



Almajirai (Students) Involvement In Perpetration Of Violent Crimes In North Western Nigeria: Implication For Counselling

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the causes of involvement of Almajirai in the perpetration of violent crimes in North Western Nigeria. It employed a descriptive survey approach while carrying out the study. Two research questions were raised which sought to find out the forms and causes of prevalence of violent crimes among the Almajirai in the study area. The population of the study consists of more than four million (4m) Almajirai students scattered across the seven (7) North Western states of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa states. A sample of eight hundred (800) Almajirai students and twenty (20) Almajirai Malams (teachers) were purposively selected from four states of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina for this study. Two instruments were used in obtaining the data from the respondents, namely: Almajirai Violent Crime Questionnaire (AVCQ) and Interview Schedule. The AVCQ was validated by experts from the Department of Education, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. Using a method of test retest method, a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.72 was obtained and therefore the instrument was adjudged to be reliable. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used in the analysis of the data. The results of the analysis revealed among others that corporal punishment, drug abuse, abandonment by parents/ guardian, lack of concern by government in Almajiri education etc are the factors that cause the Almajirai to engage in violent crimes in North Western Nigeria. It was however recommended among others that government, NGOs and stakeholders of education should organize seminars and workshops whereby counselors should be invited to enlighten the Almajirai, parents, Malams, Islamic scholars, traditional rulers and village heads on the dangers of Almajirai involvement in violent crimes.

Keywords: Almajirai, Almajirci, violent crimes, Qur'anic schools

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the causes of the involvement of Almajirai in perpetration of violent crimes in North Western Nigeria. The term Almajirai, (singular, Almajiri), is used to describe beggars, more especially of the school age and teen-aged beggars; otherwise known as the “street kids” and “wanderers” (Bambale, 2013). Almajiri system refers to a traditional method of acquiring and memorizing the Glorious Qur'an in Hausa/Fulani community where boys (Almajirai) at their tender ages are sent out by

their parents or guardians to the far and near villages, towns and cities for the search of Qur'anic education under an Islamic scholar called Malam. The school system has for centuries provided training and produced scholars, teachers, Khadis, Imams, preachers, and even warriors like Usmanu Danfodiyo, the leader of the Jihad in this part of Africa. In the Sokoto Caliphate for instance, the Qur'anic Schools produced scholars that were highly morally upright who helped in the governance of the caliphate, assisted in the resuscitation of unity and peaceful co-existence, learning of the Qur'an and other Qur'anic sciences (Lolo and Adiya, 2019). In short as observed by Shehu (2019), between 13th and 18th centuries, Islamic scholarship, through the Qur'anic school system, flourished in what is called Bilad as-Sudan, and prior to the advent of colonialism in the late 19th century there was blossoming of Islamic scholarship which were pure and in concord with the teachings of Islam.

The institution of Almajirci (Almajiri system education) has undergone a very radical transformation as a result of socio-economic and demographic changes. In early days of the system, the migration was from the cities and towns to the villages or a settlement away from the cities and towns. It was a seasonal affair. It was then believed that in the villages, there was nothing that would distract the attention of children. They would devote their time to reading and recitation of the Holy Quran. The children would be seen under trees, on the farm, concentrating on their studies.

As time goes on, this pattern has gradually changed and presently, the children are taken out of their villages and brought into the cities where, in addition to attractions, they spend most of their time begging for alms. They can be seen all over the places, in the markets, motor parks, restaurants, beer parlours and around churches in begging for food and money. Little time is given to Quranic studies for which they have been taken out of their villages. Almajirci is no more the seasonal affair as it used to be. It is more of child abuse. The practice provides a recruiting ground for criminals and other shady behaviour such as, Area boyism, theft pickpocket, drug abuse, narcotics. In some instances, the children (Almajirai) are used by Mallams to acquire wealth. Their daily and even nightly routines involve street and house to house begging for food, cloth and money, as well as menial jobs such as washing plates, sweeping and washing clothes, thus making the Qur'anic learning as an insignificant secondary pre-occupation (Ibrahim, 2011).

North Western states of the country which consists of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa states harbor about four million Almajirai who do not benefit from the existing formal and non-formal education. There are many children enrolled in Almajiri schools in different parts of these states. These schools remain the only form of education accessible to them. Their lack of formal education is seriously affecting the productivity of these children and attainment of needed sustainable peace and development in their community, state and Nigeria at a large (Ibrahim, 2011). In Sokoto State, according Education Trust Fund (2012), there are one million one hundred and forty-five thousand one hundred and forty five (1,145,145) pupils enrolled into nine thousand five hundred and fifty one (9,551) Almajirai schools with the total number of twenty five thousand and four (25,004) malams. The state is the second state with the highest population of Almajirai in the Northwest states. Katsina State Government has identified 106,000 Almajirai pupils across 5,558 Islamic schools in the 34 local government areas of the state in a bid to modernize the Almajirai system of education and avert the menace of street begging in the state (Sardauna, 2021). According to The Guardian Newspaper (2020), Zamfara State has about two million Almajiris roaming the street of Zamfara State according the Director of Budget, Alhaji Hamza Salisu. In Zamfara State, according to Kebbi State Commissioner of Education, Muhammad Aliero, there are more than 800,000 Almajirai pupils not in school. There are 504 Almajira Islamic schools. Despite the laudable efforts of integration of Almajiri Quranic School into formal education by Sokoto State, Federal Government and nongovernmental organizations in the provision of Almajiri integrated education the states are still having huge number of these children everywhere in the states. This paper intends to present the findings of a research conducted in the four sampled states in North-Western Nigeria on the causes of the involvement of Almajirai in perpetration of violent crimes and show how counselling services can help to reduce or eliminate the bad trend in the region

Statement of the Problem

The involvement of Almajirai students in violent crime has made the Almajirai schools environment unsafe for teaching, learning and researching. In the early 1970s and 1980s, the school environment was safe and secured for learning and physical development of individuals. Today the situation has changed drastically and the school environment has become a source of worry, anguish and misery for Almajirai Mallams (teachers), students and parents. The prevalence of violent crimes in North Western states has rendered Almajirai schools of learning unsafe for human habitation.

It is worth noting that the aims and objective of the Qur'anic education is principally to inculcate eternal values that are unchangeable and very clear (Badarul Islam, 2009). At the Qur'anic school age, the child is train to learn the skills of reading the Qur'an starting from the memorization by heart of the few verses and short chapters (Suwar), then to the learning of how to write the alphabets and the texts (Badarul – Islam, 2009). In addition to the above, Qur'anic education aims to inculcate into the minds of the learners the relationship between man and Allah in a way that the child will be aware that his/her actions are linked with Allah (Ulwan 2001). In short, the pristine Qur'anic education aims at sowing the seed of abiding by the Qur'anic ideals, having unquestionable loyalty to Allah and following the footsteps of the Prophet (SAW), purification of the soul from all negative conducts, acquire purity, virtuous behaviours and render services to Allah and fellow human being in one's day to day activity.

However, the above aims and objectives of the Qur'anic school education are not being achieved at present. The trend has changed as Khalid (2000) noted that Almajirai schools change from its origin and purpose to the centre of violence, torture and unwarranted intimation executed by the seniors to the junior one. They plan and execute violent crimes like stealing in neighbouring houses. They talk tough, and behave tough and can easily go to other Almajirai schools from their own, in a bid to perpetuate evil. This malady appears to have rendered Almajiri schools unmanageable with pervasive violence perpetuated by Almajirai especially if the Mallams keep the large number of them in the school. It is not yet known empirically the causes of Almajirai student's involvement in violent crimes, the forms of violent crimes they commit and the frequency of occurrence.

Also, the ever rising challenge of the forces of insecurity such as kidnapping, arm banditry, unprovoked killing, rape, murder, maiming, manslaughter, etc, in the country especially in the Northern part of country has raised a lot of worry. This is because owing to the sickening and hunger stricken conditions which the Almajirai are left to thrive, they can be easy recruitment target by the perpetrators. As stated above, there is no doubt in saying the fact that, there are many forms of violent crimes prevalent in the North-Western Nigeria among which are kidnapping, arm banditry, thuggery, burglary, arson, area-boyism, rape, sexual assault, robbery, assault, manslaughter is potentially related directly or indirectly to the Almajirai (Sati, 2015). These crimes have been so predominant in the recent years. This could not be dissociated with fast deteriorating socio-economic and political state of the country at large. There has been all-round inflation, poverty, corruption with impunity and insecurity all over the country which has further worsened the conditions of the poor masses. As we all know, North-western states of the country are among the poorest states in the country. Since it is generally assumed that these students are future leaders of tomorrow it become pertinent to identify the areas where counselling could be provided based on their areas of problems so as to assuage the causes of violent crimes by making recommendation and offering counselling measures. It is against this background that the present study was undertaken to examine critically the violent crimes that Almajirai students commit, its aetiology and prevalence among them in North-Western Nigeria.

Research Questions

This research was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the forms of violent crimes prevalent among Almajirai students in North Western Nigeria?
- ii. What are the causes of Almajirai (students) involvement in violent crimes?
- iii. What roles can counseling service play to reduce or eliminate the trend?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this research was the youth bulge theory. 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 (Aghedo and Ake, 2013). 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 positions 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” (Schomaker, in Aghedo and Ake, 2013). The theoretical foundation of the youth bulge is based on the premise that countries with weak political institutions that are undergoing demographic transitions are vulnerable to social unrest, rebellion, and violent conflicts due to unemployed male youth who will seek socioeconomic advancement through extralegal means. This youth bulge trend is mostly prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands that have weak political institutions on one hand and a large youth cohort (over 30 percent) relative to the adult populations (Aghedo and Ake, 2013). It is observable from the youth bulge theory that youth bulge and violence is not automatic because of variables that intervene between demography and security. Some of which include unemployment, relative poverty, and urbanization, the youth demographic cohort which make it difficult to translate their education into sustainable jobs in fragile states, leading them into poverty. LaGraffe (2012: 67) sees demography acts as having a “force multiplier,” that aggravates these preexisting conditions. The alienation, frustration, and growing discontent arising from lack of sustainable livelihoods among these youths coupled with other stressors, make them easily susceptible to mobilization for violence and uprising for a little provocation. The volatility of this youth population, between ages 15-24, is strengthened by the lack of developmental in social welfare for the present and future generations. Added to these intervening variables is being unmarried. Due to this, the young men tend to have time for risky engagements like participation in rebellion that have low opportunity costs. Thus, portraying angry male youths as “driven to violence by their nature” (Corner House, 2004).

This theory is particularly suitable in relation to Africa because of the high rate of unemployment and poverty profile of the continent and the fact that the youths constitute more than 35 percent of the population. The population of people under 14 years is even over 44 percent in such countries as Sierra Leone (Bricker & Foley, 2013; Kaplan, 1994). The lack of “access to power, position and other resources by the youth greatly reduces their space of possibilities,” which is often interpreted as “social death” (Vigh, 2006:37). The current condition of the African continent of soaring unemployment, endemic poverty, and failing schools (Potts & Campbell, 2009, quoted in Kegley & Blanton, 2011) and the volatile environment youth inhabit because of their constricted options (Kaplan, 2006) compound the phenomenon of youth bulge, consequently driving young Africans to seek escape from “confining structures and navigate economic, social and political turmoil” (Vigh, 2006). This disenchantment has been further accentuated by a pervasive negative culture which Abdullah (1997) called “lumpen youth.” This street-based culture positions the youth against mainstream culture with attendant negative consequences.

Despite its popularity, youth bulge theory has been criticized for being a tool for the promotion of American interests. It has been argued that the “demographic time bomb associated with a youth bulge is a myth used by the United States of America to justify its military intervention and population control efforts in the South” (Corner House, 2004:2). The criticism has been further buttressed by the fact that youth bulge theory was originally aimed at providing US intelligence with a tool by which to uncover national security threats, coupled with the fact that a large youth population could be a blessing rather than a curse, as exemplified by the Asian Tigers (Corner House, 2004). Notwithstanding these criticisms, the theory makes intuitive sense. A surge in youth population means an increase in the demand for jobs and other sociopolitical goods. In weak societies like Nigeria and some West African countries that are characterized by corruption, poor governance, ineffective public institutions, and an attendant high rate of unemployment and poverty, the youth often use their energy and vigor for antisocial and violent purposes.

This theory is particularly relevant to this research as it portrays the situation of Nigeria that is characterized by weak political institutions, ever growing population of over 200 million prone to social unrest, rebellion, and various forms of violent conflicts perpetrated by unemployed youths.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was used in the cause of this research. The population comprised of more than four million Almajirai students scattered across the seven (7) North Western Nigerian states of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa states. Eight hundred (800) Almajirai students and twenty (20) Malams (teachers) were randomly selected from Almajirai schools in the study area as follows: Sokoto (200), Kebbi (200), Zamfara (200) and Katsina (200) while five (5) Malams were drawn from each of the four states. The instruments for the study were researcher developed questionnaire titled "Almajirai Violent Crime Questionnaire" (AVCQ) and Interview Schedule for the Malams. The AVCQ consisted of two parts, A and B. Part A consists of 12 items on the forms of violent crime while Part B consist of 12 items on the causes of violent crime. The questionnaire was translated into Hausa language for the Almajirai students and their Malams (teachers) for easy understanding. The scale was designed into modified Likert scale of Agree (1) and Disagree (2). The Interview Schedule was designed to solicit questions on the forms of violent crimes, the prevalence of the crime and causes of violent crimes among Almajirai from the Almajirai Malams (teachers).

The instruments were validated by experts from the Department of Education, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto who evaluated the relevance of each item in the instrument based on the objectives. A test re-test method of reliability was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. A Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) of 0.72 was obtained using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 and therefore, the instrument was adjudged to be reliable. Data from the field was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The results of the data obtained from the field are presented in tables below. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. In the analysis, mean of 1.00 – 1.50 indicates levels of "Agreement" while mean 1.60 and above indicate level of "Disagreement".

Table 1: Forms of Violent Crimes Prevalent among Almajirai Students in North Western Part of Nigeria

Forms of Violent Crimes	Sokoto		Kebbi		Zamfara		Katsina		Grand Analysis of Sampled States	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Kidnapping	1.3500	.47817	1.6650	.47317	1.6550	.47656	1.8150	.38927	1.6212	.48538
Arm banditry	1.3600	.48120	1.5450	.49922	1.5850	.49396	1.7900	.40833	1.5700	.49539
Arson	1.4200	.49480	1.6750	.46955	1.5250	.50063	1.2150	.41185	1.4588	.49861
Thuggery	1.5050	.50123	1.0200	.14035	1.1350	.34258	1.2200	.41529	1.2200	.41451
Burglary	1.5300	.50035	1.1300	.33715	1.1950	.39719	1.2300	.42189	1.2712	.44488
Area boyism	1.4400	.49763	1.2550	.43695	1.2050	.40471	1.1050	.30732	1.2513	.43400
Rape	1.4550	.49922	1.8000	.40100	1.7200	.45013	1.6900	.46365	1.6662	.47185
Sexual assault	1.5300	.50035	1.8600	.34786	1.8600	.34786	1.7950	.40471	1.7613	.42659
Robbery	1.5500	.49874	1.7350	.44244	1.7050	.45719	1.8700	.33715	1.7150	.45170
Theft	1.3850	.48782	1.0000	.00000	1.0700	.25579	1.1200	.32578	1.1438	.35106
Assault	1.5800	.49480	1.7450	.43695	1.6900	.46365	1.1650	.37211	1.5450	.49828
Manslaughter	1.6150	.48782	1.9800	.14035	1.9300	.25579	1.8950	.30732	1.8550	.35232

Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork, 2022. Note: mean 1.00 – 1.50 indicates levels of “Agreement” while mean 1.60 and above indicate level of disagreement.

Table 1 above shows the forms of violent crimes prevalent among the Almajirai students in the four sampled states of North Western Nigeria. Based on the result of the grand analysis, the respondents agree that "Theft" (mean = 1.1438) is the most common violent crime among the Almajirai. This is followed "Area boyism" (1.2513), "Thuggery" (1.2200), "Burglary" (1.2712) and "Arson" (1.4588). Also, as shown by the mean responses, it can be seen that "Manslaughter" (mean = 1.8550) is a crime that was strongly opposed to be prevalent among the Almajirai. This was followed by "Sexual Assault" (1.7613), "Robbery" (1.7150), "Rape" (1.6662), "Kidnapping" (1.6212), "Arm Banditry" (1.5700) and "Assault" (1.5450). The mean number of respondents who disagreed that violent crimes such as arm banditry, assaults and kidnapping also indicates that these crimes cannot completely be dissociated from the Almajirai of North Western Nigeria. From the interview schedule conducted on the Almajirai Mallams (teachers) of the North Western Nigeria, it was further affirm that some of the Almajirai partake in fighting, stealing in the market, assault, smoking of Indian hemp, banditry and area boyism. Also, it was reported by one of the Malams of the case of Almajiri who is a member of the dreaded blood lusty gang Boko haram. Majority of the Mallams interviewed also pointed out that these violent crimes especially fighting, stealing in the market, assault, smoking of Indian hemp, banditry and area boyism is so prevalent among the Almajirai.

Table 2: Causes of Violent Crime among the Almajirai students in in the Four Sampled States

Causes of Violent Crime	Sokoto		Kebbi		Zamfara		Katsina		Grand Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Corporal Punishment	1.2300	.42189	1.0000	.00000	1.3300	.47139	1.1700	.37658	1.1825	.38650
Drug Abuse	1.3200	.46765	1.0000	.00000	1.3850	.48782	1.5100	.50115	1.3037	.46016
Peer Group Influence	1.4250	.49558	1.0300	.17102	1.5500	.49874	1.4700	.50035	1.3687	.48277
Abandonment by parents guardian	1.4500	.49874	1.0000	.00000	1.6500	.47817	1.4950	.50123	1.3987	.48995
Societal stigmatization	1.4800	.50085	1.1600	.36753	1.5950	.49212	1.6700	.47139	1.4762	.49975
Feeling of no future	1.5950	.49212	1.0500	.21849	1.5500	.49874	1.3550	.47971	1.3875	.48748
Lack of interest for being Almajirai	1.4750	.50063	1.1800	.38515	1.8300	.37658	1.3150	.46568	1.4500	.49780
Feeling of no security in the school	1.3850	.48782	1.1200	.32578	1.3950	.49008	1.3600	.48120	1.3150	.46481
Feeling of depression and hungry	1.3600	.48120	1.0000	.00000	1.3350	.47317	1.3300	.47139	1.2563	.43683
Lack of concern by parents and teachers	1.4000	.49113	1.0000	.00000	1.4900	.50115	1.3950	.49008	1.3212	.46725
Lack of concern by government in Almajiri education	1.3800	.48660	1.0000	.00000	1.4500	.49874	1.3750	.48534	1.3013	.45909
Indiscipline among Almajirai students	1.4700	.50035	1.4650	.50003	1.5450	.49922	1.2250	.41863	1.4262	.49484

Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork, 2022. Note: mean 1.00 – 1.50 indicates levels of “Agreement” while mean 1.60 and above indicate level of disagreement.

Table 2 above shows the causes of violent crime among the Almajirai students in the four sampled states of North Western Nigeria. As shown by grand analysis based on mean of all the items, all the items listed in the table are the causes violent crimes among the Almajirai in North Western Nigeria. However, a closer look at the means of the items indicates that corporal punishment (1.1825) is the major cause of violent crimes among the Almajirai of North Western Nigeria. This is followed by depression and hunger (1.2563), Lack of concern by government in Almajiri education (1.3013), Drug Abuse (1.3037), Feeling of no security in the school (1.3150), Lack of concern by parents and teachers (1.3212), and so on. The Mallams who were interviewed blamed the causes of the Almajirai involvement in violent crimes to indiscipline among the Almajirai, bad friends, politicians, lack of food, shelter and clothing, trauma of less parental care, chronic hunger and hopelessness.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first research question of this study sought to determine the forms of violent crimes carried out by Almajirai of the North Western part of Nigeria. From the findings in Table 2, it was shown that majority of the Almajirai participate in crimes such as theft, area boyism, thuggery, burglary and arson. This finding was supported by that of Khalid (2000) who observed that Almajirai schools, change from its origin or purpose to the centre of violence, torture and unwarranted intimation executed by the seniors to the junior one. According to him, the Almajirai plan and execute violent crimes like stealing in neighbouring houses, talk tough, and behave tough and can easily go to other Almajirai schools from their own in a bid to perpetuate evil. This finding was also supported by Sati (2015) who stated that crimes such as kidnapping, arm banditry, thuggery, burglary, arson, area-boyism, rape, sexual assault, robbery, assault, manslaughter are potentially related directly or indirectly to the Almajirai and which have become predominant in the recent years. Also on the forms of violent crimes by Almajirai in North Western Nigeria, it was reported by one of the Malams that in Zamfara State, an old Almajiri student was found among the bandits who kidnapped twin sisters who were about to marry in Dauran village in Zamfara State. According to the Malam, the ex-student attended Almajiri school in Maiduguri, Borno State and later joined the group of Armed Bandit in Shinkafi Local Government of Zamfara State. They were caught in 2018 by Police. Also, in Funtua Local Government, Katsina State in the year 2007, there were cases of groups of Almajirai in a car holding pieces of wood and cutlasses, shouting and singing a song of politician slogan along Bypass road. This is a pure evidence of Almajirai manipulation by politicians for political thuggery in the state. In a nutshell, the research shows that Almajirai students involve in all the 12 identified violent crimes in Table 1 above.

Research question two sought to discover the causes of Almajirai involvement in violent crimes in the North Western Nigeria. Even though all the variables (namely; Corporal Punishment, drug abuse, peer group influence, abandonment by parents/ guardian, societal stigmatization, feeling of no future, lack of interest in being Almajirai, feeling of no security in the school, feeling of depression and hunger, lack of concern by parents and teachers, lack of concern by government in Almajiri education and indiscipline among Almajirai students) were unanimously linked to causes of Almajirai involvement in violent crimes in the North Western Nigeria as shown in the research. Corporal punishment was indicated as the major cause of violent crimes among the Almajirai of North Western Nigeria. This is a situation whereby Almajirai child is sent out to beg or carry out one task or the other and he fails or does not perform well to the satisfaction of the Malam. In some cases, the Malams administer corporal punishment on the Almajiri. This will sometime induce the child to engage in desperate measures such as stealing, burglary, thuggery, etc as foreseen viable measures to meeting their Malams' expectation. Other major causes include depression and hunger, lack of concern by government in Almajiri education, drug abuse, Feeling of no security in the school and lack of concern by parents and teachers. This finding was supported by Kushee (2008), Pongri (2008) and Akubor (2012) who established manipulated Almajirai system provides the training ground of those, who later graduate into full scale criminality. This is because of the hardship they are exposed to and the uncensored lives they live as Almajirai on the streets. The group graduate and are called by various names in different parts of northern Nigeria. For instance in Borno they are referred

to as Ecomog, Area Boys in Sokoto, area boys Kawaye in Kaduna and Katsina, Yan Daba in Kano, Yan Sara Suka in Bauchi, Shinco in Adamawa and Yan Kalare in Gombe. They are mostly armed with machetes, clubs and similar weaponry. Due to their condition and high patronage from the political class, they become easy prey for politicians, who offer them small amounts of money, drugs, alcohol and weapons in exchange for engaging in acts of intimidation and assault or simply to accompany their campaigns in a demonstration of muscle.

Counseling Implications to the Problems of Almajirai Involvement in Perpetration of Violent Crimes in North Western Nigeria

Based on what has been discussed above, the following roles to be placed by relevant counselors can help in minimizing involvement of Almajirai in violent crimes. In other words, the section is going to discuss briefly the ways that relevant guidance counselors can help Almajiri education system in North-western Nigeria returns to the roles it played in the period of the caliphate and in the 1970s. These ways are discussed briefly as follows:

First, there is need for Group counseling technique to be adopted. This research considers group counseling method as one of the measures to be used in tackling the problem of Almajirai involvement in violent crimes in North Western Nigeria. In this method, professional counselors are to be secured and they should liaise with Local and state governments of the North Western States so as to organize advocacy and sensitization programmes for Almajirai, Mallams, parents, village heads, traditional rulers, communities and other relevant stakeholders on Almajiri phenomenon through seminars and symposium, discussing general problems and prospects of Almajirai.

Second, the topical areas of discussion are very important. Therefore, since the research has already identified a lot of factors that are related to the upsurge of violent crimes in the region, there is to take the factors that cause the involvement of Almajirai in violent crimes one after another. Undoubtedly, the general Almajirai system of education needs to be addressed and professional counselors are to address this issue. They should start by addressing the mode of admissions in Almajiri schools. The current state whereby no records on the number of Almajirai admitted should be checked. Therefore, the counselors should ensure that the admitted Almajirai in all the schools have proper records of each child including their names, ages, places of birth, parents' names, hometowns, local government areas, states of origin and telephone numbers or permanent addresses of the parents should be properly documented. The parents must be informed on the need to be visiting their children, providing food, clothing, study materials and other necessary paraphernalia for study.

Third, the professional counselors should adopt current conventional practice of prevention rather than cure. Since the focus of contemporary psychologists is to provide preventive interventions (Bryan et al., 2009), professional counselors need to organize preventive programmes to all concerned Almajirai schools. Therefore, intervention strategies such as risk identification technique, violence identification technique, safety planning for possible situations, problem solving techniques and information on availability of counseling for Almajiri child and Mallams must be provided to all concerned states in Northern Nigeria.

Fourth, content of the enlightenment campaigns should always be linked with the aims and objectives of the Qur'anic school system. We pointed out above that the Qur'anic education aims at inculcating in children closeness to Allah and following the footsteps of His Prophet, imbibing virtuous conducts and render services to Allah and humanity, among others. This should be reiterated to the children and their parents. Therefore, all measures that are required to achieve these noble aims and objectives must be adhered to by the parents as well as all stakeholders. Similarly, all actions that will perpetuate the current causes of Almajirai becoming street beggars, armed-robbers, arsonists, area boys, and recruits for violent politicians and terrorists among other crimes should be prevented. This is very important for the professional counselors to know and address in their enlightenment processes.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated the involvement of Almajirai (students) perpetration of violent crimes in North Western Nigeria. It discussed on the forms and causes of these violent crimes.. North Western Nigeria has witnessed a rapid surge in the rate of violent crimes in recent years (Sati, 2015). These crimes range from kidnapping, arm banditry, thuggery, burglary, arson, area-boyism, rape, sexual assault, robbery, assault, manslaughter, etc. However, crimes such as theft, area boyism, thuggery, burglary and arson have been shown to be associated with the Almajirai of North Western Nigeria. The research has been able to show that these crimes were perpetrated by Almajirai as a result social, economic and political factors. The factors include corporal Punishment meted to the Almajirai by their Malams and fellow (older) Almajirai, drug abuse, peer group influence, abandonment by parents/guardian, societal stigmatization, feeling of no future, lack of interest in being Almajirai, feeling of no security in the school, feeling of depression and hunger, lack of concern by parents and teachers, lack of concern by government in Almajiri education and indiscipline among Almajirai students. All these factors combine to influence the Almajirai towards partaking in violent crimes as means to overcoming the unfavourable and often life-threatening circumstances they find themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of the study and the conclusions thereof, the following recommendations are made:

- (1) Parents and community leaders should be made to understand that the role educating their children is their sole responsibility because they will be held accountable for doing otherwise on the Day of Judgement.
- (2) Malams to be involved in the Qur'anic Schools must be known and with unquestionable character. Communities and Governments should take care of their basic needs to stop or reduce their movements from place to place. On the alternative, Federal, State and Local governments should employ them like other teachers in the formal education.
- (3) There should be proper supervision and provision of basic needs such as food, clothes, other necessary materials as well as more favourable and conducive learning environment by government, Almajirai stakeholders to Almajirai students.
- (4) Government, NGOs and stakeholders of education should organize seminars and workshops whereby relevant counsellors should be invited to enlighten the Almajirai, their parents, Malams, Islamic scholars, traditional rulers and village heads to inform them on the causes of deteriorations in Almajiri education, the resultant consequences or dangers of that await the whole society if the deteriorations are allowed to persist. By so doing the students will become aware of the devastating effect of violent crime and keep away from them.
- (5) There Federal government can create a National Commission for Almajiri Education.

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