

Street Begging Among Muslims in Ibadan — On Islam and Social Manners

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Abstract

Almsgiving/charity is one of the pillars of Islam and highly recommended as a duty, however begging as a profession is totally prohibited. However, some segments of the Muslim community have exploited the Islamic window of benevolence by turning themselves into perpetual beggars. This paper examined the socio-cultural as well as religio-social effects of begging among Muslims and how the two have impacted the image of Islam and Muslims in a contemporary plural society such as Nigeria. The paper focused on the carefree attitude of both the government and the people towards the beautification and environmental sanitation system of the city of Ibadan. It interrogated the environmental degradation and the menace that beggars constantly constitute. It used structured interviews to elicit data from selected beggars from three locations in Ibadan. The paper sought to know: why poverty is synonymous with Muslims; what mechanisms are in place by Islam to deal with poverty within the Muslim community and how these mechanisms have impacted the lives of Muslims; and to what extent Muslims can engage in begging?

Keywords: Street begging, Islam, Muslim, Social manner, Ibadan

Introduction

Ibadan is one of the historical cities in Yorubaland. Its people are from the Yoruba ethnic group though the city is populated by various other ethnic groups in Nigeria. but because the area is one of the historical cities of the Yoruba ethnic group, it is Yoruba territory. It is therefore, mostly populated by the Yoruba who constitute different clans and lineages. It is also common knowledge that Ibadan is the city with the largest landmass in the whole of the West African sub-region (Mabogunje, Awe & Lloyd, 1967).

Ibadan is presumed to have Muslims as the majority in its population because of its earliest contact with Islam when it arrived in Yorubaland and the contributions of its key people to the development of Islam in Ibadan land (Doi, 1975). The earliest people to embrace Islam in Ibadan were members of the ruling class and as this class of people embraced Islam, their families and subjects followed them in the new faith. This to a large extent added to the popularity of Islam and the Muslims in the city of Ibadan (Abdul-Rahman, 1989). Due to this factor, whatever happens in the city of Ibadan, Muslims are found in the majority. Put differently, any discussion of social issues (such as begging) in the city of Ibadan must pay attention to the Muslim population, also because they constitute a large proportion of those involved in the act.

A visitor to Ibadan would wonder at the poor level of sanitation in the city. This can be attributed to environmental mismanagement and lack of urban city planning. Almost everywhere one turns to in Ibadan one sees filth. The case is worse in areas where the beggars are situated. This segment of the society does not bother at all about the condition of their living environment. The major concern to this set of people is their material gain regardless of whether the environment is dirty/liveable or not. The insistence on begging by those who see it as an easy means to make a living, particularly the Muslims, calls for scholarly enquiry. This is important in order to bring to the fore, the Islamic standpoint on begging. The questions that may be pertinent to this enquiry are: Exactly when does Islam allow its adherents to beg? To what extent is begging allowed? What are the Islamic legal discourses on begging? When does begging become a sin for a Muslim? Answers to these questions will be discussed in this paper.

Islam and Almsgiving/Charity

If one goes by the number of times almsgiving is mentioned in the Qur'an, it would suggest that Islam encourages the act of begging without restrictions. *Zakat* is mentioned as many times as *salat* is repeated in the Qur'an to lay emphasis on their importance. The observance of prayers as well as payment and giving out from one's wealth are the major prerequisites of becoming a true Muslim, after the testification of faith in the oneness of Allah. *Zakat* is indeed the third fundamental pillar of Islam and it has its guiding rules and principles of payment and administration. In some instances in the Qur'an, *zakat* and *sadaqah* are used interchangeably, however, while *zakat* is a compulsory duty on every Muslim who meets the necessary criteria of wealth, *sadaqah* is a voluntary act for all Muslims irrespective of financial status. In addition, while *zakat* is time bound, *sadaqah* can be done at will, at the discretion of the giver; both are commanded in the Qur'an. According to the Qur'an, eight categories of people can benefit from *zakat* and *sadaqah*:

- the poor
- the needy
- those employed to administer the (funds)
- those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to truth);
- those in bondage
- those in debt,
- in the course of God the wayfarer (Qur'an 9:60)

In another *ayah* (verse), the Qur'an states thus:

Of their goods take alms, That so thou mightiest
Purify and sanctify them; And pray on their behalf.
Verily thy prayers are a source of security for them:
And Allah is One Who heareth and knoweth. (Qur'an 9:
103)

In line with the above *āyāt* (verses), almsgiving (*zakat*) is a compulsory religious duty for every Muslim, the neglect of which amounts to sinning against the commandment of God. But the

underlying problems are how to demarcate between fundamental/ compulsory and meritorious duties and how to determine those who are genuinely in need or are poor. This is particularly important given the prevailing situation among Muslims in Nigeria, particularly in the city of Ibadan. In fact, the indicators to differentiate between the haves and the have-nots are not there because of the statements in the Qur'anic and Prophetic injunctions on the treatment of beggars: "And repulse not the beggar". (Qur'an 93:10) "...the upper hand is better than the lower hand (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 1362) (i.e., "he who gives in charity is better than he who takes it." In other words, Muslims must be cautious not to fall short of their responsibilities, while at the same time not aiding and abetting indolence. To critically engage this problem, this paper examines the hermeneutics of begging within the Islamic texts as well as from scholars' opinions.

On the Grammar of Begging

Almsgiving is an express commandment by God. It is one of the fundamental pillars of Islam and is as important as other fundamental duties expected of a Muslim. In the Qur'an, distinction is made between almsgiving and begging. But before that, it is necessary to quickly explore the meaning and the root of the word begging. From the literary point of view, the root verb of begging comes from *t-s-w-l* (*tasawwala*=he begged), the act itself is *tasawwulu* (begging) and a beggar can be referred to as *al-mutasawwulu*. In as much as almsgiving is encouraged and enforced in Islam, the act of begging is specifically frowned at, given the importance ascribed to the blessings attached to spending from the proceeds of one's own sweat. In Islamic terminology, sadaqah has been defined as an act of "giving something . . . without seeking a substitute in return and with the intention of pleasing Allah" (Philips, 2020). Moreover, sadaqah from a similar perspective "is what the person gives from what he possesses, like Zakat, hoping to get closer to Allah". Narratives on the lives of the Prophet and his companions are replete with instances where he discouraged some of his companions from begging and encouraged them to engage in fruitful earning through their own sweat. In other words, while almsgiving is considered a compulsory duty in Islam, begging is strongly discouraged among Muslims. A giver in the language of the Qur'an, is like a champion on the field of sports whose joy is limitless when glory is achieved. Therefore, the Qur'an encourages the giver more

often than a beggar/receiver. An examination of the sayings of the Prophet will reveal that there is more emphasis on the need to be a giver than to be a receiver. The following statements from the Prophet (S.A.W.) alludes to this:

Save yourself from hellfire even by giving a half-date fruit in charity; and if you cannot afford even that, you should at least say a good word. (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 2, Book 24, Hadith 21/6195)

The upper hand is better than the lower hand. The upper hand is the one that gives and the lower hand is the one that takes. (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 1362; see also Sahih Muslim, Book of Zakat, Hadith No. 1033)

According to Bilal Philips, there are two types of people in the world: givers and takers. The takers may eat better, but the givers sleep better. In other words, giving in charity is better than begging (Philips, 2020). Perhaps, this is the reason why the Prophet of Islam preferred not to consume from sadaqah and would rather accept gifts. We deduce from this that gifts are like a means to cement or solidify relationships between people while almsgiving/charity is a religious duty of which there are choices of people to be given.

Socio-Cultural Effects of Begging

A cursory look at the city of Ibadan by a visitor will suggest perhaps two views, that: 1) the city is majorly populated by Muslims and, 2) the majority of beggars in the city of Ibadan are Muslims. This is not surprising as they are products of what constitutes identities in the city of Ibadan. In Ibadan, it is easy to categorize people as Muslims due to the integration of Islamic culture into the indigenous Yoruba culture. The Islamic adornment system, especially for women, is seen everywhere even among non-Muslim women. In the city of Ibadan, it is a common practice among women to wear a scarf or what the Yoruba call *iborun* (veil) which is similar to the Islamic adornment known as *hijab*, without which Yoruba women feel their dressing is incomplete. In this instance, it can easily be concluded that the integration of the Islamic culture into that of the Yoruba is very strong and alive. Therefore, it is important to examine whether the act of begging has been, through Islamic

integration, embedded in Yoruba cultural practices or not. This study found that begging is an age-old phenomenon (Farisade, 2008) as well as a universal phenomenon (Selby, 2008). Differences only exist in the mode of operation based on geographical location, cultural orientation, and the norms of the people.

Furthermore, according to Olaosun (2009), there are categories of beggars in Southwest Nigeria and they range from the 'fine *baara*' to the 'sit-at-place', the '*babiyala*', and the 'ceremonial' beggars. While Olaosun's categorization is very apt, there are others that this study refers to as the 'motor park' and 'drummer' beggars. Whereas the fine *baara* beggars are those who, in line with Olaosun, are 'professional' beggars. They exploit every opportunity to tell unfounded stories to appeal to the sympathy of their acquaintances. To this category of beggars, the religious garb is an instrument of their 'profession'. Sometimes, they catch their benefactors unawares and sometimes, they even resort to stealing. They are known by their appearance/dressing and the stories they tell, such as: "I am coming from the hospital where I could not afford the cost of the medications prescribed for me," or "my child is in the hospital in a critical condition" and many more. The majority in this category, according to Olaosun, are school drops-out, unemployed youths, those who have in one way or the other failed in the pursuit of their careers, or disarmed bandits. Because of their dressing style, they easily fit into the society, even at social gatherings. Interestingly too, one of the salient features of this category is that as soon as they realize that they have become well known in an area or location, they quickly move to another location to avoid suspicion.

The second category, the 'sit-at-place' (called sit-at-place because, they are usually in a fixed location and do not move around like the *babiyala* group), are complacent beggars. However, they do not just sit anywhere but choose advantageous places like restaurants, places of worship, and locations where commodities for the rich are sold, expecting that the well-to-do and wealthy customers will give them whatever they can afford to part with. In this category are the old and critically-handicapped who do not need much talk before they are given alms. In other words, their conditions are obvious and usually speak for them. Those of them who choose to sit at places of worship are commonly patronized by worshippers who want to fulfil their religious obligation of almsgiving.

The *babiyala* category includes entertainers who move from one street to another singing to beg. The beggars under this category are usually Hausa, Kanuri or Fulani who have emigrated to the southwestern part of the country to seek their fortune through begging. They are usually go around in groups and because of the singing aspect of their begging, they are usually more successful at finding favour with people than other categories. In other words, the choice of begging via entertainment seems to be lucrative in the Nigerian society.

Named after the event that is relevant to their engagement, the 'ceremonial' beggars are usually seen at ceremonies fanning, eulogising, or tacking flowers or ribbons to the chests of their intended benefactors. On many occasions, the 'drummer' beggars fall into this category. One wonders how they get information about impending ceremonies. They usually appear at occasions without invitation. The majority in this category are from the Yoruba ethnic group, and are comprised mainly of youth, aged men and women. They appeal to the emotions of their benefactors through the unsolicited services they usually render. Sometimes they sing and chant uncoordinated songs and eulogies.

Similarly, the motor park beggars are those who move from one vehicle to the other at motor parks asking for alms. These range from the old and middle aged to youths and young children. All these categories of beggars are present in the city of Ibadan and can be seen everywhere.

To bring home the socio-cultural effects of begging therefore requires an excursion into the Yoruba value system. Among the Yoruba, begging is a hateful act. It is not only frowned upon but is also considered shameful act. That is why an ordinary Yoruba man/woman will constantly pray that God should not make begging their means of livelihood and often say, *Èdùmàrè májẹ n tọrọjẹ* (May the Lord forbid that I beg to feed). In other words, the Yoruba as a people really appreciate and cherish feeding from the sweat of their own brows. A beggar in the reckoning of the Yoruba is a lazy person who will in turn feed from 'filth'. A beggar can also resort to stealing whenever begging proves not to be lucrative because free income would have become a habit. If it is true that the Yoruba do not celebrate the act or the actor (begging/beggar), how come there are so many beggars on the streets of the city of Ibadan?

The answer to this question above is obvious. Only the loss of familial prestige and honour will make a Yoruba person resort to begging. Another important point here is that the majority of the beggars in Yorubaland in general and the city of Ibadan in particular are from northern Nigeria and other West African countries. These are people whose practices have been driven by their cultural history and belief systems. Among the Hausa, the concept of *almajiri* holds sway. The term *almajiri* was actually coined from *al-Muhājirūn* (the emigrants) (Olaosun, 2009). This term referred to those who emigrated with Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from Makkah to Yathrib (later Madinah), leaving behind their families and worldly possessions due to persecution from their people in Makkah for accepting the new faith, Islam. When they got to Madinah, they became objects of benevolence through the hands of the *Ansār* (helpers) who were their hosts. The concepts of *al-Muhājirūn* and *al-Ansār* are what the Hausa people of Nigeria, through their interactions with Islam, have turned into a celebrated culture. But does this mean the early migrants of Islam turned themselves to perpetual beggars? The answer to this is no, because, in as much as they were critically in need of accommodation and sustenance, they did not subject themselves to begging. Rather, the helpers of Madinah were willing to render assistance to their brothers based on the promises they made to the Prophet during the pledge of *al-Aqaba* at Taif (Ali, 1979: 140-142). In other words, the *Ansār* made themselves available to the needs of the *Muhājirūn* when the latter needed it most. This is evidenced in one of the *ayāt* (verses) of the Qur'an:

To the indigent Muhajirs, those who were expelled from their homes and their property, while seeking grace from Allah and (His) good pleasure, and aiding Allah and His Messenger: such are indeed the sincere ones – But those who before them, had homes (in Madinah) and had adopted the faith – show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls – they are the ones that achieve prosperity. (Qur'an 59: 8-9)

In accord with the above *ayāt* of the Qur'an, the Islamic provision of almsgiving is a direct means of poverty alleviation as well as a relief

system for those who are genuinely in need. This does not indicate that Muslims should subject themselves to perpetual begging, making it a habit or their regular source of income. Therefore, some of the behaviours we see among Muslims in this part of the world are not in accord with the Islamic social ethics and manners but are rather driven by selfish and egoistic interpretations of the all-embracing and all-inclusive culture of Islam. Though some Muslims may be poor, that is not a licence to adopt perpetual begging. Rather, it is meritorious to earn a living through lawful labour. This is also not to discredit the institution of zakat/sadaqah and the listed beneficiaries in the Qur'an but to encourage and strengthen earning through *halal* (lawful) means in order not to allow indolence within the Muslim *ummah* (community).

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 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. One becomes very curious to know what the town planners and environmental agencies in Nigeria, with particular reference to the city of Ibadan, are doing to make the city free of beggars. Indeed, the current dispensation in the city of Ibadan calls for the urgent attention of both the government and the Muslim community.

The city of Ibadan is now home to beggars, whether handicapped or not. Everywhere you go, you find them in their numbers. There is no more regard for motor roads and motor parks. Worst of all is that any

area where the beggars are found in large number in the city of Ibadan, it is usually dirty as if filth is an accompaniment of begging or being Muslim. This is one of the reasons the act of begging is tagged a menace in this study. Visits to Mokola roundabout, Ojoo and the inner Sabo revealed very disturbing situations.

This filth situation is a serious health threat which the government, as a matter of urgency, needs to do something about in order to prevent diseases such as cholera, severe fever and other unforeseen outbreaks, particularly during this COVID-19 period. The living conditions in these areas call for urgent attention and actions on the part of the government. It was stated by the "leader" of beggars at inner Sabo during interactions with him, that, the government of Oyo State, led by Governor Alao Akala really did well for them. He mentioned that it was during the Akala regime that they were all relocated to that particular area with a few blocks of low-cost houses. Since then, the place has witnessed expansion by way of erection of sheds due to the increase in the population of beggars residing in the area.

Despite the increase in the population of the area, the basic amenities of life such as toilet facilities, potable water, and living quarters are grossly lacking. During the data collection, the researchers were greeted with very dense stench from all areas of the inner Sabo. The most worrisome aspect of the situation is that grandmothers/grandfathers, children and grandchildren of different families were found inhabiting the same place. This type of arrangement can only be accounted for by the way they get married. With all these in mind, it can be categorically stated that the act of begging and the perpetrators have become a menace in the city of Ibadan.

Islamic Windows of Benevolence: a curse or a blessing?

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 order 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.

Islamic Mechanisms for Poverty Alleviation

Many Qur'anic injunctions exist which are aimed at reducing poverty within the Muslim ummah. This is because Islam rejects poverty and hunger, viewing it as a grave danger that can threaten not only the faith but also the moral wellbeing of an individual (Ogunbado, 2011). Poverty is a means of insecurity and threatens the peace and tranquillity of a nation. Ogunbado (2011) stated that it can force people to wear the garb of indecency and eventually stray from the path of guidance. To avert this possibility, Islam has made provisions for Muslims to employ. Mechanisms such as zakah (poor due), sadaqah (charity), *infāq* ((voluntary spending), *waqf* (endowment), *it'ām* (feeding), *ihsān* (benevolence or goodness) among others are relevant here. Whereas zakah is a compulsory religious duty, others are considered to be meritorious and commendable if performed with good intention. The pertinent question here is, how impactful are all these windows within the Nigerian society? It is worrisome to note that despite the fact that all these mechanisms exist, begging is still rampant among Muslims in

Nigeria, and particularly on the streets of Ibadan, because of lack of organized efforts on the part of both the government and the Muslim ummah. The institution of zakah was not taken very seriously by the majority the Muslims over the decades, except in recent times when young Muslim organizations have woken up to the benefits of payment and distribution of zakah.

In the city of Ibadan, there are quite a number of Muslim organisations such as: Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN), NASFAT, University of Ibadan Muslim Community (UIMC), et cetera that have taken it upon themselves to have organized zakat/sadaqat foundations to cater for the needs of poor people among the Muslims. However, the impact of these efforts is yet to be visible because of the deep level of poverty in the country generally and among the Muslims in particular. Apart from having organized foundations to utilise the proceeds of zakat by Muslim organizations, there are philanthropists and individuals who on a regular basis engage in acts of *ihsān* through other windows of poverty alleviation listed above. Again, all these have not been impactful because they are not backed by organised efforts as well as follow-up programmes by government and the Muslim ummah in order to sustain them. Another important factor to note is that the number of Muslims that are conscious of paying zakat is very low when compared to the level of poverty among the Muslims in Ibadan. In other words, for Islamic poverty alleviation mechanisms to be impactful in Nigeria or in the city of Ibadan among the Muslims, there is a need for a change in attitude from both government and Muslim philanthropists. Wealth needs be circulated widely in order to reduce the high level of poverty, particularly among the youths. This will in no small way reduce the menace of begging and idleness on the part of the youths especially, if not among the older generation, who have come to consider begging as an end in itself.

Interviews/Data analyses

This study used both social sciences and humanities approaches for the research. Structured interviews were conducted among beggars in three different locations in the city of Ibadan. 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. A Hausa language speaker 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 the city of Ibadan is deeply rooted and requires much more than surface analysis of the situation; rather it needs in-depth scrutiny. About three hundred beggars were interviewed in the three locations chosen in this study. Only a few of the responses of the respondents are presented to avoid repetition of views.

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 three locations sampled in this study. Respondents who gave consent to willingly participate in the survey had to be assured of confidentiality even before the interview questions were asked.

The respondents were chosen randomly in the three locations examined and their background information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Background information of the respondents

Respondents	Age (Years)	Gender	State	Job	How many years have you spent here?	How many children do you have?
1	56	Male	Sokoto	King	10 years or more	2
2	45	Male	Abuja	Gateman	10 years or more	5
3	45	Male	Katsina	King	15 years or more	8
4	50	Male	Jigawa	Trader	Less than 1 year	10
5	95	Female	Not specified	Begging	4 years	8
6	14	Female	Kano	Jobless	7 years or more	5
7	32	Male	Katsina	Jobless	less than a year	7
8	28	Male	Jigawa	Barber	less than 1 year	5
9	60	Male	Jigawa	Farmer	15 years or more	7
10	35	Female	Katsina	Begging	8 years or more	8
11	28	Male	Jigawa	Trader	7 years or more	4

The results obtained indicate that the majority of the beggars were from Jigawa and Katsina states (Figure 1). Among them were males and females with quite a number of children as shown in Table 1. The average age of the respondents was 49 years within the age range of 95 and 14 years. Furthermore, some of the respondents had spent less than a year in Ibadan, while the highest number of years spent by any respondent was 15 years or more. The responses given by some of the participants for leaving their states of origin are:

I left my state because of Boko haram and thieves.¹

¹ Interview with Muhammad Sanni at Sabo in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020.

I left my state because our people in the North used to mock us, they don't understand that we are not capable of earning a livelihood. People here in Ibadan are very good and they give us money.²

I left my state because I was in debt and there was no one to help me. So, I became a beggar when I got here?³

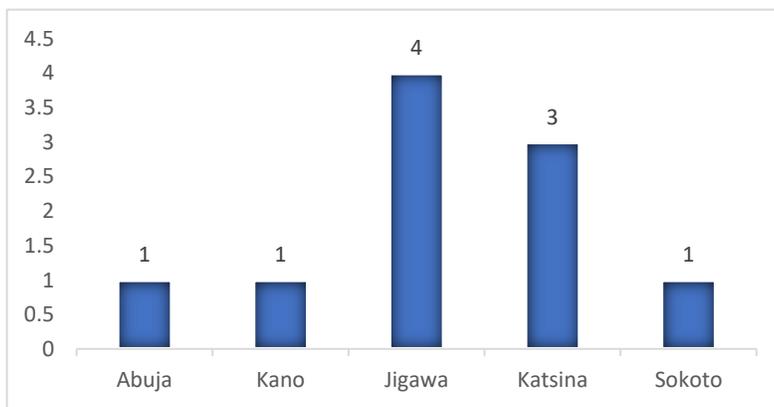


Figure 1: State of origin of the participants.

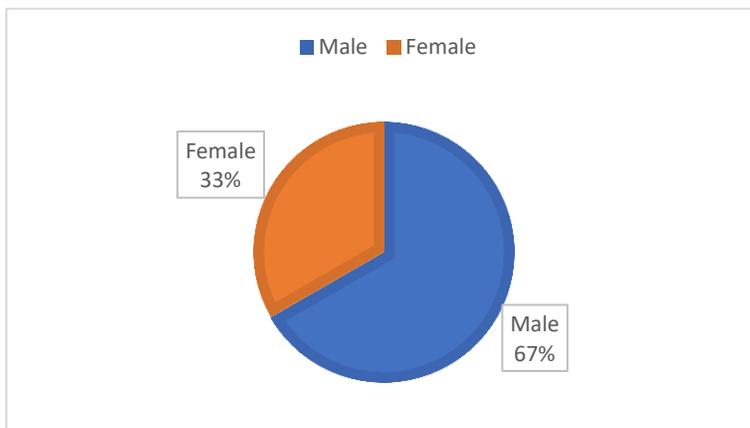


Figure 2: Participants' gender

² Interview with Bala Yusuf at Sabo in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020.

³ Interview with Aisha Ibrahim at Sabo in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020.

Table 2: Information about Islam and begging

How much do you make per day?	Do you think begging is good Islamically?	What do you think government can do?	Will you drop begging if government finds a solution?	What do you understand about Islam?	What is your contribution to this situation?
500	No	Provision of basic amenities	Yes	Submission to the will of Allah	Praying
1000	No	Provision of basic amenities	Yes		Praying
5000	No	Job opportunities	Yes	Submission to the will of Allah	Helping people
2000	No	Free education	No	Islam has 14 pillars	
1000	No	Job opportunities	Yes	Submission to the will of Allah	
Enough to eat	No	Equal rights	Yes	Submission to the will of Allah	Praying
	No	Job opportunities	Yes	Praying 5 times daily	
2000	No	Get females married	Yes		

The average earning per day by the beggars was ₦1,900. The maximum and minimum earnings were ₦5000 and ₦500 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:

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 a beggar?⁴

As you can see, my husband is crippled. He can't do heavy work and I am jobless. So, I joined him as a beggar to take care of the eight children we gave birth to.⁵

Begging is ok 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.⁶

Begging is not proper for those that have the ability to work, but there are some people that don't have choice than begging.⁷

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.⁸

When asked about what they think government can do to help them, 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

⁴ Interview with Bala Yusuf at Sabo in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020.

⁵ Interview with Rabi Muhammad at Mokola in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020,

⁶ Interview with Ibrahim Abdullah at Mokola in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020.

⁷ Interview with Muhammad Fatih at Mokola in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020.

⁸ Interview with Auwal Muhammad at Mokola in Ibadan on 13 July, 2020.

them even promised to stop begging if there is government intervention. See some responses below:

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 drop begging.⁹

Of course, if I have another option, I will drop begging. At least I will be going and coming back home in the evening or afternoon. I will even leave this state and not come back. I will open a shop, start my barbing work, and feed myself as well as my parents.¹⁰

Yes, I will leave begging because it is not that I am happy doing this begging job.¹¹

When asked what they understand about Islam, the summary of their responses is that Islam is submission to the will of Allah, and believing in Allah as the only true God, praying five times daily, fasting in the month of Ramadan, giving zakat/sadaqah if one has the means, and going on pilgrimage to Makkah if one has the capacity to do so. Some of their participants' responses to the question are:

Islam is for a Muslim to know that there is no other God except Allah, and testification that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) is his messenger. So, no matter how difficult my situation is, I believe it is the will of Allah.¹²

Islam, is it like reading? Ok as a Muslim, I read Qur'an but not much, hadith, sirah I read them also but not too much as a Muslim.¹³

⁹ Interview with Abdulrahman Ibrahim at Ojoo in Ibadan on 5 August, 2020

¹⁰ Interview with Auwal Ibrahim at Ojoo in Ibadan on 5 August, 2020.

¹¹ Interview with Rabi Muhammad at Mokola in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020.

¹² Interview with Ahmed Lawan at Ojoo in Ibadan on 5 August, 2020.

¹³ Interview with Muhammad Sanni at Ojoo in Ibadan on 5 August, 2020.

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 are as follows:

As a Muslim and king of this area, I gather people to read Qur'an and pray for Nigeria. The main purpose of our prayer is that Allah should give the government the ability and capacity to help those in need. We pray often to Allah to help open the eyes of our government so they can plan for us, the beggars.¹⁴

My own contribution is to keep praying and help people in need.¹⁵

Going forward

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 Nigeria 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 Nigerian 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 *fine baara* (stylish begging) among the Yoruba.

Apart from youth who have chosen to indulge in idleness or *fine baara*, there are other categories of beggars who are both aged and dependent. The aged in a sane society are 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.

¹⁴ Interview with Abdullah Yusuf at Mokola in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020.

¹⁵ Interview with Abdulrahman Maitama at Mokola in Ibadan on 11 July, 2020.

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 inner Sabo 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.

Conclusion

Islam has often been misunderstood and misrepresented by forces within and without. These elements have exploited the Islamic window of benevolence. Although it is a religious duty on the part of individual Muslims, the window was not put in place to condone laziness in any form. It is evident from the discussions in this study that the Islamic window of almsgiving and charity has been misrepresented. It is also true that this window is beset with difficult challenges, such as increase in the number of idle able-bodied youth, increase in mass illiteracy among youth who have chosen begging as a profession, environmental degradation and pollution, as well as population explosion among the beggars. The latter can be attributed to the way the beggars tend to get married at a very tender age. This study has shown to a large extent how the culture and belief system of the beggars has been deployed to construct the notion of almsgiving among Muslims and how this has resulted in a menace and social security issues in Nigeria, particularly in the city of Ibadan. As has been the case in other parts of Nigeria, with daily increase in the number and visibility of beggars, the act of begging has continued to generate fresh questions about the provision of basic amenities of life by the government of Nigeria. It should be stated that not all persons who claim to be Muslims exhibit the ideals of Islam. The majority of practices by these Muslims are culturally rather than Islamically bound. It is, therefore, important to note that until socio-cultural factors that are catalysts for the celebration and increase in the

number of beggars in Nigeria are taken into reckoning by the government, the menace may linger on indefinitely.

Recommendations

Going forward, this study recommends as follows:

- That beggars be taken away from the streets and major roads in Ibadan by government,
- That government should find a way of disbanding the over-populated inner Sabo and provide basic amenities like toilets and water for the area,
- That government should provide avenues for the engagement of the youth through training them in capacity building to become self-employed and economically empowered.
- That the Muslim ummah should see the menace of begging as a serious challenge and educate its people accordingly.
- That the institution of zakat should be maximally utilised to reduce poverty among the Muslims.
- That basic elementary education be made mandatory to this category of the society by government.

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