

The Control of Externality among the Street Children and Marginalized People of Dhaka City: A Key Indicator to Ensure Sustainable Livelihood

ISSN: 2311-8636 (Print)
ISSN: 2312-2021 (Online)

Muhammad Rehan Masoom

Assistant Professor, School of Business and Economics, United International University, Dhaka, **BANGLADESH**



Licensed:

Source of Support: Nil

No Conflict of Interest: Declared

*Email for correspondence:
rehan_1611@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Any 'sustainable livelihood' requires the empowerment of the individuals elevated enough to be the decision-makers with their respective sets of priorities. Any scheme to ensure livelihood as such, supposed to include the transcendence of a perspective of development that conciliates the diversity of both economic activities and social actions that a person may rely on to subsist. This need to convey a holistic view of poverty, which considers multiple perspectives beyond the common measurement like income levels or productivity: that does not see the poor as only the victims of the societal context. However, Bangladesh is the country where apparently the culture of poverty predominates, and the people are often thought to be not motivated enough to change their fate. Therefore, studying the psychosocial makeup of the poor regarding the decision-making of pivotal issues of their lives may indicate the ways to ensure the sustainability of poverty reduction strategies in this country. The paper details the extent to which the poorer segments of people in Bangladesh show whether their surroundings are controlling their existence or not. The study investigates the state of the seven groups comprising of street children, rickshaw pullers, beggars, women working in parlors (the ethnic minority), factory workers, men working in saloons (the refugees) and the people living in the old home (socially isolated). The study administered a three-month survey with a pre-defined questionnaire. The findings suggest that the people of Bangladesh lean towards the external locus of control, hence tends to blame outside forces when it comes to certain hiccups in pursuits of goals.

Keywords: Sustainable livelihood, Control of Externality, Rotter's Scale, Lower Segment of the population, Expectancy of being out-of-control

INTRODUCTION

Any 'sustainable livelihood' requires the empowerment of the individuals elevated enough to be the decision-makers with their respective sets of priorities. Any scheme to ensure livelihood as such, supposed to include the transcendence of a perspective of

development that conciliates the diversity of both economic activities and social actions that a person may rely on to subsist. This need to convey a holistic view of poverty, which considers multiple perspectives beyond the common measurement like income levels or productivity: that does not see the poor as only the victims of the societal context. However, Bangladesh is the country where apparently the culture of poverty predominates, and the people are often thought to be not motivated enough to change their fate. Therefore, studying the psychosocial makeup of the poor regarding the decision-making of pivotal issues of their lives may indicate the ways to ensure the sustainability of poverty reduction strategies in this country. A large number of people of the country lives under the poverty line, and unlike the other metropolitan cities of the world, Dhaka, the capital of the country, hold quite a variety of poor in its various pockets. Not only these poor are of different in their ages, but also they vary in their ethnicity and do several things for their survival. The most common format for earning of these poverty-stricken people is rickshaw pulling, working in the garment factory and begging. Socially isolated communities like the Biharis and the ethnic minorities are found to be working in the women and gents parlor. Further, an unusual urban poverty of the capital city may be observed in the street children and old living in old-home.

Rickshaw is not only one of the principal means of transport in Dhaka city but also a primary mean of income or employment generation for the poor people of the country as a whole. Economist Binayak Sen mentioned, "Rickshaw is undoubtedly the leading contributor in the transportation sector even compared to air and rail services." Perhaps the simplest and almost the instantly available source of employment generation is rickshaw pulling and appears to be a vocation that interests a large number of urban poor. Despite unlawful, begging is yet another common format visible for earning for starving city dwellers. Apart from poverty, disability, and unwillingness to work, that requires physical strength are the primary reason behind choosing this profession. Poor migrants are found to be working in garment-industry. However, not only the economic forces but also the socio-cultural aspects of the country also generated a large number of poor. The Bihari community of Bangladesh as a linguistic minority, and Chakma, Marma, Garo, Santal, and Mro as the indigenous inhabitants, are often facing obstacles to be in the prime-line employment. A pool of the Biharis is found to be working in the saloon located in the prime location of the city. Likewise, a large number of ethnic minorities are seen to be serving in women beauty-parlour. Previous research suggests that due to not being a part of the dominant culture, they often remain socially isolated and are susceptible to an external locus of control (Masoom, 2016).

Street children generally represent the absolute lowest level in the social hierarchy of Bangladesh. A street child is someone "for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults" (UNCHS, 2000, p.73). Commonly they are seen to sell things on the streets or involve doing other odd jobs since their parents' earning are inadequate to feed them and send them to school. Although there is currently no official statistic of the number of street children, nonetheless WHO reports indicate that their number would be no less than six-hundred thousand, predominantly living in Dhaka city. Besides, though 'Old home' is relatively new for the society, yet a number of old living in the old home, where scarcity is an everyday affair.

Therefore, to outline a holistic view of poverty, the paper details the extent to which the poorer segments of people in Bangladesh indicate whether their surroundings are controlling their existence or not. The study investigates the state of the seven groups comprising of street children, rickshaw pullers, beggars, women working in parlors (the ethnic minority), factory workers, men working in saloons (the refugees) and the people living in the old home (socially isolated).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Control is a simple word to read yet a challenging word to actually administer the meaning. There are people who think they control everything, while others may assume they are being controlled by the world around them and everything in between. Control can be defined as the ability to determine the consequences by directly regulating actions, controlling people and managing events. The word 'control' becomes even more compelling when the word locus is affixed to it. The locus is described as a situation or more precisely, a context where something occurs. An individual's locus of control (LOC) can be internal or external. People who count their success as a simple outcome of their own hard work and assume they have the firm grip on their life have an internal locus of control. In contrast, people who attribute their achievement, accomplishment or incompetent and failure to the outside forces have an external locus of control. More precisely, "a locus of control orientation is a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or on events outside our personal control (external control orientation) (Gonzalez & Zimbardo, 1985, p. 275). On the other hand, poverty is one of the most persistent social predicaments that impede to attain sustainable livelihood. At the most elementary definition, poverty implies 'lack of material resources'. It is one of the universal states of affairs plaguing places across the societies worldwide; hence a number of explanations concerning the underlying reason behind the causes of poverty emerged.

One popular yet discrete explanation implies poverty as the consequence of people's cultural values and norms. One of the earliest writings of relating poverty with socio-cultural values was presented by the anthropologist Oscar Lewis (Lewis 1998), his theory of 'culture of poverty' suggests that the poor has a distinct mindset that compels them to be in poverty and living in economic deprivation. Lewis asserted that person who grew up in rather economic hardship, such as in slums, will internalize feelings of hopelessness and desperation that designates their very living condition. Since a person growing up in a situation as such, will not be able to seize any advantage of opportunities that often come in the way of living, simply due to the fact that he or she has internalized the cultural norms of deprivation. Lewis viewed this as a sort of psychological phenomenon that co-occurs living in dire circumstances. Moynihan (1985), another prominent proponent of the culture of poverty theory pledges, there is something culturally enduring about poverty. Moynihan suggests, even if the arrangement of circumstances such as the economic situation, political condition or educational opportunities changes, some people are likely to remain poor as of the values they hold.

This social theory expands on the idea of a cycle of poverty and attracted both the academics' and policymakers' attention. Despite the harsh academic criticism, the explanation is still considered to be relevant since it proposes a way to explain why poverty subsists despite anti-poverty programs. Oscar Lewis said, "the people in the culture of poverty have a strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependency, of

not belonging along with this feeling of powerlessness is a widespread feeling of inferiority, of personal unworthiness" (Lewis 1998). Interestingly, people who have the external locus of control possess the similar personality traits. They are the people who consider 'fate' as the driver of their lives, not their willingness. Cidade, et al. (2016) indicates, "Individuals in situations of poverty and extreme poverty showed high indices of fatalism, pessimism, divinity control, and luck, and low indices of hope and sense of community. Individuals with adequate income have low levels of fatalism, pessimism, and divinity control. It is concluded that poverty has consequences on the life of those who experience it and that attitudes of pessimism, hopelessness, and belief in luck as well as the weakening of community networks, articulate and support the maintenance of the status quo" (Cidade, et al. , 2016).

Further, a number of studies intended to outline how the external locus of control acts as the negative element in forming a positive attitude that leads to development. Hammer & Vardi (1981) noted that the favorable experiences reinforce tendencies toward internal control, hence enhances a persons' initiative in self-development with future favorable outcomes. Conversely, hostile reality can lead to for external control. Sims & Szilagyi (1975) found that the more an individual is orientated to the control of externality, the less likely he or she is to anticipate a positive outcome of the performance. Poverty and Economic deprivation are a hostile reality for the larger segment of the population of Bangladesh.

METHODS

The study is exploratory in nature and it tends to investigate the state of the seven groups comprising of Street Children (n=200), Rickshaw Puller (n=200), Slum dwellers (predominantly beggars) (n=70), Women working in parlors (the Ethnic Minority) (n=15), Factory Worker (n=125), Men working in saloons (the refugees) (n=40) and the people living in the old home (the Socially Isolated) (n=55). Although street children may seem to have no permanent address, even on the street where they live, nonetheless mostly commonly they can be located in places like *Rabindra Sarobar* in Dhanmondi, *Mazar gate* near *Ramna Park*, *Kamalapur Rail station*, and *Jatrabari Kancha bazar*. Rickshaw is one prominent vehicle to cover short and semi-long distances in *Dhanmondi*, *Lalmatia*, and *Jatrabari*. Workers of two garment factories in *Gazipur* area are taken as the sample. Seven distinct *Gents parlors* located in *Dhanmondi* predominantly employ the refugees as their staffs. *Persona* and *Farzana Shakil's Makeover Salon* in *Dhanmondi* are the two most popular women parlor that employees women who belong to the Ethnic Minority group. *Beganbari Slum* of *Mirpur* is the place where a large number of baggers live. These beggars earn their living by begging on streets mostly roaming around *Shahid Buddhijibi Mazar* in *Mirpur*. *Probin Nibash* at *Agargaon* is one of few local retirement homes in Bangladesh. These are the places where the research considered as the area of study. Poverty and social isolation are often the situations that may indicate the same psycho-social context for the research because of the multiplicity of the meaning of the terms (Masoom, 2016).

An assumption holds that their beliefs are elevated on the external locus of control. In order to come to this analysis, the study administered a three-month (from April 2016 to July 2016) survey of Seven hundred and five people (705) with a pre-defined questionnaire. Due to the unavailability of a proper sample list, the sampling units are selected to suit the convenience of the researchers with the intention that these 705 people can be categorized into the aforementioned seven groups. After thorough classification of

the participants into groups, they have been interviewed according to a selected number items of the questionnaire formed on the concept was developed mostly by Julian Rotter.

Rotter (1966) indicates that people differ in respect to how responsible they hold their own fate as for their present situation. A person with an 'internal locus of control' believes that people are accountable for their successes and failures. Conversely, people with a comparatively external locus of control attribute successes and failures to fate, chance or destiny. The scale adopted in order to administer the survey in this study is formulated by Stephen Nowicki and Marshall Nowicki & Duke (1974) to correct some technical dilemmas that were characteristic of the original Rotter (1966) scale. Nonetheless, like the original, it measures one's thinking about whether events are dominated internally or externally. One of the advantages of this scale is reports on test-retest reliability (Nowicki & Duke, 1974; Campis, Lyman & Prentice-Dunn, 1986) have generated very decent figures (such as .83 over a six-week period). Surveys using the original Rotter (1966) scale were reported facing troubled by a drift for subjects to provide socially desirable responses. The Nowicki and Duke version appears to have minimized this predicament. We should keep in mind that Locus of control has been related to an extensive range of variables. The norms for the scale based on data collected by Nowicki and Duke (1974) indicate that any score more than 16 out of 40 (any score above 40%), supposed to be considered as the external score. However, due to the level of education and perseverance of concentration of the respondents reckoned in this study, only 25 (deleted item: 4, 6, 9, 14, 22, 26, 31, 33 to 40) seemingly appropriate items are selected from the Nowicki and Duke Scale. Hence, any score above 9 (out of 25), can be counted as an external score.

A separate scale, known as 'Stanford Preschool Internal-External Scale' is used to estimate the locus of control of the street children. The scale was introduced in 1974 and is designated for use in children who are aged from three to six years old (Mischel, Zeiss & Zeiss, 1974). It contains 14 items in a forced-choice format to address several issues such as the inclination some preschoolers have to respond in an affirmative way when asked a yes-or-no question. This scale is subdivided into positive and negative subscales and examines Locus of control outside the general educational realm. There are questions regarding control over things along with peer and parental communication. One of the basic benefits of adopting this scale is, it is relatively short, taking into account the fact that a child's attention span is usually more limited than that of someone grown-up. The study considers 12 relevant items (item 13 & 14 are deleted, as seems inappropriate for street children), and any score lower than fifty percent (below 6 of 12) simply implies an external locus of control.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of 705 surveyed people of seven distinct categories, 515 individuals are falling in External Locus of Control. Only near about one-fourth of the people of the survey indicate to have Internal Locus of Control. Except for the refugees, who are chiefly *Biharis*, working in the Gents' Saloon, no less than three-fifth of the people of all segments shows their belief to be controlled by the external factors. The overwhelming majority of the rickshaw pullers (80%) feel that their lives are controlled by the external factors, whereas all fifteen surveyed ethnic women working in the beauty parlors consider that outside forces control their lives. Near about 72 percent of the street children think that they are living the lives that they do not have any authority over it. The picture is a bit good for the people who are living in slums and workers in the factories. Near about 35 percent of the people of

these two segments of the people indicate that they can influence events and their outcomes of their lives. The situation is devastating in case of the people who are old and living in the old home. Fifty out of fifty-five old (comprising over ninety percent) indicate that they have no control over their lives. For detail, please consider table 1.

Table 1: The control of Externality of the Street Children and Marginalized People of Dhaka City

Locus of Control	Distribution	Status							Total
		Street Children	Rickshaw Puller	Slum dwellers	Ethnic Women	Factory Worker	Saloon Worker	Old living in Old Home	
Internal	Number	57	40	25	0	43	20	5	190
	Percentage	28.5	20	35.7	0	34.4	50	9.1	26.95
External	Number	143	160	45	15	82	20	50	515
	Percentage	71.5	80	64.3	100	65.6	50	90.9	73.05
Total	Number	200	200	70	15	125	40	55	705
	Percentage	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100.00

There are hardly any differences between the Street Children and other groups of people as far as gender is concerned. Female are showing slightly better condition than that of a male if the control of externality is being considered as a negative indicator of social lives. However, the study cannot emphasize this finding regarding the fact that the sample size is less appropriately disproportionate. Less number of female is available to survey since the segment considered in this study lean towards more of male than of female. When age is considered as a mediating factor, no pronounced difference is found with regard to the category of ages. However, data suggests that adolescents are feeling more internal locus of control than that of the old. For detail, please consider table 2 (a), table 2 (b) and table 3.

Table 2 (a): Gender-wise locus of Control of the Street Children of Dhaka City

Locus of Control	Distribution	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Internal	Number	42	15	57
	Percentage	27.1	33.3	28.5
External	Number	113	30	143
	Percentage	72.9	66.7	71.5
Total	Number	155	45	200
	Percentage	100	100	100

Table 2 (b): Gender-wise locus of Control of the Marginalized People of Dhaka City*

Locus of Control	Distribution	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Internal	Number	112	21	133
	Percentage	25.5	32.3	26.3
External	Number	328	44	372
	Percentage	74.5	67.7	73.7
Total	Number	440	65	505
	Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Street Children are not included in this distribution.

Table 3: Age-wise locus of Control of the Marginalized People of Dhaka City*

Locus of Control	Distribution	Level of Age					Total
		Adolescence (13-19)	Early Adulthood (20-29)	Middle Adulthood (30-39)	Late Adulthood (40-59)	Old Age (60+)	
Internal	Number	7	51	22	41	12	133
	Percentage	31.8	28.2	22.2	29.5	18.8	26.3
External	Number	15	130	77	98	52	372
	Percentage	68.2	71.8	77.8	70.5	81.2	73.7
Total	Number	22	181	99	139	64	505
	Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Street Children are not included in this distribution.

CONCLUSION

A notable strand of contemporary economic research concentrates on external structural constraints that perpetuate poverty traps, such as lack of employment opportunities and absence of the provision of proper social interaction. Undoubtedly the stand is justifiable, nonetheless from the starting point as such policies to address sustainable livelihood tend to unwind the internal personality constraints. Hence, extensively missing from conventional interpretations of poverty traps are the 'affective mechanisms' through which the existence of poverty forms the values, norms, beliefs and aspirations of the poor. An urging need to address the variables like 'pessimistic beliefs', 'learned helplessness', 'social isolation' and 'external locus of control' has emerged as the central thesis in some ongoing research. One notable issue to address while addressing the 'affective mechanisms' is unlike external structural constraints, these internal compulsions are endogenous due to the experience of social isolation from the mainstream culture and chronic poverty, and becomes an independent source of negativity for poor persons in its own right. The study found that three-fourth of the respondents belong to the dejected classes of the society are falling in External Locus of Control. Regardless of age, nationality, gender or ethnicity, the majority of the people that suffer poverty or deprivation feel that their lives are controlled by outside factors. Although the study cannot emphasize the finding as because the measurement tool that may fail to reach the construct validity as a fundamental requirement due to applying it from a completely distinct cultural context of origin, nonetheless the outcomes of the research that cannot be grossly ignored. On the final note, the situation may not be as dismal as seems because, despite the LOC is seen as a stable, underlying personality construct, nonetheless it is a response to circumstances. Some psychical and educational, institutional and instructional interventions have been found to provide transformations towards the internal locus of control.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Kazi Ashfaqur Rahman, Naziha and other undergrad students of School of Business & Economics, United International University, for their support to administer the survey.

REFERENCES

- Campis, L.K., Lyman, R.D. and Prentice-Dunn, S., 1986. The parental locus of control scale: Development and validation. *Journal of clinical child psychology*, 15(3), pp.260-267.
- Cidade, E.C., Moura Jr, J.F., Nepomuceno, B.B., Ximenes, V.M. and Sarriera, J.C., 2016. Poverty and fatalism: Impacts on the community dynamics and on hope in Brazilian residents. *Journal of prevention & intervention in the community*, 44(1), pp.51-62.

- Gonzalez, Alexander, and Philip G. Zimbardo. "Time in perspective." *Psychology today* 19, no. 3 (1985): 21-26.
- Hammer, T.H. and Vardi, Y., 1981. Locus of control and career self-management among nonsupervisory employees in industrial settings. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 18(1), pp.13-29.
- Lewis O. (1998) "Culture of Poverty" *Society*, 35 (2). pp. 7-9
- Masoom, Muhammad Rehan. "Social Isolation of the Stateless and the Destitute: A Study on the Refugee-Camp and the Sullied Slum of Dhaka City." *Urban Studies Research*. vol. 2016, Article ID 9017279, 10 pages, 2016. doi:10.1155/2016/9017279.
- Masoom, Muhammad Rehan. "Social Isolation: A Conceptual Analysis." *Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 7, no. 4 (2016): 277-281.
- Mischel, W., Zeiss, R. and Zeiss, A., 1974. Internal-external control and persistence: Validation and implications of the Stanford Preschool Internal-External Scale. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 29(2), p.265.
- Moynihan, Daniel P. "The paranoid style in American politics revisited." *The Public Interest* 81 (1985): 107.
- Nowicki Jr, S. and Duke, M.P., 1974. A locus of control scale for noncollege as well as college adults. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 38(2), pp.136-137.
- Rotter, J.B., 1966. Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological monographs: General and applied*, 80(1), p.1.
- Sims, H.P. and Szilagy, A.D., 1975. Leader reward behavior and subordinate satisfaction and performance. *Organizational behavior and human performance*, 14(3), pp.426-438.
- UNCHS (Habitat) .2000. Strategies to combat homelessness. UN-Habitat.

--0--

Publish Online and Print Version Both

Online ISSN: 2312-2021

Google Scholar: <https://goo.gl/eozEWi>