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PREVALENCE AND CONSEQUENCES OF STREET BEGGING AMONG CHILDREN IN OGBOMOSHO METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the prevalence of street begging among children in Ogbomosho Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria, together with the level of awareness of social protection policies and the consequences that child begging holds for the children involved and for the wider community. Anchored on the Social Disorganisation Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design and combined a structured questionnaire with in-depth interviews to obtain data from 385 respondents drawn through a multi-stage sampling technique, out of which 345 questionnaires were retrieved and validated. Eight in-depth interview sessions supplemented the quantitative data and were interpreted through content analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the survey data, while a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the age of beggars and the prevalence of begging in the metropolis. Findings show that child begging is markedly prevalent in markets, motor parks and religious centres, and that it is particularly visible during school hours, an indication that many of the children involved ought to be in the classroom. Awareness of government and non-governmental interventions among residents was found to be comparatively high, yet a wide gap exists between such awareness and the actual benefits reaching the families of child beggars, suggesting weak policy delivery rather than an absence of policy. The consequences reported by respondents include poor mental health, exposure to abuse and exploitation, risk of trafficking,

malnutrition, school dropout and long-term stigmatisation. The hypothesis test returned a statistically significant relationship between age and the prevalence of begging ($F = 45.84$, $p = .000$), with a moderate effect size. The paper concluded that child begging in Ogbomosho persists because of the interaction of weak family structures, unmet welfare needs and poor enforcement of child protection provisions, and recommended stronger law enforcement, functional rehabilitation centres and more deliberate public sensitisation to close the gap between policy and practice.

1.0 Introduction

Street begging by children of school age is a social problem that exposes young persons to emotional, economic and psychological harm at a stage of life when they should be receiving education and parental care. Begging among children who ought to be enrolled in school is a recurring occurrence linked to poverty, parental separation, deprivation and certain cultural beliefs (Bukoye, 2019). Although poverty remains a leading cause of street begging across the world, the extent and character of the problem differ from one setting to another, and school-age children frequently turn to the street as a means of escaping the effects of household poverty.

The phenomenon is not confined to developing countries; it is a global urban concern, though it is more visible and more pressing in low-income societies. Nigeria's situation is compounded by the size of its population and the correspondingly high number of people living in poverty (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The World Bank (2021) reported that fifty-four million Nigerians were living in extreme poverty as of 2019, earning less than \$1.90 a day, a figure that had risen to almost ninety-seven million by 2022 (World Bank, 2021). Street begging in Nigeria is prevalent among children between the ages of three and seventeen years, and the growing number of beggars in cities such as Ogbomosho raises questions about whether the phenomenon has become a threat to social order and to the goal of national self-sufficiency (Enam, 2021).

Begging has always represented one of the few options open to the helpless poor (Adewuyi, 2021; Adedibu, 2019), though not every beggar is poor, and not every poor person begs. Sociologically, begging has been described as a form of social deviance and a product of urban poverty, involving the pursuit of material benefit from other persons without an intention to reimburse them or render any service in return (Healy & Rogoz, 2012). In recent years, the growing number of beggars in Nigerian cities, including Ogbomosho, has been attributed to the

weakening of the family unit, which pushes individuals toward alternative means of survival, including street begging (Adebayo, 2020). Children found begging on the streets are typically also found to have experienced a broken home, and for many of these children, begging has effectively become a means of livelihood and a path to survival (Akinwale, 2021; Yusuf, 2020). Beggars in Ogbomosho, as elsewhere, are drawn from diverse circumstances that include disability and poverty, but children form a growing and worrying share of this population. Several encounters with the children on the streets of Ogbomosho reveal that broken homes remain a dominant explanation for their circumstance, underlining the extent to which begging has become a coping mechanism rather than an isolated act of deviance. Given the scale of the problem and the paucity of research focused specifically on Ogbomosho, this paper investigates how prevalent begging is among children in the metropolis, how aware residents are of the social protection policies meant to address the problem, and what consequences child begging holds for the children and for the community that hosts them.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is nothing remarkable about begging when it is confined to persons who are incapable of working, yet a troubling variant has emerged among school-age children in south-western Nigeria, commonly associated with the plea ‘please, I lost my mother's money’ or ‘sorry, I want to eat’. Begging as a coping response to political, economic, social or environmental hardship may attract little criticism when it is occasional, but when it becomes a settled means of livelihood, its sustainability and its costs to the children involved deserve close research attention (Tafere, 2007). In Ogbomosho, children engaged in begging are frequently neglected both by government and, in many cases, by their own parents, leaving them without the attention and protection they require.

Children who beg on the street are disadvantaged and marginalised, and they commonly develop psychosocial difficulties such as a sense of alienation, depression, dependency, shame, stigmatisation and discrimination, in addition to health-related problems including exposure to sexually transmitted infections (Lucas, 2019). The United Nations Children's Fund (2022) has observed that street children constitute a varied population that can be grouped into children on the street, children at risk, and children of the street, with children on the street being those who work on the street principally to survive (Lalor, 2019).

Street begging also reflects on the quality of governance in a society. Beyond the strain it places on the children themselves, it exposes them to sexual abuse, unplanned pregnancy, kidnapping

and recruitment into criminal activity, and it places them at risk from careless drivers and from police brutality (Usoro et al., 2020). Despite the scale that the problem has assumed in Ogbomosho, comparatively little empirical work has examined how prevalent child begging is in the metropolis, how aware residents are of the social protection measures designed to check it, and what its consequences are for the children and the community. It is this gap that the present paper addressed.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this paper was to examine the prevalence and consequences of street begging among children in Ogbomosho metropolis. The specific objectives were to:

- i. examine how prevalent street begging is among children in Ogbomosho metropolis;
- ii. ascertain the level of awareness of social protection policies among children involved in begging in Ogbomosho metropolis; and
- iii. analyse the consequences of street begging among children in Ogbomosho metropolis.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. How prevalent is street begging among children in Ogbomosho metropolis?
- ii. What is the level of awareness of social protection policies among children involved in begging in Ogbomosho metropolis?
- iii. What are the consequences of street begging among children in Ogbomosho metropolis?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

HO: There is no significant relationship between the age of beggars and the prevalence of begging in Ogbomosho metropolis.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This paper is significant because it draws the attention of government, counsellors, the public and other stakeholders to the growing presence of child beggars on Nigerian streets, presenting it as a serious socio-economic and health concern with implications for the country's image. The remedial measures proposed are intended to be of practical assistance to policymakers and practitioners. The paper also serves as a foundation for further research on the subject, both in Ogbomosho and in other parts of Nigeria, and it offers an empirical basis on which government agencies, non-governmental organisations and community leaders can design interventions that protect vulnerable children and promote healthier, more self-sufficient communities.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The paper was limited to the prevalence of child begging, the level of awareness of social protection policies, and the consequences of begging among children in Ogbomosho metropolis, Oyo State. It does not extend to a detailed treatment of the causes of begging or of the strategies for curbing it, which are addressed in a companion paper.

2.0 Conceptual Review

2.1 Begging

Ways of begging vary across time, place and culture, but the practice is common everywhere despite differences in its scale and severity (Lucas, 2019). The International Labour Organisation (2019) has defined begging as a method of exploitation used to gain material and immaterial benefits, a definition that captures both the exploitation of the elderly and the forced labour of children. The Organisation further describes begging as a broad and complex range of activities in which an individual asks a stranger for money because of poverty or the need for charitable donations for health or religious purposes, with some beggars selling small items whose value bears little relation to the sum received in return (International Labour Organization, 2019).

Kennedy and Fitzpatrick (2020) view begging as an act of asking passers-by for money in a public place, although the practice extends beyond requests for money alone, since beggars may also ask for food or clothing, and the activity is not restricted to public spaces. Sociologically, begging is regarded as a social deviance and a product of urban poverty, involving the pursuit of material benefit from other persons with no intention of reimbursement or of providing a service in return (Healy & Rogoz, 2012). Individuals displaced by natural disaster or conflict often migrate toward cities in search of better living conditions, and many of these migrants, lacking resources, employment and social support in their new environment, eventually resort to begging.

2.2 Child Begging

Child begging is a persistent problem that affects many developing regions, where poverty, unemployment and social inequality push children into street begging. The International Labour Organization (2019) defines child begging as a form of exploitation used to obtain financial or material benefit, often involving children from impoverished backgrounds who are coerced, or who are left with no alternative means of survival. In Nigeria, child begging has become an alarming social issue driven largely by economic hardship, broken family structures, limited access to education and certain cultural factors (Adewuyi, 2021; United Nations Children's Fund, 2022). Children involved in begging may be self-initiated, pushed into the activity by parents or

guardians, or controlled by organised syndicates that exploit their vulnerability (Usono et al., 2020).

2.3 Prevalence of Begging in Nigeria

Child begging is a widespread and visible problem in Nigeria generally and in Ogbomosho Metropolis in particular. The presence of child beggars is especially noticeable in commercial hubs, markets, motor parks and around religious centres, where the flow of pedestrians and the possibility of receiving alms are greatest. The rise in the population of child beggars raises questions about whether the phenomenon has become a threat to social order and to the aspiration toward national self-sufficiency (Enam, 2021). Ododuwa Youth Mobilization (2022) puts the number of child beggars in western Nigeria at thirteen million, with millions more unschooled and unemployable, underscoring the scale of the challenge confronting cities such as Ogbomosho.

2.4 Social Protection Policies and the Nigerian Experience

Social protection policies comprise measures by state or non-state actors intended to provide income transfer to poor people and to protect the vulnerable at social and economic levels (World Bank, 2004). Social protection interventions assist individuals, households and communities in managing the income risks that leave them vulnerable (Ortiz, 2001), and globally, social protection is regarded as an important instrument for reducing the vulnerability and exclusion caused by poverty (United Nations Children's Fund, 2016). In Nigeria, government and non-governmental organisations have collaborated on job creation, housing, essential amenities, social security and health insurance for citizens, in pursuit of the country's broader development goals (Umukoro, 2013).

Among Nigeria's social protection measures is the Child Rights Act of 2003, which affirms the right of every child to survival and proper parental care, and which prohibits child labour and abuse, including street begging, providing for the punishment of anyone who violates its provisions (United Nations Children's Fund, 2016). The Universal Basic Education Commission, inaugurated in 1999 and given legal backing through the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004, provides nine years of basic education intended to eliminate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty (Umukoro, 2013). Despite these measures, over seven million Nigerian children remain out of school, an indication that policy provisions have not translated fully into practice (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020).

2.5 Consequences of Begging

Several studies have documented the consequences of begging for children in Nigeria. Beggars often face stigmatisation and marginalisation, which can result in discrimination, harassment and, in some cases, violence directed against them (Ododuwa Youth Mobilization, 2022). Regular begging can also foster a dependency on alms that discourages the pursuit of employment or other productive activity, perpetuating the cycle of poverty in which the children and their families are caught. Begging has further been linked to increased exposure to criminal activity, as some children turn to theft or are drawn into more serious forms of exploitation, including trafficking, by organised networks that prey on their vulnerability (Amutah-Onukagha et al., 2020; Owoaje et al. 2019).

Beyond the direct harm to the children, the visible presence of beggars can affect public perception of a city, contributing to an impression of urban decline that may deter investment and reduce patronage of businesses located in affected commercial areas.

2.6 Empirical Review

Adekunle (2021), studying the socio-economic background of child beggars in Lagos and Ibadan, found that most of the children involved came from low-income and broken homes, and that eighty per cent of them had never received formal education, a finding that points to a strong association between illiteracy, poverty and street begging. The study, however, was limited to socio-economic background and did not examine prevalence in the specific context of Ogbomoso, a gap the present paper addresses.

Usoro et al. (2020) examined the exploitation of child beggars by organised groups in Nigerian cities and found that many children do not retain the proceeds of their begging, since these are confiscated by the syndicates that control them, reinforcing a cycle of exploitation that calls for stronger law enforcement. Gruenewald et al. (2020), in a study covering South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, found that children engaged in street begging commonly develop low self-esteem, depression and social isolation, arising in part from the verbal and physical abuse they experience from members of the public, and recommended rehabilitation programmes that combine counselling, skills training and community reintegration. Namwata et al. (2019), examining child begging in Tanzania, identified rural-to-urban migration as a major driver, with weak law enforcement and limited social welfare provision compounding the problem. Taken together, these studies point to a consistent pattern across settings, poverty, weak family

structures, and inadequate policy delivery, but none of them speaks directly to the situation in Ogbomosho, underlining the value of the present paper's location-specific evidence.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This paper was anchored on the Social Disorganisation Theory, developed by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, which holds that crime and deviant behaviour, including child begging, are more likely to occur in communities where social structures have broken down. When communities experience economic instability, high poverty and weak family or institutional support, social norms weaken, leaving children without adequate guidance and protection and exposing them to negative influences, including street life and begging.

The theory's principal strength lies in linking environmental and social factors, such as family breakdown, weak schools and inadequate religious institutions, to deviant outcomes, and in offering a practical basis for policy responses centred on community development. Its main limitation is that it does not fully explain why some children in socially disorganised communities do not turn to begging, and it gives limited attention to individual motivation and psychological factors. Notwithstanding this limitation, the theory is well suited to the present paper because it accounts for the way in which economic hardship, weak family structures and inadequate social institutions in Ogbomosho combine to sustain a high prevalence of child begging, while also pointing toward interventions, such as stronger family welfare programmes and community networks that could reduce it.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The paper adopted a descriptive survey design, considered appropriate for a study seeking to investigate the prevalence and consequences of begging among children in Ogbomosho metropolis. A descriptive survey, according to Nworgu (2016), is a design in which the researcher studies a representative sample of a population by collecting and analysing data drawn from it.

3.2 Study Area

The study was carried out in Ogbomosho metropolis, a city in Oyo State, Nigeria, positioned between latitude 8.1333°N and longitude 4.2667°E and covering approximately 597 square kilometres. Ogbomosho serves as a transit hub between Ilorin and Ibadan and is host to Ladoke Akintola University of Technology. Its population, estimated at over one million following the 2006 National Population Census, comprises a significant proportion of children and adolescents,

over forty per cent of whom are below the age of eighteen, resulting in a high dependency ratio that places pressure on household resources and, for some families, contributes to child labour and begging as coping strategies.

3.3 Population and Sample Size

The study population was estimated at 200,000 persons, drawing on the 2006 National Population Census figures, with an estimated 43,000 children aged three to seventeen years actively engaged in begging within the metropolis. The sample size of 383 was determined using the Krejcie formula for sample size determination at a 95 per cent confidence level and a 5 per cent margin of error, based on a population proportion of 0.50.

3.4 Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique, combining cluster and purposive sampling, was adopted to obtain a balanced and representative sample. Ogbomosho metropolis was divided into three existing political districts, further divided into seven wards, from which wards were selected on the basis of their socio-economic characteristics and levels of child begging prevalence.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Data were obtained from primary sources through a structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide. The quantitative approach relied on closed-ended items and Likert-type scales aligned with the research objectives, while the qualitative approach used open-ended questions to elicit detailed accounts of participants' experiences and perceptions, analysed through content analysis. The questionnaire was validated by the researcher's supervisor and other experts in the Department of Sociology, and its reliability was established through a test-retest procedure involving a pilot administration of twenty copies.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, in the form of frequencies, percentages and means, were used to summarise the survey data, while a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis relating age of beggars to the prevalence of begging. Data from the in-depth interviews were analysed using content analysis, a qualitative method that involves the systematic and objective examination of textual data to identify recurring patterns and themes.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before their inclusion. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout, and the study

excluded any individual who was unwilling to participate, unable to give informed consent, or whose involvement might have exposed them to risk.

4.0 Results and Discussion

A total of 383 copies of the questionnaire were administered, of which 345 were retrieved and found valid for analysis. Eight in-depth interview sessions were conducted, out of ten originally planned, owing to field constraints.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Nearly half of respondents (47.3 per cent) were aged 11 to 16 years, with a further 33.7 per cent aged 6 to 10 years and 19.0 per cent below 5 years, confirming that the study captured primarily children and adolescents. The gender distribution was close to even, with males representing 50.4 per cent and females 49.6 per cent of respondents.

S/N	Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Age (years)	Less than 5	73	19.0
		6–10	129	33.7
		11–16	181	47.3
2	Sex	Male	193	50.4
		Female	190	49.6
3	Religion	Christianity	297	77.1
		Islam	61	15.8
		Traditional	27	7.0
4	Educational Status	Enrolled in school	152	39.7
		Dropped out	180	46.9
		Never attended school	51	13.3
5	Parental Status	Orphaned	156	40.7
		Single parent	51	13.3
		Both parents alive	176	45.9
6	Family Size	0–5	136	35.5
		5 and above	247	64.5
7	Migration Status	Indigenous child	142	37.1
		Migrant child	241	62.9

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data show that Christianity was the dominant religious affiliation (77.1 per cent), and that educational status raised concern, with 46.9 per cent of respondents having dropped out of school and 13.3 per cent never having attended. Family structure data indicate that 40.7 per cent of respondents were orphaned, and family sizes tended to be large, with 64.5 per cent belonging to households of five members or more. Migrant children accounted for 62.9 per cent of

respondents, well above the 37.1 per cent who were indigenous to Ogbomosho, suggesting that population mobility is closely bound up with the prevalence of child begging in the metropolis. These patterns lend support to the Social Disorganisation Theory, since family instability, economic pressure and weak community integration appear together in the profile of the children involved.

4.2 Prevalence of Begging Among Children in Ogbomosho

Table 2 presents data addressing the first objective of the paper, on the prevalence of begging among children in Ogbomosho.

S/N	Item	SA	A	U	D	Mean
1	Child begging is a common sight in Ogbomosho Metropolis.	213	64	79	27	4.2
2	The number of child beggars has increased in recent years.	139	46	150	48	3.7
3	Most child beggars in Ogbomosho are of school-going age.	171	182	1	27	4.3
4	Child begging is more prevalent in markets and transport areas.	269	114	-	-	4.7
5	Most children who beg are from poor or broken homes.	114	200	52	17	4.1
6	Some children beg despite having parents or guardians.	142	150	91	-	4.1
7	Child begging is more common during school hours.	233	149	1	-	4.6
8	Many child beggars come from outside Ogbomosho.	170	107	91	17	4.1
9	Child begging is a growing concern in Ogbomosho.	240	102	28	17	4.5
10	Government intervention in reducing child begging has been ineffective.	218	95	45	25	4.2

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (N = 383)

Table 2 shows a strong consensus among respondents on the prevalence and character of child begging in the metropolis. With a mean score of 4.2, residents overwhelmingly agree that child begging is a common sight, while a mean of 4.7 points to particular concentration in markets and

transport areas. The temporal pattern is notable: begging is more common during school hours (mean = 4.6), indicating that children who ought to be receiving education are instead on the streets. Respondents further recognise that most child beggars are of school-going age (mean = 4.3) and that many, despite the popular assumption of parental absence, in fact have living parents or guardians (mean = 4.1). Migration also features prominently, with many child beggars reported to originate from outside Ogbomosho (mean = 4.1), and the community expresses considerable concern about the growing scale of the problem (mean = 4.5) alongside dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of government intervention (mean = 4.2).

These quantitative findings are corroborated by the in-depth interviews. One participant, describing what he observes daily, stated:

Child begging has become very common in our community. I see these children every day at motor parks, markets, and even in front of mosques and churches. Some of these children are sent by their parents because of poverty, while others have run away from home due to family problems. The situation is really bad because instead of these children being in school learning, they are on the streets begging for money and food. (IDI

1/Male/Trader/45yrs/Married/Ogbomosho/October 2025)

A second participant linked the visibility of the practice to broader shifts in the community:

Due to modernisation and urbanisation in our community, child begging has increased compared to ancient times. People now see it as normal because poverty has become widespread. Ogbomosho residents perceive child begging as something negative, but they have become used to it. (IDI 3/Male/Retired Teacher/68yrs/Married/Ogbomosho/October 2025)

A third respondent drew attention to how migration and community response intersect with the visibility of begging in the metropolis:

Most of their families have moved to Ogbomosho from rural areas looking for better opportunities but ended up in poverty. The children regret being on the streets, but they have no choice because they need to survive.

(IDI/5/Male/Mechanic/29yrs/Married/Ogbomosho/October 2025)

These accounts affirm the survey findings that begging among children in Ogbomosho is widespread, concentrated in commercial areas, and closely tied to the movement of impoverished families into the metropolis.

4.3 Awareness of Social Protection Policies

Table 3 presents data addressing the second objective of the paper, on the level of awareness of social protection policies among residents.

S/N	Item	Yes (%)	No (%)	Mean
1	Aware of government policies aimed at reducing child begging?	86.0	14.0	1.8
2	Heard about government/NGO programmes supporting child beggars?	92.7	7.3	1.9
3	Do most parents of child beggars know about available welfare programmes?	80.0	20.0	1.6
4	Do children who beg have access to free education or vocational training?	55.3	44.7	1.5
5	Are government agencies actively working to curb child begging?	80.3	19.7	1.6
6	Is there enough public awareness about the dangers of child begging?	92.7	7.3	1.9
7	Are there social services to rehabilitate child beggars?	77.9	22.1	1.6
8	Do families fail to benefit from government social welfare programmes?	64.4	35.6	1.6
9	Can better awareness of policies help reduce child begging?	91.7	8.3	1.9
10	Is there a lack of political will to address child begging?	87.8	12.2	1.8

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (N = 385); Cluster mean = 1.8

The data reveal comparatively high awareness (86.0 to 92.7 per cent) of policies and programmes targeted at child begging, alongside a significant implementation gap. While most respondents are aware of government and non-governmental initiatives (mean = 1.9) and recognise their potential to help (mean = 1.9), only 55.3 per cent believe that child beggars actually access education or vocational training. Despite 80.3 per cent acknowledging that government agencies are active on the issue, 87.8 per cent cite a lack of political will as an obstacle, and 64.4 per cent report that families are not benefiting from existing welfare programmes. The cluster mean of 1.8 suggests that policies exist on paper but fail to translate meaningfully into reduced begging on the ground.

The in-depth interviews add texture to this picture. One participant explained the practical consequence of limited awareness for struggling families:

If there is proper awareness, parents can access available resources no matter what financial challenges they face. If there is awareness, families will do whatever it takes to access social

protection instead of sending their children to beg on the streets. **(IDI 1/Female/51yrs/Married/Civil Servant/Ogbomoso/September 2025)**

Another respondent linked the problem to weak information channels rather than to an absence of policy:

The lack of awareness about social protection policies in Ogbomoso varies, but a few causes will be mentioned: poor information dissemination by government agencies, lack of education among parents about available programmes, and lack of proper sensitisation by local authorities. Most parents that send their children to beg do that out of desperation and ignorance of available government support.

(IDI 2/Female/48yrs/Divorced/Business Woman/Ogbomosho/September 2025)

A third interviewee situated the problem within the erosion of traditional support systems:

In Ogbomosho traditional community, social protection was basically provided through extended family systems, and people relied on community support rather than government programmes. Due to breakdown of traditional support systems and lack of information about modern social protection policies, the rate of child begging is now increasing. (IDI 3/Male/Retired Teacher/68yrs/Married/Ogbomosho/October 2025)

In all, the quantitative and qualitative evidence indicate that the challenge in Ogbomosho is less about the existence of social protection instruments and more about their communication and delivery to the households that need them most.

4.4 Consequences of Child Begging

Table 4 presents data addressing the third objective of the paper, on the consequences of begging for children in Ogbomosho.

S/N	Item	Yes (%)	No (%)	Mean
1	Does begging negatively affect children's mental health?	91.7	8.3	1.9
2	Are child beggars at risk of dropping out of school?	87.8	12.2	1.8
3	Does begging expose children to abuse and exploitation?	73.8	26.2	1.6
4	Are child beggars at risk of being trafficked or kidnapped?	77.1	22.9	1.6
5	Do child beggars suffer from malnutrition and poor health?	65.2	34.8	1.6
6	Does begging affect children's ability to form social relationships?	86.0	14.0	1.8
7	Is child begging a source of public nuisance in Ogbomosho?	74.3	25.7	1.7

8	Do child beggars face stigma and discrimination?	76.1	23.9	1.7
9	Can child begging lead to criminal involvement later in life?	84.7	15.3	1.8
10	Does child begging threaten the economic and social development of Ogbomosho?	92.7	7.3	1.9

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (N = 383); Cluster mean = 1.8

The data point to serious and interconnected consequences of child begging. Near-unanimous agreement (91.7 per cent) links begging to poor mental health, and an even higher proportion (92.7 per cent) sees it as a threat to the economic and social development of Ogbomosho. Education suffers noticeably, with 87.8 per cent citing the risk of school dropout, while 84.7 per cent warn of a heightened risk of criminal involvement later in life. Children also face exposure to abuse and exploitation (73.8 per cent), risk of trafficking (77.1 per cent) and health problems associated with malnutrition (65.2 per cent). Socially, begging isolates children (86.0 per cent) and exposes them to stigma and discrimination (76.1 per cent), and the cluster mean of 1.8 confirms that these consequences are experienced together rather than in isolation.

The interviews give a fuller sense of the psychosocial toll of begging. One respondent described the sense of shame and rejection experienced by the children:

These children who beg on the streets sometimes feel ashamed, and at the same time, they feel they are not living a life worth emulating. They see themselves as not important and feel rejected by society. People accuse these children of being thieves even when they have done nothing wrong. They see them as dirty, stubborn, and potential criminals. The female children are especially seen as likely to become prostitutes when they grow up.

(IDI 4/Female/Businesswoman/35yrs/Divorced/Ogbomosho/October 2025)

Another participant connected the social treatment of these children to their mental health:

Child begging is a very difficult situation, especially for children who were born in Ogbomosho, because residents react negatively to them. People make jokes about them, see them as irrelevant in society, and treat them as miserable. Many of these children develop mental health problems because of how society treats them.

(IDI 5/Male/Mechanic/29yrs/Married/Ogbomosho/October 2025)

These accounts show that the consequences of child begging in Ogbomosho extend well beyond the physical risks of street life to encompass a durable psychological and social burden, one that reinforces the marginal status of the children long after any individual episode of begging has ended.

4.5 Test of Hypothesis

HO: There is no significant relationship between the age of beggars and the prevalence of begging in Ogbomosho metropolis.

The hypothesis was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), the results of which are presented in Tables 5a and 5b.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.327 ^a	.107	.105	.47375

a. Predictors: (Constant), Child Begging

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	10.288	1	10.288	45.838	.000 ^b
Residual	85.961	383	.224		
Total	96.249	384			

The results indicate a statistically significant effect of the age of beggars on the prevalence of begging in Ogbomosho, $F(1, 383) = 45.84$, $p = .000$, at the .05 level of significance. The R Square value of .107 shows that age accounts for approximately 10.7 per cent of the variance in the prevalence of begging, and the associated effect size can be described as moderate. On this basis, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that a significant relationship exists between the age of beggars and the prevalence of begging in Ogbomosho metropolis. This finding is consistent with the survey data in Table 2, which showed that begging is markedly more prevalent among children of school-going age (11–16 years) than among younger children, suggesting that as children grow older they become more actively and visibly engaged in begging, whether because they are entrusted with greater responsibility for household income or because they are more able to move independently through commercial areas.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The findings show that child begging is highly prevalent in Ogbomosho Metropolis, particularly around markets and transport hubs, and that it is most visible during school hours, indicating that children who should be receiving formal education are instead engaged in begging. The community expresses considerable concern about the growing number of child beggars and about the limited effectiveness of government intervention. These observations are consistent with the Social Disorganisation Theory, which holds that structural and environmental breakdown,

including poverty, inadequate education and weak policy implementation, sustains social problems such as child begging.

On the question of awareness, the paper found that residents are broadly aware of social protection policies and of the programmes intended to support child beggars, yet a considerable proportion believe that these policies are not effectively reaching the children who need them. The interviews attribute this gap chiefly to poor dissemination of information and to the erosion of traditional community-based support systems, rather than to any lack of genuine intention on the part of policymakers. This distinction matters: it suggests that closing the gap between policy and outcome may depend less on the introduction of new interventions than on improving how existing ones are communicated and delivered.

On consequences, the paper found that child begging carries serious costs for the children involved, including poor mental health, exposure to abuse and exploitation, risk of trafficking, and long-term social stigma, alongside a broader threat to the social and economic development of the metropolis. The interviews reveal a psychological dimension to these consequences, in the persistent sense of shame and rejection reported by the children and by adults who observe them, that reinforces the case for interventions that go beyond material relief to include psychosocial support.

The significant relationship found between age and prevalence adds a further dimension to this picture, suggesting that interventions should be sensitive to the age profile of children involved in begging, with particular attention to school-age children whose continued presence on the street represents both an immediate welfare concern and a longer-term threat to their educational and social development.

5.0 Conclusion

This paper has examined the prevalence, the level of awareness of social protection policies, and the consequences of begging among children in Ogbomosho Metropolis. The evidence shows that child begging is a common and growing phenomenon in the metropolis, concentrated in markets and transport hubs and most visible during school hours, and that it is significantly associated with the age of the children involved. Although awareness of relevant government and non-governmental interventions is comparatively high among residents, a considerable gap remains between such awareness and the actual delivery of support to the families that need it. The consequences of child begging are far-reaching, spanning poor mental health, exposure to abuse and exploitation, risk of trafficking, malnutrition, school dropout and enduring social

stigma, and they extend beyond the individual child to affect the broader social and economic standing of the metropolis.

6.0 Recommendations

On the strength of these findings, the paper recommends the following measures:

- i. Strengthening enforcement of existing child protection provisions, so that individuals or networks who exploit children for begging are identified, prosecuted and prevented from continuing the practice. Establishing functional rehabilitation and support centres where children removed from the streets can receive psychosocial support, basic education and life skills training, with a view to eventual family reintegration where appropriate;
- ii. Improving the communication and delivery of existing social protection programmes, so that awareness translates into actual access to welfare, health and educational support for the families of child beggars. Intensifying public sensitisation campaigns that address both the dangers of child begging and the responsibilities of the wider community toward vulnerable children; and
- iii. Directing targeted attention, in any intervention design, to children of school-going age, given the significant relationship this paper found between age and the prevalence of begging.

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Data availability

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Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Ethical approval was duly sought and obtained from the appropriate institutional authority before the commencement of the study. All relevant ethical requirements and procedures governing the participation, confidentiality, informed consent, and protection of respondents were appropriately observed throughout the study.

Consent for publication

The author(s) declare that consent for this publication was given

Competing interests

The author(s) declare that they have no competing interests.

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