


The Almajiri System of Education in Lafia, Nigeria: Addressing the Challenges, Impact and Way Forward to Education Development



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ABSTRACT

This study presents the place of the Almajiri system of education in Lafia, Nassarawa State, Nigeria. It traced the background history of Lafia and the development of the Almajiri system of education in the state. The researchers documented the mode and teaching methodology as well as processes of the Almajiri education system in Lafia. Consequently, this study, which was developed using primary data that was collected from field interviews, found that there are a number of misconceptions and abuses within the Almajiri system of education. The study recommends multiple strategies for strengthening the education system for the overall human capital development of the country. The study is significant considering the population of people that constitute the Almajiri population in the state, as well as their potential contribution to societal building when empowered intellectually.

Keywords: *Almajiri, education, Malam, Quran, Lafia*

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Publication History

Received:

28th June, 2025

Accepted:

20th October, 2025.

Published:

30th December, 2025.

To Cite this Article:

Onu, John Chimezie , and Kelechi Johnmary Ani. "The Almajiri System of Education In Lafia, Nigeria: Addressing the Challenges, Impact and Way Forward to Education Development." *Journal of Education and Learning Technology* 6, no. 12 (2025): 1393 - 1401.
<https://doi.org/10.38159/jelt.202561212>

INTRODUCTION

Almajiri is a concept used to identify abandoned children in Northern Nigeria who fend for themselves through begging and live their lives in pursuit of Islamic knowledge. To become an Almajiri entails one leaving one's immediate nativity and moving far away to a new environment in search of emancipation intellectually and socially under an Islamic tutor. Therefore, this system of acquiring Islamic knowledge has come to be known as the Almajiri system of education. This system of education has affected the socio-economic development of northern Nigeria, including Nasarawa state. Just like the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, in which the slaves constituted a nuisance to society after the advent of the industrial revolution.

The Almajiri live and sleep together in a closed environment. Within the era of COVID-19, the Almajiri were believed to be an immediate target of the virus, considering that they lived in crowded rooms in which they slept. Therefore, the nineteen states of northern Nigeria repatriated them to their respective states of origin. However, this development, as good as it may look, was not a success story, as there are still elements of the Almajiris wandering about the streets, stationed at motor parks, marketplaces, eateries, going from house to house with their plates in their hands begging for alms and food to eat.

One cannot talk about the socio-economic underdevelopment of Nasarawa state and the north-central geopolitical region of Nigeria without a reference to the Almajiri system of education as a major contributing factor to this socio-economic upheaval. Consequently, this study focuses on identifying the

current challenges facing the Almajiri system of education in Lafia at a time when there is institutional neglect of this group of Nigerians by their parents and the government.

The study is divided into a number of sections. The first section is the introduction. It is followed by the methodology section, which presents the research design. The study then records the background of educational development in Nasarawa. This is followed by the presentation of findings on the Almajiri system of education and the strategies for educational development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Almajiri System of Education

The origin of the Almajiri system of education can be traced to the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and the unveiling of the Quran to him. Muhammed, the great Prophet, was born at Makkah in the ruling and aristocratic clan of the Quraysh, a branch of the Ismailite family. His father, Abdullah, was the youngest son of the then chief of the Quraysh, Abdul Muttalib. Abdullah was married to Aminah, a daughter of Wahhab of the Bznu Zohra clan. There are some differences as to the date of the birth of the Prophet. The accepted view is that he was born in 571 A.D. The child was named Ahmad by his mother and Muhammed by his grandfather (Rahim 2001). After his marriage to Khadijah, Muhammed frequently visited a cave of Hera, a small mountain not far from Makkah, and devoted himself to meditation. He would spend one month of every year in deep meditation in the Hera cave. He thought of the wretched condition of the people, their misbeliefs and social evils, and sought divine light and guidance to lead them to the path of true religion and morality and a better and healthier social order and system.

Muhammed mediated at Hera for fifteen years, yearning for truth and divine guidance. At last, the truth and divine guidance came down to him. One night in the month of Ramadhan, as he lay in the cave, wrapped in his mantle, a voice came to him and bade him read. He trembled with awe and said that he could not read. Asked the second time, he made the same reply. When the third time the voice commanded him to read, he read the verse of the Quran which begins with "Iqra bi-isme Rabbikallazi Khalaq (Read in the name of the Lord who created...). Muhammed became a prophet and at this time was aged forty (610 A.D). After this first revelation, the verses of the Quran were revealed to Prophet Muhammed during the twenty-two years of his prophetic career. The Quran is the fundamental of Islam and of an ideal social order. Islam enjoins its followers to lead a pure, simple and decent life. The believers of this new faith are called Muslims.¹

The word Almajiri is derived from the Arabic word Al, which means God (A Community Leader Interviewed). It also means an emigrant (Muhajurum in Arabic). Muhajurum is someone who leaves his place of origin for another location in search of knowledge (A Community Leader Interviewed). Therefore, during the time of Prophet Muhammed, there were people who devoted their time and whose only job and duty was to read and recite the Quran as it had been handed over to the Prophet by Angels (A Community Leader Interviewed). However, its development as a system of education can be traced to the death of the Prophet Muhammed. Before the Almajiri system of education, people recited the Quran in the wrong way (A Community Leader Interviewed). Therefore, there was a need to create a system in which people would be taught the recitation of the Quran. This led to the origin of the Almajiri system of education. The Almajiri system of education trains young Muslims about the system of their religion, starting from the Quran (A Community Leader Interviewed). The Hausa name is called the Tsangayya system of education.

The Almajiri system of education is supported by several passages in the Quran. A notable example is Quran 9:127, which enjoins Muslims to seek knowledge; "A company of every part should go forth to gain sound knowledge in religion to enable them to teach their people when they come back to them". In several hadith narrations, the Prophet was reported to have said: "Go ease the way to paradise for him who seeks knowledge", "Whoever follows the road to knowledge Allah will show him the road to paradise."² The Prophet also opined that one can seek knowledge as far as China.

¹ A Rahim, *Islamic History* (Islamic Publication Bureau , 2001).

² N. Cheta, "History of the Almajiri System in Nigeria," *The Guardian*, May 29, 2019, <https://m.guardian.ng/features/history-of-the-almajiri-system-in-nigeria/amp/>.

It is germane to state that the Kambari people were the first to accept Islam in Nigeria and were learned in Arabic education. Thus, its conquest of Lafia marked the introduction of Islam in Lafia and also Islamic centers, which taught other new converts on the tenets and principles of Islam. Therefore, due to the vast knowledge of the Kanuri settlers in Lafia in the Quran, parents who could not send their children to Borno or other advanced Islamic centers to learn and recite the Quran under the tutorship of Mallams, sent their children between the age of 4-12 to the Lafia centers (A Community Leader Interviewed). However, it is pertinent to note that another reason that led to the rise of Lafia Islamic centers and why Muslim parents sent their children to Lafia centers was due to the fact that the means of economic survival and well-being are relatively low in Lafia compared to other Islamic centers in northern Nigeria (A Community Leader Interviewed).

The term, in recent times, has expanded to refer to any young person who begs on the streets and does not attend a secular school.³ This has also extended to include begging for food in the neighbourhood or from house to house after daily recitation of the Quran. The Almajirai move around sometimes on bare feet and in dirty clothes, sometimes in a company of their fellow learners, carrying plates. This is because their parents sent them to these schools without providing the necessary amenities to keep them healthy while learning the Quran. Many people give 'sadaka' to Almajirai on a daily basis, seeking divine reward and protection. Most Mallams were educated in the Almajiri system of education, and they do not receive a salary but depend financially on the alms of the community and the work of the Almajirai.⁴

Background of Nasarawa State and Almajiri System Of Education

What is now known and called Nasarawa State was, before October 1, 1996, part of Plateau and Benue states and commonly referred to as "Lower Plateau". In 1902, the British colonial administration brought together much of what is now Nasarawa State under the Nasarawa Province, but parts of the area (Lafia, Nasarawa and Keffi) were later merged with Benue Province in 1934. In 1967, the Provinces of Plateau and Benue were merged to form Benue-Plateau State by the government of General Yakubu Gowon. But the government of General Murtala Muhammed later split the state into Benue and Plateau in 1976, and the country was split into nineteen states.

The struggle for the creation of Nasarawa State is believed to have actually started as far back as 1976, when the desire for a state led the people to clamour for the creation of Gurara State. However, when the Federal government constituted a panel chaired by Justice Ayo Irikefe for the creation of states, the proposed Gurara State did not see the light of day because it did not enjoy the support and goodwill of many people who preferred to remain in Plateau State. However, some people are of the opinion that the movement did not see the light of day because it had some religious undertones. Be that as it may, the struggle took another dimension in the Second Republic (1979-1983) when Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was the president of Nigeria, and Solomon Daushep Lar of the Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP) was the governor of Plateau state. Consequently, separate movements fronting for the creation of the state emerged. One was fronting for Middle Belt creation, the other was fronting for 'Nasarawa State creation'.⁵ However, when the government of Shehu Shagari was overthrown in a military coup in 1983, General Muhammadu Buhari took over the leadership of the country, and the agitation for the creation of Nasarawa state subsided. This was only revived when General Sani Abacha assumed office as Head of State in 1993. The movement continued, and meetings were held at various times and in different parts of the region to keep alive the dream for a new state. With the emergence of Abacha, there was a general agitation for the creation of more states and local government areas across the federation. This, therefore, resuscitated the clamour for the creation of a new state with more vigour. Nonetheless, this time around, those pushing for the creation of Nasarawa state were divided. A group wanted Nasarawa State with its headquarters in Akwanga, while another wanted Nasarawa State with its headquarters in Lafia, as agreed in the memo submitted to the National Assembly in 1982. In some quarters, it is believed that the ethnic bond between the late Emir of Lafia, Dr. Isah Mustapha Agwai 1

³ Cheta, "History of the Almajiri System in Nigeria."

⁴ O. Akali, "The Almajiri in Northern Nigeria: Militancy, Perceptions, Challenges and State Policies," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 5, no. 2 (2015): 128–42, <https://doi.org/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.5.2.128>.

⁵ L.M. Azige, *Nasarawa @ 21: The Journey of a People* (Lafia: Gomis Computers, 2017).

and the then Head of state and government, General Sani Abacha (who were both Kanuri) also contributed to the creation of the state. It is held that the Emir convinced Abacha that the creation of Nasarawa State would empower his fellow tribesmen who had migrated to Lafia and were seeking political relevance.⁶ This also made it possible for the creation of Nasarawa State with its capital in Lafia.

The adoption of the name Nasarawa for the new state to be created was symbolic and historical. Nasarawa was derived from the Hausa word Nasara, which means ‘victory’, and which symbolizes the achievement of freedom and self-determination after a protracted struggle that lasted for about twenty years (1976-1996). The second reason the name Nasarawa was adopted was historical. It is equally significant to note that from the earliest colonial days up to the time of amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, the whole of this region, now covered by Nasarawa state, was part of Nasarawa Province.⁷ Thus, on October 1, 1996, the then military regime of the late General Sani Abacha created Nasarawa State with its capital in Lafia, from the old Plateau State. This day was significant because Nigeria, as an independent nation, celebrated its thirty-six years of political independence from its erstwhile colonial power (Britain).

METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitative research. It made use of both primary and secondary sources. Under its primary sources, oral interviews were extensively conducted by the researcher in Lafia Local Government Area in order to unveil the nature of the Almajiri system of education in Nasarawa State and its contributions to the economic, religious, political, and socio-cultural development and underdevelopment of the state. The study also made use of newspapers, both print and online. The researcher also used data from books, articles and works by corporate organisations.

The participants interviewed in the course of the research are presented in Table 1.1 below:

s/n	Names	Age	Place(s)	Date interviewed	Status/Occupation	Mode Of Interview
1	Abubakar Ismail	≈28	Makarantan Mallam Musa, Kankaran Rapi	July 31st, 2021	An Almajiri Student In Makarantan Mallam Musa, Kankaran Rapi, Lafia.	Direct
2	Alaramma Abdulkadr	≈75	At his home, Bakin Dogo	August 3rd, 2021	An Islamic cleric and owner of a well-equipped Almajiri school.	Direct
3	Aliyu Umar C	≈31	At his home, Ochefu Crescent	July 28th, 2021.	Self-employed and a graduate of Nasarawa State University.	Direct
4	Dan’Maje Tijani	≈38	At his wife’s place, beside Sandaje Hotel, the Millionaire's Quarters	July 28th, 2021	A civil servant who works under the Ministry of Education, Lafia, Nasarawa State.	Direct
5	Dr Muhammed Tanko Aliyu	≈45	At his office in the Faculty of Arts, Federal University, Lafia	August 3rd, 2021	A lecturer and the Head of Department, Islamic Studies, Federal University, Lafia.	Direct

⁶ Azige, *Nasarawa @ 21: The Journey of a People*.

⁷ Azige, *Nasarawa @ 21: The Journey of a People*.

6	Dr Yusuf	c43	At his office in the Faculty of Arts, Federal University, Lafia	August 2nd, 2021	A lecturer in the Department of Islamic Studies, Federal University, Lafia.	Direct
7	Mallam Abubakar Dahiru	c41	At Aunty Dele College, Shinge, Lafia	July 28th, 2021	A Mallam who teaches Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) at Aunty Dele College, Shinge, Lafia.	Direct
8	Mallam Hassan Mai Dakari Lafia	c50	Makarantan Mallam Hassan Kukabinsa, Lafia	July 31st, 2021	A Mallam who inherited an Almajiri school from his father.	Direct
9	Mallam Rabi	c38	Makarantan Mallam Rabi, Kofar Kaura, Lafia	July 31st, 2021	An Islamic Mallam who owns an Almajiri school and is also a student of Federal University, Lafia, Department of Science Laboratory Technology (SLT).	Direct
10	Umar Muhammed Kwasau	c28	At his school, the Federal University, Lafia	July 29th, 2021	Formerly an Almajiri boy and now a student of Federal University, Lafia, Department of History and International Studies.	Direct

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Almajiri school system, or system of education, is quite distinct and different from the Islamic school (A Community Leader Interviewed). Although both involve the learning of Islamic values, principles, ethics and morals. It is pertinent to note that, unlike the Almajiri system of education, Islamic education is taught in the conventional educational school system. It is also pertinent to note that separate and independent Islamic educational schools exist. What seems to distinguish Islamic schools and Almajiri schools is in the area of operation, such as what is being taught and the language of communication. It is of importance to note that Islamic education taught in conventional schools or that Islamic schools incorporate Western subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and geography and English and other languages in teaching, which is alien to Islam. In the Almajiri system, however, it is purely the Quran and the use of the Arabic language in propagating Islamic principles. The Almajiri school system can be classified into levels (A Community Leader Interviewed). Just like what is obtainable in the Western system, whereby a child starts from crèche level and continues through the nursery, primary, secondary and university level. Almajirai are categorized into three classes: firstly, Gardi, which is an adult class; secondly, Titibiri, which is an adolescent class; and thirdly, Kolo, which is an infant class. The schedule of the Almajiri educational system is divided into three sessions: morning session (5am-11am), afternoon (2pm-4pm) and the night session (7pm-10pm).⁸ The Almajirai usually began their studies between the ages of 3 and 12, to learn about Islamic principles, values, and cultures

⁸ Iro Aghedo and James Eke Surulola, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in Northern Nigeria," *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies* 28, no. 3 (2013): 97-123.

in an Almajiri school, either by leaving their immediate environment to well-known Islamic centers or within their environment under the guardianship of a teacher.⁹

The Quran is subdivided into 60 segments, which are further classified into 10 verses. At first, the child is taught the 10 lowest verses, which he is expected to know as a beginner. Furthermore, the child is given a writing slate and taught how to write the Quranic alphabet. During this period, the child progresses to writing and reading the Quran on the writing slate assigned to him. After completing the 60 segments of the Quran, the child can now be classified as a secondary school graduate. In order to have mastery of the Quran, the child goes back and starts cramming the 60 segments to the point of reciting them off-hand. After this process is achieved, he can now write the Quran off-hand and take it to his Mallam for necessary corrections. This stage continues until professionalism (i.e writing and reciting the Quran) is attained (A Community Leader Interviewed). However, it is pertinent to note that, when not engaged, the Almajiri students engaged in other menial jobs in order to assist themselves in their studies. Amongst these jobs are shoe repair, washing of clothes, fetching water, and wheelbarrow pushing (A Community Leader Interviewed). During the rainy season, most of the Almajiri children usually go to the hinterland in order to work on farmlands and get paid (A Community Leader Interviewed). Therefore, they are not always available during the rainy season, but are available during the dry season. In Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, most of the students in Makarantan Mallam Musa and Mallam Rabi, as well as Makarantan Alamma Abdulkadr, have gone into the hinterland for farming activities in order to assist themselves in their studies. In 2006, it was estimated that over seven million males a year were matriculating into Quranic schools in northern Nigeria. Currently, there are 9.5 million Almajirai in northern Nigeria. About half of these are domiciled in the core northeast geopolitical zone.¹⁰ In Lafia Local Government Area alone, there are close to fifty Almajiri schools, each numbering eighty students.

A lot of misconceptions and abuse exist about the Almajiri system of education in northern Nigeria. Colloquially, the term has expanded to refer to any young person who begs on the streets and does not attend a secular school.¹¹ A lot of people think that Almajiri means begging. However, it is germane to state that Islam does not support begging; however, it is allowed under critical conditions or circumstances, such as begging in order to overcome a problem or challenge or when one's house was razed by fire or when one's properties are stolen (A Community Leader Interviewed). The students are exposed to begging and some social vices, which are not part of it and have crept into this system of education. It has been abused by a number of people, starting from the British. The British relegated the system to the background and discouraged people of northern Nigeria from attending because they wanted to change the identity of the Muslims. When they left, their successors were western-minded, and the former left the system without any rehabilitation, reconstruction or any kind of modification. Therefore, it became the affair of the society and their teachers as part of their religious obligations, and they do not care about any support from the government or society. The society has taken it upon itself to assist the Mallams who volunteered to teach their wards how to read and write the glorious Quran correctly. When the responsibility has become that of the Mallams to take care of the feeding of these children, and the former has no means to sustain them, they have no option but to send these children to beg for food (A Community Leader Interviewed).

However, some scholars have argued that sending somebody to go and beg was, at the beginning, a process of imparting humility and obedience in these children. When somebody reads through the Quran, they become noble in the eyes of Muslims. So, for him not to feel big and arrogant, his teachers will ask him to go and beg just as a remedial mechanism from arrogance and boastfulness. This may be true in some areas like Borno, Yobe. It may also be true that this begging is for survival because many parents send their children to these Almajiri schools without any follow-up or responsibility. They do not assist their teachers in taking care of their children; no stipend is attached or allowances given to their teachers. The Mallams do not have the wherewithal to feed all the students. It is either that he takes them to his farm and they assist him to get what they will eat, or if he does not have a farm, he sends

⁹ Akali, "The Almajiri in Northern in Nigeria: Militancy, Perceptions, Challenges and State Policies."

¹⁰ Aghedo and Surulola, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in Northern Nigeria."

¹¹ Cheta, "History of the Almajiri System in Nigeria."

them out to beg for food to eat. Until recently, it was only food they begged for and came back to continue their study (A Community Leader Interviewed). But then, with the increase in the insecurity in the nation, when they go out to look for food, they also look for money, and in some cases, become vulnerable to undesirable elements in the society, and they are used as foot-soldiers for insecurity, insurrection and other social vices, as has been mentioned in some cases. Many stakeholders have identified the time bomb of neglecting the Almajirai and their teachers (A Community Leader Interviewed).

It is germane to state that not everyone who begs on the streets, moves from house to house, is an Almajirai. Some individuals have taken advantage of begging attached to this system to perpetrate some social vices, such as stealing and rape, in society. Therefore, the Almajiri system of education, which was begun by Prophet Muhammed, has gone from normal to an anomaly. Therefore, there is a need for a restructuring, rehabilitation and modification of this system of education in order to suit the changing and dynamic human environment and social milieu.

With this system of education in place, many northern parents do not care for their role in a child's upbringing. This is because the child can easily be sent to acquire Islamic knowledge in far places. Thus, the parents see no need for child planning in order to adequately cater for their children. Therefore, this has resulted in an increase in the natality rate in northern Nigeria. This is because most parents marry as many as four wives and have children numbering about fifteen to twenty without adequately taking care of them. This system of education serves as a means for shouldering most of their parental responsibility towards their children. Thus, they send their children to these schools with fewer worries because they believe that it is part of fulfilling their societal responsibility to their children.

The Almajiri system has played an important role in the area of the economy. This is because during the rainy season, most of these students do go into the hinterland and engage in all manner of farming activities (A Community Leader Interviewed). This is to enable them to make money in order to aid their studies. The Almajirai are also employed by their teachers as a labour force during the farming season in order to enable them to cultivate what they will eat after their daily classes. Most of the students in Lafia during this period go to places like Keana, Obi, Asankwa, Dedere, Assakio, etc. Also, the Almajirai engage in other petty economic activities such as shoe repair, laundry work, fetching of water and wheelbarrow pushing in order to get money to purchase food and soap to wash their clothes. Therefore, it is on record that some graduates of these schools engage in one business or the other in order to cater for their economic well-being (A Community Leader Interviewed). Most of them take advantage of the Lafia Modern Market and Lafia Neighbourhood Market in order to engage in some petty economic activities, such as shoe repair, wheelbarrow pushing, and head portage, to assist themselves in their studies. However, it is pertinent to note that the Almajiri system of education has been perceived as a major factor heralding the underdevelopment of northern Nigeria. This factor is within the context of 'youth bulge'. The term 'youth bulge' was coined by German social scientist Gunnar Heinsohn and popularized in the 1990s by American political scientists Gary Fuller and Jack Goldstone. Proponents of the theory argue that "societies characterized by a youth bulge (a burgeoning youth population) while simultaneously facing limited resources and, in particular, a lack of prestigious position for 'surplus' youngsters-i.e. the third, fourth, fifth etc born children-are much more prone to social unrest, and acting belligerent towards their neighbours than those societies without these demographic stressors". In Lafia, one can easily spot an Almajiri by the way they are addressed. One passing through the major highways, such as Makurdi Express Road, Jos Express Way in Lafia, will always have a glimpse of an Almajiri. Some are stationed in popular filling stations such as Nagoda, A. A Rano, AYM Shafa, all in Lafia, begging for food.

However, it is pertinent to note that some individuals in society have played upon this system and commit all manner of atrocities. It is germane to state that not everyone found begging on the street is an Almajirai. In Lafia, the Almajiri system of education has produced clerics such as Alarmma Abdulkadr, Mallam Rabi, Mallam Musa, etc. They have also established Almajiri schools in order to inculcate Islamic values, principles and tenets to the Muslim youths in Lafia. Many numbers of Muslim parents have refused to send their children to Western schools for fear of their children being corrupted by Western values and cultures. This is because of their belief that the first knowledge one acquires is

that of religion. Thus, there is a need to send their children to Almajiri schools for proper knowledge of Islamic principles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 19 northern states should establish a regional approach to Almajiri education and holistic re-orientation campaigns, and the role of the emirate system should be redefined to reflect the contemporary changes around the world, particularly as it is observed in the most dominant part of the abode of Islam, the Arab world. For any intervention to succeed, the monitors and supervisors should be people of impeccable character with Islamic and Quranic education who can be respected by the teachers. The proprietors of the system should be given the opportunity to further their education. There is a need for the government to restructure the syllabus of the Almajiri system of education in order to fit into the contemporary system of education, since it has classes which can be classified as similar to a Western education system, where one goes from the primary level, through the secondary level, to the university level. There is a need for the government to involve the teachers of these schools in formulating any given policies. This could be said of the Almajiri schools, which were established by the then president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, but failed because most of the teachers were not carried along.

There is a need to integrate the Almajiri schools into Islamic schools. Although Islamic schools are quite different from Almajiri schools, the former also teach what is being taught in the latter. In order to ameliorate the level of begging in the street, the government can provide food items to schools, which could be monthly or quarterly. Also, the national policy on the Child Rights Act should be ratified by northern states. The private sector and Islamic organisations should intervene in the programme reform and improve on the gains made so far to prevent situations of having the students out of school to seek livelihood, as it does not speak well of Islamic faith. There is a need for the government to think about putting these proprietors on payroll in order to feel carried along and that their contributions are recognized by the government. There is a need for the teachers of these schools to register under the federal government in order for the government to know the number of Almajiri schools in the country, and also to know the number of students under each school and adequately make plans for them. The government can establish a school where these students can attend under government control. This school should be equipped with modern facilities, and its teachers should collaborate in order to teach these students.

In Lafia, efforts are being made to reform this system through the collaboration of different stakeholders. There is an intervention project fund that the federal government has been disbursing to selected centers of every state for the building of infrastructure in these schools. The programme is called IQTE (Integrated Quranic and Tsangayya Education). The desk officer for IQTE in each centers of the selected twenty-five states is the desk officer for SUBEB coordinated by the coordinator of Islamic studies. This intervention is with a grant of five million naira for each centers, and it is their responsibility to choose what they want, and the money is given under the supervision of State Implementation Team (SIT) and with the monitoring of SUBEB and UBEC. They were given a deadline to complete this project and when they finish, the project remains their own. This is a laudable initiative from the federal government. However, there are certain conditions attached to it, part of which is that they must agree with the integration, that both Islamic education and Western education are taught in the Almajiri schools. Although some accepted these proposals, others rejected them vehemently (A Community Leader Interviewed). Most recently, there has been a move by the Sardauna Foundation, led by its Managing Director, Engr. Abubakar Umar Gambo, to reform the Almajiri system of education. He said, 'We decided to engage traditional leaders and religious leaders to advocate for a reform in the Almajiri system such that the Almajiri will study with dignity and in a healthy and globally acceptable environment so that the study will be beneficial to them and the society'. He further postulated that, 'the purpose of the engagement is to collate views to get the best ways to modernize the system and thereafter engage stakeholders at the policy level that will change the condition and maybe in the near future, we will see improvement in the system.'¹²

¹² M. Ahmadu-Suka, "Sardauna Foundation Seeks Ways to Reform Almajiri System," *Daily Trust*, August 13, 2021.

CONCLUSION

This article is different from other articles available on the Almajiri system of education. Most articles portray this system in a negative tone. Meanwhile, this article seeks to move away from popular tradition by highlighting the positive impact associated with the Almajiri system of education. The article dealt with the Almajiri system of education in north-central Nigeria, a case study of Lafia Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, 1996-2020. It looked at the creation of Nasarawa state on October 1, 1996, from the old Plateau state by the then military head of state and government, General Sani Abacha. It also examined the origin of the Almajiri system of education, which came about when the Quran was unveiled to Prophet Muhammed. It also investigates the origin of Islam and the Almajiri system of education in northern Nigeria, which came about with the introduction of Islam in northern Nigeria in the eleventh century. Going further, the origin of the Almajiri system of education in Lafia came about as a result of the introduction of Islam into the area. It also examined the Almajiri school system, which is divided into three classes and the lesson periods, which are categorized into morning, afternoon and evening sessions. The work also examined the learning process of the child who tries to have mastery of the Quran, which is subdivided into 60 segments. The work also took into cognizance some of the abuses and misconceptions of this system of education, whereby the students are exposed to all manners of social vices as a result of begging for what to eat in order to be able to study. Finally, centered on the impact of the Almajiri system of education. It treats the socio-cultural, religious, economic and political impact. It is permissible to state that the Almajiri system of education in north-central Nigeria, particularly Lafia, has resulted in the development and underdevelopment of the area. Therefore, the Almajiri system of education has impacted and continues to impact the overall development of northern Nigeria in diverse ways. A proper knowledge of this system of education will go a long way in understanding its roles and how to reposition it to achieve its intended goal.

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