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Article

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ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR STREET BEGGING AMONG SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Many children live on the streets, robbed of education and vulnerable to many hazards, despite attempts to solve this issue. This paper explored the possible factors influencing street begging among school-age children in the locale. A self-constructed questionnaire was employed to gather data from 100 randomly selected employees in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Development, Kwara State, guided by three research questions. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyse the data. Results showed that major causes of street begging are poverty, parental neglect, substandard housing, homelessness, bad urban family circumstances, family disintegration, and cultural and religious influences. Moreover, street begging was discovered to affect children's educational performance, hence restricting their academic advancement and prospects for the future. The paper suggested poverty alleviation programmes, a committed government committee to monitor policy implementation, sustainable rehabilitation projects, and enhanced family duties towards this problem. Reducing the number of vulnerable children also depends on discouraging polygamy and large families. The results draw attention to the pressing need of efficient policy implementation and greater social responsibility to shield children from severe reality of street life. Combating these underlying issues will help to create a more lasting solution that guarantees every child has access to school and a brighter future.

Keywords: Street Begging, School-age Children, Poverty, Family Structure.

Introduction

Street begging among school-age children remains a pressing social issue in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, reflecting deeper structural and socio-economic problems. The presence of children on the streets, engaging in begging rather than education, signals a significant deprivation of basic rights, exposing them to exploitation, abuse, and a cycle of poverty.

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Empirical studies suggest that street begging is not only a consequence of economic hardship but also of cultural norms, poor governance, and systemic neglect (Bowling, 2022; Tsagem & Idris, 2025). Poverty is one of the primary drivers of child begging, as families struggling to meet basic needs often push children into street begging as a survival strategy (Agyemang et al., 2024). In Nigeria, Mbam et al. (2022) reported that over 60% of the population lives below the poverty line, with children being the most vulnerable. Inadequate parental care and family disintegration further exacerbate this issue. Studies by Obimakinde and Shabir (2023) revealed that children from broken homes or large, polygamous families are more likely to be forced into begging due to a lack of financial and emotional support. Also, cultural and religious practices influence the normalisation of child begging in some communities, particularly in the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria, where children are sent out to beg under the guise of religious education (Uroko & Obiorah, 2024). This practice not only deprives children of formal education but also exposes them to various social risks, including exploitation, malnutrition, and physical abuse. In some cases, religious leaders who oversee these children fail to provide adequate care, further worsening their plight (Uche, 2022).

The educational consequences of street begging are severe, leading to poor academic performance, school dropout, and limited future opportunities (Doja, 2020). Children engaged in begging often lack access to basic literacy and numeracy skills, making their reintegration into formal schooling difficult. Studies have shown that street children in Nigeria exhibit lower cognitive development and socio-emotional well-being than their peers who attend school regularly (Ariyo et al., 2022). This educational deprivation perpetuates the cycle of poverty, making it difficult for these children to break free from socio-economic disadvantages in adulthood. Beyond education, street begging also has significant psychological effects on children. Research by Yousaf and Rafique (2025) suggests that children who beg on the streets often suffer from depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety due to social stigma and neglect. Exposure to harsh environmental conditions, exploitation, and verbal or physical abuse further deteriorates their mental health. The lack of parental care and a structured environment deprives them of emotional stability, leading to maladaptive behaviours that persist into adulthood. Government intervention in tackling street begging has been inconsistent, with policies lacking effective implementation and sustainability (Ojedokun, 2021). While various child protection laws exist, enforcement remains weak, allowing the issue to persist. The Kwara State government, for instance, has made efforts to rehabilitate street children through skill acquisition programmes and social welfare initiatives, but these efforts often lack sufficient funding and long-term planning (Salahu, 2019). Without a coordinated and well-funded approach, the effectiveness of such interventions remains limited. Furthermore, rapid urbanisation and poor housing conditions have contributed to the rise in child begging. The increasing migration of rural families to urban centers like Ilorin in search of better economic opportunities has led to overcrowded settlements with inadequate social amenities. Families living in slums often lack access to affordable housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities, forcing children to seek alternative means of survival through begging (Moreno & Sulasula, 2024).

The role of family structure in child begging cannot be overlooked. Large families with multiple dependents often struggle to provide for their children, leading to increased child labor and begging. Research has shown that children from polygamous households are more likely to be pushed into begging due to financial strain (Shaiful Bahari et al., 2021). This study aims to assess the underlying factors contributing to street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis and provide evidence-based recommendations for mitigating this issue. By

understanding the root causes, policymakers and stakeholders can develop sustainable solutions that prioritise child welfare and ensure access to education and a brighter future for all children.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the factors responsible for street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Examine the factors responsible for street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.
- ii. Investigate the possible effects of street begging on the educational attainment of school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis.
- iii. Find possible solutions to the problem of street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis.

Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

- i. What are the factors responsible for street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State?
- ii. How does street begging affect the educational attainment of school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis?
- iii. What possible solutions can be implemented to reduce the prevalence of street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the factors responsible for street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis. The population for the study comprised employees of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Development, Kwara State, who are directly involved in child welfare and social intervention programmes. A sample of 100 respondents was randomly selected to ensure diverse perspectives from individuals working within the ministry. A self-constructed questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was designed based on literature review findings and was divided into three sections: demographic information, factors contributing to street begging, and the impact of street begging on children's education. The instrument was validated by experts in child development and social welfare to ensure reliability and content validity. Data were collected and analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically Mean and Standard Deviation, to determine the most significant factors influencing street begging. The analysis was guided by three research questions aimed at understanding the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to child street begging. Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation of all respondents. The findings from this study will inform policy recommendations aimed at addressing the root causes of street begging and promoting child welfare in Ilorin Metropolis.

Results

Answering of Research Questions: Three research questions were generated and answered using measure of central tendencies (mean and standard deviation). The results are presented in the tables below.

Factors Responsible for Street Begging Among School-Age Children in Ilorin Metropolis

To answer this research question, the mean responses of the respondents to each questionnaire item addressing the factors responsible for street begging were computed. The cut-off mean value was calculated to be 2.5. Items with a mean value greater than 2.5 are considered significant factors, while those below 2.5 are not.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing Factors Responsible for Street Begging

S/N	Items	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Homelessness	2.67	1.14	1st
2	Poverty	2.65	1.04	2nd
3	Mental illness and drugs	2.45	1.02	10th
4	Inadequate access to housing	2.56	1.06	4th
5	Lack of health support services	2.46	1.50	9th
6	Negligence from the parents	2.57	1.04	3rd
7	Breakdown of the family system	2.53	1.03	6th
8	Unemployment of parents	2.48	1.13	8th
9	Poor urban families, where children are subjected to work	2.54	1.14	5th
10	Cultural and religious factors	2.53	1.05	7th
Total		2.54		

The table above reveals that the major factors responsible for street begging include homelessness, poverty, parental negligence, inadequate housing access, poor urban families where children are forced to work, breakdown of the family, and cultural and religious factors. The overall mean of 2.54, which is above the cut-off of 2.50, confirms that these factors contribute significantly to street begging in Ilorin Metropolis.

Effects of Street Begging on the Educational Attainment of School-Age Children in Ilorin Metropolis

The total responses of the respondents, which were initially in a continuous form were transformed to a categorical data, and were categorised into two groups: **negative** (scores between 6–15) and **positive** (scores between 16–24) based on the cut-off score of 9. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of the Effects of Street Begging on Educational Attainment

Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Remark
6 – 15	68	68.0%	Low
16 – 24	32	32.0%	Average

The table reveals that 68% of the respondents indicated that street begging has a negative effect on educational attainment, while 32% reported an average impact. This suggests that street begging significantly hinders the educational progress of school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis.

The Possible Solutions to Street Begging Among School-Age Children in Ilorin Metropolis

To answer this question, the mean responses of teachers to each item addressing possible solutions were computed. The cut-off mean value was **2.5**, with items above this threshold considered as viable solutions.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing Possible Solutions to Street Begging

S/N	Items	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Poverty alleviation programmes targeting beggars and the needy should be promoted	2.59	1.14	1st
2	Sustainable and effective rehabilitation should be promoted	2.56	1.04	3rd
3	Committees should be set up at all government levels to implement poverty alleviation programmes	2.57	1.02	2nd
4	Families should fulfill their social responsibilities, especially to disabled or distressed members	2.54	1.06	4th
5	Individuals should avoid social excesses such as polygamy when they cannot support their children	2.51	0.50	5th
Total		2.55		

The table above indicates that the most viable solutions to street begging include poverty alleviation programmes, effective rehabilitation strategies, government intervention through policy implementation, family responsibility, and responsible family planning. The overall mean of 2.55, which is above the cut-off of 2.50, suggests that these solutions, if properly implemented, can significantly reduce street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis.

Discussions of the Findings

The findings of this study revealed that several key factors contribute to street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis. These include homelessness, poverty, parental negligence, inadequate access to housing, poor urban living conditions, family breakdown, and cultural and religious influences. Homelessness and poverty emerged as major drivers of street begging among school-age children. Respondents indicated that children from destitute families often resort to begging as a means of survival. This finding aligns with Uroko and Obiorah (2024), who established a strong correlation between begging, homelessness, poverty, mental illness, inadequate access to housing, and lack of social support systems. Similarly, Obimakinde and Shabir (2023) emphasised that children engaged in street begging often lack stable homes, parental care, and financial support, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Parental negligence and the breakdown of family structures were identified as significant contributors to child street begging. The findings revealed that children from broken homes or those with absent or negligent parents are more likely to resort to begging. This corroborates the assertion of Ariyo et al. (2022), who argued that the failure of families to provide adequate care and supervision often pushes children into street life, exposing them to risks such as trafficking, child labor, and abuse. Moreover, Sumarni and Darmawan (2024) noted that children from dysfunctional families experience higher levels of social exclusion, forcing them into begging as a coping mechanism.

The study also found that cultural and religious factors play a role in perpetuating street begging among school-age children. Some societies tolerate or even encourage child begging as part of religious traditions or cultural norms. This finding is supported by Yusuf (2020), who documented that in certain regions, particularly among Almajiri children, begging is institutionalised within religious schooling systems. Such cultural acceptance makes it difficult to eradicate the practice without targeted interventions. The findings also demonstrated that street begging has detrimental effects on the educational attainment of school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis. Respondents emphasised that children who beg on the streets instead of attending school missed critical learning opportunities, which ultimately leads to illiteracy and social marginalisation. This finding aligns with the work of Alqahtani (2022), who highlighted

that children involved in street begging are at a high risk of academic failure due to irregular school attendance and exposure to street-related dangers. Moreover, studies by Gabriel (2024) showed that street children face psychological and emotional challenges that further hinder their academic performance. The lack of proper parental guidance, exposure to harsh living conditions, and constant need to fend for themselves make it difficult for them to concentrate on education. Beyond educational setbacks, the study found that children involved in street begging are vulnerable to various social dangers, including human trafficking, child labor, and sexual exploitation. Respondents highlighted that beggars, especially young girls, are at high risk of being trafficked or forced into prostitution. This assertion aligns with Franchino-Olsen (2019), who noted that street children are often targeted by criminals for illegal activities due to their vulnerability. Furthermore, the study revealed that children who beg on the streets are at risk of being involved in road accidents, particularly in areas with heavy traffic. Bello and Olutola (2020) supported this finding, stating that beggars constitute a significant percentage of road accident victims due to their constant presence in high-risk areas.

Conclusion

The study concluded that homelessness, poverty, parental negligence, family breakdown, and cultural and religious influences are the primary factors driving street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis. Additionally, the study affirmed that street begging negatively impacts the educational attainment and overall well-being of children. To address this challenge, concerted efforts from the government, families, and society at large are required to implement sustainable poverty alleviation programmes, strengthen family support systems, and ensure that every child has access to quality education and a safe environment.

Recommendations

To tackle the issue of street begging among school-age children in Ilorin Metropolis, the study suggests the following measures:

- i. **Poverty Alleviation Programmes:** Government and non-governmental organisations should implement targeted poverty alleviation programmes that directly benefit beggars and vulnerable families.
- ii. **Sustainable and Effective Rehabilitation:** Rehabilitation programmes should focus on reintegrating street children into society by providing them with education, vocational training, and psychological support.
- iii. **Policy Implementation and Government Intervention:** A dedicated committee should be established at all three tiers of government to oversee the implementation of poverty alleviation initiatives and policies aimed at reducing street begging.
- iv. **Strengthening Family Structures:** Families should be encouraged to take responsibility for their children's welfare, and awareness campaigns should be conducted to promote responsible parenting.
- v. **Regulating Polygamy and Large Families:** Individuals should be discouraged from having more children than they can afford to care for, as large family sizes often contribute to child neglect and poverty.

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