

**PORTRAIT OF THE ALMAJIRI: A STUDY OF THEIR DAILY
ACTIVITIES IN PAINTING**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Project Report entitled PORTRAIT OF THE ALMAJIRI: A STUDY OF THEIR DAILY ACTIVITIES IN PAINTING is a record of my original research work. It has never been presented elsewhere in any application for a degree. All quotations and information used and their sources are acknowledged by means of references.

OTU JOHN OZOVEHE

DATE

CERTIFICATION

This project report entitled **PORTRAIT OF THE ALMAJIRI: A STUDY OF THEIR DAILY ACTIVITIES IN PAINTING** by **OTU JOHN OZOVEHE** meets the regulations governing the Award of the Master of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my Father Mr. P. O. Otu, my Mother Dr. (Mrs.)
D. O. Otu, my brothers and sisters for their untiring contributions to my education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With all due respect, I appreciate God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for his ever-present help in the time of need.

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Finally, to my parents, I say thank you for your unflinching financial and moral support. God bless you richly, in Jesus name, Amen.

ABSTRACT

PORTRAIT OF THE ALMAJIRI: A STUDY OF THEIR DAILY ACTIVITIES IN PAINTING is aimed at bringing to people's knowledge the correct use of the word 'Almajiri' its origin, development and the present destitute state of the Almajiri. The study was motivated by the ongoing events of destitution, poor living conditions and their abuse by both social miscreants and the Mallams who abuse them. The Almajiri is a boy-scholar who goes to a town outside his hometown against the backdrop of the primary aim of learning the Qur'an. The intention of the research is to raise awareness on the societal ills the Almajiri cause and the ones they suffer. The survey for the research was based on actual visits paid to the various places, which negates the primary aim that has brought them to their town of Quranic study. In the methodology, sketches were made from poses assumed by the Almajiri. The other sketches were based on imaginative composition and photographs taken of the Almajiri. The research was not undergone to condemn anyone, but rather to create awareness for a unilateral structure that will aid the proper organization of the Traditional Quranic School for the Almajiri. The paintings produced are shown in various plates and exhibited as a result of the study carried out. It is observed that for as long as the destitute situation and abuse of the Almajiri persists, the paintings made and exhibited regularly might aid a reversion to the initial ideal of the Traditional Quranic School.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction and Background of the Study

In an interview with Mohammed in August 2000 he explained that the Prophet Mohammed (PBH) got inspiration from God and the conviction that he was a prophet, sent to spread Islam started receiving revelations from God (Allah) in Mecca. The pagans did not make it a conducive place to preach and teach, in that his disciples; few as they were at the onset were attacked and killed. He fled to Medina with his disciples and continued teaching. At the time such gatherings took place, those who sat round the Prophet Mohammed (PBH) to learn were called 'Almuhajjir' which means an emigrant. These were people that went to Medina because of the persecutions in Mecca. In this regard, there are two categories of the Almuhajjir and they are the Dalibi, the self-dependant wealthy traders and the Sahaba that depended on alms, while seeking Quranic knowledge.

Sani (2003) states '... male children were taken to areas other than their birth places and they stayed for years under the social care of a prominent scholar who fed and clothed them as they acquired Koranic knowledge. By implication the almajiri institution was a boarding school system.' This antecedence gives credence to the fact that there was a properly organized setup in the past that differs from what currently obtains today, in which the Almajiri has to sleep on the bare floor of the mallam's anteroom. The Almajiri is not properly fed and clothed as it ones was but he is seen engaged in various odd jobs such as washing clothes, carrying load in market places and even selling black market petrol.

In an interview with Usman in June 2004, he said that Usman Dan Fodio in 1834 started the traditional quranic school in Sokoto after a jihad of that period, and Arab travellers were also involved in the introduction of the traditional quranic school. He said he had attended the traditional quranic school at home and there were about sixty students in attendance. He blames both parents and the government as the groups responsible for the state of destitution of the Almajiri. He explained that jobless youths are to be held responsible for carrying out sectarian violence and not the Almajiri. In an interview with Haruna in May 2004, who had also attended a traditional school, explained that parents, government and the Muslim Umma should be held responsible for the destitute state of the Almajiri. To this end, he said these three should involve themselves in the financing and control of the traditional quranic school. On the question of violence, he however opined that the jobless youths are the ones used during sectarian violence and not the Almajirai.

Most of the people that come to the northern part of Nigeria for the first time say, “An Almajiri is a beggar”. They are given to this misconstrued use of word because they have never even taken it upon themselves to know what the word Almajiri means. The word is from the Arabic word ‘Almuhajjir’ which in the Hausa language is pronounced ‘Almajiri’ and means disciple. But in spite of the slight difference in the pronunciation, the Arabic word means emigrant. The word follower could also be used, in this regard, one that is subjected to the study of the Qur’an.

Most of the time, people coming to the north for the first time, on hearing the word Almajiri have invariably become the culprits to the mis-use of the word Almajiri. Just as much as they have seen those who are called by the name, they are quick to join in calling such boys, Almajiri without trying to find out the meaning of the word. As far as they are concerned, any boy of about age 6 to 15 or 16 in tattered cloths with or without a bowl in his hand is an Almajiri. On this, Mohammed in the August interview of 2000 stated that “the girls cannot be allowed to go far from home like the boys because of the obvious risk being raped and misled into prostitution.” Nevertheless, the Islamiyya School makes it possible for both the boys and the girls to attend a quranic school that is not far from their houses. It is pertinent to note at this juncture that the Islamiyya school is one in which the boys and girls that attend are those that live within their parents and only trek to the Mallam’s house for the lessons. Each child also pays a fee of between 200 to 400 Naira monthly.

1.1.1 Objective of the Almajiranci

According to the National Council for the Welfare of the Destitute (2001) it explained that the traditional Quranic school has two objectives, which are, to impart intellectual and moral training through the domestic enrolment, in which he attends the school daily from home, and the boarding enrolment that completely exposes the Almajiri to the dual opportunity of becoming a Mallam on completion of his study and even learn any trade of his choice. The syllabus of the Almajiri is split into two stages, namely, the lower and advanced studies. When a pupil is

enrolled, he is expected to start from the beginning but can stop at the end of the first three levels. The following are the levels in this order of precedence:

Level one: Babbaku is the one in which the Almajiri learns to identify the different Arabic alphabets and learn the pronunciation, written on a wooden slate.

Level two: Farfaru is the level that enables the Almajiri learn the Arabic vowels, this is said to take a longer period since it is more difficult.

Level three: Zube is said to be easier and faster to learn as it entails learning, reading and writing of the Qur'an. The Almajiri is made to write the whole of the Qur'an in parts from beginning to the end. This marks the end of the elementary level. This is also called Sauka, meaning graduation. This is always marked by a public recitation of a portion of the Qur'an after which a feast is held for the graduated Almajiri. After these three levels, an Almajiri may decide to proceed to the higher level of becoming well versed in the Qur'an and even become a Mallam.

Level four: Haddatu is the level in which the Almajiri is expected to memorise the whole of the one hundred and fourteen chapters of the Qur'an. He is then made to revise the Haddatu in a special class called Tishe/Tilwa.

Level five: Satu is the final stage in which the Almajiri is made to write portions of the Qur'an from memory until he completes this task flawlessly on sheets of paper. There will be a musabbah reading before his write up is

accepted and such an Almajiri is hence called a Hafiz. This level marks the end of the Almajiri's study of the Qur'an and may decide to go and specialize in any area of his choice.

The second objective of the Almajiranci is to engender moral development in the Almajiri. The Almajiri is taught the significance of Islamic culture and discipline, to understand the Quranic values system and live by them, the essence of communal belonging and the unity of the Muslim Umma. The Almajirai are taught the virtues of habits such as dressing and eating habits. These are lessons taught by both the Mallam and the Almajirai that have reached the fifth level of their study.

Though the traditional Quranic school does not have the type of organisational set-up the western form of education has, it still has its own laid down precepts strictly adhered to by Mallams that firmly follow these laid down precepts. This aids discipline in the rank and file in both age, between the Almajirai, and the Mallams in their knowledge of the Qur'an. According to the National Council for the Welfare of the Destitute (ibid) it explained that on the basis of age, the Almajirai starts with the lowest age group called the Kolo. These are aged between four to eleven years old. The Titibiri are the adolescent age group ranging from twelve to about sixteen. The Gardi are aged from seventeen to young adults.

The Kolo and Titibiri are the ones found studying in the first three levels of Quranic studies, and after graduating can either leave the school or continue. The

Gardi are those that have attained the teacher-in training status and assist the Mallams in giving lessons in the first two levels of the Almajiri syllabus. However, the Gardi do not go about to beg for money and food, which they are expected to bring and is shared by the Gardi. Apart from begging, they engage in other industries to eke-out a living such as laundry, manicures, sewing caps and a host of other noble engagements.

Among the Mallams is a categorisation that is only recognized through the Quranic knowledge attained. These are the Mallams, Alaramma and the Gwani. The Mallam is the lowest ranked person in the knowledge of the Qur'an and is a word generally used to mean teacher, and only has students learning under him. The Alaramma has both Almajirai and Mallams learning under him. The Gwani is the most respected person in the knowledge of the Qur'an and has only the Mallams and the Alarammai that come to seek deeper knowledge of the Qur'an.

1.1.2 The Almajiri

The Almajiri is a boy who is born into a family, just like every one else. He has a father, a mother, sisters, brothers and every other member of the extended family. He has friends. He is a human being. He has, just like every other human being, dreams, taste, aspirations and hopes, among others. He is not a myth. But it will be pertinent to mention without the intent of committing any act of sacrilege that he has become a victim to the religious tradition that has been passed down over the years to impart into him, the knowledge of the Qur'an through several years of Arabic lessons.

The phenomenology, therefore, of the Almajiri is that he does not visit home on a set date, like a holiday, as he seldom gets any visit from his home. This is not to insinuate rejection, but perhaps to aid him concentrate on his studies, he is left to ‘himself’, to discover his God (Allah) on the pages of the Qur’an. Invariably, he is no less than any one or better, but deserves a fair treatment, or a better one, as his future which is plagued by the state of destitution, begging and abuse, by some of the Mallams under who he is learn the Qur’an and also has him abused.

1.1.3 The Quranic School

The Quranic school system have no organized boarding facilities, even though it has in the past boarded the Almajiri with a much better boarding condition that it is now. The payment of school fees, scholars say was done, based on the individual Mallams discretion, in that, he either depends on some bountiful givers of alms in the form of clothes, food and money, for both the Mallam and the Almajiri. This money is given almost as regular as once in two months. There was a Quranic recitation to also ‘graduate’ those who have proven themselves to be ‘men’ among the Muslims. To this end, they graduate into the waiting arms of either going back to their homes permanently or stay back in their ‘new found homes’ to trade.

Macleod (2001) stated that

the King (Fahd) also poured cash into scores of new Islamic Universities, which began to turn out thousands of fresh religions activists’.” But something

unexpected happened”, he quoted a former Western diplomat as saying in Riyadh, that, “instead of this wonderful utopia, where young men were attracted to academia to learn about Islam, you got thousands of religious graduates who couldn’t find jobs.

Just as important or paramount as religious education is, there is a great need for the Almajiri to acquire formal education by drawing a time-table for the Traditional Quranic School or some form of vocational education such as trading, be taught to them, to enable them get self employed, preventing them from roaming the streets and being abused or manipulated after the completion of their Quranic education.

According to Mohammed, still from the August interview in 2000, explained that in the social context the Almajiri is expected to have a proper knowledge of the one hundred and fourteen chapters of the Qur'an. Religion is primarily designed to guide the conduct of ones life as it affects every aspect of living. This in turn will make the society a better place to live if everyone adheres to the teaching taught to him or her as an individual.

While in the traditional context, the Almajiranci is one handed down from one generation to the other to propagate the teachings of the Qur'an in order to have it reflective in the lives of every Muslim, old and young, male and female. The ‘Makarantan Allo’, a Hausa phrase that translates literally to ‘The slate school’ and is also called as the Traditional Quranic School by some other Muslims, exists till today.

Long before now, the Traditional Quranic Schools had been run with ease

some years after 1097 A.D. By this, an Almajiri leaves his home state to another to learn the one hundred and fourteen chapters of the Qur'an without having to roam the streets begging for alms as the situation is now, with the Almajiri Shehu explained in a July interview. Sule-Kano (1998) stated that "the Nigerian political economy being over-whelmingly a neo-colonial one, in which the national economy was created as that of a capitalist economy, it has inherently some internal dynamics that never work in the interest of the oppressed majority." This he posits to be borne out of the one sidedness of the nations economy, in which the welfare of the general populace is seldom taken into consideration. This in turn has prompted the parents of the Almajiri to see the situation as a vista to ease themselves of the financial burden of fending for their children.

The portrait the researcher has painted is not bent on painting the Traditional Quranic School bad, but is intent on drawing a line of challenge that calls for change, a change on the conduct that guides the running of these schools that will prevent these Almajirai from their present state of poor livelihood. In Saudi Arabia and its neighbouring countries teachings continued until about 1000A.D. when little children, boys and girls began to be made to learn the Qur'an under a Mallam, the teacher.

Thakur and Ezenne (1980) explain that

he sits with volumes of the Qur'an on a stool or chair with the pupils sitting in a semicircle round him. As they grew, those who displayed an exemplary knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an through the recitation were made to travel to other Arab Nations to learn and teach. This is against the backdrop of the Prophet's

(PBH) teachings that they should 'Seek knowledge even if it can take you the distance between here (Medina) and Sin (China).

This necessitated the traders to also take it upon themselves to spread Islam to other parts of the world, such as Africa. This has since made it possible for parents to send their children far from home to literarily seek Quranic knowledge. The success of these was made possible by the gifts given to the Mallams to cater for the Almajiri.

Thakur and Ezenne (1980) further stated that 'As far as Nigeria is concerned a Muslim scholar named Hamed Mohammed Mani and a Kanem ruler who ruled between 1085 and 1097AD', stand as the pioneers of the spread of Islam in Northern Nigeria. Umme Jilmi's acceptance of Islam made him have his children taught as early as possible." This act of having children gather round a Mallam soon spread throughout Nigeria. Suffice to say that Donovan (1999) said that in a little village in neighbouring Niger, a place called Fachi, a man named Kader, the oldest spiritual leader and keeper of the Qur'an in Fachi explained that he has eleven boys that come from a nearby town to learn. In his interview with Kadir he said that he teaches the boys to write and memorize the one hundred and fourteen chapters of the Qur'an. He said further that by reciting the obligatory prayers, they are being brought to religious adulthood. An annual Quranic recitation takes place for the boys to prove their right of passage. In this a boy on successfully reciting the passage given to him to recite by heart also becomes a Hafiz in the eyes of Muslim leaders.

In an interview with Isyaku in February 2001 he explained that the traditional Quranic School was originally designed to be a boarding school. The very poor parents send their wards far in recent times, as they could no longer afford to fend for their children. But when it originally started as a boarding school, Muslims gave money, food and clothing to the Mallams to feed the boys they had with them. Elaborating on the Almajirai, Isyaku said that it was not a burden on many of the Mallams to take care of the welfare of his family and the Almajiri. Such Mallams had farms where they grow beans, maize and other crops, where the Almajirai under such Mallams work and are fed. The situations of having them go around begging for alms did not exist. But this did not rule out the fact that they went to the farm to help the Mallam, who they also helped joyfully.

He was also an Almajiri, but as a result of his parents' education an elderly man was called upon to come to the house to teach him daily. His parents have six children, three boys and three girls. The Mallam did not come on Thursdays and Fridays. For hundreds of years, the Traditional Quranic School had spread throughout the northern states of Nigeria. It will raise, from boys to men, Quranic literates both as scholars and Muslims in general. The tradition of having to leave your town to another place to acquire knowledge has been adhered to by many parents. In the last twenty years, eyebrows have been raised about the physical, emotional and psychological state of the Almajiri. The Almajiri has degenerated in status as many Arabic teachers have since had the boys they have sit to learn and live with them abused such as to do one singular thing, beg after their lessons. This is not to imply that the primary aim of teaching Qur'an has been defeated, but

right after the lessons they also engage in various acts that have been destructive to the society and themselves.

The Almajiri resort to begging for money, food and clothing for their upkeep and make a monetary return of twenty naira, once every Thursday. They also resort to touting at motor parks, pimping in university hostels and engaging in sexual activities, washing clothes in brothels, hotels and carrying luggage in market places. Sometimes, the Almajirai are used during religious riots to engage in beating of people and burning of churches.

In a typical Quranic school, a Mallam has between thirty to as many as eighty boys studying under him, which he mostly cannot cater for as a result of the bad economy. The boys also live in the Mallam's house. They sleep on mats that soon age into tatters and end up sleeping on the bare ground. The ventilation in the shelter is either poor or the door is blocked by a woven straw mat used as a curtain. This allows mosquitoes and the cold harmattan wind to breeze in. When it rains, flooding occasionally keeps them away from sleeping on the floors, which is borne out of the lack of drainage system in front of these houses.

It is pertinent to note that the boys seen in such schools and on the streets are children that come from as far as Bauchi, Borno, Kebbi, Zamfara, Sokoto and the other northern states bordering Kaduna. A boy is told of the importance of quranic education with stories of great prophets that have left their marks on Islam's sand of time. After this short enlightenment, the boy is either taken to or handed over to a man who will then take the boy to his destination. His luggage

usually little, comprises of about three to four changes of clothes and on rare occasions, money.

Departures are usually emotionally laden with mixed feelings, which are evident on the mother. Some times there is physical resistance from the boy that is about to be led away to his fate, as he struggles to wrench himself free from his father or guardian. On the child's arrival to his destination, he is packed with more words of endearment to have him prepared to become a disciple, an Almajiri, until a time when he can proficiently recite any chosen portion of the Qur'an. It is pertinent to note at this juncture that there is no gender discrimination as it pertains to the evident absence of the girls from the traditional Quranic schools. The researcher was made to know that the girls stood a high risk of rape and prostitution, for which she is not allowed till today to go beyond the neighbourhood to learn the Qur'an.

Artistic commentaries on the social misnomer and vices affecting the Almajiri, has been the self – chosen subject of a handful of artists. Artists at most time choose to depict the Almajiri in the figurative abstract style of painting. To a large extent, the Almajiri's poor state of living which has gone from bad to worse has been turned into a mere fictitious tale of woe, but is very real. Paintings have not being made in picturesque representation of many of the aspects of their life. Many of the paintings only hinge their works on the display of one artistic dexterity or the other.

According to Jegede (1996), he stated that “for the visual artist, mastery of techniques and materials cannot and should not be substituted for message and thrust, otherwise he is a rambler who refuses to advance a thought through his art.” In this, he means that an artist should be carried away by skill use and displays of styles. This he posits to make artists in Nigeria to direct their artistic energies on sociological studies of man. On this, according to Gardner (1980), she explained that Gustave Courbet (1819-77) stated that “to be able to translate the customs, ideas, and appearances of my time as I see them-in a word, to create a living art-this has been my aim.” Against the backdrop of this, the researcher has therefore undergone the study to prick the consciousness of artists to join in the call to effect a positive change in the life of the Almajiri, and other types of social misnomer.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The conduct that guides the Traditional Quranic Schools has made the boys to be abused by various social miscreants. The Mallams, who take more boys than they can cater for, which in time leads them to touting, pimping, selling petrol at the “black market”, is reason enough for great concern. They are also denied of years of constant emotional and physical contact with their families, which affect them psychologically leaving them at the mercy of the negative minds of the society. Many of the paintings produced do not depict the mood, emotional depressed states and challenging throes of life of the Almajiri. There is also the lack of paintings depicting picturesque aspects of the Almajiri’s life in the representational art form, which is easily understood, against the backdrop of the poor level of art appreciation in Nigeria. It is hoped that the constant exhibitions of

paintings on the Almajiri will on the long run alleviate the problem the Almajiri is going through.

This study is centered on the reversion to the primary ideals of the Traditional Quranic School in which children are made to study only within the perimeters of their parents' houses and under such conditions, the Almajirai is efficiently catered for which will lead to achieving of the goals set for the Almajirai.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to:

- I. Depict selected aspects of the negative life events in the lives of the Almajiri in painting which includes their sleeping and living conditions, the beggarly life they live and the things they do to earn a living
- II. Using the works produced to raise awareness among Muslims on the poor state of the boys who learn under the Mallams that subject the Almajiri to abuse with the hope that the Muslims can contribute in cash and kind, and also regulate a population the Mallams can cater for, and
- III. Evoke artistically the consciousness of public, government, policy makers, stakeholders and the society as a whole through the exhibition of the paintings produced.

1.4 Significance of the study

- I. This study hopes to make artists understand the role they can play in raising awareness on the present state of the Almajiri to the society.
- II. This study also hopes to cause the Muslims and Islamic organizations to organise a plan of action to guide the conduct of the

Traditional Quranic School.

- III. This study is also expected to encourage policy makers in both the federal and state governments to seriously look into the destitute state of the Almajiri through the exhibition of the works produced.

1.5 Delimitation

The Traditional Quranic School exists in many of the northern states of Nigeria. The peculiarity in the stated problems, therefore, has made the scope of the study to be in Samaru and Zaria City.

1.6 Justification of the Study

Specific attention has been given to the various aspects of the Almajiri life in paintings. The efforts made by many artists give a shallow description of the sordid aspect of Almajiri lives with the use of various painting forms. The study has however, contributed to knowledge, the proper use of the word Almajiri, and the attendant hardships they go through, the abuse they suffer and the problems they pose to the society through the paintings produced in the representational art style.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Almuhajjir:	Arabic word for emigrant
Almajirai:	Plural of Almajiri
Almajiranci:	State of being a student
Almajirci:	the same as above
Almajiri:	It is a compound word in this study, and is an emigrant

Asr:	Prayer said around 3:30 - 4:00 p.m.
Bara:	Hausa word for begging
Dalibi:	Self dependant scholars (traders) at the time of the Prophet Mohammed (PBH)
Hafiz	One that displays excellence in the knowledge of the Qur'an
Islamiyya	Islamic school
Kwadago:	Hausa word for labour
Magrib:	Prayer said around 6:30-730p.m. (Sunset)
Makarantan Allo:	Slate School
Mallam:	Teacher
Muslim Umma:	Muslim community/ Muslim members
Sahaba:	Scholars that depended on alms at the time of the Prophet Mohammed (PBH)
Subh:	Prayer said at 5-5:30a.m. (Sunrise)
“PZ”:	Paterson Zochonis; the name of a Company and is also a name used for an area in Zaria
Purdah	State of seclusion for married Muslim women
Talla:	Hausa word for hawking
Tafsir:	Translations and commentary of the Holy Qur'an
Zaure:	Ante room of a typical Hausa type of house

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is on a review of related literature, unfortunately in this part of the world, documented reports and empirical studies are scarce in respect of the Almajiri. However, a descriptive survey approach was used to review the pattern of the life style of the Almajiri. This is done in three main sections as stated below:

1. Societal opinion and attitude to the Almajiri system.
2. The Mallam's training pattern
3. The Almajiri's life in the Mallam's household

2.1.2 Societal opinion and attitude to the Almajiri system.

The poor living condition of the Almajiri prompted Tanko (2001) to state that "the sad story of the Almajiris keeps on repeating itself and with each passing day the response to this open challenge has always been the lukewarm attitudes on the part of those who are suppose to do something about it". There is a sense in which the ignorance on the part of many custodians of the Traditional Quranic School makes the Almajiri to suffer. He further explained that the sharia law should also now do away with the Almajiri way of life by making parents take back their children compulsorily if their welfare cannot be uplifted.

Sule-Kano (1998) stated that 'the Muslim Umma as far as the Almajiri phenomenon is concerned, government is to recognise the magnitude of the

problems with the view of demanding for a rebuttal on the National Educational Policy so as to recognise and capture the peculiarities of the Traditional Quranic Schools system'. He meant that the Muslims believe that the government should recognise the place of the Traditional Quranic School so as to include it by integrating it into the National Educational Policy. This will then make it possible for the Almajiri to also benefit from the formal education in which section 18 of the 1999 constitution states that "the Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal educational opportunities at all levels with the intention of eradicating illiteracy".

He further emphasised that

'Bara' and 'Talla' have become part of the objective conditions of capitalist transformation of the society in the lives of the Almajiri. The Almajiri is subjected to this act of begging and hawking to make a living for the Mallams, thereby keeping the boy out of the formal type of schools.

In another interview with Shehu in November 2000 said that there have been four benefits of the Traditional Quranic School from the onset. These are split into the religious, political, economic and social aspects of life. On religious grounds, the Qur'an makes it emphatically clear that knowledge should be taught and sought not just from one place but also from many places. This is to enable the sharing of knowledge, since insight on any verse derived from Allah is different but for specific purposes as it affects the different needs of people. This is on the basis of the Sayings and Traditions of the Prophet (PBH) in which he said, 'Seek

knowledge even if it can take you the distance between here (Medina) and Sin (China)'.

While politically, interaction is established, which in turn prevents any form of dialectical difference or any form of identity crisis. A non-indigene can be employed in the place he finds himself without any tribal sentiments raised. Socio-economically, it aids the prevention of any form of class stratification and also creates inter marriage. Friendship and mutual co-existence is also fostered through the Traditional Quranic School system. To this end, he concluded that there are still schools that are properly organised and go firmly by the precepts of the proper running of the Traditional Quranic Schools, as they do not make the boys beg and do take good care of them.

Millennium Hope Programme (2000), a booklet published by the office of the Kaduna State Governor's wife, stressed the need for the rehabilitation of Almajiri. In the problems it stated, it explained that the Almajiri has not been properly catered for against the backdrop of the initial practice of the system, where the welfare of the Almajiri fell on the community who provided for their basic needs such as good feeding and accommodation. But under the present economic situation that has swept the country off her feet of financial stability, there has not been the usual communal backing, which has made the Almajiri to go into the streets to beg, tout in motor parks, carry load at market places and campuses of institutions of higher learning. The booklet further stated that the Traditional Quranic School is not a religious practise, but a traditional practise that

engaged the presence of little boys and girls of between the ages of six to adulthood to go and learn the ethics and tenets of Islam for a number of years.

In the Kaduna State Government's effort to reduce the menace they cause to the society and of course themselves, they have since established four learning centres to teach them various skills such as furniture making, welding and a host of other trades and commerce. The programme is intent on integrating Quranic knowledge with literacy and vocational skills. These schools have since started in earnest. They are designed to enrol sixty trainees in two classes in each of the four centres namely Rigasa, Tudun Wada, Zaria City and Kaura. This is with the hope that more Muslims of thought will come forward to aid the government in getting the boys off the street and prevent poor parents from sending their children out of their homes to beg and from sending them to distant Traditional Quranic Schools.

Mumuni, (2001) quoted Yahaya as saying that,

parents have to realise that Islam has no objection to western education, because Prophet Mohammed (PBH) said 'Seek for knowledge even if it is as far as China' and at that time China was a pagan country. So it means if you can go as far as to a pagan country to acquire knowledge why can't you acquire it in your own area where you have the access?

This invariably puts to rest the meaning of the statement that has been misinterpreted by parents who send their children from home because of poverty under the guise of aiding their children acquire the knowledge of the Qur'an. He further opined that the northern elites should start exploiting the high level of

illiteracy in the north by establishing private schools to complement government's efforts towards giving qualitative education to the Almajiri.

Auwal (1992) states that...

'almajirci' has entirely lost its educational/religious relevance and is nothing more than a malevolent, monstrous and exploitative economic enterprise...in the light of these changes, 'almajirci' in its contemporary form results in, ... the following harmful effects: ... the practice provides a recruiting ground for criminals and other shady characters... Young unprotected boys denied parental love and care... Almajiranci, in its present form, teaches and perpetrates a dependency orientation among our youth, especially at the formative years of their lives ... almajirci' in its present form makes it difficult, if not impossible for government to implement any meaningful policy towards improving integration or channelling any form of assistance to the Koranic school system.

In this regard, he makes it clear that the primal intent to teach Quranic and religious education has been lost to falsehood that is supported by both parents and some Mallams that take lots of the Almajiri for the purpose of financial gains to themselves when miscreants go to such schools to recruit militias for religious riots. That they lack parental love and care goes a long way to subject them to emotional and psychological depression, for which they are also taught to depend on others, hence the incidence of begging among many of the Almajiri. Again, Auwal goes further to tell of the government's attempt at integrating both the Traditional Quranic School with formal education which has been facing great

difficulty due to the fact that it will prevent most of wrong practices that characterise many of these schools today.

It is pertinent to point here that the Almajiri's emotional state has gone down so much various opinion against the continuation of the Traditional Quranic School has come on the heels of their use as militias as posited by Bello-Barkindo (2006) that

Their sponsors belong hypothetically to the same group that has, for decades, denied them the right to learn how to distinguish right from wrong. If the almajiri had well-paved streets like the ones in the GRAs he would not want them littered with corpses of Christians. If he had a job, he would not expose himself to the danger that rioting comes with. If he had a home he would not be there to be incited. If he had hope, he would not find refuge in extremism. Much has been said about his education but too little has been done.

The above position is a clear indication of gross neglect of a religious tradition gone bad and yet falls on self-inflicted blind eyes that refuse to see the need to make changes through legislation and the enlightenment of the Mallams that lack the enlightenment to understand the need for a greater level of civility.

Awofeso et al (2003) state that

The Almajiri heritage is, like the madrassahs in Central Asia, a system of Muslim education that dates back several centuries. With the imposition of British colonial rule between 1902 and 1960 on parts of the Sokoto Empire that currently constitute northern Nigeria, the North's amalgamation with Southern Nigerian British protectorates in 1914, and the formal abolition of slavery in northern Nigeria in 1936, this heritage underwent major structural and functional transformations.

These changes however have worsened over the years as caution have been thrown to the wind with regards to the efforts made to establish formal education without the integration of the Traditional Quranic school into the formal school curriculum. This does not go without saying that the Quranic School was and is still held sacred above the formal education hence the impossibility of such integration. The fact that there had been structural and functional transformations points to the lack of these; vis-à-vis the current state of destitution the Almajiri finds himself in.

Mumuni (2001) wrote that Yahaya said “the Almajiri practice in the north, whereby parents pack their children and put them in care of poor Quranic teachers in form of boarding systems without paying any fee for their upkeep cannot promote any qualitative learning”. In this, he implies that a particular amount ought to be paid to a teacher who intends to run an Traditional Quranic School, so as to aid his and the upkeep of his pupils. But in the absence of the payment of fees that would have taken care of the their welfare, the boys are sent to the street by their teachers to beg for alms.

Katagum (2000) said, “these poor kids are left in the hands of guardians who hardly know anything about Islam and the boys spend their lives, under the Mallam preparing for a life of destitution”. He means that such Mallams take it upon themselves to display a knowledge they do not have. And the parents who send their children to such Mallams do this to relieve themselves of the financial problems of raising their children, sometimes numbering up to ten, while there are

parents who send their children to Quranic schools ignorant of the tested knowledge of such Quranic teachers.

Batagarawa (2000) said, “this practise is surely not supported by any religious belief as erroneously being portrayed and peddled”. This invariably means that despite the good intentions of the practise of the Traditional Quranic School, it must not be one that allows children to be forced out of their homes, where there are no boarding facilities to cater for their welfare. He said “let us therefore not jeopardise the future of our children and condemn them and our society to a peripheral status, a future of permanent servitude and wide spread impoverishment”.

In an interview held with Ibrahim in July 2002 a student resident of Hanwa, an area around Zaria, said that he tries as much as possible to help them. This he does by engaging them in washing clothes, plates and pots and sweeping his rented house. He said he gives them first aid treatment whenever they suffer minor aches such as head and stomach aches. When they suffer cuts to their feet, from not being able to afford slippers, he treats the cuts though he feeds them once a while, he said he realised he also has to pay them so that they made an obligatory payment to their Mallam who the boys said they must pay twenty naira a week.

In an interview with Rilwanu in May 2004, he said that parents and the government should be blamed for the misconduct that guides the conduct of the running of these schools. He affirmed attending a Traditional Quranic School as boy at home with pupils numbering up to about seventy. He went on to

emphatically state that parents and the government should both be involved in the running of the schools, just as the parents' teachers' association works in the western type of education. On the question of the probability that the Almajiri might be involved in sectarian violence, he explained that any one deprived of the basic necessity of life could be prone to violence.

In an interview with Suleiman in June 2004, he explained that Usman Dan Fodio only reformed traditional quranic school with boarding and little fees, as the traditional quranic school had began before Dan Fodio. He said he had attended the traditional quranic school at home with between forty to sixty pupils in attendance. He explained that government, Muslim Umma and parents should be held responsible for the destitute state of the Almajiri.

On the roles each of these three parties should play, he said that government should be involved because the Almajiri are equally citizens of the country, salaries be paid to the Mallams, teaching and learning materials be provided and that government should include the Almajiri in its educational policy to enhance quality and control of the running of the school.

He said the Muslim Umma should be involved financially by making donations in cash and kind to the government, and that parents should pay a token per child as school fees.

2.1.3 The Mallam's training pattern

In an interview with Adamu in March 2001, an Arabic teacher in Hayin Dogo in Samaru explained that most Muslims do not give the usual financial and

material support to the Traditional Quranic Schools like they used to do. He said he has been running the school for the past twenty-seven years with constant support from Muslims around Samaru. With help from God he said, that ‘he had been inspired to go into farming to feed the boys’. Mallam Adamu has thirty-seven boys with him and has mats for them to sleep on. He had had about sixty, which he had to reduce to his present number of pupils. He is a sixty-five year old man married to three wives and has nineteen children, his children he said do not attend the general lesson he holds for his students but he has employed a teacher to do that. He is also married and has a son.

On the question of begging amongst his Almajirai, he said he kicks against it and has had to punish his students on many occasions for such an act. In Mallam Adamu’s own opinion, there are some Mallams, he said should not be allowed to run the Traditional Quranic School, because the boys they have with them are too many, dirty, unkempt and their sleeping space is absurd. The Almajiri sleep in the ‘zaure’, the lobby of the house’s entrance. This exposes them to the harsh cold weather during the harmattan and the middle of the rainy seasons and mosquito bites.

In another interview with Abubakar March 2001 another teacher, said that ‘there had being efforts by some Muslims and the society and the Almajiri Development Committee to make the schools properly organised’. This he explained had being met by lots of oppositions as it was termed to be an infringement against Islam. Mallam Abubakar is married with three wives and

eleven children. He also has under his watchful eyes ninety-three Almajirai studying. He posited strongly that there should be a central body that should supervise the schools, which he explained will help to prevent the numerous abuses the Almajiri suffer.

2.1.4 The Almajiri's life in the Mallam's household

In an interview with Ilya in March 2001 an eight-year old Almajiri who is an indigene of Katsina State said his father is married to a wife and his parents have three children. He also said he is the first born of the three children. Although he cannot say precisely if his immediate younger brothers have been sent to school to acquire western education. This is because he had not been able to go home on holiday since he left home to Zaria to study the Qur'an. He was sent to Samaru through an uncle to come and learn the Qur'an. He came with a light blue colour shirt and pair of trousers that are both dirty and are in tatters as at the time of this interview. He said the only thing he came with was a sleeping mat. His Arabic teacher's name is Mallam Audu in Hayin Dogo in Samaru. He is married to three wives and they have nineteen children amongst them. His children, he said do not attend the Quranic lesson with them as they take their lessons through another teacher that the Mallam had trained.

The Almajiri number up to fifty-seven with age range of between six and eighteen years old. The Mallam only feeds them the day he takes them to his farm, which he said he does out of compulsion. The food is a meal of rice with stew served in a large tray and shared into bowls by any of the older boys. But on

Thursdays, they must make compulsory returns of twenty naira to the Mallam or else get beaten with a horsewhip or cane.

In another interview with Magaji in March 2001, an eight-year-old boy from Makarfi village outside Zaria who also attends the Traditional Quranic School. He was brought to Samaru about two years ago. His father he said has three wives and they have seven children amongst them. He said he has not gone home since he came to the Quranic School. He said he had cried for a couple of weeks until he decided to come to terms with his fate as God's will. When asked if he had ever taken ill, he said it was only once, of a slight fever that was cured with local herbs.

On many occasions when food is not shared but eaten directly from the tray most of the smaller boys go hungry and have to go around begging. They engage in what is called 'kwadago' a Hausa word for labour or petty jobs such as washing cloths. These they do for the university students who constitute the majority of those that have them engaged and pay them. They wash cars, cut grasses and run errands and even pose as models for the Fine Arts students as a means of earning money. After the whole day, they retire back by four-o'clock to attend the evening session of Quranic lesson until about nine in the evening under a light bulb that make them cluster together to aid them see what they are reciting.

This interview was held with Umar also in March 2001, a fifteen-year-old Almajiri who said he had stopped attending the school for about two years. His father has four wives and twenty-three children. He had left home for a little over

seven years, the third of the six children; his mother has for his father. He lives in Tudun Wada with a man who he said sends him to sell petrol. He also said he had been engaged in the last violence in Kaduna. He had gone to deliver a message when he was picked by a man and was forced to join in the civil disturbance.

He however refused to say if he killed anyone or the names of any of the two men that he met in Kaduna or the one he works for in Tudun Wada. He had for the past two years sold fuel until recently that the supply of fuel to the stations returned to a good level of normalcy. On his relationship with his family he said he has since been going home to Kebbi State once or twice a month for the past seven months. He said his mother hugged him and wept uncontrollably, while his sisters, four of them also cried. His father, he said was quite happy to see him but still hoped he would finish the Quranic school. He said he promised him he would resume and stop after three years.

In an interview with Mohammed in May 2001, a sixteen-year-old boy in Sabon Gari, said he is an indigene of Bauchi State. His father has three wives and they have nineteen children between them. He said he is looking forward to finishing his Quranic School, as he is eager to become a trader. He came to Zaria as a boy, five years ago after his father had brought him to learn the one hundred and fourteen prayers of the Qur'an.

He said they wake up as early as about six in the morning to go to the Mallam's farm and return about an hour later to start the Quranic lessons at about eleven O'clock. The lessons continue till about three in the afternoon punctuated

by the 'Asr' prayer. After the 'Magrib' prayer, they are allowed to go and beg or work, if there is any. He said he has been engaged in various jobs from washing clothes even in brothels, cutting grasses, plucking mangoes for sale to even pimping in girls' hostels in the university. He said he had been tricked into a girls' hostel at night to engage in sex during breaks or strikes, though he refused to give out names. He said he was well fed and given drugs to take which enhances his performance. He also said had duped him once by refusing to pay him.

After avoiding the girl for about a week, he went back to apologise and the girl accepted him back. The girl had said she wanted to take a bath and he quickly offered to sweep the room. He said he made away with the girl's money and jewellery, T-shirts and two canvas shoes. All this he said happened at the Zaria College of Education in December 2000. He said he sold the girl's things to a boy at the Sabon- Gari market.

2.2 REVIEWED WORKS OF ARTISTS

In the review of works of artists the researcher was able to get works that were not necessarily hinged on the Almajiri. Many of the paintings reviewed were based on what the researcher could get which are works that focused on the plight of the Nigerian child. The review of such works were used to guide the study

2.2.1 Plate I: The Yaro

'The Yaro' is an oil painting made by Oladesu Johnson of four boys. Three of the boys are standing with bowls in hand while the fourth sits on a box with his own bowl beside him. The artist depicted the boys to stand secluded from the

village or town as they ponder where to go. The boys stand together in the same predicament but yet alone in their minds wondering at why it has to be them to suffer. The use of the Hausa word ‘Yaro’ which means boy, also accounts for the mis-use of word and wrong naming of the Almajiri by non-indigenes, like this artist.

2.2.2 Plate II: The Nigerian Child

‘The Nigerian Child’ painted by Olopete Jerry Femi shows a boy on his knees looking into a cup. The boy is superimposed against the figure of a pregnant woman. The dark colors of people that surround the boy suggests the bleakness of his future with a little light of hope glowing from the lower left side of the painting and towering above the boy; perhaps to suggest hope. The gloom depicted in this painting shows not just the surrounding destitution and lack, but also the state of the child’s mind. The glowing light at the lower left of the painting is suggestive of hope rekindled on his knees praying and searching for his daily bread.

2.2.3 Plate III: The Nigerian Child (Searching For Survival)

‘The Nigerian Child (searching for survival)’ is a painting by Obuowosola Foluso depicting four boys at a refuse dump. The boy in the foreground has a load of refuse about six times his size held to his shoulder with his left hand. This is one of the many things the Almajiri does to feed himself. The bright overtly painted background suggests the telltale lack in the midst of plenty. The boy kneels over a refuse dump and is not disturbed by the weight of junk he has

collected. In his frantic search, he still looks out perhaps for help from any kind-hearted passer-by.

Plate I: The Yaro, 1998
Oladesu Johnson
Oil on Canvas, 53 cm x 75 cm

Plate II: The Nigerian Child, 1993
Olopete Jerry Femi
Oil on Canvas

Plate III: The Nigerian Child (Searching for Survival), 1993
Obuowosola Folusho
Watercolours

2.2.4 Plate IV: Filled with despair

Oil painting, titled 'Filled with Despair' is an oil painting by Elebeh Peacemaker, which shows two boys in the fore ground leaning against a pole and dust bins with a bowl each in their front. This scene echoes the tiring state the Almajiri also finds himself after he had gone to and fro looking and begging for food but finding the stingy hands of people. The dark colours suggest gloom, which they lean against; perhaps suggest the rejection they are suffering from. The bright background suggests the affluence that clearly has left them to the dark claws of deprivation.

2.2.5 Plate V: Profile of the Average Nigerian Child

The 'Profile of the Average Nigerian Child' is a painting by Karunwi R. Kayode, which depicts at the top right hand corner of the oil painting a boy with a bowl in his hand waiting for someone to dole out food or money to him. The faces of two boys with tears running down their cheeks are reminiscent of the emotional

state they cannot bear. The dark colours, just like the last three works mentioned above continue to suggest the gloom, hopelessness and lack, which is also typical in the plight of the Almajiri.

2.2.6 Plate Vi: The Nigerian Child: Journey through pains

‘The Nigerian Child: Journey through pains’ is a painting by Ene E. Ugochukwu which shows a Nigerian map on the lower left of the painting with children thronging to the left hand side of the painting. It depicts the non-clear cut future of the child. The drama in this painting, perhaps, implies the bleakness of the nation as it concerns the Nigerian child, hence the exit from the map; the country, as shown in the painting.

Plate IV: Filled with despair, 1993
Elebeh Peacemaker
Oil on Canvas

Plate V: Profile of the average Nigerian child, 1993
Karunwi R. Kayode
Oil on Canvas

Plate VI: The Nigerian child: Journey through pains, 1993
Ene E. Ugochukwu
Oil on Canvas

Plate VII: A future at stake, 1993
Oduji Chukwuma
Oil on Canvas

2.2.7 Plate VII: A Future at Stake

‘A Future at Stake’ is a painting by Oduji Chukwuma which depicts a boy wiping tears from his eyes with another standing with a bowl begging as two others share from a slate or book, while another lies down resting and is probably thinking of his future. On the upper part of the painting are three figures of men depicting the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria. The artist probably believes should hold themselves responsible for the future of the children in Nigeria. The lower part of the painting is painted in dark colours to suggest the sad state of the mind and the physical condition of the child’s future. This though has the same bearing with the state of the Almajiri, but proves that little is known about the Almajiri who are the worst hit by destitution and neglect. This last statement will be discussed in the conclusion.

Plata VIII: 'Makaranta'

Muazu Mohammed Sani

Oil on canvas

Source: National Gallery of Art, Nigeria

Plate IX: Is this the future? 1992

John Otu

Collage

Source: In the artist's collection

2.2.8 Plate VIII: ‘Makaranta’

Further more, a painting by Muazu Mohammed Sani lays emphasis on the lessons taught with the use of exaggerated slates, as the basis for the running of the Traditional Quranic School. The depiction of three Almajirai is perhaps to suggest a need to control the number of pupils taken by the Mallams, in order to advocate for a better learning condition and accommodation, suitable of the Almajiri. The dense dots at the bottom of the painting perhaps suggest the intense nature of the Quranic study, while the sparse and bright use of coloured dots at the top suggest the bright hope and success of the Almajiri.

2.2.9 Plate IX: Is this the future?

A collage work by John Otu depicts seven Almajirai searching for food in the refuse bins. This is typical of the destitute state of the Almajiri. The work advocates an urgent call on all well meaning Nigerians to alleviate the Almajiri of his present poor state and bleak future, the reason for which the artist used fabric off-cuts to emphasise the fact that their clothes are always in tatters and at times torn. He also went ahead to include some graffiti on the wall, which is typical of their desire express themselves. The colours of the fabric used for the work is suggestive of hope that there will be help for the Almajiri for as long as there is a consistency in the production of works done depicting the poor state of the Almajiri.

Conclusion

The researcher sought for works that focused directly on the state of the Almajiri and was only able to find out that most of the works were on destitute children, while just a few focused on the aspects of the Almajiri life. The draught of works that focused on the Almajiri is however a great draught that is reason for concern, by all and sundry, as the destitute state of the Almajiri persists. The reviewed works relate to the study in the sense that the attendant destitution is typical of the nine art works vis-à-vis the destitution the Almajiri suffers. Another issue is the art style used by most of the artist to produce the works, which made the works to a large extent esoteric.

The use of representational art style to produce art woks in the Nigerian society, against the backdrop of the low level of art appreciation, calls for an urgent need to make works that are both topical and picturesque. This will on the long run raise awareness in the public on art and its usefulness to the society as a tool for national development.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The method applied in the works produced was from visual experience and observation, sketches, photographs and study drawings based on visits paid to various places where the Almajirai are seen. The sketches centered on the Almajirai at work, school, rest poses, events outside school, begging scenes, sleeping poses and at play. These events are chosen to enable all and sundry to know the sordid life events they go through. The analysis and production of drawings are arranged in four sections stated in 3.2.2 along with the drawings. Interviews were held with the Almajiri about his life experiences in his day-to-day activities that aided the researcher to depict some of these in paintings.

Some Mallams were also interviewed through an interpreter, in order to know the structure for the running of their Quranic Schools. Muslim scholars and educational administrators were also interviewed on the various issues and concerns about the origin, development and present state of the Almajiri system and the conduct that guides the running of the traditional quranic schools. Newspaper and magazine articles were also consulted, to know the opinions of concerned Muslims.

3.2 Collection of data

The instruments used for data collection were observation, sketches, photographs, study drawings and the questionnaire. The sketches and photographs were made into working drawings and split into for categories that enabled the researcher emphasis the problems faced by the Almajiri. There were three sets of questionnaire. The first two sets were for the Almajirai and their Mallams, both of which were administered orally as they were not literate in English language. The third set was administered to Muslim members of the public and educational administrators and Muslim scholars. The population of the study is quite large. As a matter of fact, there is no accurate statistics on the number of Quranic Schools in Nigeria. Since the researcher cannot possibly reach the entire population, he decided to choose a sample.

The study area is Zaria metropolis. The samples were chosen from Zaria City, Sabon-Gari and Samaru. In all the three areas, 10 Schools were selected. In Zaria city Schools, 120 pupils were chosen and 60 pupils were selected from schools in Samaru. The number of mallams who responded to the interview schedule was 10. The instrument was pilot tested in 2 Quranic Schools in Tudun Wada, as the area is not included in the final study. Educational administrators and Muslim scholars who completed the questionnaire were 30. The Muslim Umma who responded to the questionnaires was 20 in number.

3.2.1 Procedure for the production of Works

Photographs were taken of the Almajiri by the kind permission of the Mallams, in different social settings to aid the production of works in watercolours. Though the researcher avoided photographic shots of other scenes, to avoid sacrilege.

Plate 3.1.1: Photograph of Almajirai with their Mallam, 2001

Plate 3.1.2 Photograph of Almajiri about to be given money, 2001

Plate 3.1.3: Photograph of an Almajiri with a bowl in hand 2001

3.2.2 Procedure for the production of Works

The works produced relied completely on every information collected in order to depict, as close as possible the dramatic events that still persists in the Almajiri's life. Nevertheless, not all the events discussed were painted. Some of the scenes depicted are begging for money, carrying luggage to earn a living attending lessons, engaging in one form of manual labour or the other. These led to the making of sketches of different day-to-day experiences the Almajiri goes through. Sketches were therefore made to aid the production of works of scenes that could not be captured with the camera as the Mallams approached frowned at this considering it sacrilegious. The scenes that could not be captured on camera were the pimping, fetching water to take a bath in the Mallam's compound, and the time they made delivery of money to the Mallam among others.

The first drawing shows the

(1) Life before resuming school in figure 1

(2) Life in the school premises in figure 2a-2d

(3) Life during school session in figure 3

(4) And life outside the school area in figure 4a-4j

Figure 1a depicts life before resuming school, which is always typified by struggle hinged on the fact that the school is far from home and the parental care is about to be lost, when it was not supposed to be. The scene shows the man taking the boy away to be the father. His luggage comprises of a slate and a mat that will as always soon become worn out over time that passes without visits from his parents. Furthermore, his mother and siblings watch helplessly at him struggle fruitlessly against his father.

Figure 2a depicts the Almajirai's sleeping condition in which they sleep in the anteroom of the mallam's house. The Zaure in traditional Hausa architecture is where male visitors sit to be attended to since many of the men keep a harem of wives. The anteroom is exposed and has two entrances that have no doors other than a mat that is used as a curtain, which in itself gets worn out with time. There they also keep their slates and lie on the bare floor since their mats are worn with age. Figure 2b depicts the claim by many of the boys that they make a weekly delivery of money to the Mallam. An Almajiri in caftan is shown here making his delivery while another has both hands on his head, suggestive of regret at not been able to bring back his own. Two other boys are depicted peeping in to see what will become of the two other Almajirai that cannot make the return of money for the day.

Though most of the Almajirai look dirty and untidy, some of them explained that they actually have their baths but the lack of body creams to rub on themselves after a bath leaves their skin dry and scaly. The harmattan haze in the north leaves their skin

white making them look more unkempt and dirty in the sketch in figure 2c. Figure 2d was made to further prove their claim. However, this sketch has no background drawing to suggest where they are having a bath. Two of them are depicted sharing water from a pale of water, while the other boy has a pale to himself. Figure 3a shows the Almajirai reciting the Qur'an from their slates. The Almajirai is depicted without shirts and the normal kaftans usually worn in the north. The depiction of the three is also to advocate a need to control the number of pupils taken by the Mallams instead of the large pupils they enroll and hence cannot cater for.

Figure 4a depicts three of the Almajirai washing clothes as a means to earn a living. The one sited to the right of the drawing is depicted in a tired pose, having finished with his washing. It is pertinent to note that they co-operate with each other to get such chores that enables them earn money to feed with. In figure 4b, an Almajiri is depicted begging from a young lady sitting on a park bench. The drawing was made from a life event in the Sculpture Garden of the Fine Arts Department, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Many of the students approached by the Almajiri do earn the favour of some students; as they get money. The lady is seen making an attempt at giving the boy money as she reaches for her handbag.

Figure 4c depicts an older Almajiri waiting for black market petrol with two small four-liter jerry cans. His down cast head posture is indicative of the throes of waiting for black market fuel. While the sketch in figure 4d depicts two Almajirai, just like the boy above also wait for supplies of fuel. They are so

despondent; they are not bothered about where they lay their heads, as the source of the next meal is more important to them.

It is pertinent to note that their lessons dose not prepare them to be gainfully employed like their peers that attend formal schools, for which they say with hope that they will also love to attend the formal school as depicted in figure 4e. In figure 4f, an Almajiri is depicted from a pose the researcher found one of them in, looking contented and not the least disturbed by his current state of life. He lacks easy access to his family and their presence, clothing, good food, and basic formal education. In this regard, he sees his situation as his destiny and takes each day as it comes, hence his contentment. Though they share things such as food, money and clothes, the sketch in figure 4g depicts a situation where one of them refused blatantly to share his small ration of food with his peers. This looks at this behavioural pattern in the younger boys, while figure 4h looks at it among the bigger boys, which in itself is not strange in man generally.

It is expected that when a human being has spent energy on any type of work, he gets tired and needs rest, but the Almajiri here depicted in figure 4i is actually tired of his destitute state. His eyes strikes a thoughtful gaze at his hand and wonders why all the work dose only affords him to live from hand to mouth. However, the sketch in figure 4j depicts an Almajiri pondering hopefully that one day things might just change for the better, for as long as he develops a right attitude about every thing that comes to him. The sketches were carefully selected by the researcher, from which paintings were produced and arranged in a

chronological path to guide any viewer on the path from to destitution that the
Almajiri's leads.

CHAPTER FOUR

Presentation and Analysis of paintings and data

4.1 Introduction

This chapter treats the presentation and analysis of paintings and research data. The chapter is presented under two main sections: section One deals with paintings done in relation to the life style of the Almajirai; section Two deals with the analysis of the data collected in respect of the life style of the Almajirai from the interviews conducted and questionnaire administered on the study sample.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of paintings

The researcher used the visual experience of the various aspects of the Almajiri's life, photographs and sketches made of the Almajiri to produce the paintings made. The researcher organized the sketches into four stages, in order to understand how the Almajiri arrive his destination. These are the;

- (1) Life of the Almajiri before resuming school
- (2) Life in the school premises
- (3) Life during the school session
- (4) Life outside the school area.

These stages enabled the researcher to produce works that should in turn enable the viewer to understand the various aspects of the Almajiri's life. It is pertinent to mention here quickly that the researcher's palette has subjected the first nineteen paintings to the same colour scheme to depict the persistence in the destitution the Almajiri suffers. The use of the unpainted fore ground depicts the

unending nature of the situation depicted for the purpose of emphasis, with regards to the need to urgently revert to old ideals of the Traditional Quranic School the Almajiri is subjected to.

4.2.1 Plate I: I don't want to go, 2001

This painting depicts a boy who had known how far away a boy could be sent to go and learn the Qur'an. The holidays through which he can visit home are not possible, as they do not have the kind of money it costs to transport them and neither are they helped financially to engage on such trips. In this light, the boy is seen resisting the call to go the distance. His mother stands at the doorway watching helplessly as her son is forcefully taken to a distant town to study, without her consent.

4.2.2 Plate II: Sleeping in the Zaure, 2000

The overt use of brown in this work is evident of the telltale dirt and filth they have to sleep in. this makes them prone to skin diseases such as eczema and rashes among others. The painting further depicts an example of the problem of accommodation, which is an issue that must be attended to; so as to alleviate the Almajiri of the poor living condition he finds himself in. they sleep on the bare floor and the also keep their slates in the same Zaure where they sleep.

4.2.3 Plate III: Making the day's return, 2001

The continuous use of burnt umber is to engender in the viewer the lack luster life the Almajiri is subjected to. The opens in to the street where the Almajiri wanders from morning till night making attempts at earning a living since

the Mallam cannot cater for his basic needs. This painting depicts the experience shared by one of the Almajirai that the Mallam under whom he studies expects them to make a return of twenty Naira on Thursdays. To this end, those who are not able to bring money usually hide or do come to explain their inability to make the return for such a day. This is just one out of the many schools where the Mallams practice such an act.

Plate I: I don't want to go, 2001
Watercolours, 56½ cm x 76 cm

Plate II: Sleeping in the Zaure, 2000
Watercolours, 56½ cm x 76 cm

Plate III: Making the day's return, 2000
Watercolours, 56½ cm x 76 cm

4.2.4 Plate IV: A morning bath, 2001

The northern part of Nigeria where the researcher did this study is mostly dry; except for the rainy season, prompted the arid feel this work has. The only tree in the compound has lost its leaves to draught and the space behind the wall surrounding the house looks abandoned by pillows of clouds, and even other trees. This because many of the people cut down the trees to make firewood since they cannot afford kerosene. Even though most of them look dirty, with torn clothes, there are still some that take their baths. This painting depicts some of such Almajirai, who are made to take their baths by their Mallam since he has a well in his compound.

4.2.5 Plate V: It's too small, 2001

The fact that the needs of the Almajiri are not met is evident in the near similarity in the colour of their shirts. The clothes look pale from age and the fact that they do not have soap to wash them make them become dirty and soon tear in to tatters. This painting shows a group of Almajirai sitting round a tray of rice. The

oldest of the boys share the food, which is sometimes greeted with the dismay and dissatisfaction of any the smaller boys. But their dissatisfaction is not always enough to make them to report to the Mallam. In most cases, it was seen as a sign of disrespect for their seniors and in other schools, the boy that did the poor sharing was punished.

4.2.6 Plate VI: In the Mallam's compound, 2000

The air of comfort fills this painting's atmosphere with the attendant dryness that characterizes Zaria. The compound is depicted in the typical humble Hausa man's interior that lacks any attempt at a taste for decorations and want for opulence. The Mallam is depicted here listening to a group of six Almajirai reciting aloud the Qur'an. This painting advocates a situation in which the Mallam only admits just enough to teach and cater for. The compound looks swept and hence clean enough for them all to sit on the bare ground.

Plate IV: A morning bath, 2001
Watercolour, 56½ cm x 76 cm

Plate V: It's too small, 2001
Watercolours, 56 ½cm x 76cm

Plate VI: In the Mallam's compound, 2000
Watercolours, 56½ cm x 76 cm

4.2.7 Plate VII: Discipline, a watchword, 2000

The rendering of the water colour using strong brush strokes indicates the marks, emotionally, of the canning over time while studying; this is not to be taken literally to mean the Almajiri physically bear scars from been canned at the school. Distraction or lack of concentration, which can deter a pupil from hearing properly, is always punished. This warrants strokes of the whip as punishment on an earring Almajiri. While the punishment is being administered, the recitation suffers a pause because the Almajiri that is an older learner who is not expected to make a mistake such as pronunciation.

4.2.8 Plate VIII: Squabble over a drink, 2000

But on the main campus is some greater amount of freshness that differs from the dryness that seems to have a greater control of the Samaru village's environment. The colours are more inviting as it compares to the restrictive seclusion that characterizes the interiors of the houses where the Almajiri takes his

lessons; in the continuous noise of trying to out shout each other as they recite their lessons. This painting shows two Almajirai fighting over half a bottle of soft drink given to them to share by a female student in the sculpture garden of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The older Almajiri is seen trying to cheat the younger one. This is one of the ways they behave to each other which does not make their life phenomenal.

4.2.9 IX: Carrying Load to Earn a Living, 2000

Another aspect of earning money, as seasonal as it is on the university campus demands strength and absolute care. This, the Almajiri say is one of the jobs or labour engaged in that brings in money as he charges with cognizance to the weight of the load and the distance to which the load is to be carried. The boy that is bent over is tired from the several countless trips made to and fro carrying load to earn a living. The white colour of the post office building ghostly serves as a backdrop for the boy in the middle of the painting to be better seen against the dark doorway to the post office. The researcher chose to depict the essential part of the event and yet leave out unnecessary details to washes, while some other parts are not shown at all.

Plate VII: Discipline, a watchword, 2000
Watercolours, 56 ½ cm x 76 cm

Plate VIII: Squabble over a drink, 2000
Watercolours, 51½ cm x 59 cm

Plate IX: Carrying load to earn a living, 2000
Watercolours, 38 cm x 44½ cm

4.2.10 Plate X: Begging to Earn a Living, 2000

The overt attempt at depicting figures and objects to detail engenders a sense of realism. The brush strokes rendered on many of the figures and objects are intent on depicting the texture so as to draw the viewer into the work and enquire at the environment of the Almajiri and his attendant state of destitution. The use of the colour blue on the parts of the faces of the boys is to express the state of emotional gloom they are in. Begging, just as much as it is against the teachings of Islam, the younger boys are seen here engaging in begging. This is not to say that the older boys do not beg, but they seldom do, as they have many types of work they can engage in so as to earn a living.

4.2.11 Plate XI: Sight seeing, 2000

This painting though looks halfway done, but is for the purpose of depicting the poor life pattern they are subjected to despite the good intention of the traditional quranic school. Again, the researchers left lots of background detail beyond the tree so as to make the viewer focus on the beauty the three boys have seen in the sculpture piece. Every human being, irrespective of the person's status

in the society deserves and do engage in a time set aside for leisure. These three boys are shown in this painting looking at, and touching a sculptured piece they might soon be driven away from, for touching it.

4.2.12 Plate XII: A Pose to earn money, 2000

Just like the painting in plate XII, attention is also directed at the artist and the Almajirai as they sit in the Sculpture Garden of the Department of Fine Arts. The unpainted background is done to serve as an enhancer to the title of the painting by which the viewer's focus is constantly to be centred on. This painting depicts two Almajirai stand and watch as another Almajiri pose for an artist after a lot of persuasion with the promise made that he will be paid. This is one of the strains the Almajiri goes through to earn a living, which is a typical example of child abuse and labour caused by the improperly organised school.

Plate X: Begging to earn a living, 2000
Watercolours, 38 x 45 ½ cm

Plate XI: Sight seeing, 2000
Watercolours, 38 cm x 48 ½ cm

Plate XII: Posing to earn money, 2000
Watercolours, 51cm x 58 cm

4.2.13 Plate XIII: When will I be like them? 2000

The use of washes of green on the right side of the painting suggests hope and a sure future for the boys in school uniforms, as against the use of yellow ochre for the Almajiri that is to the researcher indicative of bleakness. This is borne out of the destitution the Almajiri is only bound to end up with when compared to formal schooling. Just like everyone, the Almajiri has dreams and aspirations in life. Against the backdrop of the importance of religious education, there is the need to have it accompanied with the formal or western education by integration. This boy, bare – topped pauses on his way to the Quranic School, was wondering on when he will ever get the opportunity to undergo formal education.

4.2.14 Plate XIV: Share with Us Now, 2000

The researcher left the two other boys lower bodies unfinished to suggest their temporal effort at making their fellow share his ration of food with them. The unpainted background indicates the liveness the Almajiri suffers in his effort to feed daily. In this painting, two boys are seen urging their friend to share a meal with them, which he refuses to do. This is because the ration of food he has just been given by someone is not enough for him, let alone sharing it with someone else who does not have enough.

4.2.15 Plate XV: A pose for the artist, 2000

Mixed feelings greets the Almajiri daily as he makes efforts to eke a living for which his body is depicted in dual colours. The blue one, of distaste, and the brown one of the reality he is faced with for which he has to succumb to even

posing to be drawn as a means of earning money to feed himself. This painting depicts one of the problems of getting the Almajiri to model, knowing fully well that he is not a trained model. This is an example of one of the difficulties the researcher encountered, as he had to use drawings and quick sketches made, while the researcher was gathering data that led to the production to paintings.

Plate XIII: When will I be like them? 2000
Watercolours, 56½ cm x 76 cm

Plate XIV: Share with us now, 2000
Watercolours, 28 cm x 38 cm

Plate XV: A pose for the artist, 2000
Watercolours, 28 cm x 38 cm

4.2.16 Plate XVI: Begging, but ignored, 2000

As much vibrancy seems to elude the Almajiri daily, so is it depicted in the sparse use of colours in this painting and many others paintings. Most recently, as a result of the revelations from the Almajiri, that he makes returns to the Mallam once a week, people have since refused to give the Almajiri money. This not to say that it has been substituted with a meal or clothes, as they go about hungry because they not want to engage in any type of work that can earn them money.

4.2.17 Plate XVII: Washing Clothes to Earn a Living, 2001

This is however the only painting that the researcher has spent vibrant colours on to suggest the temporal glee the Almajiri enjoys when he gets a large amount of work that brings a lot of money for him. The mellow use of colours on the background also suggests calmness and the much-awaited liberty away from the tenacious rigour of studying at the Mallam's house. Among other types of money earning jobs they engage in, washing clothes is one of such jobs they engage in as one of them is seen here washing while two other's rest, after having finished with their own washing.

4.2.18 Plate XVIII: Picking bottles to earn a living, 2001

Colour representation played no role in suggesting thought, moods and feelings of the Almajiri in this work. The researcher's liberality in this painting is brought to bear so as to enable both the viewer and reader to freely read the painting. This painting depicts two boys running to pick bottles for the owner of the kiosk in the sculpture garden of the department of Fine Arts of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This the Almajiri does regularly and they either earn some money; twenty naira, or a bottle of soft drink, which is based on the dictate of the shop owner.

Plate XVI: Begging, but ignored, 2000
Watercolours, 38 cm x 51 cm

Plate XVII: Washing clothes to earn a living, 2001
Watercolours, 56½ cm x 76 cm

Plate XVIII: Picking bottles to earn living, 2000
Watercolours, 56½ cm x 76 cm

Plate XIX: No fuel at black market, 2000
Watercolours, 56½ cm x 76 cm

4.2.19 Plate XIX: No fuel at black market

Gloom, depression and frustration sets in, and these are depicted in the colour rendition in this painting. Since the current state of destitution seems not have an end in sight, the background is also left unfinished just as it has been discussed in most of the paintings. This painting depicts the extent an Almajiri can go to earn money. But at this age of fourteen to eighteen, their desires begin to run high and rarely attend the school any more. The Almajirai become tools through which economic saboteurs sell black market fuel. This is one of the ways in which they endanger their lives and the society's economic future.

4.2.20 Plate XX: Resting tiredly

The background is covered by a cacophony of colours typical of the type of inconsistency and uncertainty that characterizes the Almajiri's life daily. The use of two different colours to paint the head is to express the painful thoughts of doubt, uncertainties and the pangs of pains that his mind goes through daily. The

unfinished nature of the depiction is also to emphasise the fact that the Almajiri's days of woe ending is not in sight. His lose leg that has no foot depicted emphasise the fain path of hopelessness he threads despite the religious knowledge he is forced to acquire from early boyhood.

Plate XX: Resting tiredly, 2006
Watercolours, 39 ½ x 38 cm

Plate XXI: Contented, in spite of lack, 2006
Watercolours, 38 x 47 cm

Plate XXII: Unskilled knowledge, bleak future, 2006
Watercolours, 36 x 56 cm

4.2.21 Plate XXI: Contented, in spite of lack

The red stream of colour running diagonally from the top centre down the left of the painting depicts the state of despondence that no doubt crosses his mind intermittently. The green colour in its gentle shades like the foliage of those of a tree depicts the contentment that he will one day stop being subjected to the hands of a failed religious tradition, which has not for once thought of the need to make changes that will enable him to meet the challenges of the times. The tree depicted also philosophically serves as a reminder of the fact that it has its leaves a long way up at the top; which is what the Almajiri also looks forward to.

4.2.22 Plate XXII: Unskilled knowledge, bleak future

Every religion provides primarily, spiritual growth and maturity for its followers so that they live with integrity in all aspects of life and living. However, the lack of an educational integration typical of the painting in plate XIII is emphasised again in this painting. The Almajiri is hence depicted to be looking elsewhere, gradually with the hope of making life worth living for him as the darkness of null-skill acquisition from the right side of the painting. To the left of the painting is a ray of hope, in yellow, which is indicative of the challenges he no doubt has to face to be able to earn a living out side the sole pursuit of Quranic knowledge.

Plate XXIII: A practice gone sour, 2006
Watercolours, 37 ½ x 56 cm

Plate XXIV: A debased search for food, 2006
Watercolours, 40 x 56 cm

4.2.23 Plate XXIII: A practice gone sour

The faded colours on the walls of the house emphasise the soon to end studies for these Almajirai depicted among others within the context of the painting. Blue, a colour mostly used to express gloom among a school of thought is used here by the researcher in painting the heads of the figure on the right and the figure behind the one lying down. They must salvage the throes of lack of food that they are mostly thrown into after their lessons each day. They live from hand to mouth from the money they beg for daily and are mostly left topless as their clothes age and are later thrown away.

4.2.24 Plate XXIV: A debased search for food

In this painting, the foliage is given little attention to emphasise the neglect the Almajiri suffer from all and sundry. Again, the overtly less detail given to the use of colours on the boys and the objects such as the dustbins they search. The debasing state of searching for food from dustbins is one of the telltale deplorable condition the Almajiri in many northern urban cities is seen. This painting also emphasise the fact that the ignorance they suffer from the neglect by their parents, the Mallams, government and the society in general has made them to resort to scavenging for food where they seldom find any to feed their constantly empty and hungry stomachs.

4.3 Presentation and analysis of research data

As explained in chapter three, the researcher interviewed the Almajirai, Muslim Umma, educational administrators, Muslim scholars and Mallams in order to gather relevant data with regard to the life style of the Almajirai, the organization of the Traditional Quranic Schools and their opinions from religious and social perspectives of the Almajiri life. The responses of the interviewees are presented in this section of chapter four.

4.3.1 Data in respect of the Almajiri's background

Table 1: Biodata of respondents.

n = 280

Item	Frequency	%
Age range		
Below 10 years	112	40
10 –12 years	84	30
13 – 14 years	56	20
15 – 16 years	28	10
Total	280	100

As seen from above the table, majority of the Almajirai fall within the age group of 5 – 12 as 70% (196) of them are in that age group.

Table 2: Almajirai's states of origin

n= 280

Item	Frequency	%
State of origin		
1. Sokoto	56	20
2. Zamfara	65	23
3. Katsina	84	30
4. Kaduna	75	27
Total	280	100

Seventy-three percent (205) of the Almajirai are non-indigenes of Kaduna. They are from neighbouring states such as Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states. They most often appear very dirty and unkempt with sores on their bodies and dandruff on their heads.

Table 3: Marital status of the Almajirai's fathers

n= 280

Item	Frequency	%
No. of Father's wives:		
One wife	28	10
Two wives	42	15
Three wives	98	35
Four wives	112	40
Total	280	100

Majority of the Almajirai's fathers have three or four wives as indicated by ninety- eight (35%) and one hundred and twelve (40%) of the Almajirai. This means that over 70% of them are from polygamous homes with several children. In some of the homes, there are more than twenty children who need to be cared for by the fathers as the mothers are in pudah and do not engage in any economic activities to augment the family's income. The implication of this is that with poverty prevalent in most rural areas from where these Almajirai come, there is little or no parental care and the children are left to fend for them selves using all means conceivable and often seeking defense for such action under religious laws or regulations.

Furthermore, the condition of the Traditional Quranic School is shabby and over crowded. More than 80% of the Almajirai are in such schools, where their

Mallams make them pay a compulsory sum of ten to twenty naira a week as contribution to the Mallam which is seldom used for the Almajirai's upkeep. Their sleeping condition is equally appalling as they sleep on the ground, the mats, having since worn out from wear and tear. Every single one of the Almajirai that agreed to talk desired to attend a formal school.

4.3.2 Responses of interview with Mallams who operate Quranic schools

With respect to the Mallams, most of them have polygamous marriages. Only two out of the ten Mallams interviewed have only one wife each. In addition, all of the ten Mallams have between four and eighteen children of their own. Three of the Mallams have a controlled population of about fifteen to twenty pupils. The remaining seven Mallams have as many as sixty pupils each in the school. Concerning the question of feeding and provision of suitable accommodation for the pupils, the Mallams reluctantly responded that the pupils feed themselves. They also declined having any knowledge of and Mallam that makes the Almajiri beg in order to make a compulsory weekly monetary contribution for their upkeep.

4.3.3 Opinions of educational administrators, Muslim scholars and Muslim Umma in respect to the Almajiri life in the society

There are fifty persons in this category of respondents; twenty, representing 40% of the people interviewed are aged between twenty-one and thirty years; this forty percent affirmed that they do not know the history of the Traditional Quranic School. The remaining thirty or sixty percent who are aged between thirty-five and

sixty years had however attended such schools and do have some knowledge of the history of the Traditional Quranic School. All the thirty older respondents asserted that there is the need to revert to the fundamental ideals of the Traditional Quranic School, which is seen in the Islamiyya School; where the children attend one closest to their homes and pay monthly fees to the Mallam. This need is an urgent one. They also believe that the government can help to standardise the organisation administration of the schools through assisting in funding in order to enable the Mallams make adequate provision in terms of registration and accommodation facilities. In addition, the Child's Right Law that was recently (May, 5th 2003) passed into law should be enforced throughout the country.

Forty of the fifty respondents in this category believe firmly that the Almajirai are always made to engage in sectarian violence by some Mallams, while some of the Almajirai often join such acts voluntarily. However, such a situation is attributed to the bad state of the economy, neglect by parents, government and the Muslim Umma of the country.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This study centres on a Portrait of the Almajiri. The Traditional Quranic School is an issue of great concern at this period of human development. A child who falls into this form of school instead of the Islamiyya School deprived and deprived of love, comfort, care and even the benefits of the third millennium in which only the enlightened can cope successfully. The Almajiri studies under the informal Traditional Quranic School, which has a negligible place in the formal education sector. The need to standardise teaching and learning in the school is therefore urgent.

5.2 Problems encountered in the course of the study

The Almajirai, who are the centre of the research scarcely respond to question asked by the researcher. In this, the researcher has to go as far as to offer cash gifts to persuade them answer the questions asked. The Mallams also posed another phase of the problem, as they always conclude that only those that work, as government agents would ask the types of questions the researcher asked. In addition, the researcher is not a Muslim, this created a greater communication problem, and often he had to depend on those that are Muslims who in turn are reluctant to offer any assistance to the researcher.

Again, the organizational set up of the school that lacks a unified body through which the researcher would have been able to get data on the history of

the school, the basis on which the school is run and the training and qualification of the Mallams, is also lacking. The inadequacy of literature on the Almajiri made data collection difficult. The researcher had to rely on oral interviews, and articles that are intermittently published in the newspapers and magazines. However, the authors of such articles are not always reliable since the commentaries are written out of the desire to express their dismay on the dismal state of the Almajiri. The sketches made were most of the time done from imagination and postures assumed from poses paid for by the researcher. This is a problem, as the Almajiri is not a trained model, and as it is expected of their age group, they are always restless and cannot pose for long.

The only photograph of a Mallam that was used as a reference was taken with the aid of a Muslim that had to convince the Mallam that he and the researcher are not government agents. This did not enable the researcher capture the events as they really unfold. Having gone through all these in the collection of data, the researcher had to try as much as possible to depict the various aspects the Almajiri's life in the paintings produced. On this, the researcher had to rely greatly on the knowledge of drawing gained through the training at the art school and private practice. The researcher's decision to use watercolours was by choice and therefore has no bearing to the message in the works, which could have being equally successful in any other painting medium.

It is pertinent to mention at this juncture that the production of works in the representational art style will aid the viewing public to better appreciate the destitute state the Almajiri currently finds himself.

5.3 Summary of findings

The main findings of the study are:

1. The Almajiri is aged from about six to sixteen years of age.
2. Majority of them are from polygamous homes with their fathers having between three to four wives, and about fifteen children.
3. In the Quranic schools, they fend for themselves; seek for ways to feed, though sometimes begging for alms or working as head porters to earn money.
4. They are usually dirty and unkempt as there are no adults or parents to encourage them to keep clean.
5. All the two hundred and eighty Almajirai in the study desired to go to a formal school so as to have a fruitful adult life.
6. The Quranic schools used for the study are over crowded as many of them have over sixty pupils. The schools are poorly organised and under funded. The Mallams who operate the schools depend on free-will donation from pious Muslims that seldom come in recent times.
7. Many of the Mallams demand a compulsory twenty-naira weekly contribution from each pupil. This means that since the pupils are far away from home, they go out to beg or work in order to get this levy.

8. While it is known that the Traditional Quranic School is accepted by the Islamic religion, it appears from the study that the economic crunch in the nation makes it difficult for the Mallams to operate the schools according to Islamic injunctions.

5.4 Conclusion

The researcher posits unequivocally that the Almajiri is no doubt displaced and currently suffers physical and emotional abuse borne out of his parents' decision to a traditional quranic school that has mainly gone worse. Again is the seeming helpless position the nation's government currently takes, as the Almajiri's state of destitution seems to have no end in sight. The researcher also calls for, through this study, a reversion to the fundamental ideals of the Traditional Quranic Schools which exists as the Islamiyya school, by the parents, Muslims and the government and artists are encouraged to get involved in the awakening of the society to the ills and the neglect the Almajiri suffer through the production and exhibition of paintings on issues affecting their lives. The various paintings produced are however not produced with the intent on condemning the Traditional Quranic School or the Mallams, but to awaken a need to better the life and living condition of the boys subjected to these dehumanizing living conditions.

5.5 Recommendations

The researcher hereby recommends that:

- (1) Muslims should, through their local mosques, raise the awareness that will aid the restructuring of the traditional Quranic Schools.
- (2) The Islamic scholars, educational administrators and the Islamic clergy must come together, with the Mallams to form a central structure or a unilateral control over every Traditional Quranic school in order to prevent Mallams who are not well learned in Islamic doctrine from running such a school.
- (3) There should be an agency or board to guide the conduct of the Quranic Schools through (i) regular inspection of the schools (ii) the control of the pupil population and the (iii) knowledge of the Mallams involved in the teaching.
- (4) This study also challenges every artist to raise awareness through the creation of works that depict the ills the Almajiri suffers in most northern parts of Nigeria.
- (5) The researcher, through this study hopes that visual artists will use the representational art style to make works based on topical issues of national concern to raise public awareness, as the level of art appreciation is lower than average.

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- Isa Suleiman Lecturer, Institute of Education Department of Arabic
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APPENDIX I

A) A questionnaire administered orally to the Almajirai, as they do not understand the English Language.

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your State of Origin?
4. What is the name of your Mallam?
5. How many wives have your Father?
6. If he has only one wife, how many children does your Father have?
7. If he has more than one wife, how many children are there in the Family?
8. How many times do you go home on holidays in a year?
9. Have you ever tried running away from School?
10. Would you want to attend a formal school if you have financial assistance?
11. Do you beg to earn a lining or you engage in a kind of labour to meet your financial needs?

B) A Questionnaire administered orally to the Mallam, as they generally do not understand the English Language.

1. How old are you?
2. How many wives do your have?
3. How many children do you have?
4. How long have you been running this School?
5. How many pupils do you have?

6. How do you feed them?
- 7a. Do their parents pay any kind of fees?
- 7b. How much per year?
8. Do you allow your pupils to beg for food and money?
9. Do you think your pupils should be aided by the government to attend a formal School?
10. What do you think should be done to Mallams that make their pupils to pay money into their coffers once a week?

C) A Questionnaire given to Muslim scholars and administrators and Muslims in general.

1. What do you know about the Traditional Quranic School?
- 2a. Did you ever attend one?
- 2b. At home or far from home?
3. How many students were there in the School you attended?
4. How many students were allowed in the School at a time?
- 5a. Who should be held responsible for the destitute state of the Almajiri?
 - a. Parents
 - b. Quranic Mallams
 - c. Muslim Umma
 - d. Government
 - e. Others (specify)
- 5b. Give reasons for your answer.
- 6a. Do you think the government should be involved in the running of the Traditional Quranic School?

6b. Give answer with reasons.

7a. Do you believe the Almajiri is made to engage in sectarian violence as militias?

7b. Support your answer with reasons.