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METAMORPHOSIS OF INSECURITY: FROM DISPLACEMENTS TO STREET BEGGING IN ABUJA, THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY

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Abstract
The study investigates the connection between insecurity and increase in street begging in Abuja. Street begging has become a menace in Abuja, efforts by successive administration at curbing it has not yielded significant result as street begging continue to increase. Objectives of the study include; investigating the trend of insecurity and the increase in street begging, identifying those that has been displaced due to insecurity and turned to street beggars in Abuja; designing means through which beggars can be decongested from FCT. It employed the use of interview on the beggars around Dei-Dei and Zuba, in which 20 of them were interviewed, the responses were interpreted in themes. It adopted the vicious cycle of theory as its theoretical framework. The study found that there is a relationship between crises ridden states such as Borno, Katsina, Zamfara, Yobe and Bauchi which triggered the influx of street begging in Abuja. Attempts at re-integrating beggars to their original homes have been very limited, due to inadequate social welfare of the beggars in FCT and the states where the original homes of the beggars. The study recommends that Federal Capital Territory Administration should increase funding and proper monitoring of the rehabilitation center in Kuchiko, FCT, Abuja, there should be a synergy between the states where the beggars were displaced to FCT, establishment of vocational skill center in those states and it should be headed by a rehabilitated beggar who understands the consequence of street begging.

Key Words: Street begging, Insecurity, Displacement, Rehabilitation and Repatriation

Introduction

Nigeria is currently grappling with perennial and deepening security challenges, manifesting in forms of armed banditry, insurgency, kidnapping, farmer-herder conflict, armed robbery, ethno-religious cleansing, with attendant consequences of wanton destruction of lives and property. The country is ranked 5th out of 141 countries in 2022 and it worsened to 104 out of 121 countries of the world, making Nigeria one of the unsafe countries of the world to live in (Safety Perceptions index, 2022 &2023). Survivors of insecurity are confronted with demeaning and compounded conditions such as displacements, hawking, living in ramshackle refugee camps, fending for themselves by becoming bread winners at tender age (Eneji& Agri, 2020) and some turning into street beggars.

Street begging is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, it predates the colonial era; the "Mabaretas" were known as beggars and have promoted begging by asking people for money (Amman, 2009). Street begging is not however peculiar to Nigeria, it's a global socio-economic problem that exists even in developed countries, Fatai, Rasheed, Abdulrahaman &Kunnu (2020, P.20) submits that, globally, street begging has been practiced with similar spatial pattern in the distribution of beggars and varied socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of beggars. In spite of this assertion, the causes and rates of street begging differs from one country to another. Nigeria's case is pathetic due to natural resources that abounds, it is rated as the largest producer of oil in Africa and 15 in the world, but lag in developmental strides.

Street begging as defined by Fatai et al (2020) is a systematic effort because those who engage inbegging are well-organized, using different tactics and strategies for enhancing sympathy from the general public, towards soliciting for alms. However, in recent times the northern states are being ravaged by insecurity such as Boko Haram insurgency, ethno-religious killings, armed banditry which has displaced thousands of people from their homes into refugee camps and migration from crises ridden areas to relatively peaceful areas such as Abuja where they seek succor. Some of these displaced persons on arrival at these new settlements seek for coping strategies, particularly street begging.

Statement of the Problem/Justification

Street begging has become a widespread socio-economic problem in Nigeria, particularly in northern part of the country,instead of abating it has increased astronomically without solutions. Numerous studies have been conducted investigating the causes and effects of street begging in Nigeria (Fatai et al, 20020; Bokuye,2014; Eneji& Agri, 2020; Mesele 2020) most of these studies concentrated on the socio-economic effects of street begging on security in Nigeria, while much attention has not been accorded to the impact of insecurity on displacements and street begging in Nigeria, particularly in Abuja. As it stands today the rate of street begging in FCT, Abuja has become alarming, efforts are in place in social Development Secretariat to repatriate street beggars to their homes, in the year 2022, this led to the repatriation of 2,017 beggars to Kaduna, Jiggawa, Kano, Katsina, Niger and Borno states (Social Development Secretariat Report, 2022) but this has not yielded significant improvement as beggars continue to increase in FCT, Abuja with attendant consequences on environmental and social-economic disorderliness. The study, therefore seeks to investigate the impact of insecurity on street begging focusing on FCT, Abuja.

This study is therefore relevant for new researches and policies on addressing street begging as a major metamorphosis of insecurity. It is also significant in the sense that policies of government and other researches will identify those that are displaced from the crises ridden areas of the Northern States such as Borno, Katsina, Yobe, Zamfara, Plateau states, among others and have become street beggars in Abuja Federal Capital Territory (FCT), will be relocated to their original homes, consequently decongesting the state and FCT, Abuja.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to investigate the impact of insecurity on street begging focusing on FCT, Abuja.

i. Investigate the impact of insecurity on increase in street begging in Abuja.
ii. Identify those that has been displaced from their communities due to insecurity and has become street beggars, in Abuja.
iii. Assess the efforts by the Federal Capital Territory Administration at decongesting beggars from Abuja.
iv. Suggest means through which beggars can be decongested from FCT, Abuja and be relocated to their original communities.

Methodology of the Study

The study adopted the primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source of data which was based on eliciting data from the beggars. The study focused on the beggars at Zuba and Deidei which have a chunk of them. In order to select a sample of the beggars, the purposive sampling also known as judgmental; which entails individuals who may have special characteristics that qualifies the individual or group to be sampled Biereenu-Nnabugu, (2006), was adopted as a sampling technique to select 20 of beggars. Also, during the head of rehabilitation center for beggars and destitutes, Kuchiko, Abuja was selected. An interview schedule was adopted to conduct interview the beggars and the head of rehabilitation center,

Kuchiko, FCT, Abuja, using a recording device. The researcher speaks Hausa and English language; hence he was able to interpret the interview questions to the beggars.

The data generated through interview were descriptive and interpretative in nature. Therefore, the interview was first transcribed, then reading and re-reading transcript gotten from interviews. This involved severally reading through the interview, highlights plot and story, identification of recurrent patterns, words, phrase and contradictions in the text. The transcript was organized into themes and subthemes based on each question asked in the interviews. This was done to provide the avenue for presenting the details and particularity of each one of the individual respondents' experiences and the overall picture of the samples as whole.

The secondary data includes, the use of literature review such as text books, articles, internet among others.

Conceptual Clarification

Street Begging

In order to make a holistic conceptualization of street begging, it is pertinent to explore the meaning of begging. Fawole, Ogunkan&Omoruan (2014), perceives begging as an act of soliciting for money food, and clothes by individuals and organizations or even countries.Taking it further,Olubusola (2020) conceptualizes street begging by contextualizing it within the, street beggar, thereby centralizing it around the individual who seek for alms such as money or any other help in public places such as shopping areas, banks, public offices, churches, mosques, and busy streets, among others.

From above definitions, this study perceives street begging as individuals who wanders from one place to the other in public places to seek for material gains such as money, clothes and other assistances.

Insecurity

Security and insecurity are two sides of a coin, therefore, in order to understand insecurity, it is appropriate to define the term security. Security is multi-dimensional in nature therefore it is perceived from different approaches; some perceives it from the military stand point while others perceive it from non-military perspective (Krahmann, 2003). These various perspectives indicate the elusiveness of the term.

Adofu& Alhassan (2018), submits that security is an all-encompassing situation in which the armed forces protect not only the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country but also from internal crises such as hunger, diseases, unemployment, starvation and socio-economic injustices. Insecurity on other means the absence of guarantee of sovereignty of Nigeria, where there is presence of harm, danger, hazard, uncertainty, unemployment, poverty, insurgency, militancy, banditry, loss of material possessions and loss of lives (Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro, 2013; Hacker, 2020).

Human Displacement

The concept of displacement is multidisciplinary and covers areas in physical science and natural science. It is worthy of note to state clearly that the displacement refers to in this study is human or population displacement. In the context of this study that deals with insecurity and street begging the concept of forced displacement is more applicable.

Forced displacement happens when people and group of individuals involuntarily leave their place of abode consequent upon to avoid the effects of events or situations such as armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights abuses, natural or man-made disasters, and/or development projects (Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons). Shamsuddoha, Khan, Raihan & Hossain (2011), puts it that displacement is a definite type of migration, in which individual or group of individuals are forced to move against their will,

where people are forced to move within their country of origin, this is referred to as internal displacement.Gurer& Akgul (2020), opines that forced displacement is also connected with economic, political, technological and other systemic changes at the global level.Tremenski (2012) submits that contemporary internal displacement in many countries is often monocausal; based on four basic categories (development-induced displacement, conflict-induced displacement, disaster-induced displacement and environmentally-induced displacement).

This study is mainly concerned with individuals that has been displaced victims as a result of conflict, therefore displacement deals with individuals or groups who left crises ridden areas to avoid the effects of conflicts to seek succor in areas that are relatively peaceful.

Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis is a biological science concept which was adopted by this study. The concept of metamorphosis depicts a particular life history transition in multicellular organisms, from a larval to a juvenile (or adult) stage, accompanied by dramatic morphological, physiological, and ecological changes. Such changes typically include a major restructuring of morphology, and often involve a transition from a non-reproductive to a reproductive state, dispersal and settlement to a new habitat, and a shift in nutrition and feeding behavior, Metamorphosis is a life-history transition that involves radical changes in habitat, morphology, and physiology (Bishop, Flatt, Erezylimas& Georgiou, 2015).

Borrowing a leave from the above concepts, this study argues that insecurity is capable of changing and producing other complex phenomena in the society, hence it is metamorphosis in nature.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Vicious Cycle of Poverty by Ragnar Nurkse

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is vicious of poverty theory propounded by Ragnar Nurkse (1953). It means a circular constellation of forces tending to act and react upon one another in such a way as to keep poor country in a state of poverty. The submission by Nurkse (1953) is that poverty does not exist in vacuum but occur as a result of myriads of interacting factors, and the tendency for the poor to remain poor in other activities that they do. Succinctly put, the poor is inescapable of poverty in what they do. Nurkse's shows the vicious of cycle by submitting that a poor man my not have enough to eat; being underfed, his health may be weak; being physically weak, his working capacity is low. There is a chain connection in the consequences of poverty. Olubusola (2020), opines that attributes of poverty are inescapable, these include, poor health care services, malnutrition, lack of physical asset or borrowing power, dependence on others, among others. However, issue of insecurity as one of the major attributes of poverty was not identified. One of the major causes of poverty in Nigeria, particularly in the north is insecurity, which has displaced victims of insecurity and forces them into other activities such as street begging. Therefore, the theory is relevant to this study in the sense that insecurity has a vicious life, it doesn't end as insecurity, it leads to poverty and consequently engendering street begging

Nexus between Insecurity, Displacementand Street Begging

Street begging is multidimensional in nature, this is the reason it is elusive to perceive it from a single approach. Some literature approached begging from the perspective of a permanent business, others see it as a temporary measure to escape from their poverty conditions (Odejokun&Aderinto, 2020, P. 13). Fawole, Ogunkan&Omoruan (2014), perceives street begging from sociological perspective, the study focused on the implications of street begging on social, economic and environmental survival of the country, it submits that street begging as a means of seeking for alms negates standard conduct of behavior, and submits

that begging occurs as a product of urban poverty, product of urban ecology and social deviance.

Osa-Edoh & Ayano (2012) focused on the prevalence of street begging in Nigeria and counseling intervention strategies. The study submits that street begging has become a major issue in urban centers in Nigeria, it did not focus on any particular city rather it took Nigeria as a whole, this makes the methodology of the study to deficient.

Study conducted by Babangida, Nathan & Yusuf (2001), focused on factors responsible for street begging in Kaduna state, it argues that beggars are the most neglected people in the society. The study opined that the polygamous nature of families in Northern has impacted negatively on children who roam the street as "Almajiri" who turned to street beggars to survive due to lack of parental care. The study identifies causes of street begging as; street begging, homelessness, breakdown of the family system, mental illness and unemployment while the consequences of street begging as sexual abuse, kidnapping and prostitution, and illegal trade, police harassment.

Studies such as Gomment& Esomchi (2017), submits that the consequences of begging include carnage, kidnapping, indecent assault and a significant threat to National Security. Most studies concentrated on street begging as a major driver of insecurity (Olaniyi, 2009; Tambuwal 2010, Fatai, 2017; Eneji& Agri, 2020;Mesele, 2020), while few attentions have been accorded to insecurity as a major driver of street begging in the country, it is this lacuna in literature that the study hopes to fill.

Street begging is more widespread in the northern states, than other parts of Nigeria, it is driven byreligious beliefs, poverty, exploding population without corresponding socio-economic development. The northern states have been experiencing challenges of security such as Boko Haram insurgency, armed banditry, ethno-religious clashes which has displaced people from crisis ridden areas to relatively peaceful areas. Efforts at curbing street begging in Abuja, FCT, has not yielded significant result, due to the fact that attention has not been accorded to holistic approach of viewing the phenomena from human displacements due to insecurity that has increased street begging.

Data on the number of displaced people and death rates have been captured by various scholars and institutions indicating that thousands of Nigerians has been victims of insecurity in the Northern Nigeria; particularly the North-West and North-East Nigeria with attendant consequences of severe humanitarian crisis. For example, United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR), submitted that between December 2018 and January 2019, number of Internally Displaced Persons in Maiduguri increased from 79,000 to 113,000. Displacement Tracking Matric (DTM), submits that between December 2022 and February 2023, in 2,482 localities in the six states of north-east Nigeria (Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Gombe and Bauchi)) as of February DTM identified 2,388,703 in 4888,163 households, while Mathew Kukah stated that over 12,000 people have lost their lives to insecurity in the North-West (Natsa, 2025).

Victims of war ridden zones flees to refugee camps and areas where they seek succor in order to earn a living through demeaning activities such as street begging. Hence, the major driver of migration is economic motive, most of which the migrants assumed they can get in large urban slums, dubs by (Shamsuddoha, Khan, Raihan & Hossain (2011), as urban poverty pockets. FCT, Abuja is an urban area with slums which falls under the urban poverty pockets category, which is house to beggars, these areas include Dei-dei and Zuba.

Discussion of Results on Street begging and Insecurity in Abuja

The discussion of the interview is under the following themes:

Beggars' state of origin: From the interview conducted, out of the 20 beggars 15 of them are from the north east and north west, the rest are from Nasarawa state and Niger state. The data supplied by the Destitute center, Kuchiko, FCT shows that from 2019 to 2024, states such as Katsina, Zamfara, Kaduna, Bauchi, Yobe and Kano were top among beggars brought to the center. According to the head of destitute, Kuchiko, Abuja, the rate of beggars in FCT increased over time, most of them are from north east and north west. He also submitted that from the data of the beggars that they profiled; the rate of beggars in FCT increases astronomically; it was 2,500 beggars in 2021, in 2022 it increased to 3,700 in 2023 it was put at 4,200, in 2024. The rate of beggars have become alarming in Abuja, FCT to the extent the minister of FCT, Nyesome Wike declared that they should be evacuated from the streets of Abuja (Sanusi, 2024).

Efforts at curbing street begging by FCT Administration: Over the years successive administrations have made different efforts at evacuating beggars from the streets of FCT, Abuja but this has not yielded positive results. From the respondents, at Social Welfare Secretariat, Abuja; there are issues of inadequate financing of home for destitutes with attendant poor infrastructure, diversion of funds meant for the rehabilitation of beggars and handling beggars with kid gloves due to religious biases and inconsistencies in policies of different FCT administrations are the major challenges hindering the evacuation of beggars from FCT, Abuja. A personal visit by the researcher to the home of destitute in Kuchicko, it was noticed that the place is in shamble with paucity of infrastructure.

The nexus between insecurity and street beggars: According to data generated from the office of destitutes and beggars, there are other factors that causes street begging, these include, poverty, illiteracy, religious factors. They also submitted that issues of insecurity and flooding (particularly 2024 flooding) has the high tendencies to increase street begging.

This study extrapolates from the states of origin of beggars and states with high level of insecurity that there is a connection between insecurity, displacements and street begging. This was buttressed by Consumer News and Business Channel (CNBC), reported that Borno and Katsina are the most insecure states in Nigeria and identified such as Borno, Katsina, Adamawa, Kaduna, Yobe and Zamfara as the highest states with issues of insecurity, such as kidnapping, terrorism, banditry, herder's militia which has impacted food security and living conditions.

Suggestions on how street begging can be curbed: First and foremost, beggars are groups of people that are economically deprived who seek succor on the streets and Abuja is considered as place where a better life can be sought. From the data generated it is indicative that most of the beggars are from other states that are considered volatile, succinctly, a holistic approach is adopted to nip the menace of street begging in the bud. This should begin by providing adequate infrastructure at home of destitutes particular training facilities that will empower the beggars. The fact that street beggars are mostly victims of displacements and insecurity, there should be synergy between FCT and beggars state of origins on the relocation of beggars, this has to do with establishing training centers that will take the beggars off the streets. Also, the head of such training beggars should be a rehabilitated beggar who has made some progress in education and skills, so that the individual can be a model to other beggars.

Conclusion

The study examined the nexus between insecurity and street begging in FCT, Abuja and submits that insecurity results to displacements and street begging. The study discovered that most of the beggars are also from volatile states with high security risks, in the north and

have found a place of succor in slums in FCT such as Dei-Dei and Zuba, this has increased the number of street beggars in FCT and has become complex socio-economic problems, those involved in street begging do so to survive their present condition.

Government's attempts at re-integrating beggars to their original homes have been very limited in scope due to its inability to address the social welfare of the beggars before returning them to their original home. The lack of empowerment of street beggars by government has made the beggars to refuse to be reintegrated into their original home. If they are properly empowered, they are ready to return home,therefore more resources should be deployed to the home of destitutes. The attempts by government should include free education for the beggars. The beggars are ready to return home if given proper empowerment such as skills acquisition.

Furthermore, the study also recommends that there should be synergy between the state of origin of beggars and the FCT on the repatriation of beggars, the states should build and equip the rehabilitation centers with training facilities that will empower the rehabilitated beggars. Also, the head of the centers should be headed by a rehabilitated beggar who can be a model to beggars.

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