Interrogating the Prevalence of Street Begging by Adults with Disabilities Encompassing Children as Escorts in Africa at the Expense of their Basic Education: A Systematic Literature Review

Abdallah Jacob Seni

Department of Educational Foundations and Continuing Education, the University of Dodoma

Abstract

Street begging by adults with disabilities involving children as guides is one of the barriers to accessibility of basic education prevalent in African countries. This study interrogates the commonness of street begging involving children in Africa at the expense of their basic education. It particularly set to understand the factors leading to the prevalence of this dreadful phenomenon and the negative consequences emanating from this practice. A systematic review was adopted to review 20 empirical articles and subject them to thematic content analysis. The results indicated numerous reasons including deficiency of education, sympathy attraction, lack of proper orientation, laziness and poverty. Others are religious grounds and parental separation leading to presence of single mothers and single fathers. The presence of this dreadful phenomenon has deprived children from accessing basic education. The need for more inclusive interventions to tackle the phenomenon in each nation as per contextual conditions arises.

Correspondence

Abdallah Jacob Seni
ajseni@gmail.com

ORCID
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0904-5267

DOI
https://doi.org/10.53449/dnsmm159

Introduction

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, UNICEF (2016) is aware regarding the prevalence of severe begging using children as guides and how it excludes them from enjoying their right to education, weakens their projections in life and exposes them to hardship of life (Seni, 2017; Tatenda et al., 2020). The Africa Agenda 2063 aims to make the youth and children specifically to take lead of the continent's destiny. This noble obligation of moving mankind forward requires a deliberate preparation of these children through empowering them with quality education. Available facts and figures indicate a total of 215 million children mainly from Africa, being child labourers and begging escorts (Mace, 2016). The prevalence of begging by adults with disability using children as their guides thus jeopardizes their schooling as they spend precious time in the begging activity and fail to enrol or attend to school (Ogunyai & Ojakorotu, 2021; Seni, 2017; Tatenda et al., 2020). Conversely, parental care has been widely cited as a crucial component in the child's success on academic pursuits (Ndijuye & Benguye, 2023; Ndijuye & Pambas, 2022; Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022; OCDE, 2018).

The Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set to safeguard that children benefit from access to quality basic education and attain pre requisite competencies as articulated in goals #3 and #4 (UN, 2018). Efforts to evict beggars in various cities and towns of Africa have not been successful due to inadequate resources for sustenance of plans for evacuating or assisting beggars (Namwata et al., 2015). In Ghana for example, Begging was banned before independence in accordance with the Control of Beggars and Destitute Ordinance of 1957 to respond on peoples' desire for eviction of beggars in Accra (Fuseini & Daniel, 2018; Weiss, 2007). International agencies condemn involving children in the begging activity. The United Nations, UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), regard this phenomenon as violation of the basic human rights of children, including education access right, health and develop to fullest potential (Fuseini & Daniel, 2018). The constitutions of various nations also regard education as a basic human right, thus any acts of restriction or denial to access is the breach of the law. While there have been various efforts to widen access of education to all children from global to contexts, the prevalence of begging by adults with disability using children as guides persists. Despite the prevalence of begging using children as escorts, literature on the same is still scant. Most of the studies on begging and on the use of children as guides by beggars with disability tended to concentrate or emerge from West Africa, mainly Nigeria (Adesokan & Owoyemi, 2022; Agunyai & Ojakorotu, 2021; Aliyu & Kayode, 2024; Babangida et al., 2021; Bukoye, 2015; Chukwudeh & Oduaran, 2021; Liman & Abubakar, 2016; Olubusla, 2020; Onagun, 2016; Oluwole, 2016) and from Ghana (Agyemang et al., 2024; Fuseini & Daniel, 2018; Fuseini & Daniel, 2020; Grischow & Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2019). Some scant literature come from Tanzania (Seni, 2016 a; Seni, 2016 b; Seni, 2017; Shitindi et al., 2023a; Shitindi et al., 2023b). Another scant literature come from Zimbabwe (Rugoho & Siziba, 2014). Consequently, there has been a paucity of information regarding this dreadful phenomenon of begging using children by the adults with disability. Consequently, the problem which is visible and prevalent has remained invisible and unaddressed. This systematic review is an effort to interrogate the prevalence of begging involving children as guides by the adults with disability.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. What are the reasons for the prevalence of begging using children as guides by the adults with disability?
2. What are the negative consequences on the involvement of children in begging?

Study Rationale and Significance

Notwithstanding sustained global, regional, and national commitments to defend children's rights to education and protection, the persistent involvement of children as escorts in street begging by adults with disabilities remains a critical yet underexplored challenge in Africa. The rationale for this systematic literature review is based in the contradiction between existing child protection frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Africa's Agenda 2063 vis-à-vis the encounters of children whose schooling and wellbeing are compromised through their participation in begging activities. While

international agencies and national governments have formally condemned child involvement in begging, enforcement gaps and socioeconomic vulnerabilities continue to allow the practice to flourish largely unchecked.

Additionally, despite the fact that a growing body of literature has examined street begging, disability, and child labour independently, studies that specifically interrogate the intersection of adult disability, child escorting, and educational exclusion remain fragmented and geographically skewed. Existing empirical evidence is heavily concentrated in a few countries particularly Nigeria and Ghana with limited representation from other regions of Africa. This uneven scholarly attention has resulted in an incomplete continental understanding of the prevalence, drivers, and consequences of the phenomenon. Consequently, the issue has remained inadequately theorised, insufficiently synthesised, and poorly reflected in policy discourse and intervention strategies.

The significance of this study lies in its systematic synthesis of existing literature to illuminate the scope, underlying causes, and educational implications of begging practices that involve children as guides for adults with disabilities. By consolidating dispersed evidence, this review sought to make visible a problem that is socially evident yet academically marginalised. The findings are expected to contribute to knowledge by identifying recurring patterns, contextual determinants, and gaps in current research, thereby providing a stronger empirical foundation for future studies.

From a policy and practice viewpoint, the study is significant in informing child protection agencies, education stakeholders, disability advocates, and policymakers about the educational risks and rights violations associated with the practice. By foregrounding the educational consequences for children, the review reinforces the centrality of parental and caregiver responsibility in safeguarding children's schooling, as well as the need for inclusive social protection mechanisms for adults with disabilities. Eventually, this study aligns with global and regional development agendas by advocating for evidence-based interventions that protect children's right to education while addressing the structural vulnerabilities that drive adults with disabilities into street begging.
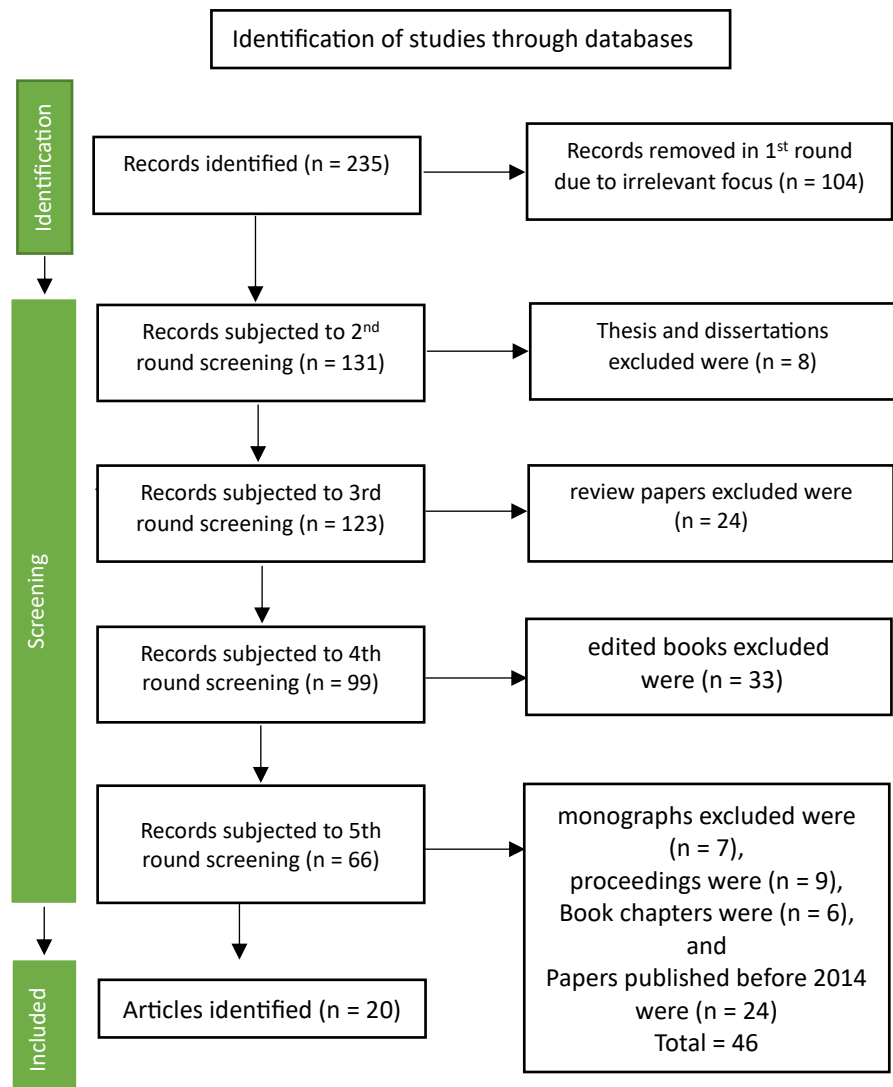
Methodological Procedures

Search Strategy

Search process is crucial for a successful systematic review process and for ensuring capturing of relevant literature to be used in a review (Macfarlane et al., 2022). The process of searching articles to be included in the reviews focused on the selection criteria established by the review author. The study followed the PRISMA guidelines to ensure a transparent and rigorous literature selection process. Relevant studies were identified through systematic searches using five databases including Google Scholar, Dimensions, Scopus, Web of Science and PubMed using predefined keywords and search strings related to street begging by adults with disabilities or those involving children as guides in Africa at the expense of their basic education were chosen during the search process. The use of the five databases facilitated the review author to obtain relevant and current articles for the review process. The search procedure was conducted in November and December, 2024 to obtain relevant and current articles for consideration during the review process. The obtained articles were subjected to eligibility criteria

before the review process. During the search process, three phrases/words were used such as street begging, adults with disabilities, or those involving children as guides in Africa. All these strategies helped to gauge the suitability of the articles for inclusion. The selection process involved title and abstract screening, followed by full-text assessment for eligibility. The PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) illustrates the study identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion process.

Figure 1
Flow Chart for the Included Studies

Identification of studies through databases

| Identification | Records identified (n = 235) | → | Records removed in 1st round due to irrelevant focus (n = 104) |

Screening	Records subjected to 2nd round screening (n = 131)	→	Thesis and dissertations excluded were (n = 8)
	Records subjected to 3rd round screening (n = 123)	→	review papers excluded were (n = 24)
	Records subjected to 4th round screening (n = 99)	→	edited books excluded were (n = 33)
	Records subjected to 5th round screening (n = 66)	→	monographs excluded were (n = 7), proceedings were (n = 9), Book chapters were (n = 6), and Papers published before 2014 were (n = 24) Total = 46

| Included | Articles identified (n = 20) |

Source: Adapted from Page et al. (2021)

The PRISMA flow chart in Fig. 1 shows how the inclusion and exclusion process arriving at a total of 20 articles that met the prescribed conditions was undertaken.

Eligibility Criteria, Selection and Refinement

For systematic review, selection of articles to be included in the review should focus on all research articles that answer the research question and meet inclusion and exclusion criteria (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008). The process of selecting articles to be included in the review was done based on the established rules for article selection. The first rule was that articles related to street begging were included in the review. This means that articles that did not relate with the prevalence of street begging by adults with disabilities or those involving children in begging and as guides in Africa at the expense of their basic education were not considered in the selection. Articles that were considered for selection were from African countries which was the focus of the study. Another selection criterion embraced was the use of articles that were written in the English language. Likewise, articles which were empirical in nature were considered to be selected for the review.

In this aspect, the process of screening the title and articles that met the established criteria was done by the review author. This procedure was important as it helped the review author to obtain the relevant articles to be included during the review process. The first step in this stage was to identify duplicates that appeared in the different searches in the selected databases. Some automatic procedures, tools like Excel formulas, or programming languages (i.e. Python) were conveniently utilized. In the second step, articles were included or excluded according to the selection criteria, mainly by reading titles and abstracts. Finally, the quality was assessed using the predefined scale, which was pertinent in preventing selective outcome reporting, minimizing reviewer bias, ensuring standardized comparison across studies, and in enhancing methodological rigor (Higgins et al., 2024). In this regard, articles that were easily retrieved from the databases used were taken into credibility procedures. Additionally, the articles that related with street begging by adults with disabilities or those involving young children including girls as guides in Africa at the expense of basic education for these children were considered during the screening procedures (Carrera-Rivera, et al., 2022). While a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) research methodology allows to collect, identify, and critically analyse various categories of research studies including articles, conference proceedings, books, and dissertations through a systematic procedure (Pati & Lorusso, 2018), for the purpose of this paper, the review was deliberately confined to papers that were from empirical journal articles. Consequently, papers which were not from empirical journal articles were excluded in the review process. During the selection process, articles that were written in the English language were included in the review process this was done out of the understanding that the language is a lingua franca and spoken by a wider population and so the paper would gain wider readership as well.

Table 1 indicates the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to acquire the articles that were used in the review process.

Table 1
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Accessibility	Articles that are open access	Articles that are inaccessible including grey literature
Language of Papers	Articles written in English language	Articles written in language different from English
Type of Publication	Papers from a peer-reviewed journal	Thesis, dissertations, review paper, edited books, monographs, proceedings and Book chapters
Publication year	Papers published between 2014 and 2025	Papers published before 2014
Paper Focus and Relevance to research questions	Articles focusing on begging by adults with disabilities, beggars, involving children as guides or showcase in Africa.	Articles that did not focus on street begging by adults with disabilities, do not focus on beggars, not involving children.
Population	Street adult beggars with disabilities, beggars, children involved in begging or as guides of beggars	Adult with disabilities not involved in begging, adult beggars without disabilities, children not involved in begging or children not involved as guides of beggars
Methodological Considerations	Papers with qualitative, quantitative methods, and mixed methods Approaches.	Articles without research approach
Delimitation and location	Articles which are from or on Africa.	Articles which are not from or on Africa.

Source: Field Data

Quality Assurance Procedures

The validity of the findings of the Systematic Review (SR) rest on the methodological quality of the individual studies in which they are included. Consequently, evaluating the validity of the included studies is an integral component of a systematic review (Negarandeh & Beykmirza, 2020). Conversely, obtaining opinions from peers and experts while developing the review protocol, is encouraged to ensure the review's consistency and validity, and helps identify when modifications are necessary (Wohlin et al., 2012). The assessment of the 20 reviewed empirical articles was made by two peers who are co-authors in a number of articles with the review author. The assessment was also done by two expert reviewers who were senior and prominent researchers from one university in Tanzania. These peer debriefing and expert

opinion provided insightful inputs on the review protocol thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the whole review process. The rigor of each paper was evaluated by using, the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). All the papers under review were gauged to attest their methodology using predetermined questions which were defined before the review process. Thus, these questions guided the reviewer author in judging whether the included studies met the minimum methodological standards and they ensured consistency, objectivity, and reproducibility in the evaluation process (Joanna Briggs Institute, 2020; Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018 & Hong et al., 2018). Each article scores ranged from 3 to 7 which was agreed upon to be the benchmark for the inclusion in the review. The quality of the journals was judged using Scimago journal ranking with the H-index and quartile one to four regarded as a benchmark.

Data Extraction

Those articles that passed the study selection were then thoroughly and critically read and later on the researcher completed the information required using the data extraction form (Carrera-Rivera, 2022). The data extraction form is a structured tool developed in advance to ensure consistency, transparency, and completeness in obtaining relevant information from the reviewed articles. Specifically, the form captured a number of information from each included study such as author(s), year of publication, country/setting, study design, aim/objectives, sample size, and population characteristics. Furthermore, the form documented the methodological details like data collection methods, instruments used, analytical approach as well as key findings reported in each paper under review (Higgins et al., 2022; Moher et al., 2009; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). The review author thoroughly perused in depth the data extracts to familiarize with the emerging themes and sub themes. Thereafter, embarked on the coding and data analysis stage.

Articles Reviewed and Database Source

A total of 20 articles on various African countries met the review criteria. Table 2 provides a description of each paper in terms of the authors, years of publication, countries where the research was conducted, methodologies, sample sizes and key highlights of the reviewed empirical articles.

Table 2

Details of Articles Reviewed and Key Messages

Article No.	Authors and publication year	Research Approach and or design	Country and sample size	Key message
1	Ndlovu (2016)	Qualitative research approach	South Africa; 27 donors, including 10 whites, 10 blacks and 07 Indians.	education and socio-economic and political class can stimulate begging.
2	Agyemang et al. (2024)	Qualitative research approach and Case study Design	Ghana; 40 street beggars.	Beggars without disability showcase their children to win mercy of people, Consequently, increase their financial inflow. This strategy is termed as child advertisement
3	Fuseini and Daniel (2020)	Qualitative research approach and Case study Design	Ghana; 6 parents, 3 mallams and 8 children.	Quran insist on being fair to all and taking care of children. Islam powerfully denounces begging particularly the use children in the phenomenon. Parents are regarded as guides, providers and role models of children.
4	Fuseini and Daniel (2018)	Qualitative research approach and Case study Design	Ghana; 6 parents, 3 mallams and 8 children	Children encounter dreadful experiences like abuse from the public, chase by dogs and beatings. Missing school impact the child beggars. Child beggars continue begging despite the dreadful conditions in order to maintain their families.
5	Longi et al. (2022)	Mixed methods though largely qualitative	Ghana; 200 street beggars.	Beggars regarded themselves as incapable who deserved public kindness. They Hire children as assistants and others amplify their disability status to win peoples' concerns.
6	Babangida et al. (2021)	Quantitative approach and social survey research design	Nigeria; 384 street beggars who were willing to participate in the study (i.e. Kawo 96; Kaduna Central market 96; Barnawa 96; and Sabon Tasha 96)	Poverty accounts for street begging rendering street children vulnerable to sexual exploitation, abduction, road accident, physical attack, forced prostitution and crime.
7	Ibrahim et al. (2024)	Qualitative Approach and phenomenology design	Ghana; 25 Beggars with vision impairment	Majority of beggars with disabilities have primary education. Poverty, disability, war, culture, drugs abuse and religion lead to restricted access to education among their children.

Table 2 (continued)

Article No.	Authors and publication year	Research Approach and or design	Country and sample size	Key message
8	Agunyai and Ojakorotu (2021)	Qualitative research Approach	Nigeria; 3 parents, 5 children, 3 other stakeholders.	Lack of resources, religion, cultural principles, quest for money and poor governance are the reasons for begging involving children as guides. These encounters make access to basic education unreal to these children. Likewise, their disabled parents encounter grieve of misgivings and blame of failure to meet the needs of their children and drugging them into beggary life.
9	Olubusla (2020)	Quantitative approach and descriptive survey design	Nigeria; 133 children within the Sulejas	Low education of the parents, lack of parental education contribute to begging involving children as guides. Parents' incapacity to meet school needs and dues, children's inability to cope with the school life drove them to drop out of schools and slowly transform into naughty boys and girls before engaging in beggary life and other divergent deeds.
10	Chukwudeh and Oduaran (2021)	Qualitative Approach and Descriptive design	Nigeria; 48 children	Inadequate considerations of girls' education led to Less concern on purchase of writing and other educational materials for girls. Immoral actions by school drop outs in Nigeria are fuelled by the persistence of failure to meet school requirements by parents.
11	Aliyu and Kayode (2024)	mixed methods approach	Nigeria; 150 school-age children, beggars, school leaders, parents, and non-governmental organizations dealing with education.	Poverty, religion, culture, parental separation and attitude cause child street begging among in Nigeria. Some parents force children to go out for begging while they should be in school.
12	Bukoye (2015)	Quantitative Approach and Descriptive survey Design	Nigeria; 100 Beggars 20 from five respective wards	Beggars including children are humiliated, abused and harassed by people.
13	Liman and Abubakar (2016)	Quantitative Research Approach and Descriptive Correlational Design	Nigeria; 248 physical challenged in Kebbi State	Street begging is a result of lack of education among people with disability. Counselling is important in making people refrain from begging and attend to school.
14	Shitindi et al. (2023)	Qualitative Research Approach	Tanzania; 38 street children and 18 key informants.	Poverty, incapacity to manage family fundamental requirements including food, shelter, clothes, education, and health requirements result into child begging at the expense of schooling.

Cont …

Table 2 (continued)

Article No.	Authors and publication year	Research Approach and or design	Country and sample size	Key message
15	Rugoho and Siziba (2014).	Mixed Method Approach and Cross-sectional Research Design	Zimbabwe; 63 disabled beggars and 16 traders and the auxiliary police	Many children have never attended school or attended only once in a while and dropped out. Poverty, un employment, failure of support structure and social bodies to address street begging and other social deviant practices.
16	Onagun (2016)	Mixed Method Approach	Nigeria; 100 beggars	Poverty and ignorance force adults with disability into begging accompanied with children who encounter restricted access to education.
17	Adesokan and Owoyemi (2022)	Quantitative Approach and Descriptive Survey Design	Nigeria; 50 Adolescents beggars.	Poverty, exploitation by their families and their disabilities caused children go for begging and so do not attend to school.
18	Oluwole (2016)	Mixed Method Approach	Nigeria; 545 beggars with disabilities.	Begging is more pronounced among the illiterates disabled. They have no formal education.
19	Shitindi et al. (2023)	Qualitative Approach	Tanzania; 38 street children and 18 key informants.	Major reasons for begging are poverty, imperfect support and violence from families, ignorance, and single mothers and fathers. Regarding coping strategies, street children endure with meagre money obtained through begging and performing trivial undertakings. They encounter shortage of food, health facility, shelter and access to education.
20	Grischow andMfoafo-M'Carthy (2019)	Qualitative Approach	Ghana; 16 Disabled Beggars	Absence of family back up except support from the church. incidence of stigma and rejection caused challenges on access to and participation in education.

Coding Procedures and Data Analysis

In systematic review papers, the analysis stage scrutinises the combined information from the sampled papers (Carrera-Rivera et al., 2022; Mengist et al., 2020). The main objectives in this phase include the need for analysing the papers based on prominent authors, journals, countries, and institutions. Additionally, it supports in ascertaining associations of subject matter and leads to beneficial locus of the review paper, identifying key insights and co-operation occasions. Likewise, information deduced from sampled papers can be subjected to bibliometric analysis (Donthu et al., 2021).

For the purpose of this review, the author intended to identify relationships regarding the topic and questions under investigation thereby enhancing a constructive position for the researchers' work. Consequently, the coding procedure of the research papers were subjected to deductive coding with thematic content analysis using Caulfield (2023) idea of identifying major concepts or themes. The review author classified major issues or topics covered, and perused the reviewed papers to identify information that was relevant to the research objectives and questions. Accordingly, a

thorough overview of all reviewed papers enabled taking initial notes to familiarize with the emerging major issues. Then initial themes and important sections relevant to the research questions were deduced. The coding involved relating the emerging findings with the themes created. The researcher summarized the findings to categorise preliminary thoughts that were further developed or excluded as the scrutiny proceeded and as patterns became more or less visible (Caulfield, 2023; Lochmiller, 2021). To effectively report the findings, the researcher structured the findings in relation to themes and substantiated them using evidences drawn from the reviewed papers (Lochmiller, 2021).

Findings

The subsequent explanations concern the presentation and analysis of the findings emerging from the 20 systematically reviewed articles.

Reasons for the Prevalence of Begging using Children

A number of reasons have been cited as causes for the prevalence of begging using children as companions by the adults with disability in Africa. The reviewed articles reveal lack of education, compassion attraction, lack of proper orientation, laziness and poverty as the major causes for the existence of begging involving children as escorts (Agyemang et al., 2024; Adesokan and Owoyemi, 2022; Babangida et al., 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Liman and Abubakar, 2016; Longi et al., 2022; Olubusla, 2020; Oluwole, Onagun, 2016; 2016; Seni, 2017; Shitindi et al., 2023). Other reasons are religion, cultural beliefs, poor governance and mismatch between policy and practice (Agunyai & Ojakorotu, 2021). The findings that lack of education led to involvement in begging and worse so by using children suggest the continuation of begging to these families. Depriving children from attending to school is a preparation for them to be potential beggars in adulthood. Likewise, the contribution of poverty to a beggary life involving children suggests a continuation of poverty to children as they are deprived of one of the instruments to access factors of production.

Regarding religion, alms giving is proficient to both Christians and Muslims followers (Weiss, 2007). Nevertheless, alms giving as an obligation of the five pillars of Islam and support to the needy by Christians, is hard to distinguish when it is given voluntarily, as an obligation, mandatory and to the true needy person. Christian doctrines emphasize on charity (Longi, et al., 2022), All religions however, emphasize on the obligations for people to work and raise children properly including educating them. It can thus, be said that begging practices involving children at the expense of their schooling is unacceptable and contradicts with their need to prepare responsible citizens. In contrast, Chukwudeh and Oduaran (2021) point out that preference of boys over girls' education led to the use of girls in begging as guides while boys attended school. It is vivid that girls' access to education remain a dream to the families of beggars with disabilities.

Parental separation is also highlighted in the literature as a reason for begging involving children by the adults with disability (Aliyu & Kayode, 2024). The presence of single mothers' results from the separation of parents. Life hardship to single mothers drag children into the street to beg or guide adults with disability in the begging activity. As a result of indulging in beggary life, the school age children, miss this noble chance and perpetuate hardship throughout their entire life. Parental separation and negligence

of parents over their noble duties of parenting are some of the irresponsible behaviours and negatively affects the children and is inconsistent with the religious teachings (Fuseini & Daniel, 2020; Agunyai & Ojakorotu, 2021).

Negative Consequences on the use of Children in Begging

This systematic review has identified numerous negative consequences on the participation of children in begging escorting adults with disabilities. These include lack or limited access to education, health challenges, stigma and bullying, sexual harassment and abuse. In this review, the review author mainly focused on the challenges related to lack or limited access to education and discuss on how other effects impact on the education of these children. The review indicates that begging activity using children as guides had detrimental effects on access to basic education of the children (Seni, 2017). Likewise, the portrayal of children as a way of attracting sympathy from passers-by also referred to as child advertisement (Agyemang et al., 2024) attacks the personality of children and exposes them to stigma, rejection and bullying from their peers (Grischow & Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2019). Consequently, it demotivates them from attending school, leading to their dropout.

Additionally, the review has also established that children encountered negative experiences including being affronted, hurtled by dogs and beaten by people as well as being in psychological trauma (Fuseini & Daniel, 2018; Agunyai & Ojakorotu, 2021). It could obviously be seen how these children endure an insecure kind of life coupled with constant fear. The hustles they face make them tired and deprive them of the time to go to school if at all they were enrolled. They also experience poor academic performance (Agunyai & Ojakorotu, 2021) and the majority who were not enrolled, schooling remains a dream for them.

The review has also revealed that children involved in begging are prone to sexual exploitation and indulgent into prostitution (Babangida et al., 2021). This observation reinforces the extreme vulnerability of girls. Chances for early pregnancies and infection to sexually transmitted diseases are vivid in this case. Similarly, Shitindi et al. (2023) contend that challenges of food shortage contribute into children's involvement in the begging activity. A critical review reveals that lack of food sends children to the street to beg. Again, due to beggary life being uncertain, they endure hardship by staying hungry leading to their truancy and drop out of school.

Poverty is identified as a consequence of lack of education which in turn contributes to persistence of begging. Many government interventions in Africa to the delinquent of begging include founding of reintegration centre for orphans, vulnerable children, women in need, widows and oversee the skill acquisition centres (Idris, 2024).

Discussion

This section discusses the findings emerging from the reviewed papers in addressing the main concerns of the review.

Examining the categories of child beggars in major African cities and towns reveals that they include, but are not limited to, children who accompany parents or relatives with disabilities, those who are compelled to beg to support religious education, and those who beg while their mothers remain out of public view but closely supervise them (Olubusola, 2020). It also appears that most of the literature on begging emerge from West Africa particularly Nigeria followed by Ghana. This can partly explain

the profound and pronouncement of the problem in those areas but also it signals awareness and orientation of various scholars in addressing pertinent issues of the most vulnerable children and adults such as the beggars and children. Poverty overrides other causes for street begging. Thus, begging was also caused by the desire elicit mercy and impress the public to offer alms, the disability conditions of the adults seeking a company of school age children and family disintegration (Seni, 2017; Anangisye, 2020; Namwata et al., 2012) The phenomenon negatively impacted children including denial of schooling. Impliedly, the findings suggest presence of a couple of reasons leading children to the street accompanying the adults in the activity. As this fundamental, breaking the poverty cycle is key to reviving schooling hope to many children in the Africa continent and beyond. Overall, the begging phenomenon cause detrimental effects to children including jeopardy of their health and schooling opportunities.

The findings in this review paper contrast with those of earlier empirical studies in a number of ways. Concerning religion, prior empirical studies present mixed interpretations. Some scholars argue that religious doctrines particularly Islamic almsgiving (zakat) and Christian charity unintentionally legitimize street begging (Weiss, 2007). The current review aligns with this position but goes further by problematising the misinterpretation of religious obligations, noting that all major religions simultaneously emphasize work ethic, parental responsibility, and child education. This contrasts with earlier empirical studies that tend to treat religion primarily as an enabling factor, without sufficiently acknowledging its internal doctrinal contradictions concerning child welfare. There is a notable point of divergence which emerges in relation to gender and child participation in begging. While previous studies empirically demonstrate a preference for educating boys while girls are left home doing domestic chores (Kiranga & Seni, 2025; Ndibalema, 2022), the current findings reinforce this gendered pattern but frame it as evidence of systemic gender inequality intersecting with disability poverty and begging (Chukwudeh & Oduaran, 2021). This intersectional framing is less explicit in earlier empirical studies, which often treat gender bias as a secondary outcome rather than a central explanatory variable.

The roles of parental separation and single motherhood identified in this study indicate the link between family disintegration and children's street involvement (Aliyu & Kayode, 2024). Furthermore, the present findings deepen this explanation by associating parental separation not only with economic hardship but also with parental negligence and weakened moral accountability, thereby aligning with Fuseini and Daniel (2020). This contrasts with earlier studies that largely attribute child begging to structural constraints while underemphasizing parental responsibility and social norms (Ahmad & Abubakar, 2025; Embleton et al., 2020; Karatu & Oguntade, 2025; Mazikana, 2019; Mwanyekondo, 2019).

Consistent with prior empirical studies, poverty repeatedly emerges as a primary structural driver compelling individuals and families to resort to begging as a survival strategy rather than a choice (Seni, 2017). Research in urban Tanzania has documented how income poverty pushes children into street situations where they engage in begging or other precarious activities to meet basic needs, limiting their access to essential services such as health care and schooling (Shitindi et al., 2023). Similarly, studies on child guides in begging show that limited educational opportunities, parental

neglect, and economic deprivation are key factors reinforcing their vulnerability (Seni, 2017).

This review further aligns with global research indicating that child begging is associated with multidimensional deprivation social, economic, psychological and entrenches children in cycles of disadvantage. For example, analyses from other contexts highlight how poverty, lack of education, and family instability intersect to expose children to prolonged exploitation and reduced schooling prospects, exacerbating social marginalization (Husnan, 2025). Such evidence suggests that beggary is not merely an economic phenomenon but also a mechanism of social exclusion that undermines children's long-term wellbeing.

Limitations and Future Studies

The review paper has pointed out some of the key issues regarding begging and adult beggars with disabilities involving young children as guides. These issues range from family socio economic status, pretence for sympathy attraction and religion grounds (Ndlovu, 2016; Agyemang et al., 2024; Fuseini & Daniel, 2020). The prevalence of the begging phenomenon among adults with disability guided by children is not only a challenge to the beggars and the general public, it poses a critical, profound and long lasting impact to the part of children through denial of accessing basic education (Rugoho & Siziba, 2014). Bearing in mind that the current review systematically dealt with papers on adult beggars with disabilities who use children as guides in Africa, the need for a study reviewing adult beggars with disabilities using children globally arises. Furthermore, a systematic review on girls used by adult with disability in the begging process is desirable.

Implications

The present systematic review has shed light on valuable evidence for the existence of the phenomenon and its everlasting negative consequences to both the beggar and the child guide. Since poverty consistently appeared as one of the driving forces for one to indulge in such a shameful way of earning money, systematic strategies to initiate income generating activities are appropriate to disrupt the vicious circle of poverty and begging. Education to children should be overemphasized as a way of pulling them out from the chains of incapacitation.

Accordingly, the review highlights the need for comprehensive and sustainable interventions that go beyond short-term relief. Echoing recommendations from the literature, promoting income-generating activities such as vocational training, microfinance, and inclusive employment opportunities is essential for disrupting the poverty begging nexus and enhancing economic self-sufficiency among vulnerable populations (Shitindi, Nyello & Mswima, 2023). Income support programmes, cash transfers, and economic empowerment initiatives have been shown in related fields to strengthen household resilience and reduce dependency on street-based livelihoods, although their design and implementation must be context-specific and well monitored.

The involvement of children as guides or primary actors in begging has profound implications for their education and development. Consistent with existing research, this review underscores the central role of education as a protective and transformative mechanism. Strengthening access to formal schooling, coupled with supportive measures such as school feeding programmes (Kazianga, De Walque & Alderman, 2012),

conditional cash transfers (García & Saavedra, 2022), and community-based outreach, is essential to prevent child exploitation and break intergenerational cycles of incapacitation. This approach aligns with calls from international research that emphasize education as a key determinant for reducing child vulnerability in street settings. Collectively, these implications call for coordinated, multisectoral responses that integrate social welfare, education reforms, and economic empowerment policies to address both the root causes and long-term consequences of begging. Policy responses should prioritize poverty reduction, access to quality schooling, and child protection frameworks that safeguard children from exploitative practices, ensuring sustainable pathways out of begging and into dignified livelihoods.

Conclusion

The drive of this systematic review was to explore the reasons for the prevalence of begging using children as escorts by the adults with disabilities. It also set to explore the negative consequences on the involvement of children in begging with a particular focus on education. A total of 20 empirical research articles was reviewed and a number of reasons causing the presence of the begging style involving children as guides analysed. The systematic review has also highlighted the negative consequences of this practice. Nevertheless, the awareness of these issues is critical in informing the African countries on what the governments, NGOs, Donors and community at large could do to rescue these children from entering into a vicious cycle of poverty and ignorance. The findings from this systematic review also significantly contribute to literature on begging, disability and vulnerable children aiding in the begging process. A systematic review that scans the problem globally is imperative to unearth the presence, magnitude and prevalence of begging style by the adults with disability involving children as guides.

Recommendations

Based on the findings revealed in this systematic review, a number of recommendation are put forward:

  i.   The governments, NGOs, Donors and community in general should support the adult beggars in establishing income generating activities relevant to their conditions and refrain from begging.
  ii.   The African governments should ban the practices and dreadful phenomenon of Street begging by adults with disabilities using children as their guides so as to release them and go to school.
  iii. The initiation of intervention programmes on school re-entry for children who guide adult beggars with disabilities may be useful in supporting these vulnerable children.

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