

Assessment of Almajirin System of Education: It's Implication for Child, Family and National Development in Minna Metropolis, Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This work was undertaken to find out the implication of Almajirin system of education on the child, family and the nation at large. A hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed among people from selected towns in Niger state, Nigeria. Interviews and surveys were also conducted. The instrument for the study was a self-designed questionnaire. A sample of 120 people in the selected areas was drawn using simple random sampling. Data was analyzed using frequency Tables, percentage and mean. It was observed that Almajiri system of education have a strong and positive impact on the child, family and the nation at large. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that government should consider addressing the feeding and welfare needs of the Almajirin and their Mallams, infrastructural facilities should also be provided.

Introduction

Almajiri' is a Hausa word meaning immigrant children in search of knowledge on Quranic education. The Quranic School is the primary level of traditional Islamic education. It is an institution which has its origin traced to the prophetic period of Islamic education. Historians have traced the *Almajiri* system of education to the beginning of the 11th Century, largely promoted by leading lights of Islam who were determined to spread Islamic knowledge and learning, long before the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of British Nigeria. The word 'Almajiri' coiled from Arabic word "AL-MUHAJIRIN" which came as a result of Prophet Mohammed's migration from Mecca to Medina. From the Islamic perspective, the word was first used by the prophet Muhammad to indicate those of his companions European Scientific Journal (Muhajirun) who migrated with him for the sake of Islam from Mecca to Medina.

The name Muhajirin later came to refer to those knowledge seekers who move from one place to another in search of knowledge like the Quranic school teacher and his pupils. In a Hadith (sayings) of the prophet in the collection Al-Tirmidhi (1980), the Prophet is quoted to have said "the search for knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim". The Hadith did not discriminate against age or status. In another Hadith collection by Walial-din (1977), the prophet said: "go in search of knowledge". The above Hadith shows that the search for knowledge knows no geographical, social or religious boundary. He said in another Hadith "wisdom" (knowledge) is the lost property of the believer wherever he sees it, he picks it up." These and many other similar Hadith propelled Muslims to go in search of knowledge.

In Hausa land Almajiri refers to 'children' sent from their homes and entrusted into the care of Islamic teachers (Mallams) to learn the Islamic studies. In Nigeria, the Almajiri system started in the 11th century, as a result of the involvement of Borno rulers in Quranic literacy. Seven hundred years later, the Sokoto Caliphate was founded principally through an Islamic revolution based on the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. These two empires run similar Quranic learning system which over time came to be known as the Almajiri system. The Danfodio revolution brought with it some modifications, the establishment of an inspectorate of Quranic literacy, the inspectors reported directly to the emir of the province, concerning all matters relating to school. Shehu (2004), states that the colonialists specifically came up with policies aimed at destroying the traditional Quranic schools and replacing them with the western style school. It was after independence that serious efforts were made to improve the system of Quranic schools. Islamic scholars and organizations like Jama'atulNasril Islam (JNI) struggled to establish and maintain the schools. Sir, Ahmadu Bello Sardauna of Sokoto established Quranic schools in Muslim localities.

Traditional Islamic education has a long history of existence in Nigeria. It started in the northern parts of the

country, long before the advent of western education. It operated through the Quranic schools, whose main objective was to familiarize pupils with the tenets of the Quran and probably become Islamic scholars. The Quran has been the core-curriculum of this system of education since its inception because it plays a central role in the life of a Muslim spiritually, politically, socially, economically and otherwise. Yahaya (2004) suggests that the problem of the Quranic School started with the colonial invasion of the northern parts of Nigeria, which led to the relegation of Islamic education to the background. According to him, this led to the gradual eroding of the Islamic educational system. Curriculum contents, teaching methods, teachers' qualification, infrastructure and administration have been compromised, therefore the Quranic School has remained archaic. Consequently, the Almajiri is more of a social problem than a useful member of society. Almajirai are vulnerable to being used as political thugs by benefactors who take advantage of their lack of formal education. They are considered as great security risks as many of them have become miscreants who actively participate in ethnic, religious and political violence and terrorism Christian (2010).

Western education means institutionalized system which was inherited from the British colonist, education or secular education is a cumulative process of development of intellectual skills, habits, attitude and values all from different dispositions of life. Generally education is the quality of learning that which helps us improve ourselves and the society at large. In short formal education provides people with specific skills useful in the production of manpower for example skills acquisition like craftsmanship, teaching, engendering etc. Educational system is regarded as the means of providing the man power at various level on which modernization depends, the educational service is an important tool for the Almajirai and the society at large.

Statement of the Problem

The Almajirai are just like other children from families brought to learn the Qur'an under the watchful eyes of Mallams (Islamic teachers), some dropout along the way and become a problem to the society. Most pupils withdraw due to hardship that is encounter during the training, they have not only become a source of concern to Islam and their parents but the society at large, hence they are seen on streets begging for alms and food, and at the end of the day go back to their camps to sleep. They come across various kinds of dangerous juvenile and adolescent peer. The Almajiri are children living under horrific conditions, few of them do not know their homes or who their parents are as they are left early in life. These children had no option than to follow other group of children that come their way, in the mornings, they are seen following a bean cake seller who approaches a buyer to buy her bean cake and distribute it as Sadakkah to these children. In most cases these children population is large which the Mallams can't meet their basic needs and they will have no option than to send them out to beg. A very pathetic aspect of their life is what they eat, they do not care about the nature of the food cooked, fresh or stale and it can be picked from anywhere. It is against this background that the researcher intends to carry out this study with a view to come out with relevant suggestions that will enable the government and the society to address these problems and proffer solutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Almajiri system of education, its implications on the child, family and the nation. The specific objectives are: -

- i. To assess the implications of the Almajiri system of education on the child, family and national development.
- ii. To examine the adequacy of the Almajiri school's curriculum.
- iii. Determine the challenges and prospects of the system.
- iv. To identify the strategies for improvement.

Research Questions

- i. What are the implications of Almajiri system of education on the child, family and National development?
- ii. What is the adequacy of the Almajiri School's curriculum?
- iii. What are the challenges and prospects facing the system?
- iv. What are the strategies for improvement?

Method

The research design employed for this study is a descriptive survey research. A survey research investigates the existing situation and attitude based on information collected directly from the people involved. This kind of research method is mostly concerned with how, what, and why questions. It interprets and establishes the course of actions. Gay, (2005) defined descriptive research as a process of data collection in order to test hypothesis or to provide answers to research questions. The area chosen for this research is Minna metropolis of Niger state, due to the fact that the state is one of the places identified with the problem of Almajiri system of education and

the government has made little or no efforts to address the situation. The target population of this study comprises of selected areas in Minna metropolis with a total number of one hundred and twenty five (125) people, both families and Mallams. In composing the sample of the study, the researcher adopted purposive sampling techniques, followed by random sampling from some selected settlements in Minna metropolis. The sample size for the study is 125 respondents.

For the purpose of this study, a self-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: A and B. Section A is concerned with the bio data of the respondents while section B was used in answering the questionnaire. A four point likert scale with strongly agree (SA) agree (A) disagree (D) strongly disagree (SD) with total number of 22 items. The questionnaire was validated by three lecturers in the department of Science Education, Federal University of Technology, Minna. Useful corrections were made, which led to re-construction of the words that were corrected. For reliability, before the actual data collection piloting of instruments was done in one of the settlements based on convenience sampling involving five (5) families and two (2) Mallams. The area did not participate in the final study. Piloting enabled the researcher to test the reliability of the instruments. The questionnaires were given to the families and Mallams at the same time of the study. The researcher used pilot testing to identify uncertainty and also make all corrections during the final data collection, the result of the pilot indicated that the instrument was reliable. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the sampled groups in the selected areas in Minna metropolis with the help of some friends who served as research assistants. Mallams and families were given the questionnaires to tick their best options while the researcher waited to give necessary assistance where needed. In this study descriptive statistics using frequency distribution, tables, percentage and mean were used for computation.

Results

The respondents were require to indicate their age, gender and occupation as a source of information, the summary of respondents responses to item of their background information is shown in tables 4.1and 4.2 respectively.

Section A. Bio Data

Table 4.1. **Distribution of respondents by Age**

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-30	41	34.2
31-40	47	39.2
41- above	32	26.6
Total	120	100

Table 4.1 showed that (34.2%) of the respondents are within the age of 20-30 years, (39.2%) of the respondents are within the range of 31-40 years, (26.6%) of the respondents are within the range of 41 years and above.

Table 4.2. **Distribution of respondents based on occupation**

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Trading	32	26.7
Civil servant	25	20.8
Farming	26	21.7
Others	37	30.8
Total	120	100

Table 4.2 showed that (26.7%) of the respondents were civil servants, (20.8%) of the respondents were mallams, (21.7%) of the respondents were housewives while majority (30.8%) were engaged in other things.

Research Question 1: What are the implications of Almajiri system of education on child, family and National development? To answer this research question, frequency and mean were modified as shown in the table below.

Table 4.3 **Distribution of respondents by implications of Almajiri system of education**

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Freq.	No.	Mean	Remark
They are denied basics needs	304	90	16	6	416	120	3.50	Accepted
Families sometimes loss their loved ones through the Almajiri system e.g. kidnap, death	208	168	12	6	394	120	3.30	Accepted
The health of Almajiri is at risk	248	147	2	8	404	120	3.40	Accepted
Almajiri are exposed to environmental hazards e.g. accidents	220	162	12	5	399	120	3.30	Accepted
A generation of labor force is being wasted	132	177	34	11	354	120	2.95	Rejected

Table 4.3 showed that four out of the given variables have a mean rating above 3 points; 1stvariable is highly rated by 3.50. While the 5th variable have a rating slightly below 3 points which is 2.95, four variables were accepted while the fifth variable was rejected.

Research Question 2: What is the adequacy of the Almajiri School's curriculum?

Table 4.4 Distribution of respondents by adequacy of the Almajiri School's curriculum.

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Freq.	No.	Mean	Remark
The curriculum provides opportunity for literacy, numeracy	96	169	50	17	331	120	2.80	Rejected
The curriculum of Almajiri offers opportunity for career guidance	76	69	64	46	255	120	2.10	Rejected
The curriculum of the Almajiri provides vocational training	48	51	68	57	224	120	1.90	Rejected
The curriculum of Almajiri system of education prepares the learners for total development of the individual	84	81	48	48	261	120	2.20	Rejected
The curriculum offers experiences that enable the Almajiri fit well in the society	72	72	64	46	254	120	2.20	Rejected

Table 4.4 showed that the distribution of respondents by the adequacy of Almajiri school's curriculum. The result showed that all variables had a mean rating below 3 points. The highest variable is the 1st variable rating 2.80 while the lowest variable is the 3rd variable rating 1.90.. This means that the Almajiri School's curriculum because is not adequate.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges facing the Almajiri system?

Table 4.5 Distribution of respondents by challenges

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Freq.	No.	Mean	Remark
Lack facilities	344	96	0	2	432	120	3.60	Accepted
Poor funding	328	111	0	1	440	120	3.70	Accepted
Teachers lack adequate training	180	150	20	15	365	120	3.00	Accepted
Poor implementations of policies	276	120	8	7	411	120	3.40	Accepted
Inadequate curriculum	156	150	28	17	361	120	3.00	Accepted

Table 4.5 showed the distribution of respondents by challenges of the Almajiri system of education the result showed that all variables had a mean rating above 3.00. The 2nd variable was considered as the highest rated by 3.70. While the 3rd and 5th variables were the lowest rated by 3.00. This means they were accepted as the challenges facing the Almajiri system of education.

Research Question 4: What are the strategies for improving the Almajiri system of education?

Table 4.6 Distribution of respondents by strategies for improvement

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Freq.	No.	Mean	Remark
Integrating UBE into Almajiri system of education	240	141	14	6	401	120	3.30	Accepted
Funding	288	123	6	4	421	120	3.50	Accepted
Introduction of vocational skill into the curriculum	284	132	4	3	423	120	3.50	Accepted
Government should provide infrastructural facilities to Almajiri schools	340	81	4	6	431	120	3.60	Accepted
Private sector participation in Almajiri system of education	220	156	14	6	394	120	3.30	Accepted
Parent should be charged fees to support the system	236	138	12	9	385	120	3.20	Accepted
Government should enact policies and ensure their implementation to discourage begging	240	108	20	14	380	120	3.20	Accepted

Table 4.6 showed the distribution of respondents by strategies for improving the Almajiri system of education. The result showed that all variable had a mean rating above 3 points while the strategies for improving the Almajiri system of education variable 4 is considered the highly rated variable which is rating 3.60. And the low rated variables are 6th and 7th by 3.20.

Discussion

The findings of the study are discussed based on the research questions raised in chapter one of this research study.

The finding on the table 4.3 showed items 1, 2, 3 and 4 which are Almajiri denied basic needs, families sometimes loss their loved ones, the health of Almajiri is at risk, Almajiris are exposed to environmental hazards were identified as some of implications of Almajiri system of education in Minna metropolis while item 5 which is the generation of labor force of Almajiri is being wasted was been disapproved. . Shehu, (2004) considered this as implications of Almajiri system of education.

The findings on table 4.4 showed that items 1-5 which are, the curriculum provides opportunity for literacy,

numeracy, the curriculum of Almajiri offers opportunity for career guidance, the curriculum of Almajiri provides vocational training, the curriculum of Almajiri prepares the learner for total development of individual, the curriculum offers experiences that enable the Almajiri put well into present society, were all rejected by the respondents who did not believe that the Almajiri curriculum has these variables in its content.

The findings in table 4.5 showed that all items were accepted as the challenges facing the Almajiri system of education which are: lack of facilities, poor funding, teachers' lack adequate training, poor implementation of policies, inadequate curriculum.

The findings in table 4.6 showed that all items can be adopted as strategies for improving the Almajiri system of education which are the system should be integrated into UBE curriculum government should fund the system, vocational skill should be introduced into the system, infrastructural facilities should be provided, private sectors should participate, parents should be charged fees, policies should be enacted. Dukku (2004) suggested that a more determined effort should be made to support Quranic and Islamiyahh schools in the areas of facilities, the welfare of Mallams and Almajiri, and the expansion of Quranic education curriculum.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions were established.

1. Most of the Almajiri in Minna metropolis and Bida town are denied basic needs.
2. The curriculum offered in the schools does not provide opportunity for literacy and it is not adequate.
3. Poor funding from government is a major challenge facing the Almajiri system of education.
4. Provision of infrastructural facilities by government is a problem facing the Almajiri system of education.

Lastly, in order to reform the Almajiri system of education, home economist has a crucial role to play by educating the Almajiri and train them on vocational skills, the knowledge of this will greatly influence the living standards of Almajiri and the nation at large.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made towards the growth of the Almajiri system of education for adequate curriculum and good implementation of polices.

1. Government should consider addressing the general welfare of the Almajiri to avoid street begging and its social effects on the pupils as well as the society at large.
2. The curriculum of Almajiri schools should provide opportunity for literacy and adequacy
3. The Almajiri system of education should be properly funded.
4. Infrastructural facilities should be provided by the government to Almajiri schools, which will play a vital role in reforming the system.

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