



Shariah Requirements versus Contemporary Economics Realities: Influx of Muslim Beggars in Sabon-Zongo Accra

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Abstract

This study explores the phenomenon of begging with a particular focus on Shariah Requirements Versus Contemporary Economics Realities: Influx of Muslim Beggars in Sabon-Zongo Accra. Overall, the study contributes towards filling the enormous gap in the literature on begging in Muslim communities in Ghana and adds other dimensions to the phenomenon of both child and adult begging in general demonstrating the complexity and different facades of the phenomenon. The methodology employed was qualitative, whilst structured interview as a method was used in gathering the necessary information needed for this article. In discussing the findings, the article analyses how this practice works and seeks to gain insight into the interrelationships of the children with their adult partners both at the family levels and at the street level as well as the implications of these interrelationships on the level of agency and vulnerability of the children involved. More importantly, the article highlights the experiences and voices of beggars by looking at the economic realities and the role Islam plays alleviating the plights of beggars. It also highlights the processes that lead to the manifestation of the phenomenon as we see it; that is, why are children used as partners and not adults, and how that is influenced and shaped by power relations and the society's understanding of what is right and wrong for the child.

Keywords: *muslim beggars; shariah requirements; economics realities; sabon-zongo; ghana; accra*

A. INTRODUCTION

According to the Oxford Online Dictionary (2022), begging simply means to ask for money, food, clothes, etcetera, as a gift or as charity. This implies that begging is not peculiar to individuals, but also organizations or countries. For the latter group, it is conceptualized here as “corporate begging”; and it is made to include seeking for charity by organizations or grants or debts cancellation by richer organizations or nations to poorer organizations or

nations. The former category, which is the concern of this study, is synonymous with street and house-to-house begging which captures the children begging phenomenon.

Adedibu (1989) sees begging, as an indication of abject poverty. Begging technically known as pan-handling defines a situation whereby the needy ask for material benefits or money-often even basic amenities like food and clothing. Begging is one of the most endemic multifaceted social and societal problems. Begging is a social ill which destroys the country economy and human resource capacity needed for future growth and development. Begging has been a serious problem confronting many urban northern societies.

The problem of begging has arrested the attentions of governments of various countries, particularly the advanced countries of the world (Ogunkan, 2009), and the case of Ghana is no exception. For instance, in Canada, the Province of Ontario introduced its Safe Street Act in 1999 to restrict specific kinds of begging especially certain narrowly defined cases of aggressive or abusive begging (Wikipedia, 2011). In United Kingdom, begging has been restricted in British Columbia and in London underground system while it has been banned in some larger cities of United States such as Chicago, Illinois, Santa Cruz CA, San Francisco CA. In most, if not all US jurisdictions beggars can be arrested and jailed under vagrancy law (Wikipedia, 2011). The case of Ghana in this light is different even though similar law exists. This is because it is difficult to see beggars arrested and prosecuted even in Sabon Zongo. The research is therefore necessary in the study area as it will guide government and policy makers on economic realities of begging and the challenges begging poses to the study area.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ogunkan and Fawole (2009) in their work “Incidence and Socio-economic Dimensions of Begging in Nigerian Cities: The case of Ogbomoso”, noted that the main socioeconomic characteristic of begging is illiteracy. Majority of parent do not have formal education while majority of other are products of such vagabond as well. The authors indicated that from the colonial period, the education history of Nigeria has always been laid with imbalance. The southern and northern educational disparity remains glaring and the resultant effect cannot be disputed. The authors remark is not so different from what is happening in Ghana looking at the educational disparity between Northern Ghana and Southern Ghana. The continuous effect of illiteracy on parent and youth thereby becomes a drive for child begging phenomenon in these societies. Child begging phenomenon is also drive by peer influence, parental divorce and maltreatment, child labor or children in search of job, parent deceased. This drive is supported by Nwangu (2007) who believed that what pushed children into urban streets to beg include poverty, non-challant attitudes by parents and low educational attainment by parents, school dropout, and teenage pregnancy among others.

Rana (2006) further observes that only few things disrupt public life on roads and streets with more audacity than beggars chasing people for paltry amount of money, as it is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon to be interrupted, often insolently, while driving a car or on foot, by a barefoot child. They constitute a huge source of distraction to the public, because most of them do shamelessly shock commuters in an attempt to generate maximum sympathy from them. Naalir (2010) further asserts that street beggars frequently haunt locations such as entrances to office buildings, almsgiving houses, ATM machines, parking places, railway stations and bus halts, major road intersections, particularly where there are tourists, filling stations and fast-food restaurants. Adedibu and Jelili (2011) similarly posit that street beggars in Nigeria usually congregate for the purpose of soliciting alms in and around religious centers, motor parks, filling stations, markets and major road junctions; a case which is not different from Ghana. This makes the authors' work relevant to the current study.

In Ghana, both begging and child labour are illegal. Attempts to ban begging in Ghana can be traced back to the pre-independence era through the enactment of the Control of Beggars and Destitute Ordinance of 1957 to officially appease public resentments against the beggar population in the capital city of Ghana, Accra (Weiss, 2007). The Beggars and Destitute Act of 1969, the content of which did not depart from the 1957 ordinance, recaptured the state's position on begging. Under the Beggars and Destitute Act (NLCD 392), section (2), begging is a criminal act in Ghana and offenders are to be prosecuted (G.O.G, 1969). Likewise, under the Children's Act of 1998, child labour is illegal in Ghana (G.O.G., 1998). In spite of the legal position on child labour and begging in Ghana, studies have been done in relation to street children, begging and child abuse.

Erskine and McIntosh (1999), in their work "Why Begging Offends: Historical Perspectives and Continuities", indicated that the phenomenon of begging is complex and multifaceted. The spaces, the operations and the individuals associated with the phenomenon are defined and shaped by social norms and values across time and space. Children as well as adults have been variously found to be involved in the activity of begging across the world. In Ghana and particularly Sabon Zongo (the study area of this research), begging is largely undertaken by the disabled with assistance of children, usually from 4 to 14 years old.

Judging from the works of Erskine and McIntosh (1999) above, one can state that the activity of begging presents an interesting quandary in Ghana that potentially has serious implications on the rights and welfare of a child who engages in it. For instance, begging is unlawful in Ghana and is punishable under the 1969 National Liberation Decree 392 though juveniles are exempted by the law. This seems to be guarding against undue incarceration of juveniles but is not adequate in preventing their involvement in the 'illegal' activity in the first place. The law is silent on what should be done when juveniles are

involved in begging. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (Article 29 (b)) to which Ghana is a party, prohibits using children in all forms of begging (emphasis added). The UN Convention on the Rights of Children in addition to provisions for the promotion of child survival, participation and development also made provisions for the protection of children from exploitation and harm (including work that is stigmatizing). The Children Act of Ghana also sets out to protect children from exploitative labour, discrimination and degrading treatment.

The concept and practice of begging is shaped by social norms and values of the Ghanaian society. In his work *Begging and Almsgiving In Ghana: Muslim Positions Towards Poverty and Distress*, Weiss (2007) observes that the traditional principle of kinship solidarity and support - where members of the extended family are obliged to assist one another during instances of hardship and crisis - has been cited as the major basis of support for the not well- to-do including the disabled. His study on alms giving in Ghana reveals that families in Tamale detest having their relatives seen begging for alms because the stigma attached to the relative extends to the larger family. Could that be a factor why some of these beggars migrated to Accra? As such based on the principle of solidarity, families used to support their needy and disadvantaged relatives, a case which is not familiar in Sabon Zongo, but the increasing hardships, poverty and unemployment situations have greatly challenged families' commitments to this kinship principle of solidarity presently. Weiss quoted one of his respondents as saying: "the stigma of shame prevents most people from begging as the stigma also affects the family, who therefore usually take care of their poorer members" and concludes that, "one could argue that most beggars in Tamale are not out in the streets to make an easy living but as a consequence of the erosion or non-existence of traditional safety nets" (Weiss, 2007:74-75).

Apt (1993) also pointed out to similar conclusions when she asserted that, the extended family system of kinship solidarity support of members in times of need and crisis were increasingly given way to the dominance of the nuclear family system to care for the elderly and the disabled. And yet the increasing economic hardships that begun in the late 1980s pose serious challenges for children of the nuclear family to adequately meet the needs of their elderly and disabled. Hence most disabled people move onto the streets to beg for alms by relying on children to serve as their guides/aides. Therefore, one can state that the economic realities in Ghana in particular has forced some Ghanaians to resort to begging.

1. Begging and its related concept in modern times

The trend and dynamics of begging and its prevalence within most parts of the human society is aged old, and thus have generated lots of concerns by social thinkers who have proffered lots of controversies as to its pervasiveness and dynamics (Michelle, 2007). "Begging among many social maladies is viewed to be an attitude of nuisance projected by those engaged in it to their targeted members of the public"

(Adams, 2004). According to Roberts (2010), “among certain people of both poor and of able bodied categories who sees the act of pan-handling as a career motivated in him by a once elderly relative or neighbor”. While Murray (2008), views “begging as a social act of exploitation by both the giver and the recipient who seek to promote it as a motivational means for the survival of such easy going members of the society”.

Adedibu observed that (2008) “for most countries of the third world, begging as an indication of abject poverty, has always been a major way out for the helpless poor”. However, not all beggars are poor or motivated into begging by poverty, and not all the poor are beggars. This, therefore, necessitates the need to re-examine the concept of begging and related issues. To beg, simply means to ask for money, food, clothes, etc, as a gift or as charity. This implies that begging is not peculiar to individuals, but also organizations or countries. For the latter group, it is conceptualized here as “corporate begging”; and it is made to include seeking for charity by organizations or grants or debts cancellation by richer organizations or nations to poorer organizations or nations. The former category, which is the concern of this study, is synonymous with street and house-to-house begging; it borders around such issues or related concepts as “panhandling” “mendicancy” and “vagrancy” which characterize city beggars. This conceptualization would not only capture the image of the begging and begging question, but also reflect their implications for the city’s physical and socio-economic environment.

2. Religious Perspectives on Begging

Religion by most social construct is described as a way of life whose ideology is transferred from one generation to another. Depending on the background of some religions, but most conventional ones, begging is an accepted phenomenon by, and for its practitioners Abdullah, (2001). That is to say, “in virtually every religion of the world issues surrounding alms giving (and by implication begging) are entrenched though with different approaches”. In this section the issue of alms giving and begging as obtained in the scriptures of both Islam and Christianity (which are the two most popular orthodox religions) is examined. In Islam, “zakat” (alms giving) is so weighty that it is one of the five pillars of the religion. Thus says Allah: “And in their properties there was the right of the beggar, and the Mahruum” (the poor). It is believed that every “penny” spent for the poor is spent for the cause of Almighty Allah.

It is evident in the Qur’an, and of course, Islam, not to reject beggars “And reject not the beggar” (Qur’an 93, verse10). The list of those entitled to alms in Islam is not, however, restricted to beggars, but including all the poor, the captives, those in debt, stranded travelers, among many others. (Qur’an 9 verse 60). In summary while giving alms is seriously encouraged, begging is not frowned at, if the need arises. In Christianity, alms giving is also encouraged but begging is silent upon. Thus says the

Bible: “Oh the joys of those who are kind to the poor (are that) the Lord rescues them in times of trouble” Psalm (41:1). “Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing. But a curse will come upon those who close their eyes to poverty Proverbs (28:27).

3. Socio-economic realities of begging

Regardless of one’s religious, cultural and other background and orientation, what to eat or wear and where to live, among other necessities must be sought so long as one is alive. It follows therefore that as long as poverty exists in our society, without adequate policy measures to address it, begging would continue to thrive as an urban activity. This is because without prejudice to the influencing roles of the composite variables of culture, urbanization and socio-polity, most (if not all) beggars (including part-time and full time as well as conspicuous and “veiled” ones) are lured into begging first by the factor of poverty (Jelili, 2013; Osagbemi, 2001; Adedibu, 1989).

What is certain is that, though when many beggars taste begging especially as evidenced in Sabon Zongo-Accra, they do not want to stop irrespective of whether or not they have overcome the poverty hardship, none of the certified full time or part time beggars actually take to begging without first tasting poverty.

The existing literature on poverty has it that a universally acceptable definition of poverty remains elusive, because it is more easily recognized than defined (Mafimisebi, 2002). This is why a wide variety of definitions have been put forward to reflect different dimensions or contexts within which it is defined. In general, however, two approaches of defining the concept are observed in the literature. First, poverty is observed in either absolute sense or relative sense. In absolute sense, poverty is seen, according to Akinbola (2002), as a state of not having or not being able to get the necessities of life; it is the situation of lack of access to resources needed to obtain the minimum necessities required to maintain physical efficiency (Okunmadewa, 2001). Second, from its multidimensional perspectives, poverty is seen as a physiological deprivation, a social deprivation, or a human deprivation. The physiological deprivation refers to poverty of income and basic human needs. Social deprivation, on the other hand, refers to the lack of basic capabilities to live a long and healthy life with freedom or lack of resources required for participation in social activities. Human deprivation also, is denial of right and freedom or lack of dignity, self-respect, security and justice (Mafimisebi, 2002). Due to the interrelationships among these various dimensions and approaches to defining poverty and for comparison purpose, the global community has adopted income as a measure; and by this measure, an income of one US dollar per day per person (Hauser and Pilgrim, 1999) is observed to indicate poverty. The psychological effect of poverty on individual strips him of his self-respect and human dignity. One important manifestation of this, especially in Ghana, is the involvement of considerable number of its population in begging around the country.

Nevertheless, the socio-cultural and socio-political background and other orientations notwithstanding, the socio-economic realities and circumstances that may promote begging in the society should be well focused and attended to in the state economic and urban development policies. It is only when this is taken care of that we can appreciably discern and address the socio-cultural and socio-political connections to begging.

4. When Does Begging Become a Menace?

Muslims are those who are guided not only by the dictates of the Qur'an but also by social/cultural norms that are in conformity with the worldview of Islam. They operate in-between their religious obligations and cultural orientation and norms. However, to every rule in Islam, there are exceptional cases. This is exactly where the dynamic nature of Islam is showcased. Questions about begging are therefore germane here. Is begging a part of Islamic culture? Exactly to what extent is begging permitted? These questions are necessary because the majority of the people that engage in the act of begging in Sabon-zongo are Muslims. If actually Muslims are expected to be role models within human societies, why should some Muslims continually be a menace to society and present Islam in a derogatory manner? Begging actually becomes a menace when there are so many beggars on the streets that they become a nuisance to society. This makes it difficult to know those who are poor and genuinely in need, and those who have taken begging as a profession.

5. Islamic Windows of Benevolence

That something is allowed under certain circumstances does not make it the ideal way of life. The windows of zakat and sadaqah in Islam were put in place to remedy some salient social ills, particularly to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor within Muslim societies. It is meant to take care of the needs of the less privileged and to advance the cause of Islamic expansion. It is supposed to be a blessing in the sense that if the gap between the rich and the poor is bridged, the society becomes better for it. Any society where the institutions of zakat and sadaqah are in place and the proceeds well utilised should have low level of poverty and in turn very rare instances of begging. In other words, the Islamic window of sharing and caring can adequately take care of the needs of human societies and can also contribute meaningfully to its advancement in terms of meeting up with modern challenges.

However, it could also become a curse if the intent behind its establishment is misunderstood or if the facility is mismanaged. In societies where zakat is not adequately paid by Muslims and where there is no constituted authority to oversee its collection and distribution, people will be overcome by impunity and laziness and turn the provision into a profit-making enterprise. In such societies, thuggery, brigandage and oppression of the weak become the order of the day. The most vulnerable are the

poor and the weak segment of the society who will constantly see the rich as oppressors and would always want to tap from their resources at every opportunity. Thus, the Islamic window of benevolence can be a curse due to the way people utilize it. However, whatever Allah has ordained always has underlying blessings and advantages, both apparent and hidden, and so the Islamic window of benevolence can never be a curse, but it will only be a blessing if the rules and regulations of application are properly followed.

C. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed in this work was qualitative. Qualitative research according to Philipsen, H., & Vernooij-Dassen, M. (2007) is defined as “the study of the nature of phenomena”, including “their quality, different manifestations, the context in which they appear or the perspectives from which they can be perceived”, but excluding “their range, frequency and place in an objectively determined chain of cause and effect”. According to Punch, K. F. (2013), this formal definition can be complemented with a more pragmatic rule of thumb: qualitative research generally includes data in form of words rather than numbers. Following this, the method applied as a primary source of data collection was interview.

Primary data for the study were generated from the administration of structured questionnaires and it focused on the street beggars. The questionnaires probed among other issues; the incidence of begging, socio- economic and cultural characteristics of beggars in Sabon-zongo. Since the beggars keep moving, it was very difficult to prepare any sampling frame out of which to select the desired sampling principle or method. Instead, the places or spots where the beggars are generally found within Sabon Zongo were selected. Hence the need to employ a sampling method that would ensure a proper representation of the large population of the street beggars was necessary. Therefore, purposive sampling technique was employed. Using multistage sampling technique, a total of thirty (30) beggars were sampled. Interviews were also conducted with two (2) Imams in the community as well as three (3) chiefs on the issue of begging. Secondary data were obtained from relevant institutions related to this research work such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines and any other material relevant to the research.

D. FINDINGS

Structured interviews were conducted among beggars in Sabon Zongo. Among the respondents were women and men (who were either mothers, fathers or grandparents), girls of marriageable and very young ages, and boys between eight and twenty years of age. The interviews were conducted based on general, gender specific and individual related questions. Hausa language was employed to ask the questions directly and the responses were tape-recorded and translated for analyses. It was discovered that the initial projection

of this study was far below the results generated through the interviews. The menace of begging in Sabon Zongo is deeply rooted and requires much more than surface analysis of the situation; rather it needs in-depth scrutiny. About thirty beggars were interviewed in the study area. Only a few of the responses of the respondents are presented to avoid repetition of views.

1. Ethical consideration

Prospective interviewees were duly informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary and their responses would be confidential. To ensure anonymity, the original names and identities of the respondents were not used in the analyses. Also, the consent of the respondents was duly sought before the commencement of the interview sessions in the study area. Respondents who gave consent to willingly participate in the survey had to be assured of confidentiality even before the interview questions were asked.

2. Background information of the respondents

The results obtained indicate that the majority of the beggars were not formally from Sabon-zongo. Among them were males and females with quite a number of children. The average age of the respondents was 49 years within the age range of 45 and 50 years. Furthermore, some of the respondents had spent less than a year in Accra, while the highest number of years spent by any respondent was 15 years or more.

3. Why did you leave your various environment to come and beg in Accra?

The responses given by some of the participants for leaving their hometowns to Accra:

In an Interview with Muhammad Sanni at Sabon Zongo on 11th June, 2022, he said he left his hometown because of the economic hardships. In an interview with Bala Yusuf at Sabon Zongo on 11th June, 2022, he indicated that he left his hometown to Accra because his people from his village usually mocked him that he was capable of earning a livelihood. He added that people in Accra, especially in Sabon Zongo are very good and they give them money. In an interview with Aisha Ibrahim at Sabon Zongo on 11th June, 2022, she also explained that she left her hometown to Accra because she was in debted and there was no one to help her out. She therefore resolved to begging when she got to Sabon Zongo through her friends.

The average earning per day by the beggars was Ghc 50.00. The maximum earnings were around Ghc 80.00 and the minimum earnings were Ghc 50.00 respectively. But in some cases, they only earned enough to eat. When asked if they were happy about being beggars and if begging is allowed in Islam, they answered no.

The summary of their responses is that certain circumstances have led some of them to beg. Some of the responses are highlighted below:

4. Why do you beg?

Bala Yusuf at Sabon Zongo, who was interviewed on 11th June, 2022 held that:

Sincerely speaking, most of us beg because there is no option to survive. You can imagine having a blind and a crippled parent that gave birth to children while begging. If such children are grown up without even recognizing their parents and no one to care for them, how do you want them to cope without being beggars?

An interview with Rabi Muhammad at Sabon Zongo on 11th June, 2022 also explained that:

As you can see, my husband is a cripple. He can't do heavy work and I am jobless. So, I joined him as a beggar to take care of the children we gave birth to.

5. Is begging allowed in Islam?

In an interview with Ibrahim Abdullah at Sabon Zongo on 11th June, 2022, he narrated that:

Begging is okay only for those that don't have a choice, for example the crippled, the handicapped, and the blind. But it is not good Islamically for those that are complete; for example, those that have hands, legs, eyes. Most importantly, begging is not for women, because they are supposed to be in their fathers' or husbands' houses to be cared for, he retorted.

An interview with Muhammad Fatahu at Sabon Zongo on 11th June, 2022, he held that begging is not proper for those that have the ability to work, but that there are some people that do not have a choice other than to beg.

Muhammad Awal on the other hand, who was also interviewed at Sabon Zongo on 11th June, 2022 also stated the following:

My parents are jobless. Aside from being a barber, I used to hustle, as the eldest of the house to put food on the table. Unfortunately, I have had leg fractures in the past 12 years. During those 12 years, I have had no strength to work and feed my family. And since money from barbing alone can't satisfy me, I had to start begging.

6. What do you think government can do to help?

When asked about what they think government can do to help them or alleviate their situations, the summary of their responses is that government should provide basic needs for their survival such as job opportunities, free housing, free education, and money. Furthermore, the respondents need the government to treat them the

same way they treat other citizens. Some of them even promised to stop begging if there are government interventions. Some of their responses included the following:

On the question of what they think government can do to help them out of poverty? Abdulrahman Ibrahim who was interviewed at Sabon Zongo on 5th May, 2022 stated that:

I am not happy the way I beg. I also want to give money to people.
If the government should find solution for us, I will stop begging.

On the other hand, Awal Ibrahim, who was interviewed at Sabon Zongo on 5th May, 2022, also believed that:

Of course, if I have another option like help from the government, I will stop begging. At least I will be going and coming back home in the evening or afternoon. I will even leave Accra and not to come back. I will open a shop, start my barbing work, and feed myself as well as my parents.

The view of Rabiu Muhammad was not different from that of Abdulrahman Ibrahim and Awal Ibrahim. After an interview with him at Sabon Zongo on 5th May, 2022, he explained that he will quit begging if there are supports from government. He added that it is not that he is happy begging in the street; but that economic situations have forced him to.

7. What has been your personal contribution to the issue of begging?

When asked about their contributions to the situation are, their responses indicate that they would not relent in praying to Allah. They also lend helping hands to other handicapped among them. Some important responses included the following:

Interview with Abdullah Yusuf at Sabon Zongo on 5th May, 2022, he opined that as a Muslim, he usually gathers people to read the Qur'an and pray for Ghana even in his situation as a beggar. He indicated that the main purpose of their prayers was that Allah should give the government the ability and capacity to help those in need. He added that they pray often to Allah to help open the eyes of their government so that they can plan positively for the beggars.

The view expressed above was however not different from that of Abdulrahman Alhassan who was interviewed at Sabon Zongo on 5th May, 2022. He however indicated that his own contribution is to keep praying that government consider them and at the same time he will continue helping people in need, especially other beggars.

8. Going forward, what do you think should be done?

A healthy society is one where the citizenry is considered first in terms of the basic needs of life. It is a society where the gap between the rich and the poor is not apparent but reduced to the barest minimum. The dwindling economic condition of Ghana as a nation over the years has affected its citizenry adversely in terms of employment and

empowerment opportunities. This situation has subsequently rendered the majority of Ghanaian youths idle and lazy. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why some able-bodied youths would prefer to opt for stealing or engage in what is popularly called stylish begging in order to earn a living.

Apart from youth who have chosen to indulge in idleness or stylish begging, there are other categories of beggars who are both aged and dependent. The aged in a sane society should be taken good care of, while the younger ones are given the right and sound education that will in turn translate to human capital and empowerment through windows of opportunities.

However, it must be emphasised that lack of governmental intervention should not be an excuse for the beggars to constitute a menace in the society. Able-bodied persons, particularly the youth, should find a way of earning a living by engaging in fruitful labour instead of turning themselves into objects of pity by those who bring meagre amounts of money or gifts to them on a daily basis. It was highly appalling to find at Sabon Zongo that grandfathers/grandmothers as well as their children and grandchildren were all living together in the same area and doing the same thing over the decades. They even go to the extent of conducting marriages among themselves. This is the exact reason why begging has become a generational phenomenon among the northerners, hence, the need for government's quick intervention to forestall impending danger of hooliganism and thuggery of youth from this particular set of people.

E. CONCLUSION

Investigation of the incidence of street begging is cumbersome, because of the social, economic and cultural behavior of the street beggars. The study established that street begging is carried out by diversity of people regardless of age, sex, religion, marital status and body physique. A short drive on the streets of Sabon-zongo reveals that persons of both sexes, ages, all forms of disabilities and some without any kind of physical challenges are seen along the streets begging for alms. There are also the mentally challenged who beg for alms, some rather menacingly or aggressively and in addition, a number of reasons contributed to the increase in the population of street beggars and the incidence of begging on the streets.

The researcher is fully convinced that if rehabilitation centres are put in place and in good condition, social welfare fund for the poor beggars, vocational training; skill acquisition and entrepreneurial assistance to the inmates who are deprived beggars and other related measures are introduced in the study area and in some cities nationwide, street begging will be a thing of history. In summary, one hopes that our investigations have thrown light on the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of street beggars.

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