

1 *Original Article*2 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10827512>3
4 **The psychosocial consequences of Almajiri system of education among almajiri pupils in two tsangaya**
5 **schools in Kaduna North metropolis, North-Western Nigeria.**6 **Zubairu H.D¹, Yohanna S², Abubakar R¹, Usman N³, Ige O⁴.***7
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13 * Correspondence: habibatuzubairu73@yahoo.com ; Tel.: +2348068109803 (Zubairu H.D)14 **Abstract:**15 *Almajiri education started from time immemorial in the Northern part of Nigeria. The word Almajiri means someone who moves*
16 *from place to place in search of Islamic and Qur'anic knowledge. There are estimated 10 million indigent children on the streets*
17 *begging for alms. Over the past few decades, the system has been over whelmed, neglected and abused. Several factors can be*
18 *associated with the poor organizational structures of the Almajiri system of education.*19 *This research is aimed at assessing the psychosocial consequences of Almajiri system of education with a view to finding useful*
20 *information that will guide policymakers in decision making regarding Almajiri system of education.*21 *Convenient sampling method was used to select 150 almajiris for this study. Using simple random sampling technique, seventy-*
22 *five (75) almajiris from each school were chosen until 150 almajiris were selected. A structured questionnaire formulated by the*
23 *researchers were administered to each almajiri.*24 *Results: Out of the 150 Almajiris 2 (1.3%) were between the ages of 5 - 9, 104(69.3%) were in between the ages of 10-14 and 44*
25 *(29.3%) were in between the ages of 15 and above.*26 *2 (1.3%) among the almajiris were happy, 112 (74.7%) were sad and 36 (24.0%) remained indifferent. about 28 (18.0 %) attested*
27 *to taking one or more illicit drugs either cigarette, cannabis, or Tramadol.*28 **Citation:** Authors First and Initials

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*Conclusion: The Almajiri system of education has been adulterated with begging and other forms of child abuse. The main objective of the system such as intellectual and moral training as well as life-long discipline have unfortunately been lost.***Key Words:** *Psychosocial, consequences, Almajiri, Education, North-western Nigeria*34 **Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors.

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[\(https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).**1. Introduction**

The Almajiri educational system has been in existence for over 500 years and has facilitated the spread and acceptance of Islam in northern Nigeria.¹ Many parents or guardians in rural areas in northern Nigeria send their sons or male wards aged

38 between 4 and 12 years old to distant locations to acquire Quranic education via the Almajiri system (Tsangaya
39 schools/Makarantar Allo).² This choice is sometimes made due to the low socioeconomic status of the parents and
40 belief that they are fulfilling their obligations by providing a religious and moral education for the children.³ There are
41 an estimated 10 million indigent children on the streets begging for alms, known as almajiri in Northern Nigeria.⁴ Due
42 to inadequate funding, the teachers are unable to provide the basic needs of the children.⁵ Despite the fact that all
43 children have the right to health, basic education and good nutrition, the students are deprived of these and thus
44 expected to fend for themselves by resorting to street begging and doing menial jobs. This leaves them exposed to
45 physical, psychological, and sexual abuse as well as unfavourable environmental conditions.⁶

46
47 The challenges with this system of education are multi-faceted. They range from substandard infrastructural facilities
48 for learning and daily living, lack of adequate adult supervision, lack of parental care, loneliness, poor feeding,
49 insecurity, exploitation and societal negligence, absence of a planned curriculum and non-integration into the formal
50 educational system.^{6, 7} Consequently, the prevalence of morbidity and mortality among these children is high. The
51 negative health effects associated with children trained via this educational system are vast with ripple effects
52 progressing into adulthood.⁸ Research shows that exposure to extremely stressful situations in childhood and
53 adolescence to mental health problems. The psychosocial consequences include emotional instability, depression,
54 schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, suicidal ideation and suicide.⁹ If these issues are not
55 tackled early on, they grow into adolescence and adulthood to constitute a societal problem.

56
57 In order for the Nigerian government to maintain progress towards achieving sustainable development goal 4 (SDG 4)
58 which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, they
59 established the Almajiri education programme. Kaduna State was one of 15 states which integrated Quranic/Tsangaya
60 education into the Universal Basic Education (UBE) system.¹⁰ These unique schools were established to mitigate the
61 challenges which faced the unstructured and informal learning system previously utilised by the proponents of the
62 early Almajiri educational system.¹⁰ However, due to inadequate funding, lack of skilled manpower, poor
63 infrastructural facilities, and poor school attendance; the pupils still face numerous psychosocial challenges.²
64 This study was conducted to determine the psychosocial problems of children in the almajiri educational system in
65 Kaduna North LGA.

67 **Methodology**

68 **Study Area**

69 Kaduna North LGA is one of twenty-three local government areas in Kaduna State. It has a 2022 projected population
70 of 538,600. It has a population density of 7,672/km² with an area of 72km². It is an urban local government which has
71 11 political wards: Badarawa, Dadi Riba, Hayin Banki, Ungwar Rimi, Kabala, Kawo, Mai Burji, Sardauna, Ungwar
72 Liman, Ungwan Dosa, Ungwan Sarki and Ungwan Shanu. The predominant ethnic group are the Hausa/Fulani who
73 are mostly Muslims. The population has a wide range of occupations. However, agriculture is a common source of
74 income. It is either the primary or secondary source.

76 **Study Design**

77 This was a cross sectional study.

78 **Inclusion criteria**

79 Pupils in Tsangaya schools in Kaduna North LGA.

80 Exclusion criteria

81 Children who are severely ill at the time of the study.

82

83 Sample Size

84 Two wards (Hayin Banki and Badarawa) were selected from Kaduna North LGA. One Tsangaya school was selected
85 per ward. A total of 150 pupils were selected to participate in the study. Seventy-five pupils were selected from each
86 school by simple random sampling.

87

88 Data Collection Tool

89 A semi-structured, pre-tested, interviewer administered questionnaire which was adapted from previous studies was
90 used to obtain data from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: sociodemographic
91 characteristics of the respondents, prevalence and distribution of the psychological effects and social effects of this
92 educational system.

93

94 Data Analysis

95 Data will be analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 23 by N.H Nie, D.H Bent and C.H Hull in Chicago. Frequency
96 distributions were generated for all categorical variables such as age group, sex, educational status etc. Mean and
97 standard deviations were determined for the quantitative variables such as age. All findings were presented with
98 frequency distribution tables.

99

100 Ethical Consideration

101 Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics and Scientific Committee of Barau Dikko Teaching Hospital. Informed
102 verbal consent was obtained from the school authority and guardians of the respondents after the nature of research
103 was duly explained to them. Respondents were assured of strict confidentiality of the responses provided. They were
104 also told that they could withdraw from participating in the study at any point during the research.

105

106 Results

107 Table 1 shows majority of the respondents were aged between 10 and 14 years 104 (69.4%). Majority of them came
108 from a polygamous setting 142 (94.7%) with about half of them coming from households with 6-10 children 76 (50.7%).
109 Hausa was the predominant tribe 146 (97.3%). Most of the respondents had no formal education 136 (90.7%) and had
110 fathers/guardians with mainly Quranic education 144 (96.0%). Table 2 Over two-thirds of the respondents had
111 experienced bullying 102 (68%). Majority of them had feelings of anger and loneliness regarding the school system 122
112 (81.3%). Table 3 Only 9 (6%) stated that they at food regularly, while all of them live in dilapidated buildings, wear
113 unclean clothes, and only have access to unsanitary toilet facilities. Illicit drug use was recorded in 28 (18.7%) of the
114 respondents.

115 Table 1: Distribution of the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. (n=150)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group (years)		
5-9	2	1.3
10-14	104	69.4
≥ 15	44	29.3
State of Origin		

Kaduna	138	92.0
Outside Kaduna	12	8.0
Number of children in the family		
≤5	4	2.7
6-10	76	50.7
11-14	42	28.0
≥15	28	18.6
Type of family the child comes from		
Monogamous	8	5.3
Polygamous	142	94.7
Tribe		
Hausa	146	97.3
Fulani	4	2.7
Level of education		
None	136	90.7
Primary	12	8.0
Secondary	2	1.3
Parents' marital status		
Married	122	81.3
Divorced	28	18.7
Father's/Guardian's educational level		
None	0	0
Quranic	144	96.0
Primary	5	3.3
Secondary	1	0.7
Tertiary	0	0
Father's/Guardian's occupation		
Farmer	100	66.7
Trader	28	18.7
Artisan	10	6.7
Driver	8	5.3
Herdsmen	2	1.3
Islamic scholar	2	1.3

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120 Table 2: Distribution of psychological effects of the Almajiri educational system among the respondents (n=150)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Experienced Bullying	102	68
Feeling lonely	122	81.3
Feeling angry	122	81.3

Feeling about the form of education

Sad	112	74.7
Indifferent	36	24.0
Happy	2	1.3

Table 3: Distribution of social effects of the Almajiri educational system among the respondents (n=150)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Food is available regularly	9	6.0
Feels safe and secure	18	12.0
Desires western education	67	44.7
Feeling societal neglect	93	62.0
Stays in dilapidated building	150	100.0
Wears dirty clothes	150	100.0
Uses clean toilet facilities	150	100.0
Goes to the hospital when ill	25	16.7
Uses illicit drugs	28	18.7

Discussion

From the research carried out, majority of the respondents were between the ages of 10 - 14 years. This is consistent with studies conducted in Kaduna and Sokoto which showed that 65% and 73% (respectively) of the Almajiri in the study were within the age range of 10 to 14 years.^{7, 11} These findings are also in keeping with the basic tenets of this practice where children are enrolled into the system at an early age. Research shows that separation of children from their mothers and families at an early age is associated with emotional distress and lower cognitive functioning.¹² They are denied of parental care and basic education.⁹ Almost all the respondents are Hausas and Fulanis. This is consistent with studies conducted among almajiri children in Kaduna, Borno and Sokoto where all the respondents were Hausa/ Fulanis.^{7, 8, 11} This is because Almajiri practice is more common among the Hausa and Fulani group of people. The study showed that majority of the respondents (90.6%) do not have formal education, because their parents have sent them to acquire the Qur’anic education. These findings are consistent with findings from a study conducted in Borno which showed that almost all the participants had no formal education.⁸ Lack of formal education has far-reaching negative socioeconomic, environmental and health effects. Additionally, it will undermine the efforts to ensure Nigeria meets the target of Education For All (EFA) and SDG 4. Majority of the respondents’ fathers had only Quranic education. This finding is similar to a study conducted across the states in northern Nigeria.⁴ The level of education of the parents makes them more likely to promote this practice.

Over two-thirds of the respondents had experienced some form of bullying. This is similar to findings from a study conducted in Borno State where almost 60% of the respondents had experienced bullying.⁸ The physical health effects of bullying could be immediate with physical injury or long term: headaches, sleep disturbances and somatisation.¹³ Bullying has also been found to be associated with development of anxiety disorders.¹⁴ Majority of the respondents

148 feel sad, lonely and angry about the almajiri educational system. These results are comparable to findings from a
149 study conducted among almajiri pupils in Borno State.⁸ The feelings of despondency are unsurprising due to the fact
150 that the children have been exposed to stressful living conditions at an early age. The children are required to fend for
151 themselves for their daily needs; an overwhelming majority of the pupils in the almajiri system rely on the charity of
152 strangers by begging. This puts them at an increased risk for exploitation and abuse (physical or sexual).¹⁵

153 The respondents are not guaranteed adequate nutrition because they are dependent on the goodwill of strangers; so
154 malnutrition is another critical issue among them.¹⁶ Only 6% of the respondents in this study stated that they received
155 food on a regular basis. A study in Sokoto showed that food insecurity was largely prevalent in the almajiri system.¹⁷
156 Malnutrition and its attendant complications will lead to increased morbidity (malaria, intestinal parasitosis,
157 dermatologic conditions etc) and mortality among these children.⁵ About two-thirds of the respondents felt neglected
158 by society. Research shows that social exclusion perpetuates the cycle of poverty, reduces access of affected people to
159 basic social services like education and healthcare. As a corollary, health outcomes among these children are
160 invariably poor.¹⁸ All the respondents lived under deplorable environmental conditions. This increases their risk of
161 exposure to physical, chemical and biological hazards.⁶ The health-seeking behaviour of the respondents is quite poor
162 with less than a fifth of them accessing healthcare services in hospitals/clinics/health centres. A study conducted in
163 Gombe State showed that only 10.4% of the respondent accessed care at healthcare facilities. The commonest response
164 to illness was self-medication.¹⁹ Health seeking behaviour is inextricably linked to social determinants such as socio-
165 economic status and level of education.²⁰ Both parameters are sub-optimal in this population. The health outcomes for
166 populations with poor health-seeking behaviour are generally unfavourable.²⁰

167 Illicit drug use was reported in almost 20% of the respondents. A study conducted in north-east Nigeria had a 66%
168 prevalence of drug use.²¹ This difference could be attributed to the fact that majority of those respondents were older
169 (≥ 15 years) than those from this study. Drug use in adolescents has been found to be associated with lack of stable
170 family structure, fragmentation of families, low consistency of family management, history of abuse and/or neglect,
171 low socio-economic status and lack of social support.²² These factors further buttress the findings from this study;
172 because almajiri children typically exposed to the aforementioned predisposing factors.

173 In spite of the concerted effort by the Nigerian government to mitigate the challenges posed by the Almajiri
174 educational system, it remains a serious issue.

176 **Conclusion:**

178 Government should make Qur'anic schools ie tsangaya to have a designed curriculum which include a formal system
179 of education i.e., primary, secondary, and tertiary education Almajiranci is a societal menace requiring an urgent
180 national solution to arrest the negative trends that are associated with it such as exploitation and abuse of children
181 along with their vulnerability to being recruited for criminal activities such as kidnapping, banditry, boko haram
182 which are among the major problems affecting the Northern part of the country presently.

184 The Almajiri system of education has been adulterated by begging and other forms of child abuse. The main objective
185 of the system such as intellectual and moral training as well as life-long discipline have been defied.

186 The need for the Mallams to be more educated in Quranic and Hadith injunctions on Islamic education that is
187 against begging is important. The poor support for the system and lack of recognition of the products of the system
188 by both government and the general society including the absence of decent jobs for these products after graduation
189 should be looked into and addressed accordingly.

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194 Recommendations:

195 The government should make Quranic schools which is the tsangaya to have a designed curriculum which include
196 formal system of education from primary, secondary and tertiary education so that teaching and learning of the
197 Qur'an could be part of our educational system and then Mallams should have financial support or salary from
198 government.

199 The government should assist the tsangaya schools by providing toilets, bathrooms, boreholes, medical care center,
200 food, and psychosocial support to the Almajiri pupils. Religious orientations, radio and TV programs should be
201 organized to the public to clarify the misconceptions of the word "Almajiri" and its practice.

202 Finally, general skills acquisition programs should be enforced for the Mallams and the Almajiri pupils in their
203 tsangayas.

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