ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Public Perception Of Prayer Begging In Nigeria

CHINELO EDITH UDE-AKPEH Ph.D

Department of TV Journalism NTA Television College, Jos Plateau State neloudeakpeh@yahoo.com;

Abstract

The study is on the opinion of the public about prayer begging. It was designed to examine the reasons for prayer begging and the way the public view prayer begging. The rationale for the study stemmed from the proliferation of prayer or religious beggars in Nigeria. The study was a cross-sectional survey. Four basic research questions guided the study. All long distance travelers in Jos metropolis made up the population. A sample of 80 long distance travelers resident in Jos was selected using the purposive sampling technique. Data were elicited from the same by means of a self-designed questionnaire whose reliability index was 0.76. Direct delivery method was used for data collection while the percentage was used for data analysis. Results indicated that the reasons for prayer begging include lack of skills, unemployment, and laziness among others. Also the public perceive prayer beggars as irresponsible people, indolent and potential fraudsters. Some of the ways to curtail the incidence of prayer begging include ignoring their financial pleas and threats and youth empowerment, among others. The study recommended that the government should enact policies that will help reduce prayer begging. Also government should create jobs for youths to reduce their vulnerability to prayer begging after graduation.

Keywords: Prayer begging, beggars, motor park, travelers, long distance

INTRODUCTION

Begging is an ancient phenomenon. All over the world, there are usually beggars. High points of beggars are usually on the streets, markets, motor parks, recreation centres and public places like stadiums, motor parks and cinema halls. Begging (despite the form) is one of the most endemic multifaceted social problems. From experience over the years, the phenomenon of begging is a result of a number of factors such as poverty (real poverty or fraudulent poverty), religion, physical disability, culture, national disaster, civil war, bad habits (drug, alcohol, and gambling dependencies), family heritage, uncontrolled rural to urban migration, and psychiatric disabilities and disorders, etc. (Ogunkan & Fawole, 2009). These disasters put the affected persons in a pitiable position that their only option for survival is to beg. This is quite understandable. According to Mukharjee (2015), begging is a symptom of social disorganization and the widespread custom of alms-giving by individuals and institutions by which the disability, helplessness or social inadequacy of the beggars has been sought to be mitigated. Continuing, Murkharjee notes that the most frequent cause of begging in India is the increasing population by which workers were displaced from the land and unable to find employment or means of subsistence. In addition to the displaced workers, there are the physically challenged such as the blind, the deaf, etc. who also take to begging.

Before now, the category of people that beg is usually the destitute, the poor, refuges, the diseased, handicapped, and displaced people. However, lately, the kinds of beggars we see in today's world is surprising. Now we see many able-bodied men and women, young children, young men and women begging in a special way. One wonders what has come over the people of today world. It is more worrisome to see that people have resorted to begging using the name of the Lord as a cloak. It is now a common sight in most motor parks and bus terminals to see well-dressed, healthy–looking people hanging around waiting for the time of take-off of vehicles so as to enter the vehicles as 'preachers' (prayer beggars), preach God's word based on their own religious convictions and possibly lead travelers in a session of prayers for protection and journey mercies. With every confidence and submission, these travelers obey the

instructions and comply with the prayers. Shortly after the prayer, the next thing that usually follows is a request for seed sowing from the passengers for protection, advancement, miracles and breakthrough, etc. Onuora (2011) was forced to ask 'does God need some conditions to shower his blessings on His children? Are the blessings and mercy of God towards all humans not free of charge? Do we need to bribe God before we access his blessings? All these questions have not found satisfactory answers till date.

What is usually inexplicable is that this category of beggars do not belong to the categories of beggars defined by Murkharjee (2015) but belong to the class of non-displaced, able bodied well dressed and healthy persons. This category of beggars called prayer beggars are a source of worry to the general public whom they look up to for assistance.

Begging generates various reactions from people (Shamsad, 2014). Some see begging as a sign of poverty and lack of services including affordable housing for marginalized groups. Others view it as a negative effect of businesses, outcome of alcohol and substance abuse, the result of family breakdown; or as the actions of those unable or unwilling to sustain themselves by other activities (Carter, 2017).

Many studies indicate that begging was non-existent in primitive societies where small groups of relatives used to live together and support one another. Mutual aid served as self-protection and security for the clan or even the whole tribe. The phenomenon of begging has emerged in association with private property. Due to civilization and population explosion as well as the multifarious nature of today's human needs, helping people (beggars) is becoming difficult because most people are struggling to survive. So the normal help which family members freely receive from their well-to-do relations is gradually fading away; therefore there is a great increase in the number of beggars.

Lately the emergence of prayer beggars has constituted another source of concern to the public. These beggars are not destitutes or displaced but are healthy and able bodied, yet they choose to beg in the name of the Lord. These beggars come in the name of the Lord and they use God's name as a means of making a living by targeting travelers in the various bus terminals and parks. The question is, is God so poor that we need to beg with His name? Does our religious belief agree to begging in the name of God? What are the perceptions of the public regarding these prayer or religious beggars? These and other questions form the basis of the present study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Begging has been a phenomenon that has existed since the origin of man. From ages past there have always been beggars as there are usually people who are not able to meet their needs and they resort to others for help. There are categories of persons known to be beggars. They include, poor people, displaced persons, those who are affected by crises or natural disasters like flood, fire, war or earth quake. Some others are people whose sources of livelihood may have been destroyed and who seek refuge outside their homes. Such persons are usually unkempt, unhealthy and frustrated. However lately there is the proliferation of another category of beggars who have no such characteristics of the beggars described above. They are not displaced nor affected by any form of crises or natural disasters. They appear healthy and neatly dressed and equally religious. These are tagged religious or prayer beggars. They beg travelers for money in motor parks and bus terminals. They can conduct prayers and ask for money afterwards. The question is does God permit anyone to beg in His name. Why can't these prayer beggars do any work to fend for themselves? Now, the problem of this study is embedded in this broad question: 'What are the reasons for prayer begging and what are the perceptions of the public regarding prayer beggars?'

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine religious or prayer begging in Nigeria. Specifically the study is designed to:

1. Identify the category of persons that are permitted by religion to beg.
2. Find out the reasons for prayer or religious

begging.
3. Identify the perceptions of the public regarding religious or prayer begging.
4. Suggest ways of curtailing the incidence of prayer begging in the study area.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study provided answers to the following research questions:
1. What category of persons is permitted by religion to beg in Nigeria?
2. What are the reasons for engaging in prayer or religious begging?
3. How does the general public perceive prayer or religious begging?
4. What measures can be adopted to curtail the incidence of prayer begging in Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Begging

Begging entails asking help from people who we are acquainted with and those not acquainted (Mbah, 2020). Begging is simply the act of asking for assistance from other people due to some incapacitation on the part of the beggar orchestrated by some challenges like poverty, natural disaster or death (Adeoye, 2021). To beg means that the beggar is willing to swallow pride and stop how to accept any insults or inconveniences that may ensue. As Uche (2019) stated, most beggars receive insults from the people they are asking help from. It takes courage to beg. This is because real beggars have no other choice as they are not able to fend for themselves. The evident incapacitation is the adequate drive to keep on begging to be able to survive.

According to Adejumo (2019), the situation of begging in Nigeria is such that there are different categories of beggars found at motor parks, religious worship centers, markets, road junctions, venue of ceremonies and worst still on the campuses. Characteristics of street beggars in Nigeria are diverse. Some are disabled, ranging from the blind to the deaf and dumb seeking a means of livelihood. They have no skilled ability for self-employment or for employment by companies. There are the mad people; the twins' mothers and the able bodied. Begging is an age-long social problem in Nigeria. There are no current techniques for begging which have not been used for hundreds of years or are not based on older techniques that are adapted to modern technology (John, 2016).

According to Murkerjee (2019), begging is a symptom of social disorganization and the widespread custom of alms-giving by individuals and institutions has been the method by which the disability, helplessness or social inadequacy of the beggars has been sought to be mitigated. In the same manner, begging is defined by Mortimer (2005) as asking for money or other assistance without an exchange of services in a public place. It is sometimes a syndrome as it exists in association with other things (Tambawal, 2019).The Nigerian National Planning Commission (2005) observes that beggars like other poor people manifest joblessness, over-indebtedness, economic dependence, lack of freedom, inability to provide basic needs of life for self and family, lack of access to land and credit and inability to save own assets.

In answering the question regarding why beggars keep begging despite the numerous inconveniences and insults attached, Adejumo (2019) states that beggars are usually unskilled, and as such are not employable. Due to this incapacitation, the only option is to resort to begging despite all odds.

According to Murkhajee (2019), there are three types of begging namely traditional (street) begging, internet (cyber) begging and prayer (religious) begging. The street begging is the oldest form of begging whereby beggars move from one street (location) to another. Internet begging involves begging for money or other forms of help from strangers over the Internet. In the prayer form of begging, people ask for money using the name of God at the instance of prayer. In any form of begging, the central notion is that the beggars have some limitations or problems that make them not to be able to fend for themselves.

Meaning of Prayer or Religious Begging

Prayer or religious begging is the type of begging in

which the beggar uses prayer as a bait to attract attention of donors (audience) (Mobolaji, 2018). This category of beggars differ from traditional beggars in that they do not move from street to street but are found specifically in major motor parks or bus terminals. Their target is usually travelers (especially long distance travelers). Prayer beggars are usually able-bodied adult men or women; most times they dress very well, look healthy and smart (Mbah, 2020). On seeing them, one would never believe that such caliber of persons could be begging. In their mode of operation, they usually use the name of God to entice their audience. This is because they (beggars) believe that people everywhere revere the name of God (Timothy, 2020). In addition, Uche (2019) avers that one of the reasons for their huge success is the inherent fears that usually grab travelers due to uncertainties in travelling which may include accidents, armed robbery attacks or kidnap. This fear is more pronounced lately due to the rampant cases of kidnappings and abductions of travelers coupled with bad roads.

Naturally, any traveler will want to receive prayer against accidents, attacks or kidnappings; hence these travelers are always eager to listen to such prayer beggars. According to Umeige (2018), prayer beggars operate on a similar pattern; the pattern is first of all, introduction, singing of religious songs with clapping, a little sermon and closing prayer which is closely followed by the money request. Travelers are requested to sow (money) into the work of God (ministry) as a precondition to receive their blessings or miracles from God. In some cases when it seems travelers are adamant to the money request, some of such prayer beggars tend to lay curses or threaten evil on the travelers (Timothy 2020). One question that readily comes to mind is; does God use threats to persuade people? Is God that wicked? Does God use force to extort money from people when He is the owner of the universe? This attitude of threatening travelers has raised a lot of skepticism among people which has made them to query the authenticity or genuineness of some prayer beggars. In the same vein, Ukeije (2018) lending a voice on the issue of prayer begging asked if God ordained that His children should be beggars after He instructed His people to work and earn a living. If one must beg, should it not be at the instance of known incapabilities? However, Onuvughe (2013) argues that the irony of the whole situation of some prayer beggars is that some of them are learned and healthy enough to work. The question then is what then are their reasons for begging?

Begging – A Christian Perspective

The issue of prayer or religious begging has raised questions in the mind of many people – both Christian and Muslins. In Nigeria, there are three main religions, namely Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR). Each of these faiths has their notion about religious begging. In the Christian faith begging is allowed if the beggar has some form of incapacitations in the form of sickness, homeless, joblessness or being orphaned. That is why the Holy Bible recorded that there will always be the poor among me (Matthew 26: vs 11). This is because there is always trouble in the world that will make people homeless, orphans or sick. The Bible never enjoined healthy and able bodied persons to beg; rather, it is stated clearly that "He who does not work should not eat". Again, Paul the Apostle (the greatest evangelist) wrote clearly in Acts that his hands have labored and ministered to his needs, so that nobody could say he (Paul) was a burden to him. This statement clearly indicates that though Paul was preaching from one place to the other (doing the work of God), he did not forget his business or job which was tent-making. Tent making was his business; from that business, he was able to cater for his personal needs even as he was busy doing the work of God. The lifestyle of Paul is characteristically different from the altitude to work of some prayer beggars today who totally leave their jobs or work and depend on little money which travelers will donate. In cases whereby the money is not forth coming or is not adequate, they are forced to release curses or threaten the travelers. However, Alubo (2012) has argued that this laying of crises is anti-Christian because the bible enjoins us to bless not to curse. Again in Matthew 10 verse 8 Jesus

stated clearly that freely you receive, freely you give. This means that believers are not to collect anything in return from people for doing the work of God. However, if those people (in appreciation and out of volition) decide to give, the preacher can collect with a grateful heart. The issue of forcing money out of people's pocket in the name of God is anti godly and is never supported anywhere in the bible.

It is equally instructive to note that Jesus was a carpenter. He learnt carpentry from his father and also all his disciples were busy people. Some were tax collectors, and some were fishermen. There was never a time it was recorded in the bible that Jesus or His disciples collected money from the audience. Even when Peter needed to pay tax, he was sent to the river to go and fish. From the fish mouth, he saw money and used it to pay their taxes. In summary, Christianity does not support prayer begging or begging in the name of the Lord. Jesus enjoins brethren to bear one another's burden. This means that well-to-do people or rich people in the church should assist the less privileged ones to meet their needs. This injunction was made so that begging will be minimized because it is a debase to the God who owns the whole universe.

Begging: Islamic Perspective

The word begging is derived from the Arabic word of asking (su'aal) (Khalid 2020). For example e.g.; I asked him for the thing", meaning "I asked him to give it to me" (IbnManzoor, 1986). In the Holy Quran, The Almighty said (He will not ask you for your money). Therefore, begging means decorating the soul for what is being treasured and beautifying the ugly (Al-Zubairi, 1973). Terminologically, begging means extending the hand or pretending to do a service or display a simple commodity or perform acrobatic games in the public to seek charity from people (Bridgman, 2011). By begging, individuals seek to escape from life's responsibilities, especially those who do not have the desire to engage in an honorable work that generates an income for them and saves their face from asking for sympathy (Ali, 2015).

According to Khalid (2020), begging is only permitted for some categories of persons like the homeless (vagrancy) and the poor. Khalid maintained that vagrancy (homelessness) in language terms means an idler, or a homeless fugitive who has no shelter. Similarly, as a term, vagrancy means voluntary absence from work and abandonment of the permissible pursuit of livelihood. It concerns those who do not earn a living whether by active pursuit or neglect of providing the basics of honorable life for themselves (Al-Bakri, 1988). The poor in this context connotes a person who does not have enough for his family (Al-Razi, 1983). Allah said in the Holy Quran (Only alms are given to the poor and needy). Poverty therefore means living without a minimum level of a certain income due to the lack of adequate food, shelter and health care (Issa, 2012; World Bank Group, 2004). According to the United Nations (1990), poverty entails hunger, lack of shelter, disease and the inability to treatment, lack of ownership of work and fear of the future.

From the submissions of different Islamic scholars cited above it could be deduced that begging is not a supported profession especially when the beggar is not among the categories of persons listed. It then means that there is no way in the Holy Quran that laziness and shying away from one's responsibilities are supported. Every able bodied human being is expected to work hard to be able to provide for his family. People who practice begging view it as a legitimate activity. Therefore, they do not feel ashamed when they engage in it (Bamisaiye, 1974). They do many forms of it, and may resort to proficiently inventing methods and tricks in pursuit of money. Begging became a way to obtain quick income in light of the circumstances and the increase of high rates of poverty, unemployment, disease, etc. It has spread in some countries including Nigeria under the economic embargo, displacement, unemployment and multiple crises of insecurity and stability. The high rate of unemployment and the spread of diseases and epidemics increased the number of the poor and needy as well as beggars (Al-Najjar, 1981). Despite this the only people permitted to beg based on Islamic injunction are the poor and the homeless.

Perceptions of the Public about Prayer Begging

The proliferation of prayer beggars has raised reactions from the general public regarding their real intentions and the reasons for their action. In the views of Onyejekwu (2019), prayer begging is a religious fraud. He stated that fraud is simply using an unlawful means to extort a valuable from someone or by working on their intelligence. Onyejekwu stated that some prayer beggars use threats and intimidations to induce fears on travelers which make travelers to bring out money even against their wish.

Similarly, Aguoru (2019) observed that prayer or religious begging is a kind of social nuisance. This is because according to him, every traveler already knows the risks involved. One needs not remind or emphasize the risk to travelers in a bid to create more fears to collect money. According to Aguoru, every traveler especially adults is old and mature enough to handle whatever risks that may ensue in the journey. The practice of using prayer threats to induce fears in travelers and sometimes the noise that is usually associated with such constitute a social malaise.

Prayer begging has also been described as a dignified or galvanized form of traditional begging by Okenta (2020). Okenta noted that some prayer beggars are graduates, who are well- dressed and speak good grammar. However Okenta queried why people with such sterling qualities could resort to begging rather than using their skills in a more positive way to earn a living. According to Okenta, there is no difference between prayer begging and traditional begging except in the clientele and the location (which is motor parks or bus terminals).

In the submission of Mbah (2020), prayer begging could be seen as a means of covering irresponsibility. Mbah argued that the Bible advised all men and women to provide the needs of their family as people who fear God. That means that anyone who fails in his or her duties towards his family does not have the fear of God and as such is irresponsible. People that beg using prayer use the money to meet their basic needs of clothes, food or shelter (which they are expected to provide for their family under normal circumstances) as responsible people. But as a result of sheer irresponsibility, such persons resort to prayer begging to cover up.

Characteristics of Authentic Beggars

Begging is an age-long phenomenon especially in poor countries. However, despite the rampant nature of begging, there are certain criteria that qualify one to be called a beggar. This means that people will only be moved to assist a supposed beggar when these traits are evident in their life or situation.

In identifying beggars, Adejumo (2019) noted that real beggars are those experiencing poverty, displacement from home (due to flood, war or crises), or are orphans and refugees. These categories of persons are people that have certain incapabilities that will not allow them to acquire skills (hence they are unskilled), learn a trade or be educated to be employable. Because they are not skilled in any form of trade or vocation they cannot be entrepreneurs or business owners.

Obrien (2017) argued that even some orphans do not beg. This is because they prefer to go and serve a master to learn a trade or a business so that they can lead independent life later rather than beg. It is on this note that Mazi (2018) noted that some beggars are bundle of lazy, irresponsible and shameless people who do not want to work hard to earn a living but rather to be parasite by depending on others by begging. Mazi further averred that a person of integrity (no matter the ugly situation) will rather do menial jobs to survive than to beg. Such a person sees begging as a shameful act.

In another line of thought McDonald (2016) stated that in some countries the government makes provisions for re-habitation of displaced citizens to reduce incidences of beggary. In some cases, some families are contacted to help accommodate such displaced persons while the government sends stipends to such families for their sustenance. However, due to the increase in displacement of citizens (due to flood, crises or war), the capacity to accommodate is far less than the number of displaced persons and as such the available option is begging.

Theoretical Framework

Economic Deprivation Theory

The Economic Deprivation Theory by Willam Hasen (2016) states that may people especially urchins resort to street begging or other forms of begging when and where they are not able to get their economic needs met due to serious poverty in their family or area or region. According to the theory, there are crowds of street urchins in every city in Nigeria. They are not so stupid as to try to beg from people who are as poor as they are; rather they wait in areas where they feel their take will be greater. Such areas include hotels, banks, upscale shopping area, rich men's houses, motor parks, bus terminals etc. Their main aim is to be pitied and given assistance preferably in food or cash. Some of the key findings that lead to begging and youth radicalization include ignorance of true religious teaching, unemployment and poverty, poor parental upbringing and high level of illiteracy. These factors combine to blind the people to think that begging is the only way out of their desperate condition; hence they do not make any formal thinking out of box to address their plight.

The Economic Deprivation theory is appropriate for the study because most prayer beggars do not think well. If they are really thoughtful they would have known that they are not among the caliber of persons to beg and as such should have thought out of the box to do other meaningful and legitimate things for survival.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross sectional survey design. In this design data are usually elicited from a representative sample of a population and the results used to generalize for the entire population. The study population is all long distance travelers in Jos metropolis. The use of long distance travelers is because they are the main target of prayer beggars and as such have experienced prayer beggars in any of their journeys. A sample of 80 long distance travelers was selected from four major motor parks in Jos metropolis. The study used the purposive sampling technique in selecting the sample. The criteria for selection include that the person is resident in Jos and travels at least once in two weeks to places like far North, Eastern states and Western states. Data were collected by means of a researcher made structured questionnaire tagged Prayer Begging Questionnaire (PBQ). The Cronbach-Alpha reliability index of the PBQ is 0.76 indicative of high reliability. Direct delivery method was used in collating data while the percentage was used in analysing the data. The bench mark is 50%, hence any item with affirmative response below 50% was not regarded as influential though was recognized. The choice of the percentage was due its simplicity to relaying information to lay readers and its ease of interpretation.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What categories of persons are permitted by religions to beg?

Table 1: Categories of Persons Permitted by Religious to Beg

S/N	Statement	Agreed Freq	%	Disagreed Freq	%
1.	Orphans	68	85.0	12	15.0
2.	Homeless	72	90.0	08	10.0
3.	The poor	75	93.8	05	6.2
4.	Destitute (displaced person)	70	87.5	10	12.5
5.	Refugees	76	95.0	04	5.0
6.	The sick	73	91.3	07	8.7

Evidences in Table 1 show that refugees (95%), the poor (93.8%), and the sick (91.3%) are the most vulnerable people permitted by religion to beg. Others include the homeless (90%), the destitute (87.5%) and the orphans. From the table above it could be seen that all the listed categories have affirmative responses above the 50% bench mark which means that they are accepted as influential.

Research Question 2: What are the reasons for prayer begging?

Table 2: Reasons for Prayer Begging

S/N	Statement	Agreed Freq	%	Disagreed Freq	%
1.	To support the work of God	35	43.8	55	56.2
2.	To help the travelers	60	75.0	20	25.0
3.	To defraud the public	53	66.3	27	33.7
4.	To cover their laziness	68	85.0	12	15.0
5.	To cover their lack of skills	70	87.5	10	12.5
6.	Lack of jobs	65	81.3	15	18.7

Result in Table 2 reveals that people beg using prayer primarily to cover their lack of skills (87.5%), to cover their laziness (85%) and due to lack of jobs (81.3%). In the same vein it is evident from Table 2 that the issue of supporting the work of God has affirmative response of 43.8% which is below the bench mark, hence cannot be regarded as influential. In essence it could be deduced that to support the work of God is not accepted as a reason for prayer begging.

Research Question 3: How do the public perceive prayer begging?

Table 3: Perception of the Public about Prayer Begging

S/N	Statement	Agreed Freq	%	Disagreed Freq	%
1.	Some prayer beggars are sincerely using it for God's work	34	42.5	46	57.5
2.	They collect the money for their selfish interest	48	60.0	32	40.0
3.	Prayer begging is a social ill	69	86.3	11	13.7
4.	Some prayer beggars may be fraudsters	67	83.8	13	16.2
5.	Some prayer beg because they are lazy to work	73	91.3	07	8.7
6.	Some prayer beggars are irresponsible	65	81.3	15	18.7

Going by results presented in Table 3, it evident that the widely accepted perception of prayer begging are that some prayer beggars are lazy to work (91.3%), prayer begging is a social ill (86.3%) and that some prayer beggars may be fraudsters (83.8%). It is interesting to note that only 42.5% of the respondents agreed that prayer beggars are sincerely using it for Gods work. However, since 42.5% is below the bench mark, then it is not accepted as influential and as such it is discarded. Conversely, it implies that a greater percentage (57.5%) is of the opinion that they do not use it for God's work.

Research Question 4: How can prayer begging be curtailed in Nigeria?

Table 4: Means of Curtailing Prayer Begging

S/N	Statement	Agreed Freq	%	Disagreed Freq	%
1.	Give your support only to certified beggars	75	93.8	05	6.2
2.	Ignore their financial pleas and threats	68	85.0	12	15.0
3.	Support as little as you can if you feel led	55	68.9	25	31.1
4.	Refer them to charity organizations for aid	60	75.5	20	25.0
5.	Advise prayer beggars to get jobs or skills	70	87.5	10	12.5

Table 4 shows that 93.8% agreed that only certified beggars should be assisted, 87.5% said prayer beggars should be advised to get jobs or acquire skills and 85% opined that we ignore their financial pleas and threats. The least accepted remedy is to support as little as one can if one feels led (68.9%).

DISCUSSION

The study is on prayer begging as a means of survival in Nigeria. It aimed at identifying the reasons for prayer begging and the perceptions of the public regarding prayer begging. It was gathered that there are categories of persons permitted to be which are the destitute, refugees, homeless and orphans. This finding is in tandem with Adejumo (2016) who noted that real beggars are those experiencing poverty, displacement from home (due

to flood, war or crises), orphans and refugees. As such these people are unable to fend for themselves due to their obvious prevailing bad conditions. In the same manner, the study discovered that there are certain reasons that make people to beg in the name of God. Some of them are lack of skills, laziness and unemployment. In Nigeria a lot of persons including graduates are unemployed. They do not have any means of survival. And some of them feel too proud to do menial jobs while waiting for the main job to come. That is why Mbah (2020) argued that some prayer beggars might actually be covering their laziness or pride. In the present day Nigeria, everyone is aware of the state of the economy so that no sensible person can depend on another for survival. It is for the same reason that youths are admonished to acquire relevant skills in addition to their certificates to enable them survive in the society because getting a job now is very rare. So to depend on alms giving or financial support from travelers as a means of survival cannot be ideal.

The study equally revealed the way the public perceive prayer beggars. Prayer beggars are perceives as irresponsible people. This finding agrees with the submission of Mazi (2018). Mazi noted that some beggars are bundle of lazy, irresponsible and shameless people who do not want to work hard to earn a living but rather to be parasite by depending on others by begging. Prayer begging is perceived as shameful because when one considers the caliber of persons that prayer beg. Some of them are educated and can do many other legit jobs to earn money yet they resort to begging in the name of God.

To curtail the incidences of prayer begging, it was suggested that travelers ignore their financial pleas and threats. This is necessary because they use such threats to induce fears in the unsuspecting innocent travelers (Uche, 2019). When the travelers ignore their threats and still have smooth and successful journeys then the prayer beggars will know that safety is of God not on them.

CONCLUSION

The study was on prayer begging in Nigeria. It was designed to examine the incidence of prayer begging and to unravel the reasons behind it. From the study it was gathered that the categories of persons permitted to beg are the orphans, refugees, homeless and the poor. Also many prayer beggars beg due to lack of skills, unemployment and laziness among others. In the same vein. the study identified the perception of the public about prayer beggars to be those of being irresponsible, a social ill and shameful act. Some of the means to curtail the incidence of prayer begging include ignoring their financial pleas and threats and advising them to get jobs or acquire skills among others. The study concludes therefore that prayer begging is a social ill in Nigeria and should be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study the following are recommended:

1. The government should enact policies that will ensure that only the certified category of beggars are found begging in the streets and other places.
2. Prayer beggars should be advised and assisted by charity organizations and philanthropists to start off business or acquire skills for survival.
3. Motor park and bus terminal managers should not permit prayer beggars to use their facilities for begging anymore.
4. People in ministry should not abandon their jobs or vocation so as to have adequate finance to run their ministry and still cater for their families.
5. The government should create employment for graduates to reduce the propensity of resorting to begging using the name of the Lord.
6. The various institutions of learning should include entrepreneurship as a compulsory part of the curriculum so that graduates can acquire one or more skills before graduation to enable survival in the society in the absence of a paid job.

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