

Poverty, the Almajiri System and the Rising Cases of Societal Crimes in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

Poverty is a condition of having insufficient resources or income, lack of basic human needs such as adequate and nutritious food, clothes, housing, clean water and many more. It is a condition that can lead to terrible suffering, prevent people from realizing many of their desires and can as well lead to death. Poverty is an encumbrance that has for long bedevilled many people in some part of Northern Nigeria and has been used as an artifice wheeling the Almajiri system which has further led to the rising incidences of societal crime in Northern part of Nigeria. The study examined the relationship between poverty, the Almajiri system and the increasing cases of crime in Northern Nigerian. This was further complemented by descriptive and qualitative analysis. The study adopted a combination of methods such as secondary data drawn from an array of published and unpublished materials relevant to the study; journals, conference and seminar papers, internet materials, reports and documentary excerpt. The study findings show that there is relationship between poverty, the Almajiri system and increasing incidence of societal crime. The findings of the study revealed that poverty has impacted negatively on the Almajiri system and consequently the societal crime in Northern Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommends the need to sensitize the people on functional societal living, attitudinal re-awakening and re-orientation, poverty reduction programmes.

Keywords: Almajiri system, Northern Nigeria, Poverty and Societal Crime

Introduction

Northern Nigeria is an agglomeration of 19 states situated in the northern part of the country and they are subsumed in three geo-political zones viz: Northeast, Northwest and the North-Central (Morgan, 2008). Three (3) major religions are professed and these are: Islam, Christianity and Traditional religion. The Hausa–Fulani ethnic group are the most predominant ethnic group in the geopolitical zones and majority of them professed Islam as their religion. Besides the Hausa–Fulani speaking group, there are other minor ethnic groups such as: Jukun, Tangale, Birom, Jaba, Atyab, Taroh, Bacham, Biliri, Siyawa, Igala, Idoma and copious of others in the zones and more common in the North Central geopolitical zone (Muzan, 2014). Despite the prevalence of other ethnic groups, Hausa–Fulani culture and custom has dominant influences on the other group and is widely being used as the *lingua – franca* in the three geo-political zones (Peter & Ian, 1984).

The Northern states are the most backward and underdeveloped in the country and this very ugly incidence is attributed to the lingering challenges of poverty that for long has plagued most of the states. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2019 report reveals that the northern states were the major states battling with poverty - with North-East as the most affected area (Presidential Initiative on North East, 2019). The report reveals that agriculture was the mainstay of the economy of the people in the North but it was still being practiced at the subsistence level and is mostly characterized by the usage of local implement, local seedling and breeds, human physical labour and traditional system of operation (Salihi, 2012). The rainfall pattern is typically a single-

maximum with rain falling from April and end in October. This has led to the practice of irrigation to augment food challenges in the zones but all to the contrary (Roots, 2018).

The Almajiri system flourished in the Northern states chiefly because of the conflating relationship between the religious system and poverty in the area (Sani, 2015). Some parents who are adherers of the Almajiri system have resorted to the exploitation of the system to hide the visage of poverty that for long has been a thing of concern in the northern part of the country (Roger, 2018). Traditionally, the Almajiri system that was first introduced and being practiced was more of religious education given to children to enable them to be equipped with the vast knowledge of the Qur'an and as well to be future Islamic teachers (Powell & Abraham, 2019). In the olden days, it was the sole reservation of the noble and children from the royal home. The narrative has changed with the advent of Western Education visa-vis the country's colonial masters who gave more emphasis to Western education than the Almajiri system (Roger, 2018). The shift in the narrative had brought a lot of modification in the practice and some, most especially the rural and urban poor who are mostly ill-informed and being tele-guided by elites and fundamentalists who have resorted to the maximum exploitation of the system to lid societal disquiet such as poverty, avoid responsibility and to perpetually display their avarice and gratification (Roots, 2018).

The greed is a sad tale to the society and has been breeding room for a lot of societal malaise. The children of the impoverished and ill-informed parents are left at the mercy of nature and commonly exposed to different challenges and most of them are wrongly manipulated and being used to perpetuate menaces such as: political thuggery and robbery, hooligans during inter-ethnic and religious conflict, fermenters of troubles and affiliate of acts such as rape, havoc wreckers, killings and many more (Sidi, 2015). Many of them are armed with both conventional and unconventional weapons such as guns of different shape and size - machetes, cutlasses, sticks (*kokaal*), iron rods, *barandami*, *gario buda*, harmer, broken bottles, razor blades and animal horn (*Kaho*) (Ibrahim, 2017). A lot of them are into night activities; going to cinema and nocturnal trading, and some often avails as bouncers or political party's thugs (Toyo, 2011). A lot of studies have also shown that most of them engaged in criminal activities and into drugs such as heroin (*gwana*), *Ajigaraw* and *marijuana* (Indian hem). They also abuse alcohol like *ogogoro* (local dry gin) and *burkutu* (guinea corn brewed alcohol) and with the escalated poverty, many of them cannot afford some of these drugs and as such, abuses rubber solution (meant for mending tires and tubes), Benylin (cough expectorant), lizard dung, residual of decomposed gutter, petrol and sniff pit toilet whiff early in the morning, formalin (known as *Madara sukudai*); a chemical which is used for the perseveration of biological specimens and embalming corpses (Umaru, 2015).

This group that do partake in this heinous act may not necessarily be firm adherers of the faith but often ascend religious leadership during riots, determine who is to be attacked or spared during attacks and when and where the attacks or assault should take place (Nicholson, Tucker & Ba, 2018). Elites and fundamentalists often recruited and manipulated them to their maximum advantage. It is in this direction, that this study is predicated. It is against this backdrop that the following research questions were posited to guide the study.

- a. How does poverty influence the spread of the Almajiri system in Nigeria?
- b. In what way is the Almajiri system being manipulated to aid social crimes?
- c. What mechanism can be implemented to mitigate the challenges of poverty, refurbishes the Almajiri system and curb criminality often associated with the Almajirai system Northern Nigeria?

The core objective of the study is to examine the lingering problem of poverty, the Almajiri system and how it is being exploited to spin out criminality in Northern Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- a. Examine the influence of poverty on the Almajiri system.
- b. Assess the Almajiri system and how it is being used as an instrument for perpetrating societal crimes.
- c. Provides solution on the challenges of poverty, how the Almajiri system can be refurbished and how to curb criminalities being perpetrated by the Almajirai.

Methodology

The study relied on secondary data drawn from an array of published and unpublished materials relevant to the study such as books, journals, magazines, conferences and seminar papers and newspapers. Other sources of secondary data were reports of white papers of investigation panels and other qualitative publications related to the problem of the study. Interview was the major primary instrument used in the study. Fifteen interviews were administered in five states in the country. The interviewees were experts on poverty and religious studies and persons with knowledge on the subject. In interpreting our data, the relationship between poverty, the Almajire system and societal crime was examined at both theoretical and empirical levels. Content analysis method was used in analyzing the data collected.

Conceptual Clarification

The Concept of Poverty

The Encyclopedia Britannica stressed that the word poverty was a coinage of a French word 'poverté' which denotes the state of being poor, the state of lacking in quality or amount. The term has been conceived in different ways. Poverty as a concept is multi-dimensional. It connotes inadequacy such as lack of money under social usage. It shows the inequality of persons in a given society, the relationship between those who "have" and those who have not. It is a state of lack in which a person is unable to meet the basic requirement including food, shelter, and clothing. According to Akande (2003), it is a material and non-material deprivation, which is mainly characterized by food insecurity, lack of access to health services, poor and adequate education, lack of basic needs, physical, psychological experience of violence and insecurity. In the work of Taylor (1990), poverty means different things at different places. However, in a general term, he sees poverty as a state where a person is unable, for whatever reasons, to provide the basic needs of life such as food, clothing and shelter. Taylor goes ahead to emphasize that poverty can be brought about by one or combination of the following factors: *old age, sickness, infirmity* and total depression leading to *unemployment, laziness, low wages or high prices*, family circumstance such as choice and separation.

Oyemisi (2004) advocates that poverty is a state where an individual is unable to provide adequately for his/ her needs of food, clothing and shelter that is the inability to meet social and economic obligations, lack of gainful employment, skills, assets, self-esteem and limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water, sanitation and consequently, has a limited chance of advancing in the welfare to the limit of his/her capabilities. Poverty can either be in absolute or relative terms. Absolute poverty is a condition where a person or group of persons are unable to satisfy their human survival needs in terms of food, clothing,

shelter, health, transport, education and recreation. Relative poverty is a complete state of lack and deprivation among individuals or groups. Thus Babashola (1997) as cited in Stephenson (2010) defined poverty as a condition of life characterized by malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, low life expectancy and high infant mortality beneath any national explanation of human decency.

The Concept of Crime

There is no universally accepted definition of crime. Scholars and professionals have conceptualized it from different perspective and therefore emphasize different aspect of the process. It is easier to be identified than to be defined. The Encyclopedia Britannica stressed that the word crime is a concept that is derived from the French word *Crimen* and it denotes an act considered morally wrong or a shameful, unwise or regrettable act. According to Saleh (2016), crime is any fault, transgression, violation and illegality committed by an individual in the society. In the same vein, Sati (2017) sees it as a gross act of misconduct that is not morally justifiable and is an offence in the law. The two definitions underline the cardinal content of a crime. It may however be faulted for its lack of emphasis on the nature and the resulting factors.

This deficiency is remedied in the definition propounded by Diamond (2018) who notes that crime entails breaking the law either as a result of factors which he listed as drugs, alcohol, frustration, ignorance or brainwash. Cohen (2018) has provided what may be regarded as a summation and comprehension of various definitions of crime and listing of its major element. According to him, crime in its contemporary form includes behaviour or any action being done either by commission or omission that is contrary to the law of the society and is punishable by law. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that societal crime is any act that is committed by either an individual or group in the society that is illegal, morally wrong and is punishable by the law of the society. Societal crime encompasses wider range of transgression and illegalities punishable by law and is considered injurious to the society.

Meaning and Nature of Almajiri System in Northern Nigeria

Almajiranci is a Muslim system of education peculiar to Northern Nigeria and some part of neighboring West African countries, in which a student from an early age, leaves his home and family to stay under a teacher; an Islamic cleric (Okeye and Ya'u, 1999). Yusufu (2010) sees Almajiranci as an unconventional and informal system of Qur'anic learning chiefly practiced among Muslim in the Northern part of Nigeria and some other West African countries. In the same direction, Sani (2014) is of the view that it is a traditional way of learning how to study Qur'an by the Muslims in the Northern part of Nigeria. In the system, the teacher may settle in a place and may not necessarily be an indigene of where he situated the learning centre. The care for the Almajiri and the teacher (Mallam/ Ulama) lie with the community (Abdu, 2010). Abdu (2010) stressed that colonialism had altered the Almajiri system of education by its introduction of formal education and its non-support of the system. He identified other associated factors as urbanization, rural-urban migration, economic crisis and increasing commercialization of formal education and the shinningly opportunities associated with the system.

The nowadays practice is different from what was being done in the past. The system before the advent of the colonial master was treated with a lot of preference and it was the reserve of the children from royal homes, kingmakers and children from affluence background. The emergence of Western education and the dislike of the system by the colonialists have contributed to the switch in the olden day's practice (Sani, 2014). The swap was the launch pad that ushered the entrance of all and sundry. The rich and the royal families took side with the Western education

and discarded the Almajiri system to the poor who could not afford to pay the cost associated with the Western education (Sani, 2014).

Parents who mostly sent their children and ward to the Almajiri system of education are mostly people that are into the practice of multiple marriage and as well have large number of children to take care of them. They often capitalize on the petite knowledge of the innocent children to cover their state of lack and as well avoid responsibility. Kamal (2010, 102) has this to say on the Almajiri system.

The intention of the Almajiranci as a system of Islamic education is not something bad; it is a good thing. The departure from the real intention to what is being practiced at the contemporary period is the very thing that has given it the bad name. Most of the supporters are only avoiding the responsibility (how to take care of the innocent children that are product of multiple marriage and poor planning) and the inability to measure what they have and do not have has taken the centre stage.

Espousing in the same direction, Bello (2014) is of the view that most of the innocent children do not chose the circumstance as it is, it not their making or choice to join the Almajiranci. He stressed further that parents often do that by either taken the advantage of the ignorance of the children, brainwash and sometimes, the usage of force. Sati (2015) averred that Almajiranci in itself is not a bad thing; it is about being a disciples and educator of the Qur'an. He went further to ascribed that it is the societal neglect and exposure that sometimes forces the Almajirai to partake in crimes and all sort of societal absurdities. Regarding the *Almajiri system* and the prevalence of crime in the northern Nigeria, he enthused:

Most of the crime such as rape, theft, armed robbery, recruit of insurgents, pick pocket, perpetrators of violence during religious and ethnic clash, perpetrators of properties crime and other crimes are mostly among their fold. It is not that all of them are bad but record from securities apparatus has shown that most of them are responsible for this societal disquiet (Sati, 2015, pp.52).

Barkindo (2017) stressed that most of the parents that do send or have sent their children or wards are largely persons or group of persons that are ill-informed and ignorance about changes in time. He went further to stress that some of the parents were not actually poor as it is often seen but were people who are not enlightened and are resistance to change. He cited instance where some of the parents have seen it as: a service to God, anti-Western World; which they commonly see as perfidious, way of strengthening the Hausa-Fulani culture and the act of seeking for reward from God. He stressed further that:

The Mallam (Teacher) whom the child (Almajiri) has been kept under or in his custody is supposed to cater for the child from what was given to him from the parents of the child. This is because it is expected of every parent whom has sent his child or ward to give something and continue to contribute by either sending money, foods and clothing to the upkeep of the child. But things are not being done in this direction. The Mallam because of the large number of the children(Almajirai) under their care and the compromise by parents have chosen to push the children (Almajirai) to

the mercy of the society; begging and indulging in menial labour in order to survive (Barkindo, 2017, Pp109).

The Almajiri System and Societal Manipulation

The society has taken advantage of the weakness of the system and negligence by both the parents and the government to its personal gains. The elites and most especially the political elites often use the Almajirai as thugs; helping them to perpetrates violence during and after election-rigging, disrupting of the electoral process and fomenting trouble most especially when it does not favour the direction of the elites who has sent them (Yusuf, 2010). Most of the dangerous weapons often used by them were bought by the elites who are exploiting them for their own avarice and personal aggrandizement (Sani, 2014).

Religious fundamentals who knew clearly that the Almajirai are ill-informed, ill-conceived and unlearned uses subterfuge such as brainwash, indoctrination and incite to lure the innocent children in participating in violence (religious), wrecking-havoc, maiming, vandalizing and killing during societal uprising (Yusuf, 2010). They are commonly being recruited into dangerous sect and as insurgent. Commenting on this, Ahmed (2019, pp. 203) has this to say:

The followers of Maintasine in 1980s, Mohammed Yusuf in 2007, Shekau and even the followers of Abu Musab al-Barnawi are mostly the Almajirai. They are easily being brainwashed because of their little knowledge, limited exposure and the neglect by the society. The Almajirai were often deceive that what they were doing will attract blessing from above and addition; there are some certain opportunities for the perpetration of the act (Ahmed 2019, Pp.203).

An interview audience granted by the mother of Shekau to Legit.ng on 3rd November, 2018 has shown that he was an Almajiri who had left home since when he was three years old. She stressed: "I have not set my eye on him since he left for Almajiranci. I only heard that he exists and the securities are looking for him". Apart from this, most of those that were caught and imprisoned have this type of background (Sati, 2015). Sani (2014) also stated that it is the neglect and exposure that has sent most of the Almajirai to indulge in criminal act and joining groups that perpetrate heinous violence in the society. He went further to stress that some who have chosen to be good, learn menial task and vocation such as shoe making, conductor and later on – drivers, carpentry, electrical works, business and many others; leaving street begging to the upcoming one (Sati, 2015). Due to their exposure and neglect by the society, some of the Almajirai have opted into activities of gangsters, bandit and conflicts entrepreneurs, fomenting troubles and making cheap capital from such uprising, supporting this notion, Ibrahim (2018;10) has this to say:

They are often around the streets in their neighbourhood and some hang around motor parks and market. They are predominantly into hard drugs and also abuse alcohol like gin and are usually armed with weapons anticipating any inter – group violence and readily available as ethnic and religious armies during riots.

Majority of them do not know what brought them and as a result were chiefly in the darks about social realities. Anything that is not known to them or is not being practiced in the Hausa – Fulani culture is seen as forbidden and a sin (Bello, 2014). How the small children survive and curbed with daily lives, like in term of feeding, clothing and where to sleep rest upon the child and the

host community on which the learning centre is situated. This has shown why it is easy for the system to survive among the Hausa-Fulani speaking group than among non-Muslim and Non-Hausa-Fulani speaking group (Barkindo, 2017). What often raised eyebrow is that the Hausa-Fulani capitalists would never send their children to such informal school and will never say anything bad on the system. This has justified why Sani (2014) has stressed that societal elites would never call for its scrap because of the benefit that they are deriving from the system. He stressed further that they are generally the ones that are being hired as thugs and crime syndicate; use to execute heinous act in the society.

Another distinct feature of the Almajiri system is that their schools are situated in the cities and town where there is human population and Muslim settlement. The Almajirai can go to non-Muslim settlement to look for menial works, and to learn certain artisan vocation but it would never be at the detriment of his Qur'anic class (Paul, 2013). The societal criminals are mostly those that have transcended as either rebels or have abandoned the program either as a result of frustration, exposure and societal influence. Corroborating on the notion, Mazu (2018; 21) observed:

A lot of these criminals that we have in our societies are mostly the Almajirai that have rebelled and have chosen to give back to the society what they have been exposed to. Those that took their Qur'anic studies seriously mostly end up as future Mallam and well behaved person in the societies. Those that operates in the non-affirmative are those that do not know why they were sent for and the message which is expected of them to pass.

Ahmed (2019) averred that religious bigot and fundamentalist who knew that the Almajirai are little children, ill-informed and have been pushed to the world and fundamentalists capitalized on this weakness by using subterfuge such as indoctrination and brainwash to recruit them as their die heart, subjects, dogma of their system and perpetrators of any act they have devised. He cited incidences such as the *maintasine* in 1980s, sharia debate in 2003, post-election violence of 2011, the Potiskum riots of 1994, the Jalingo crisis of 1992 and many more as common examples of conflicts that the Almajirai were being used. Sanusi (2014;3), a former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria describes it thus:

The reform of the law started by politicians but found popular support in the environment of despondency frustration and discontent. It received immediate intellectual support from pro – Wahhabi neo – fundamentalist movement who did not initiate them but share a vision (Sanusi, 2014:3).

Theoretical Underpinning

Manipulation theory is adopted as the theoretical underpinning of the study. It stemmed from instrumentalism and by extension Marxism. Key proponent of the theory is Bala Usman and was propounded in 1987. It was further developed by scholars such as Sabo Bako, Blasé and many more. The central premise of the theory is that issues pertaining religion and ethnic background can easily be exploited by set of individuals to their own advantage and to the detriment of the those being exploited (Collins, 2014). Bala (1987) points out that no region is immune to manipulation and neither are no religious leaders or elites. This is because both religious and ethnic sentiment has the potential both as a soothing balm and as an explosive fuel in a situation of crime. Pascal (2010) is of the view that men never do evil so completely as when they do it from ethnic

and religious conviction. Examples abound in history and recent happening in India, Pakistan, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Lebanon, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Chad, Uganda, Nigeria, just to mention but a few that sentiment attached to this element for long has been used as either cover and means of recruiting insurgences, inciting violence and destruction of lives and property.

The theory has the following tenets:

- a. Sentimental discourse or issues that appeal to emotion are those things that are mostly being exploited.
- b. Manipulators often hide under a system to cover their action or inaction.
- c. Manipulation is an unsystematically relationship between the exploiter and the person being exploited.
- d. The society is always at the receiving end of any act of manipulation.

The theory is applicable to the study in the following direction:

a. The Utilization of the Almajiri System as a Concealment

Poor parents in the rural and urban areas in the Northern Nigeria have taken advantage of the system to hide their poverty level in the eye of the society. A lot of them that have multiple wives or are into multiple marriage and many children often uses the system as their hiding place. Instead of avoiding such practice of multiple marriages and giving birth to children which they cannot carter for their need; the Almajiri system has provided a soft landing lance to hide and continue with such act. It is the children of the poor and groups of persons that are ill-informed and illiterates that were victims of the subterfuge. This factor and societal neglect has made the Almajiri to be exposed and the consequences are: crimes, violence and other societal menaces.

b. A tool of Avarice in the hands of Elites and Fundamentalist

The elites just like religious bigot and fundamentalist often capitalizes on this opening to achieve their embellishment. The elites who would never send their children in such traditional schools are always at the forefront to recruit this exposed and at risk children as political thugs and brute to help them rig election, ferment troubles, kill, destroy properties and cause unrest where ever it will benefit them. They often buy for them weapons and give them tokens to perpetrate heinous act to suit their gusto.

Religious bigots and fundamentalist often recruit them as followers, disciples, adherers and supporters. They use decoy as brainwash, incitation, indoctrination and religious motivation speech to lure them into heinous act. This has amounted to a lot of anomalies such *Boko Haram*, *Maintasine*, the *Tafawa Balewa* conflict of 1994, the Jos conflict of 2001, the *Zaria post – election violence* of 2011 and just but few to mention.

Result of the Findings

The findings of this study has revealed that poverty is the ultimate cause of illiteracy in Nigeria and this is too common in the Northern part of country. The study findings reveal that there is a nexus between poverty and the Almajiranci in the Northern Nigeria. The geopolitical zones and states where the Almajirai comes from were characteristically backward and lacking in a lot of ways. The National Bureau of Statistics (2019) report averred that absolutes poverty ranges between 59.3% in North Central, 68% in North East and 70% in the North West. These statistics

shows that North East and North West zones were the poorest region in the country and at the same time, are the very zones where the Almajiri system flourished and is being cherished. Statistics from NBS has shown that the zone trails behind other zones in terms of adult literacy and very high in regard to poverty rate as shown in Table 1 and Table 2 below;

Table 1: Young Adult literacy in Nigeria as at 2017

S/N	Zone	Literacy Rate (15-24 years) Male	Literacy Rate (15-24 years) Female
1	North West	57.59%	38%
2	North East	53.1%	41.9%
3	North Central	76.4%	62.0%
4	South West	93.7%	92.6%
5	South South	95.0%	94%
6	South East	94.3%	95.4%

Source: NBS, 2019

Table 2: Poverty by Geographical zones in Nigeria

S/N	Zone	Poverty Rate
1	North west	81.11%
2	North East	76.8%
3	North Central	42.6%
4	South West	19.3%
5	South South	25.2%
6	South East	27.4%

Source: UN Global multi-dimensional poverty index 2019

Tables 1 and 2 shows that the zone is already in bad shape. In terms of literacy, it is the lowest and in regards to poverty, the zone has very high rate. Espousing on the same direction, Akinfala (2018) attempted to create a connection between the lingering poverty in the north and level of literacy. He sees poverty as the basic cause of illiteracy in the zones and faulted the imprint of poverty and religion to challenges of literacy in Northern part of Nigeria. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2018) found that over 10 million Nigerian children of school age are not in school and that most of them are either hawking goods on the streets or doing some form of menial labour to make ends meet. The study went further to show that 53% are of secondary school level and 47% were of the level of primary school. This equally corroborate with the survey of Arewa Youth Mobilization, a Non-Governmental Organization who affirmed that 30% of Northern Nigerian Youths are street beggars. The NGOs Secretary General, lamented that begging had become a tradition and a way of life in the North. He alleged that nowadays parents have now seen it as a source of income and way to avoid responsibility. He linked poverty in northern part of Nigeria to the lingering Almajiri system and a class culture as he rightly noted:

Nothing excites the average Hausa Alhaji more than having hundreds of his brethren trooping to his enclave in order to hail him and greet him – *ranka de de* each morning. He distributes *sadaka*; having them eats his crumbs while he indulges in the yearly hajj to ensure that he enters Al-jannah (Barau, 2009;12).

This is a fertile ground for the Almajiri system and for long has succeeded in producing an army of dysfunctional unemployed, unemployable and uneducated youth. Chentu (2010) stressed that the rich will definitely want the status quo to be sustained because it serves their interest. The elites supply the fodder for the societal menace such as riots, election rigging and thuggery while the uneducated Almajirai are being used to perpetuate the heinous act.

The study findings also reveal that religion has long been used as a cover to further strengthen the Almajiri system. The elites just like the poor and uneducated groups that still advocate for the continual practice of the system have vested interest. A cross-sectional survey among parents who prefer the Almajiri system to Western education has shown that most of them are people that are very poor, uneducated and person with little exposure, ill-informed, ill-conceived and groups that can easily be twisted as decoy in the hands of manipulators. This goes with the view of Akinfala (2018) who asserted that when a young man is poor, illiterate and unemployed, he or she can easily become a clean slate for any kind of brainwash which according to Marx is more potent when it comes from religion and aided by culture.

The study also found that there is a significant connection between the Almajiri system and the spate of criminalities in Northern Nigeria. The study uncovered that the protracted challenges of poverty have made feeding and general upkeep of the Almajirai very difficult. Alms often given to them have greatly reduced and thus they were left with no other option than to engage in some jobs which has exposed a lot of them into drugs and militant youth gangs. They are readily available as ethnic and religious armies during riots. Repeated incidence of violence in the society has increased their access to arms which were often provided by some elites and fundamentalists in the society who never get to retrieve them after the violence. This sudden ownership and possession of weapons has made a lot of them to indulge in criminalities such as looting, stealing, rustling of livestock, armed robbery, inter-group violence, rape and killing, fomenting troubles and participating in ethno-religious conflict.

Conclusion

Almajiri system of education has enjoyed a celebrated history of patronage and societal support more in the past than in the contemporary time. In the past, the system was more of a reserve of the children from the royal home and children from affluence background. The system turned sour and got debased with the arrival of the colonial master; a departure and decline from the normal patronage and thus the openness of the system to all class of people due to the non-patronage and relegation of the system by the colonialist. This development thus exposed the system to a lot of societal manipulation.

The poor in rural and urban part of Northern Nigeria have capitalized on the loose nature of the system and were using it as a cover to hide their avarice and unconventional practices such as multiple marriages, multiple child birth without the means to cater for their needs and many more. The supporters of the system exploit the system against its real intent to further their action, leaving the victims at the mercy of nature while the society bears the brunt of their misdeed. The Almajirai are not only being used as a subterfuge but are exposed to societal hardship, suffering and different forms of adversity. This development has forced a lot to indulge in acts such as consumption of illicit substance such as drugs, hard drinks and many more. Elites and fundamentalists have capitalized on the opening to recruit this exposed Almajiri as thugs, fomenters of troubles, die-hard followers, supporters and tools to help them satisfy their personal aggrandizement. This is a sad tale to the society because they exposed and wrongly exploited Almajirai usually turn to be

societal miscreant, criminals, scoundrel and readily available group for recruit as rebel, insurgent, rioters among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered:

- i. States in Northern Nigeria should provide critical interventions in education, healthcare, rural and urban infrastructure, poverty eradication, job creation and youth development. This will go a long way to reduce poverty and engage youth in the society.
- ii. States in Northern Nigeria should collaborate with religious and traditional institution to provide thorough enlightenment campaign to its citizen on the art of living, marriage and responsibilities, marriage and child upbringing. This will go a long way to discourage the exploit of the Almajiri system as a cover and decoy to satisfy their avarice
- iii. There is need for an overhaul in the Almajiri system in tandem with conventional practice. The system should either be scrapped off or be refurbished along the path of conventional standard just like the Western education. This will go a long way to maximize the potentials of the Almajirai and as well limit their exposure to societal malaise.
- iv. It is also important for the federal government to put the rural farmers who long constitute the larger number of rural poor in the core of its policies. Their concerns and needs should be at the centre of government agricultural policies. It is the rural farmers that commit a lot of their energy on farming while using local implement, unimproved seedling and breeds. Encouraging them into modern way of doing things will not only contribute to managing the increasing challenges of the Almajiranci, it will also contribute to the quest for sustainable development.

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