

## Challenges Faced by Out of School Female Street Children and Teenagers Engaged in Begging in Tanzania

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### ABSTRACT

Street begging among children and teenage remain a barrier to accessing basic education for girls. This study explores the challenges surrounding out of school girls engaged in begging and examines their future aspirations regarding schooling. Mixed method approach but qualitative dominant was deemed relevant to understand the phenomenon in its context. Using a purposive, snowball and incidental sampling techniques, a total of fifty-seven (57) participants were sampled including fifteen (55) female street children and teenage beggars, (1) District social welfare officer and one (1) District Community Development Officer in Dodoma City of Tanzania. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The results indicated that these girls encountered hardships in the street including violence, sexual harassment, rape and beatings from the male street children beggars and the general public. The findings underscore how girls involved in street begging endure hardship and their schooling aspirations remain in darkness. The incidence of such terrible phenomenon made their future aspirations in dark and guaranteed the deprivation from schooling. The need for more inclusive interventions to tackle the phenomenon in each nation as per contextual conditions arises.

### KEYWORDS

Out of school girls; street children and teenage; begging; basic inclusive education; Tanzania.

## INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in mid 1990s estimated there are approximately 100 million street children worldwide with that number constantly growing (Parveen, 2016). Despite the constantly increasing number of street children and teenage around the globe, they remain invisible entities left to be ignored, disgraced and abused. Most of the developing countries including Tanzania greatly encounter the challenge of rapidly increasing street children despite various initiatives to mitigate the challenge (Shitindi et al, 2023). While the cities are crowded with people, they are not liveable due to increased population growth and density without being economically dense with investments in infrastructure development, industrial and commercial structures, and affordable housing to keep pace with the concentration of people thereby rendering urban inhabitants to face challenges of low access to basic services such as education, health and shelter (World Bank, 2021).

Street begging is one of the age-long dreadful social problems that have consistently attracted global attention (Olubusla, 2020). Child and teenage begging, although not more pronounced in Tanzania, it prevails in various places including major cities in the country. The cities are dominated by both families with high, middle and low income. The families with low income comprise those with abject poverty failing to afford their basic needs including food, clothes, shelter and health care (Shitindi et al, 2023).

Education is a key of life as it capacitates the recipient to create a pathway for self-reliance, liberation and breaking out from the grips of abject poverty and a vehicle for attainment of current and future economy of a country (Fuseini and Daniel, 2020). Conversely, begging interrupts children enrolment to school and if they enrol, they do not persist longer and become truants or drop from school and affect they future schooling aspirations (Fuseini & Daniel, 2018). While previously begging was more pronounced in some regions such as Dodoma (Namwata et al, 2010; Seni, 2016a; Seni, 2016b; Seni, 2017). However, it has later on spread its roots to all cities in the country including Dar es Salaam (Shitindi et al, 2023a, Shitindi, 2023b). This is not to suggest that in other towns begging involving children is not an issue, rather the phenomenon is more pronounced in cities (Muda et al, 2023). The current study was undertaken in Dodoma due to the extent of the beggary culture and being a capital city of the country.

A number of efforts have been undertaken from global to local contexts to mitigate child and teenage street begging. Globally, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly articulate on the need to ensure that all girls and boys participate fully in free, equitable and quality basic education as enshrined in goals #3 and 4 (UN, 2018).

In Africa, a number of social protection instruments exist including the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (CAP), the African Union's Social Policy

Framework (2008), the African Civil Society Platform for Social Protection Strategy for Africa and the African Union Vision 2063 all of which set to protect children with the quest to attain Universal human rights including education, food, shelter and medical care to all including girls (Onyeonoru, 2018).

The government of Tanzania has strived to alleviate the problem of street begging using children and teenage as guides or as direct beggars. These efforts entail the Child Act, 2009, Child Development Policy, 1996 and the Education and Training Policy of 2014 are explicit on the need to guarantee basic education access to all. Furthermore, the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty I and II (NSGRP I & II) of 2005/6 to 2009/10 and from 2010/11 to 2014/15 respectively (URT, 2006; URT, 2010), Fee-free education Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2015a; United Republic of Tanzania, 2015b) and the Re –entry programme for girls (United Republic of Tanzania, 2021) among others have been implemented with the aim of reducing poverty, improving the standard of living and social welfare of the people of Tanzania and widen access to education. However, these efforts have not been fully able to provide a sufficient solution since in various regions of the country particularly in cities, the phenomenon of female child and teenage begging instead of going to school persists. The reasons for the continued persistence of child and teenage street begging include but not limited to poverty, sympathy, lack of education, disability, lack of proper orientation, laziness, religious and mismatch between policy and practices of ending street children and begging (Adesokan and Owoyemi, 2022; Agunyai and Ojakorotu, 2021; Agyemang et al, 2024; Babangida et al, 2021; Ibrahim et al, 2024; Longi et al, 2022; Olubusla, 2020; Seni, 2016a, Seni, 2016b; Seni, 2017;). Other reasons pointed out entail parental separation, deprivation, and cultural belief. Conversely, poverty overrides other reason leading to street begging worldwide (Aliyu and Kayode, 2024).

As this fundamental, the current study investigates the challenges faced by out of school female street children and teenage engaged in begging in Dodoma city of Tanzania. Thus, the study embarked to answer three research questions:

- i. What are the challenges facing female street children and teenage involved in begging?
- ii. What are the future schooling aspirations of female street children and teenage involved in begging?
- iii. Which measures can be undertaken to mitigate the challenges facing female street children and teenage involved in begging?

This study contributes on the literature regarding plights facing street children and teenage involved in begging. It also sheds light on actionable policies and practices for mitigating the challenges.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Poverty has been widely documented as one among the major socio-economic problems impacting both the global north and the global south though with varied degrees and extent. It

has also featured in a number of studies on Most Vulnerable Children as well as research on begging (Aliyu & Kayode, 2024; Seni, 2016a; Seni, 2016b; Seni, 2017; Shitindi et al, 2023a; Shitindi et al, 2023b;). As this fundamental, the present study was underpinned by the theories of poverty. There are various theories of poverty which endeavour to identify the underlying causes of poverty (Addae-Korankye, 2019). These theories entail but not limited to economic theories, sociological theories, psychological theories, and anthropological theories.

Regarding the economic theories of poverty; two schools of thought co-exist whereby the classical economic traditions believe that poverty is inseparable to the individual's contribution on it (Weber 2001). On the other hand, the neoclassic or main stream economics regard poverty as being above the control of individuals. Conversely, the Marxian or radical views regard poverty as a consequence of class or group discrimination. The sociological theory of poverty was put forward by the Sociologist Max Weber, in 1970s century and later on developed by Emile Durkheim in 1980s. These sociologists believe on the interplay of culture and place of residence on poverty. Thus, the rural, urban or city are important in explaining one's poverty (Ringen, 1985; Townsend, 1979). The theory also believes on gender and household structure as the precipitating factors for ones' poverty where females are disadvantaged (Miller 1996; Ringen, 1985). Other concerns of the sociological theory relate to people's moral failings and how resources and opportunities are unequally distributed across society. In fact, access to opportunities remains under the influence of one's social class positions and that lack of access to resources alters behaviours, social norms, and aspirations of individuals or a group of people (Gould, 1999; Harrington, 1962; Jenks, 1992; Murray, 1984; Rodman, 1963; Wilson, 1987). The theory is also cognisant on the role of poverty in causing stigma and shame. As a way for intervention the theory puts forward the need for providing welfare benefits to the poor (Murray, 1984).

Regarding the anthropological theories of poverty, it refers to culture of poverty and asserts that children born into poverty maintain values and mind sets that reinforce their continuation in that economic status. The theory was put forward by an anthropologist Oscar Lewis in the 1960s. The main concerns of the theory of poverty are considerations of culture which explains on how poverty forces the poor to develop certain patterns of behaviour permitting them to survive the sordid conditions of poverty and normalize the dreadful condition (Lewis, 1966). The theory underscores the fact that the people who grows up in this culture develop a strong feeling of fatalism, helplessness, dependence and inferiority leading to live a hand to mouth life. Finally, regarding is regarding the Vicious Circle Theory, which argues that the poor are trapped in circumstances which make it difficult for them to escape poverty. The Vicious Circle Theory indicates how poverty as a subculture, passes from one generation to another and becomes institutionalized amongst the poor and prepare the ground for the phenomenon of street begging (Olubusla, 2020). Inadequate access to basic needs such food, clothes, medical care and shelter render them prone to illness. These situations inhibit them to leverage opportunities exposing them to continued poverty. In the words of Lewis (1959); by

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the time children were six or seven, the culture of poverty was so ingrained in them that they were more than likely to live the same impoverished lives as their parents. The poor such as female street children and teenage tend to develop their own institutions because the public incline to ignore and by pass them (Nanglakong et al, 2019).

The theories of poverty including the culture of poverty theory have been strongly criticized over the years. Critics argue that the theory tends to blame the victims of poverty for their situation and ignores larger structural forces, such as discrimination, lack of opportunities, and the impact of macroeconomic factors. Consequently, the study triangulates theories and thus was also framed under the principle of operant conditioning which is one of the major theories in psychology. The theory states that behaviours are learned through reinforcement. In this particular case, begging among street female children and teenage. Thus when people receive positive stimuli as reinforcement for their begging behaviour, they keep on exhibiting the begging behaviour. Consequently, the theory recognizes the fact that the person forms association between the behaviour and the outcome (Skinner, 1948). Therefore, begging behaviour is associated with the guarantee of gaining money and the amount of money or the quantity of materials one earns in the begging activity. Furthermore, poverty affects how people see themselves and reduces their confidence in their own ability to succeed including schooling. The theory stipulates how physical and psychological health consequences may arise including mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety and substance addiction. The theories of poverty indicate how the street beggars are desperate over the economic disparities and hardship as a result they continue to beg.

The study further triangulates the theories of poverty and the psychological theory with the vulnerability theory to strengthen the genesis of streetism and begging phenomenon among school aged girls who are out of school. It is also triangulated to facilitate more understanding of the need for and actionable interventions. Vulnerability theory was developed by Martha Albertson Fineman and indicates how vulnerable contexts such as poverty, deprivation, orphanage and so forth may lead to negative socio-economic consequences. According to this theory, children's and teenage vulnerability is explained in different ways including bringing about inequalities and ways which we can use to mitigate inequality or rather vulnerability. According to Fineman, vulnerability theory is capable of advancing substantive equality which presupposes that equality occurs when people are equally benefited or disadvantaged by a law or policy. She pointed out that the state is responsible to take care of the vulnerable groups of the society in this case street children, teenage as well as the elderly to name a few. A vulnerability approach is not does not focus on specific individuals or groups or on human and civil rights. Rather, it underscores the need for addressing human vulnerability with a focus of what we share as human beings, equal treatment before the laws and the underlying social structures as well as relationships that organize society and affect the lives of everyone within society (Fineman, 2019).

Generally, it can thus be said that the two core tenets of vulnerability theory are explicitly noted including the need for access to institutional resources that promote resilience. Conversely, one's ability to handle the risks of life depends on one's context, position, and access to resources (Fineman 2008; Fineman, 2010). Likewise, the theory notes that the state must be more responsive and responsible on vulnerability. Because neither inequalities nor the systems that produce them are inevitable (Fineman 2008; Fineman, 2010). Access to education is one among the basic human right which all children from diverse backgrounds need to avail. The vulnerability theory was thus deemed relevant to guide the study and illuminate the findings for a deeper understanding of the issues under investigation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study on challenges faced by out of school female street children and teenage engaged in begging in Dodoma city of Tanzania comprehensively understood from the review of the related studies.

### **Challenges facing Street Beggars**

Literature reveals a number of challenges which face beggars in the course of begging. Babangida et al (2021) point out that begging leads to negative impact on the health and personality of beggars. The dependency on public individuals by beggars expose them to dangers such as HIV/AIDS (FGN/UNICEF, 1990). Women and young girls are the most vulnerable with high possibilities of catching unplanned and early pregnancies respectively, indulge in Kidnapping and Prostitution as well as Crime and illegal drugs trade leading to confrontations with the police (Babangida et al, 2021). Street children also encounter a lack of basic needs including food, shelter and medical care rendering them vulnerable to diseases, hunger and homelessness and indulgent into voluntary or forces beggary life (Kaushik and Gupta, 2022; Shitindi et al, 2023a).

Kaiser & Sinanan (2020) used a qualitative methodology researched on the phenomena of female street children with a sample of 12 female children between the ages of 13 and 14 in Dhaka city of Bangladesh. They revealed that majority of girls reported having been sexually assaulted but they remained optimistic for the future. This indicates that despite the hustle female street children endure, they remain tolerant and keep on struggling. Likewise, Sarnaker (2023) conducted a study on how street children are affected by poverty, illiteracy, disease, and the lack of access to mass media in the city of Dhaka, Bangladesh. The study indicates street children are prone to dreadful conditions. Majority of them encounter emotional, physical, and financial exploitation. Using a qualitative approach; Suteki (2022) conducted a study on law enforcement of child exploitation among street children in Semarang City. The study by Suteki found that street children encounter discriminatory treatment from their parents, children, the law enforcement organs and the general public. Beggars also encounter psychological abuse including verbal aggression, harassment, public hostility, contempt, stigmatising and dehumanising responses (Fuseini & Daniel, 2018). In Ethiopia Kassa and Getahun (2021)

conducted a study on major factors of elders begging in Bahir Dar City Administration in Ethiopia and indicate that family conflicts and violence caused elders to engage in street begging. A study by Millanzi et al (2022) on the effect of educational intervention on shaping safe sexual behaviour based on problem-based pedagogy in the field of sex education and reproductive health among adolescents in Tanzania revealed that adolescent girls are prone to unsafe sex due to their lack of sex education and life style they lead. Similarly; Seff and Stark (2022) conducted a study on the role of social norms with a focus on intimate partner violence among adolescent girls in Nigeria and found that unsafe sexual behaviours among adolescents prevailed worldwide.

Lawal et al (2022) conducted a qualitative study of public health and policy implications of street begging in Nigeria and revealed that most often the female beggars are exposed to sexual abuse leading to some of them becoming victims of HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Their life style renders them vulnerable to higher risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Nweze et al (2019) did an assessment of the trainability of beggars and the destitute in Abakaliki Nigeria. Their study indicated that beggars struggle against dehumanizing incidences of ritual decapitation, rape, rejection, commercialized body parts plundering, hunger, lynching and physical assaults causing hatred to the public. A study by Ekebosi et al (2021) was on public perception on street begging in Awka, Nigeria and depicts the need of the public to chase street beggars in the public places as they were regarded as thieves. While street beggars seem to be negatively perceived, to some, their behaviour exhibit deviations rendering them miss sympathy and trust from the public.

### **Education Prospects of Street Beggars**

The common categories of beggars entail those from acutely economically and socially marginalized in terms of educational backgrounds, availability of jobs, and family support (Rahman, 2021). This implies that female street children and teenage beggars stem from families with educational disadvantage and their educational chances remain unlimited as well. Street children involved in begging are subjected to child labour especially those who assist adult beggars. Consequently, they are precluded from fulfilling their true full potential in obtaining adequate education and becoming economically self-reliant through salaried employment (Tatenda et al, 2020). In Kenya; a study by Kisirkoi and Mse (2016) revealed that some street children were ready to study any lessons which would culminate into earning a living and fulfil their life aspirations through acquisition of employment. This demonstrates how the street children and teenage beggars including the females longed for education but were denied access. The study by Kisirkoi and Mse recommended for the identification of individual talents of each child and provide actionable interventions including giving them non formal education.

### **Measures to Mitigate the Challenges Facing Street Beggars**

Su et al (2021) Conducted an assessment of poverty alleviation measures and sustainable livelihood capability of farm households in rural China. Their study found that financial capital

is crucial for interventions aimed at improving the lives of the urban poor. They thus advocate for government assistance, donations and funds from solicitations. Likewise, (Khan and Fahad, 2020) recommend for establishment of poverty alleviation programmes while (Segun-Alalade et al, 2022) recommend for policy measures that would enhance the capacity of beggars along the lines of entrepreneurship in a struggle to take them out of the street and help them lead a life with dignity. Kuang et al (2019) researched on the influence of livelihood capital on adaptation strategies in China and revealed that in urban settings, natural capital entail environmental quality and access to public spaces. This demonstrates how beggars depend on those public and environmental resources including open spaces, squares, parks, plazas, trees, abandoned buildings, and water sources for their survival in the streets. The state and the general public implicitly are expected to maintain and allow access to these spaces and resources for continuity and use by all including the street beggars. Conversely, it is hard to guarantee on the existence of abandoned buildings since the urban spaces keeps on developing and times they may shelter criminals. On the other hand, street begging is a potential threat to the environmental, economic, and social survival of human societies due to a number of reasons including the deviant use of the environment without considerations to its sustainability and hygiene (Khan and Fahad, 2020).

Amin et al (2025) researched on urban poverty with a focus on the role of livelihood capital in the livelihood strategies of urban beggars in Indonesia. They used a mixed method approach and found that it was crucial for beggars to be assisted with financial, social, and human capital in supporting them to gradually get out of beggary life. The emphasis on gradual abandonment of begging demonstrates how the phenomenon is deep rooted and is difficult to combat immediately. Kaushik and Gupta (2022) researched on the right to education of child beggars in India and revealed the need for governments to have scholarship on children involved in begging for them to continue schooling. Conversely, this is more applicable to those who beg and continue going to school but less applicable to the out of school female street children and teenage who may require a different arrangement. Ekebosi et al (2021) conducted a study on public perception on street begging in Nigeria and revealed that there was a need for the establishment of destitute centres, pay allowance to people with disabilities, empower social welfare agencies as well as evicting beggars. The Institute for Human Development (2021) highlights support for employment, dignified life, financial help to start income generating activities, pension or monetary support for disability, old age and ill-health, provision of education or skill training constitute the reasons for street beggars to evacuate begging. This indicates that beggars are not happy with their beggary life and would wish to refrain from begging if supported to do so. Rajan (2024) conducted a study on the need for education among victims of child beggary and found out that a number of barriers impede the access to and attainment of child beggars due to various reasons including financial constraints, geographic isolation, desire to support their family and socio-cultural factors like stigma and discrimination. Rajan recommends for targeted educational Interventions such as developing and

implementing tailored educational programmes with flexible learning modes like non-formal education, vocational training, and life skills development to accommodate their unique circumstances and challenges.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Approach and design

This study used a mixed method approach with qualitative dominant and case study design which allowed the researcher to gather rich and in-depth information regarding the begging phenomenon by female street children and teenage. The approach was deemed relevant to flexibly and suitably capture in depth first-hand information from the participants' voice using quotes (Babbie, 2013) and describe the challenges emerging from the phenomenon numerically. The study was undertaken in Dodoma city of Tanzania at Viwandani ward which is the city centre and densely populated for beggars to gain access to the people they can ask for the help. A total of fifty-seven (57) study participants were sampled including fifteen (55) female street children (Aged between 7 to 12) and teenage (aged between 13 to 17) (Out of whom eight were street children beggars and seven were street female teenage beggars), one (1) District social welfare officer and one (1) District Community Development Officer. Using a purposive, snowball and incidental sampling the researcher managed to reach the study participants whose number was determined by point of saturation. The study sample and the respective data collection methods are presented in Table 1 for a quick and clearer view.

**Table 1.**

*Sample size distribution and Data Collection Methods*

Sample	Sample size	Method of data collection		
female street children	27	Interview, Questionnaire	Observation	&
street female teenage beggars	28	Interview, Questionnaire	Observation	&
District social welfare officer	01	Interview		
District Community Development Officer	01	Interview		
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>			

### Data Collection methods

Data in this study was collected using key informant interviews which were unstructured to allow flexibility in questioning and probing. This strategy enabled the researcher to obtain voluminous information which were later on subjected to summarisation. The researcher voice recorded the interview session to enable remembrance during reporting and coming up with valid and credible quotations. Each interview session took place in places where the street

beggars regarded safe for them and conducive to allow a free conversation. As that fundamental, the interviews took place at Public Garden, Nyerere Square and lasted for 50 to 65 minutes. The interviews with the District Social Welfare Officer and District Community Development Officer were conducted in their offices where they regarded conducive. Both the children, the District Social Welfare Officer and District Community Development Officer responded on the questions regarding the challenges facing female street children and teenage involved in begging, future schooling aspirations as well as those on measures for mitigating the challenges facing female street children and teenage beggars.

Data was also collected using Direct Observation by the researcher. To achieve rigor and trustworthiness in observations, the researcher drew an Observation guide to aid in the observations. Consistent observations were made in public places where the female street beggars were fond of going for begging. Consequently, the researchers frequently positioned himself in Nyerere Square, Majengo Market, Sabasaba street, Kuu street, Near Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs), In the Restaurants, Bars, Bus stops, churches and Mosques. The challenges facing street children and teenage involved in begging were observed. The researcher adequately explained to the street children and teenage beggars that the observations were exclusively for research thereby reinforcing the rapport and the researchers' undertakings did not offend the street children and teenage beggars. Questionnaires were also administered to female street children and teenage female street girls to capture the challenges which were experiences prominently and those which were least encountered.

The validity, reliability, credibility and trustworthiness of the questionnaire, interview and observation guides were achieved through engaging three University senior researchers for appraisal. Consequently, their comments led to the omission and addition of some questions to bring into concord with the main research questions. The researcher piloted the data tools at a go collection tools in one ward within Dodoma city which was not meant for the main study. The findings of the pilot study enabled the researcher to fine tune, delete and add some of the items, thereby maintaining the rigour before starting the main field work.

Regarding ethical considerations and human subject protections, the researcher sought for informed consent of participants where the District social welfare officer and the District community development officer consented by filling inn and signing the consent forms. The consent of the female street children and the female teenage was also sought and accomplished through the Social welfare officer. participants' anonymity and privacy were considered at every stage of the research process. All study participants were also assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time they wished. The researcher collected the data personally. The study findings were reported behind the shield of anonymity thereby using one's position such as District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) and District Community Development Officer (CDO), Female street Child and Female Teenage were deemed safe and used to protect the identity of study informants. Likewise, the wards were also anonymously reported to strengthen shielding of the findings and so ward A, ward B and ward C were used in this case. All information obtained

from the study were treated with high confidentiality and were used for the purpose of the study only. These strategies ensured a comfort of study participants to share their insights freely.

### **Data analysis**

Data were analysed using thematic analysis which enabled the identification of major concepts or themes to guide the reporting of the study findings (Caulfield, 2023). The transcripts were entered in the folder formed using the open and axial plus 2022 (Release 22.0.0) MAXQDA software and then recognised codes were merged into themes (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). Then, the findings were reported verbally using quotations to capture the informants' voices.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This part presents and discusses the study results guided by the research questions.

### **Challenges Facing Street Children and Teenage Involved in Begging**

The study findings have revealed a number of challenges facing female street children and female teenage street beggars. These challenges entail violence, sexual harassment, rape and beatings from the male street children beggars and the general public. Other challenges were specific to the female teenage street beggars including lack of private places to manage their menstrual periods.

Data emerging from the questionnaires administered to female street children and female teenage girls are presented in table 2 subsequently.

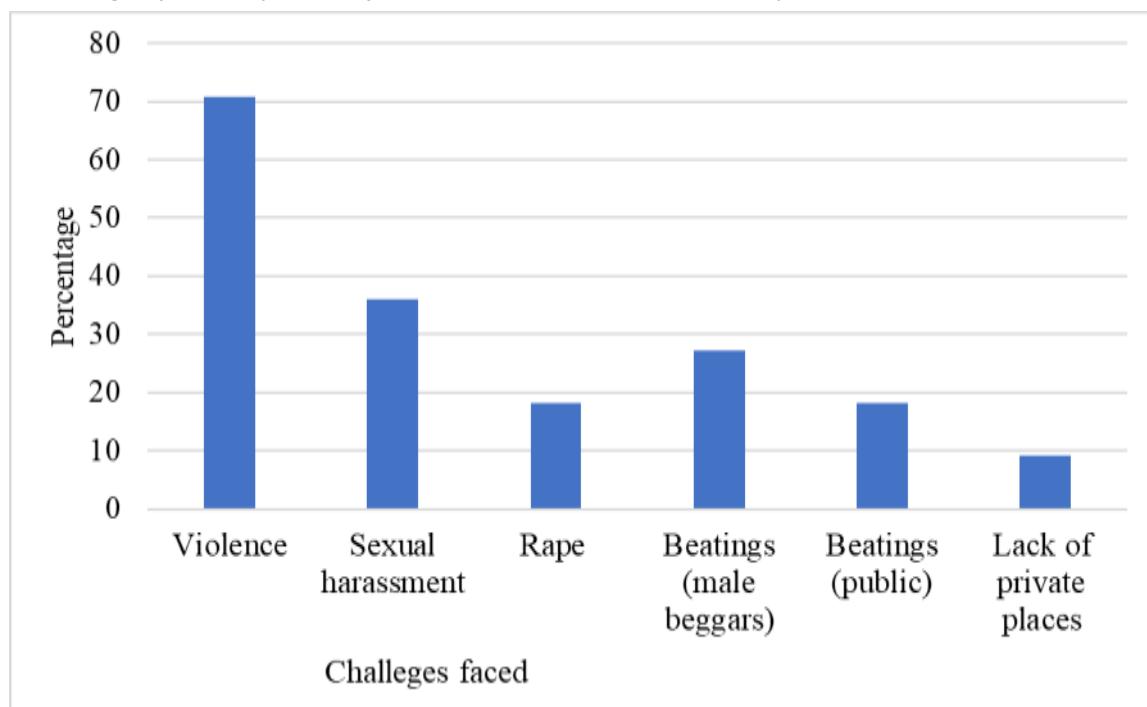
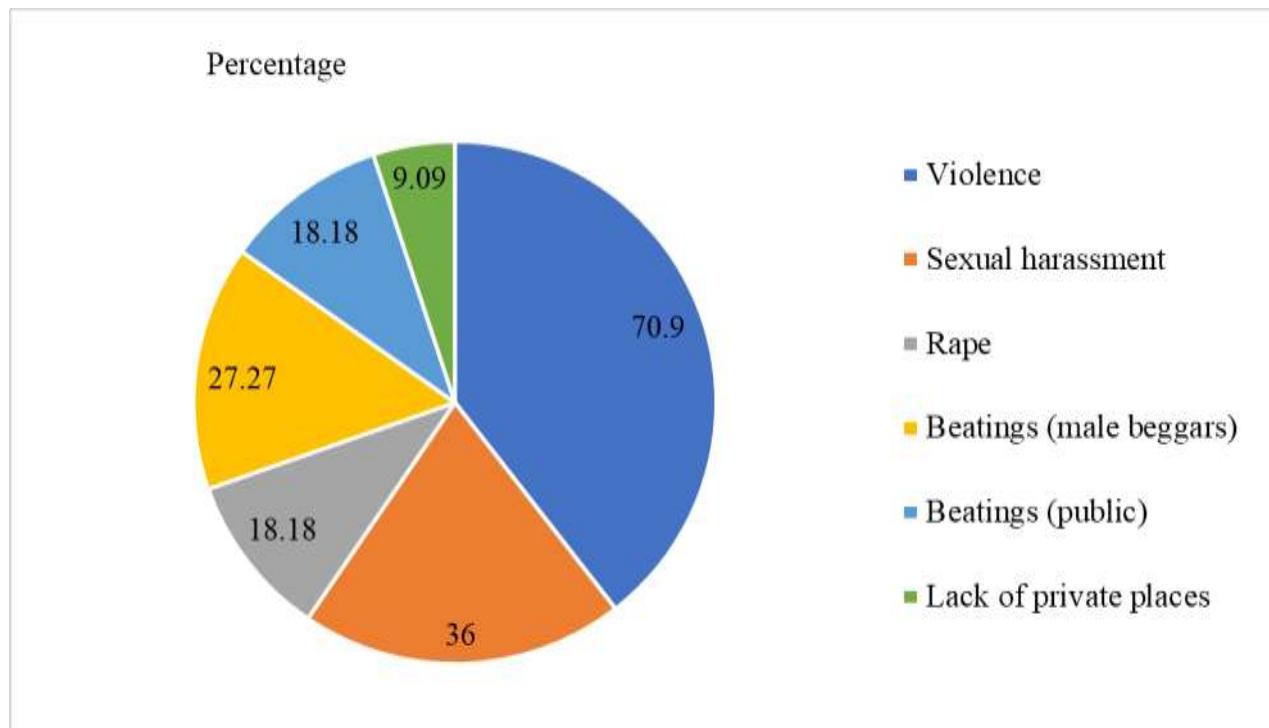
**Table 2.**

*Challenges Encountered by Female Street Children and Teenage Girls*

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Response (N = 55)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Violence	39	70.9
Sexual harassment	36	36
Rape	10	18.18
Beatings from the male street children beggars	15	27.27
Beatings from the general public	10	18.18
Lack of private places to manage menstrual periods	5	9.09

Data on the challenges encountered by female street children and teenage girls are presented in bar chart and pie chart provided figure 1 and 2 to facilitate legibility and quick view.

Data in Fig. 1 above show that the largest number of street female children face violence (70.9%), and sexual harassment (36%). This is followed by those who face beatings from male street children (27.27%), beating from the general public (18.18%), and rape (18.18%). Few street female children reported lack of private places during menstrual cycles (9.09%).

**Figure 1.***Challenges faced by street female children in Dodoma City***Figure 2.***Challenges faced by street female children in Dodoma City*

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street children (27.27%), beating from the general public (18.18%), and rape (18.18%). Few street female children reported lack of private places during menstrual cycles (9.09%).

During interview sessions, one of the participant street children revealed that she was verbally abused and chased from a restaurant where she went to beg. In this regard, the female street child beggar had the following to say:

I was chased by a man in the restaurant where I went to beg. This is the place which I normally go for begging but on that day I faced a difficult moment since I had to run to avoid being beaten. The whole day I was so worried and could not keep on begging confidently (Interview with a female street child in ward A).

The study by Kassa and Getahun (2021) also pointed out conflict and violence at home as the reasons leading to people to indulge of street begging. While the study by Kassa and Getahun highlight violence as an aspect which encounter beggars, it differs with the current study in that violence precedes one to start begging while in this study violence happens when the female street child beggars is in the processes of begging. Verbal abuse to street beggars is also underscored by Longi et al (2022) who point out that beggars were crushed down by vehicles, verbally abused by some people, disrespected, discrimination, stigmatization, and given bad alms. A study by Ekebosi et al (2021) also indicates that beggars were chased out of public places as they were regarded as problematic. These findings concur in pointing out violence as a resonating thorn in the lives of beggars but they refer to different age groups of beggars in particular children and elders respectively. These findings demonstrate how beggars regardless of their age and gender encounter a violent life. Conversely, the female and children are likely to be severely impacted on the phenomenon.

Sexual harassment was nominated as a challenge facing female street children and female street children beggars. Both female street children beggars and female teenage street beggars reported to have been sexually abused, harassed and exploited. In the words of one of the participant female teenage street beggars the following quote was noted:

I have done sex by different men due to a lack of sleeping places and so when one welcomed me in a place to sleep, he would request for sex. I fail to disagree due to fear of missing a sleeping place and would face more violent actions including beatings if disagreed (Interview with a female teenage street beggar in ward B).

On the same vein, one of the participant female street child beggar testified to have been indulged in sex in favour of a sleeping place. As she correctly says:

A boy asked me to do sex in order to protect me at night and I had to agree since he threatened me. He warned to accept his request so that we can be friends and help each other in begging (Interview with a female teenage street beggar in ward C).

The study findings that female street children and female teenage beggars are prone and encounter sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual exploitation are in akin with those in other studies. Seff and Stark (2022) asserts that sexual violence among adolescent girls is rampant globally. This indicates how female teenage street beggars are exposed to

dangers that interferes their health and future schooling aspirations. Studies also indicate that female adolescents reported to have been engaged in sexual relationships and have sex with multiple people which reinforce their likelihood to contaminate sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS and conceive early and unwanted pregnancies (Lawal et al, 2022; Millanzi et al, 2022).

The findings demonstrate that Street children are vulnerable to sexual abuses and exploitation in which the incidents of sexual assaults mainly occur at night due to lack of private and safe sleeping places. This situation indicates how passers-by, older street men and male street boys seize opportunity and have sex with these vulnerable girls without their conscious consent. The findings reflect how the female street children beggars and the female teenage street beggars are prone to catch sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. The danger of early and unwanted pregnancies is also vivid in this case.

The study participants further reported on being raped as one of the interviewed study participants clearly said:

A man forced me to have sex with him and when I disagreed, he used force and it was difficult for me to stop him. He overpowered me. The next day I could not disagree and I slept with him several times before I got pregnant (Interview with a female teenage street beggar in ward B).

Nweze et al (2019) underscore the fact that female street children and female street teenage beggars endure the inhuman fatal behaviour by street boys and some members of the general public with such inconsistent behaviour.

The findings that female teenage street beggars were raped indicates how the community has moral decadence and the information that the teenage beggar could not reject later suggest how helpless these vulnerable girls are to the extent of consenting sex with people they did not love. Bearing children with the one who raped them indicates how they are at risk of getting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, as they seem to do unprotected sex. The children born out of rape are likely to be trapped in continuation of moral decay and limited care rendering them to become future potential beggars as pointed out in the Vicious circle of poverty theory (Olubusla, 2020).

As premised in the psychological theory, the experiences of being raped as indicated in the study findings, underpin the psychological health consequences that may occur to the female street children and teenage beggars who endure such an inhuman violent action likely to pose health problems including mental illnesses, depression, anxiety, glue sniffing and substance addiction.

On the other hand, both the female street children beggars and the female street teenage beggars report to have been beaten by male street beggars as well as other members of the public. One of the interviewee street child beggar intimated:

One day, I was beaten by a male street beggar when we were given money nearby the bank. He wanted to take all the money and when I insisted that we were begging

together and the money belonged to all of us he had to beat me. I couldn't fight with a boy (Interview with a female street child beggar in ward A).

Data emerging from observation also reinforce the presence of power dynamics between female and male beggars rendering girls to be victims of violence and beatings. Whenever, the female and male beggars were together in the begging activity, field observation attested how male street beggars would quickly take money meant for all of them including the female beggars leading to constant fight in which the females are beaten due to masculinity of the males.

The findings that the female street children beggars were beaten by their male counterparts reflect on the existence of power dominance by males and inherent inequalities in the societies. The vulnerability theory underscores that children's and teenage vulnerability lead to inequalities that require actionable interventions by the government, NGOs, religious organisations and the general public (Fineman, 2019). Kaushik and Gupta (2022) also portray that street children beggars are sexually molested, beaten, tormented, and forced to beg on the streets for food and shelter. Rebuking, insulting or beating the female street children and female street teenage beggars reinforce the ideas held in the social theory of poverty which consider poverty as being inseparable to the individual's contribution on it (Weber, 2001). That is why one may mistreat the vulnerable person thinking that she was lazy or merely deviant. Such a thinking is however, inconsistent with the neoclassic or main stream economics which see one's poverty as being beyond her/his control. It also differs with the Marxian or radical theory which see poverty as a consequence of social stratification and exploitation.

### **Future Schooling Aspirations of Street Children and Teenage Involved in Begging**

The interview data emerging from the district social welfare officer and district community development officer indicated that educational aspirations for the female street children and female street teenage beggars was still vague. The female street children and female street teenage beggars though some expressed the desire to go back to school the possibility was still vague to them.

The interviewee District Social Welfare Officer had the following to narrate:

While the government has come up with the decent fee free education policy which could pull all children into basic education, there is an obvious lack of a common perception regarding street children and girls' education in particular lack support to some families. Some children are orphans living with non-biological parents or grandparents who have limited awareness on the importance of education (Interview with District Social Welfare Officer in Ward A).

On the other hand, some female street children and teenage beggars registered their desires to go back to school indicating how the beggary life was unpleasant to them. As the interviewee teenage street beggar shared her feelings:

Though begging account for our family survival, I wish to go back to school to escape the torture of hot sun, rain and violence accompanying the begging activity. If a good

Samaritan could support me to go back to school or enrol with VETA, I will be happy for that (Interview with a female street teenage beggar in ward B).

Likewise, the interviewee female street child said:

Lack of food at home makes me come and beg but I like going to school. I fail to attend to school because my grandmother asks me to accompany in the begging work (Interview with a female street child beggar in ward A).

On the other hand, there were some female street children and female street teenage beggars who thought that going back to school or enrolling to a vocational training was a wastage of time. In this case, the interviewee female teenage street beggar commented:

I currently want to get money through begging to buy food and take care of my grandparents. Sending me back to school will delay my desire to take care of my elderly relatives who are also visually impaired (Interview with a female street teenage beggar in ward B).

The desire to keep on begging to earn a living explain the presence of positive reinforcement through gaining money using an “easy” though shameful and humiliating activity of begging. To girls of this kind the money gained through begging seem to override all the torture, violence and stigma accompanying the activity. This reflects the relevance of the principle of operant conditioning under the psychological theories. The findings also indicate how the begging practice is deep rooted to the girl to the extent of failing to see other opportunities ahead. This demonstrates the relevance if the belief held in the anthropological theories of poverty, which regard culture of poverty as important in shaping children born into poverty to maintain values of begging and regarding it as a normal phenomenon.

It appears that there are some female street children beggars who wished to attend to school daily but would go for begging to sustain their families. The findings that there are challenges on the awareness and perceptions regarding the importance of education and negligence of educating a female child, arguably they constitute the drawbacks for the realization of access to basic rights and basic needs, including access to and full participation in basic education (Seni, 2017). While the government of Tanzania has embarked on the provision of fee free and compulsory basic education to all children, the attainment of this noble policy thus has remained a dream to the female street children and female teenage involved in street begging.

The Re-entry programme which was published by the government of Tanzania in 2021, the NGOs were implementing the same since 2019 by sending the beneficiaries in Folk Development Colleges (FDCs) or pursue secondary education informally for two years (Asumini and Mwila, 2024; United Republic of Tanzania, 2021). Consequently, those who dropped from school due to early pregnancies and other challenges such as financial constraints or discipline cases benefits from this scheme. However, this noble policy stance has not yet reached the female street children and teenage street beggars group fully. The need for a targeted intervention on this vulnerable group of girls is pertinent. While the global north has managed

to come up with conducive arrangement to young mothers (Brake & Grossman, 2020; Freedmon, 2020), in the global south, more is still required to match the policies on supporting teenage mothers, female street children and teenage street beggars and vulnerable groups at large to practice. There are also challenges related to awareness about the presence of support structures which are readily available (Laurencio et al, 2024). Awareness and actionable support will help to pull out the female street children and female teenage street beggars.

### **Measures for Mitigating the Challenges Facing Female Street Children and Teenage Beggars**

The study results have pointed out a number of ways to mitigate the challenges facing female street children and teenage beggars. The Findings revealed that it was not easy and straightforward to combat all the challenges at once. One of the interviewee revealed the following:

It is hard to come up with a comprehensive and relevant solution to female street children and teenage beggars due to their heterogeneity of deprivations and encounters though they have a lot in common. The government should strive to fully understand the specific context within which children's own experiences of begging is embedded. This will enable the government to come up with a relevant and actionable interventions for meeting their needs. Research or consultative meetings engaging them will shed light on the best fit interventions (Interview with the district community development officer in ward A).

On the similar note, another interviewee said:

There is a need for all stakeholders to consider the street begging phenomenon involving girls and teenage as a menace and serious socio-economic problem requiring collective and coordinated efforts. Giving these girls education whether formal or non-formal would help in rescuing them from this tough life (Interview with the district social welfare officer in ward A).

The researcher was inclined to capture the views of the female street children and female teenage street beggars to capture the first hand options for dealing with their plights. The interviewee female teenage street beggar suggested the following:

I beg in the streets due to the loss of my parents and my grandparents are so poor to meet my school needs. If someone could send me to learn sewing clothes I will be so glad and quit the begging work (Interview a female teenage street beggar in Ward A).

The findings that there was a need for coming up with actionable interventions to help the female street children and female street teenage beggars reinforce the fact that their plight are not hinged to their faults but partly are systemic as stipulated in the Marxian or radical theory and the vulnerability theory which stress on the state interventions to vulnerability (Fineman, 2019).

These findings concur with those by Nweze et al (2019) insist on the provision of vocational training to street beggars as a way of supporting them to lead a life with dignity and pull out from the beggary life. It is obvious from the study findings that the female street

children and female teenage street beggars would wish to go back to school but more preferably enrolling to a non-formal education centre and acquire skills which could be put into immediate use and lead an independent life. Generally, the phenomenon of street begging by girls and other categories of beggars require the efforts of various actors including the government, international community, NGOs, religious organisation and so forth (Bukoye, 2015).

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the government through social welfare offices should design and implement actionable preventive and rehabilitative measures to effectively prevent and deal with street begging generally and the one involving girls. Sustainable social package should be set aside to support the children from poor families get basic education. Their families should be supported to start income generating activities to break the vicious circle of poverty. Those who are already on the streets begging must be enumerated and supported based on their interests, capabilities and talents. This pre supposes engaging them fully to learn the best fit interventions for them. Since this study was confined in Dodoma city only, a more comprehensive study using mixed method approach and involving all major cities in Tanzania arises.

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