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The Metaphor of Almajirai and the Rights to Mainstream Western Education in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

Education enhances the capabilities of an individual. Thus, those who are denied the rights to education face the possibilities of limited chances in the future. UNESCO for instance, argues that meaningful education is the key to advance social justice; as people who are marginalised in education face bleak future. On that note, the enrollment of the almajirai boys in the Tsangaya schools of the Almajiri education system, otherwise call Tsangaya negates this UNESCO standard for proper educational advancement. The most difficult problem in the reformation and integration of the Tsangaya system into the mainstream educational system is based on the age-long cultural belief that the western education is contradictory to the whole essence of Islamic belief. Some believe that a child with western education will eventually lose his Islamic identity and embrace vices that negate the values and principles of Islam. The variables to the denial of secular education in the North mystify Almajirai as social misfits, as commodity for both the terrorists and politicians. Yet no known study has analysed information on the rights of secular education in far Northern Nigeria. This study, therefore examined Almajirai and the Rights to the Mainstream Western Education in the Northern Nigeria. The social Learning theory was used as the Theoretical Framework. The survey design was done through In-depth Interviews and Key Informant Interviews. The sample size was chosen based on multi-stage sampling method. Thirty households were systematically sampled from four Local Government Areas which yielded a sample size of 120 households selected from the three states in Far Northern Nigeria. It was observed that the almajiri activity is closely associated to violent crimes such as terrorism and kidnapping. The study concluded that the government should provide western education to replace Almajiri education in Northern Nigeria.

Keywords: Almajirai, Western Education, Rights, Tsangaya

Introduction

The *almajirai* are boys from primary-school age who are faced with the hard necessity of roaming the streets begging for food and alms to survive. This phenomenon is northern and culturally Hausa-fulanic. They do not stay with their parents, most of who reside in rural areas. They live with their Qur'anic teacher call Mallam, who only provides limited supervision and care. Almajiri in Arabic word "Almuhajirun", means an emigrant. It usually refers to persons from underprivileged rural families, who leave their residences to stay with the Qur'anic teachers in Qur'anic schools in the quest for Islamic knowledge. The system was funded by the state treasury and the state zakkat funds, and was under the control of the emirs of the

traditional government system that existed before the coming of the British. Since Islam encourages charity to a welfarer and to a student of learning, the community as well readily supported these Almajiri most of whom came from faraway places to enroll in the Tsangaya schools. In return, the Almajiris offered services such as laundry, cobbling, gardening, weaving and sewing as charity to the community that contributed to their wellbeing; hence they gave the society what the society gave to them.

The *mallam*'s purpose was to teach the children the basics of Islam and how to write and recite the Arabic alphabet (Oladosu, 2012). But today, they live with their Qur'anic teacher call Mallam, who only provides limited supervision and care. With the increasing level of poverty in the country, the care of the Almajiri became overwhelmingly burdensome for the Mallams who were left with no choice but to send these little boys out to beg from the goodwill of the society. These boys swam into the society with no bearing moving from street to street, house to house, vehicle to vehicle. They became a burden as well as nuisance to the society. They sang, begged, prayed, appealed to the mercy, and goodwill of the people. It's really sad when you see these Almajiris, hungry, malnourished, wounded; rushing for flies' infested leftover food, searching through trash can for little morsels, just to stay alive. They consume all kinds of food, fresh or stale. They roam about dirty, tattered, barefooted, pale with flies pecking on their cracked lips and dry faces, which is filled with rashes or ringworm. These victims of neglect were also victims of exploitation (Sa'id, 1992). Indeed, the *almajiri* population has grown exponentially, and a large majority has been unable to turn their education into productive jobs, thereby turning them into "social misfits" who pose a security risk (Aluaigba, 2009). In order to escape the distractions of life, the *mallam* would take the *almajirai* out of the city to a camp where they were taught self-reliance as well as discipline. Sometimes, when there was shortage of food, the Quranic teacher would send the pupils out to solicit for food from residents around. This practice of soliciting for food by the *almajirai* became known as "almajiranchi"—a practice meant to make them strong and to prepare them for life's struggle.

During the pre-colonial era, the Almajiri education system was established under the Kanem-Borno Empire. It was established as an organized and comprehensive system of education for learning Islamic principles, values, jurisprudence and theology, just like the madrasah in Malaysia, and Egypt (Nasir 2010:3, Awofeso et al. 2003:314). In 1904, the British invaded and colonized the northern Nigeria territories and took control of the state treasury. The British also refused to recognize the Tsangaya as an important education system and deliberately abolished its state funding arguing that, they were mere religious schools. Boko, meaning western education was introduced and funded instead. British administrators strictly restricted their activities in the northern region as part of a policy of indirect rule that allowed emirs there to remain in power as figureheads while in fact serving as agents of the British (Osaghae, 2002). As Mustapha (1986) notes, when Western education was finally introduced into the northern region, the system was aimed at training the sons of aristocrats and was used as a form of social control. The early

exposure to Western education gave the southern region an edge over the North in administration and employment.

Islamic scholars who were revered professionally for controlling the moral fibers of the society gradually became neglected. With loss of support from the government and the helpless Emirs, the Almajiri system thus collapsed. The responsibility of the Almajiri was then taken over by the local scholars who deemed it a moral and religious duty to educate these pupils for the sake of Allah. Disregard for the Almajiri system in preference for western education ignited animosity and antagonism from the Mallams, the pupils and the society at large. The case scenario is worsening by the belief that the western education (BOKO) was of Christian-European origin and therefore anti-Islamic doctrines. It bred the fear that a child with western belief will eventually lose his Islamic identity and embrace vices that negates the values and principles of Islam such as alcoholism, fornication, semi naked dressing, partying, abandoning the prayer, fasting, and zakkat. This moral component of the Almajiri Quranic school system has been described as accounting for the high preference by parents as it is perceived to be lacking in the western-styled schools (Uzodike & Maiangwa 2012:111, Karu 2011:14).

Mallams reveal that graduation of pupils would mostly depend on the ability of the pupil to grasp the complete chapters of the Quran which in most cases could extend for years. The objectives of the system include moral training cutting across respect for elders, shunning alcohol, dishonesty, lies, developing good habits and the development of a pious man that will be useful to the society (Yusha'u et al. 2013:128). The Almajiri system contains four important features that make it unique for exploitation by an extremist movement. First, it involves children being relocated-separated from their villages, families and friends to the guardianship of Mallams in towns. Second, it is restricted almost exclusively to boys. Third, the curriculum of the schools is concerned primarily with teaching the sixty chapters of the Koran by rote memorization. Fourth, each school serves 25 to 500 students, from the ages six to twenty-five. These schools are largely autonomous from government oversight (Awofeso et al. 2003: 314).

Today the word Almajiri in Hausa has gradually acquired a completely different meaning; it is more or less referred to as beggars roaming the streets, towns and cities. They include young pupils who left the comfort and protection of their parents and relations at a very tender age for the purpose of Qur'anic education (Sa'id, 1992). The National Council for the Welfare of Destitute (NCWD) puts the current population of the Almajirai at about 7 million and research shows that 6 out of 10 of them never find the way back home. Many are lost through street violence, ritual murder, while others through disease and hunger. With these, 7 million potential Scholars, judges, accountants, engineers, and doctors are wasted. The scope of curriculum in Quranic schools is myopic, as it does not include such orthodox subjects as mathematics, English, social studies, and basic science. The *almajiri* curriculum centers mainly on the reading and the writing of the Quran and on *tafsir*, hadith, and tawhid and other branches of Islamic studies (Oladosu, 2012, p. 1821). This deficiency in science-oriented subjects and in modern information,

communication, and technology, as well as entrepreneurial skills development, negatively affects the students in the labor market after graduation, making many of them unemployable. Perhaps it is because it has become an avenue for imbuing the youth with skills that are not needed in the labor market that many people have concluded that *almajiri* culture has outlived its importance.

Relevant Literature Review

According to Donnelly (1990), the emergence of Justice in the society is the prerequisite for fundamental Human Rights. Human Rights are literally those privileges one enjoys by virtue of being a human. Donnelly argued that human rights set out minimum conditions for a dignified life, a life worthy of a fully human being (Chukwuka, 2016). The Nigeria constitution of 1999 in Article 17(2) (a) and Article 42(1) guaranteed freedom from discrimination and equality before the Law. Article 34(1) of the Fundamental Rights provides right to personal Liberty. Human Rights guarantee different members of the citizenry equal conditions and treatment. These include the Magna Carta of 1215; French Revolution: *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*; the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; the United States Bill of Rights; English Bill of Rights for the Englishmen in 1689; and the Human and Peoples' Rights (Vasak, 1977, p.35). Jaffrelot (2003) & Ikpeze, (2011) refer to policies that take into consideration race, ethnicity and gender in an attempt to promote equal opportunity in all spheres of life such as employment, education, holding public office and decision-making as Affirmative Actions. Some of the rights of the child as stated by The People's Movement for Human Rights Education include the following:

- Right to freedom from discrimination based on gender, age, race, colour, language, ethnicity or the status of the child's parents.-
- Right to a standard of living adequate for a child's intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual development.-
- Right to a safe and healthy environment-
- Right to equal access to food and nutrition.-
- Right to freedom from cultural practices, customs and traditions harmful to the child;
- Right to education- free and compulsory primary education and freedom from all types of discrimination at all levels of education. Linked with the above rights is the right to information about health, sexuality and reproduction, protection from physical and mental abuse (www.humanrights/girledu...)

Education enhances the capabilities of an individual. It is a mechanism for enabling active citizenship; thus those who are denied the rights to education face the possibilities of limited chances in the future. UNESCO for instance argues that, meaningful education as a right is key to advancing social justice; as people who are marginalised in education face the prospect of bleak future chances which truncates

their participation in social processes affecting them (2010:8). On that note, successive governments in Nigeria have at various times, introduced inclusive policies aimed at providing education as a fundamental right of every child. Since the operation of the present UBE program, it has recorded visible levels of enrolments. In 2010, the country recorded an 83.3% gross enrolment rate at the primary school level with male enrolment hitting 87.1% and female 79.3% (World Bank. 2013b). In 2009, in country statistics by DFID also showed a gross primary school enrolment (though lower than the EFA targets) of 95% for males and 84% for females (2012:83). Despite these figures, a large section of school aged children in Nigeria are not captured in this numbers as statistics show that over 9 million Almajiri boys are presently outside the mainstream school system (Ibrahim 2012, UBEC. 2012). Nasir writes that Quranic schools in northern Nigeria enroll more pupils of primary school age than the western-styled schools (2008:3). These schools owned by the Mallams are outside the purview of the state; and have no form of linkage with the mainstream school system (Western Education) (Imam 2012:193, Nasir 2010:3). In contrast however, there are some Islamiyya schools that have successfully managed to offer their pupils both Quranic and secular education. These private institutions mostly serve children from wealthy homes and are able to both enhance their pupils' capabilities and enable a smooth transition to higher education. However, some owners (Mallams) of traditional Almajiri-Quranic schools have largely remained outside the mainstream school system. The new millennium was marked by the launch of two ambitious global development frameworks – the Education for All (Dakar Framework for Action) and the Millennium Development Goals. Both firmly positioned education and gender equality at the centre of the global education and development agenda. These statements claimed education as a fundamental human right, an enabling right and the key to empowering boys to fully develop and participate in the political, economic and social progress of their societies.

Nigeria recognizes education as a fundamental human right and is signatory to the major conventions for the protection of the rights of children and women, especially, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In 2003, the Government of Nigeria passed into Law the Child Rights Act. This Act is aimed at facilitating the realization and protection of the rights of all children. In the quest to achieve the objectives of EFA and MDGs, Nigeria also enacted the Universal Basic Education (UBE) law, which provides for a 9-year free and compulsory basic education to fast-track education interventions at the primary and junior secondary levels. The Government of Nigeria has been working in active collaboration with International Development Partners such as the UNICEF, DFID, UNESCO, USAID, JICA, World Bank as well as Civil Society and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) to achieve the EFA/UBE goals. The expectations to achieve major gender equality gains in education are still shrouded in mystery.

According to UBE (2004) it was necessitated by some policy innovations and changes. Some of the innovation border on classroom size 20 pupils to a teacher and an helper in Pre-primary schools, 35-40 pupils in a class in primary and secondary schools and 20 pupils for practical work in technical and vocational colleges. Another

core area of the policy innovation is area of monitoring and maintenance of minimum standards. The introduction of Universal Basic Education, though launched in 1999, reflected in the 2004 edition of the policy. The free, compulsory education was extended beyond primary school to secondary school. Subsequent to this organizational and structural innovation, there were content and pedagogical innovations in the curriculum. Some major subjects especially at Junior Secondary School went through some restructuring, and in some instance a substantial overhauling of the subjects.

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this research is to examine the Metaphor of Almajirai and the Rights to Mainstream western education in Northern Nigeria. The following specific objectives are proposed:

- To examine the factors that structure the exclusion of Almajirai from the western education system
- To determine the factors that associates the Almajiri boy to criminal activities in Far Northern Nigeria
- To identify and acknowledge the fundamental rights of the Almajiri boy to western education in far Northern Nigeria

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura (1977) cited in Nabavi, (2012) believed that children learn by observation and imitation. Children tend to be selective in what they imitate and they are more eager to imitate a behavior if it results in outcomes they value. Social learning theories in general maintain that overt reinforcement, punishment, or observational learning molds children's learning. This theory is based on the idea that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context, individually, by observing the behaviors of others. After observing the behavior of others, they then assimilate and imitate that behavior, especially if their observational experiences are positive rewards. According to Bandura, imitation involves the actual reproduction of observed motor activities (Bandura 1977). It is rooted in many of the basic concepts of traditional learning theory. However, Bandura believes that direct reinforcement could not account for all types of learning. He added a social element, arguing that people can learn new information and behaviors by watching other people. According to the elements of this theory, there are three general principles for learning from each other. They are Observation, Imitation, and Modeling. People who are being observed are called models and the process of learning is called modeling. For example, the cultural and religious norms that exposes the urchins to abuse, criminalization and subsequent mobilization for violent causes including terrorism in Northern Nigeria became the issue of modeling among the Almajirai groups in that environment. Bandura stated that the imitation and behavior modeling will occur if the children observe the positive and desired outcomes in the first place. They can then use the behavior they experienced to imitate and model the cultural and

traditional norms observed. He argued that children learn and imitate behaviors which they have observed in other people.

Almajiri System and Internal Security Implications

Almajiris are teenage beggars who under the guise of being enlisted in religious study beg perpetually on the streets and homes. A poorly attended bridge gap juvenile education system called Tsangaya was instituted for them. While the goals of Quranic school system have been highlighted as including a complete knowledge of the Quran as a way of gaining spiritual sanctity here on earth and in the hereafter (Yusha'u et al. 2013:128), the views of these pupils may also reflect a system of indoctrination where some pupils may be taught to reject western styled education. By the same token, some scholars have made a linkage in terrorist attacks in Nigeria between the Almajiris and the Boko Haram group (Awofeso et al. 2003:317-8, Yusha'u et al. 2013:129). Their claim explains the argument by Klasen that socially excluded children are a threat to the society through the generation of social disruption (2001:422).

As far back as 1921, there were 30,411 Islamic schools in northern Nigeria, and by 2006, it was estimated that over seven million males a year were matriculating into Quranic schools (Aluaigba 2009:20). Currently, there are about 9.5 million *almajirai* in northern Nigeria (Oladosu, 2012). About half of these are domiciled in the core northeast geographical zone, which is also the hotbed of Boko Haram terrorism. The high rate of enrollment into *almajiri* schools all over northern Nigeria contrasts sharply with the low enrollment in formal schools and represents a serious problem. A 2009 survey carried out by the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) indicated that the enrollment of pupils into Quranic schools tripled that of formal schools in Sokoto and Zamfara states. One of the core drivers of violent conflicts in northern Nigeria is widespread illiteracy engendered by poor education. To date, the North has the highest level of illiteracy in the country despite efforts aimed at promoting literacy, including the universal primary education program launched in 1976 and the universal basic education (UBE) program, which was re-launched in 1999 (just before the proclamation of the millennium development goals by the international community). Though a national problem, educational crisis is worse in the North than in the South. The wide educational imbalance between the North-South divide has existed. The western-styled school system is presently structured on a 9-3-4 system where the first 6 years is spent in primary school, first 3 in the junior secondary, 3 years in senior secondary and the last 4 in tertiary institutions. The basic school system inclusive of early childhood is offered through private day-care.

At the formative stage of *almajiri* schooling, it was not envisaged that the Quranic pupils would have to beg for alms permanently or do menial jobs for their survival, as it is the practice today. These days, a typical *almajiri* can be spotted by his unsavory appearance—dressed in tattered clothes, disease afflicted, and armed with a plastic plate; he roams the streets begging for alms. Socially regarded as nuisance, the *almajirai* are often chased away by decent people. They hang around

restaurants, markets, shops, petrol stations, and houses, most times sleeping on disused pieces of cardboard or bare floors. The street urchins bemoan their fate as they watch other privileged children enjoy life with their parents (Olagunju, 2012; Loimeier, 2012). As a result of these social and economic deprivations, some *almajirai* end up becoming commercial errand boys, hewers of wood, or fetchers of water (known locally as “mai rua”). Yet many take to petty theft, thuggery, and peddling of hard drugs. Some find life too cruel and unbearable to be meaningful and commit suicide. This was the case with a young *almajiri* who hanged himself at the Ungwar Maihauta area of Minna in Niger state in 2011 (Adofetekun, 2011). The socioeconomic destitution of the *almajirai* makes them easy prey to conflict.

The entrepreneurs—desperate politicians who have quest for power and resources pay these street urchins peanuts in order to execute criminal acts. Today, the *almajirai* have become ready-made recruits for prosecuting violence against political and business opponents and rivals. In fact, it has been alleged that most of the terrorist attacks involving suicide bombings, setting places of worship ablaze, killing innocent souls and destroying property were masterminded by jobless pupils of the Al-majiri schools (Oladosu, 2012, p. 1821). The system has over time become a breeding ground for criminality and insecurity (Loimeier, 2012), spawning youths who are significantly inclined to violence as a means of survival or making their voices heard. *Almajiri* training provides one of the easiest avenues for indoctrination and radicalization (Abuh, 2010). Furthermore, confessions of children arrested in connection with Boko Haram terrorists provided insights into the vulnerability and radicalization that lead them into violence. Some of the 35 children released in May 2013 confessed to be *almajirai*. One of them admitted that they were paid about \$30 each by some politicians and rebel leaders to spy on troops, vandalize property, and kill non-Muslims (Abuh, 2010).

The use of social miscreants as cannon fodder has a long history in northern Nigeria, as shown by the Maitatsine urban revolts which broke out in Kano in 1980. The Maitatsine uprising which claimed over 5000 lives in Kano was the precursor to the Boko Haram terrorism. The violent who exploited the dwindling economic situation of northern Nigeria in the early 1980s was as a result of the recruitment of foot soldiers from the *almajiri* system (Loimeier, 2012; Winters, 1987). Street urchins who were unable to afford the basic necessities of life became diehard patriots of the Islamic sect. The Maitatsines preached that killing was compulsory and they believed they would go to heaven if they killed *arnas* (infidels) (Elaigwu, 2005; Falola, 1998). The goals of Quranic school system have been highlighted as including a complete knowledge of the Quran as a way of gaining spiritual sanctity here on earth and in the hereafter (Yusha’u et al. 2013:128) the views of these pupils may also reflect a system of indoctrination where some pupils may be taught to reject western styled education. By the same token, some scholars have made a linkage in terrorist attacks in Nigeria between the *Almajiris* and the Boko Haram group (Awofeso et al. 2003:317-8, Yusha’u et al. 2013:129). Their claim explains the argument by Klasen that socially excluded children are a threat to the society through the generation of social disruption (2001:422).

The mainstream analyses that highlight the salient radical Islamism in coming to terms with the insurgent proliferation was vehemently the abandonment of the boy-child by the parents and state. The itinerant Quranic pupils therefore resort to street begging for alms and survival. And the “street life” exposes the urchins to abuse, criminalization and subsequent mobilization for violent causes including terrorism. It is then argued that if these practices of rampant child abuse and state neglect of the almajirai and other vulnerable groups were not fervently addressed through better education, employment opportunities and poverty reduction, therefore Northern Nigeria will likely remain a breeding ground of Internal conflicts.

Interventionist Strategies and Social Policies for Almajiri Education In Northern Nigeria

Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNESCO 2003) articulates: Education is both a human right in itself and indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. Education has a vital role in empowering women, street working children from exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth (UNESCO, 2003).

The issue of out-of-school children in general, and in particular, the Almajiri pupils in Northern Nigeria, is a serious challenge to the international conventions (EFA and MDGs) to which Nigerian Government is a member. The out-of-school children in Nigeria estimated at 10.5 million, out of which the Almajiris (itinerant Qur’anic School Pupils) constitute over 9 million of this number and these are concentrated mainly in the Northern part of Nigeria (UNESCO, 2003).

With the above Social problem, the then government of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in a bid to better the lot of the Almajiri, decided to establish 125 almajiri schools where western as well as Quranic education were recognized for reform of more than a century old system in Northern Nigeria, so that it will enable the moral training and modern skill acquisition of the almajiri and they will be removed from the streets and can contribute meaningfully to the Nigerian society.

To ensure that the Almajirai are provided with the best opportunities for access to Basic Education, 2,270 Almajiri Model School Proprietors, head teachers, SUBEB Desk officers, and Chairmen of SBMCs were trained on curriculum implementation and use of textbooks in teaching and learning. Also Curriculum was developed for the Almajiri Education Programme in line with the Basic Education Curriculum and Textbooks funded by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund was edited and produced. In order to fulfill the objectives of the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan’s Transformation Agenda for the Almajirai which include:

- Provide access and equity to Basic Education for all Almajiri School age children;

- Discourage and gradually eliminate itinerancy and begging of Almajirai in the country; and
- Support the emergence of an enabling environment that could facilitate the effective integration of Islamic discipline into basic education programme.
- Support for community owned *Tsangaya/Islamiyyah* and *Tahfeez* Primary Schools.
- With this in mind, the Jonathan administration Constructed 125 Almajiri Schools in Northern Nigeria with many basic facilities such as Admin block (offices, laboratories and workshops), Staff accommodation, Hostel block, Toilets and laundry, Recitation Hall, Mallam's Residence, Motorised Borehole with Overhead-Tank, VIP toilets, Kitchen and Dining, External works and fencing (NPAD-UBEC 2012). During the inauguration of the repackaged and rebranded almajiri schools in Sokoto state in 2012, the president stated:

Our administration believes that the time has come for the nation to build on the moral foundation of the traditional system by providing the almajiri with conventional knowledge and skills that will enable them to fulfill their creative and productive potentials (Alechenu, 2012).

The most difficult problem in the reformation and integration of the system to the mainstream educational system is based on the age-long cultural belief that the western education is contradictory to the whole essence of Islamic belief. This is ingrained in the belief that the western education called Boko is of Christian-European origin and therefore anti-Islamic. Some believed the fear that a child with western belief will eventually lose his Islamic identity and embrace vices that negates the values and principles of Islam, such as alcoholism, fornication, partying, abandoning the prayer, and fasting. The Islamic fundamentalists acquired a more pronounced political edge as they believed that the national fortunes of the governing Muslim national elite declined dramatically with the election of President Jonathan, a Christian from the south and the removal of politicized military officers, who were disproportionately Muslim (Dickson, 2015).

Research Methodology

The survey design was done through In-depth Interviews and Key Informant Interviews. The sample size was chosen based on multi-staged sampling method. Thirty households were systematically sampled from four Local Government Areas which yielded a sample size of 120 households selected from Kano, Kaduna, and Katsina in the Far Northern Nigeria. Forty households were selected from each state as the sample size from the state. The choice of the location of study was to ascertain the relationship between the acceptances of secular education amongst the Almajirai in the Hausa speaking states. The study also engaged relevant secondary data through journals, books and government publications. Due to language limitations, two local

assistants-male and female who spoke in the local Hausa language and are both Christian and Muslim and students of the state's tertiary institutions were used.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Respondents According to Socio-demographic Characteristics

| Characteristics | Categories | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|
| | 3-7years | 10 | 7 |
| | 8-14 years | 70 | 73 |
| | 15-19 years | 15 | 11 |
| | 20&above years | 5 | 8 |
| | Total | 120 | 100 |
| | Male | 120 | 100 |
| | Female | 0 | 0 |
| Education | Total | 120 | 100 |
| | Parents background | 4 | 2 |
| | Formal education | 2 | 8 |
| | Tsangaya education | 96 | 80 |
| | Other qualifications | 6 | 12 |
| Total | 120 | 100 | |

Source: Field Survey 2018

From the research carried out, findings show that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 8- 14 years while a few of the respondents are 15 years and above. This shows that these pupils are exposed at very early tender stage of life to several hazards. They are denied of parental care and basic education. Majority of the respondents (72%) are Muslim Hausa/Fulani. This is because Almajiri practice is more common among Hausa/Fulani society in Northern Nigeria. The surveys revealed that majority of the respondents (80%) do not have formal education, because their parents have sent them far away to study the Qur'anic education. Parental goals and poverty were found to be the reasons for sending them far away from home to study Qur'an.

Discussion and Findings

Hausa language is the only medium of instruction. Even at the advanced level popularly known as Makarantun Ilimi the Hausa language is retained as the language of instruction. This makes the system a perfect platform for the implementation of the vision of the Asmara Declaration of 2000. A declaration for African languages in Asmara Eritrea, in the year 2000, where there call for restoration of the African languages in the national and international affairs of Africans. The Almajiri system is the only system that holds the potential for the implementation of the resolution of these African intellectuals known as the Asmara Declaration.

The scope of curriculum in Tsangaya education is myopic, as it does not include such orthodox subjects as mathematics, English, social studies, basic science Sciences, technology, and mathematics.

The socioeconomic destitution of the *almajirai* makes them easy prey to conflict entrepreneurs—desperate politicians who seek them for their quest to power and resources, i.e, the politicians pay the street urchins peanuts to execute criminal acts such as suicide bombings, setting places of worship ablaze, killing innocent souls and destroying property

The practice of polygamy by Muslim in Nigeria results in the explosive population of youths who lack sustainable means of livelihoods. The violent insecurity in northern Nigeria is fuelled by this factor.

Conclusion

As western-styled schooling increasingly becomes a standard exemplifying the notion of a global childhood, other learning systems in the broader education system are perceived as barriers to achieving this notion of childhood and the EFA goals. Thus, in this paper, I examined the factors that structure the exclusion of the Almajiri child from the mainstream western education system. I interrogate the ‘universal’ in state policies in its failure to take cognizance of the multiplicity of cultural contexts in which childhood is constructed. As Sedel notes, western schools can be organized in a way that it will balance the elements of local traditions and still provide meaningful education that enhances future chances of their pupils (2005:38).

The enrolment rates into the Almajirai schools have tended to mask local realities and experiences of children outside the public school system. The western-styled education was therefore being seen as “white man’s” education and the one that undermines local variations. This again indicates the state’s inability to sufficiently balance western schooling and other form of education to match the African experience (Nyamnjoh 2012:136, Easton et al. 1997:7, Marfo and Biersteker 2011:73).

There were deliberate policies by the state to exclude people from participating in social processes as a right; both passive and self-exclusion were implicated. This is as a result of the exploited Amajirai who come from poor and large families and be exposed to very early stages of life to several forms of hazards. They are denied of basic education, good environmental condition, parental care, love and support; their parents send them away and they end begging on the streets, plucking fruits and become nuisance to the society. The destitute *almajirai* depend largely on public philanthropy and alms for survival—a fact that makes them vulnerable to conflict mobilization. To mitigate widespread insecurity in the sprawling north, effective and quality education is necessary.

Recommendations

- Religious orientations, seminars, conferences should be organized to the people to clarify the misinterpretation of the word “Almajiri” and its practice.

- The *almajiri* education system should be overhauled, and orthodox subjects such as mathematics and English should be added to the curriculum together with relevant technical subjects.
- The government of Nigeria should recognize education as a fundamental human right and as the major conventions for the protection of the rights of children and women.

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