



IMPROVING ALMAJIRI AND GIRLS CHILD EDUCATION THROUGH INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: ROLES OF BETTER EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY FOR ALL IN NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract: *This study was carried out to determine improving almajiri's and girl's child education through inclusive education in North Eastern Nigeria. Thus, the study has three objectives namely; to explore basic factors hinder Almajiri and Girls Child from embracing inclusive Education, To examine how the top underwriting variance factors encumber Almajiri and Girls Child Education are subdued through Better Education Service Delivery for All and to ascertain Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) policy guide for proper implementations of quality inclusive education on Almajiris and girls-child. This study utilized a survey design. Populations of the study were 1,192,636 and sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size of a given population. Hence, sample for the studies stood at 361. Structural questionnaire was used as instrument for collection of primary data for the study. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three expert, their suggestions, contributions and corrections were used to modify the research instrument to its final form. The instrument was administered by the researcher, co-researcher with the aid of three research assistances. Descriptive statistics included frequency; percentages and mean were used to analyse data using the statistical package for social sciences version 23. The paper finding revealed that, the practice in the BESDA inclusive education of out of school children provided opportunity for Almajiri and Girl Child to acquire basic education at door steps, conducive environment as well as curriculum that promotes the studies of Qur'anic and basic education subject at once whereby assimilation of mallam and alamma into the programme. Based on the findings, the paper recommends amongst others: that the Government need to extend the better education service delivery for all (BESDA) project in North East and put in place more funding as well as policies that create an environment where almajiri and girls children have access to basic education and can learn effectively. Traditional ruler, Community members and media organizations, together with local civil society organizations, have an imperative role to play in monitoring the quality of basic education provision and, in particular, almajiri and girls' participation in education.*

Keywords: *Inclusive Education. Almajiri and Girls Child, Better Education Service Delivery for All*

Introduction:

It is commendable to note that the National Policy on Education (2013) does not discriminate on the basis of gender, but instead emphasizes freedom, equality, and justice (Science Teachers Association of Nigeria, 2019). Every citizen, regardless of gender is guaranteed equal rights, responsibilities, and educational opportunities before the law. Despite the progress made in recent years regarding laws indicating the equality of the sexes in education and employment, much work remains undone.

Education is the quality of learning which enables us to better ourselves and our community. In summary, education equips individuals with specific skills beneficial in the production of manpower for the acquisition of pattern skills such as craftsmanship, teaching, and

engendering. The educational service is an essential tool for Almajiri's and girl's children in a society as a whole.

Some Almajiri, like other children from families brought to learn the Qur'an under the supervision of Mallams (Islamic instructors), abandon the program and become a social problem. They have become a source of concern not only to Islam and their parents, but also to society as a whole, as a result of which they encounter a variety of hazardous juvenile and adolescent peers. In most instances, the population of these children is so large that the Mallams cannot meet their basic needs and are forced to send them out to beg (Mahdi 2019). Education for girls is a fundamental right. It is also the nation's responsibility to provide an inclusive and high-quality education, regardless of gender discrimination. Educating girls considerably contributes to the growth of a stable, prosperous, and healthy nation whose citizens are active, productive, and empowered. Over 5.5 million females are out of school in Nigeria, according to data. (Education and Cultural Organization of the United Nations [UNESCO], 2014). Forty percent 40% women and 28% males have never attended school (NBS, 2014). Nearly two-thirds of women in the North West and North East have no education, whereas less than 15% of women in the South South are uneducated (Epiwre O. 2019).

The increasing number of out-of-school children is a more disturbing trend. In 2007, an estimated 8.3 million children did not attend school (NBS/UNICEF, 2014). \\

Since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education For All (EFA), and Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) declarations in the year 2000, Nigeria has paid significant attention to girls' education. Similarly, academic and non-academic researchers have documented proposed policies and solutions to issues concerning Almajiris and girls' child education in Northern Nigeria as well as evaluated new and existing Almajiris and girls' education programs and factors influencing girls' education (Abdussalami, 2018; World Bank, 2016; GEARN, 2014). However, research has revealed that the Almajiri and their Mallams (teachers) are in deplorable social conditions and that their teachings and learning environment are not conducive to learning (Galadanci A. 2012, cited in NERP, 2013).

Problem Statement

Almajiri are predominant in Nigeria's northern region. Originally, it was envisioned that these children would be sent away from their families to receive traditional Qur'anic education from a "Mallam" (Yahaya, 2021). However, this system has changed, and children were left to wade through the streets and plead for alms to support themselves and their Mallams (teachers). They receive neither an Islamic education nor a western one. Almajiri practice results in child maltreatment because children (aged 6 to 17) are subjected to laborious work at a young age, are deprived of life's necessities, are plunged into poverty and its attendant ills, and may not be trained in any skills.

Gender disparities in education are exacerbated by additional deeply entrenched forms of inequality based on socioeconomic factors (poverty), cultural factors, distance to school, residence type, and lack of awareness/sensitivity, as well as early marriage, according to (Bako, 2019). In numerous nations, wealth disparities are glaring. Children from the impoverished households are much less likely to attend school. Living in a rural area where lengthy distances to school are exacerbated by poverty and traditional practices heightens the danger. Every privilege guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been denied to the Almajiris and girls of Nigeria (UNESCO, 2014). As it jeopardizes the future of the younger generation, the current system should be eliminated. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to determine the obstacles preventing Almajiris and girl's children from implementing inclusive education in north eastern Nigeria.

Objectives of the study:

The main objective of the study is to ascertain improving almajiri's and girl's child education through inclusive education in North Eastern Nigeria. Other specific objectives are:

1. To explore basic factors hampering Almajiri and Girls Child in the North Eastern Nigeria from embracing inclusive Education.
2. To examine how the top underwriting variance factors hindering Almajiri and Girls Child Education are subdued through Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) in North Eastern Nigeria.
3. **To** ascertain Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) policy guide for proper implementations of quality inclusive education of the Almajiris and girls-child in North Eastern Nigeria.

Significance of the study:

The generalization of this study would be a great contribution to the vast knowledge in relation to the role of BESDA towards inclusive education of Almajiri and Girls child in North eastern Nigeria. Furthermore, the results of this investigation could be highly significant and beneficial for the Government, Educators, Community and future researchers as well.

Scope and Delimitation of the study:

This research will only cover out-of-school Almajiri and Girls Child North Eastern Nigeria. The general intern of this study is to determine the significance of Better Service Delivery for All towards inclusive education of Almajiri and Girls child education. To this end, the research will be conducted with limited amount of financial resources and time frame.

Literature Review

The greatest investment in a nation's national development is education. Girls' education improves economic development and reduces social disparities. In Nigeria, however, Almajiris and females are excluded from education. Nigeria has the largest non-schooled population in the globe, and it is increasing. Girls constitute the vast majority of Nigeria's astounding 10.5 million out-of-school children. Children from the poorest households in rural North West and North East regions are among those with the highest risk of never attending school. Now, inclusive education is required to nurture the growth of all Nigerians to their fullest potential. Almajiri and girl's children confront obstacles to education primarily due to poverty, cultural norms and practices, poor infrastructure, violence, and fragility (Ali and Hadi 2012).

Al-Amin (2010), who contributes to this issue, believes that tradition is a hindrance to the education of children, particularly females. He determined that women tend to embrace negative self-fulfilling prophecies, stereotyping, and stigmatization as a result of our cultural society's traditional socialization process. In rural areas, girls may be required to travel significant distances to reach the nearest school. 14% of the students surveyed in a recent study by (Ali and Hadi 2012) walked more than six kilometers to school each day, spending more than an hour doing so. Sixty-one percent of those who walked between one and three kilometers are females. A baseline survey conducted in (2018) in Northern states (Unicef, 2017) revealed that 21% of girls viewed distance to school as a significant barrier that would prevent them from attaining their desired level of education.

In addition, Babagana, Idris, and Danjuma, (2018) found in their study that the traditional attitude of parents towards the education of their daughters' daughters is similarly negative. Many parents believe that investing in a son is preferable to investing in a daughter, as daughters are perceived to be less valuable after receiving an education and less likely to

comply with the wishes of their father, sibling, or husband. This traditional outlook on education has contributed to the Nigerian female child's access to a high-quality education. As a girl from the North Central region, (Mahdi 2012), cited in British Council (2012), stated, "Some parents prefer their daughters to attend school because only sons inherit and carry on the family name." Others may view girls' education with hostility associating it with moral decline and Westernization.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) predict that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the richest males will attain universal primary completion in 2025, but the poorest girls will not catch up until 2086, if current trends continue. (UNESCO, 2014). The Gender Parity Index (GPI), reveals that, the ratio of girls to boys at each level of education, consistently indicates that there are fewer girls than boys enrolled in school. In fact, the preponderance of children who are not in school is female.

Nevertheless, numerous studies have shown that the Almajirai and their Mallams live in deplorable social conditions, and that their teaching/learning environment is not conducive to learning (Oladeji, 2010, cited in NERP). Numerous academicians refuted the claim and asserted that begging was not known to be associated with the teaching of Islam, but that the religion (Islam) was known to have discouraged begging and promoted hard work and independence (Mahdi 2012). Recently, some Mallams, parents, and Almajiris have accepted the integration of fundamental education into Almajiri schools. With the integration, there will be permanent centers with enhanced facilities, such as water, toilets, and adequate ventilation; Almajiri will be taught life skills such as trade for income generation and sustainable development; the Sokoto state government has replaced so. Many Almajiri school structures were replaced with contemporary structures, and a Religious Ministry was established (Zaid, 2012). Now, inclusive education is required to nurture the growth of all Nigerians to their fullest potential. Almajiri and girl's children confront obstacles to education primarily due to poverty, cultural norms and practices, poor infrastructure, violence, and fragility (Ali and Hadi 2012).

Ekpiwre and Haruna, (2019) Numerous research studies have demonstrated that fees have a negative impact on females' attendance and advancement. In Northern Nigeria, primary and junior secondary institutions are subject to a variety of formal and informal charges and fees. Children's enrollment and retention in school can be significantly hindered by the accessibility of institutions. In rural areas, girls may be required to travel significant distances to reach the nearest school. 14% of the students surveyed in a recent study by (Ali and Hadi 2012) walked more than six kilometers to school each day, spending more than an hour doing so. Sixty-one percent of those who walked between one and three kilometers are females. A baseline survey conducted in (2018) in Northern states (Unicef, 2017) revealed that 21% of girls viewed distance to school as a significant barrier that would prevent them from attaining their desired level of education.

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Methodology

This research work was carryout using survey method, in which data gathers directly from persons within the population of the study using questionnaire, interview and observations. As recommended by Sodame (2009) in Udom (2014) among other scholars was adopted. The design was chosen not only because it is appropriate in obtaining the option of respondents on the problem area but as one of the effective method to gather data by the use of questionnaire which was the major instrument used for data collection in this study.

Population of the study

The population of the study comprises 717,796 and 468,593 only out-of-schools Almajiri and Girls child respectively, within the age of six to twelve (6-12 years) as well as 6,247 staff/ad-hock staff with Better Education Services Delivery for All BESDA across North Eastern Nigeria. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO in its Global Education Monitoring Report, 2022) cites that the total Out-Of-School Children (OOSC) in Nigeria is 9.5 Million, the report showed the regional distribution of both boys and girls child Out-Of-School Children. Hence, this study will cover only Girls Child and Almajiri population within North East as shown from below table 1.

Population Distribution of Almajiri, Girls Child and BESDA staffs in North East

S/NO	Name of State	Population of Out-Of-School Almajiri	Population of Out-Of-School Girls Child	Population of BESDA Staff/Ad-Hoc Staff
1	Adamawa State	104,837	69,576	971
2	Bauchi State	156,678	74,254	1076
3	Borno State	171,759	103,681	1,632
4	Gombe State	97,265	58,496	894
5	Taraba State	71,333	65,735	657
6	Yobe State	115,924	96,851	1,242
	TOTAL	717,796	468,593	6,247

Sources: UNESCO 2022, BESDA/NBS Survey 2022.

Sampling and Samples

Because of the large geographically dispersed of the population, multistage technique being adopted in which three states are selected Gombe, Bauchi and Adamawa. Hence, sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size of a given population. The sample for the studies stood at 361 and the researchers adopted multistage sampling technique in arriving at the sample.

Instrument for data

Primary data was gathered through the use of questionnaire and observation while, secondary data which include official documents from BESDA state offices, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and online sources are accumulated.

Method of data collection

The method requires administering survey. **Questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. A set of questionnaire was designed to elicit data from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided in two sections. Section A, sought for bio data information of the respondents while section B, was used to collect data for responding to the research questions. Likert's scale was adopted with each section having five (5) point response options.**

A guide to the scales rating format is presented as follows; 1= 'Undecided', 2 = 'Strongly Disagree', 3 – 'Disagree', 4 – 'Agree', 5 – 'Strongly Agree'.

Validation of Instruments

The instrument was duly validated by three experts one each from Faculty of Science Education, Federal University Kashere, Statistics Department Faculty of Science, Joseph Tarfa University of Agriculture Makurdi Benue and School of Education, Federal College of Education (Tech.) Gombe.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument reliability coefficient was established by Cronbach alpha that yielded 0.70 which was considered high for the study.

Method of Data analysis

The data collected were presented in tabular form for meaningful interpretation; mean and standard deviation were used in which descriptive statistical tools is employed for analyzing the data collected for the study. For the research questions, the Mean rating of 3.00 was used

for decision point such that only item less than 3.00 were regarded as disagreed, while rating equal or above 3.00 same were regarded as agree. The level of significant was 0.05.

Presented/result:

Research Question 1: What are the basic factors hampering Almajiri and Girls Child in North Eastern Nigeria from embracing inclusive Education?

Table 1: Respondents mean rating on the factors hampering almajiri and girls child from embracing inclusive education in North Eastern Nigeria.

S/No	Items statement	SA		A		D		SD		U		Total	Mean
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
1	Poor socio-economic status of family is responsible for increase in the number of out of school children (Almajiri and Girl child)	126	36.6	194	56.4	13	3.8	8	2.4	3	0.8	344 100%	3.87
2	Lack of interest on western education among some families in northeastern Nigeria caused rises out of school children (Almajiri and Girl child)	18	5.2	130	37.8	187	54.4	4	1.2	5	1.4	344 100%	2.42
3	Illiracy on the part of parent is also responsible for increase in the number of out of school children (Almajiri and Girl child)	175	50.9	138	40.1	7	2.1	22	6.4	2	0.5	344 100%	3.53
4	Negative parental attitude or perception constitute a challenge to the inclusive education of Almajiri and Girl child	153	44.5	146	42.4	25	7.3	16	4.7	4	1.1	344 100%	3.71
5	Religious factor contribute to the increase in high numbers of out of school Almajiri and Girl child	167	48.5	152	44.2	8	2.4	17	4.9	–	–	344 100%	3.98

6	Culture, Norms and Values also contribute to the increase in high numbers of out of school Almajiri and Girl child	134	38.9	178	51.7	25	8.1	–	–	4	1.3	344 100%	3.62
7	Environment excessively contribute to the raise in high numbers of out of school Almajiri and Girl child	149	43.5	163	47.1	11	3.2	20	5.9	1	0.3	344 100%	3.05
8	Lack of motivation by the community leaders caused an increase in number of out of school children.	9	2.6	181	52.6	31	9.0 1	124	36. 1	3	0.4	344 100%	3.16
	Grand Mean												3.62

Source: Field Survey

The result of data analysis in table 1 above relate to the basic factors hampering Almajiri and Girls Child in North Eastern from embracing inclusive Education. The result indicates that the respondents agreed with all items except item 2. This means that all items are factors obstruct Almajiri and Girls Child from espousal inclusive Education except item 2. The findings revealed that, eight items had the Mean of 3.0 and above showed that the items were Strongly Agreed and accepted by the respondents' as the grand Mean score is 3.62 which indicates Strongly agreed. Hence, standard deviation ranged from 0.8 to 2.13 which revealed that respondents were not too far from the mean and each other in their responses.

Research Question 2: How does the top underwriting variance factors hindering Almajiri and Girls Child Education are subdued through Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) in North Eastern Nigeria.

Table 1.2 Distribution of respondents by impact of BESDA in downcast the top underwriting variance factors hindering Almajiri and Girls Child Education.

S/No	Items statement	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed		Undecided		Total	Mean
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
9	BESDA program provide adequate funding, learning facilities, feedings to encourage inclusive education of out of school children.	182	52.9	145	42.1	11	3.2	4	1.2	2	0.6	344 100%	3.91
10	Organization of seminars and workshop for parents and Elders of the community.	163	47.4	175	50.8	3	0.9	2	0.6	1	0.3	344 100%	3.78
11	Provision of skills acquisition facilities and personnel's	154	44.8	168	48.8	8	2.3	9	2.6	5	1.5	344 100%	3.63
12	Integration of mallam and alaramma into the programme	179	52	140	40.7	16	4.6	7	2	2	0.7	344 100%	3.27
13	Establishment of temporarily learning centers beside district head (Jaurabe) and more tsangaya model school for easily access to basic education	138	40.2	182	52.9	12	3.4	8	2.3	4	1.2	344 100%	3.51
14	Engaged traditional rulers, religion leaders and community elder's consciousness for effective inclusive education out of school children	157	54.7	165	47.9	13	3.8	6	1.7	3	0.9	344 100%	3.54
	Grand Mean												3.89

Source: Field Survey

The result of the data in the table 2 above revealed that respondents in items 9-14 had Mean scores ranging from 3.91, 3.78, 3.63, 3.27, 3.51 and 3.54. This indicates that the respondents strongly agreed that all items of the questionnaire above are imperative strategies adopted by Better Education Delivery For All (BESDA) to persuade inclusive education among Almajiri and Girls child education within North Eastern Nigeria. The grand mean score is 3.89 which also indicate strongly agreed and however, standard deviation ranged from 1.4 to 1.93 which revealed that respondents were not too far from the mean and each other in their responses.

Research Question 3: How does Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) policies guide the proper implementations of quality inclusive education among Almajiris and girls-child in North Eastern Nigeria?

Table 1.3 Distribution of respondents by policies strategies for implementation of inclusive education

S/No	Items statement	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed		Undecided	Total		Mean
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
15	The BESDA curriculum Provides opportunity for literacy and numeracy in which by experience it will enable the Almajiris and girl child to fit well in society.	134	38.9	178	51.7	28	8.1	4	1.3	-	-	344	3.16
16	BESDA present inclusive education which operates an integrated curriculum that promotes the study of Qur'anic and basic education subject at once.	175	50.8	144	41.8	16	4.7	7	2.0	2	0.7	344	3.43
17	Present practice BESDA inclusive education provide conducive environment for both Qur'anic and modern basic education											344	3.08
18	Current practice of BESDA inclusive education would create well organized learning atmosphere	156	45	144	41.8	25	7.3	16	4.7	4	1.2	344	3.41
19	The BESDA curriculum offer opportunity for career guidance and vocational training for total development of individual	163	47.4	156	45.5	21	6.2	-	-	3	0.9	344	3.50
20	The practice in the BESDA inclusive education of out of school children (Almajiri and Girl Child) provide them opportunity to acquired basic education at door steps and skills needed for self-reliance.	181	52.6	124	36.1	31	9	5	1.5	3	0.8	344	3.21
	Grand Mean												3.54

Source: Field Survey

The result of data analysis in table 3 above relate to the Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) policies guide the proper implementations of quality inclusive education among Almajiris and girls-child in North Eastern Nigeria. The result indicates that the respondents in item 15-20 had the mean scores ranging from 3.16, 3.43, 3.08, 3.41, 3.50 and 3.21. This revealed, the respondents strongly agreed with all items as proper measures for implementations of quality inclusive education among Almajiris and girls-child in North Eastern Nigeria. The grand mean score is 3.54 which signify agreed.

Discussion on Finding

The analysis of research question one revealed poor socio-economic condition, illiracy on the part of parent, traditional attitude (culture, norms and values) as well as environment excessively is the basic factors hampering Almajiri and Girls Child in North Eastern Nigeria from embracing inclusive Education. This finding is in agreement with that of Ali and Hadi (2012), Almajiri and girl's children confront obstacles to education primarily due to deplorable social conditions, poverty, cultural norms and practices, poor infrastructure, violence, and fragility which associated with not conducive learning environment.

The analysis of research question two revealed that, Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) Establishment of temporarily learning centers beside district head (Jaurabe) and supplementary tsangaya model school for easily access to basic education, Integration of mallam and alamma into the programme. Engaged traditional rulers, religion leaders and community elder's consciousness. availability of adequate funding, learning facilities, and feedings to encourage inclusive education of out of school children are factors en route for restrained the top underwriting variance feature hindering almajiri and girls child from embracing inclusive education in North Eastern Nigeria.

The analysis of research question three revealed that, **The Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) curriculum endow with opportunity for literacy and numeracy, programme present all-encompassing education of Qur'anic and basic education subject at once. Furthermore, Curriculum offer opportunity for career guidance and vocational training as well the programme in general is categorized as P for R which is progress for result.**

Conclusion

Education is the vehicle for human emancipation and development. It transforms all aspects of live and eliminates ignorance, improves self esteem; open up opportunities for social, physical and economic interaction. Inclusive education ensured that all children have access to basic education of good quality. This implies creating an environment in schools and in basic education programs in which children are both able and enabled to learn. Such an environment must be inclusive of children, effective with children, friendly and welcoming to children, healthy and protective for children and gender sensitive.

This paper highlights the relevance of Better Education Service Delivery project on inclusive quality education for the almari and girl-child. It further discusses importance of empowering the almajiri and girl child through mitigating gender disparity in education and all spheres of life. **Based on the findings**, the paper identified certain impediment working against educating the almajiri and girl-child as illiracy on the part of parent, traditional attitude (culture, norms and values), religion, poverty, and. as well as environment excessively.

Thus, the paper suggests that consideration of the contextual circumstances of the almajiri and girl-child in marginalized societies is needed in order to stop gender discrimination and

adopt better education service delivery for all policy for the country to attain sustainable development. Hence, inclusive quality education of the girl-child in Nigeria is paramount.

Recommendations

Traditional ruler, Community members and media organizations, together with local civil society organizations, have an imperative but sometimes under-used role to play in monitoring the quality of basic education provision and, in particular, almajiri and girls' participation in education.

Educational data collected, stored and analyzed at basic levels must be improved to better recognize, monitor and take action on disparities in education access and completion. Better data would improve our understanding of marginalized groups in the education system and therefore improve action to remedy the situation. Training and awareness-raising on the importance of data would bring attention to this need.

Government need to extend the better education service delivery for all (BESDA) project and put in place more funding as well as policies that create an environment where almajiri and girls have access to school and can learn effectively. Issues of school feeding, security, distance, community and traditional stereotyped perception towards the almajiri and girl child must be addressed according to policy. The enforcement of the Girl-Child Act in all states in Nigeria is paramount in order to foster equal right of the female child with that of the male child. Hence, government needs to galvanize the political momentum in which courageous policy action of Universal Basic Education Board at National level; State Universal Basic Education Board as well as Better Education Services Delivery for All can be taken. Actions are needed that challenge the existing structures and systems that keep almajiri and Girls child from realizing their right to basic education.

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