



Eliminating and Sustaining Factors Influencing Child Begging in North Central Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined eliminating and sustaining factors influencing child begging in North central geo-political zone of Nigeria. The researchers adopted survey research design with a population of 7,050 comprising children, mualluns and parents. Three research questions were used as a guide to the study and the sample of 721 comprising 621 mualluns and parents and 100 almajiri drawn from two sampled states through simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The instruments used for data collection were researchers developed questionnaire titled "Eliminating and sustaining factors of Child Begging Questionnaire (ESFCQ), interview and close observation which were face validated by three experts in Childhood Education, Islamic studies and Measurement and Evaluation from Federal College of Education, Kontagora, Niger State. The reliability estimate of ESFCQ was established using Cronbach Alpha's co-efficient method and the index ranged from 0.78 to 0.71. Findings of the study revealed that poverty, migration and almajiri syndrome are the major sustaining factors, while provision of adequate social amenities like schools, daily school feeding for pupils and reorientation can play a vital role as eliminating factors of child begging. The study therefore recommended that Government should improve the living condition of families to take care of their children and also restructure the Islamiyya to include modern subjects in the centers.

Keywords: Child begging, Eliminating, influencing, sustaining, North Central Geo-political zone.

Background to the study

Every nation depends on the academic excellence and development of children to be relevant and survive in the era of globalization. The emphasis on children is anchored on the conviction that children are the future leaders of tomorrow and comprise about 50% of the earth's population. Notwithstanding their place in the preservation and maintenances of the continuity of the nation, children are more venerable and susceptible physically and psychologically, (Kolosor, 2002). Hence, the need for protection, provision and adequate preparation of the child as the nation's

future is inevitable. The usage of children for economic gain, especially begging is an inhuman activity accelerating in a geometric progression in the North. In Nigeria especially in the North, children are abased exploited and exposed to begging thereby depriving them of the basic essentials of life: education, shelter, good food etc that engenders children proper development. The presence of children begging in the streets according to Thorsen (2012) during school hours is an indication that children are not adequately protected and taken care of (Fatokun, 2007). It is a common sight in major parks and streets in

Nigeria to see children of school age between 6 – 16 years begging for money, food and other items when they are supposed to be in the classroom learning in the school.

The term begging according to International Labour Organization (ILO, 2004) is defined as a range of activities whereby an individual asks a stranger for money or other items on the basis of being poor or needing charitable donation due to health, survival and at times laziness. Survival according to Abraham Maslow need theory is an essential need in life. The nefarious act contravenes the rights of the child, which principal objective was to ensure every child the right to survival, full development; protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and full participation in family, cultural and social life (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (UNCRC, 1999).

The child according to United Nation Convention on Rights of the Child, (1989) is any person below the age of eighteen years. But for this study, a child is anybody below the age of twelve years. This is the age of children beggars in the Northern states. And incidentally, this is the age for nursery, lower Basic Education and mid basic education in Nigeria. The phenomenon of child begging in Northern Nigeria results mainly from the following sources, namely: the family background; (poverty) (Azeez, 2015), migration, peer/environmental influence, cultural and religious beliefs. Begging in the North is fully carried out by almajiri- an Hausa word “Al-muhajir” meaning the migrants (Khalid, 2005), who are often young children especially boys of primary school age, who are either full time beggars or children who do not stay with their parents, but comes to seek Qur’anic education under a (muallun) who only provides them limited food, supervision and care (Tambuwal, 2009).. Thus in order to maintain the centre and sustain themselves, the almajiri after lesson earn their daily livelihood through household help or beg for food and money. Osa-Edoh and Ayamo, (2012) confirms that people, who beg, do so in order to

meet sustenance needs. Shema, (2004) and Sambo, (2014) identified the consequences of child begging to include physical assaults, psychological torture etc and the eliminating factor to include providing better condition of living for families in the North respectively.

As a matter of fact, the plight, menace and future of the child either as almajiri (destitute) whose prerogative is begging or almajiri (student) who combines begging with seeking for knowledge is unpleasant and brink. Notwithstanding this present condition of child abuse via begging vis-à-vis global commitment and legal declarations, that the study the tend to investigate eliminating and sustaining factors of child begging in the north central geo-political zone.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to examine the eliminating and sustaining factors of child begging in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Specifically, the study is aimed at;

- i. Ascertaining the sustaining factors of child begging.
- ii. Determining the major consequences of child begging.
- iii. Finding out the eliminating factors of child begging in Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research questions were formulated based on the purpose of the study to guide the study;

- 1) What are the sustaining factors of child begging?
- 2) What are the major consequences of child begging?
- 3) What are the eliminating factors of child begging in the North Central?

Significance of the study

The findings of this study shall be of immense benefits to children beggars (almajiri), parents, religious leaders, government, and the general public. The result of this study is expected to

bring to the fore the condition surrounding the actual life of the almajiri in the North. The study is expected to reiterate to parents' duties and obligations towards their children is not only to give birth randomly, but also to train them in such a way to be relevant.

Religion leaders are the custodians of religion. The findings of the study will benefit religious leaders tremendously. Child begging in the North is mistakenly and indirectly attributed to islam religious practice of almajiri. The finding of the study would demand from leaders of religion to intervene by either assisting the mualluns or passing a regulation that would benefit the children under these mualluns.

The study is hoped to be of benefit to the government by making them improve on their attitude towards upholding the right of the child. It is not enough to declare universal free and compulsory basic education for all Nigeria children, whereas majority of children are out in the street begging during school hours.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the survey design. Survey research is a method which elicits information pertaining to the phenomena at hand. According to Kerlinger (2007) survey means sampling opinion of people who have had practical experience with the problem to be studied. The population of the study is 7,050 comprising of parents, mualluns and almajiri children from the North Central Geo-political zone of Nigeria. The sample for the study was 721 comprising 100 almajiri children selected through

convenience sampling techniques and 621 made up of 100 muallun and 521 parents drawn from 3 local government areas from each of the two states sampled through simple random sampling technique.

The instruments for data collection was researchers' developed instrument entitled 'Elimination and Sustaining Factors of Child begging Questionnaire (ESFCQ)', interview and close observation. The questionnaire of consists of four sections and structured on a four point likert scale of Strongly Agree, (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was face validated by three experts in Childhood Education Islamic Studies and Measurement and Evaluation from Federal College of Education, Kontagora, Niger state. Their corrections, suggestions and modification were effected in the final draft before administering the instrument. The reliability index of the instruments range from 0.78-0.71 established using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient method. The instrument was administered by the researchers to the respondents directly for quick and complete return rate. Percentage and frequency scores were used in analyzing the demographic data of the questionnaire and interview, while Mean and Standard Deviation scores was be used in answering the research questions.

Results

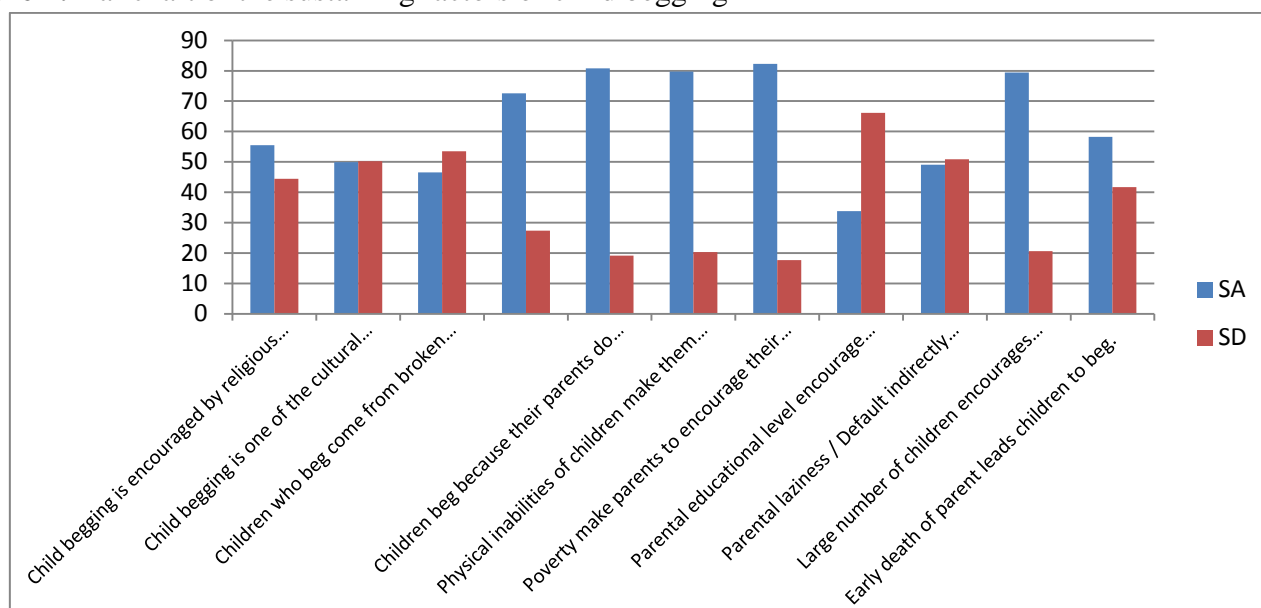
Research Question 1: What are the sustaining factors of child begging N (621)

Table 1: What are the sustaining factors of child begging N (621)

S/N	ITEMS	A	%	D	%
1.	Child begging is encouraged by religious belief	345	55.56	276	44.44
2.	Child begging is one of the cultural practices in the North.	309	49.96	312	50.24
3.	Children who beg come from broken homes caused by divorce or separation.	289	46.54	332	53.46
4.	Parent health condition cause child begging	451	72.62	170	27.38
5.	Children beg because their parents do not take good care of them.	502	80.84	119	19.16
6.	Physical inabilities of children make them to beg.	495	79.71	126	20.29
7.	Poverty make parents to encourage their children to beg.	511	82.29	110	17.71
8.	Parental educational level encourage child begging	210	33.82	411	66.18
9.	Parental laziness / Default indirectly permit child begging.	305	49.11	316	50.89
10.	Large number of children encourages child begging.	493	79.39	128	20.61
11.	Early death of parent leads children to beg.	362	58.29	259	41.71

To further understand the direction of the sustaining factors of child begging a bar chart is presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: Bar chart of the sustaining factors of child begging



It is obvious that from table 1, that with a total of 621 respondents sampled for the study concerning sustaining factors of child begging. the descriptive statistics with simple percentages showed that most parents send their children to beg due to the high level of poverty in the family as 511 (82.29 %) of the respondents strongly agreed, while only 110 (17.71%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that child begging is not as a result of parental poverty. The analysis also showed that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that children beg because their parents do not take

good care of them with as 502 (80.84%), while the remaining 119 (19.16%) respondents said they strongly disagree that begging is not as a result of parental inability to cater for their children. It can also be discerned from the table that parental educational level is not a sustaining factor of child begging as 411 (66.18%) of the respondents strongly disagree that most Almajiri children are from parents who are highly educated while only 210 (33.82%) strongly agreed that child begging is due to parental educational level.

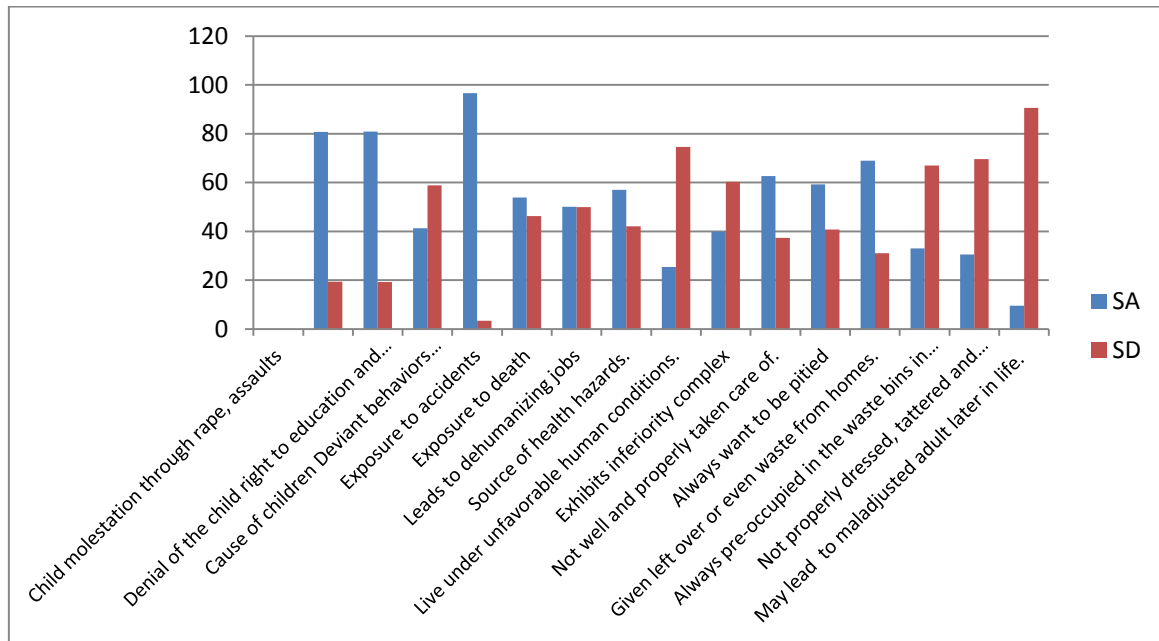
Research question 2: What are the major consequences of child begging?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of major consequences of child begging (N= 621)

S/N	ITEM	SA	%	SD	%
1.	Child molestation through rape, assaults	489	79.63	132	20.37
2.	Denial of the child’s fundamental right to good life	501	80.68	120	19.32
3.	Denial of the child right to education and proper development	502	80.84	119	19.16
4.	Cause of children Deviant behaviors (stealing, dangerous smoking and drug addicts)	256	41.22	365	58.78
5.	Exposure to accidents	600	96.62	21	3.38
6.	Exposure to death	334	53.78	287	46.26
7.	Leads to dehumanizing jobs	311	50.08	310	49.92
8.	Source of health hazards.	354	57.00	267	42.10
9.	Live under unfavorable human conditions.	158	25.44	463	74.56
10.	Exhibits inferiority complex	247	39.77	374	60.23
11.	Not well and properly taken care of.	389	62.64	232	37.36
12.	Always want to be pitied	368	59.26	253	40.74
13.	Given left over or even waste from homes.	428	68.92	193	31.08
14.	Always pre-occupied in the waste bins in search of one thing or the other.	205	33.01	416	66.99
15.	Not properly dressed, tattered and haggard looking	189	30.43	432	69.57
16.	May lead to maladjusted adult later in life.	59	9.50	562	90.50

To further understand the direction of the consequences of child begging a bar chart is presented in figure 2.

Figure 2: bar chart of the consequences of child begging



It is evident in table that the descriptive statistics of consequences of child begging with a total of 621 respondents who were sampled for the study. With simple percentage, the result showed that most of the respondents strongly agreed that child begging has a major consequence of exposing children to accidents as 600 (96.62%) , while only few of the respondent 21 (3.38%) said it does not exposure children to accidents. Also, 501 (80.68%) of the respondents believes that it is a

denial of the child’s fundamental right to good life while 120 (19.32%) said that it does not. However, 562 (90.50%) of the respondents strongly agreed that it may lead to maladjusted adult later in life, white a correspondent 59 (9.50%) strongly disagreed that it may not lead to maladjusted adult later in life.

Research question 3: What are the eliminating factors of child begging?

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of eliminating factors of child begging (621)

S/N	ITEMS		SA	%	SD	%
1.	Ensuring that children within UBE age attend school free.	561	90.34	60	9.66	
2.	Punishment to parents who refused their children to go to school for any reason	99	15.94	522	84.06	
3.	Punishment to children found begging in the streets.	256	41.22	365	58.78	
4.	Introduction of birth control law in the country	402		219		
5.	Support of indigent families who cannot take care of their children	168	27.05	453	72.95	
6.	Support of indigent children by Government, NGO or philanthropist.	325	52.33	296	47.67	
7.	Creating skill acquisition centre to equip with skill for life-long programme.	604	97.26	17	2.74	
8.	Providing school meals for children who attend school.	258	41.55	363	42.35	
9.	Provision of other incentives like clothes, books, pencil, uniform etc. to discourage child begging.	169	27.21	452	72.79	
10.	Providing good employment for parents to take care of their children.	287	46.22	334	53.78	
11.	Empowering parents to be able to take care of their children.	301	48.47	320	51.53	
12.	More enlightenment campaign to expose the dangers and consequences of child begging.	254	40.90	267	42.10	

To further understand the direction of the eliminating factors of child begging a bar chart is presented in figure 3.

Figure 3: Bar chart on eliminating factors of child begging

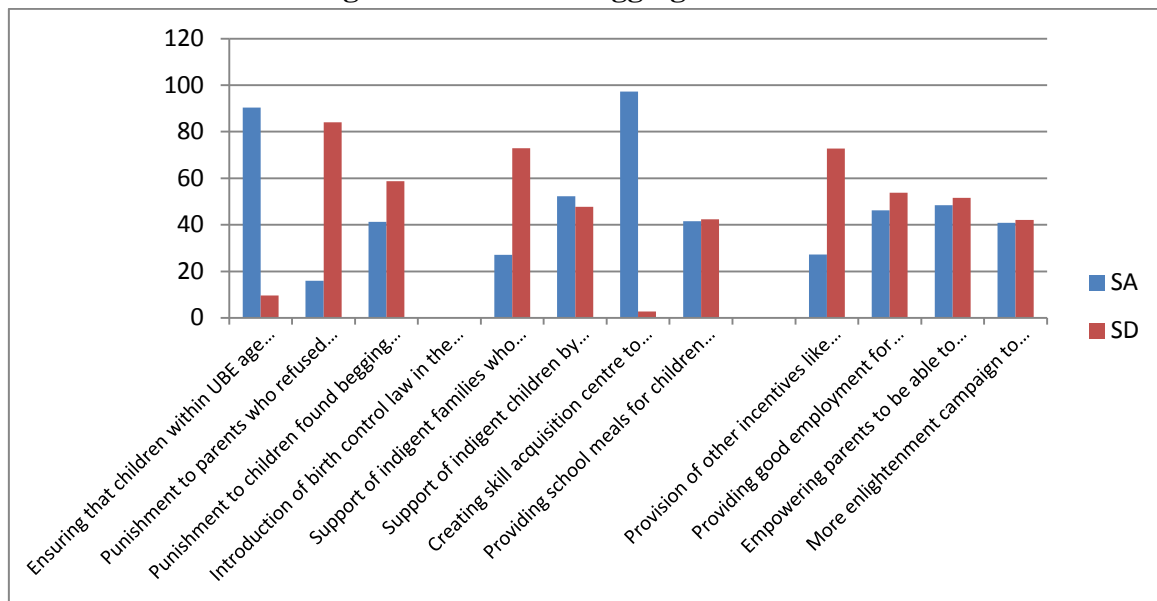


Table 3, presents the descriptive statistics of eliminating factors of child begging with a total of 621 respondents who were sampled for the study. With simple percentage, the result showed that creating skill acquisition centre equip with skills for life-long programme will help eliminate child begging. The result showed that 604 (97. 26%) strongly agreed while only few respondents 17 (2.74%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, most of the respondents said that ensuring that children within UBE age have free education with a percentage of 561 (90.34%), while only 60 (9.66%) strongly disagree. However, punishment to parents who refused their children to go to school for any reason had more respondents who disagreed with a total respondents of 522 (84.06%) with only 99 (15.94%) of the respondents that agreed that punishments can eliminate child begging.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of study, indicating respondents’ major sustaining factors of child begging as parent health condition (72.6%), inability of parents to take care of their children (80.8%), physical inabilities (79.7%), poverty (82.2%) and too many children (79.3%) as unveiled in table 1 are in agreement to the previous researches which

suggest that these factors are strong sustaining factors for child begging. The finding of the study is in agreement with Azeez (2015) that identified poverty as a contributing factor to child begging. All the children who beg are from poverty stinking homes. Many families in the country are leaving below the poverty line. 100% of the children interviewed take to begging because they are hungry and need food to sustain themselves and their siblings. Also discovered from the interview conducted is that all the children begging migrated from close neighbourhoods. These children attest that their parents are alive but allow them to go to Islamiya to learn Qu’ran. The finding of the study is agreement with the popular views that almajiri is synonymous with begging. 89 % of the children interviewed confirm that they beg because they are almajiri. This study also exonerates the mualluns as some studies aver that the muallun collects the proceeds from the children after begging. The children involved in begging all accepts that they eat the proceeds of their begging. However 98% of the children add that they do other works like going to farm, fetching water and firewood for the muallun. Other factors indicated has almost equal percent or slight variance of score except 66.1% of the

respondents disagree that parental educational level is a sustaining factor of child begging. Parental level of education according to the finding of the study does not enhance child begging.

The study revealed in table 2 that the consequences of child begging are molestation (79.6%), denial of fundamental rights (80.6%), not going to school (80.8%), exposure to accidents (96.6%) and given left over of food (68.9%). The finding of the study revealed that children who beg are exposed to physical molestations through assaults and psychological torture through rape and even at times receives food or items that are not worthwhile. The finding of the study is in agreement with Adaramaja and Adegbite (2005) view that unhealthy lifestyles or behaviour might have direct or indirect consequences in the health and well being of individual causing restlessness, accidents, and untimely deaths among others. Similarly, result is consistent with the findings of Sambo (2014) that the moral development of the child is not properly taken care of as the muallun collects from the children little levies for the services rendered without asking how the money was gotten.

Finally, the study revealed the eliminating factors of child begging to include enforcing birth control law (64.73%), ensuring that school age children attend school (90.3%), and create acquisition centers (97.2%). On the other hand, the respondents disagree that the following factors as punishing whose children are not at school (84.1%), support families to take care of their children (72.9%), and provision of food and other items (72.7%). The finding of the study unveiled that child begging can be eliminated through ensuring that school age children are at school during school periods. The findings of the study confirm the view of Shema (2005) that economic empowerment of parents will help ameliorate the sense of want that sometimes induce the parents to send their children away to beg. 60% of the children interviewed admitted that their parents who are alive send them to Islamiya to learn the

Qu'ran and also to beg to sustain themselves and their siblings. On the other hand 38% of the children beg on their own probably due to peer/environmental influence and hunger. Close observation reveals that the sole activity of the children in the Qu'ranic school is only learning to recite the Qu'ran, which oftentimes is boring. Thus the other activities planned or unplanned are begging, doing mualluns work etc. only 12% of the children interviewed attend formal schooling, 76% were told to wait maybe for their older siblings to finish and 94% would love to go to formal school for learning.

Conclusion

The findings of this research show that the sustaining factors of child begging in North central geo-political zone are: poverty, polygamy, Almajiri syndrome, peer/environmental influence, cultural and religious beliefs. Also, the study discovered some consequences of child begging to include the following: breeding ground for terrorism, criminals, political thugs/touts and abnormal children, physical assaults of children, psychological torture denial of fundamental rights, exposure to epidemic outbreak, sickness, disease infection and death. The study found that the eliminating factors that would end child begging include the following factors: ensuring that all children enjoy the UBE programme, improving the living standards of families so that they can take care of their children and re-structuring of the almajiri education system.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations are made:

- Improvement of the standard of living of the families.
- Enlightenment campaign on the psychological torture, physical assaults and molestations of begging on the development of the child.
- Punishments spelled out for parents who through commission or omission prevents

their school age children to go to school and children who abandons school to beg during school period.

- In as much as child begging is kicked against, governments and other stakeholders should create opportunities for children who cannot go to school to make a living by other means, through skill acquisition centers.

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