

# Combatting Almajiri System in Nigeria: Public Knowledge and Perception on the Role of Communication

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## ABSTRACT

This investigated contributions that an amalgam of communication genres could play in combating the age-long trade, pseudo, religious practice known as *almajiranci* or Tsangaya system in North-West Nigeria. The study draws insight from the fact that the conservative attitude among residents of Kano has limited the influence of the various media used to advocate for radical reorientation and behavioural change in the study area. Chief among the objectives of the study was to find out if the residents knew about the problem, to what extent, causes whether or not the residents knew the role of communication as a factor that could combat the menace. The communication function theory foregrounds the study. It utilised the mixed methods design where qualitative and quantitative data were generated using interviews and copies of the questionnaire. Six(6) respondents were interviewed in the first phase of the research. In the second phase, four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were administered across the six local governments that made up the Kano metropolis, namely Kano Municipal, Fagge, Nassarawa, Dala, Tarauni and Kumbotso, using a combination of purposive and quota sampling. The study found that the residents had high knowledge of the existence of Almajiranchi practice, they mentioned poverty, illiteracy, love of Islamic scholarship, divorce, and the quest for self-discipline as some of the reasons for the prevalence of the practice and they perceived communication, especially the mixed-communication genre/integrated genre, as having the suitability for combatting the menace. It was therefore recommended that parents prioritise the well beings of their children and also call for the need to involve communication professionals in designing messages that are geared towards attitude change.

**KEYWORD:** Almajiranci, Combatting, Public Knowledge, integrated communication, Perception

## INTRODUCTION

“We would go to beg at 6 a.m. and return at 7 a.m. We would go out again at 11 a.m. and return for prayers at 2 p.m. Finally, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., we were back on the streets again, begging” (1). The quote above from thirteen-year-old Abdulkareem, a returnee Almajiri from Borno State to Gombe State in an interview with Geoffrey Njoku, a UNICEF Communication Specialist in Nigeria, exemplifies the typical day of an Almajiri. Thus, the Almajiri system revolves around Quranic education and begging.

The term Almajiri is a Hausa word that has its origin in the Arabic word, “al-Muhajirun”, meaning emigrant. Under the Almajiri System, parents send their male children to distant locations to acquire Quranic education. Some parents send their children to Almajiri school because of their passion for religious and moral education. In contrast, some send them because of the lack of finances to cater to plenty of children who have needs and lack finances for the acquisition of Western education since the Almajiri school system is tuition-free.

However, the Mallams (teachers) send the children to the street begging to meet their needs under this system.

In Nigeria, some efforts aimed at combatting the menace of Almajiranci birthed the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme launched in 1999 to provide free, universal and compulsory primary education for every Nigerian child aged 6-15 years. Children aged 6-11+ years for primary school education and aged 12-14+ years for junior secondary education. The programme took off effectively after the ratification of the UBE Act in 2004. Chief among its objective was to provide programmes of encouragement to all marginalised and disadvantaged groups, not only girls and women but also out-of-school youths and the Quranic students (Almajiris). (2). Specifically, in response to the challenge of educational backwardness among the social group known as Almajiris, the Nigerian government founded the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989 to coordinate programmes aimed at improving the lives of the Almajiris by making education accessible to them (3).

The Almajiri group in Nigeria is essential to the development of Nigeria because although it is challenging to know the number of Almajiri children in Nigeria, they are estimated to be about 10 million, or 81 per cent of the more than 10 million out-of-school children in the country (Unicef,nd).

Lately, efforts have been intensified to ensure the ban of the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria (4). First, former President Goodluck Jonathan invested billions of naira to build almajiri schools that incorporated Islamic and secular education in the north. His successor, President Muhammadu Buhari, has also keyed into the attempts to ban the Almajiri system by transferring the management of the schools to state governments and Islamic scholars for management(5). However, most schools have been abandoned, and the children, the supposed pupils, are back on the streets (6).

The Almajiri Child Rights Initiative is another attempt at banning the Almajiri system. The advocacy group started in 2014. This initiative recognised the relationship between the Almajiri system and the eighth out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, it aims to bring about “policy change through evidence-based advocacy and wide stakeholder engagement campaigns that leverage new media to force and endear government at all levels into decisive action”(7).

The justification for this study is the need to examine the role communication can play in the containment of Almajiranci system in Kano State. Communication is said to be a panacea to a lot of societal problems, whethersocial, political, or economic. If the scourge is allowed to continue, the future of the Nigerian children and youths who are considered the leaders of tomorrow is in jeopardy. Especially because Kano State is one of Nigeria’s Megacities and the northern region’s commercial nerve.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

According to Hoechner (2014), about 8.5 children are involved in Almajiranci in Northern Nigeria and over 300,000 reside in Kano State. The Kano State Government gave a more recent figure in a BBC interview with Mansur Abubakar. The Governor emphasised the need to proffer a solution to the scourge because it could no longer take care of the over Five Million Almajiris in the state (8). In the same vein, (4) noted that Almajiranci had been one of the countries’ social challenges for decades. Therefore, the various calls for the ban of the Almajiri system seem justifiable because statistics have shown that a preponderant of out-of-school children in Nigeria is from the north (9).

The reasons for advocating the ban of Almajiranci include emerging awareness of the scourge to involve violation of child rights to education, proper nutrition, good health, security and shelter, inappropriate laws or lack of implementation of laws in Nigeria culminating in vices like thuggery, theft, pre-mature death,

drug abuse, terrorism recruitment, among others and calling attention to the plights of the children and raising awareness about the need to restore human dignity to the Almajiri child.

However, the governments at various levels were nonchalant to the menace of Almajiranchi until COVID-19 came, of which many Almajiri children were casualties(10). The period witnessed a mass exodus of Almajiris back to their homelands. For instance, one of the northern governors, Governor Nasir Elrufai of Kaduna State noted thus:

We've been looking for ways and means to end this system because it has not worked for the children. It has not worked for northern Nigeria and it has not worked for Nigeria....it is better to give the Almajiris some kind of modern education than to allow them to waste their lives away, roaming about the streets begging for what to eat (11).

In this regard, UNICEF has supported some State governments to reunite Almajirai with their parents and has trained social workers in child protection and case management to provide needed support for the children. Thus, more than 35,000 children have been reunited with their parents in parents in Kaduna State alone (11).

Until recently, little attention has been given to Almajiranchi in scholarship. The scant studies emphasised its prevalence and socio-economic impacts(12). For instance, (13) examined the consequence of the economic crisis on the Almajiris practice and found that the financial crisis worsens their situation and recommended that the governments at various levels partner with revered Islamic scholars through conferences to enhance the development of the Almajiri education system. Some other studies show how Almajiranchi has contributed to insecurity in Nigeria (14 and 15). Still, other scholars have demonstrated how the problem has often been presented as a religious issue even when it is a combination of factors (1). As well, some have advocated how to refocus the energies of the children **on** other productive ventures like, for instance, waste management (4).

There has been a problem with knowledge of the Almajiranchi system and diverse opinions about the role of communication and so this paper examines the issue. If all need to bear the responsibility of eliminating the scourge, the role of communication has to be examined. A sociological problem of this nature requires behaviour change which can only be engendered through communication. Unfortunately, no serious attention and focus have been given to communication among the plethora of canvassed and deployed approaches. However, one of the contemporary approaches is to integrate the Almajiri system into the circular school system (16) and this is considered as an effort that needs communication to thrive. In addition, the observed conservative attitude among residents has limited the influence of the various media used in advocating for a radical reorientation and behavioural change in the area that this paper is concerned with. Thus, Adam Zakari, a UNICEF Chief of Field, called for a deeper understanding of the causes and reasons why parents subject their children to such a harrowing experience as the beginning of the analysis of the problems facing Nigerian Children. It is through communication that the issues' causes and reasons can be better comprehended.

The problem above led to this study on combatting Almajiranchi through Communication in Kano State, North-West Nigeria. Therefore, this study ascertains public knowledge and perception of the role of communication in combatting Almajiranchi in North-West, Nigeria.

## **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

This study examines the knowledge and perception of the role of communication in combatting Almajiranchi in Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- 1) Determine the knowledge of Kano State residents about Alamajiranci System.
- 2) Ascertain what Kano State residents perceive to be the most disturbing aspect of Alamajiranci.
- 3) What do Kano State Residents perceive as the reasons for the existence of Alamajiranci?
- 4) Establish whether or not Kano State residents perceive communication as a factor that could combat Alamajiranci,
- 5) Investigate the extent to which residents of the North-West consider communication as being central in combatting Alamajiranci.
- 6) Find out the channels of communication the Kano State residents perceive as most preferred in combatting Alamajiranci?

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

- 1) What knowledge do Kano State residents have about Alamajiranci System?
- 2) What do Kano State residents perceive to be the most disturbing aspect of Alamajiranci?
- 3) What do Kano State Residents perceive as the reasons for the existence of Alamajiranci?
- 4) Do Kano State residents perceive communication as a factor that could combat Alamajiranci?
- 5) Determine the extent to which residents of North-West consider communication as being central in combatting Alamajiranci?
- 6) What channels of communication do Kano State residents perceive as most preferred in combatting Alamajiranci?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the major concerns of the Sustainable Development Goals is education for all. The Almajiri system is one of the obstacles that can hinder the attainment of that goal (16 and 17). In this regard, the surge in the rate at which children of school age are allowed to go into Almajiranci is disturbing. Some scholars have been deliberate in showing how the Almajiri syndrome is inhibiting development (See 18). According to (19) eight (8) of the sustainable development goals are tied to the plight of the Almajiri child and if actions are not taken ten (10) million of them might be left in the move towards the realization of the goals (20)

## COMMUNICATION IN COMBATTING ALMAJIRANCI

Scholars recognize communication as an exchange of meaning; In general, communication promotes knowledge sharing and reduces uncertainties among people (21).

Debates concerning the existence of the socio-group known as Almajiri are controversial. There is a lack of consensus regarding whether to ban it or not. While some think the group is responsible for insecurity, criminality, and unemployment, others believe its benefits include grooming children into adults by teaching

them virtues like humility, work resilience, perseverance, and other attributes that would positively impact society (4 and 22).

Despite the lack of adequate attention given to communication and the media's place in proffering solutions to the Almajiri scourge, a pocket of recommendations implying the need for communication as a panacea exists. For instance, (23), in a survey of 60 teachers from different Almajiri Model Schools in Sokoto state, examined the challenges of infusing the Almajiri educational system into a Universal Basic educational programme. He found inadequate public enlightenment programs to be one of the challenges, other were insufficient funding, inadequate facilities, and poor planning and supervision. In the same vein, Alkali (24), in proffering solutions to the Almajiri menace, suggested the need for community engagements between NGO leaders and the government cautioning parents to desist from giving out their children to the evil act. Similarly, (16) advocated a synergistic action among the traditional leaders, Imams and the government.

Communication is at the core of the kind of enlightenment programmes often implied by scholars. For example, (23) mentioned community engagement and (24) and (16) mentioned the involvement of all stakeholders. Communication has to be tailored towards attitude change, prevention and taming what Ahmad (16) referred to as the "abandonment" of the Almajiri by parents, Mallams and the government. Underscoring the need for team work among stakeholders, (17) avers that "government, school administrators, parents, teachers, students, individuals and society should collaborate in putting effective measures in place for future educational efficiency of *Al-Majiris* in the country" (p.1). Further, the importance of seminars and conferences has been put forward (25).

As mentioned elsewhere, some social campaigns and advocacy programmes aimed at taming the surge of Almajiri practices are evolving to complement the Federal government's efforts. Such advocacies target behaviour change using hashtags. Examples are #sendAlmajiriToClass and the Almacare programme by Child Rights Initiative. However, the extent to which residents of Kano State are aware of such communication activities is unknown and little attention is given to studying the variables in Kano State which happens to be the highest state that harbours the Almajiri children. Also, little is known about the efforts towards containment in Kano State.

## FUNCTIONAL GROUP COMMUNICATION THEORY

Hirokawa Randy and Marshal Scott Poole, in their book titled *Communication and Group Decision Making* 1986 argue that groups make good decisions if four conditions are met (26). The theory is rooted in Dewey's problem-solving processes (27). The four conditions for good group communication include problem analysis (taking a look at the prevailing situation and potential threats by looking at the nature, extent and causes of the problem). Second, goal setting (the group evaluates the problem, discusses possible solutions, and establishes criteria for judging proposed solutions so that politics rather than reasons will not drive solutions.). Next, identification of positive and negative character alternatives (the group generates alternative proposals for tackling the problem concerning the objectives and tries to establish which solutions have positive biases to the problem and which have negative tendencies). The final requisite is evaluating positive and negative characters (here, the objectives and alternatives are estimated to reach a consensus on a course of action) (26 and 27).

The theory argues that no requisite is better than ineffective group communication as they are all linked in a continuum. It argues that three types of communication are related to these functions. 1) promotive communication, which gives attention to one of the functions, 2) disruptive communication, which detracts from the group's ability to achieve all four functions 3) counteractive communication.

The theory recognises the role of communication in all stages. It argues that the group's utilisation of its information base from conception to the stage of reportage and interpretation determines the success of

communication as it is key to the formulation of positive and negative alternatives.

The theory has been criticised for not adequately taking into account prior group decision-making histories. And that made (28) add two other functions to the previous tasks, which include historical (groups talk about how past decisions were made and institutional, which addresses parties that were not present.

Concerning this research, the theory has practical utility because if those four requisites for quality communication are put in place to address the menace of Almajiri in Nigeria, there could be a better result. This is akin to the (27) argument that neglecting those results in an inadequate information base, leading to the rejection of valid information and acceptance of invalid details. Too little information may be collected, while too much knowledge could lead to overload. Thus, the group could also be guilty of faulty reasoning. The solution to all situations is to counteract a misled group by influencing it positively.

In sum, the theory is apt for this study because it demonstrates how the quality of a group's communication influences its output. Finally, the functional theory proposes that influential problem-solving groups will establish general norms or operating procedures that will guide interaction throughout the group process (29). Thus, communicative interventions could help reduce constraints to knowledge dissemination that impede combating the social vice of Almajiri practice.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A survey design was used in this study. According to (30), a survey integrates quantitative and qualitative data to provide vital information. In the same vein, (31) describe survey research as a method deployed in gaining knowledge of things, peoples and events in the natural world" (p.67). The choice of the survey was in consideration of the research type concerned with a given existential phenomenon in the area under investigation.

A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The sampling method was used to select six Local Government Areas in the state. The choice of the local governments was informed by the large concentration of Almajirai in these areas, who are attracted by their commercial nature to settle for their Quranic education. A quota sampling method was adopted to arrive at the categories of people from all the Local Government Areas studied. Quota sampling allows the selection of groups on a representative basis (32). Thus, 70 copies in Kano Municipal, 100 in Nassarawa, 50 in Gwale, 50 in Fagge, 80 in Dala and 50 at Tarauni, were administered to adult residents of the six local governments, respectively. The unequal distribution of the sample size was to ensure representation since some LGAs were bigger than others. The idea of the simple random was to give every element an equal chance of being selected. The simple percentage is adopted for data analysis.

Section one of the questionnaire was to elicit responses for demographic data, while the second part pertained to knowledge and perception of communication as a vital antidote and extent of perception.

For the interview, stakeholders were purposively selected to interrogate the variables under study. Speech corpus was recorded and transcribed thereafter.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Two types of data were collected for this study. The first data set was generated from the 400 copies of the questionnaire administered to residents in the area covered and fully retrieved. The second data set was from interviews conducted with 6 persons, two Islamic scholars, two journalists and two administrators each chosen from the LGAs.

**Table 1: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Males	289	72,3%
Females	111	27.7%
Total	400	100
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Married	148	37%
Single	231	57.7%
Widows, widowers and divorcees	21	5.3%
Total	400	100%
<b>Education</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
First School Leaving Cert.	139	34.7%
Senior Secondary Cert.	127	31%
No Formal Education	41	10.3%
Total	400	100%

Respondents’ responses concerning gender show that 289 (72.3%) were males, while 111 (27.7%) of the respondents were females. The gap between males and females is attributable to the unwillingness of so many females to avail themselves of the survey which is due to the purdah custom practised in many homes in Kano. Regarding marital status, 148 (37%), were married, 231 (57.7 %), were single and 21 (5.3 %) of the respondents were either widows, widowers, or divorced. This shows demographic diversity. The educational demography of the respondents shows that 93 (23.3%) were educated at the tertiary level. Those with First School Leaving Certificate were 139 (34.7%) of the respondents. Senior Secondary Certificate was 127 (31.7%), However, only 41 (10.3%) of respondents did not receive formal education.

**Research Question One: What knowledge do Kano State residents have about Alamajiranci System?**

**Table 2: Knowledge of Kano State residents about Alamajiranci Practice**

<b>VARIABLES</b>	<b>NO OF RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
Very good knowledge	118	30
Good Knowledge	235	59
Fair Knowledge	47	11
No knowledge	0	0
Total	400	100

Item 4 of the questionnaire was used to elicit data regarding research question one. From the table above, 118 respondents making up 30%, had very good knowledge about Alamajiranci. Two hundred thirty-five (235) respondents accounting for (59 %) of all respondents said they had good knowledge of the almajiri system well. Only 47 (11%) had fair knowledge and no respondents said they did not know about the practice. To further establish whether the residents were aware of the Alamajiranci system, the respondents were asked if they had Almajiri children in their neighbourhoods and the results are presented in Table 3 below

**TABLE 3: Knowledge about Children in Almajiranci System in Respondents' neighbourhoods**

VARIABLE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	390	97.5
No	10	2.5
Total	400	100

Item five of the questionnaire provided more insights into the knowledge of the Almajiri system. From the responses gathered, 390 out of 400 respondents, accounting for 97.5%, said there were children in their area who are into Almajiranci, while 10 respondents accounting for 2.5% of the total sample size of 400, answered in the negative. What this result shows is that almajiranci is widely practised in the northwest and Kano in particular. The acceptability of the practice may be related to the long-standing history of Kano as an international centre for Islamic Quranic education.

**Research Question 2: What do Kano State residents perceive to be the most disturbing aspect of Almajiranci?**

**Table 4: Perception of North-West Residents about the Most Disturbing Aspect of Almajiranci**

VARIABLE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Begging for food	301	75.3
Engaging in criminality	40	10
Poor Hygiene	59	14.7
Total	400	100

Questionnaire item number 6 provided the data that answered research question two. From the table above, 301 out of the 400 respondents constituting 75.3%, find begging to feed the most disturbing issue about almajiranci. Forty (40) respondents making up 10% of the entire respondents see the quality of teaching as the major drawback of almajiranci as a system of Islamic education. In comparison, 59 respondents totalling 14.7% of the respondents, adjudge hygiene as the most disturbing issue in Almajiranci.

**Research Question Four: What are the Reasons Why Parents Subject Children to Almajiranci?**

**Table 5: Reasons Why Parents Subject Children to Almajiranci**

VARIABLE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Poverty	125	31.25
Illiteracy	93	23.25
Islamic scholarship	70	17.5
Divorce/Broken homes	62	15.5
Imbibing self-discipline	40	10
Others	10	2.5

The analysis of the data from questionnaire item 7 shows that poverty was the highest reason why parents sent their children to almajiranci practice. The data show that 125 (31.2%) respondents chose poverty, 93 (31.25%) chose illiteracy, 70 (17.5) favoured Islamic scholarship, 62 (15.5) chose Divorce/Broken homes, while 40 (10%) and 10 (2.5%) chose Divorce/Broken homes and Imbibing self-discipline respectively.



**Research Question Four: Do Kano State residents perceive communication as a factor that could combat Almajiranci?**

**Table 6: Perception of Residents on Communication as a Factor in the Efforts at Combatting Almajiranci**

VARIABLE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	250	62.5
No	133	33.25
Undecided	17	4.25
Total	400	100

Two Hundred and fifty (250) representing 62.5 % of respondents agreed that they perceived communication as a factor in combatting the menace, while 133 (33.25) disagreed. However, 17 (4.25%) were undecided.

**Research Question 4: To what extent do residents of the North-West consider communication as being central in the containment of Almajiranci in North West Nigeria?**

**Table 7: Extent of consideration of communication as key in the containment of Almajiranci in North West Nigeria.**

VARIABLES	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Very high	150	37.5
High	148	37
Low	70	17.5
Very low	32	8
Total	400	100

Item 8 of the questionnaire was incisive for answering this research question. From the table above, 298 respondents out of 400, accounting for 74.5%, saw communication as the key in the containment effort of almajiranci in northwest Nigeria, while 102 making up 25.5% of the total respondents hold a contrary view. For them, communication may be helpful but not crucial. The overwhelming responses in the affirmative with a whopping 74.5% of the entire respondents are a pointer to the importance of communication as a tool for social mobilisation and social change.

**Research Question 8: What channel of communication do North-West residents prefer most for the containment of Amajiranci?**

**Table 8: Suitable channel of communication for combatting Amajiranci?**

VARIABLE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Multi- Channels	120	30
Interpersonal channels	95	24
Radio	80	20
Social Media	50	12
Television	40	10
Print Media	15	4
Total	400	100

From the responses gathered, 120 (30%) respondents of the entire respondents, the mixture of channels as

the best communication approach for containing almajiranci, followed by 95 (24%) who preferred interpersonal channels, 80 (20%) chose radio, 50 (12%) favoured social media, 40 (10%) were for television and the minutest proportion 15 (4%) chose print media as the best channel to help contain almajiranci in northwest Nigeria. 40, making 10% of the respondents chose television. Fifty respondents, accounting for 12.5%, consider interpersonal channels the best means of communication to contain alamjiranci. To further investigate the best approach for containing alamajiranchi, respondents were asked about the appropriateness of the present communication approach via the mass media. The responses are presented in Table 6. From the responses, an amalgam of communication channels was the most preferred, with television least preferred. In terms of mass media channels, radio was considered the best.

**Table 9: Appropriateness of Mass Media Alone for Combatting Almajiranci**

VARIABLE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	181	45.3
NO	219	54.7
TOTAL	400	100

From the table above, 181 respondents constituting 45.3% were satisfied with a mass-mediated approach for the containment of alamajiranci, while 219 making up 54.7% of the entire respondents find the efforts through the media alone inadequate.

From the responses gathered, it is clear that the mass media have not abandoned their advocacy for societal change. However, there is a need for more effort to be sustained.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of this study shows that the majority of the North-West residents had high knowledge of almajiranci. A greater proportion of them had them in their neighbourhood. This finding aligns with the interview data that indicate that all respondents knew alamjiranchi. For instance, an interviewee said, “North-West is synonymous with alamajiranchi, no one can live in Kano or Jigawa without knowing about alamajiranchi.” Another female respondent corroborated the first one by saying, “The alamjiranchi chants in my neighbourhood wake me up daily I don’t even care about the clock anymore.” This finding about the preponderance of alamajiranci agrees with previous research that alludes to its prevalence in North-West (16 and 22).

The study also found that the most disturbing aspect of almajiranci is the fact that they beg for alms when they are supposed to be in school. The interviewees’ responses in conjunction with the questionnaire responses attest to the fact that child begging is a social problem that violates the rights of the child and humanity. In this light, a respondent said, “The duty of care for the child rests with the parents. So, the Almajiri method as presently practised is faulty.” Another participant said, “How will parents push their responsibilities to others? The children did not beg to be given birth to. There will be no almajiri if parents cater for their children. Parents should provide for their children instead of sending them to the streets.” This finding about the almajiri and begging was earlier raised by scholars for instance (14, 15 and 16). (16) noted succinctly that the term now refers to any beggar that lacks a means of livelihood. Sending children to acquire education without providing for their feeding and making them depend on begging for their survival remains the most disturbing. This may not be unconnected to the fact that most other unpleasant conditions only happen within their abodes and hence may not attract much public outcry.

Further, the study has demonstrated that poverty illiteracy, the quest for Islamic scholarship, divorce and broken homes and imbibing self-discipline were some of the reasons why parents send their children to

Almajiranci. An interviewee confessed that “I sent my son to a Quranic school in Bauchi because I don’t have money to pay his school fee in a Boko (western) school.” Another one said, “I did Almajiranci too while growing up, so my sons too should experience it.” Scholars have written about how almajiranci have argued that taming almajiranci should start with understanding the root causes and metamorphosis from a legacy that turned bad. For instance, (33) attributed it to land degradation (famine and poverty) and overpopulation/lack of awareness about child spacing in rural communities. Also (34) and (35) mentioned religious fanaticism among other reasons.

As demonstrated in the study, communication has a vital role to play in containment efforts. The result of the interview is consistent with that of the questionnaire. All the interviewees noted that communication could be used to engender attitude change for almajiri containment. “A respondent said, the Mallams, the parents and the almajiri boys themselves need reorientation. We need to talk to them in the language they will understand. A commissioner in the state said I think we have not communicated enough.” Thus, (26) theory on how groups function effectively through communication found support in this study.

Also, the study found that the communication about almajiri containment should adopt mixed channels of communication most suitable strategy. “The media could change the narrative if given the deserved attention. The “Sankira” (the village announcer) could be told to go around the streets; announcements could be made in the mosque.” All these suggest an amalgam of communication channels. Another respondent said “The government uses only modern media to talk about the Almajiri practice, do rural dwellers who send their children to Almajiranci have such access to those communication tools, can they read newspapers, No. We need to add rural communication means.” All these are consistent with (23) who calls for public enlightenment as the panacea to curbing almajiranci. As Alkali (24) also puts it, community engagement is vital to eradicating almajiranci.

## **SUMMARY OFFINDINGS**

The data gathered from this survey has shown the high presence of almajiri in the area covered by this research, it has demonstrated the reasons for almajiranci to include, including poverty, illiteracy and the quest for Islamic scholarship among others. It is glaring that while the system has some form of religious value as a method of teaching religious values, it is deficient and filled with multiple challenges that cannot fit into the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world. Though conservatives hold the system so firmly, it is gratifying to note a high consciousness level among the people. The study found that mixed communication channels could help change the orientation of people there to unite against or reform the system that has fallen short of human standards in a globalised world.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through the survey, this study examined the role of communication in the efforts aimed at combating the scourge of Almajiranci in Nigeria. The study found that respondents had high knowledge of the menace. Also, respondents were aware of the role of communication, provided a multi-communication strategy would be harnessed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To change the status quo concerning the Almajiri situation in Nigeria today, all stakeholders must work together to either abolish the system or, at best, refine it. Muslim scholars and leaders in the affected areas should encourage Muslim parents to accord the upbringing and education of their children adequate attention to reducing its prevalence.

Parents should exercise caution before entrusting their children to relatives and caregivers in the name of acquiring religious knowledge. In a situation where sending the children out to live with a relative or caregiver is inevitable, the guardian should be adequately supported, especially when he is not economically buoyant so that the children will not be sent begging for alms.

Authorities should live up to expectations by providing social amenities in rural areas to dampen down rural-urban migration. In the same vein, an enabling environment should be created for the middle and lower classes to lead a better life devoid of humiliation, dehumanization and poverty.

Since communication has a vital role to play, a concerted effort should be made to allay the fears of Muslim parents who are afraid of losing their children to Western education. Also, special schools that meet both the religious and circular needs of the children should be established.

Government should liaise with communication professionals in designing informational materials that target attitude change for combatting Almajiranci. Such materials will embed multiple communication channels that could reach the rural areas where the parents of most of the almajiri children reside.

There are no specific programmes to address the menace in Kano State. To buttress the fact of the lack of or inappropriate communication, ()noted that advocacy and mass mobilization for behavioural change goes beyond information dissemination it involves communication dialogue, theatre for development, mass media for development.

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