

Impact of Child Labour Practices on the Well -Being of Almajirai Children in Gusau Local Government Area of Zamfara State, Nigeria

Ugba Dajo, PhD¹, Tume Apityan²

¹Department of Sociology, Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State

²Department of Home Economics, School of Vocational Education, Federal College of Education (Technical) Gusau College

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100500757>

Received: 14 May 2026; Accepted: 20 May 2026; Published: 12 June 2026

ABSTRACT

Child labour remains a persistent global social problem. While existing studies often generalize its causes primarily linking it to poverty and economic deprivation while overlooking the influence of socio-cultural factors. This study therefore examines how cultural and religious entrenched systems, such as the Almajiri system, wherein children pursue Qur'anic education but encounter exploitation, neglect and intentional abuse due to weak institutional oversight. The sample size of the study consisted of 356 almajiri children. Closed ended questionnaire and key informant interviews were used as the primary instruments of data collection. Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 while data from key informant interview were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's approach. Findings from the study showed that there was high prevalence of child labour among almajirai children. The study also observed that poverty and religious beliefs reinforce each other in promoting child labour among almajiri children. The pattern of work almajirai children engaged in were hawking on the streets, domestic work and working on people's farms. Many of the Almajirai children that engaged in child labour suffered from injuries, physical and emotional abuse. The paper recommends that parents, religious/ traditional leaders be sensitized on the need to encourage almajirai to enroll in formal education and Government should provide small business loans and farming support to parents to address the problem of poverty.

Keywords: Abuse, almajirai, childlabour, education, social-cultural factors, poverty

INTRODUCTION

Child labour has existed for centuries. It is considered one of the oldest social problems in this world (Tariq, 2020). In pre-industrial societies, there was hardly any notion of childhood in the modern sense, children often began to actively participate in activities such as hunting, farming, and fishing at an early age (Schildkrout, 2000; Diamond, 2012). These activities were not only economically necessary but also socially valued, enabling children to develop practical skills, gain social recognition, build self-esteem, and achieve status within their communities (Sharma, 1999, Schildkrout, 2002; Diamond, 2012). In a similar vein, Łukasiewicz (2023) observed that in the pre-modern period, rural children were already assigned to work on a lord's farm, for a wealthy farmer, or to serve in a city. These historical accounts suggest that children learning to carry out some tasks were an integral part of pre-industrial societies and this was not considered as child labour.

However, the issue of child labour began to receive global attention during the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries. According to Gowland et al. (2023), large-scale employment of children during the rapid industrialization of the late 18th and early 19th centuries in England was widespread. Nelson (2020) also noted that during the industrial revolution, children were employed in different types of jobs ranging from working on machines in factories, hawking newspapers on the streets, working in coal mines, and sweeping chimneys. In some instances, owners of industries preferred to engage children rather than adults because their services were very cheap, they were more submissive, and they were less likely to go on strike (Nelson, 2020). Flowing from

the above, it is obvious that it was the Industrial Revolution that fertilized and exacerbated the exploitation of child labour across various sectors.

Consequently, due to the negative effects of child labour on the well-being of children, efforts have been made by the international community to address the problem. At the international level, different laws, treaties and conventions, such as the Minimum Age Convention (1973), Minimum Age Recommendation (1973), Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (1999), and Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation (1999), were enacted to eradicate the menace of child labour. **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990) operates on the continent to tackle the problem of child labour. Nigeria is a signatory to all the international and regional treaties aimed at addressing the problem of child labour. Furthermore, the Nigerian government passed the Child's Rights Act into law in 2003 in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1959 with the aim of stemming the menace of child labour. These legal instruments/treaties are designed to ensure that no child should be engaged in work that harms his or her health, development, or future prospects (International Labour Organization [ILO] and United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2024).**

In spite of the numerous international treaties on child labour which many countries including Nigeria are signatory, the problem of child labour is far from being addressed. For instance, it is estimated that 138 million children are engaged in child labour globally, and 54 million of these children are working in hazardous work environments likely to harm their health, safety, **or morals (ILO, 2025). Disaggregated data on a regional level indicated that** Saharan Africa houses the largest concentration of children in child labour, with 87 million, or close to two-thirds of the global total (ILO, 2025).

In Nigeria, child labour is a pressing concern. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2024), 24,673,485, or 39.2% of children between 5 and 17 years old are in child labour. The implication of the above statistics is that many children are engaged in activities that are harmful to their health and well-being in Nigeria. One of the most visible and culturally rooted manifestations of child labour in Nigeria is the Almajiri system. It is a system where parents typically send children, mostly from Northern Nigeria, to live with Islamic teachers (Mallams) to receive Qur'anic training. However, due to neglect by parents or guardians, combined with the Nigerian government's failure to effectively address the problem, Almajiri children survive by working in the informal sector, on farms, house helps and in other dangerous sectors.

This precarious condition not only undermines their access to quality education but also exposes them to multiple forms of exploitation and abuse. As a matter of fact, the government does not officially recognize these schools, and students attending Almajiri schools are officially considered out of school (United States Department of Labor, 2022). This is not surprising because children that don't attend school such as the Almajirai children are potential child labourers (UNICEF, 2024). Consequently, Almajiri children often constitute a readily available source of cheap labour, while their exploitation remains largely unchecked by both the community and state authorities. As a result, what is meant to be a religious endeavor frequently subjects Almajiri children to child labour and hazardous conditions, substantially exacerbating the high incidence of child labour in Nigeria.

Despite the burgeoning research on child labour in Nigeria, studies frequently generalize the issue, primarily linking it to poverty and economic exploitation (Bourdillon & Carothers 2019; Enebe et al., 2021; *Adeagbo & Mosobalaje, 2023; Faluyi & Faluyi, 2024; Muhammad, Magaji, & Ismail, 2025*). These studies insufficiently address culturally and religiously entrenched systems, such as the Almajiri system, wherein children pursue Qur'anic education but encounter exploitation, neglect and intentional abuse due to weak institutional oversight. A notable deficiency exists in research investigating the interplay between religion, culture, education, and governance in shaping the experiences of Almajiri children and perpetuating their susceptibility to child labour. It is based on the foregoing that this research was designed to examine child labour practices among Almajirai children in the Gusau local government area of Zamfara State.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives have been designed to guide the study:

- i. Assess the prevalence of child labour among Almajirai children in Gusau LGA

- ii. Identify the causes of child labour among Almajirai children in Gusau LGA
- iii. Determine the forms of child labour activities carried out by Almajirai children in Gusau LGA
- iv. Examine the impact of child labour on the physical health and safety of Almajirai children in Gusau LGA

LITERATURE REVIEW

Almajirai

The term almajirai (singular -almajiri) has its roots in the Arabic word “Mahaajirun” which means someone who has left his place of abode in pursuit of Islamic knowledge (Al-Amin, 2019). According to The Economist (2014), the term ‘*Almajiri*’ means “immigrant”, signifying that the children come from different places to acquire Islamic teaching. The term first emerged during the migration of Prophet Mohammed and his followers from Medina to Mecca. Available literature indicates that it was those persons who were in the company of the Prophet Mohammed as he journeyed to Medina that were first addressed as “Al-Muhajirun” meaning emigrants (Taiwo, 2013). On arrival to Medina, these emigrants had no means of survival. However, because of the good and long standing relationship the Prophet had with the host communities, his followers were incorporated into different trades and vocation as apprentices and were also rewarded with a token for the services they offered in order to take care of their needs (Taiwo, 2013).

In Nigeria, the almajirai system has been traced to the 11th century following the involvement of Borno monarchs in Qur'anic literacy (AbdulQadir, 2003). According to Bambale (2003), almajirai can be classified into three groups namely, Gardi (Adult), Titibiri (adolescent) and Kolo (infant). Over the years, the almajirai system of education has become widespread particularly in the northern part of Nigeria. It has been estimated that there are 9.5 million almajirai children in Nigeria (Oladosu, 2012). As a result of the neglect of the almajirai children by their parents/guardians, teachers, communities and the government, these children lack access to food, clothing, shelter, health. This has consequently brought the almajirai system come under scathing attack in recent years on the premise that the system has outlived its usefulness and should either be reformed to meet the challenges of the 21st century or be totally discarded.

Child labour

The term child labour does not have a universally accepted definition. This is because child labour is a multifaceted issue, with considerable disparities among countries within the same region and even among sub-national areas within a single country (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019). Child labour is defined as work that children are too young to perform and/or work that, by its nature or circumstances, is likely to harm children’s health, safety or morals (ILO, 2021). One common feature emphasized by both OECD and ILO is that child labour encompasses work that is detrimental to children and is rooted in social and economic conditions.

Prevalence of Child Labour among Almajirai children

Numerous studies and publications indicate that child labour is widespread and frequent globally (Haque et al., 2021). Child labour continues to impact around 138 million children globally, with 54 million engaged in dangerous occupations (ILO & UNICEF, 2025). Africa ranks first among global areas for the prevalence of child labour and hazardous work, exceeding the world averages by more than twofold (ILO-UNICEF, 2020).

Data from the ILO-UNICEF (2020) regional estimates indicated that 92.2 million African children, comprising 40.1 million girls and 52.1 million boys, were engaged in child employment, representing 21.6% of all children in the region. Approximately 45% of child labourers, or to 41.4 million children, were engaged in hazardous work that poses direct threats to their health, safety and moral development (ILO-UNICEF, 2020).

The National Bureau of Statistics ([NBS], 2022) reported that 39.2 percent (24,673,485) of children in Nigeria are engaged in child labour, with over 14 million participating in hazardous work, representing 22.9% of children aged 5 to 17years old. Even within Nigeria, there are regional differences. For example, the North-West geopolitical zone has the highest total of children in child labour (6,407,102) and those engaged in hazardous

work (3,266,728). However, the South-East region exhibits the highest percentage of children in these categories, with 49.9% involved in child labour and 32.2% in hazardous work (NBS, 2022). Among states, Cross River has the highest child labour percentage at 67.4%, followed by Yobe at 62.6%. Conversely, Lagos state shows the lowest prevalence at 8.9% for children aged 5 to 17 (NBS, 2022). It can be distilled from the above data that despite decades of international and national efforts aimed at addressing the problem of child labour, the issue remains pervasive and unresolved.

Causes of Child Labour among Almajirai Children

There are several factors responsible for the rise in child labour globally. In the course of explaining one factor, one can end up connecting another factor into the same explanation. This shows how the factors responsible for child labour intersect and reinforce each other. This section therefore examines the causes of child labour.

Poverty

The majority of the leading scholarship on the factors responsible for child labour globally is centred on poverty. Studies in Asia, Africa and Latin America have consistently shown that the main cause of child labour is poverty (Hatim, Abbas, Arshad & Aftab, 2024). According to Kaur and Byard (2021), the usual reason for a child working is the necessity for supplementary household income. In the area of Yeji on the Volta Lake, in Ghana, household poverty, family size, unemployment, and limited job access are significant drivers of child labour (Mensah & Carlo, 2024). It is often known that poor living conditions in the country of origin are the main causes of child labour (Abeje, 2021).

In Nigeria, the proportion of citizens experiencing extreme poverty rose from 34.7% in 2018/2019 to 41.8% in 2022/2023, using the international poverty threshold of \$3.00 per person per day (World Bank, 2025). In addition, Northern Nigeria where this study is situated suffers from poverty more than Southern Nigeria. For example, in 2022/2023, the poverty incidence reached 57.4% in the Northern region and 21.2% in the southern region, compared with 44.7% and 14.9%, respectively, in 2018/2019 (World Bank, 2025). Furthermore, the minimum wage in Nigeria is currently ₦70,000 (less than \$100) per month. This is awfully poor. Worst still, some states are yet to implement the new minimum wage structure which has been signed into law. Besides, there are millions of Nigerians working within the informal sector whose earnings are extremely poor. Due to extreme financial difficulties, people are compelled to send their kids to work in a variety of places such factories, farms, and street hawking. However, in the context of almajiri children in Northern Nigeria, poverty does not fully explain the problem of child labour. Religious belief where parents send male children from rural areas to urban areas to learn Quranic teachings without adequate financial and material support increases their vulnerability and engagement in child labour.

Illiteracy

There is correlation between the education of parents and children involved in child labour. Ugbaja, Isibor, and Muojeku (2015) stated that because the majority of parents are illiterate or ignorant, they unintentionally send their children to middlemen who deceive them, promise them a better life, and then utilize them for dangerous jobs. Other research, however, has demonstrated that even parents with formal education permit their kids to engage in child employment. For instance, a study conducted in Ekiti State, Nigeria, by Oluwagbohunmi and Popoola (2023) has demonstrated that even educated parents, who ought to be aware of the risks involved and teach their illiterate parents, appear to include their children in dangerous jobs that directly jeopardize their moral growth and health. Irrespective of where the argument swings, this study argues that in the context of Zamfara, illiteracy plays a key role in fuelling child labour. For instance, the National Bureau of Statistics (2019) states that North-west Nigeria where Gusau is located has the second highest percentages of both females (55%) and males (40%) with no formal education after North-East in Nigeria. This high level of illiteracy is one of the major drivers of child labour in the study area.

Social-Cultural Factors

Sociocultural factors like polygamy, early marriage, and family conflict have both direct and indirect effects on child labor practices, especially in small-scale gold mining (Joseph, 2023). According to Sherpa (2024) the

normalization of child labor is largely influenced by cultural views and customs. In many communities, work is viewed as an integral part of a child's upbringing, with little consideration given to its detrimental effects on their physical and mental well-being. Besides, in several cultures in Nigeria, many people believe that the girl child should not go to school. Consequently, such girls are pushed into the street to trade while some others end up as domestic servants (Nwazuok & Igwe, 2016).

Insecurity

Several studies have shown that insecurity drives children into child labour. For example, the ILO and UNICEF have established that conflicts and crisis can have negative impact on children, forcing them into child labour, sometimes in its worst forms (ELCT Foundation, 2026). In Zamfara state, the activities of bandits have led to the displacement of 720,115 people at the end of 2022 (Saminu et al. 2022). The report further highlights that 23,520 male children live in camps, while 193,455 live outside official camps (Saminu et al. 2022). With the growing number of displaced children in Zamfara state, one is not surprised that these vulnerable child could be victims of child labour and exploitation.

Forms of Child Labour by almajirai Children

Agriculture

Agriculture is the most common child occupation worldwide. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019) reports that 71% of all children engaged in child labor are employed in agriculture (108 million children in 2016, up 10 million from earlier estimates in 2012). Although family farming is the main source of child labor in agriculture, commercial farming and livestock herding are also included. Even on family farms that are exempt from labor standards regulations, agricultural labor is frequently dangerous by nature (OECD, 2019). In Zamfara State, farming is the main occupation of the people. Therefore, the high number of Almajiri children roaming streets serves as cheap labour to be exploited and used for farming.

Services

Domestic work; collecting money on public transport, washing cars, and automotive repair; and street work, including peddling, begging, and scavenging are done by children in Nigeria. Many children in Nigeria are engaged in forced such as begging; domestic work; street vending etc. (United States Department of Labor, 2022).

Industry

Mining and quarrying of granite and gravel; harvesting sand; artisanal gold mining; and construction includes carrying construction materials (US Department of Labour [USDOL], 2023). Zamfara is one of the states in Nigeria that is blessed with a huge amount of unexploited solid mineral resources (Targba & Dajo, 2021). According to Nigeria Extractive Industry and Transparency Initiative [NEITI], 2020) states that mining is a significant driver of industrialization and development in Nigeria. Despite the huge potentials of the mining industry, report by ILO (2025) paints a sad picture of vulnerable children involved in gold mining with its associated risks. Large reserves of unexplored solid minerals, including gold, are found in Zamfara State, the majority of which are mined illegally. Some of the children use torches affixed to their foreheads while working underground and digging wells. Some are tasked with dragging bulky sacks of dirt under the town's scorching sun, while others just rinse them in the adjacent puddles or the river (Abiodun, 2024).

Impact of Child Labour on the Physical Health and Safety of Almajirai children

Child labour has a multifaceted effect on children. It not only robs them of their childhood but also negatively affects their physical and mental development. Adhad et al. (2021) stated that a sizable percentage of child laborers are forced to work in abusive settings, where they suffer from declining health and financial loss. According to Dinku and Fielding (2020), child labor can rob children of their right to a normal upbringing and negatively impact their future productivity and earning potential. One common theme from the above explanation is that child labour is exploitative, abusive and detrimental to the well-being of children.

Child labour constitutes a violation of essential human rights and hinders children's physical, emotional, and psychological development (Das, 2021). The involvement of children in arduous activities may adversely impact their mental and physical health, as well as their overall well-being (Omorogiuwa, 2020). According to Trong-Anh (2020), children involved in child labour experience mental health challenges, evidenced by peer-related difficulties and diminished prosocial behaviour in both nations. Children working in factories exhibited poor health, characterized by pale complexions, spinal distortion, eye diseases, and a lack of vitality. The excessive physical strain and malnutrition led to weakness and adversely affected their physical and mental development (Ruslan, Inshyn, Yelena & Olena, 2020).

Working can detrimentally affect a child's social development by limiting time spent on peer interaction and communal play. Adolescents working over 20 hours per week are particularly vulnerable to issues like drug abuse and physical aggression, indicating a correlation between excessive work hours and problematic social behavior (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Sexual abuse, exploitation, STDs including HIV/AIDS, and rape are significant risks associated with child labour, adversely affecting educational development through poor school performance, truancy, and dropout rates (Kaur & Byard, 2021). It can be seen from the above that most of the studies reviewed revolved around the impact of child labour in the industrial and formal sectors and its implications for the physical, mental, and social well-being of children. There is limited literature, especially in the socio-religious context of Almajirai children, with a particular focus on their physical health and safety in Northern Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Location of Study

Gusau is a city located in Zamfara State, north-west Nigeria. Gusau also serves as the headquarters of the state as well as a Local Government Area (LGA). According to the Zamfara State Bureau of Statistics (2022), Gusau has a population of 685,670 and covers an area of 3,364 km² (2,090 mi²). The primary occupation of the people in the study area is agriculture. The major ethnic groups in Gusau are Hausa and Fulani. According to the statistics released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022), Gusau is among the 10 poorest states in Nigeria.

Research Design

The study employed a mixed methods designs. The justification for mixed method design is because the collective strengths of both methods provide a better understanding of how child labour practices among Almajirai children in the Gusau local government area of Zamfara State than either types of data alone (Cresswell, 2011). Besides, data confirmed by more than one source is a greater reliability than data from one source.

Population of Study

The target population for this study comprised two categories. The first category consisted of Almajirai children in Gusau local Government. However, since the exact number of almajirai is unknown, the sample size of the study was determined using the proportion method especially when the population of the study is unknown (Rose, Spinks, & Cantoho, 2015). Consequently, the sample size of the study was determined using the following method:

$$n = \frac{4pq}{d^2} = \frac{4 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = \frac{1}{0.0025} = 400$$

Therefore, the population of the study consisted of 400 almajirai children in Gusau Local Government. The second category comprised twelve (15) key informants who were purposively selected on the basis of their extensive knowledge and understanding of the subject matter under investigation.

Sampling Technique

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative sampling techniques to achieve a comprehensive understanding of child labour practices among Almajirai children in the Gusau local government area of Zamfara State.

Quantitative Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique comprising of cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used to select respondents for the study. In the first stage, cluster sampling was used to divide Gusau local government into 11 clusters or council wards. These wards/clusters are Sabon-Gari, Madawaki, Galadima, Mayana, Tudun-Wada, Wonaka, Wanke, Mada, Magami, Rijiya and Ruwan-bore. Therefore, as a result of the problem of banditry and kidnapping in the study area, the 11 council wards were clustered into safe and unsafe clusters. The safe clusters or council wards are Sabon-Gari, Galadima, Madawaki and Tudun-Wada, while the unsafe clusters council wards are Rijiya, Mayana, Wonaka, Wanke, Mada, Magami, and Ruwan-bore. In the last stage, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 400 respondents out of the four safe clusters.

Qualitative Sampling Technique

For the qualitative component, the study purposively selected twelve (12) key informants and stakeholders to complement the quantitative data and provide deeper insight into the child labour practices among Almajirai children in the Gusau local government area of Zamfara State. The participants were chosen based on their extensive knowledge and experience regarding the Almajiri phenomenon. The key informants comprised two (2) government officials, (6) parents, (2) traditional rulers, (3) religious leaders, and (2) civil society organizations who have expert knowledge on the Almajiri system in the study area.

Method of Data Collection

Data for the study was collected using questionnaire and key Informant interview. Questionnaires were given to Almajiri children and the researchers engaged the services of Hausa interpreters who assisted them to fill the questions because they can neither read nor write. Similarly, Key informant Interview (KII) was conducted with key informants such as government officials, parents, traditional rulers, religious leaders, and civil society organizations who have expert knowledge on the Almajiri system in the study area.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Data obtained from the questionnaire was subjected to quantitative analysis using inferential statistical techniques, including tables and percentage distributions. In contrast, data generated through Key Informant Interviews (KII) were analyzed thematically following the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) for the identification and interpretation of patterns and themes within qualitative data. Subsequently, findings from both the quantitative and qualitative strands were triangulated to provide a more comprehensive and better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

RESULT

This section presents and analyses data on child labour practices among almajirai children in Gusau Local Government.

Socio –Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section discusses the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents such as sex, age, education and religion.

Table 1: Socio –Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable		Frequency(f)	Percent (%)
Sex	Male	347	96.9
	Female	11	3.1
	Total	358	100
Age	4-7	122	34.1
	8-12	162	45.3
	13-15	53	14.8

	16 &above Total	21 358	5.8 100
Education	No schooling	282	78.8
	Primary	76	21.2
	Secondary	0	0
	Tertiary	0	0
	Total	358	100
Religion	Islam	358	100
	Christian	0	0
	Others	0	0
	Total	358	100

Source: Field survey 2025

The data in table 1 showed that majority of the respondents represented by 96.9 % (347) were males while 3.1% (11) were females. The dominance of males in study was because most of the almajirai children on the street are males. On age distribution, majority of respondents represented by 45.3% (162) were between 8-12 years. This was followed by those between 4-7years with 34.1% (122). Similarly, those between 13-16years constituted 14.8% (53) of the sampled population while who were 17years and above were 5.8% (21). On educational distribution, majority of respondents represented by 78.8% (282) had no formal education. Furthermore, 21.1% (76) of the respondents had primary education. In terms of religious affiliation, all the respondents' representing 100% (358) were adherents of Islamic religion.

Table 2: Prevalence of Child labour Practices among Almajirai children

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low	76	21.2
Moderate	28	7.8
High	254	70.9
Total	358	100.0

Source: Field survey 2025

The data in table 2 showed that the prevalence of child labour practices among almajiri children in Gusau local government area was high. This is in view of the fact that data obtained from the field indicated that majority of respondents represented by 70.9% (254) agreed that they were engaged in child labour. In the same vein, 21.2% of the respondents stated that the number of almajirai children involved in child labour was low while 7.8% (28) of the respondents were of the opinion that the prevalence was moderate.

The interview conducted with key informants also confirmed that the prevalence of child labour in Gusau Metropolis was high. One of the respondents expressed her opinion as follows: "Where we live here, I keep seeing the number of almajiri children increasing everyday" [Parent, Female, 43years, Samaru Area, 15th February, 2026].

Another Non-governmental Organization involved in supporting vulnerable children in Gusau also shared the same view that the prevalence of child labour was high in Gusau. The NGO stated that: "There is no doubt that child labour among Almajiri children is common in this state. Every day, we see children in the markets and parks begging for money or food" [NGO, 17th March, 2026].

Another respondent stated that:

We have now found ourselves in a situation where we see an increase in almajiri children engaging in some menial activities just to survive. The reason is because parents who send these children to learn no longer take care of their needs [Islamic preacher, male, 47, 24th March, 2026]

We can infer from both the quantitative and qualitative data presented that the prevalence of child labour among

almajiri children is high in Gusau metropolis. This means that many children are engaged in labour and this can expose them to exploitation and limited educational opportunities.

Table 3: Causes of Child labour among Almajirai children

Variable	Frequency(f)	Percent (%)
Poverty	116	32.4
Religious/Cultural beliefs	178	49.7
Broken Homes/Divorce	53	14.8
Others	11	3.1
Total	358	100.0

Source: Field survey 2025

The data in table 3 showed that the key drivers of child labour among almajarai children in Gusau local government were religious/cultural beliefs and poverty. This is evident because from the data collected, 49.7% (178) and 32.4% (116) were of the view that religious beliefs and poverty were responsible for the involvement of almajarai children in child labour. Other causes of child labour among almajarai children as identified by the respondents were broken homes/divorce 14.8% (53) and other factors 3.1% (11).

Data elicited through the interview also confirmed that the intersection between religious/cultural beliefs and poverty is pushing almajiri children into child labour. One of the parents interviewed shared his views as follows:

Our culture here in Northern Nigeria is pushing the children into child labour. Parents take children to Almajiri schools without providing for their needs. They believe that begging by the children is part of the learning process in the Almajiri system [Teacher, 38, Male, Tudun-wada, 16th March, 2026]

The implication of the above interview is that when these beg and can't get enough, they adopt other survival strategies such as working for people to take care of themselves.

One of the NGO officials in Gusau metropolis provided a clearer picture of how religious beliefs and poverty reinforces each in exacerbating child labour among almajiri children.

I believe that poverty and religious strongly contribute to child labour among Almajiri children in Zamfara state. In many communities, poverty forces parents to rely on the Almajiri system, while some cultural and religious perceptions make people see child begging as part of religious training [NGO Representative, 8th March, 2026).

It can be distilled from the above data that responses from the two sources of data attest to the fact that poverty interacts with religious beliefs in sustaining child labour among almajiri children in the study area.

Table 4: Pattern of Child labour Practices among Almajiri children.

Variable	Frequency(f)	Percent (%)
Unpaid family work	28	7.8
Working on people's farm	104	29.1
Breaking up granite and gravels	18	5.0
Hawking on the street	139	38.8
Working in people's houses	69	19.3
Total	358	100.0

Source: Field survey 2025

Table 4 showed that majority of the almajarai children representing 38.8% (139) were involved in hawking wares on the street for people, 29.1% (104) worked on people's farms, 19.3% (69) work in people's homes as house

helps. Similarly, 7.8% (28) do some unpaid family work without being paid while 5.0% (18) find their way to quarry sites to crush either gravel or granites.

A journalist who was interview explained that:

I work as a journalist in this town. I can tell you that children who ordinarily should be in school learning are seen working on people's farms, hawking on the streets and doing domestic chores for people [Journalist, Male, 29th March, 2026].

Similarly, an NGO representative affirmed that: "In our work, we have been seeing children hawking on the streets and doing domestic work for families instead of being in school".[NGO representative 13th March, 2026].

A parent in the study area also expressed here opinion as follows:

Most of the almajiri children in my area work in people's homes and farms. Due to hunger, before someone gives them food, they would ask them to do some work for them in exchange for food [17th March, 2026].

It can be concluded based on the evidence from the data gathered from the questionnaire and the interview that the pattern of child labour among almajiri children oscillate around domestic work, farm work and hawking on the streets and motor parks.

Table 5: Impact of Child Labour on the wellbeing of Almajirai Children

Variable	Frequency(f)	Percent (%)
Almajiri children suffer from physical abuse such as corporal punishment	54	15.1
Child labour exposures almajirai children to injuries/harm	157	43.9
Almajirai children suffer from emotional abuse such as demeaning, verbal abuse, name calling and uncomplimentary remarks	80	22.3
Child labour affects almajirai children's access to education	67	18.7
Total	358	100.0

Source: Field survey 2025

Table 5 above showed that majority of the respondents represented by 43.9% (157) agreed that they have suffered from injuries/harm working for people, 22.3 % (80) were of the view that they have suffered from emotional abuse while working for people in form of name calling, verbal abuse and uncomplimentary comments. Similarly, 18.7% (67) of the respondents were of the opinion that child labour limited their chances of going to school while 15.1% (54) said they have suffered from physical abuse in the hands of the people they work for.

Data generated from the interview from key informants confirmed that child labour negative affects the health and wellbeing of Almajiri children. One of the parents interviewed stated that:

I have seen where almajiri was hawking on the road and was knocked down by a moving vehicle. He had injuries and was taken to the hospital. After that day, nobody heard about the incidence again [Parent, Male, 36years old, 25th March, 2026].

One of the representative of the NGOs stated that:

Based on what we see these children go through every day, these children involved in street hawking are exposed to accidents, harsh weather, and physical tiredness, which has a serious impact on their health and well-being [NGO representative, 8th March, 2026].

In the view of one of the journalists interviewed, some individuals responsible for teaching almajiri children often take them to work on farms. The journalist noted that exposure to harsh weather conditions negatively affects the children's health and physical well-being.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the data presented and discussed, it is obvious that there is a high prevalence of child labour among Almajiri children in the Gusau local government area. This is not surprising because the level of neglect and abandonment of almajirai may have accounted for this high level of involvement in child labour. The findings of the study agree with Weldeyesus and Alemu (2024) that child labour was prevalent and with high intensity among children in the rural settlements of Raya-Kobo and Angot in Ethiopia. Similarly, the NBS (2022) and the ILO (2022) reports show that the North-West geopolitical zone, where Gusau is located, has the highest total number of children in child labour (6,407,102) and hazardous work (3,266,728). The high prevalence of child labour implies that more children are roaming the streets, markets, and motor parks instead of being enrolled in school.

It was also clear from the study that religious/cultural practices and poverty were the major push factors for child labour among almajirai children in the study area. These two factors cannot be treated as independent causes of child labour in the context of this study. It is true that religious teachings encourage parents to send their children for Islamic education, many poor families are unable to provide for the children's basic needs while studying. As a result, the children often engage in activities such as hawking, farm work, or other forms of labour to survive. The implication here is that poverty and religion intersect in the almajiri system when children sent for religious education are forced into labour due to the inability of poor parents to support them financially.

The study also observed that the category of child labour activities engaged in by the almajirai children in Gusau local government revolved around hawking on the streets, working on people's farm and serving as house helps in people's homes. This is expected because almajirai children have no known places as their homes which explain why they are always on streets selling wares for people and house helps. In addition, the motto of Zamfara state is "farming is our pride" and the primary occupation of the people is farming. Therefore, the thousands of Almajiri children on streets are served as cheap labour to be exploited and used for farming activities. The findings of this study agrees with those of U.S. Embassy Abuja (2018, 2019), Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity (2013) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR, 2018) that most children in child labour work in the agricultural sector, mining, hawk on the street and work as house helps in poor countries of the world.

The findings of the study also showed that child labour had negative consequences on almajirai children particularly by exposing them to injuries/accidents while hawking on the streets and working on people's farms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The study recommends that the parents/guardians, religious/community leaders who are the major stakeholders in the almajirai system of education should be enlightened/sensitized to understand that in view of the speed and direction to which the society is headed, Qur'anic education alone cannot guarantee a secured future for their children. There is therefore, the need to push for reforms that will encourage parents to send their children to formal schools as well.
- ii. Poverty remains a key driver of child labour among Almajiri children in Nigeria. In a country with narrow economic opportunities, parents inability to cater for the needs of the family forces children into child labour. Therefore, government can assist by offering small business loans, farming support, or startup grants for parents.
- iii. Working together as a team is very important in achieving set objectives. While the Federal government has deployed resources in building almajirai schools with modern learning facilities to pave way for the integration of almajirai schools with the Universal Basic Education programme, most state governments in the Northern part of Nigeria have not done their part to ensure the success of the policy. It is therefore recommended that state governments should work in tandem with the federal government to ensure the integration of almajirai schools with the Universal Basic Education programme.
- iv. There are laws in Nigeria that stipulate sanctions for parents who refuse to send their children to school. Therefore, parents who refuse to send their children/wards to school in Gusau LGA and Zamfara State and Nigeria in general should be sanctioned to serve as a deterrent to others.

REFERENCES

1. AbdulQadir, I. A. (2003). *The almajiri system of education in Nigeria today?* Paper presented at the 21st convocation of Bayero University Kano. <http://www.gamji.com/index.php/SJPAS/article/view/637>
2. Abeje, A. (2021). Causes and effects of rural–urban migration in Ethiopia: A case study from Amhara Region. *African Studies*, 80(1), 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2021.1904833>
3. Abiodu, J. (2024). Nigerian child labourers toiling to make ends meet from illegal gold mining. <https://humanglemedia.com/nigerian-child-labourers-toiling-to-make-ends-meet-from-illegal-gold-mining/>
4. Adeagbo, J. O., & Mosobalaje, R. O. (2023). Poverty, child labour and access to schooling in Oyo State. *African Journal of Educational Management*, 24(1), 144–166.
5. Agbo, M. C. (2017). The health and educational consequences of child labour in Nigeria. *Health Science Journal*, 11, 1.
6. Ahad, M. A., Chowdhury, M., Parry, Y. K., & Willis, E. (2021). Urban child labor in Bangladesh: Determinants and its possible impacts on health and education. *Social Sciences*, 10, 107. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10030107>
7. Ahmad, S., Huifang, W., Akhtar, S., Maqsood, S., & Imran, S. (2020). An analytical study of child labour in rural Punjab. *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences*, 43(1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.4038/sljss.v43i1.7730>
8. Babale, K. J. (2003). Reform of almajiri system for Nigeria vision 2020. *Farfaru Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 3, 519–524.
9. Bourdillon, M., & Carothers, R. (2019). Policy on children’s work and labor. *Children & Society*, 33, 387–395.
10. Das, B. (2021). Ergonomic exposure and occupational injuries among child workers. *Toxicology and Industrial Health*, 37(8), 481–495. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07482337211025366>
11. Diamond, J. (2012). *The world before yesterday*. Viking Press.
12. Dominic, G. M., & Carlo, D. P. (2024). Socioeconomic determinants of child labour in Ghana. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 14(9), 1110–1137.
13. Ekpenyong, S. N., & Sibiri, A. E. (2011). Street trading and child labour. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 4(1), 36–46.
14. Enebe, N. O., Enebe, J. T., & Agunwa, C. C. (2021). Child labour among students in Enugu. *BMC Public Health*, 21, 1339. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11429-w>
15. Faluyi, B. O., & Faluyi, V. O. (2024). Social analysis of child labor in Nasarawa State. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(11), 1061–1071. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8110085>
16. Gowland, R. L., et al. (2023). Health consequences of child labour in 19th century England. *PLoS One*, 18(5), e0284970. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0284970>
17. Government of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity. (2013). *List of hazardous child labour in Nigeria*. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-addis_ababa/---ilo-abuja/documents/publication/wcms_300829.pdf
18. Haque, M. A., Moniruzzaman, S., Janson, S., Rahman, A. F., Mashreky, S. R., & Eriksson, U. B. (2021). Psychological abuse and neglect in rural Bangladesh. *Acta Paediatrica*, 110, 257–264.
19. Hatim, M., et al. (2024). Poverty, illiteracy, and child labour in Pakistan. *Governance and Society Review*, 3(1), 83–99. <https://doi.org/10.32350/gsr.31.05>
20. Heady, C. (2000). Effect of child labour on learning achievement. *Innocenti Working Paper No. 79*.
21. Idris, A. (2016). Almajiri integrated schools in Northern Nigeria. *Current Studies in Comparative Education, Science and Technology*, 3(3), 145–158.
22. International Labour Organization. (2017). *Global estimates of child labour*.
23. International Labour Organization. (2021). *Child labour*.
24. International Labour Organization. (2022). *Child labour in Nigeria: At a glance*.
25. International Labour Organization. (2025). Safe mining practices and child protection in Nigeria.
26. International Labour Organization & United Nations Children’s Fund. (2024). *Global estimates of child labour 2024*.
27. Joseph, G. M. (2023). Socio-cultural determinants of child labour in Tanzania. *South Asian Journal of*

- Social Studies and Economics*, 20(4), 53–67. <https://doi.org/10.9734/sajsse/2023/v20i4742>
28. Kovalenko, R., et al. (2020). Occupational safety in 19th century Europe. *Labor History*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2020.1775796>
 29. Łukasiewicz, D. (2023). Models of child labour in history. *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*, 41(2), 145–164.
 30. Muhammad, M., Magaji, S., & Ismail, Y. (2025). Child labour and trafficking in Gombe State. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(8), 2568–2584.
 31. National Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *Nigerian child labour survey 2022*.
 32. National Population Commission (Nigeria) & ICF. (2019). *Nigeria demographic and health survey 2018*.
 33. Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. (2020). *Solid minerals landscape in Nigeria*.
 34. Nwazuo, A. N., & Igwe, C. A. (2016). Worst forms of child labour in Nigeria. *Beijing Law Review*, 7(1), 69–82.
 35. Oluwagbohunmi, M. F., & Popoola, E. O. (2023). Educated parents and child labour in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 16, 1.
 36. Omorogiuwa, T. B. E. (2020). Health issues of child labourers. *Social Work in Public Health*, 35(8), 679–688.
 37. Schildkrout, E. (2002). Age and gender roles in Hausa society. *Childhood*, 9(3), 342–368.
 38. Sherpa, F. (2024). Socioeconomic condition of child labour in Nepal. *South Asian Journal of Research & Innovation*, 11(1–2), 104–106.
 39. Targba, A., & Dajo, U. (2021). Quarrying and poverty reduction in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Agricultural Extension, Economics & Sociology*, 39(3), 75–84.
 40. Tariq, B., & Ab-Rahim, R. (2020). Trade and child labor: A review. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 10(1).
 41. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2018, September 10). *End of visit statement on Nigeria* by Maria Grazia Giammarinaro. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23526&LangID=E>
 42. United Nations Children’s Fund. (2007). *Child labour, education and policy options*.
 43. United States Department of Labor. (2023). *Findings on the worst forms of child labor: Nigeria*.
 44. U.S. Embassy Abuja. (2019, March 5). *Reporting*.
 45. Ugbaja, M. O., Isibor, A. C., & Muojeku, A. C. (2015). Educational status and child labour in Nigeria. *American Academic & Scholarly Research Journal*, 7(5), 135–142.
 46. Weldeyesus, M. A., & Alemu, B. A. (2024). Child labour in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 18, 4.
 47. World Bank. (2025). *Poverty and equity brief*.