



## Street Begging: The Case of the Bolgatanga Municipality

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### Abstract

This study explored the issue of street begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality, the capital town of Upper East Region. The study shed light specifically on street begging and factors that motivate people to beg. Structured questionnaires were administered to 20 respondents from various public spaces using convenience sampling techniques. Semi-structured interviews as well as participant observation were tools used to collect primary data. The study found out that a majority of the beggars are non-Ghanaians from neighboring countries. Also, the issue of street begging is as a result of many factors including poverty, disability, religious affiliation, culture. The study recommends that to address the phenomenon of street begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality, local government and policy makers should focus on preventive and responsive interventions rather than curative and rehabilitative interventions. The study further recommends the scrutinization of the immigrants at the borders to make sure they have workable skills that will enable them gain employment and secure sources of livelihood.

**Keywords:** religious affiliation, culture, disability, rehabilitation, begging

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of begging has been a histo-religious phenomenon. Various religions and social interventionist approaches have highlighted the need to give alms to the needy and other socially disadvantaged groups. The spatial and the number of people involved in begging has taken a complex dimension making it difficult to get beggars who are really in need of special attention due to variables in urban centers that keep on mimicking. Begging has become a global phenomenon which threatens the environmental, economic and social survival of humanity. The problem of begging has arrested the attentions of governments of various countries, particularly the advanced countries of the world (Ogunkan, 2009).

In Ghana today, begging has become a lucrative source of business for able people and people with disabilities in the cities. They prefer begging on the street to learning some kind of trade that would provide them their livelihood and some form of dignity. In doing this, they also involve very healthy youth when they could be engaged in some productive venture (Department of Social Welfare, 2008).

The situation of street begging is more common in communities such as the “Zongos”, slums and involves people of some cultural interpretations of social phenomenon and Islamic faith. Bolgatanga is not an exceptional story from other cities in the various regions of Ghana, perhaps even the worst since it has become obvious that authorities of the Bolgatanga Municipal Assembly have failed in their bid to rid the ceremonial streets of the Municipality of beggars. Authorities claim it is illegal to beg for alms on the street as the laws and the constitution of the country do not make provision for such acts.

In this regard, street begging in cities is a phenomenon with socio economic, cultural and socio-political dimensions, all indicating the centrality and significance of the concept of poverty, as a vital measure of understanding and addressing the problem of begging in cities.

### **Problem statement**

Although the problem of street begging is a global phenomenon, it is rampant in third world countries. Begging is an urban problem that is more noticeable in the urban areas of any country. Increased incidence of street begging in many urban areas are associated with socio-economic realities that prevail in the families of those who beg and in local communities. Generally, street begging cannot be related to a single cause, instead, it is a multi-faceted problem in which a combination of factors often lead to individual ending up as street beggar.

The phenomenon of street begging is as a result of a number of factors such as poverty (real or marginalized), religious affiliation, physical disability, culture, natural disaster, civil war, bad habit (drug, alcohol, gambling,) family heritage, uncontrolled rural urban migration, psychiatric disabilities and disorders.(Amman, 2006; Ogunkan & Fawole 2009; Namwata et al., 2011).

In Ghana, street begging has become a social canker due to the growing population and Bolgatanga is not an exception; people are motivated to beg due to one or more of the above factors. According to the beggars and destitute act, 1969 (NLDC 392) begging is a criminal offence and is further compounded if children are being used. Efforts to curb the problem of street beggars and street begging have failed because governments and other stakeholders are not well informed about the categories of street beggars and the factors associated with begging activities. The Lack of information usually leads to the adoption of efforts that deal with the symptoms of the problem of begging rather than the root causes of the problem. Although there is an act that regards street begging as an offence, much has not been done to deter people from begging. Hence, this study intends to examine the emergence of street begging and the factors that influence street beggars especially in the Bolgatanga Municipality to help influence future policies.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### Main question

- What lead to street begging and what factors influence street begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality?

### Specific questions

1. What are the factors that motivate street beggars in the Bolgatanga Municipality to engage in begging?
2. What are the categories of beggars found in the Bolgatanga Municipality?
3. What appropriate recommendations can be put in place to minimize the phenomenon of street begging?

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

### Main objective

To examine street beggars and factors influencing street begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality.

### Specific objectives

1. To examine the factors that motivates beggars within the Bolgatanga Municipality to engage in begging.
2. To find out the category of beggars in the Bolgatanga Municipality.
3. To recommend solutions as to how this phenomenon can be minimized.

## METHOD

### Relevance of the study

The study seeks to reveal the cultural, socio economic, socio political and religious links of street begging and factors that influence street begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality.

Firstly, the study will make data available for various stakeholders to be used for relative analysis or as a reference point, especially in the field of academia, government and development partners on the theme under discussion.

Also, the study is relevant as it will increase the knowledge of students and the general public on the emergence of street begging; the factors that motivate street begging, reasons associated with alms giving and also serve as literature review to students who intend to research into similar research topics.

Furthermore, the findings and recommendations will serve as a spring board highlighting and necessary corrective measures to guide NGOs, CBOs, community development agencies, such as the department of social welfare and Department Of Community Development with the view of reducing the incidence of street begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality.

Lastly, it will serve as a guide or a document that policy makers could resort to when formulating policies on the subject matter under discussion and how to address the challenges associated with begging.

### **Scope of the study**

The research work is an investigation into the emergence of street begging and the factors that motivate people to beg in the Bolgatanga municipality. Different categories of beggars were clearly found in the Central Old Market (the road linking the lorry station and the old market through the Imperia station), the Metro Mass Station, the Gail Filling Station (adjacent the Bolgatanga Slaughter House, New Total 3, the Catholic Cathedral and the Central Mosques. From this, efforts were made to identify the emergence of street begging, factors that urge people to beg, the various reasons why people give alms and the categories of beggars in the Bolgatanga Municipality.

### **Sampling methods**

The study team used both probability and non-probability sampling methods to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The study targeted both beggars and non-beggars in the Bolgatanga Municipality at all vantage points where begging is done. In all, 20 respondents were selected for the study.

#### ***Probability Sampling***

##### *Simple random sampling*

This technique was used to get respondents at most vantage points in the Bolgatanga Municipality where beggars are found. 1 person each was sampled at every vantage point where reachable summing up to 5 respondents and another 5 at the Metro Mass station.

#### ***Non-Probability Sampling***

##### *Purposive Sampling*

This technique was used to interview a number of key informants who are believed to be knowledgeable in the area of study. These included 1 key informant from municipal Assembly, 1 Social Welfare Officer from the Department of Social Welfare, 1 Community Development Officer, 1 soothsayer and 1 “ mallaam” in “ Zaare community”; These people gave information with regard to the factors that motivate street begging and reasons why people give alms in the Bolgatanga Municipality.

##### *Accidental Sampling*

This is where the researcher obtained information from people who are most expediently available or accidentally come into contact with the researcher. The research team used this technique to investigate street beggars who are available at spotted locations like the Central Business District behind the Imperia Bus station where beggars are seen parading and others seated engaged in the act of begging, the catholic cathedral church, total 3 and Gail filling station and non- beggars who also give alms to the beggars. and. The study team interviewed 10 persons.

## **SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION**

Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources.

### **Primary data sources**

The primary source involved key informant interviews, participant observation and self-administered questionnaires which were used to collect data throughout the survey. Primary data were collected from beggars and non-beggars.

### **Secondary data sources**

Secondary data on the other hand involved the extraction of information from books, journals, and reports from the Social Welfare Department and Municipal Assembly. Internet materials and other documents whose subject matter was relevant to the study were used.

### **Mode of data collection**

The type of data collected in this research was grouped under qualitative and quantitative data and this was obtained from primary and secondary data sources. Participant observation, interview guides, and questionnaire as the key tools were used in the collection of primary data whiles secondary data were retrieved from books on related subjects, journals, annual reports from the district assembly, and reports from newspaper publications

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Oscar Lewis's theory of the culture of poverty. Lewis (1959) developed his theory from his experience of Mexico. The culture of poverty is a specific syndrome that grows up in some situations. It requires an economic setting of cash economy, a high rate of unemployment and underemployment, low wage and people with low skills. In the absence of voluntary or state support and stable family, the low income population tends to develop the culture of poverty. The poor realize that they have a marginal position within a highly stratified and individualistic capitalist society which does not offer them any prospect for mobility. Lewis's theory of the culture of poverty indicates that poverty as a subculture passes from one generation to another and becomes institutionalized and the poor have to develop their own institutions because the larger society tend to ignore and by pass them. There are a number of characteristics which prepare the ground for the phenomenon of begging. Some include;

1. Low level of associations and the lack of voluntary associations
2. Suffering from some chronic illnesses and sometimes idleness
3. The lack of professional skills to undertake jobs.
4. Experiencing long-term unemployment periods (Lewis, 1998)
5. The existence of some spiritual and psychological characteristics such as low self-esteem; weak self – concept; tendency towards indolence, the lack of cognitive psyche; a

feeling of incapability; dependence on others and the feeling of unworthiness (Ahmadi, 2003).

### **The concept of begging**

To beg, according to the Oxford Dictionary (sixth edition, 2001), simply means to ask for money, food, clothes, etc., as a gift or as charity. This implies that begging is not peculiar to individuals, but also organizations or countries. For the latter group, it is conceptualized here as “corporate begging”; and it is made to include seeking for charity by organizations or grants or debts cancellation by richer organizations or nations to poorer organizations or nations. The former category, which is the concern of this study, is synonymous with street and house-to-house begging; it borders around such issues or related concepts as “panhandling” “mendicancy” and “vagrancy” which characterize city beggars. This conceptualization would not only capture the image of the begging and beggars in question, but also reflect their implications for the city’s physical and socio-economic environment.

It is important to state that while “street and house-to-house begging” and “panhandling” are synonymous, and may represent the general idea of asking people for money, food etc, mendicancy and vagrancy connotes more than street begging.

Mendicancy, as an art of begging is usually associated with religious members. Vagrancy, on the other hand, refers to the begging activity of the jobless, the homeless, and wanderers or vagabonds. It involves people who have been driven by natural disasters to leave home in search of richer areas as well as refugees (Hanchao Lu, 1999) who become beggars in the new places they migrate to.

It is worthy of note that a significant proportion of street beggars are physically handicapped or disabled. Begging, as an indication of abject poverty (Adedibu, 1989), has always been a major way out for the helpless poor. However, not all beggars are poor or motivated into begging by poverty, and not all the poor are beggars. This, therefore, necessitates the need to re-examine the concept of begging and related issues.

The Bihar Prevention of Beggary Act, 1951 of India defines begging as “soliciting alms in public places and having no visible means of subsistence, and wandering about or remaining in any public place.”

Begging is a request for alms or charity for oneself. Adedibu (1989) identifies thirteen closely related factors influencing begging in Nigerian cities. These include: physical disability, unemployment, religious belief, old age, the lack of caring relatives, and the lack of rehabilitation Centre. Others are poverty, uncontrolled migration, the lack of education, one’s place of origin, the lack of adequate residence, accidents, and the acceptability of begging in society. Jelili (2006) identifies physical disability, unemployment, and old age as factors influencing begging.

### **Street beggars and categories**

The term “street beggars” is defined in this study as individuals, including children, elderly people, people with disabilities, and families, who normally beg or make their living from the streets or public spaces such as shopping areas, churches, and mosques

by asking people for money and food. Aduana (2006) held the view that street beggars have generally been categorized in terms of their abilities and disabilities based on how they make their living from the streets. There are also individuals who do not show any externally observable deformities or disabilities.

NCFWD (2001) also identifies six reasons for begging. These are the lack of parental / guardian support, the lack of parental / guardian neglect, poverty, disability, socio-cultural misconception, and the lack of parental education.

The issues of begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality appears similar and one or more of such factors may be reason(s) for begging on the streets. However, these vary among beggars to reflect different categories of beggars.

### **Socio-economic practicalities of begging**

Regardless of one's religious, cultural and other background and orientation, what to eat or wear and where to live, among other necessities must be sought out so long as one is alive. It follows therefore that as long as poverty exists in our society, without adequate policy measures to address it, begging would continue to thrive as an urban activity. This is because without prejudice to the influencing roles of the composite variables of culture, urbanization and socio-polity, most (if not all) beggars (including part-time and full time as well as conspicuous and „veiled“ ones) are lured into begging first by the factor of poverty. This is an undisputed fact to most scholars in the emerging school of thoughts (study of begging) including Adedibu (1989), Hanchao Lu (1999), Jordan (1999), Osagbemi (2001), Kennedy and Fitzpatrick (2001) and Jelili (2006, 2009), among several others. For example, while Jelili, (2006, 2009) has described begging as an activity of the wretched poverty-ridden individuals, Kennedy and

Fitzpatrick (2001) have associated begging with such poverty indicators as homelessness (which they describe as „rough sleeping“) and dirty street job (which they describe as „big issue“).

### **Poverty**

Poverty is defined in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS 2003) as an unacceptable physiological and social deprivation. It is also defined in some cases as a condition of having insufficient resources or income.

Chambers (1983) and Jazairy (1992) define poverty in terms of the aspects it is perpetrated, namely, material deprivation, isolation, dependence and subordination, absence from organization, the lack of assets, vulnerability to natural disaster and insecurity. This definition lacks spatial sense and does not justify for natural roots as they exist. It also lacks human originality.

Research has shown that poor vocational rehabilitation outcome, the lack of access to the labor market, and poverty have caused many Ghanaians with disabilities to resort to begging on the streets in Ghana for survival (Appiagyie, 2006; Kassah, 2008).

Poverty and other socioeconomic conditions in contemporary times make it difficult for many families to assist those in need. It is estimated that about 40% of Ghanaians are

poor, i.e., having incomes below the poverty line and hence struggle to meet basic human needs (GSS, 2009). The above mentioned conditions that lead people to the streets are the realities on the grounds.

### **Destitution**

Destitution refers to a total, or virtually complete, absence of resources. Although this is indicative of extreme poverty, it is not necessarily equivalent; a person may become destitute immediately through fire or through a natural disaster, while someone in chronic or extreme poverty may have experienced long-term malnutrition and disadvantage. The English POOR LAW (1601-1948) offered poor relief only to those who were destitute, rather than those who were identified as poor; poverty outside the scope of the poor was widespread (Webb & Webb 1927). Inventories were made of any goods remaining to paupers and they renounced them as a condition of relief in the workhouse.

### **Types of poverty**

#### ***Extreme Poverty***

Extreme poverty, absolute poverty, or abject poverty is stated as “a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.” It depends not only on income but also on access to services.” Extreme poverty was defined in 1996 by Joseph Wresinski, the founder of ATD Fourth World as:

the absence of one or more factors enabling individuals and families to assume basic responsibilities and to enjoy fundamental rights. The situation may become widespread and result in more serious and permanent consequences. The lack of basic security leads to chronic poverty when it simultaneously affects several aspects of people’s lives, when it is prolonged and when it severely compromises people’s chances of regaining their rights and of reassuming their responsibilities in the foreseeable future.

This definition was adopted by the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in The Despouy Report on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty. The World Bank defined the new international poverty line as \$1.25 a day for 2005 (equivalent to \$1.00 a day in 1996 US prices). The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger was the first Millennium Development Goal, as set by 189 United Nations Member States in 2000. Extreme poverty is most common in Sub-Saharan Africa, though it also exists in parts of Asia and Latin America.

“Extreme poverty deprives people of almost all means of managing risks by themselves. With few or no assets, self-insurance is impossible. With poor health or bad nutrition, working more or sending more household members to work is difficult. And with high default risks, group insurance mechanisms are often closed off.

When a shock occurs, they must obtain immediate increases in income or cut spending, but in so doing they incur a high long-term cost by jeopardizing their economic and human development” (World Bank, 2000).



### ***Relative poverty***

Relative poverty is when some people's way of life and income are so much worse than the general standard of living in the country or region in which they live that they struggle to live a normal life and to participate in ordinary economic, social and cultural activities. What this means will vary from country to country, depending on the standard of living enjoyed by the majority (The European Anti-Poverty).

### **Cultural fulfilment of begging**

#### ***The concept of Culture***

According to E B Taylor, 'Culture' is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, law, custom and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of a society. Ghana has a rich culture and traditional values. This is exhibited in communal values such as respect for the elderly and diversity, as well as the sense of belonging to a community where the problem of one community member becomes the problem of the whole community (CWMG, 2004).

#### ***The concept of divination***

Divination (from the Latin word 'divinare' "to fore see, to be inspired by a god," related to divinus, divine) is the attempt to gain insight into a question or situation by way of an occultic, standardized process or ritual.

Divination can be seen as a systematic method with which to organize what appears to be disjointed random facets of existence such that they provide insight into a problem at hand. If a distinction is to be made between divination and fortune-telling, divination has a more formal or ritualistic element and often contains a more social character, usually in a religious context as seen in the traditional African medicine.

Fortune telling on the other hand is more every day practice for personal purposes. Particular divination methods vary by culture and religion.

#### ***The concept of soothsaying and how it encourages begging***

Soothsaying is the art or gift of prophecy (or the pretense of prophecy by supernatural means). ([www.thefreedictionary.com/soothsaying](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/soothsaying)). It may be a strange belief but people still practice it. In some communities in northern Ghana, especially Bomahe community, Tolon and Tamale metropolis, twins, triplets and quadruplets are considered as lesser gods and in order to ensure their survival, soothsayers ask their mothers to engage in begging. Mothers with such babies believe that if they do not turn into begging, their children will die.

Most of these babies sit with their mothers in tattered clothes and most often houseflies hover around their mouths. The kids are also identified by their unkempt hair and pale looks and are likely to be spotted at insanitary places.

Twins in the region have been victims of traditional beliefs when UNICEF says "exploiting a child for economic gain by way of begging constitutes child exploitation."

Clearly, there are more women in northern region who have little or no education, so there is the urgent need to develop women empowerment programs to equip them with employable skills to help erase the practice. (A GNA feature by Albert Oppong-Ansah. 2012 GNA, Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012. or [ghananewsagency.org/features/old-be....](http://ghananewsagency.org/features/old-be....))

### ***Religious permutation of begging***

Religion can be seen as the beliefs and practices associated with the supernatural (Nukunya, 2003). Religion according to J.B Pratt (1920, p. 2) is the serious and social attitude of individuals and communities towards the power or powers which they conceive of as having ultimate control over their interest, and destinies.

In virtually every religion of the world, issues surrounding alms giving (and by implication begging) are entrenched though with different approaches. In this section, the issue of alms giving and begging as obtained in the scriptures of both Islam and Christianity (which are the two most popular orthodox religions) is examined.

### ***Islamic Perspective of Begging***

In Islam, „zakat“ (alms giving) is so weighty that it is one of the five pillars of the religion. Thus says Allah: “And in their properties there was the right of the beggar, and the Mahruum” (the poor). It is believed that every “penny” spent for the poor is spent for the cause of Almighty Allah. It is evident in the Koran and of course Islam, not to repulse beggars “And repulse not the beggar” (Koran 93, verse10). The list of those entitled to alms in Islam is not however restricted to beggars, but including all the poor, the captives, those in debt, stranded travelers, among many others. (Koran 9 verse 60). In summary while giving alms is seriously encouraged, begging is not frowned at, if the need arises.

### ***Christian Perspective of Begging***

In Christianity, alms giving are also encouraged but begging is silent upon. Thus says the Bible: “Oh the joys of those who are kind to the poor (is that) the Lord rescues them in times of trouble” (Psalm 41, verse 1). “Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing. But a curse will come upon those who close their eyes to poverty (Proverbs 28, verse 27).

In a way, it could be inferred that, if religions encourage alms giving, they indirectly encourage begging. The difference between the reviewed religions is in the degree and categorical statement, which are more pronounced in Islam than in Christianity. What the two religions stand for, however, as far as begging or beggars, and the poor generally are concerned is love, to the extent that it is preached that the wealth of the rich is not considered theirs alone but to take care of the wretched too. Thus says scriptures:

1) “I want you to share your food with the hungry and to welcome poor wanderers into your homes.....If you do these things, your salvation will come like the dawn.....Then when you call, the Lord will answer....”(Isaiah 58, verses 7-9)

2) “And in their property there was the right of the beggar and the poor” (Koran 51, verse 19)”

## **Social issues on begging**

When a person has a visible or perceivable disability, it is assumed by others that the person cannot survive and has to depend on the care of his/her parents or the welfare of the community. Sometimes, deprived of opportunity and steeped in ignorance, some disabled persons themselves seem to believe so" (ILO, 1993)

### ***Social Support***

Social support is defined as social relationships capable of providing individuals with tangible support or feelings of a sense of belonging to a loving or caring person or group (Hobfoll & Stokes, 1988). Social support includes emotional support, informational assistance, comfort, intimacy, tangible support, and physical affection (Cohen, Mermelstein, Kamarck, & Hoberman, 1985; House & Kahn, 1985; Wallston, Alagna, & DeVellis, 1983).

The importance of social support in the rehabilitation process is acknowledged in the literature (Belgrave & Walker, 1991; Cohen, & Syme, 1985; Jackson, Meade, Ellenbogen, & Barrett, 2006). Due to its significance in the rehabilitation process, it is recommended that social support be included in every rehabilitation effort (Belgrave & Walker, 1991; Cohen, & Syme, 1985; Jackson et al., 2006).

### ***Disability***

Disability may be generally defined as a condition which may restrict a person's mental, sensory or mobility tasks in the same way as a person who does not have a disability. A disability is an umbrella term, covering impairment, activity limitations and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations, disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of the society in which one lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by one with disabilities requires intervention to remove environmental and social barriers. Evidence suggests that people with disabilities face barriers in accessing the health and rehabilitation services they need in many settings. World Health Organization (World Report on Disability)

## **Background Information of Respondents.**

The essential features of this chapter include the background of respondents such as age, sex, occupation, religion, household size, education, marital status etc.

### ***Age and Sex Distribution of Respondents***

The age group of 20 respondents interviewed, it revealed that the age group of the respondents ranges from 15 to 66 years and above. However, a majority of the respondents who beg were within the ages of 36-45 and 46-55 representing 30% each respectively. Also, it was gathered that a minority of beggars had their ages ranged from 56-65 and 66 and above representing 5% each respectively.

**Table 1.** Ages of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15- 25	3	15%
26-35	3	15%
36-45	6	30%
46-55	6	30%
56-65	1	5%
66+	1	5%
Total	20	100%

(Source; field survey, 2019)

The important feature here is gender, both males and females are actively involved in begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality; It was revealed in the study that females dominated the males in the begging act. This goes to explain the inequality gap that still persists as a canker which makes women the most vulnerable in society. Social support includes emotional support, informational assistance, comfort, intimacy, tangible support and physical affection (Cohen et al 1985). This is contrary to the above explanation of social support since the available rehabilitation centers do not offer support to those in need, most particularly women in dire need as exemplified of female beggars in the case of Bolgatanga.

### ***Ethnicity of Respondents***

Various people from different ethnic backgrounds from in and out of Ghana are in the Bolgatanga Municipality as beggars. In the study, it was noticed that beggars from more than four ethnic groups were identified to be engaged in begging. Below is a table demonstrating the various ethnic groups and their frequency.

**Table 2.** Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
Moshi	2	10%
Gonja	2	10%
Frafra	5	25%
Fulani	4	20%
Hausa's	4	20%
Others	3	15%
Total	20	100%

(Source; field survey, 2019)

The information gathered showed that a majority of the beggars were found to be “Frafras” and they attributed their reasons for begging to cultural and economic factors. This is evident in the case of Jelili, (2006, 2009) who described begging as an activity of the wretched poverty-ridden individuals. In terms of cultural factors, most female beggars believed in the fact that the birth of twins demands begging as perceived by their culture and this contradicts the perception of UNICEF which says “exploiting a child for economic gain by way of begging constitutes child exploitation”. Twins in this region have been victims of tradition

### ***Educational Status of Respondents***

The table discloses that out of the total respondents; 17 persons representing 85% are not formally educated, only two persons representing 10% had primary education and one person had tertiary education signifying 5%.

**Table 3.** Educational Status of Respondents

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not educated	17	85%
Primary/J.H.S	2	10%
Tertiary	1	5%
Total	20	100%

(Source: Field Survey, 2019)

The findings from the survey suggest that street begging is more pronounced within illiterates as a majority of the beggars had no formal education. The modes of social interaction in a form of interpersonal relations enable the beggars to amend their loss of social articulation. Factors like ethnic background, gender, marital status, religion, education levels and body physique play a basic role in composing and patterning the beggars' informal social relationships and determining the choice of friends (Demewozu, 2005). The above is true of what has been said of (Demewozu, 2005) because education equips people with more lucrative jobs than ending up on the street as beggars.

### ***Religion***

It is of the notion that Muslims are usually those involved in begging but the study revealed that other religions are also involved in begging, though small in number. Table 4.4 below illustrates the various religious sects in the Municipality, thus Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions. Out of the 20 interviewees, 3 are Christians representing 15%, 16 are Muslims representing 80%, 1 person from the traditional sect representing 5% which serves as the statistics of religious status of the respondents covered in the study.

**Table 4.** Religion of Respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	3	15%
Islam	16	80%
Traditional	1	5%
Total	20	100%

(Source: field survey, 2019)

From the above table, it can be deduced that religion is basically a factor that encourages begging. In Christianity, alms giving is encouraged but begging is silent upon. In a way, it could be inferred that if religions encourage alms giving, they indirectly encourage begging. In Islam as well 'zakat' (alms giving) is so weighty that it is one of the five pillars of the religion. It is believed that every "penny" spent for the poor is spent for the cause of Almighty Allah. It is evident in the Koran and of course Islam, not to repulse beggars (the poor). The list of those entitled to alms in Islam is not however restricted to beggars, but includes all the poor, the captives, those in debt, stranded travelers, among many

others. In other words, while giving alms is totally encouraged, begging is not frowned at, if the need arises.

### ***Household Size of Respondents***

Most of the beggars that were covered in the study had family members to cater for. Also, most males that were covered under the study usually had two wives and a number of children, including themselves to feed. The data collected revealed that beggars usually do not have stable occupation, but have large families to cater for and therefore they resort to begging as the only immediate solution.

**Table 5.** Household Size of Respondents

Household size	Frequency	Percentage%
1-3	3	15%
4-7	10	50%
8-10	6	30%
11+	1	5%
Total	20	100%

(Source: field survey, 2019)

Regarding the beggars' household size, the findings revealed that the largest proportion, 50% had household size between 4 - 7, 30% had 8-10 household members, 15% of them had household size of 1 – 3 members while 5% had household members of 11 and above. From the findings, it was reflected that a large population of beggars in the Boolgatanga Municipality belong to low income group. Begging as an indication of abject poverty (Adedibu, 1989), has always been a major way out for the helpless poor. However, this is challenged because most of these beggars on the street with large families lack proper planning and aside they can resort to other livelihood sources rather than begging when they have large families to cater for.

### ***Marital Status of Respondents***

Marital status influences begging to some extent, A majority of men and women were actively involved in the act of begging as revealed by the study. The widows claimed they neither had nothing to do nor any family support other than to resort to begging as a source of livelihood.

**Table 6.** Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	3	15%
Married	15	75%
Divorced	1	5%
Widowed	1	5%
Total	20	100%

(Source; field survey 2019)

Table 4.6 shows that the people who engaged in begging are more of married persons (75%), than single (15%), divorced and widowed (5% each). The findings is similar to what has been observed by (Ogunkan & Fawole, 2009) who found that begging is more

of married than person single in Ogbomoso as an indication that poverty and need to provide for the family form part of the major reasons why people beg on the streets.

### Occupation of Respondents

Out of 20 respondents interviewed, 60% of the beggars (males and females) were actively involved in begging as a main source of livelihood, while 25% and 15% were into farming and begging, farming and trading respectively.

**Table 7.** Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Male	female	Frequency	Percentage
Begging	4	8	12	60%
Farming and begging	3	2	5	25%
Farming and trading	1	2	3	15%
Total	8	12	20	100%

(Source; field survey, 2019)

This category talks about the occupation of the respondents. It was revealed that, most of them had main and temporal occupations. Relative poverty is when some people's way of life and income is so much worse than the general standard of living in a country or the region where they live that they struggle to live a normal life and to participate in ordinary economic, social and cultural activities. What this means will vary from country to country, depending on the standard of living enjoyed by the majority. (The European Anti-Poverty).

It is conventional wisdom to believe that the down turn in the economy is a causal factor for the rise of the social ill and fallout. One believes that the reasons for the widespread of begging in the Bolga Municipal are deep-rooted to some extent on the economic realities of our time.

### Factors That Motivate Street Begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality

A lot of factors accounted for street begging and a few factors that were revealed from the study of beggars are poverty, physical disability, culture and religion. Poverty and other socio-economic conditions in contemporary times make it difficult for many families to assist those in need. It is estimated that about 40% of Ghanaians are poor, i.e., having incomes below the poverty line and hence struggle to meet basic human needs (GSS, 2009).

**Table 8.** Factors Motivating Street Begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	11	55%
Physical disability	8	40%
Culture and religion	1	5%
Total	20	100%

(Source; field survey, 2019)

Adedibu (1989) identifies thirteen closely related factors influencing begging in Nigerian cities. These include: physical disability, unemployment, religious belief, old age, the lack of caring relatives, and the lack of rehabilitation centers. Others are poverty, uncontrolled migration, the lack of education, place of origin, the lack of adequate residence accident,

and the acceptability of begging in society. Also, Jelili (2006) identifies physical disability, unemployment, and old age as factors influencing begging.) Despite the above mentioned conditions, poverty is the main driving force that leads people to the streets to beg in the Bolgatanga Municipality.

### ***Forms of Disabilities***

One of the major factors that motivated people into begging is disabilities and it was clearly evident as it constituted 40% of the beggars that were studied. Blind beggars were 3, constituting 15% of the disabled covered under the study, cripples were 2 constituting 10%, a 1 eyed person with an amputated leg constituting 5% and finally, 2 people with amputated arms also constituted 10% of the total population of 9 beggars.

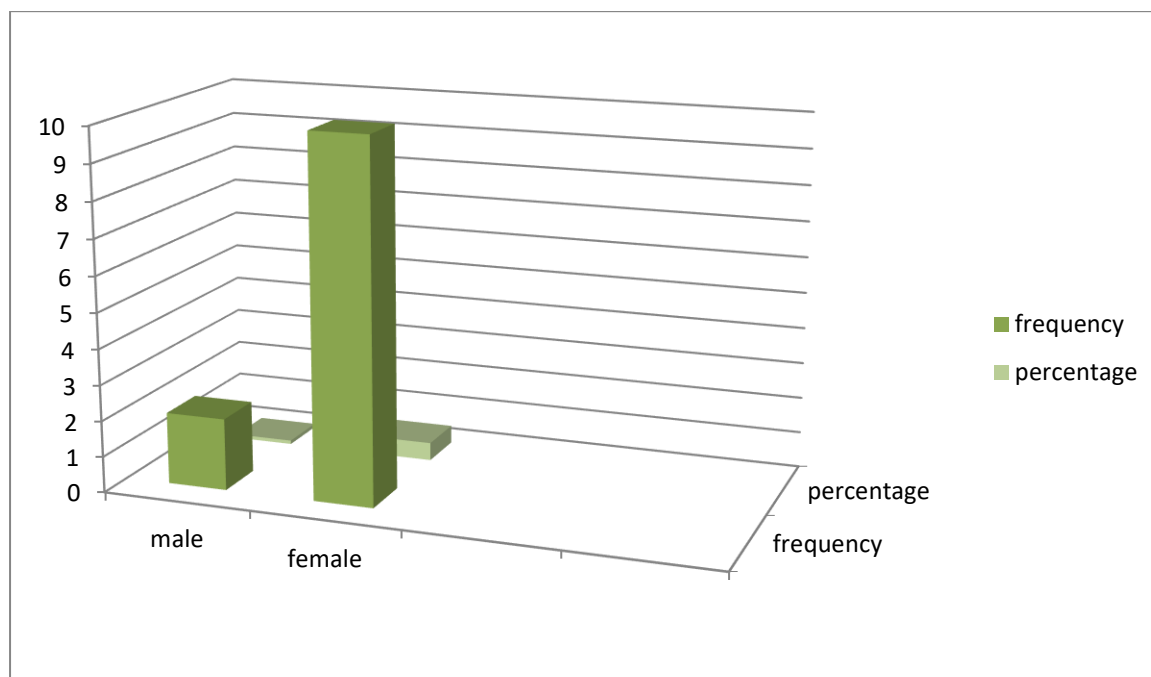
It is significant to note that being disabled is not the same thing as hopelessness; the less fortunate are described as persons who lack the necessary chances or facilities to realize their potentials. The recognition of the potentials of the less fortunate has been the position of those who carry out studies on the disabled by arguing that “When a person has a visible or perceivable disability, it is assumed by others that the person cannot survive and has to depend on the care of his/her parents or the welfare of the community. Sometimes, deprived of opportunity and steeped in ignorance, some disabled persons themselves seem to believe so” (ILO, 1993).

The situation of the disabled persons who are unemployed and take to begging, especially in developing countries, are thus condemned (Awori, 1992). In this regard, it is obvious that beggars use their disability nature as an excuse to beg rather than engage in productive ventures.

### ***The Able Bodied Beggars (No form of disability)***

Though the disabled beg and it is frowned upon, the able bodied who are less privileged also take advantage of the sympathy of society and resort to begging as an occupation to earn a living. The issue is that persons who engage in begging have one reason or the other to support their stand as to why they beg.



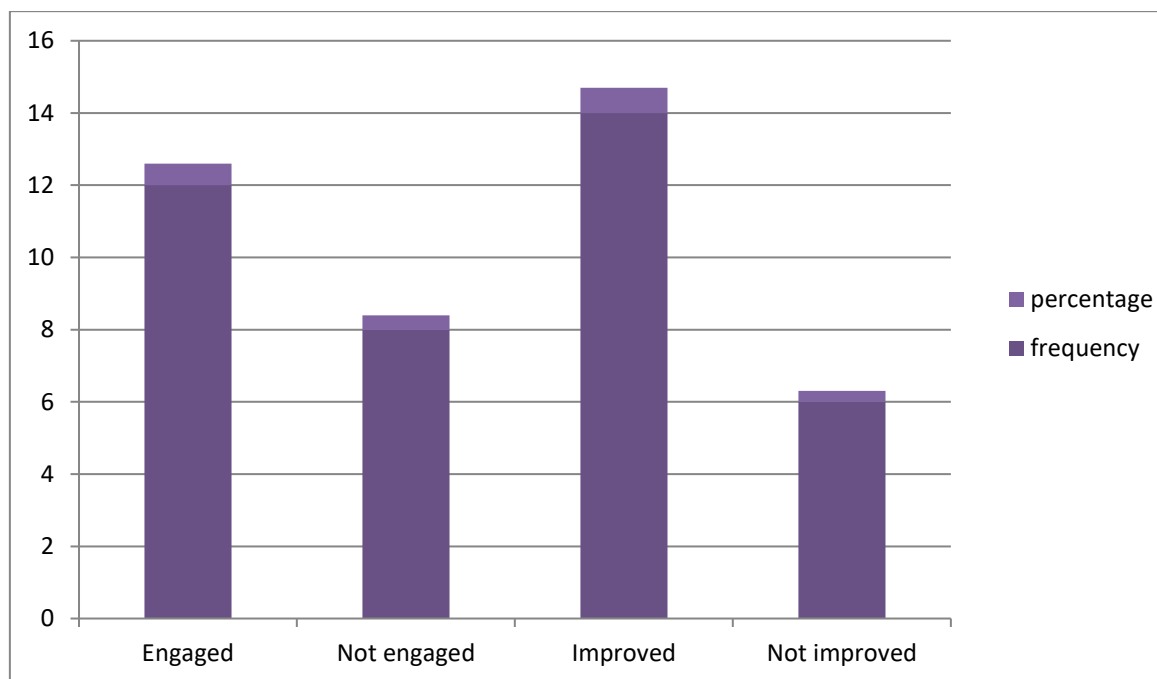


**Figure 1.** Able Bodied Beggars (Source; field survey, 2019)

Most of these beggars in this category complained of poverty as a motivating factor that pushed them to beg and most women related it to a cultural reason associated with superstition. Begging, as an indication of abject poverty, (Adedibu, 1989), has always been a major way out for the helpless poor. Nevertheless, not all beggars are regarded as poor or motivated into begging by poverty, and not all the poor are beggars. As it may be, one begins to wonder whether such religious and socioeconomic factors actually encourage begging to a large extent.

### ***Begging and Livelihood Improvement***

During the field survey, it was revealed that a majority of the beggars were previously engaged in other occupations before they moved into begging. Others were not involved in other occupations aside begging from which they derive their livelihood. It was revealed in the study that, 12 people representing 60% were involved in other forms of occupation before they moved in to begging, 8 persons representing 40% were not engaged in any form of trade, 14 beggars representing 70% stated that their livelihood had improved as a result of begging, while others representing 30% claimed the trend remained unchanged.

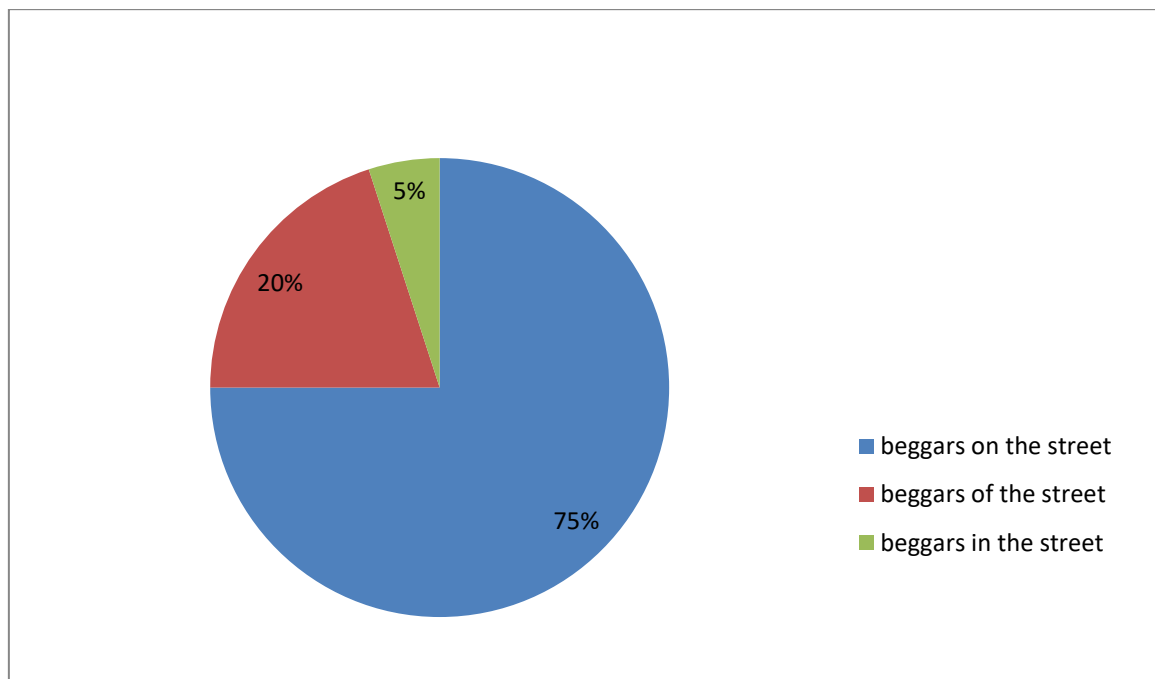


**Figure 2.** Livelihood Improvement Analyses of Beggars (Source; field survey, 2014)

Research has shown that poor vocational rehabilitation outcome, the lack of access to the labor market, and poverty have caused many Ghanaians with disabilities to resort to begging on the streets in Ghana for survival (Appiagyie, 2006; Kassah, 2008). A considerable number of them stated that their livelihood had improved significantly as a result of begging, which is a motivating factor for begging.

### The Categories of Beggars

From the study, it was revealed that there were various categories of beggars which comprised beggars on the street, beggars off the street and beggars in the street. The first category of beggars earn money on the street for themselves or their families but often go home in the evening after spending the day on the street begging. The second category of beggars live and sleep on the streets and have lost family ties. These beggars normally spend some nights on the streets and occasionally go back home. Beggars in this third group are completely detached from or have been abandoned by their families and their societies and they have move into the begging life.



**Figure 3.** Categories of Beggars in Tamale (Source; field survey.2014)

From the chart above, it is clear that beggars on the street were 15 out of 20 respondents representing 75%, beggars of the street were 4 representing 20%, while beggars in the street were 1 representing 5%. This implies that most beggars had their permanent homes but always go on the street to beg and return home. Adugna (2006) held the view that street beggars have generally been categorized in terms of their abilities and disabilities based on how they make their living from the streets. From the findings it is evident to acknowledge that both able bodied and disabled resort to begging for a livelihood.

### Vantage Points for Begging

It was revealed from the field survey that, most beggars in the Bolgatanga Municipality were found at various vantage points where begging activities are being perpetuated. Such places were traffic lights joints, places of worship, around shops and market centers. Again, It was revealed that 5 beggars representing 25% were located at places of worship, 6 of them representing 30% were located at fuel filling stations, whereas 9 representing 45% begged around shops and market places.

**Table 9.** Vantage Points of Begging

Location	Frequency	Percentage%
Places of worship	5	25%
Fuel Filling Station	6	30%
Shops and market	9	45%
Total	20	100%

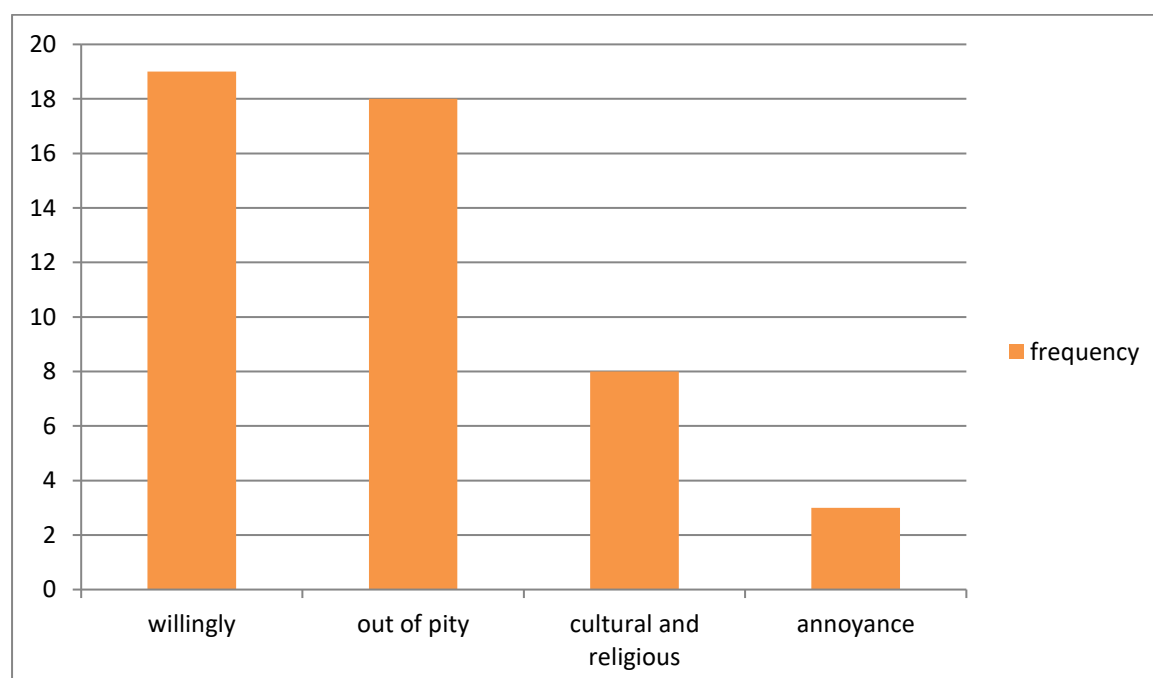
(Source; field survey, 2019)

In some communities in northern Ghana, especially 'Bomahe' community, 'Tolon' and Tamale metropolis, twins, triplets and quadruplets are considered as lesser gods. In order to ensure their survival, soothsayers ask their mothers to engage in begging. Mothers with such babies believe that if they do not turn into begging, their children will die.

Most of these babies sit with their mothers in tattered clothes and most often houseflies hover around their mouths. The kids are also identified by their unkempt hair and pale looks and are likely to be spotted at insanitary places. (Oppong-Ansah, 2012). The above is a true reflection of the findings from the survey, where most of the beggars were actually seen at filthy and unhealthy places begging.

### Reactions of People Who Offer Gifts to Beggars and Their Reasons

Beggars are usually on the streets in order gain their daily needs, through the help of members of a society who may appear to offer gifts for various reasons. Some may offer gifts to beggars out of pity, willingly or because of cultural and religious purposes, whereas others as a result of a beggar's actions may react cruelly towards beggars. Below is the response of the beggars in relation to the reactions of passersby and the reasons why they offer gifts. 19 people gave gifts willingly, 18 gave out of pity, 8 gave for religious and cultural reasons and lastly, 3 gave in a cruel manner.



**Figure 6.** Reactions of Passersby and Reasons They Offer Gifts (Source; field survey, 2019)

Through the field survey, it was found that some street beggars beg from passersby or pedestrians by stretching their arms out, particularly with those children from Chad. Sympathizers usually respond by offering gifts or ignoring them. When responding to beggars' demands, most cruel passersby use phrases like "I have no money or 'nba ta lawu' 'In some cases, the beggars experience violent and unfriendly responses from passersby, although this situation has not discouraged them from the begging activities. On the other hand, others seem to be compassionate to beggars because of religious and cultural reasons. This finding goes in line with the Bible and the Quran as stated below;

"Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing. But a curse will come upon those who close their eyes to poverty".

It is believed that every “penny” spent for the poor is spent for the cause of Almighty Allah. It is evident in the Koran and of course Islam, not to repulse beggars “And repulse not the beggar”.

### Ways of Reducing the Incidence of Begging

Though a majority of the beggars studied claimed they had their livelihoods improved as a result of begging, they all (20) hoped to stop begging should they have access to tangible support to start farming, trading and sewing. 3 out of the 20 wanted to farm representing 15%, 10 beggars representing 50% wanted to start any form of trade, 2 representing 10% wanted to sew and 5 representing 25% wanted to do both farming and trading if they were offered assistance, as obtained from the field survey.

**Table 10.** Various Occupations Beggars Wished to Venture Into

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage%
Farming	3	15%
Trading	10	50%
Sewing	2	10%
Farming and trading	5	25%
Total	20	100%

(Source; field survey, 2019)

From the information gathered from the survey, it was evident that no assistance was given to the beggars and the rehabilitation center was not functioning effectively in order to provide social support to the beggars. Thus, in a normal functioning environment, social support should be available to assist the less privileged through capacity building and many others. Social support includes emotional support, informational assistance, comfort, intimacy, tangible support, and physical affection (Cohen, Mermelstein, et al., 1985). The findings agree with (Cohen, Mermelstein, et al., 1985) on social support which is not available to the less privileged in Bolgatanga Municipality who happen to find themselves as beggars on the street.

### SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

Most of the respondents the team met during the survey were physically and mentally fit to undertake any job to earn a living. A team member disguised himself as a beggar and interviewed a respondent (beggar) and the respondent indicated that he is a “professional beggar” and has been in it for the past seven years, and that he uses carriage to beg, usually his targets are the rich. When he knows that you are “well to do” and you are with your colleague, may be at a drinking spot or at relaxation places, he usually walks straight to you and says “give me Ghc.20” if anybody among the group wants to help, may be, by giving the money, he will insist that “No” he wants the money from the one he asked first and usually adds that “there is a reason why”, that is why he didn’t asked any of the members around but you. He added that his dress code is black suit with white trousers and polished black shoe. During the interview he was in the same cloths with the reason that when you see him in that attire you wouldn’t think that he is a beggar but may be a messenger of God.

Also, some beggars see begging as a source of employment. The study team observed some beggars at the back of Imperia Bus Station, a walk way in the market where they have their permanent sitting places for begging. They go there as early as 7 am and go home around 6 pm usually led by kids. During the interview, some indicated that they own houses out of begging (compound houses) and other people are renting in their communities. Some have their life savings up to about GHC.10.000. The team suggested that if they had that amount then they should quit begging and start up a business and they said that “begging is a very lucrative business in it you have nothing to lose”. With such mentality, it will be very difficult for such a beggar to quite bagging.

## **CONCLUSION**

Begging is one of the phenomena of the urban areas of developing countries and a kind of social problem which is not like other problems as seen in the public notwithstanding the fact that economic poverty is an essential feature in the development of this phenomenon. From the results of the study, poverty and other root causes including, culture (the myth of twin birth), physical disability coupled with other factors lie at the heart of the emergence of street begging. In some context, traditional and religious values are used to support begging though it seems that such beliefs are often a reflection of the prevailing economic conditions rather than an intrinsic part of cultures.

Furthermore, it can be concluded that street begging is a global occurrence which is gradually becoming a nuisance to the public especially in developing countries. The study has also established that the absence of formal education is an important feature that influences street begging to a large extent. The enforcement of education prospects is considered essential to confront the menace of street begging. Government should, therefore, improve upon the educational structure by introducing mechanisms to ensure that all children of school-going ages are included in the FCUBE program and the free senior high school policy. This will help eliminate child beggars off the streets.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are presented as ways of reducing the emergence of street begging in the Bolgatanga Municipality and by extension, to other cities in Ghana at large.

Foreigners who are engaged in street begging should be repatriated by the government. Government through the Social Welfare agencies should introduce diversionary programs such as vocational training to address issues that lead to people being on the streets. Government should prioritize the provision of affordable quality education to engage children of beggars so as to avoid trans-generational begging. This will equip the children with requisite knowledge and skills to attain their own future sources of means of support and empower them to face their future as independent individuals.

The immigration service should scrutinize foreigners to make sure they have workable skills that they can use to secure employment opportunities or serve as their source of livelihood in Ghana before they are allowed entry.

The government in collaboration with religious leaders through the media by the use of radio and television channels should offer social services and also preach vividly with the intention of directing people's attention towards skills acquisition and capacity building that can help to solve the problem of poverty that leads to street begging.

Extra efforts should be placed on changing community or society's attitudes towards beggars with disabilities and emphasizing the necessity of educating children rather than being blinded by culture which permits the use of twins as an excuse for begging.

In as much as begging is not good, governments and other stakeholders should create opportunities for street beggars to make a living by other means through trading and farming.

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