

# Street Begging and Its Psychosocial Social Effects in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria

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**Abstract**—This study investigated street begging and its psychosocial effect in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. In carrying out this study, four research questions were used. The instrument used for data collection was a face-to-face and self-developed questionnaire. The results revealed there is high awareness level on the causes of street begging among the respondents, who also mentioned several factors contributing to street begging. However, respondents disagreed that lack of education is a factor contributing to street begging in Nigeria. The psycho-social effects of street begging, as identified by the respondents, are development of inferiority complex, lack of social interaction, loss of self-respect and dignity, increased mindset of poverty and loss of self-confident. Solution to street begging as identified by the respondents also includes provision of rehabilitation centers, provision of food for students in Islamic schools and monthly survival allowance. Specific policies and other legislative frameworks are needed in terms of age, sex, disability, and family-related issues, to effectively address the begging problem. Therefore, it is recommended that policy planners must adopt multi-faceted, multi-targeted, and multi-tiered approaches if they are to have any impact on the lives of street beggars in all four categories. In this regard, both preventative and responsive interventions are needed instead of rehabilitative solutions for each category of street beggars.

**Keywords**—Beggars, begging, psychosocial effect, respondents, street begging.

## I. INTRODUCTION

ONE of the highly visible socio-economic and physical problems of most cities in Nigeria is the increasing incidence of begging by different types of beggars. Most of these poverty-ridden individuals and the mentally-derailed street persons have taken advantage of the anomic situation of most urban centers to remain permanent residents (legal or illegal) of the cities. However, in spite of the efforts of some state governments of the federation and their agencies, research showed that when beggars are made to vacate the street either through one form of rehabilitation or another, or through a legal or enforcement means, it does not take long that most of them re-appear [1]. The reasons for this may not be far-fetched, for while beggars may be of different types and forms, their characteristics and reasons for taking to begging also vary. As such, any attempt aimed at removing them from the street may only work for those who are part-time or temporary beggars.

The problem of street begging in Nigeria, most especially Ibadan in particular, it is associated with the growth of urban

areas and aggravated by drought, famine and depressed economic activities. These factors have deepened the extent of poverty in the Ibadan metropolis and other urban areas in the country having contributing to the phenomenon of street begging [2]. Although poverty is said to be less acute in the urban areas of Nigeria, it is still a serious problem especially in urban areas. On the socio-economic front, large areas of these regions have minimal infrastructural development which impedes people's access to markets, health and educational facilities, and safe water resources etc. [3].

According to [4], begging is a social problem which has not only psychological consequences such as the development of inferiority complex in the beggars' family members and their network of kinship, but also the problem of begging will affect, as an unpleasant problem, the geographical and social structure of the urban areas. This study covers Ibadan north, Ibadan North West, Ibadan south west, Ibadan south east, Ibadan north east. Each of these local government areas is considered to be a true representative of the northern, western or eastern part of Ibadan. The choice of each local government areas has been observed to be based on the need for a cross socio-cultural analysis. It is important to mention also that the common denominator of the areas is the increasing rate of urban growth, which is accompanied by diverse socio-economic problems; one of which is the increasing incidence of begging in nearly every major road of the city with its attendant environmental and socio-economic implications for areas, the city and the nation at large.

The sample of the study consisted of two hundred people selected in Ibadan Metropolis of Oyo State participating in the research questionnaire.

The research questions are:

1. What are the causes of street begging in the Ibadan metropolis?
2. What are the factors contributing to street begging in the Ibadan metropolis?
3. What are the psycho-social effects of street begging in the Ibadan metropolis?
4. What are the solutions to street begging in the Ibadan metropolis?

Begging is a practice whereby a person obtains money, food, shelter or other things from people they encounter by request.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF BEGGARS

Beggars are usually associated with the high rate of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, illiteracy and many social problems such as crime, drug addiction, alcoholism, high rates

of mental illness, and suicide. Begging consists of an action and/or actions, which are events we can describe as intentional [5]. The intentionality of begging is made explicit by the communicative act or set-up: the position of the beggar, putting down a cup or a notice and addressing people. Begging is an informal economic activity; this implies that begging is an activity outside of formal state regulations. According to [6], the main reason for the beggar to engage in begging activities consists of his striving for a monetary or semi-monetary return. The pursued reward consists of the gifts received. Thereby, it is constitutive for begging that the benefit is intended for the beggar or his peers. Begging is performed in a public space and it is a street economic activity. Whoever wants to beg, needs nothing more than a public space, preferably with a considerable amount of traffic, be it pedestrian or motorized. Begging generally is an urban phenomenon, the relationship between the giver and the receiver is explicitly non-reciprocal. In this way, alms are not a part of a real gift relationship, as conceptualized in the dominant literature on gift relations [7].

### III. TYPES OF BEGGARS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

Generally, beggars can be divided into two categories: professional and non-professional. The non-professional beggars are the ones who are the real needy as they are very poor and can hardly survive in this era of expense. They do not ask from every one and also want to maintain their respect in the society. For that matter, there is always a room in society to compensate them. Alms, charity and Zakat are the funds given for these real needy persons. They are creatures of circumstances; on the other hand, professional beggars are the one who can earn their livelihood by getting work but feel at ease in begging and are looting the public with shrewd thinking and artificial looks. They even use someone else's child to quench their thirst in the view to earn easy money. These beggars have made the lives of citizen miserable by pleading for money at various traffic signals of the city by blocking the road, annoying citizens, and demanding money in every nook and cranny of city. Beggars may be grouped into the following eight categories:

**Able bodied**-The able bodied beggar forms the largest group of the beggar population and come to beg because of poverty and unemployment, and later become professionals. At religious places, they get free food because of the poor. Reference [8] defined that able bodied beggars are the ones who are lazy and wander around the city. They never bother to search for a suitable job; instead, they harass and cajole the public to give them alms.

**Religious**-It is known to beggars that giving aid to a poor is an advantage for any religious people. When devotees go to religious places for worship, the beggars normally do not pray for alms. Subsequently, when the devotees return from religious places, the beggars flock around them and show in a chorus for alms. Religious mendicants are those who conceal themselves under the cover of religious faith [9]. They are mostly seen in the premises of temples. They also travel extensively from temple to temple during festivals.

**Physically Handicap**-People with disabilities have begged throughout history and across the world. They have asked for money and other kinds of charity. Among this type of beggar may be classed the blind, the deaf-mute, and the crippled and deformed [10].

**Mentally Handicap**-This type of beggar includes the feeble-minded and those suffering from mental disorders. The feeble-minded may be divided into the micro cephalic (those with abnormally small skull), the hydrocephalic (those with enlarged skull and popularly known as having water on the brain), the paralytic and the traumatic. Many beggars with mental disorders are allowed to rot in the streets [10]. Such beggars may sit in one place for days together urinating and defecating in the self-same place and may be covered with lice, germs, mosquitoes, flies and other vermin, and at times until a crow comes and starts pecking them, and even then, no one takes any notice.

**Diseased**-Besides the physically and mentally disabled, there are the chronically under-nourished beggars and those afflicted with various organic troubles, or weaknesses of the vital organs. They may even be more disgusting than the sight of the mentally disturbed beggar; they are beggars suffering from acute stages of venereal diseases, leprosy, epilepsy, tuberculosis and various skin diseases.

**Weak**-This category of beggar are those suffering from the weakness due to malnutrition. Most of these beggars only eat two times a day and nothing else is taken by them as a supplementary i.e. milk or fruits, due to which they have no strength to do any work, and hence, why they are begging.

**Old**-The disintegration of the joint family system has made the life of the aged a precarious one. The value system has also drastically changed, wherein; young people do not want to shoulder the responsibility of caring for aged parents, who are unwanted in their own houses. Most of these people resort to begging, their main complaints being their inability to work due to their late years, and the neglect of the children [11].

**Child**-The child beggar may be a paid or unpaid assistant to an adult beggar. Begging would not be a profitable trade if there were no children to attract the customer's attention. The beggar child therefore, is the most valuable asset in the trade; and as such is sold, bartered or mortgaged [12]. Children can easily draw the sympathy of the general public. So, many children are brought into this profession, as it is considered an item, wherein, a mother, who was separated from her husband, made use of her children for the purpose of begging.

**Others**-Eunuchs: (locally known as 'hijras') live at the margins of society with very low social status. Few employment opportunities are available to these people. Many get their income from performing at ceremonies, begging, and prostitution; these are the occupations of eunuchs also recorded in pre-modern times. They are often encountered on streets, trains, and other public places demanding money from people. If refused, they may attempt to embarrass the man into giving money, using obscene gestures, profane language, and even sexual advances.

**Addicts**-Addicts used to beg for funds to acquire narcotics. Many beggars are young male drug addicts.

#### IV. METHODS OF BEGGING IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

Beggars use numerous ways to get attention, sometimes going so far as to obstruct a pedestrian's path as they shove their hand or a cup out in front of them. Methods range from carrying a sign or holding out a cup on a city sidewalk, threatening, taunting and touching passersby in an attempt to intimidate them into giving money. Generally, though begging occurs in a passive manner, an act of begging in one context might not be intimidating, but the same behavior in a different context might [13].

Beggars often share successful approaches which seem to attract more attention or to entice or entertain passersby.

- 1) Silence- This method is simply an exhibition of physical and mental deformities for the purpose of soliciting alms by exposing their diseased part, stretching out an open palm, inflicting injuries on self, etc.
- 2) Slogan- They also says slogans as a weapon for asking money in the name of God, hunger, blessings.
- 3) Showing their deformity or handicap- Most handicapped or diseased individuals use their deformities as a tool to ask for money. They show-off their deformed or diseased body parts to gain the sympathy of passersby. We can easily find these types of beggars at markets, religious places, and railway station, where the movement of large numbers of people takes place.
- 4) Using infants - Carrying an infant is a useful tool to touch the hearts and minds of donors for money. Frequently, female beggars with a baby and asking for aid in the name of the infant can be found at different parts of markets, railway station and residential areas.
- 5) Other Methods-
  - Long stories of the mendicant's plight or some task they are trying to accomplish, such as obtaining money for the bus or train so as to return home, etc.
  - A direct Personal Request for money for food and medicines, in the hopes that honesty will gain sympathy.
  - Torturing themselves by beating and sitting on the road side during hot summer days.
  - Being stationed near traffic in order to get money or goods or solicit donations, for example walking between lanes at a red light; when this is done with a sign, it is often referred to as "flying". In these cases, beggars run the risk of being struck by passing vehicles.
  - The Dasari, a beggar by caste, comes to the door with his iron lamp, and stands sounding a conch and striking a gong, to beg. Individuals and families wander around asking for help to get them to religious places saying they have taken a vow that they would collect money from donors in order to undertake their pilgrimage.

#### V. CAUSES OF BEGGING IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

Unexpected and important relationship occurs between causes of begging [12]. Some of the major causes of begging are as follows:

**Poverty:** Poverty can be measured with specific earnings per capital to the spending of an individual or a group of

people at a given time [14]. Signs of poverty may include poor shelter, poor health care and malnutrition. In trying to survive, about 55% of children were sent to the street by their mothers to beg [15].

**Homelessness:** UNICEF reportedly stressed that 100 million children worldwide are homeless and about 15,000 children in Nigeria are homeless [16]. According to the statistics, 43% of beggars were homeless, of which, 71% of them barely sleep [17].

**Break Down of the Family System:** Most children flee from homes with reports of being maltreated by step parents who refuse to take care of them, resulting in the children begging on the streets for survival [18].

**Mental illness and Drugs:** Some begging can be attributed to addictive disorders such alcohol and/or drug dependency. These people beg to raise money to buy items to feed their addiction such as drugs, alcohol and tobacco [19].

**Unemployment:** Beggars are generally unemployed, with 82% being unemployed for a long time [20]. In the case of Ibadan, street begging is a term of the economic situation of poor urban families, whereby children are subjected to working conditions for the survival of the families involved.

#### VI. CONSEQUENCES OF STREET BEGGING IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

Apart from the strain that begging has placed on beggars, there are factors which have a negative impact on their health and personality. Some of these include:

**Sexual abuse:** Female beggars are mostly abused sexually by men who seem to lure them to bed with the promise of money; some of them have been identified as victims of HIV/AIDS [21].

**Kidnapping:** Many beggars on the streets of Ibadan risk being kidnapped for illegal organ harvesting, as well as for rituals and other forms of dark magical practices [22].

**Crime:** One of the common crimes which they likely involved in is workshop lifting, indicated by 76% of respondents [23].

**Accident Risks:** Beggars risk being hit or run over by careless drivers as they beg for alms between moving vehicles in highway traffic.

#### VII. PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF STREET BEGGING IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

The respondents of this research have being able to identify the relative psychosocial effects of street begging among the people and residence of Ibadan, the reports are as shown in Table I.

TABLE I  
 PSYCHO-SOCIAL EFFECTS OF STREET BEGGING IN IBADAN

S/No	STATEMENT	SA	A	SD	D
1.	Development of inferiority complex	26%	60%	9%	5%
2.	Lack of social interaction	23%	61%	11%	5%
3.	Loss of self-respect and dignity	32%	62%	5%	1%
4.	Increased mindset of poverty	41%	55%	---	4%
5.	Loss of self-confident	40%	53%	6%	1%

SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, SD: Strongly Disagree and D: Disagree.

The cumulative responses in Table I show the psycho-social effects of street begging with 86% of the respondents who mentioned development of inferiority complex as a psycho-social effect of street begging, 84% mentioned lack of social interaction as a psycho-social effect, 94% mentioned loss of self-respect and dignity, and 96% mentioned the increased mindset of poverty, while (93%) of respondents mentioned loss of self-confidence as a psycho-social effect of street begging.

#### VIII. SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO STREET BEGGING

Several strategies have been employed by the government, corporate organizations and public spirited individuals both in Nigeria and abroad in order to combat this situation.

##### A. Rehabilitation Centre

It was pointed out that existing rehabilitation homes are a mockery and an insult to human dignity, since they lack basic necessities of life, and therefore, are not an effective strategy for curbing street begging [20]. However, proper maintenance strategies can be put in place to keep facilities in good condition.

##### B. Provision of Food for Students in Islamic Schools

The basic reason for Almajiri begging in Kano is that the children have no alternative to feeding, therefore the Kano state government embarked on a pilot programme of providing food for the Islamic schools in three local government councils (Warawa, Makoda and Ajingi) for a period of one year. Reference [18] reported that children from local government areas stopped begging.

##### C. Counseling Implications

In this case, counselors can apply their skills in vocational educational-social counseling, which will enable beggars to explore alternative ways of utilizing their acquired skills.

#### IX. CONCLUSION

The results of the study found that the factors that cause people to become street beggars and the phenomenon of begging are diverse and multifaceted. Poverty influences begging to a large extent in all of the studied municipalities. Other factors include unemployment, physical challenges, death of both parents, and family disintegration.

This result indicates that respondents have some knowledge about the causes, factors and solutions to street begging. However, there is need to re-orientate people on the important role that education plays on the children who are involved in the act of begging. Hence, lack of good upbringing, lack of love from parents, poverty and low educational status of parents needs to be addressed continuously by the government and community organizations and parents inclusive in order to prevent street begging.

#### X. RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the problem of street beggars and begging activities, we provide the following recommendations:

1. Policy planners must adopt several approaches if they are to have any impact on the lives of street beggars in all categories. Specific policies and other legislative agendas are needed in terms of age, sex, disability, and family-related issues to successfully address the issue of begging.
2. More efforts should be placed on changing community attitudes towards beggars who are children with disabilities and emphasizing the necessity of educating children with disabilities in order to enable them to face their future as independent individuals.
3. In as much as begging activities are not good at all, governments and other stakeholders should create opportunities for street beggars to make a living by other means.
4. Rehabilitation centers should be properly maintained with basic needs such as water and electricity being provided for the comfort of inmates.
5. The Federal Government should assist the state Government (where there are Islamic schools) in providing food for students, in the hope that they will not take to the streets.
6. The Diverted Giving Scheme should be introduced in conjunction with social welfare agencies allocating funds for the underprivileged or less advantaged.

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