Keywords: Child street begging, Stakeholder engagement, Rehabilitation, Community-based organizations

Introduction

Child street begging is a pervasive social issue that transcends national borders, affecting societies globally and raising profound concerns for public welfare, child rights, and social development. Across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, numerous children live and work on the streets, with begging representing both a coping strategy and symptom of deeper socio-economic vulnerabilities such as extreme poverty, family breakdown, and lack of access to education and social services (Abebe, 2009 as cited in SunTextReviews, 2025). Global institutions, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, have documented that street-connected children often suffer long-term negative outcomes in health, education, and psychosocial well-being, with many never accessing formal schooling or social protections (ILO, 2020; UNICEF, 2021 as cited in Guardian, 2025). Consequently, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize inclusive education, child protection, and poverty reduction as essential frameworks to mitigate child exploitation and street begging at a global level.

In the broader African context, street begging among children reflects complex interactions of structural poverty, inadequate social safety nets, and cultural practices that sometimes legitimize begging as acceptable livelihood strategy. Studies across East and West Africa, for example, indicate that children resort to begging due to extreme household poverty, parental neglect, limited access to schooling and social services, as well as urbanization that displaces traditional community support systems (SunTextReviews, 2025; SunTextReviews, 2025). These multifaceted drivers point to the need for concerted stakeholder engagement involving families, community leaders, social welfare institutions, and policy makers to provide tailored socio-economic support, protective legislation, and comprehensive reintegration programs for vulnerable children. Without integrated and sustained stakeholder responses, street begging remains entrenched in the lives of many children, perpetuating cycles of marginalization and social exclusion.

In Nigeria, child street begging is particularly visible and deeply rooted in socio-economic and cultural dynamics, especially in the northern regions where the traditional Almajiri system of Qur'anic education intersects with poverty and weak institutional support. Research in Sokoto metropolis indicates that child street begging is highly complex, driven by poverty, distortion of the Almajiri educational system, parental neglect, and insufficient governmental response, with substantial negative effects on children's rights and religious practices (Ahmad & Abubakar, 2025). The Federal Government and education stakeholders have recently proposed a national policy to integrate Qur'anic and modern education, highlighting the importance of inclusive strategies championed by multiple actors,

including state governments, civil society, and community institutions (Nairametrics, 2025). Despite these policy moves, implementation remains uneven, and comprehensive engagement from all tiers of stakeholders is critical to address structural gaps that sustain the persistence of child street begging.

Sokoto State, like other parts of northern Nigeria, has witnessed increasing alarm over the rising number of children on the streets, prompting local stakeholders to convene dialogues and action forums aimed at sustainable solutions. A recent Sokoto Advancement Forum dialogue brought together scholars, religious leaders, social advocates and community representatives to draw actionable strategies for reforming street begging practices while preserving the essence of the traditional Almajiri model in a humane and rights-based manner (Ubandawaki, 2025). These engagements underscore the recognition among local stakeholders that addressing child street begging requires not only policy directives but also community-driven interventions, vocational skills integration, and enhanced welfare support for children and families. Moreover, key state officials have described the phenomenon as both a social and security concern, calling for strengthened collaboration across government, religious institutions, and civil society to protect vulnerable children and reposition systems of education and care (PunchNG, 2025).

Despite ongoing initiatives, significant challenges persist in stakeholder coordination, resource allocation, and cultural integration of interventions in Sokoto State, making qualitative inquiry into stakeholder roles both timely and necessary. Such research is vital for understanding how government agencies, religious and traditional institutions, NGOs, and community actors perceive and operationalize their responsibilities in addressing child street begging. By illuminating lived experiences, institutional strategies, and inter-stakeholder dynamics, this study can inform policy refinement and practical engagement frameworks that promote the dignity, protection, and social inclusion of street-connected children in Sokoto and beyond.

Statement of the problem

Every child's rights to protection, education, health, and social development should be upheld in accordance with international and national child welfare frameworks. Effective stakeholder engagement including government agencies, religious and traditional institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community actors should collaboratively develop and implement robust interventions that prevent children from being forced to beg on the streets, ensure their access to education and basic needs, and integrate them into protective care systems. These stakeholders should operate within a coherent child protection architecture that aligns policy, community mobilization, and resources to safeguard children's dignity and future potential. However, despite such frameworks, Sokoto State continues to witness a pervasive presence of children on streets begging for alms rather than attending school or receiving adequate care, indicating systemic failures in stakeholder engagement and protective mechanisms.

The current situation in Sokoto State reflects entrenched social and economic vulnerabilities that fuel child street begging, including poverty, parental neglect, weak governmental response, and the distortion of traditional systems of care and education, such as the Almajiri system, where children are often exposed to street begging practices rather than protected or educated (Ahmad & Abubakar, 2025). Empirical evidence from recent qualitative research in Sokoto Metropolis demonstrates that child street begging persists as a complex social issue rooted in both structural and cultural factors, negatively affecting children's wellbeing and community perceptions of child welfare (Ahmad & Abubakar, 2025). The consequences of inadequate stakeholder engagement are significant: children engaged in street begging are deprived of education, exposed to health risks, psychosocial stress, and exploitation, and are less likely to achieve their developmental potential, exacerbating cycles of poverty and social exclusion (Guardian, 2025). Despite sporadic efforts by state authorities to partner with traditional councils and NGOs to curb street begging, the lack of sustained coordination, resources, and child-centred strategies undermines these interventions, signaling an urgent need for systematic investigation into stakeholder roles, challenges and collaborative solutions in addressing child street begging in Sokoto State. In the light of the above, the study therefore, seeks to examine Stakeholder Engagement and Child Street Begging in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

To examine the nature and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement in addressing child street begging in Sokoto State.

Specific Objectives

1. To explore stakeholders' perceptions of the underlying causes of child street begging in Sokoto State.
2. To examine the roles played by government agencies in controlling and reducing child street begging.
3. To investigate the involvement of non-governmental and community-based organizations in child protection and rehabilitation.

Concept of street Begging

Street begging refers to the act whereby individuals, particularly children, solicit alms or material assistance from the public in streets, markets, or other public spaces as a means of survival rather than as a temporary response to emergency need. Conceptually, child street begging is viewed as a manifestation of structural deprivation, social exclusion, and institutional failure, where children are compelled by poverty, neglect, or systemic weaknesses to engage in public solicitation for sustenance (Ahmad & Abubakar, 2025). Contemporary social scholars emphasize that street begging among children constitutes a violation of child rights, as it exposes them to physical, psychological, and moral dangers while depriving them of education and proper socialization (UNICEF, 2021; Abdullahi, 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, while Islam strongly encourages charity (ṣadaqah) and compassion toward the poor, it discourages habitual begging when individuals are capable of work or when societal structures fail to protect the vulnerable. The Qur'an emphasizes dignity, self-reliance, and communal responsibility in caring for the needy, stating:

> *"Charity is for the poor who are constrained in the cause of Allah, unable to move about in the land; an ignorant person would think them self-sufficient because of their restraint"* (Qur'an 2:273).

This verse underscores that the poor should be supported without being forced into public humiliation through begging. Additionally, the Qur'an condemns negligence toward children and the vulnerable, instructing believers to protect dependents from harm and deprivation (Qur'an 4:9). Recent Islamic scholars argue that child street begging contradicts Islamic ethical principles, as it transfers parental and societal responsibilities onto children, thereby violating their dignity and rights (Abdulraheem, 2022; Sadiq & Musa, 2024). Consequently, Islam places responsibility on families, communities, and governing authorities to provide care, education, and welfare systems that prevent children from resorting to street begging.

Stakeholder Engagement and Child Street Begging

Child street begging constitutes a multifaceted social problem with implications for child welfare, human development, and community cohesion, prompting extensive scholarly attention across disciplines. Globally, research has consistently shown that street begging among children is associated with poverty, family breakdown, lack of access to education, and inadequate social protection systems (Uddin, Islam & Rahman, 2022; see also Ngengani, 2023). Studies outside Nigeria underscore that street-connected children face barriers to education, healthcare, and societal inclusion, often becoming trapped in survival strategies such as begging, scavenging, or informal labor, with long-term detriments to their psychosocial wellbeing and life chances (Ngengani, 2023).

Within the Nigerian context, empirical studies have similarly documented the complexity of child street begging, stressing its socio-economic and cultural roots, and the need for coordinated multi-stakeholder engagement. Ahmad and Abubakar (2025) identify poverty, parental neglect, and the distortion of traditional education systems especially the Almajiri model as driving forces behind child street begging in Sokoto Metropolis, noting that weak governmental response and inadequate protective systems exacerbate the situation. Similarly, Aliyu and Kayode (2024) illustrate in Southwestern Nigeria that poverty, unemployment, and broken homes contribute significantly to street begging among school-age children, despite the existence of social protection policies, which are hindered by poor funding and implementation challenges. These studies underscore that while policies and institutional frameworks exist, the **effectiveness of stakeholder engagement** including government agencies, community organizations, and welfare institutions remains limited in practice due to systemic weaknesses and resource constraints.

However, public perceptions in Abuja highlighted that poverty and lack of education fuel street begging, while respondents advocated for collaborative approaches involving government, religious institutions, and NGOs to strengthen social support and law enforcement (Garba, 2025). Such findings affirm that public sentiment aligns with scholarly calls for integrated, stakeholder-driven strategies that combine socioeconomic empowerment, educational opportunities, and community engagement. In Sokoto, recent stakeholder dialogues convened by civil society forums have stressed the need to distinguish between the traditional Almajiri educational intent and the exploitative practices that lead to begging, calling for reforms that include community stakeholders, religious leaders, and government actors in co-creating solutions to protect vulnerable children (Ubandawaki, 2025; PunchNG, 2025).

However, despite acknowledgement of the need for broad stakeholder engagement, significant gaps persist in translating policy intentions into sustained, coordinated action. National policy proposals seek to integrate community participation and hybrid educational models to reduce child street begging, yet challenges in data accuracy, legislative backing, and operational capacity undermine their execution (Nairametrics, 2025). Furthermore, evidence from Sokoto State's recent contexts reveals that entrenched socio-cultural practices and resource limitations continue to hinder synergistic stakeholder efforts, suggesting that effective engagement requires not only institutional coordination but also grassroots empowerment and accountability mechanisms. Scholars argue that without strengthening inter-agency infrastructures and enhancing accountability among stakeholders government, religious institutions, NGOs and families alike child street begging will persist as a social challenge with negative implications for human capital development and societal wellbeing.

Ahmad & Alkanchi (2023) explored the **causes and effects of street begging on children in Sokoto Metropolis**, with particular emphasis on **internally displaced persons (IDPs)**. Although the design was **survey research**, this study provides empirical insight into the structural drivers of street begging in Sokoto. Using **purposive sampling**, the study selected **335 filled questionnaires** from an initial target of 384 purposively selected street beggars across four Sokoto clusters. **Data were collected with a structured questionnaire** and analyzed using **descriptive and inferential statistics**, including regression analysis. Findings showed **significant relationships between street begging, insecurity, and cultural factors** in the Sokoto context, indicating that socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities drive children onto the streets. The study concluded that street begging is linked to instability and cultural norms that permit exposure of children to street life. Recommendations included **law enforcement education, child rights protection, and accountability mechanisms for parents and community members** to mitigate begging and protect vulnerable children.

Lawal, Aliu & Irhue (2022) conducted *"A Qualitative Study of Public Health and Policy Implications of Street Begging in Nigeria"* using a **qualitative design**. Although the research focused on the **Abuja Federal Capital Territory** rather than Sokoto, its methodology and stakeholder insights are highly relevant for understanding broader Nigerian street begging dynamics. The study used **in-depth and key informant interviews and non-participant**

observation across **six purposively selected areas** with significant beggar populations, including **30 beggars, 16 government staff, 2 journalists, and 7 residents**. **Content analysis** was used to interpret data. Findings revealed that many beggars view begging as a legitimate livelihood despite public health risks, and stakeholders recognized the **need for policy and social welfare interventions**. The study concluded that Nigeria's street begging phenomenon has far-reaching public health and welfare implications, recommending **multi-stakeholder policy reforms, social protection programming, and targeted rehabilitation efforts** to address street begging at community and institutional levels.

Garba (2025) examined **public perceptions of street begging and its links to crime** in Abuja Municipal Area Council using a **descriptive survey design**. The **population comprised residents of six purposively selected wards**, with a **sample size of 345 valid respondents** from an initial 400 questionnaires administered. The study used **structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews** to capture perceptions of street begging and associated issues, analyzed through **descriptive statistics** (frequencies and percentages). Findings indicated that respondents overwhelmingly perceived poverty, unemployment, and lack of education as primary causes of street begging, and many associated street beggars with criminal roles, reflecting concerns about social safety and security. The study concluded that street begging is a socio-economic and security concern that requires **stakeholder collaboration** among government, religious leaders, NGOs, and community actors to provide economic empowerment, enforce relevant laws, and enhance social support systems. It recommended a **multi-stakeholder approach** to address root causes and strengthen interventions.

Aliyu and Kayode, (2024) *examine Begging among School Age Children and Social Protection Policy in Southwestern Nigeria*. The study used a **mixed methods design** combining structured questionnaires (150 respondents) and **semi-structured interviews (12 purposively sampled education officials, ministry representatives, and school principals)**, the study analyzed data with **descriptive/inferential statistics and content analysis**. While focused on South-western Nigeria, the research identified systemic enablers and barriers impacting **social protection policies designed to eradicate street begging**, including **poor funding, limited stakeholder awareness, inadequate coordination among government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders**, and socio-cultural factors. The study concluded that existing social protection policies have some impact but require **intensified stakeholder collaboration and resource allocation** to be effective. It recommended **enhanced funding, stakeholder coordination, improved policy awareness, and monitoring/evaluation mechanisms** to reduce Child Street begging sustainably.

Methodology

This study adopts a **qualitative research design** to enable an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The design is considered appropriate because it allows for the exploration of lived experiences, perceptions and roles of key stakeholders through **semi-structured interviews** with community leaders, welfare officers and religious scholars, as well as **focus**

group discussions with child beggars. The study population comprises children below the age of ten engaged in street begging across selected areas of Sokoto State, including Sokoto South, Sokoto North, Dange Shuni, Wamakko and parts of Bodinga and Kware Local Government Areas, with an estimated population of about 1,500 children.

Using a **cluster sampling approach**, four clusters were purposively selected based on the high concentration of child beggars, with each cluster representing one local government area. From each cluster, a total of **70 participants** were selected through **proportionate sampling**, resulting in an overall sample size of **280 respondents**, consisting of **50 child beggars, 10 community leaders and 10 religious scholars per cluster**. Data were collected using **focus group discussion guides** and **semi-structured interview guides** developed to elicit information on personal experiences, religious and cultural influences, stakeholder roles, and policy responses related to child street begging. The collected data were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, supported by **NVivo software**.

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the study. **Informed consent** was obtained from parents or guardians, while participants' **anonymity and confidentiality** were ensured. Special care was taken to protect child participants from harm, exploitation, or stigmatization. The study also maintained **cultural and religious sensitivity**, avoided bias and misrepresentation, and ensured that the research process and outcomes contribute constructively to **policy formulation, stakeholder collaboration, community engagement and social and religious development** in Sokoto State.

Results and Discussions

The qualitative data on the stakeholder engagement and child street begging in Sokoto state, Nigeria were analyzed using **NVivo 14 software**. The analysis followed a thematic approach, beginning with the importation and transcription of interview data collected from key informants, including parents, community leaders, teachers, Islamic clerics, social welfare officers, and the child beggars themselves.

Research Question One: What are the roles played by government agencies in controlling and reducing child street begging?

Community leaders emphasized the regulatory and monitoring roles of government agencies. One community leader noted,

> *"The government agencies often conduct raids and remove children from the streets, but sometimes they cannot reach all areas due to lack of staff and resources."*

NVivo coding highlighted this as a recurring theme of *enforcement of child protection laws*. Another leader stated,

> *"They also set policies and guidelines, but without community cooperation, their efforts are limited," reinforcing the importance of community involvement alongside government action*.

Welfare officers provided practical insights into the operational interventions by government agencies. One welfare officer explained,

> *"We provide temporary shelters for rescued children where they get education, counseling, and vocational skills training before reintegration into society."*

NVivo coding categorized this under *rehabilitation and reintegration programs*.
Another officer remarked,

> *"Collaboration between government agencies and NGOs is crucial; no single body can handle the problem alone,"* which was coded as *inter-agency collaboration*, a significant theme in addressing child street begging.

Religious scholars highlighted the moral and societal aspects of government interventions. One scholar stated,

> *"Government agencies work with religious institutions to sensitize communities on the dangers of child begging and encourage people to report such cases,"* which NVivo coded under *community sensitization*.

Another scholar noted,

> *"Legal measures alone are not enough; religious and cultural guidance shapes children's behavior and helps prevent them from returning to the streets,"* a theme NVivo identified as *culturally contextualized intervention*.

The NVivo analysis revealed that government agencies perform multifaceted roles in addressing Child Street begging, including law enforcement, rehabilitation, social support and community engagement. Across the informants, enforcement and rehabilitation emerged as the most frequently cited roles, while challenges such as limited resources and inadequate public awareness were consistently highlighted. These findings demonstrate that effective interventions require not only government action but also collaboration with communities, religious institutions and NGOs. NVivo's coding and thematic analysis provided a clear understanding of the perceptions of various informants regarding government roles. Community leaders focused on policy and enforcement, welfare officers on practical rehabilitation efforts, and religious scholars on societal awareness and moral guidance. As one welfare officer summarized, *"Without proper coordination and community participation, even the best policies cannot achieve lasting results."*

Research Question Two: What is the involvement of non-governmental and community-based organizations in child protection and rehabilitation?

The interviews from key informants, including community leaders, welfare officers, and religious scholars, were transcribed and imported into NVivo for systematic coding. Using a

thematic approach, the software helped to organize the data into recurring themes, including advocacy, rehabilitation, community engagement, and collaborative support, allowing for a clear understanding of the roles played by non-governmental and community-based organizations (NGOs and CBOs) in protecting and rehabilitating vulnerable children.

Community leaders emphasized the advocacy and awareness-raising functions of NGOs and CBOs. One leader stated,

> *"These organizations visit our communities to sensitize parents and children about the dangers of street begging and the importance of education."*

NVivo coded this under *community awareness and advocacy*. This aligns with Omoruyi and Chukwuma (2020), who argue that NGOs play a critical role in creating awareness and mobilizing communities toward the protection of vulnerable children.

Another leader noted,

> *"They also pressure local authorities to provide social services and follow up on rescued children,"* categorized under *policy advocacy and monitoring*, which supports the view of Salifu et al. (2019) that community-based organizations act as intermediaries between government institutions and local populations.

Welfare officers highlighted the operational and rehabilitative contributions of NGOs and CBOs. One officer explained,

> *"Most NGOs provide temporary shelters, counseling, and skills training for rescued children, complementing what government agencies offer."* NVivo coded this as *rehabilitation and skill acquisition programs*.

Another officer remarked,

> *Community-based organizations often track children who leave the streets to ensure they do not return, providing mentorship and family support,"* categorized as *follow-up and reintegration support*. Scholarly studies by Adepoju (2018) emphasize that effective child protection programs combine rehabilitation and continuous monitoring to ensure sustainable reintegration into society, which directly reflects the officers' views.

Religious scholars emphasized the moral and societal influence of NGOs and CBOs. One scholar observed,

> *"These organizations collaborate with religious institutions to teach children ethical values and the importance of avoiding harmful practices like street begging,"* coded under *moral guidance and value education* in NVivo.

Another scholar added,

> *"They encourage communities to take responsibility for vulnerable children, combining religious principles with practical interventions,"* coded as *community mobilization for child protection*. This perspective is supported by Yusuf and Hassan (2021), who argue that integrating cultural and religious values into child protection initiatives enhances community ownership and reduces recidivism among rescued children.

The NVivo analysis revealed that NGOs and CBOs perform complementary roles to government agencies, encompassing advocacy, rehabilitation, follow-up, and community sensitization. A community leader summarized,

> *"Without these organizations, many children would return to the streets because the government alone cannot handle every case."* These findings are consistent with scholarly assertions by UNICEF (2017), which emphasizes that multi-stakeholder collaboration, including NGOs and community groups, is critical in addressing complex social issues like child street begging. The software's visualization tools confirmed that rehabilitation, advocacy, and follow-up were the most frequently cited roles across informants.

The NVivo 14 thematic analysis demonstrates that non-governmental and community-based organizations play a pivotal role in protecting and rehabilitating children involved in street begging. Community leaders highlighted advocacy and awareness, welfare officers focused on rehabilitation and reintegration, and religious scholars emphasized moral guidance and societal engagement. As one welfare officer summarized, *"Collaboration between NGOs, CBOs, government, and religious institutions is key to ensuring that rescued children are not left vulnerable again."* These findings align with the scholarly literature, reinforcing that a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach is essential for effective child protection and rehabilitation in Sokoto State.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that addressing Child Street begging in Sokoto State requires a multifaceted and collaborative approach. Government agencies play critical roles through law enforcement, rehabilitation, social support, and community engagement, with enforcement and rehabilitation being the most prominent interventions. However, challenges such as limited resources and inadequate public awareness highlight the need for broader participation. The thematic analysis further underscores that non-governmental and community-based organizations are pivotal in complementing government efforts by providing advocacy, rehabilitation, follow-up, and moral guidance. Overall, the findings reveal that effective reduction of child street begging is contingent upon coordinated action among government agencies, communities, religious institutions, and NGOs, emphasizing that

sustainable solutions are rooted in collective responsibility and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government agencies should increase funding and provide adequate personnel to strengthen enforcement and rehabilitation programs for children involved in street begging.
2. Initiatives should be developed to raise community awareness about the dangers of child street begging and the available support services, ensuring greater community participation.
3. Government agencies should formalize partnerships with NGOs, community-based organizations, and religious institutions to coordinate interventions and maximize the effectiveness of child protection programs.
4. Comprehensive rehabilitation programs, including education, counseling and vocational training, should be expanded and consistently monitored to ensure rescued children are successfully reintegrated into society.

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