



## **Youth engagement in internet begging and national development in Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** The study is on youth engagement in Internet begging and national development. It was designed to examine how internet begging by youths influences the development of our nation Nigeria. The rationale for the study stemmed out of the high rate of youths engagement in internet begging and the fear of the detrimental effect it might have in the development of the nation. The study adopted the survey design. The study was guided by three research questions. Sample was 150 respondents drawn from Jos metropolis. Data were collected by means of a researcher made questionnaire titled Internet Begging and National Development Questionnaire (INBENDEQ) with reliability index of 0.78. Personal contact method was adopted in data collection. Simple percentage was used for data analysis with 50% as bench mark for all the research questions. Results revealed that poverty, displacement from homes and loss of jobs are the main reasons for internet begging by youths. Also it was gathered that internet begging makes youths lazy, and less responsible. The study found that internet begging affects national development due to propensity of leading to poverty and indebtedness among others. The author recommended that the government should empower youths to reduce poverty. Also situations that cause displacement and unemployment like crises, wars should be addressed so that people can go about their businesses well and earn their living.

**Keywords:** Begging, Cyber begging, Cybercrime, Internet, National development and poverty, Unemployment

### **1. Introduction**

Begging is as old as man. Since creation there has never been a time that every human has all that he or she needs in life. In every tribe, location or community there are always people who are not able to meet up with their basic needs due to many reasons which is not limited to poverty. However over the years, some people who cannot meet up with their family and life challenges have often resorted to begging (Mbah, 2021). Some of such persons may ask family members and friends while some others move from one place to another asking people for monetary and other forms of assistance. The begging of alms or other benefits from the

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public by a less privileged person is called street begging. In street begging, the identity of the beggar is not hidden to the people he is asking assistance from (Obiorah, 2020). In some cases some citizens do despise the beggars treating them as second class citizens. When some people cannot meet their desired needs at the appropriate time, and there may be grave consequences for the delay, they beg others who may be better disposed to help. According to Falade (2018), begging is part of nature. Those who do not have enough beg those who have all in a bid to prevent going without. Begging is human. However, most traditional beggars are elderly people, sick folks, destitute and children; not necessarily able bodied young men and women (youths) (Ferdinand, 2019). Over the years beggars move around physically from place to place or from house to house or from person to person; making the identity of the beggar to be so glaring and most times leads to disdain or disrespect to the beggar. The advent of technology and especially the internet has revolutionized a lot of things including the mode and pattern of begging. These days, street begging or traditional begging is gradually giving way to another form of begging called internet or cyber begging or e-begging.

Internet begging simply means using the internet to beg people for money, clothes or other form of support or assistance (McDonald, 2020). It is the same as the normal form of begging just that the beggars do not move about physically but use digital means to ask for assistance. It is equally referred to as virtual begging or online begging (Mbah, 2021). Internet begging is equally known as internet panhandling. In this type of begging, beggars look for help from other rich people either in cash or in kind. On the issue of the reasons why most people prefer cyber begging to traditional begging, Andre (2019) noted that cyber begging seems most convenient in the sense that the identity of the beggar is not exposed to the outside world and it gives the beggar the opportunity to get help from far and near with minimal efforts. In the same manner, it has the propensity to shield the beggar from insults and disdain from potential helpers since most of the donors may not be well-acquainted with the beggar. Accordingly, it could be said that begging is a means of helping the less privilege breathe in some fresh air of survival.

On the other hand considering the nature of some persons that adopt the cyber-begging method, which are basically youths, one is bound to wonder the real reason for cyber-begging. Donald (2018) argued that some cyber-beggars may be hiding their deep rooted laziness by begging using the internet; however, Ferdinand (2019) believed that most online beggars may have real pressing reasons why they beg even strangers to come to their aid. In Nigeria, the main causes of begging are loss of jobs, displacement due to flood or crises and death of parents or sponsors (Mbah, 2021). However, Ikenna (2020) argued that serious minded able bodied youths who lose their jobs, or are unemployed can do other meaningful things than to resort to beggary. Continuing, Ikenna was of the view that losing one's job does not mean losing one's sense of reasoning or judgment. It is on this premise that Egwuonwu (2018) believes that most able-bodied beggars(especially youths) are either lazy or have the tendency to go into fraud later which online begging may be used to serve as a preparatory ground.

The big question is, if able-bodied youths now resort to begging (in any form) what will be the hope of the nation in terms of development. Development is an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications (Gboyega, 2013). It implies improvement in material well being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. Every citizen is expected to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of the nation via his or her education, skills, talents and training (Ocho, 2015). However, in a situation whereby the majority of the nation's workforce resorts to begging, there will be danger in the future. The pride of any nation is the attainment of higher level of development in such a way that its citizens will contribute maximally to the growth of the nation. How-ever, for a nation to be in a phase of such level of development, there must be some pre-requisites, which include, industrious citizens, socio-political and economic stability (Ocho, 2015). This level of development cannot be achieved if the citizens are beggarly. Ocho equally argued that every citizen is endowed with inert potentials and abilities which are to be harnessed and tapped into via education

or other forms of training to help the person live useful life and contribute to nation building. Moreover, in any country, the youths of today are the leaders of tomorrow and as such need to be properly trained to be able to handle the future. It will be difficult if not impossible for beggarly youths to contribute to national development. It is against this backdrop that the researcher wishes to examine youths' engagement in internet begging and Nigerian national development.

## **2. Statement of the problem**

Begging has been a norm since human existence. This is because in every generation there are always people who do not have enough to cater for their families hence they beg those that have. In the traditional society begging was done face to face by elderly people, sick folks, destitute or children not necessarily able bodied youths. The beggars physically and personally approach the person(s) for assistance of money, clothes or other forms of support. However, the advent of the internet has changed a lot of things and the way things are being done. One of such changes is in the mode of begging. The traditional begging method has been revolutionized by the internet mode. Most people especially young ones have now resorted to using the internet as the new means of begging. The worrisome part of internet begging is that majority of the internet beggars are able-bodied youths and possess some appreciable level of education and are computer literate. Based on this knowledge one would expect that the youths would have been able to use their knowledge of the internet for better and profitable ventures other than begging. The fact that most internet beggars are young, healthy and learned persons leaves great questions in the minds of their audience. When one considers the fact that today's youths are tomorrow's leaders vi-a-vis their indulgence in internet begging, one is left with awe regarding the future that awaits Nigeria with such kinds of youths. Could it be that this caliber of beggars are leveraging on the internet to cover their laziness? What does the future hold for the nation if youths now resort to begging? How does internet begging affect national development? These questions are the bases of the research work.

## **3. Purpose of the study**

The study is designed to:

- Identify the reasons for youths' engagement in internet begging in Nigeria
- Ascertain the influence of the Internet begging on youths' potentials as Nigerian future leaders
- Examine how youths' engagement in internet begging affects national development in Nigeria.

### *Research questions*

- What are the reasons for youth engagement in online begging?
- How does internet begging affect youths' potentials as Nigerian future leaders?
- What are the effects of youths' engagement in the Internet begging to national development?

## **4. Significance of the study**

The study is significant for the following reasons:

- a) It will expose the reasons for online begging to the general public, parents and guardians and the government. The awareness will ginger all stakeholders to act wisely in order to forestall the occurrences of online begging.
- b) The effects or dangers of online begging to national development will enable the government take action to ensure that youths are empowered adequately to contribute their quota to national development.

- c) Parents will be educated on the issue of internet begging and its associated dangers; the knowledge will help parents to advice their children well about internet begging. Also parents will be challenged to train their children to be meaningfully employed so that they do not resort to begging.

## **5. Literature review**

### **5.1. Concept of Internet begging**

Internet begging also called online begging, cyber begging of online panhandling is the use of internet to source for help of financial assistance from people. It refers to the act of asking for money or other forms of help from strangers using the internet as a mediating tool. According to Falade(2018) cyber-begging is begging online via social media platforms. In the same manner, Adeleke (2019) defined online begging to mean asking for funds or financial help through the web in order to protect identity. Similarly, internet begging is seen by John (2020) as asking strangers for money to meet immediate or constructed needs or wants (money, food, and shelter) over the internet. Based on the various definitions one can say that online begging simply means using the internet as a medium of asking for assistance from especially strangers.

Internet begging gives individuals the opportunity to ask individuals including strangers to assist either financially or otherwise (Ferdinand, 2019). The range of help is not limited to money or finance but may include personal needs like clothing, chairs, books, kitchen utensils and other needs as the case may be (Mbah, 2021). The principal advantage of online begging is that it helps the beggar claim anonymous. Begging online via social media platforms has become so rampant that there are new terms for them. According to Wikipedia (2019), internet begging is different from street begging in that it hides the identity of the recipient, which helps to cover the shame of the beggar. It also most popular among social media users who are acquainted on social media platforms (Falade, 2018). There is nothing shameful about seeking for help but some persons might not be willing to do so. For such persons, internet begging becomes a plausible option.

Obidoa, Eze and Okide (2007) notes that internet begging comes in many forms, and can even hide under giveaways, or trends. But social media users note that this kind of begging leaves room for laziness, even cyber bullying when these demands are not met. And that is often very unpleasant to watch. World over, people ask for help through different ways which include but not limited to street-side begging and on social media platforms. With the advance in technology, cyber-begging has become the new mode of begging. The causes may be different, but the objective is the same which is usually financial assistance. Though the calamity that may befall individuals may be different but the appeal is similar. Such online beggars demand assistance from individuals which they expect to receive via home pages.

As the word implies, cyber begging is an online phenomenon where someone seeks for assistance from internet users. The reason for internet begging might not necessarily be due to lack of food, cloth or shelter as in the case of conventional begging. The rationale for online begging may vary (Eindi, 2021). Cyber begging also helps people to make money online.

### **5.2. Concept of national development**

Development is about making something better than it was or it used to be. It means self-reliance in every aspect of national life. According to Tolu and Oluwatoyin (2011), development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. As soon as the individual are made to acquire specialized skills that will enable them to help develop the society, then the society becomes developed. This accounts for the difference between the developed countries and the underdeveloped nations.

National development can equally be explained to mean totality of improvement in collective and concrete terms across socio-economic, political, technology as well as religion and is best achieved through strategies mapped out by government as contained in the nation development plans (Akindele, Ogini & Agada, 2013). From the foregoing, one can define national development as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. This is best

achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government. The Federal Ministry of Health (2000) stated that national development process must be visualised in its broadest context if it is to meet the expectations of the citizenry for a more elevated standard of living. Accordingly, the most all-encompassing goal of national development is the progressive realisation of the abilities and talents of each individual for his/her own satisfaction and enhancement of the good of the community and the nation. This is what is meant by the concept of human development, or people-centered development.

In the simplest form, national development means improving the living standards of citizens in all areas of human existence-socially, morally, economically, politically, mentally and psychologically. A nation is said to be developed when its citizens experience improved quality life in all aspects. One sided improvement does not connote national development. The following are the landmarks or yardstick for measuring national development as identified by Galula (2006).

- a) Rapid growth of incomes of the population in general.
- b) Poverty alleviation/reduction (rapid growth of the incomes of the poor).
- c) Satisfaction of basic social and economic needs.
- d) Sustainment of a democratic and fully participatory society.

### **5.3. Concept of youth**

Youth refers to a person between the age of 18 and 45 years (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013). In the Nigerian constitution, adulthood begins at 18 years. Under normal circumstances at 18 years, one should have finished secondary school or have entered tertiary institution. If the person is not going to tertiary institution, he or she should be learning a trade, a skill, arts or vocational job. At the age of 18, one should have discovered his or her area of calling or purpose or interest in life (Oniye, 2009). Youths are great assets to any nation. A youth is said to be at his prime age of life. The experiences whether favourable or unfavourable of a youth make or mar their future. Young people all over the world are vital and important segment of the society in which they live. Youths have endowment of raw energy (Oniye, 2009) which must be channeled towards profitable venture. They are always bubbling in spirit, with high hope big dreams, aspirations and ideals of what their tomorrow will be (Ogbeifun, 2007). To achieve their dreams, youths naturally do not stay still or quiet, especially when they anticipate or see their future on a totally collapsing socio-economic landscape. They try a lot of things including internet begging to sustain themselves. Youths like to channel their energy on adventures; hence they work and explore other opportunities for their basic needs of life to be met. Youths are naturally important and want things done right away especially when it concerns their welfare. On the other hand, youths can be unruly or violent when their needs are not met. They depend on their parents, elder ones and the society leaders for their dreams to come true.

### **5.4. Reasons for online begging**

Online begging helps individuals to access financial or other forms of help from strangers without utmost anonymity. In traditional begging the identity of the beggar is made clear. A lot of factors contribute to the popularity of online begging. According to O'Brien (2017), some people especially youths that resort to online begging do so not necessarily out of volition but due to some level of frustration they face in life. Continuing, O'Brien argued that lack of jobs is one of the main reasons why many youths are beggars. In Nigeria, there abound many educated youths who have graduated from different universities but could not find jobs to do due to narrow economy. Such caliber of youths turns back to become dependents (after graduation) when they ought to be fending for themselves and supporting their families. In other to keep surviving, such affected persons resort to beg online.

In another development, Ajagun (2018) notes that another reason for high indulgence of people in online begging is the high level of poverty in the country. Many persons are living below poverty line. A lot of families can no longer cater well for their family. In most homes it is becoming difficult to eat three square meals a day talk more of footing educational or other needs. The poverty level in Nigeria is so high coupled with high inflation. When families cannot feed their children rather than steal they resort to internet begging to receive some aids from strangers to support their families.

People also embark on internet begging in order to raise capital for their business or other projects (Olufemi, 2019). Sometimes a person may have a proposal or a project or even educational pursuit and may not have the required funds to accomplish same; in order to ensure that the project is not abandoned, they may use internet begging as a platform to raise the necessary capital for such. This is most plausible in some cases where the project or proposal costs a fortune. Temitope (2019) has argued that most young people use internet begging to canvass for votes to win a contest or a competition. Lately, most competitions and voting are done online due to great shift to the digital world. As a result, majority of contestants use the internet to advertise their interest and to appeal to friends and colleagues to support them. For example BB Naija show contestants in Nigeria use online begging method to demand the public to vote whereby a certain amount of money is designed for a vote. The contestant with the highest number of votes (which is equal to highest money) wins the contest. Similar contests are also done online. Furthermore, Mesele and Addiss (2020) identified other factors that might necessitate cyber begging as family disorganization, social norms, inappropriate parenting style, environmental factors such as drought, climate change, pest invasion, and flooding. Any of these could affect the productivities of farmers in rural areas and might push them to migrate from one place to another place to fend for themselves and family.

In the views of Egwuonwu (2018), laziness could be another factor that may be responsible for the increase in the number of online beggars in Nigeria. A lot of youths are not diligent. They seem to be lazy rather than being industrious; some tend to be mentally lazy. That is why a lot of persons lose hope when they lose their jobs or could not get white collar jobs. Such persons rather than thinking outside the box to know what else to do to earn a living and to contribute meaningfully to the development of their families and society, they resort to modernized form of begging-internet begging. Poor training and lack of requisite skills may be another reason for internet begging. Mbah (2021) argued that some graduates are not appointable because they show no evidence of mastery of their discipline despite the fact that their certificate or results may look very wonderful. Very many people cannot defend their certificates in the world of work. When they are employed the high level of incompetence they display leaves the employers with no other choice than to relieve them of their jobs. In such cases, the affected persons may resort to internet begging for survival.

## **6. Theoretical framework**

### **6.1. Development media theory (DMT)**

The Developmental Media Theory (DMT) propounded by Folarin (2005) seeks to explain the normative behavior of the media /ICTs in countries that are conventionally classified as developing countries. The DMT supports the use of ICT for development. This is based on the premise that ICT facilitates research, data collection, data processing and data disseminating which are necessary for development in any area of life. ICTs are useful in reducing the tasking jobs of manual labour in disseminating information, computation and storage.

The adoption of the DMT in the present study stems from the fact that internet beggars can leverage on the features of the internet to disseminate information about their needs and problems to a vast large of audience far and near in order to receive assistance. The use of internet reduces the cost and hassles of moving from one place to the other to ask for help as in the case of traditional begging. In essence the internet helps beggars to improve on their begging mode which yields better results. However, on the other hand to achieve sustainable development, the youths need to use the internet positively. They could research for better job

opportunities, new innovations, online jobs, and digital skills which they can acquire to earn a living rather than being dependent or beggarly. By acquiring digital skills or getting online jobs via the internet, the youths will make a better living, and pay their taxes and by so doing contribute to nation building.

## 7. Methodology

The study adopted the survey design. The study location was Jos Plateau state. Data were collected from some selected undergraduate students, some beggars in the city of Jos and some civil servants residing in Jos metropolis. The use of these categories of respondents was get a balanced view of the topic of discourse which is internet begging. Moreover, students and workers are the most users of internet than any other category of people. The inclusion of beggars was to get their own views about begging for better and holistic analysis. The study sampled 150 respondents altogether made up of 90 youths, 20 beggars, and 40 civil servants. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the 150 respondents. The questionnaire was distributed in Jos town which is the capital of Plateau state. Data were elicited from the respondents by means of a researcher made questionnaire titled Internet Begging and National Development Questionnaire (INBENDEQ). The data collection lasted for one week xia personal contact method. The reliability of the questionnaire was established via the Cronbach-Alpha method and the procedure yielded a reliability value of 0.78 indicative of high reliability. The researcher used the percentage in analyzing the data for the research questions. The cut off mark for the percentage was 50%. In this regard any item whose percentage response is below 50% was not regarded as influential though was recognized. The use of percentage is due to its simplicity and ease of interpretation by the readers.

## 8. Results and discussion

### 8.1. Results

**Research Question1: What are the reasons for youth engagement in online begging?**

**Table 1:** Reasons for youth engagement in Internet begging

S/NO	Statement	Agreed		Disagreed	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Most youths beg online due to poverty or displacement from homes.	140	93.3	10	6.7
2.	Some use online begging to raise funds for their projects.	120	80.0	30	20.0
3.	Lack of jobs make youth to resort to online begging	130	86.7	20	13.3
4.	Some youths use cyber begging to cover their laziness.	110	73.3	40	26.7
5.	Cyber-begging is done to help clear debts or pay bills	80	53.3	70	46.7
6.	Online begging is used by some youths to win contests	135	90.0	15	10.0

Data in Table 1 reveals that the major reasons for youths' engagement in online begging are poverty or displacement from home (93.3%), for winning contests (90.0%) and unemployment (86.7%). The least observed reason why youths engage in internet begging is to pay debts or clear bills (53.3%).

**Research Question 2: How does internet begging affect youths’ potentials as Nigerian future leaders?**

**Table 2: Dangers of Internet begging on youths potentials as future leaders**

S/NO	Statement	Agreed		Disagreed	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Engagement in internet begging can lead to loss of respect	105	70.0	45	30.0
2.	Over dependence on cyber-begging can lead to loss of integrity and dignity of labour	125	83.3	25	16.7
3.	There is high propensity of youths becoming cyber criminals	130	86.7	20	13.3
4.	It could lead to cyber-addiction which might affect dedication to duty	140	93.3	10	6.7
5.	Cyber-begging can hinder youths from being industrious.	138	92.0	12	8.0
6.	Constant cyber-begging can make youths to become irresponsible citizens.	120	80.0	30	20.0

Cyber addiction which might affect dedication to duty is observed as the lead danger of internet begging on youths’ potentials as future leaders with 93.3% affirmative response. This is closely followed by the fact that constant cyber-begging can hinder youths from becoming industrious with 92% percentage response. From Table 2, the least accepted effect of cyber begging on youths’ potentials as future leaders is that continuous engagement in internet begging can lead to loss of respect (70%).

**Research Question3: What are the effects of youths’ engagement in internet begging to national development?**

**Table 3: Effects of youth engagement in Internet begging on national development**

S/NO	Statement	Agreed		Disagreed	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Internet begging destroys national reputation among committee of nations	145	92.7	05	3.3
2.	Too many lazy youths will plug the nation into abject poverty	130	86.7	20	13.3
3.	Overdependence in internet begging will lead to the production of poorly skilled man power in the nation	120	80.0	30	20.0
4.	Internet begging will create poverty that will lead to borrowing and being in debts.	142	94.7	08	5.4
5.	Engagement in internet begging will demean the value attached to education by youths	110	73.3	40	26.7

Data in Table 3 show that internet begging has detrimental effect on national development. Some of the effects include that it could create poverty that will lead to borrowing and being in debts (94.7%), Internet begging destroys national reputation among committee of nations (92.7%) and that too many lazy youths will plug the nation into abject poverty (86.7%) among others.

**8.2. Discussion**

The study investigated youth engagement in internet begging and national development in Nigeria. The study is necessitated by the increase in the number of youths who indulge in online begging in the country lately. From the study it was discovered that many youths are into online begging for reasons like poverty or displacement from homes, loss of jobs and laziness among others. These findings are well supported by other scholars like Obrien (2017), Ajagun (2018) and Olufemi, (2019). Many people engage in internet begging when they can no longer meet up with the cost of survival due to poverty. In cases whereby people are displaced

from their homes due to war, crises or flood and are forced to leave their homes for security reasons; such affected persons might definitely be poor as their sources of livelihood (like work , job or businesses ) may not be carried along with them as they run for safety. In the interim, such persons may need to live by the mercies of others until they get other means of survival. The most recent case is the displacement of over 20,000 persons in Jebbu- Bassa in Plateau state due to recent attack in the area. Some surviving residents (youths inclusive) of Jebbu- Bassa were forced to leave their ancestral homes to run to safer zones for security reasons.

In the same vein, youth engagement in internet begging was found to have effect on youths' potentials as future leaders of the nation. It was gathered from the study that over indulgence in internet begging could make youths to be cyber criminals and to lose respect and integrity for hard work. This is not good for any nation. One of the core values of Nigeria is dedication to duty and dignity of labour. As a nation, Nigeria believes in working to get money. There is no time laziness is condoned. Youths are expected to channel their energies to worthwhile activities that will yield better [profits. This is in line with Oniye (2009) who asserted that youths' energies should be geared towards activities that will yield good and profitable results.

The results of research question three showed that sustainable development is affected negatively through youth engagement in internet begging. Development is about every facet of the society functioning well. However, when the work (youths)force resort to online begging, there will be great problems. National development is the collective effort of all citizens. According to Galula (2006) rapid growth of incomes of the population in general and poverty alleviation/reduction (rapid growth of the incomes of the poor) are some of the indices for measuring national development. This being the case when majority are beggars , how can they contribute to nation building?

## **9. Conclusion and recommendations**

The study is on youths' engagement in internet begging and national development in Nigeria. The purpose is to examine how indulgence of youths in internet begging influences national development in Nigeria. From the study, it was discovered that many youths engage in online begging due to some reasons which include but not limited to poverty, displacement from homes, loss of job, and unemployment. Similarly, online begging was found to have detrimental effects on youths' potentials as future leaders which include, making them lazy, making them to become cyber criminals among others. Finally the study found that cyber begging has some ills on national development. Some of the effects are poverty, indebtedness among others. Sequel to the findings from the study, the following are recommended:

- a. Youths engage in online begging due to poverty, displacement and unemployment; therefore the government should empower youths to reduce poverty. Also situations that cause displacement and unemployment like crises, wars should be addressed so that people can go about their businesses well and earn a living.
- b. It was gathered that online begging makes youths to lose interest in dignity of labour and hard work as future leaders hence it is necessary that the government place restrictions on the use of internet for some reasons so that people will be diligent in their work.
- c. Some dangers of youths' internet begging on national development were found to include poverty, indebtedness among others , consequently it is advisable that youths be meaningfully and gainfully engaged to fend for themselves to avoid all sorts of embarrassment.
- d. Government should reduce poverty level through youth empowerment programmes and other poverty alleviation schemes.

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