

Research on Humanities and Social Sciences
ISSN 2224-5766(Paper) ISSN 2225-0484(Online)
Vol.2, No.5, 2012

www.iiste.org


Patterns of Street-Begging, Support Services and Vocational Aspirations of People Living With Disabilities in Ilorin, Nigeria

A. Yusuf, Ph. D., Corresponding Author
(yuabra@yahoo.com)

M. B. Bello,
S. Ahmed

Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin.

O. K. Ogungbade,
Prof. J. A. Omotosho

Department of Counselor Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin.

Y. S. AlHassan,
Department Social Studies, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin

Mustapha, Jarimi
University of Abuja, Abuja

ABSTRACT

This study investigated patterns of street-begging, support services and vocational aspirations of people living with disabilities in Ilorin, Nigeria. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design. Purposive random and stratified sampling techniques were used in selecting street-beggars living with disabilities. The target population of this study was all street beggars living with disabilities in Ilorin, Nigeria. A total 131 male and female street-beggars including both young and old who are blind, hearing impaired (deaf), crippled, intellectually disabled, emotionally disabled etc were randomly selected from Ilorin, Nigeria. The results revealed that the street-begging among people living with disabilities occurred mostly at the entrance of stores, super markets and petrol stations, while the support services were derived from the family, and friends. It was recommended among others that in order to eradicate the incidence of street-begging in Nigeria, rehabilitation and vocational training centers should be established across 774 Local Governments Areas in Nigeria. It was also recommended among others, that street-begging should be banned in Nigeria

Introduction

In Nigeria, street begging is a social problem that has become a source of concern to her citizens. The presence of beggars on major highways in recent times often violate social, political and economic changes, resulting from heavy migration of families from rural to urban places, where they face profound deprivation (Inyingidimkpa & Wilcox, 2007). These child street beggars mostly between the ages of [3-17] years are a regular feature of most of the northern Nigeria. They regularly move about in groups of 5-20 with plates or bowls in hand soliciting for stipends, food, or anything edible from people or passersby.

Some commentators have argued that this societal ill has a cultural/religious dimension to it, while others argued that it has more of the political dimension to it. As those who believe in this particular mantra have argued that the present volatile nature and persistent violence in northern Nigeria can be traced to the activities of these child street beggars. Whichever school of thought one belongs to, it is pertinent to draw the attention of political, traditional/cultural and religious leaders in Nigeria to this untoward social behavior, on the need to put a stop to this practice. It is unfathomable that in this age and time when kids who should be in school or doing something positive with their lives are left to roam about the streets, all in the name of whatever social/cultural/religious or political nuances.

According to Lynch (2005), street begging is often regarded as an anti-social behaviour issue. Mortimer (2005) defined street begging as asking for money without an exchange of service in a public place. Wikipedia (2010) defined begging as a practice whereby a person obtains money, food, shelter or other things from people they encounter by request. Olawale (2007) regarded alms begging as the habit of someone (a beggar) soliciting for favour from others (potential donors) for survival and enrichment.

In Nigeria, Mijinyawa (2001) perceived begging as a derogatory habit brought about by unrestricted movement of the “almajiri” children especially in the North, which is now associated with touting. Beggars are called by other names locally. Among the Hausa people, they are called Almajiri, the Ibo people call them Onyearirio while Yoruba call them Onibara. In their own views, Horn and Cooke (2001) regarded begging as an income supplement necessary for survival at some levels, related to addictive behaviours or the need for food, accommodation, health, and so on.

The practice of street begging by people living with disabilities has become an embarrassing social phenomenon across the nation. In Nigeria, people living with disabilities flood the streets seeking and soliciting for alms from passers-by, motorists, cyclists, foreigners and the general public (Olawale, 2007). Konkola (1998) explained that street begging has assumed a serious problem in Africa for two reasons.

First, the attitude of society towards the people living with disabilities is that of abandonment, apathy and over-protection. Secondly, the attitude of society has created negative attitude of total dependency among people living with disabilities themselves. Phelan, Bruce, Moore and Estueve (1997) and Osiki (1999) also attached beggary to conditions that have sociological connotations like poverty, under-educational, underprivileged and homelessness.

According to Olawale (2007), begging behaviour among people living with disabilities could be understood in four dimensions. First, there are some disabled persons who are forced into begging by their condition that is, begging for survival. Secondly, there are persons who beg without realizing that it is abnormal to do so, not necessarily for survival, but as a permissible norm. Thirdly, some persons beg because they have learnt to do so (either from their parents, guardians, or models). Lastly, some persons beg because they are psychologically predisposed to do so (due to lower self-esteem, lower achievement and lower motivation).

It has been observed that in most parts of Nigeria, people living with disabilities that ought to be in the schools are still roaming the street begging for alms. This is a major problem that has contributed to the wrong behaviours manifested by people living with disabilities which resulted to the way the society view them as people who need to beg for alms to survive (Olawale, 2007). Ammani (2010) observed that the populations of beggars are growing exponentially on Nigerian streets. The menace of street-begging as a potential threat to Nigerian societal fabric is obvious.

According to Mortimer (2005), problems of street begging include sexual harassment of female beggars, being driven from one location to another, exposure to raw weather, fear of being captured for sacrifice are reported by the subject themselves. Eyo, Usoro and Usoro (2007) viewed street-begging as a national malady that eats into the fabrics of social, economic, religious, political and educational structures. This results to sexual assault by the prospective male benefactor, misfortune of being knocked down by passing vehicles, depreciation of societal image, disorderliness and stigma against the nation’s social and economic systems.

Nwangu (2007) examined what push children into urban streets which emphasized causes of street-begging like poverty, non-challant attitude by the parents and low educational attainment by the parents, school drop out, teenage pregnancy among others. Mbakogu (2004) and Ebigbo (2003) conducted on street-begging on so called “normal” people, there seem to be little or nothing done on these three variables together nor on street beggars living with disabilities. Consequently, this study was conducted to elicit information from street beggars living with disabilities on patterns of street begging, support services available, and vocational aspirations of people living with disabilities in Ilorin, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the conduct of the study:

1. What are the patterns of street-begging of people living with disabilities in Ilorin, Nigeria?
2. What support services are available for people living with disabilities?
3. What vocational aspirations do people living with disabilities have?

Methodology

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey design. The target population for this study consisted of all street-beggars living with disabilities in Ilorin, Nigeria. The procedure used in selecting sample for this study is purposive sampling technique. The researcher purposively selected street beggars living with

disabilities from each of the three local government areas – Ilorin-East, Ilorin-South and Ilorin-West based on location and population. In all, the researcher selected one hundred and thirty-one (131) samples from the three local Government areas (East, South & West) in Ilorin, Nigeria.

The instrument used in collecting data for this research is a researcher- developed questionnaire. It is tagged “patterns of Street-begging, Support Services and Vocational Aspirations Questionnaire (PASSUSEVAQ). The statistical methods used to analyze the data in this study was descriptive. Descriptive analysis was employed for the demographic data, that is simple frequency counts and percentages and item-by-item analysis was done using means scores and ranking order.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Rank order of respondents on the patterns of street-begging

Item/No	Item	Mean	Ranking
People living with disabilities:			
6	beg from customers inside a store or restaurant.	3.885	1 th
7	approach people as they exit from their cars at the petrol stations.	3.718	2 th
10	extend the heads or arms begging through car’s windows during heavy traffic.	3.466	3 th
5	beg near ATM banking machines.	3.160	4 th
1	beg for money using envelops.	3.031	5 ^h
9	sit/stand in one place entreating donations.	2.863	6 th
2	beg for food using bowl.	1.679	7 th
8	team up and approach people together.	1.672	8 th
4	beg through taking letters to big firms/companies.	1.603	9 th
3	beg for money through internet.	1.557	10 th

Table 1 shows the statement that has the highest mean of 3.885 (people living with disabilities beg from customers inside a store or restaurant) and ranked first while people living with disabilities beg for money through internet was ranked last.

Item numbers 6, 7, 10, 5, 1 and 9 were having relatively high mean values as showed in Table 1 indicating that they were meticulously engaging in the patterns of street begging while item numbers 2, 8, 4 and 3 were having relatively low mean values indicating that they were not engaging in such patterns of street begging in Ilorin, Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean and Rank order of respondents on the support services

S/N	Item	Mean	Ranking
People living with disabilities:			
1	receive support/care from family members.	1.710	1 st
6	have a secure and safe environment.	1.595	2 nd
7	receive public enlightenment from media.	1.550	3 rd
10	receive flexible transportation service.	1.382	4 th
9	receive support/care from non-governmental organization.	1.214	5 th
8	receive schooling facilities such as textbooks, biro etc.	1.153	6 th
4	enjoy attractive rehabilitation programmes.	1.153	6 th

5	receive scholarship from government.	1.130	8 th
3	receive adequate welfare packages from government.	1.122	9 th
2	receive free health care services from government.	1.107	10 th

Table 2 shows the statement that has the highest mean of 1.710 (people living with disabilities receive support/care from family members) and ranked first but item 12, people living with disabilities receive free health care services from Government with mean of 1.107 was ranked last. This implies that a support service of this nature was not provided for the street beggars living with disabilities.

As showed in Table 2, all the mean values for support services were very low indicating that people were not making available nor provide these support services for the street beggars living with disabilities which explain why they were engaging on the street begging. Thus, all stakeholders were called to meticulously reach out to these needy by providing support services for them.

Table 3: Mean and Rank order of respondents on the vocational aspirations

S/No	Item People living with disabilities aspire for:	Mean	Ranking
	vocations which provide good salary.	3.992	1 st
	vocations which provide attractive working conditions.	3.992	1 st
	vocations which ensure stable and secure future.	3.992	1 st
	vocations which give an improved social status and prestige.	3.985	4 th
0	vocations which permit you to help those less fortunate than you	3.977	5 th
	vocations which give chance to exercise leadership.	3.969	6 th
	vocations which permit the use of hands extensively.	3.954	7 th
	vocations which give the opportunity to serve others.	3.939	8 th
	vocations which give the opportunity to work with people.	3.931	9 th
	vocations which permit the use of special abilities aptitude.	3.916	10 th

Table 3 shows the statements that have highest means as items 1, 2 and 3 (people living with disabilities aspire for vocations which provide good salary, provide attractive working conditions and ensure stable and secure future) with means of 3.992 for the three items and were ranked 1st. This implies that all the respondents aspire for vocations that meet these conditions.

All the mean values of the statements here are relatively very high that is above the cut-off point of 2.5, this shows that all of the street beggars living with disabilities have high vocational aspirations and they could abandon begging once the basic necessities were meant by the Government, NGO, community leaders such as food, shelter and clothing. These people really wish to work.

Discussion of Findings

It was discovered from the study that street-beggars (people living with disabilities beg from customers inside a store or restaurant) and ranked first while people living with disabilities beg for money through internet was ranked last. This finding is in line with Ammani (2010) who noted that the populations of beggars are growing exponentially on Nigerian stores, streets and fuel stations. It is also in line with Osunniyi (2008) who reported the influx of beggars in Lagos on the major streets each of them armed with a bowl, a bag underneath the armpit and sometimes a staff in their hands, they flock around people like sheep to the pasture, appearing on the streets tattered and dressed in rags.

On research question 2, the result showed that the people living with disabilities receive support/care from family members ranked first but that people living with disabilities receive free health care services from Government was ranked last. This implies that a support service of this nature was not provided for the street beggars living with disabilities. This finding agrees with Ebigo (2003) who found out that many of the street beggars were out to beg because of neglect.

The finding on the research question three shows the statements that have highest means as items 1, 2 and 3 (people living with disabilities aspire for vocations which provide good salary, provide attractive working conditions and ensure stable and secure future) with means of 3.992 for the three items and were ranked 1st. This implies that all the respondents aspire for vocations that meet these conditions. All the mean values of the statements here are relatively very high that is above the cut-off point of 2.5, this shows that all of the street beggars living with disabilities have high vocational aspirations. This indicated that these people really wish to work. The finding tallies with Anyagafu and Iwenjora (2006) who conducted a study on vocational aspiration of street beggars and discovered that beggars were willing to work where opportunities existed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following conclusion were reached. Majority of these people living with disabilities begged on the road, fuel stations, in the market places during the heavy traffic, in the bus-stops, in the garages, in the street corners, in front of the churches and mosques and in other public places; majority of them received support/care from family members in addition to living in a safe and secure environment; and most of them aspired for vocations that provide good salary, attractive working conditions and ensure stable and secure future. On the basis of the findings of this study, the researcher has made the following recommendations.

In order to eradicate this anti-social behaviour in Nigeria – street-begging among people living with disabilities, government at all levels – local, state and federal should be proactive to the issue of street-begging by approving disability bill and implementing it to the full so that people living with disabilities could reap the dividend of democracy and there shall be no discrimination against them in all ramifications of life.

Policy makers and legislators have an important role to play in eradicating street-begging in its totality from our society by passing the bills or enact laws to prohibit begging in any form and enact laws that will create employment opportunities for timid populace of Nigeria who roam about the street especially people living with disabilities such as hearing impaired, visual impaired (blind), physically disables (people on the wheel-chair), mentally retarded, emotional instability, intellectual disability etc.

In order to eliminate street begging among people living with disabilities in Nigeria, twinned education with the health and nutritional interventions will definitely stop people living with disabilities begging on the streets once the basic needs in their lives have been catered for by these bodies. Since street beggars living with disabilities have high vocational aspirations and they really wish to work, it is therefore, recommended that Government at all levels should establish at least four (4) rehabilitation and vocational training centers in all 774 local government areas in the country, Nigeria. These centers will train these people to be self-reliance in any vocation they choose. Provisions of incentives, engaging them in income generation activities, and meeting the basic necessities of life will gradually stop the beggars from begging on the street.

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