



Child beggars in times of Covid in Guinea-Bissau

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Introduction

COVID is mainly a disease of adults; however, social containment measures can indirectly affect children, not least children in a vulnerable situation. The study aimed to explore the impact of the pandemic's impact on child beggars who attend Quran schools and beg on behalf of their teacher, *marabout*, in Guinea-Bissau.

Methods

The study was conducted in July 2020. Data rests on semi-structured and open-ended interviews with 14 Quran schoolboys aged 12-16 years in the suburban areas of the capital Bissau and Gabú.

Results

COVID had brought many difficulties to the boys. With the containment measures, their income from begging became meagre, resulting in hunger and continuous police threats. The boys listed the most important preventive measures for COVID, a knowledge gained from their *marabouts* and radio. Otherwise, the Quran studies had continued as usual for most of them; however, a few had temporarily returned to their home village to help with the agricultural work. For the boys, begging was an integral part of religious studies and a way to become a respected *marabout*.

Significance of Covid 19

Covid 19 is a new disease that brings many difficulties.

Transmission and prevention

contact with a person who is ill with Covid 19
"We have to wear masks, wash our hands with bleach"

Impact of the Covid 19

Covid 19 has only brought difficulties. Begging brings neither money nor food

IDENTIFIED CATEGORIES (3) & THEMES (8)

Covid 19 knowledge

Health

Education

Acces health services

"One of our colleagues was sick, but our master took him to the hospital".

COVID 19

No case of Covid has yet been reported in their *daara*

Family concern: Quran teaching

"the marabouts have adopted new measures"

Prayers

"We respect the preventive measures and also pray that God will protect us from this disease"

Support

"I would like you to help us by offering us food, a bigger residence than this one where we can all settle down and a space to read the Koran."

Conclusion

The Quran schoolboys feel the burden of the pandemic mainly through a sharp decrease of income from begging, resulting in hunger. The government and child rights organisations need to address their needs in collaboration with them, their parents, and the *marabouts* who are respected religious leaders.