



**Beyond Alms: Street Begging, Social
Exclusion, and Security Governance in
Northern Nigeria**

By

SULAIMAN Saidu Abubakar
Department of Political Science
Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna

Abstract

Street begging has become a visible and persistent feature of urban life in Northern Nigeria, reflecting deeper structural challenges related to poverty, displacement, and uneven development. While existing studies largely approach begging as a social welfare or moral issue, its implications for security governance and everyday insecurity remain underexplored. This gap is particularly significant in the context of rising urban crime, insurgency-related displacement, and declining state capacity across the region. This study examines street begging as both a symptom and a driver of broader security and governance challenges in Northern Nigeria. It aims to analyse how the proliferation of street begging intersects with urban insecurity, social exclusion, and informal survival economies, while assessing the implications for human security and state legitimacy. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) examine how patterns of street begging shape

perceptions and experiences of everyday insecurity in urban centres, and (2) identify the governance failures and institutional arrangements that sustain the vulnerability of street populations. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative research design, utilising secondary data sources, including scholarly literature, policy documents, security reports, and government publications. The analysis demonstrates that street begging is embedded in weak social protection systems and fragmented security responses, which exacerbate mistrust between citizens and the state. By reframing street begging through a human security and governance lens, the study offers policy-relevant insights into urban vulnerability, state-society relations, and inclusive security strategies, with implications for social protection and urban management in Northern Nigeria.

Keywords: street begging; human security; urban governance; social exclusion; Northern Nigeria

1. Introduction

Street begging has become a highly visible and persistent feature of urban life across Northern Nigeria. In cities such as Kano, Maiduguri, Kaduna, Katsina, and Ilorin, large numbers of adults and children occupy transport corridors,

markets, and commercial districts, relying on alms as a primary means of survival.(Bukoye, 2015; Olugbodi et al., 2024). While begging has long existed within socio-religious and cultural traditions in Northern Nigeria, its contemporary scale and character reflect deeper structural transformations associated with poverty, displacement, urbanisation, and protracted insecurity in the region.

Northern Nigeria has experienced overlapping crises over the past two decades, including insurgency, banditry, economic decline, and climate-related displacement. These pressures have weakened already fragile social protection systems and intensified urban vulnerability (Yahaya Tsagem & Idris, 2025). As a result, street begging has increasingly shifted from a marginal or episodic activity into a durable survival strategy for displaced and excluded populations (Obisesan, 2021). Despite its prominence, however, the phenomenon remains analytically underexplored. Existing research and policy responses continue to treat street begging primarily as a welfare concern, a moral problem, or an issue of public order, rather than as a governance and security challenge embedded in everyday urban life.

This conceptual gap is significant. In contexts of declining state capacity and heightened insecurity, the persistent visibility of extreme

vulnerability in public spaces shapes perceptions of risk, disorder, and institutional failure. Street begging intersects with everyday insecurity by influencing how urban residents experience safety, trust public authority, and interpret the state's capacity to govern shared spaces (Fatai et al., 2020). Yet, mainstream security discourses in Nigeria continue to prioritise militarised responses to insurgency and crime, paying limited attention to the non-violent, structural conditions that sustain insecurity at the street level.

This study argues that street begging in Northern Nigeria should be understood as both a symptom and a driver of broader security and governance failures. Rather than constituting a direct threat, street begging exposes the limits of existing security governance arrangements, revealing fragmented institutional responses, weak social protection, and the normalisation of vulnerability in urban centres (Sambo & Mshelia, 2017). By foregrounding these dynamics, the study challenges dominant approaches that separate social welfare from security governance and instead advances an integrated analytical perspective.

The study is guided by two central research questions. First, how do patterns of street begging shape perceptions and experiences of everyday insecurity in urban centres of Northern

Nigeria? Second, what governance failures and institutional arrangements sustain the vulnerability of street populations, and with what implications for state legitimacy? Addressing these questions is timely given ongoing debates on non-traditional security threats, urban insecurity, and the need to rethink security governance in fragile contexts.

Conceptually, the study is anchored in a combined human security and security governance framework. Human security shifts the focus of analysis from territorial threats to the lived experiences of individuals and communities, emphasising freedom from fear and freedom from want.(Okolie, 2022; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994). Security governance, in turn, draws attention to how security is organised, coordinated, and delivered across state and non-state actors (Krahmann, 2003). Collectively, these perspectives provide a lens for analysing street begging beyond welfare or moral framings, situating it within broader debates on vulnerability, governance fragmentation, and state-society relations.

Methodologically, the chapter adopts a qualitative, desk-based approach, drawing on secondary data from academic literature, policy documents, security reports, government publications, and reputable media sources

(Ruggiano & Perry, 2019). This approach enables a systematic examination of how street begging is framed, governed, and experienced within Northern Nigeria's urban security landscape, without conflating vulnerability with criminality.

The chapter proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews existing literature on street begging, social exclusion, mobility, and security, identifying key gaps in current scholarship. Section 3 outlines the theoretical framework, integrating human security and security governance perspectives. Section 4 details the methodology. Sections 5 and 6 present the core analysis, examining how street begging shapes everyday insecurity, how informal survival economies and governance fragmentation reproduce vulnerability, and what these dynamics imply for inclusive and preventive security governance. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the broader implications of reframing street begging as a governance and security issue for Northern Nigeria and comparable fragile urban contexts.

By repositioning street begging within debates on human security and security governance, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of insecurity in Northern Nigeria. It demonstrates that sustainable security cannot be achieved solely through enforcement or

military responses, but must address the structural and institutional conditions that render vulnerability visible, persistent, and politically consequential in urban life.

1.1 Literature Review

The scholarship on street-level informality in Nigeria is undergoing a critical paradigm shift. While earlier studies predominantly viewed street begging through the lenses of socio-religious obligation, moral deviance or individual destitution, contemporary research increasingly situates the phenomenon within a broader discourse of security governance, urban vulnerability and state fragility. This review synthesises multidisciplinary literature to explore the intersection of structural deprivation, the securitisation of mobility, spatial marginalisation and institutional failure in sustaining urban vulnerability, particularly in Northern Nigeria.

Structural Drivers: Poverty, Exclusion and Social Vulnerability

A core consensus in the literature identifies street begging as a rational survival response to deep-rooted structural deprivation. Classical urban studies in Nigeria consistently link begging to absolute and multidimensional poverty, defined not only by income deprivation but also by lack of access to education, health services, housing and dignified livelihoods

(Adedibu, 1989; Jelili, 2006; Mafimisebi, 2002). More recent studies reinforce this position, demonstrating that the persistence of begging is closely associated with chronic unemployment, weak public infrastructure and deteriorating human development indicators (Biala et al., 2024; Madaki & Ali, 2022).

In Northern Nigeria, these structural failures are compounded by the systemic neglect of the Almajiri population. The absence of state-supported education and welfare systems has entrenched cycles of exclusion that leave children and youth highly vulnerable to street survival strategies (Sambo & Mshelia, 2017; Yahaya Tsagem & Idris, 2025). In the context of the Northwest, this systemic neglect directly facilitates the recruitment pipelines for armed banditry, as marginalised youth are co-opted into violent non-state networks that offer alternative, albeit criminal, survival structures (Abdullahi, 2022). Earlier sociological analyses already warned that government responses were largely cosmetic, focusing on the periodic removal of beggars from public spaces during high-profile events rather than long-term rehabilitation, education or employment provision. (Adedibu, 1989) Such practices reinforce poverty rather than alleviate it.

Beyond economic deprivation, the literature highlights the role of social and psychological vulnerability. Studies grounded in sociological

and functionalist perspectives suggest that prolonged exposure to poverty erodes self-respect and human dignity, normalising street begging as a viable livelihood strategy (Gans, 1995; Ogunkan & Fawole, 2009). Contemporary research reframes this condition as a form of learned helplessness, where repeated institutional neglect diminishes perceived alternatives to street survival (Ezeaku et al., 2023). This condition aligns with broader vulnerability frameworks used in African urban studies, which emphasise that insecurity is socially produced through governance failures rather than natural inevitability.

Spatial marginalisation further intensifies vulnerability. Urban ecological studies demonstrate that begging is heavily concentrated in commercial districts, transport corridors, markets and religious centres, reflecting patterns of land use that systematically exclude the urban poor from formal economic participation (Fawole et al., 2014; Jelili, 2006). These spatial dynamics mirror wider African urban vulnerability patterns, where informal populations are pushed into high-risk, unregulated spaces due to planning failures and weak institutional control.

The Security–Mobility Nexus: From Social Deviance to Human Security Risk

A significant evolution in the literature is the reconceptualisation of street begging from a social nuisance to a security governance concern. Earlier studies classified begging as social deviance, particularly where it violated dominant cultural norms of productivity and self-reliance (Jelili, 2006; Schaefer, 2004). However, more recent scholarship situates street begging within the framework of human security, emphasising how unregulated mobility exposes both street populations and the wider society to risk.

Research increasingly links the unregulated movement of street children and itinerant beggars to broader non-military security challenges, including criminal exploitation, human trafficking and insurgent recruitment (Fatai et al., 2020; Obisesan, 2021). The vulnerability of Almajirai, in particular, is frequently cited as a critical entry point for extremist groups seeking low-cost labour, surveillance and logistical support. Earlier Nigerian urban studies had already observed that criminal actors often operate under the guise of begging, exploiting the invisibility and marginal status of street populations to facilitate urban crime and civil unrest (Okoli, 1993).

This security–mobility nexus extends beyond begging to the broader informal survival economy. Studies on child hawking and informal street labour in cities such as Lagos and Ibadan demonstrate that prolonged exposure to unregulated urban spaces increases contact with delinquent networks and criminal economies (Uthman, 2019; Yusuf & Nasirudeen, 2024). These findings parallel African urban vulnerability research, which shows that populations excluded from formal governance structures are disproportionately exposed to compounded social, economic and security risks.

Institutional Responses: Policy Inertia, Coercion and Governance Failure

The literature is largely critical of state responses to street begging in Nigeria. Government interventions have historically oscillated between neglect and coercive eradication campaigns, including arrests, forced removals and temporary displacement. Legal and policy analyses consistently demonstrate that anti-begging laws are ineffective because they criminalise poverty without addressing its structural drivers (Adegbite, & Odetunde, 2024).

Earlier sociological research provides strong evidence that the absence of comprehensive rehabilitation, education and employment programmes undermines state legitimacy and deepens mistrust between marginalised

populations and public institutions (Adedibu, 1989; Dalhat, 2016). Rather than functioning as agents of protection, state institutions are perceived as punitive and exclusionary, reinforcing cycles of informality.

This institutional vacuum mirrors patterns identified in the vulnerability and security governance literature of Northern Nigeria, where poor governance, weak service delivery, and lack of participatory planning are recognised as root causes of insecurity rather than merely contextual factors. In the Nigerian urban context, these governance gaps allow informal power structures, gangs and criminal networks to assume quasi-regulatory roles, politicising urban crime and intensifying insecurity (Mangai & Ayodele, 2025).

1.2 Research Gap

While existing studies have extensively documented the socio-economic determinants of street begging and its spatial concentration in Nigerian cities, (Bukoye, 2015; Onagun, 2016). The phenomenon is still predominantly framed as a welfare concern or a moral and social problem. Even sociological analyses that recognise the multidimensional nature of begging tend to examine it in isolation from broader debates on security governance, everyday insecurity and state capacity (Fawole et al., 2014). As a result, the implications of street

begging for urban security dynamics and governance responses remain insufficiently examined.

More specifically, the literature rarely interrogates how street begging intersects with social exclusion, informal survival economies and perceptions of insecurity in urban centres, or how fragmented social protection systems and weak governance structures sustain the vulnerability of street populations. Security-focused studies, in turn, continue to privilege military and policing responses, paying limited attention to non-traditional and everyday forms of insecurity rooted in socio-economic marginalisation.

This study addresses these gaps by reframing street begging as both a symptom and a driver of broader security and governance challenges in Northern Nigeria. Drawing on human security and security governance perspectives, it advances an integrated analytical lens that links street-level vulnerability to governance failures, state legitimacy and state–society relations. By moving beyond the nuisance and welfare narratives, the study contributes to debates on inclusive and preventive security strategies, highlighting the role of social protection and urban governance in addressing the structural conditions that sustain everyday insecurity.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter is anchored in a combined human security and security governance framework. Together, these perspectives provide an analytical lens for examining street begging beyond welfare or moral framings, situating it within broader debates on vulnerability, governance failure and everyday insecurity in Northern Nigeria.

Human Security and Everyday Insecurity

The concept of human security shifts the focus of security analysis from the protection of the state to the protection of individuals and communities. Rather than privileging military threats, human security emphasises freedom from fear and freedom from want, recognising that chronic poverty, social exclusion and institutional neglect constitute significant security concerns.(Okolie, 2022; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) This framework is particularly relevant for analysing street begging, as it foregrounds the lived experiences of vulnerable populations whose insecurity is produced through structural deprivation rather than overt violence.

Within this perspective, street begging is understood as both an outcome and an indicator of human insecurity. The persistent presence of beggars in urban spaces reflects deficits in access to education, livelihoods and social



protection, while also shaping everyday experiences of insecurity among urban residents. By focusing on everyday insecurity, the framework allows for an examination of how non-violent but persistent conditions of vulnerability intersect with perceptions of risk, disorder and marginality in urban centres. This approach avoids securitising poverty in a militarised sense, while still recognising its implications for social stability and governance.

Security Governance and State Capacity

While human security centres on vulnerability, security governance directs attention to how security is organised, managed and delivered. Security governance emphasises the roles of multiple actors, including the state, local authorities, informal institutions and non-state actors, in shaping security outcomes, as it involves diverse institutional arrangements and collaborative management of risk and protection across public and private domains (Krahmann, 2003). It also highlights the importance of coordination, policy coherence and institutional capacity.

In the context of Northern Nigeria, security governance is characterised by fragmentation. Social welfare agencies, urban management authorities and security institutions often operate in isolation, producing ad hoc and reactive responses to street begging. This

fragmentation contributes to the persistence of vulnerability and undermines public trust in state institutions. From a security governance perspective, street begging exposes gaps in preventive and inclusive security provision, revealing how governance failures create conditions in which everyday insecurity is normalised. This framework enables the analysis of street begging not as an isolated social problem, but as a governance issue embedded in weak social protection systems and uneven state presence. It also allows for an assessment of how coercive or neglectful responses affect state legitimacy and state–society relations.

Integrating Human Security and Security Governance

The integration of human security and security governance provides a coherent framework for understanding street begging as both a symptom and a driver of broader security challenges. Human security illuminates the structural and lived dimensions of vulnerability, while security governance explains how institutional arrangements and policy failures sustain these conditions. Together, these frameworks guide the study's analysis by linking street-level vulnerability to governance processes, everyday insecurity and perceptions of state legitimacy. This integrated approach supports the study's

central argument that addressing street begging requires inclusive and preventive security strategies grounded in social protection and urban governance, rather than narrow enforcement or welfare-based interventions alone.

1.4 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, desk-based research design, relying exclusively on secondary data to examine the security and governance implications of street begging in Northern Nigeria. This approach is appropriate given the study's conceptual focus on governance frameworks, institutional responses, and patterns of everyday insecurity, rather than on individual-level behavioural measurement (Ruggiano & Perry, 2019). Data sources include peer-reviewed academic literature, policy documents, government reports, security assessments, and reputable media and civil society publications relevant to street begging, urban insecurity, social protection, and governance in Northern Nigeria. These materials were selected based on their relevance, analytical depth, and empirical credibility, with particular attention paid to sources that address urban vulnerability, informal survival economies, and state capacity. The analysis employs thematic and qualitative content analysis. Sources were systematically

reviewed to identify recurring themes, dominant narratives, and points of convergence and divergence across the literature. Analytical attention was directed towards how street begging is framed within welfare, security, and governance discourses, as well as the extent to which institutional responses reflect preventive, inclusive, or coercive security logics. Guided by the integrated human security and security governance framework, the analysis prioritises interpretive depth over breadth. This allows the chapter to trace the links between structural deprivation, governance fragmentation, and everyday insecurity, while avoiding speculative claims not supported by existing evidence. By synthesising diverse secondary sources within a coherent analytical framework, the methodology enables a robust examination of street begging as both a symptom and a driver of broader security and governance challenges in Northern Nigeria.

1.5 Analytical Discussion: Street Begging, Insecurity and Governance Dynamics

This section presents an analytical discussion of street begging within the specific socio-political and security landscape of Northern Nigeria. By synthesising the documented findings through the integrated human security and security governance framework, the analysis moves

beyond descriptive accounts to examine how the phenomenon functions as a visible indicator of broader institutional and security failures. The following discussion focuses on three interconnected dimensions: the shaping of everyday insecurity in urban centres, the risks embedded within informal survival economies, and the consequences of governance fragmentation for state legitimacy.

1.6 Street Begging and Everyday Insecurity in Northern Nigerian Cities

Street begging has become a routine feature of everyday urban life in many cities across Northern Nigeria, shaping how insecurity is perceived and experienced in shared public spaces. From a human security perspective, this form of insecurity is not primarily expressed through overt violence, but through persistent exposure to uncertainty, disorder, and visible vulnerability in daily urban encounters.

In practice, the concentration of beggars in commercial districts and transport corridors has come to structure public perceptions of risk and disorder. These spaces, which are central to urban mobility and economic activity, are also sites where the visibility of poverty is most pronounced. As a result, street begging is frequently associated with crime, delinquency, and social breakdown, generating anxiety among residents and commuters (Bukoye, 2015;

Fatai et al., 2020; Olugbodi et al., 2024). Even where such associations lack direct empirical grounding, they nonetheless shape everyday insecurity by fostering suspicion and unease in routine interactions.

These perceptions are further reinforced by moral panic and criminal suspicion directed at street populations, particularly children and youth. In the context of heightened insecurity and insurgency-related violence, the mobility of beggars, especially Almajirai, is often interpreted as inherently suspicious (Obisesan, 2021). This framing blurs the boundary between vulnerability and criminality, producing a securitised reading of poverty that deepens social exclusion. Within informal survival economies, such stigmatisation increases exposure to exploitation and abuse, rather than reducing insecurity (Anti-Slavery International, 2020; Yusuf & Nasirudeen, 2024).

Beyond its social effects, street begging functions as a visible marker of state absence and governance failure. The sustained occupation of public spaces by beggars signals gaps in social protection, urban management, and welfare provision, particularly in cities experiencing economic strain and displacement pressures (Sambo & Mshelia, 2017). Where public authority is expected to regulate urban order and provide basic protection, the inability to address

the structural drivers of begging undermines confidence in state institutions (Yahaya Tsagem & Idris, 2025). The continued presence of beggars thus becomes a daily reminder of institutional weakness and uneven state capacity.

From a security governance perspective, this erosion of trust has broader consequences. When vulnerability persists in public spaces without credible intervention, everyday insecurity becomes normalised. Responsibility for managing risk is informally transferred from public institutions to individuals and communities, weakening the social contract. In this sense, street begging does not simply reflect insecurity; it actively shapes how insecurity is understood and governed in urban centres. Rather than a nuisance to be managed through coercive control, it emerges as a social signal of deeper governance failures that structure urban vulnerability.

1.7 Informal Survival Economies, Mobility, and Security Risk in Northern Nigeria

Street begging in Northern Nigerian cities is embedded within broader informal survival economies shaped by poverty, displacement, and limited access to formal livelihoods. Rather than existing as an isolated activity, begging intersects with street hawking, casual labour, and other precarious forms of informal work

that rely on constant mobility and the use of public space (Uthman, 2019; Yusuf & Nasirudeen, 2024). This mobility is central to survival, but it also places street populations at the margins of formal governance and security provision.

In contexts of economic decline and conflict-induced displacement, mobility becomes both a coping strategy and a source of vulnerability. Beggars frequently move between transport hubs, markets, and city centres in search of alms, a movement that reflects a rational adaptation to structural deprivation (Obisesan, 2021; Yahaya Tsagem & Idris, 2025). From a human security perspective, insecurity here is produced not by mobility itself, but by the absence of institutional mechanisms capable of regulating and protecting mobile populations within urban space.

The unregulated nature of informal survival economies further complicates urban security dynamics. Where social welfare systems and labour protections are weak, informal street activities operate outside the reach of effective governance. This creates conditions in which vulnerability can be exploited by criminal actors, including those seeking cheap labour, intelligence, or logistical support (Abdullahi, 2022; Semprebon et al., 2021). Importantly, this does not imply that beggars constitute a direct security threat. Rather, their marginal position



increases exposure to coercion and manipulation, particularly in cities experiencing heightened insurgency and banditry.

Mobility also shapes how street populations are perceived by authorities. Mobile beggars are often viewed as transient and unaccountable, reinforcing their treatment as security risks rather than rights-bearing citizens. This perception encourages reactive policing and periodic crackdowns, which often fail to address the root causes of the phenomenon (Adegbite, & Odetunde, 2024). Such responses further entrench exclusion by pushing street populations into more precarious and less visible spaces, where oversight and support are even more limited (Anti-Slavery International, 2020).

From a security governance perspective, the intersection of informal survival economies and mobility highlights the consequences of fragmented governance. The absence of coordinated urban planning, social protection, and security provision leaves mobile street populations suspended between neglect and coercion. This governance failure transforms everyday survival practices into sites of insecurity, not because they are inherently threatening, but because they unfold within institutional voids. Consequently, insecurity emerges less from the actions of street

populations than from the failure of governance systems to manage vulnerability in inclusive ways.

1.8 Governance Fragmentation and Policy Failure in Northern Nigeria

The persistence of street begging in Northern Nigerian cities reflects not only socio-economic hardship but also deep fragmentation in governance and policy implementation. Responsibility for managing street populations is dispersed across social welfare agencies, urban management authorities, and security institutions, yet these actors rarely operate in a coordinated manner. The absence of clear institutional ownership produces ad hoc and reactive responses, allowing street begging to endure as a visible expression of "misgovernance" and systemic neglect (Sambo & Mshelia, 2017).

Social welfare institutions remain structurally weak and under-resourced, limiting their capacity to provide preventive support for vulnerable populations (Dalhat, 2016). At the same time, urban management authorities often approach street begging primarily as a problem of public order and spatial control, rather than as an outcome of structural exclusion. Security institutions, operating under pressure to maintain order in fragile urban contexts, are frequently drawn into managing social problems

for which they are ill-equipped. This disconnection results in fragmented interventions that address symptoms rather than causes.

Within this institutional landscape, coercive approaches persist. Periodic arrests, street “sweeps,” and forced removals are often justified as necessary responses to public complaints or urban congestion. However, such measures offer only temporary relief and frequently exacerbate vulnerability by displacing beggars into more precarious and less visible spaces (Adegbite, & Odetunde, 2024). Rather than reducing insecurity, these coercive interventions, often framed as “eradication” efforts, deepen mistrust between marginalised populations and the state, reinforcing cycles of exclusion and informal survival (Anti-Slavery International, 2020).

Governance fragmentation also reproduces vulnerability by failing to establish durable pathways out of street life. Without coordinated access to education, social protection, or livelihood opportunities, individuals displaced by enforcement actions are quickly reabsorbed into informal survival economies. In this way, policy inertia transforms street begging into a recurring condition rather than a resolvable problem.

From a security governance perspective, the implications extend beyond street populations themselves. The continued visibility of begging in public spaces signals the limits of state capacity and undermines perceptions of state authority. When citizens encounter persistent vulnerability without effective intervention, confidence in public institutions erodes. Street begging thus becomes a public indicator of a weakened state–society relationship, where the state is perceived as punitive or indifferent rather than protective (Abdullahi, 2022).

This analysis reinforces the central argument of the study: street begging is not a nuisance to be managed through coercion, but a governance and security failure rooted in fragmented institutions and weak social protection. Rectifying this institutional failure requires coordinated, inclusive, and preventive governance strategies that restore trust, strengthen state capacity, and treat vulnerability as a security concern grounded in human wellbeing rather than public order alone.

1.9 Implications for Security Governance and Social Protection

The preceding analysis demonstrates that street begging in Northern Nigeria cannot be effectively addressed through narrow enforcement or welfare-based interventions alone. Instead, it calls for a reorientation of

security governance that recognises vulnerability, exclusion, and institutional failure as central drivers of everyday insecurity. This section outlines the implications of reframing street begging through a human security and governance lens, with particular attention to prevention, inclusion, and coordinated social protection.

1.10 Rethinking Street Begging through a Human Security Lens

Approaches to street begging in Northern Nigeria have largely prioritised enforcement, relying on periodic arrests, forced removals, and spatial exclusion to restore public order. As the analysis in Section 5 shows, such measures consistently fail to produce durable outcomes. Enforcement-only strategies address the visibility of begging rather than its structural causes, displacing vulnerable populations without reducing insecurity (Anti-Slavery International, 2020). In some cases, these interventions deepen mistrust between street populations and state institutions, further weakening state legitimacy.

A human security perspective highlights why these approaches are ineffective. By centring protection on individuals and communities rather than territory or order, human security draws attention to the everyday conditions that produce vulnerability, including poverty,

displacement, lack of education, and weak social protection (Dalhat, 2016). From this standpoint, street begging is not an aberration to be removed, but a signal of unmet human security needs that require preventive intervention.

Prevention and inclusion are therefore central to effective security governance. Preventive strategies involve strengthening social protection systems, expanding access to education and livelihoods, and remediating displacement-related vulnerabilities before they translate into street-level survival strategies. Inclusion requires recognising street populations as rights-bearing citizens rather than security threats, and integrating them into urban governance frameworks rather than excluding them through coercion.

Viewing street begging in this way also has implications for how security is governed. Inclusive, human-centred approaches reduce reliance on reactive policing and enable coordination between social welfare agencies, urban authorities, and security institutions. By tackling vulnerability upstream, such strategies contribute to more sustainable forms of security that enhance trust, reduce everyday insecurity, and strengthen the social contract. (Yahaya Tsagem & Idris, 2025) In this sense, social protection is not peripheral to security

governance in Northern Nigeria; it is a foundational component of it.

1.11 Towards Inclusive and Preventive Security Governance

Approaching street begging through a human security lens requires corresponding shifts in how security is governed in practice. In Northern Nigeria, this entails moving away from fragmented, reactive responses towards inclusive and preventive forms of security governance that address vulnerability before it manifests as urban insecurity.

A central implication is the need for coordinated social protection. The analysis in previous sections shows that street begging persists partly because welfare institutions operate in isolation from urban governance and security agencies (Dalhat, 2016). Inclusive security governance requires mechanisms that link social welfare provision, education, and livelihood support to broader security objectives. When social protection is treated as a core element of security governance rather than a parallel policy domain, vulnerability can be addressed upstream, reducing reliance on coercive interventions (Uthman, 2019).

Urban governance reforms are equally important. The concentration of street begging

in transport corridors and commercial hubs reflects long-standing failures in urban planning and service delivery in Northern Nigeria (Fatai et al., 2020). Preventive security governance involves recognising these spaces as sites of vulnerability rather than merely zones of disorder. Integrating street populations into urban policy frameworks, through access to services and regulated support, can reduce everyday insecurity without resorting to exclusionary spatial control.

Inclusive security governance also implies a shift towards non-militarised security responses. While security institutions remain important actors, their role should prioritise protection and coordination rather than enforcement alone. In Northern Nigeria's fragile security environment, excessive reliance on coercive measures risks further alienating marginalised populations and undermining trust in state authority (Yusuf & Nasirudeen, 2024). Preventive approaches that emphasise engagement, referral to social services, and institutional collaboration are more likely to strengthen state legitimacy over time.

Collectively, these measures highlight that inclusive and preventive security governance is not an abstract ideal, but a practical necessity in Northern Nigeria. Responding to street begging through coordinated social protection,

responsive urban governance, and non-militarised security practices offers a pathway towards reducing everyday insecurity while rebuilding trust between the state and vulnerable urban populations (Olugbodi et al., 2024).

1.12 Concluding Remarks

This study set out to examine the security implications of street begging in Northern Nigeria by addressing two core questions: how street begging shapes everyday experiences and perceptions of insecurity in urban centres, and how governance failures sustain the vulnerability of street populations. Drawing on secondary data and an integrated human security and security governance framework, the analysis demonstrates that street begging is neither a marginal social nuisance nor a purely welfare concern, but a visible manifestation of deeper governance and security deficits.

The study has shown that street begging contributes to everyday insecurity not through direct violence, but through its effects on public perception, social relations, and trust in state institutions. The persistent visibility of vulnerability in shared urban spaces shapes anxiety, suspicion, and moral panic, while simultaneously signalling the absence or weakness of state protection. In this sense, begging operates as both a symptom and a driver of insecurity, reflecting unmet human security

needs and reinforcing perceptions of institutional failure.

The analysis further highlighted how informal survival economies and mobility expose street populations to heightened risk in contexts of fragmented governance. Rather than constituting inherent security threats, beggars occupy positions of structural vulnerability that are intensified by weak social protection, uncoordinated urban governance, and reactive security practices. Coercive interventions, far from resolving the problem, often reproduce exclusion and undermine state legitimacy by prioritising control over protection.

By situating street begging within a human security lens, the study contributes to debates on security governance by foregrounding vulnerability, prevention, and inclusion as central to sustainable security outcomes. It demonstrates that effective security governance in Northern Nigeria cannot be achieved solely through policing or enforcement, but must be anchored in coordinated social protection, responsive urban management, and non-militarised security practices that restore trust between the state and marginalised populations.

More broadly, this study advances scholarship on Northern Nigeria by integrating street-level vulnerability into analyses of insecurity and governance, an area that remains underexplored

in existing literature. It bridges the gap between welfare-focused studies of begging and security-centred analyses of fragility, offering a framework that captures the everyday dimensions of insecurity often overlooked in state-centric approaches.

In conclusion, addressing street begging in Northern Nigeria requires recognising it as a governance and security challenge rooted in structural exclusion and institutional fragmentation. Inclusive and preventive security governance, grounded in human security principles, offers a more viable pathway for reducing everyday insecurity while strengthening state-society relations. This analytical shift has implications not only for urban management and social policy, but for how security itself is understood and governed in fragile contexts.

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