

THE PROSPECT OF EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION IN RESOLVING THE PREDICAMENT OF ALMAJIRI SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

We live in the 21st century where enemies of Islam including Western thinkers who deliberately concluded without taking any further verification that Islam encourages and allows street begging. Although Islam taught man to be generous and sympathetic that does not mean it encourage begging. Islam, being a perfect and completed Religion and a way of life provided a perfect guidance through (the *Qur'an*) and (the *Hadith*) in which are found laws, values and attributes that aim at providing a just, equitable and egalitarian society. Islam emphasizes self-reliance, (not begging) cooperation and mutual assistance particularly to the disabled, the poor and the needy. Furthermore, Islam provides various measures towards realizing these ideas. In recent times the phenomenon of begging is on the increase in Nigeria threatening social, political, economic educational and even security of the Nation. This research addresses concepts, effects, Islamic points of view as well as recommendations on how to prevent and eradicate the negative impacts of begging among Muslim Women in Nigeria.

Keywords: Prospect, Educational, Integration, Predicament & *Al-majiri*

INTRODUCTION

Begging has been identified as a worldwide phenomenon and an age-long practice predating the revelations of the Qur'an. In recent times the phenomenon of begging is on the increase in Nigeria threatening social, political, economic educational and even security of the Nation. In some countries, references is made to Nigeria as the "Land of Beggars" with the Muslim dominating Northern part producing the highest number of beggars just as they produced the highest number of the country's rulers (Dareng). Indeed there are those who believe that Nigerians (in particular the North) 'carried the profession to many parts of the world, such as Saudi Arabia, Italy and other West African countries' (Orire). While it is generally agreed that the phenomenon of begging is a dangerous and shameful trend that must be controlled. There is disagreement on the causes or reasons for the increase in begging (among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria not just Hausa Muslims) and there is no consensus on the way to curtail the phenomenon (Mu'allimu).

Street begging is a challenged faced by many nations of the world. It is a worldwide phenomenon and one among the grievous social problems that requires global attention. The menace is more prevalent in developing countries and Nigeria inclusive as the beggars move around the city centers begging for money and food.

A street beggar is an individual who solicit for money or assistance in a public space like banks, churches, mosques, and public offices and shopping areas (Adugna, 2016). A beggar may be a child, an elderly or disable person etc. The severity and wide spread nature of this phenomenon has become worrisome and a matter of concern to the government, media, religious bodies, stake holders and the general public at large. Islam encourages self-reliance, struggling which are element of social well-being, as food cannot jump into a man's mouth unless he know how to acquire it. There are various forms of begging which are manifest in different ways and makes the formulation of the solution to be adopted in curtailing the phenomenon more difficult.

There are some forms of begging which are associated with Islamic educational system in Nigeria popularly called the *almajiris* system. Other forms like praise singing have cultural roots and political motivations. Still other forms of begging are associated with the prevailing economic problems. More dangerously is the erroneous notion that some belief systems especially Islam encourages professional/ begging. The diversity of these problems also make the attempt towards finding the solution difficult as the problem persist and the society continue to suffer, therefore it is important that academic studies such as this be carried out to analyze the problem and attempt to find solution to them.

Poverty remains a systemic menace breeding insecurity, socio-economic deprivation and instability, especially in the Northern part of the country where high level of illiteracy and child destitution prevails. The increased in numbers of beggars in recent years has significantly caused outcry among both rural and urban dwellers. Beggars are mostly subjected to several illicit acts and harmful socialization. Although, several researchers have laid concerns about the effects and aftermaths of begging, very few and limited researches paid attention to the causes of increased numbers of beggars, especially in the northern Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study differs from the previous researches in this area because it specifically intends to appraise street begging among Muslim women and *Almajiri* in Northern Nigeria from the Islamic point of view.

This study is to investigate the impact of street begging among Muslim women and *Almajiri* in Northern Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the concept of begging and its various forms
- ii. Educate the general public on the problem of Street begging and destitution in the society.
- iii. Identify the Islamic position of begging;
- iv. Proffering possible solutions to the problem of begging from the Islamic perspectives.

Concept of Begging

According to the Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary a beggar "is a person who lives by asking people for money or food" (.Webste). According to the Dictionary of English Language, begging as an act "of soliciting for money, cloth, food etc.(Website). Begging can be defined as direct or indirect soliciting of resources, goods or consumer items either for basic subsistence as done by the needy or surplus accumulations resorted to by the affluent in both cases without paying or rendering return services.(2011).

These definitions clearly indicates that the person who engages in begging is not only one who cannot meet up with his economic needs, at least basic needs as a human being as a result of natural inability, in capacity or any inhibition to acquire them by personal efforts but also he could be

accumulating surplus without rendering return services. Thus begging may be as a result of necessity or mere greed and indolence.

Perspective of Begging in Islam

The fundamental attitude of Islam towards man's position in the World is that Allah (SWT) Has created the earth for his benefit. He has given him control over it, then it became man's duty to utilize and get benefits from this favour and to exert himself to seek Allah's (SWT) bounties wherever they are on the earth. It is not permitted for a Muslim to stay ideal, doing nothing yet hoping to earn a living on the pretext of devoting one's life to worship as practiced by non-Muslim monks. Furthermore, it is un-Islamic for one to stay ideal without working and still hoping to earn a living from the sweat of others. in the name of *tawakul*. The sky never rains gold or silver. Also it is not permissible for a Muslim to depend on charity, while he is able to earn a sufficient subsistence for himself and his family through his own efforts. In this regard, Allah (SWT) says:

“ And when the prayer is finished then may Ye Disperse through the land and seek the bounty of Allah (SWT) and remember Allah (SWT) frequently that Ye may prosper (Q 62:10).

This verse enjoins the Muslims to work and earn their living through lawful means.

Another Verse says:

“ It is He who Has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse Ye through its tracts and enjoy of the sustenance which He furnishes but unto him is the resurrection, (Q 67:15).

A Muslim is expected to earn his livelihood by Agricultural, Trade, and Industry or any profession or employment as long as it does not involve any prohibited act.

In the Qur'an, while referring to his bounties and favour to man, Allah (SWT) mentions the principles required for the pursuit of Agriculture.

Allah (SWT) Says:

“ It is He who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures. There in is fruit and date. Palms, producing spaths (enclosing dates). Also corn, with (its) leaves and stalk for fodder and sweet-smelling plants (Q 55:10-13).

In another verse, Allah (SWT) Says:

Then which of the favour of your lord will Ye deny (55:10-30). It is He who sendeth down rain from the skies: with it we produce vegetation of all produce,.....(Q 6:99)

He (SWT) also Says:

Then let man look his food at his food, (And who are we provide it). For that we pour forth water in abundance, And we split the earth

in fragments, And produce their in grain, and Groves and the fresh vegetation (Q 80:24-28)

Although Islam makes it obligatory upon the rich and well to do to support the poor, it does not in any way encourage begging.²⁰ The categories of people that are considered to be in need and deserving the obligatory charity (*Zakat*) are mentioned in the Qur'an as such:

Allah (SWT) say:

Aims are for the poor and the needy and those employed to administer the (funds): for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (To truth): for those in bondage and indebt in the cause of Allah (SWT); and for the wayfarer.....(Q 9:60).

And also

The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah (SWT) is that of a grain of corn; it growth seven ears. And each ear hath a hundred grains Allah (SWT) giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth, And Allah (SWT) careth for all And He knoweth all things. (Q 2:261)

And also:

And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want. And no the wayfarer, but squander not (your wealth). In the manner of a spend thrift (Q 17:26).

On his own part, Sheikh Usman Dahiru Bauchi argues that begging particularly such as practiced by the *Almajirai* is allowed; he based his argument on the saying of Allah (SWT):

In his commentary on the above verses Sheikh Usman Bauchi, said Allah (SWT) is here encouraging begging and helping beggars. He said there were beggars during the life time of Prophet (SAW) and he did not stop them. He further argues that there are other forms of begging that are not frowned at nor are efforts made to stop them like: (at many of his preaches).

- a. Fund raising
- b. Launching
- c. Cultural begging (Roko) among others

He pointed out that each individual has been given the responsibility (by Allah SWT) of feeding seven personas they are:

- i. People under your custody like the wife, children among other
- ii. Old people who cannot work any more
- iii. Sick persons at hospital and even at home.
- iv. Those affected by a calamity like flood or accident.
- v. The way wayfarers
- vi. Those whom Allah (SWT) created disable or are disabled by accident or sickness. Either physically or mentally.

He further opined that Allah (SWT) discourages begging without necessity such as praise singing.

The predicament of the *Almajiri* System of Education in Northern Nigeria

The way *Almajiri* System of education is being practiced in Northern Nigeria needs an urgent attention in order to rescue the situation. The *Almajiris* System of education has turned its students to tools for money making for their teachers. In a raining season or during harvesting period, people are always looking for workers to work for them in their farms to pay them. Most a times during this period *Almajiris* are sent to such places by their teachers to work, and malam is the one who will collect the payment, been paid for that particular work to feed and clothe himself, and they are always on the streets, public and private places, begging for money.

Consequently they waste their time in other unnecessary activities instead of acquiring knowledge. These acts make them get exposed to diseases and other hazards. The *Almajiri* are just like other resident children from families that are brought to learn under the watchful eyes of Mallams. There was event that comes to my mind of some *almajiris* in our area. Police men arrest some of the *almajiri* student during their patrol in the night in one area called Tudun-chima. After thorough investigation the police come to realize that these boys are *almajiris* of Mallam khamis' *stsangaya*, the children explain to the police that over three year their parents brought them to school; no food no cloths and they have not seen their parents again and also they don't get even food from the school due to scarcity of food and hard ship that they were encountered in the school and from their seniors by forcing them to bring food and money to them, this hardship makes them to engage themselves into stealing and carrying people's properties to sell in order to settle their seniors and to survive too, because nobody is giving them food.

Then, the police invite their Mallam to the police station, for, inquiry. The Mallam justified to the police that these children are right. Since their parents brought them to school, over three years now no one come to visit them and also almost a month they are not in the school since they have committed offence of stealing from one house in the neighborhood of the school. Thus, such *Almajiris* have become a problem to the society because their parents abandoned them and no proper care from their mallams. Most pupils withdrew due to the hardship they encounters during their stay with the mallams. They have not only become source of concern to Islam and their parents but the society at large, hence they are seen on the streets begging for alms. At end of the day, they go back to their camps to sleep. As such, they come across various kinds of dangerous juvenile and adolescent peer. (happening in Rogo, my town).

Thus these *Almajiris* are living under the horrific conditions; some of them do not even know their homes; they hardly know their parents as they left their parents very early in life. These children had no option than to follow other group of children that come their way, in the morning; they are seen following beans cake hawkers, who approach a buyer to buy and distribute it as *Sadaqaht* to them. In most cases their population is very large that the Mallams can't meet their basic needs and they will have no option than to send them out to beg. A very pathetic aspect of their life is that they do not care about the nature of the food they eat; cooked, fresh or stale and it can be picked from anywhere.

4.1 The Prospect of Integrating *Almajiri* System with Secular Education in Northern Nigeria

Integration of the traditional *Almajiri* education becomes necessary in order to eradicate the problems associated with it. The reasons for the integration are to reinforce the talent of the learners

to read, write and memorize the Qur'an and to introduce secular subjects into Qur'anic school thereby making the products Knowledgeably, numerate and to provide adequate and qualitative instructional materials in both Islamic and secular subjects. They should be educated that contrary to what some misinformed elements among the Muslim community harbor in their minds, western education is not a sin and Islam challenges Muslims to seek any form of knowledge, so long as it does not contravene the teaching of Allah and His Prophet. Unscheduled visit should be occasionally embarked upon to have first-hand assessment of how the children are being catered for. These measures are envisaged to forestall child labour, child abuse, hawking and street begging.

5.1 Conclusion

Begging has been identified as a worldwide phenomenon and an age-long practice predating the revelations of the Qur'an. In recent times the phenomenon of begging is on the increase particularly in Northern Nigeria threatening social, political, economic educational and even security of the Nation. Also among the problems, Poverty remains a systemic menace breeding insecurity, socio-economic deprivation and instability, especially in the Northern part of the country where high level of illiteracy and child destitution prevails. The increased in numbers of beggars in recent years has significantly caused outcry among both rural and urban dwellers. And also among the aim and objectives of the Paper is to examine the concept of begging and its various forms, to educate the general public on the problem of Street begging and destitution in the society, to identify the Islamic position of begging.

The Concept of Begging, Perspective of begging in Islam, are been observed. Lastly the predicament of the *Almajiri* System of Education in Northern Nigeria, and also the Prospect of Integrating *Almajiri* System with Secular Education in Northern Nigeria has stated.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented if well followed and implemented may sustain and improve the prospect of the *tsangaya* system while the challenges being faced would become a thing of the past.

- i. Mass mobilization and sensitization campaign should be organized with the aim of creating awareness particularly among key stakeholders of the *Tsangaya*, teachers, parents and community members.
- ii. Government should have to organized series of workshops for the teachers, parents and the pupils or the best ways to integrate.
- iii. Government should create enough opportunities for employment of the graduate of *Tsangaya* schools in all relevant sectors. This would surely motivate and encourage some of their colleagues to recognize and to accept the integration programmed.
- iv. In order to obtain accurate and proper integration, there is need to conduct census for the *Tsangaya* schools. The census would determine the nature and correct number of the students as well as their enrolment. This would help the government to facilitate their feeding and other welfare services.
- v. All stakeholders must work together to put a stop to the embarrassing situation. Muslim scholars leaders in the affected areas should encourage Muslim parents to accord upbringing and education of their children adequate attention.

- vi. They should be educated that contrary to what some misinformed elements among the Muslim community harbor in their minds, western education is not a sin and Islam challenges Muslims to seek any form of knowledge, so long as it does not contravene the Islamic teachings and principles.
- vii. The authorities on their part should live up to expectations by providing social amenities in the rural areas to dampen down rural urban migration. In the same vein, enabling environment should be created for middle and lower classes of the society to lead a better life devoid of humiliation and dehumanization in the hands of the elites and the well-to-do in the society.
- viii. The mass media should be involved in the integration programme that is by inviting prominent and renowned Islamic scholars to particulars to participate in television and radio stations. This would correct the wrong notion and suspicion attitude against the western education.
- ix. Government should properly fund the integrated *tsangaya* schools as equally as that of western formal education.
- x. There is need for government to construct more classes, hotels and toilets for the *Almajiri* schools and provide infrastructures, and adequate learning materials. This would give the *Tsangaya* School a conducive atmosphere for learning and facilitate the integration programme.
- xi. There is need for government to unify and have commonly adopted curriculum for the *tsangaya* schools for the whole state and country at large. (El-miskin 1986).

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