Government Policies, Institutional Capacity and Policy Implementation in the Almajiri System of Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The Almajiri system, a centuries-old practice of learning the Qur'ān in Northern Nigeria, has been more and more linked with child begging and deprivation. This study analysed the Almajiri begging system within the framework of Public Administration where emphasis was given to the government policy, institutional capacity and the implementation of government policy, and degree of deprivation of Almajiri in the system. The respondents for this study were 300 made up of 120 public officials, 90 Mallams and proprietors of Almajiri schools and 90 community stakeholders who were selected using multistage sampling. Descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were performed to analyse the data. The government policy (M = 2.45), institutional capacity (M = 2.09) and policy implementation (M = 2.36) were rated inadequate with less than the criterion mean of 3.00, while persistence of begging (M = 4.22) and material and developmental deprivation of Almajirai (M = 4.25) were rated very high with more than 4.00 of the criterion mean. Policy, capacity and implementation jointly explained 31.6% of the variance in the persistence of begging, $F(3, 296) = 45.52$, $p < .001$, with implementation ($\beta = -0.32$) and institutional capacity ($\beta = -0.24$) the strongest predictors. There was a strong correlation between begging persistence and deprivation ($r = .52$). The results indicate that the tradition of education found in the Qur'an is not the main factor behind the continuation of begging, but weak implementation of the policies designed to safeguard and educate Almajirai. The study calls for better intergovernmental coordination, dedicated and transparent funding, access to child welfare services in the Almajiri schools, vocational education integration, and an affirmation of participatory governance and reorientation of child welfare policy from punitive to protective.

Keywords: Almajiri; street begging; public administration; policy implementation; institutional capacity; Northern Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Almajiri is the traditional education system in Northern Nigeria where children and young people are sent away from their homes to learn Qur'anic and Islamic teachings from a Mallam. In the past the arrangement was integrated into the community structures and was intended to offer religious education and moral education and preparation for responsible participation in society, where parents, community and local authorities played a part in the well-being of learners (Gomment, 2020). Not specifically intended for the purpose of institutionalizing street begging.

As time went on the support systems around the system became weaker. Gomment (2020) attributes this erosi-

on to the socio-economic and administrative changes, Safiyanu and Bugaje (2020) credit a historical drop in which the system of producing educated members of society lost institutional support. The outcome, in many parts of the world, is a modern form of begging and petty labour is essential for the survival of children. In Katsina State, 603 out of the 653 Almajirais surveyed reported that their Mallams were not providing them with food while Sambo *et-al.*. (2018) attributed poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and poor governance to the factors associated with child begging. In response, Government has implemented various interventions including Almajiri Integrated Model Schools and recently the National Policy on the Enhancement of Almajiri Education, which emphasizes access to education, welfare, skills acquisition, funding and stakeholder collaboration. However, there are reports of street begging and child vulnerability. The fact that this persistence indicates that the issue is not with the existence of policy but rather in the way that policy is carried out. This is why, the Almajiri question is explored in this context as a Public Administration problem, including one of policy design, institutional capacity, resource allocation, implementation and accountability (Muhammad *et-al.*.2019; Sambo *et-al.*.2018).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While a lot of literature has been written on Almajiri education, poverty, child rights and begging, there is little that attempts to integrate these into an analysis of the reasons for the persistence of begging despite government intervention. Any approach to addressing begging has been criticized for focusing too much on punishment and not enough on the socio-economic causes of begging (Adegbite & Olatunde, 2024), and research on the integration of schools has revealed that the creation of schools alone is not enough for successful integration to take place (Olutola *et-al.*.2021). There is a lack of studies that measure, in a single design, how stakeholders evaluate policy, institutional capacity and implementation, the relationship between these evaluations and the survival of Almajirai by begging, and the impact of the begging-dependent survival model on the welfare of Almajirai. This study aims to fill that gap.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study provides information to policy makers and implementing agencies on the focus of the weaknesses of the administration, and to parents and Mallams on the conditions that lead to the perpetuation of begging. Theologically, it brings an integrated Public Administration perspective to the literature which has till now largely viewed the topics of education and poverty and the rights of children as separate entities. Administratively, it keeps the educational tradition of the Qur'an apart from the conditions of deprivation faced by children.

1.4 Scope and Organization of the Paper

The study covers selected in Bornostate, Northern Nigeria and relies on the perceptions of adult stakeholders (public officials, Mallams and proprietors, and community stakeholders); no child respondents were involved. The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature, Section 3 describes the methodology, Section 4 presents and discusses the findings, and Section 5 provides the conclusion and recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of the Almajiri System

The Almajiri system is a traditional Islamic educational system that has existed in Northern Nigeria for centuries. The term Almajiri is associated with the Arabic concept of migration in search of knowledge. Historically, the system involved children and young people leaving their communities to acquire Qur'anic and Islamic knowledge under the supervision of Islamic teachers. The system was originally intended to provide religious education, moral instruction and preparation for responsible participation in society rather than to institutionalize street begging (Gomment, 2020). The contemporary Almajiri system, however, differs considerably from its traditional form. Gomment (2020) explains that the traditional system had mechanisms through which parents, communities and other stakeholders contributed to the welfare of learners. Changes in

the socioeconomic and administrative environment subsequently weakened these support mechanisms and contributed to poverty and street begging among some Almajirai.

Similarly, Edinyang *et-al.* (2020) describe the contemporary system as involving children who may roam the streets seeking food, money or opportunities for menial work. The authors associate this situation with child neglect, child labour and other forms of vulnerability. However, it is important to distinguish the Almajiri educational tradition from the contemporary practice of child begging, because the two are not conceptually identical. From a Public Administration perspective, this distinction is significant. Government intervention should not necessarily aim at eliminating Islamic education; rather, public policy should address the institutional, socioeconomic and administrative conditions that allow children to remain vulnerable while preserving legitimate religious education.

The Almajiri begging system is a social and educational phenomenon that has attracted considerable attention in contemporary Nigerian society, particularly in the northern region, where traditional Qur'anic education remains an important part of community life. The term Almajiri is derived from the Arabic word Al-Muhajir, which refers to a person who leaves his place of residence in search of knowledge or for another religious purpose. In the Nigerian context, the term is commonly used to describe children and young persons who leave their parental homes to acquire Qur'anic education under the supervision of Islamic teachers, popularly known as Mallams. Although the original arrangement was primarily intended to promote religious knowledge, discipline and moral development, changes in family economic conditions, community support structures and educational administration have contributed to the emergence of begging as a means of survival for many pupils (Teke et al., 2022; Okonkwo, 2022).

From a contemporary Nigerian perspective, the Almajiri begging system should be understood as more than a religious educational arrangement. It has gradually developed into a complex social condition involving child mobility, household poverty, inadequate parental support, limited access to formal education and weaknesses in public welfare administration. In many northern communities, children enrolled in traditional Qur'anic schools are expected to obtain food and other basic necessities through assistance from members of the public. While some communities regard this arrangement as an expression of charity and religious responsibility, its unregulated practice exposes children to prolonged street involvement, exploitation and other forms of vulnerability. The distinction between religious learning and the economic conditions surrounding the education of these children is therefore important in understanding the contemporary Almajiri problem (Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024; Makama et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the present condition of the Almajiri system reflects a gradual separation between educational responsibility and child welfare. In a properly organised educational environment, the responsibility for feeding, accommodation, healthcare and general supervision should not be transferred entirely to children who lack the capacity to provide for themselves. However, the experiences of many Almajiri children demonstrate that religious instruction sometimes takes place without adequate arrangements for their daily maintenance. This creates an environment in which begging becomes an informal survival mechanism rather than an occasional act of receiving charity. Okonkwo (2022) observes that the difficulties experienced by Almajiri children are closely associated with inadequate parental care, exploitation and the failure of relevant authorities to guarantee their welfare. Consequently, the system requires attention not only from religious institutions but also from government agencies responsible for education, social development and child protection.

The Almajiri begging system also raises important questions about the relationship between traditional institutions and modern public administration. Traditional Qur'anic education has historical and cultural significance in Northern Nigeria, and any meaningful reform must recognise this reality. Nevertheless, cultural acceptance cannot justify practices that undermine children's dignity, educational development and access to basic necessities. The contemporary challenge is therefore to preserve the positive aspects of Qur'anic education while establishing administrative arrangements that discourage child begging and promote responsible institutional management. This requires effective coordination among parents, Mallams, traditional rulers, religious organisations and government institutions (Teke et al., 2022; Ejalonibu et al., 2025).

2.2 Concept of Street Begging

Street begging refers to the solicitation of money, food or other forms of assistance from members of the public. In Nigeria, begging is associated with several socioeconomic factors, including poverty, unemployment, inequality, disability, displacement and inadequate social protection. Sambo *et-al.* (2018) examined child begging in Northern Nigeria and identified poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and poor governance as important factors associated with the phenomenon. The study particularly linked child begging with children attending local Islamic schools and argued that government intervention should address both poverty and weaknesses in policy implementation. More recently, Adegbite and Olatunde (2024) examined street begging from a legal and policy perspective and found that existing anti-begging approaches often focus on punitive measures without adequately addressing the socioeconomic causes of begging. They therefore advocate a more comprehensive approach involving social welfare, vocational training and community support. This perspective is relevant to Public Administration because it shifts attention from simply controlling street behaviour to examining the capacity of government institutions to provide effective social services and implement sustainable interventions.

Street begging refers to the act of soliciting money, food or other forms of assistance from members of the public, usually in public spaces, residential neighbourhoods, commercial centres, markets, motor parks and major road networks. In Nigerian society, begging is not restricted to a particular population group. It may involve children, adults, older persons and individuals living with disabilities. However, the involvement of children in street begging presents a more serious social and administrative concern because of their dependence on adults and their limited ability to protect themselves against exploitation, violence and other forms of abuse. Lawal et al. (2022) explain that street begging has become a visible feature of urban life in Nigeria, with its causes extending beyond individual circumstances to include poverty, relative deprivation and weaknesses in the social welfare system.

In the Nigerian context, street begging is influenced by several interconnected factors, including unemployment, household poverty, family instability, disability, inadequate educational opportunities and weak social protection arrangements. These factors do not operate independently. For instance, a household experiencing persistent economic hardship may find it difficult to provide food, clothing and educational materials for its children. Where appropriate welfare support is unavailable, some children may become involved in begging or other street-based activities to supplement household survival. Aliyu and Kayode (2024) identify poverty, unemployment, broken homes and inadequate feeding as important factors contributing to street begging among school-age children. Their findings demonstrate that begging should not be examined exclusively as an individual behavioural problem without considering the wider socioeconomic conditions that encourage its persistence.

Another important dimension of street begging is its relationship with public space and urban governance. In cities such as Maiduguri, Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto and Abuja, the presence of individuals soliciting assistance in public places raises concerns relating to sanitation, traffic safety, public health, urban management and social inclusion. Children who spend considerable periods moving between streets, markets and residential areas may experience irregular feeding, inadequate personal hygiene and limited access to healthcare. Such circumstances also expose them to accidents, harsh weather conditions and different forms of exploitation. Lawal et al. (2022), in their qualitative investigation of street begging in Abuja, identify public health and environmental concerns associated with the growing presence of beggars in urban settlements. Their findings suggest that the phenomenon requires coordinated social and administrative responses rather than isolated enforcement measures.

It is equally necessary to distinguish between begging as a temporary response to hardship and begging that has become an established means of livelihood. Some individuals solicit assistance because of immediate economic difficulties, while others depend on it over an extended period. In the case of children, prolonged involvement in begging can interfere with school attendance, personal development and opportunities for acquiring productive skills. The concern is particularly significant where children are expected to generate resources for their own upkeep or contribute to the maintenance of institutions responsible for their education.

Therefore, effective intervention must address the circumstances that compel children to depend on public charity instead of relying exclusively on restrictions against begging (Nnama-Okechukwu et al., 2023; Aliyu & Kayode, 2024).

From a public administrative perspective, street begging represents a challenge to the ability of government to provide minimum social protection for vulnerable populations. The continued presence of children in street environments may indicate gaps in educational inclusion, family support, child protection and poverty reduction programmes. Addressing the problem consequently requires a combination of preventive and corrective measures, including household support, accessible education, vocational development, child welfare monitoring and effective community participation. A policy that merely removes children from public spaces without addressing the conditions responsible for their involvement in begging may provide temporary relief without achieving lasting social improvement (Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

2.3 Almajiri and the Begging System

The association between Almajirai and street begging has developed as a consequence of changes in the economic and institutional environment surrounding Qur'anic education. The contemporary practice is particularly problematic where children are placed under the care of Mallams without adequate provision for food, shelter, healthcare and other basic needs. Olutola *et-al.* (2021) conducted a survey involving 653 Almajirai in 12 Almajiri schools in Katsina State. Their findings showed that 603 respondents, representing 92.3%, reported that their Mallams did not provide food for them. The study consequently identified begging and menial labour as important means through which some Almajirai obtained their basic needs. The researchers recommended government intervention through public enlightenment and appropriate incentives. Gomment (2020) similarly connects poverty among Almajirai with changes in the traditional support system. According to the study, inadequate parental and community support has contributed to conditions in which children depend on begging for survival. Thus, the begging phenomenon can be interpreted as an administrative and welfare failure when public institutions are unable to protect vulnerable children and ensure access to appropriate education and basic services.



Figure 1. *field photographs of Almajiri children at Jere and MMC Local Government Area, Borno State, Nigeria***,**

Source: Author's Field Documentation, 2026

However, the modern practice has, in some circumstances, become associated with child begging because of inadequate arrangements for pupils' feeding, accommodation and general welfare. The relationship should not

be interpreted to mean that every Almajiri pupil is a beggar or that Qur'anic education necessarily requires begging. Rather, it demonstrates how inadequate institutional support can transform an educational arrangement into a situation of economic dependence (Okonkwo, 2022; Teke et al., 2022).

In several communities across Northern Nigeria, the financial and material responsibilities associated with Qur'anic education are shared among parents, religious teachers, relatives and members of the wider community. Where these support arrangements function effectively, pupils may receive assistance without being compelled to spend substantial periods on the streets. However, the situation changes when parents send their children to distant locations without providing sufficient resources for their maintenance. Under such circumstances, Mallams may experience difficulties in meeting the daily needs of their pupils, while the children themselves may be encouraged or compelled to seek food and money from the public. This development illustrates the relationship between household responsibility, institutional financing and the welfare conditions of Almajiri children (Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024; Ejalonibu et al., 2025).

The begging system also has implications for the educational experiences of Almajiri pupils. Time that should ordinarily be devoted to learning, revision and personal development may be spent moving between households, markets and public spaces in search of food or financial assistance. This can affect concentration, attendance and the general quality of educational participation. Furthermore, children who depend heavily on begging may experience social exclusion and develop a perception that their educational environment offers limited opportunities beyond religious instruction. The situation becomes more complicated when the children lack access to literacy, numeracy, science education and vocational training that could improve their future economic prospects (Teke et al., 2022; Mohammed & Duwo, 2024).

The issue also involves the responsibilities of parents and religious teachers. Parents are expected to ensure that the decision to enrol a child in Qur'anic education does not result in the abandonment of their parental obligations. Similarly, Mallams who accept children into their care have a responsibility to protect them and provide an educational environment that respects their dignity. Government institutions must also ensure that appropriate regulations, welfare monitoring and support programmes are available. The contemporary Almajiri begging problem therefore reflects a shared responsibility that cannot be assigned exclusively to one group. A sustainable response requires a clear understanding of the duties of parents, religious institutions, communities and public authorities (Onukwuba & Dominic, 2022; Okonkwo, 2022).

2.4 Historical Development of the Almajiri System

The Almajiri system developed as part of the Islamic educational tradition of Northern Nigeria. In its earlier form, it was embedded within community structures and supported by parents, Islamic scholars and local authorities. Gomment (2020) argues that the traditional system provided mechanisms for meeting the needs of learners, but these mechanisms weakened over time. The colonial transformation of educational administration and the subsequent prioritisation of Western education contributed to the marginalisation of the traditional system. The resulting institutional and financial weaknesses contributed to the emergence of begging as a survival mechanism among some Almajirai. Safiyanu and Bugaje (2020) similarly examine the historical transformation of the Almajiri system and argue that a system once associated with the production of educated members of society has experienced significant institutional decline. Their analysis highlights the interaction between historical change, social attitudes, educational policy and the changing socioeconomic environment. The historical dimension is important to Public Administration because it demonstrates that contemporary social problems are often products of institutional change and policy discontinuity, rather than isolated individual behavior.

The historical development of the Almajiri system provides an important foundation for understanding its contemporary challenges. The institution has existed in Northern Nigeria for several centuries and is associated with the historical spread of Islamic scholarship, Qur'anic learning and religious instruction across the region. According to the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning and UNICEF Nigeria (2024), the traditional Almajiri arrangement in Northern Nigeria dates back to the eleventh century. Its original purpose

was to provide children and young learners with opportunities to acquire Qur'anic knowledge under the guidance of recognised religious scholars. The movement of pupils from their home communities to established centres of Islamic learning was therefore an important feature of the educational arrangement.

Historically, the institution operated within a wider network of religious, family and community support. Parents, local communities and other benefactors contributed to the maintenance of pupils and their teachers through food, accommodation and other forms of assistance. This arrangement helped sustain Qur'anic learning and strengthened the relationship between religious education and community responsibility. The institution was not originally designed as a permanent system of child street begging. Rather, the difficulties associated with the contemporary practice became more pronounced as traditional support structures weakened and economic conditions changed. Ejalonibu et al. (2025) similarly distinguish between the earlier community-supported arrangement and the present circumstances in which some children are sent to distant Qur'anic schools without adequate provision for their upkeep.

The historical transformation of the institution is also connected to changes in the organisation of education and public administration. The introduction and expansion of Western-style formal education created a new educational environment in which conventional schools became increasingly important for literacy, employment and access to modern economic opportunities. However, traditional Qur'anic institutions were not consistently incorporated into the emerging formal educational framework. This created a situation in which two educational arrangements operated with different administrative structures, curricula and financing mechanisms. The absence of effective integration contributed to the marginalisation of some traditional educational institutions, particularly those that lacked sufficient financial and institutional support (Okonkwo, 2022; Teke et al., 2022).

In subsequent decades, the challenges associated with Almajiri education became more visible as poverty, population growth, urbanisation and declining family resources affected the capacity of households and communities to support children studying away from home. The weakening of traditional arrangements placed additional pressure on religious teachers and pupils. In some cases, children became increasingly dependent on public assistance for their daily survival. The contemporary problem is therefore better understood as the outcome of historical, economic and administrative changes rather than as an original feature of Islamic education itself (Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024; Ejalonibu et al., 2025). Government intervention became more prominent during the Fourth Republic, particularly through efforts to integrate Qur'anic education with conventional schooling. The administration of President Goodluck Jonathan introduced Almajiri Model Schools intended to combine Islamic education with conventional subjects. These institutions were designed to improve educational access while retaining the religious identity of the traditional system. Nevertheless, the long-term sustainability of the initiative depended on funding, management, teacher availability, community acceptance and the continuity of government commitment. The experience illustrates the importance of considering implementation and institutional sustainability when designing educational reforms (Okonkwo, 2022; Teke et al., 2022).

More recently, the enactment of the National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education Act, 2023, established a statutory framework for addressing the educational challenges of Almajiri children and other out-of-school populations. The Act provides for a multimodal educational approach, including literacy development, skill acquisition and entrepreneurship programmes. This development represents an important shift towards a more coordinated institutional response, although its effectiveness depends on the extent to which the statutory provisions are translated into functioning programmes at federal, state and local government levels (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2023; Ejalonibu et al., 2025).

2.5 Almajiri System from a Public Administration Perspective

Public administration provides an important framework for examining the Almajiri system because the challenges associated with the institution involve government responsibility, policy formulation, resource allocation, institutional coordination and service delivery. The problem cannot be adequately addressed through educational interventions alone, as it also involves poverty reduction, child protection, social develop-

ment and the management of traditional institutions. From this perspective, the Almajiri system represents a public governance concern requiring coordinated action among different levels of government and non-governmental actors.

One important administrative consideration is the responsibility of government to ensure that educational opportunities are accessible to children irrespective of their family economic circumstances or cultural background. The continued presence of vulnerable children outside conventional educational structures suggests that existing administrative arrangements have not sufficiently addressed the needs of all educational groups. The Federal Government's establishment of the National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education in 2023 represents an institutional response to this challenge. The Commission provides an administrative structure through which policies and programmes can be developed to improve access to education, literacy and vocational opportunities (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2023).

The Almajiri system also raises questions about the effectiveness of public institutions in translating policy objectives into practical outcomes. Government may establish commissions, develop educational policies and allocate resources to reform traditional schooling, but the success of these measures depends on effective planning, supervision, monitoring and evaluation. Where government institutions lack adequate personnel, reliable information, financial resources or implementation capacity, policy objectives may remain largely aspirational. Suleiman et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of local administrative involvement in the management of Almajiri Model Schools, particularly in relation to staffing, payment of salaries, allowances and the provision of teaching materials.

Another important dimension is administrative accountability. Public institutions responsible for Almajiri education must be able to demonstrate how allocated resources are utilised and whether intended beneficiaries receive the services for which programmes were established. Accountability also requires clear responsibilities among federal, state and local authorities, as well as appropriate monitoring of religious institutions participating in government-supported educational programmes. Without such arrangements, the provision of resources may not necessarily translate into improvements in the living and learning conditions of Almajiri children (Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024; Ejalonibu et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the public administrative approach recognises that successful reform requires more than the establishment of government institutions. It requires the development of policies that reflect local realities, respect cultural institutions and provide practical solutions to the socioeconomic conditions affecting children. A sustainable administrative framework should therefore integrate educational planning with child welfare, poverty reduction, community development and vocational training. This approach would allow government to address both the educational needs of Almajiri pupils and the structural conditions that contribute to street begging.. Muhammad *et-al.* (2019) explicitly discuss the Almajiri system from an administrative perspective. Their work examines the historical management of the system and argues that the traditional system had important administrative and socioeconomic functions before its decline. The study includes a contributor from the Department of Public Administration at Bayero University, Kano, making it particularly relevant to a Public Administration framing of the subject. Sambo *et-al.* (2018) also directly connect child begging with governance. Their study argues that poverty, unemployment and weak governance contribute to the persistence of child begging in Northern Nigeria and recommends consistent government implementation of policies designed to reform the system. Consequently, the Almajiri problem can be understood as a governance problem involving policy design, institutional capacity, resource allocation, implementation and accountability.

2.6 Government Policy and Almajiri Education

Government policy plays a central role in determining the direction, organisation and sustainability of educational reform within the Almajiri system. In Nigeria, the need to improve the educational conditions of Almajiri children has attracted attention from federal and state governments because of concerns about out-of-school children, child welfare, literacy and the increasing association between traditional Qur'anic education

and street begging. Policy intervention is therefore intended to establish an educational arrangement that recognises religious instruction while providing opportunities for broader intellectual, social and economic development.

The Nigerian government has introduced interventions intended to integrate Qur'anic education with formal education. One major approach has involved the establishment of Almajiri Integrated Model Schools designed to provide conventional basic education alongside Islamic education. Although some of the foundational research on this intervention predates 2020, subsequent studies continue to evaluate its implementation and outcomes. Olutola *et-al.*. (2021), for instance, examined the factors affecting the integration of Almajirai into the formal education system in Katsina State and found that poverty, family circumstances, religion, culture, inadequate finance and other socioeconomic factors influence integration. The study therefore demonstrates that constructing schools alone does not guarantee successful policy outcomes. Government must also address the social and economic conditions affecting children's participation. The issue has continued to receive policy attention. The Federal Government's National Policy on the Enhancement of Almajiri Education identifies access to education, improved learning environments, welfare, skills acquisition, funding and stakeholder collaboration as important policy objectives. From a Public Administration perspective, this indicates a movement from a narrow educational intervention towards a more comprehensive policy framework.

One major government intervention was the establishment of Almajiri Model Schools during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. The initiative sought to integrate conventional education with Islamic learning by providing pupils with access to subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies alongside Qur'anic studies. The policy was based on the understanding that children should not be compelled to choose between religious education and the acquisition of knowledge required for participation in contemporary society. However, the sustainability of the initiative depended on consistent funding, effective school management, adequate teaching personnel and the willingness of communities to participate in the programme (Okonkwo, 2022; Teke et al., 2022).

A more recent institutional development was the National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education Act, 2023. The Act provides for the establishment of a commission responsible for developing and promoting educational opportunities for Almajiri and other out-of-school children. Its objectives include addressing illiteracy, supporting multimodal education, encouraging vocational and entrepreneurial development and reducing the conditions that contribute to youth poverty and destitution. The legislation is significant because it provides a statutory foundation for a more coordinated national response to the educational needs of vulnerable children (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2023).

The National Policy on the Enhancement of Almajiri Education in Nigeria further provides a policy direction for improving the traditional educational arrangement. Its emphasis includes the integration of Qur'anic education with literacy, numeracy, entrepreneurial training, life skills and improved teaching practices. It also recognises the importance of strengthening the capacity of Mallams and improving the welfare conditions of pupils. The policy reflects an approach that seeks to modernise the educational environment without necessarily replacing its religious foundation (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025).

Despite these policy developments, the existence of government legislation and policy documents does not automatically guarantee improved educational outcomes. The effectiveness of the policies depends on whether they are supported by adequate funding, institutional coordination, reliable monitoring and community acceptance. Mohammed and Duwo (2024) identify begging and the vulnerability of pupils as significant challenges affecting the reactivation of Almajiri education in Gombe State. Their findings reinforce the need for government policies to address practical welfare and educational difficulties rather than concentrate exclusively on institutional restructuring.

2.7 Policy Implementation and the Almajiri System

Policy implementation refers to the process through which government decisions are translated into programmes, services and practical outcomes. The existence of an Almajiri policy does not automatically resu-

lt in the elimination of begging. Implementation requires adequate resources, institutional commitment, trained personnel, monitoring, community participation and coordination between different levels of government. Olutola *et-al.*. (2021) found that socioeconomic and cultural factors continue to affect the integration of Almajirai into formal education. The study recommended government incentives and public enlightenment as mechanisms for improving implementation. Adamu and Shuaibu (2023), in a study of Almajiri administration in Gombe Local Government Area, examined leadership quality and its relationship with educational access. Their work is particularly relevant to Public Administration because it demonstrates the importance of leadership and administrative capacity in providing educational opportunities to Almajirai. Similarly, the study by Usman (2008), although older than the preferred recent literature, remains useful as a foundational policy-implementation study because it specifically examined the management and implementation challenges involved in integrating Universal Basic Education with Qur'anic schooling. It identified ineffective communication, inadequate collaboration, weak supervision and cultural insensitivity as important implementation problems. Therefore, policy implementation should be treated as a major explanatory variable in understanding why government interventions may not completely eliminate the begging system.

2.8 Institutional Capacity and the Almajiri System

Institutional capacity refers to the ability of government institutions to perform their assigned responsibilities effectively. It encompasses human resources, financial resources, infrastructure, leadership, administrative procedures, technical expertise and monitoring mechanisms. The Almajiri problem requires considerable institutional capacity because responsibilities are distributed among several public institutions. These include education authorities, social welfare agencies, local governments, child-protection institutions and other relevant government bodies. Adamu and Shuaibu (2023) demonstrate the relevance of administrative leadership to educational access within the Almajiri system. Their study of Gombe Local Government Area suggests that leadership and administrative arrangements can influence the capacity of the system to provide educational opportunities. Olutola *et-al.*. (2021) similarly demonstrate that government interventions must respond to practical socioeconomic factors affecting Almajirai. This indicates that the success of government policy depends not only on what government intends to achieve but also on whether institutions possess the capacity to translate policy objectives into actual services.

The capacity of government institutions is particularly important because the Almajiri system involves several areas of public responsibility. Educational authorities are expected to support curriculum development and learning standards, while social welfare agencies are responsible for child protection and the identification of vulnerable children. Local government authorities may also contribute through community mobilisation, school supervision and the provision of basic services. Where these responsibilities are poorly coordinated, administrative gaps may emerge, making it difficult to provide comprehensive support to Almajiri pupils.

The availability of qualified teachers is another important aspect of institutional capacity. Although Mallams possess specialised knowledge of Qur'anic instruction, integrated educational programmes may require additional personnel with expertise in literacy, numeracy, science, vocational education and child development. Government institutions must therefore develop training arrangements that strengthen the teaching capacity of both conventional educators and traditional Qur'anic teachers. The National Policy on the Enhancement of Almajiri Education recognises the importance of building Mallam capacity as part of broader educational reform (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025).

Infrastructure and learning resources also influence institutional performance. A school may have an appropriate administrative structure but still perform poorly where classrooms, sanitation facilities, instructional materials and accommodation are inadequate. Such deficiencies may discourage attendance and undermine the quality of education. In their assessment of the Integrated Almajiri Education Programme in North-East Nigeria, Abidakun and Lawal (2026) report inadequate instructional resources and challenges associated with programme sustainability. Their findings highlight the relationship between institutional resources and the continuity of educational intervention.

Institutional capacity also involves the ability to collect and manage reliable information. Government agenci-

es require accurate records of pupils, schools, teachers, enrolment patterns, attendance and welfare conditions to plan and monitor interventions. Where reliable information is unavailable, resource allocation may not correspond with actual community needs. A functional institutional framework should therefore incorporate school registration, child welfare records, periodic inspections and appropriate reporting mechanisms. Such measures would strengthen administrative accountability and improve the ability of government to respond to emerging challenges (Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

2.9 Poverty and the Almajiri Begging System

Poverty is one of the major socioeconomic conditions associated with the contemporary Almajiri begging system in Northern Nigeria. It influences the ability of households to provide children with food, clothing, accommodation, healthcare and educational materials. Families experiencing persistent financial difficulties may regard traditional Qur'anic education as an accessible means of providing religious instruction, particularly where formal education involves expenses they cannot readily afford. However, when children are sent to distant locations without adequate maintenance arrangements, household poverty may contribute to their dependence on begging and other informal survival activities (Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024; Ejalonibu et al., 2025).

The relationship between poverty and begging is not limited to the financial condition of individual households. It is also influenced by unemployment, limited livelihood opportunities, inadequate social protection and economic inequalities within communities. In many parts of Northern Nigeria, families depend on small-scale farming, petty trading and informal employment, which may provide irregular income. Economic shocks, poor agricultural performance and rising household expenditure can weaken their capacity to support children who are studying away from home. Under these circumstances, begging may emerge as a response to unmet basic needs rather than a deliberate rejection of formal economic participation.

Aliyu and Kayode (2024) identify poverty, unemployment, broken homes and poor feeding as important factors contributing to street begging among school-age children. Although their research was conducted in South-Western Nigeria, its findings provide a useful basis for understanding the broader socioeconomic factors that influence children's involvement in street begging. The relevance of these findings to the Almajiri system lies in the fact that poverty can affect both the decision to enrol children in traditional educational institutions and the capacity of parents to fulfil their responsibilities after enrolment.

Poverty also affects the ability of religious teachers to provide adequate care for pupils. Where Mallams depend mainly on irregular community donations and contributions from parents, they may face difficulties in maintaining suitable accommodation, providing meals and supporting the educational activities of their schools. The resulting pressure can encourage reliance on informal arrangements that transfer the responsibility for survival to the children themselves. This situation illustrates why the Almajiri begging problem should be considered within the broader context of household poverty, institutional financing and social welfare administration (Okonkwo, 2022; Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

A sustainable response must therefore extend beyond the construction of school buildings. Government intervention should also consider household livelihood support, school feeding, financial assistance for vulnerable families and the development of productive skills among older pupils. Such measures can reduce the economic pressures that encourage child begging while strengthening the capacity of families and educational institutions to provide adequate care. Poverty reduction should consequently form an important component of any comprehensive programme intended to reform the Almajiri system (Aliyu & Kayode, 2024; Federal Government of Nigeria, 2023). Olutola *et-al.*. (2021) also found that poverty, lack of family financial capacity and inadequate support were among the factors affecting integration into formal education. Amuda (2021) further argues that vocational education and entrepreneurship development should be incorporated into efforts to improve the socioeconomic conditions of Almajiri children. The study connects vocational skills with sustainable economic development and argues that the absence of appropriate skills contributes to the continuing vulnerability of Almajirai. This has an important implication for Public Administration: education-

al policy alone may be insufficient if poverty and economic vulnerability remain unaddressed.

2.10 Education and Skills Development

Education is one of the most important instruments through which government can address long-term socioeconomic vulnerability. Amuda (2021) argues that vocational training and entrepreneurship can provide Almajiri children with opportunities for economic participation and sustainable development. The study suggests that an educational system that concentrates only on religious instruction without providing relevant socioeconomic skills may leave learners vulnerable to poverty. Olutola *et-al.*. (2021) similarly identify lack of financial resources and other socioeconomic factors as barriers to formal educational integration.

While Qur'anic education provides religious knowledge and moral instruction, contemporary social and economic conditions require children to acquire additional competencies that can improve their participation in society. Literacy, numeracy, communication, scientific knowledge and vocational skills are increasingly important for accessing employment, establishing businesses and participating in community development. The integration of these competencies into traditional Qur'anic education is therefore an important direction for educational reform (Teke et al., 2022; Federal Ministry of Education, 2025).

The development of an integrated curriculum should recognise the educational background of Almajiri pupils and avoid treating their existing religious knowledge as irrelevant. Rather than replacing Qur'anic instruction, an integrated approach should create opportunities for pupils to acquire conventional academic knowledge alongside their religious studies. Subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Basic Science, Social Studies, digital literacy and agricultural education can improve their ability to participate in contemporary society. Such an arrangement would also provide a foundation for further education and vocational specialisation (Mohammed & Duwo, 2024; Federal Government of Nigeria, 2023).

Vocational and technical education is particularly relevant to older Almajiri pupils who may require practical skills for economic self-reliance. Training opportunities in agriculture, tailoring, carpentry, welding, food processing, electrical installation, information technology and small-business management can provide alternative livelihood pathways. These skills may also be adapted to the economic activities available within local communities. The National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education Act, 2023, recognises the importance of skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development in addressing the educational and economic vulnerabilities of the target population (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2023).

However, the effectiveness of skill development programmes depends on the quality of training, availability of equipment and relevance of the skills to local economic opportunities. Training that is not connected to market demand may produce certificates without improving the employment prospects of participants. Consequently, vocational programmes should be developed in consultation with local employers, artisans, agricultural organisations and community-based institutions. The aim should be to equip pupils with practical competencies that can be applied within their immediate environment and beyond (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025). Education also contributes to reducing the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Children who acquire functional literacy, technical competencies and relevant qualifications are more likely to access productive opportunities than those whose educational experiences remain limited. Therefore, the integration of formal learning and practical skill development into the Almajiri system should be considered an important investment in human capital and long-term community development.

2.11 Child Rights and Social Protection

Another important dimension is the protection of children from exploitation, neglect and abuse.

The contemporary Almajiri system has attracted concern because children who are sent away from their families may have limited access to parental care and basic social services. Olutola *et-al.*. (2021) found substantial evidence of weak parental contact and inadequate provision of basic necessities among the respondents in their study. Okonkwo (2022), examining the situation of Almajiri street children during the COVID-19 pandemic, argues that inadequate care and denial of children's rights increased their vulnerability

during the crisis. The study highlights the importance of human dignity, child rights and government responsibility in addressing the situation of vulnerable Almajirai. This places the issue firmly within the domain of social policy and public administration. Government has a responsibility not only to provide educational opportunities but also to establish mechanisms for protecting vulnerable children.

The experiences of Almajiri children demonstrate the importance of strengthening child protection mechanisms within traditional educational institutions. Children who spend extended periods in public spaces may be exposed to physical injuries, abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of harm. Their vulnerability is increased by their young age, separation from their families and dependence on adults who may not always have adequate resources or capacity to provide appropriate care. Okonkwo (2022) highlights the relationship between the experiences of Almajiri children, human dignity, parental responsibility and weaknesses in governance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning and UNICEF Nigeria (2024) identify Almajiri children as a particularly vulnerable population requiring improved access to basic services and child protection. Their situation analysis highlights concerns relating to deprivation, violence, neglect, exploitation and inadequate access to essential services. The report also emphasises the importance of providing vulnerable children with food, education, healthcare, psychosocial support, shelter, clothing and household economic assistance. These provisions are relevant to the development of a comprehensive social protection framework for Almajiri pupils.

Social protection involves policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty, prevent deprivation and support individuals and households facing socioeconomic vulnerability. In the context of the Almajiri system, relevant interventions may include school feeding, financial assistance to poor households, healthcare access, child protection services and educational support. Such interventions can reduce the pressure on children to obtain their basic necessities through begging. Nnama-Okechukwu et al. (2023) similarly emphasise the importance of coordinated social work interventions in protecting vulnerable children involved in street-based activities.

A functional child protection system must also recognise the responsibilities of parents, religious teachers and government institutions. Parents should not transfer their entire responsibility for children's welfare to Mallams, while religious teachers should ensure that children under their supervision are protected from exploitation. Government agencies must provide appropriate oversight and accessible reporting mechanisms for cases of abuse and neglect. The effectiveness of social protection therefore depends on the ability of these actors to work together in safeguarding the welfare and dignity of children (Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

2.12 Leadership and Administrative Effectiveness

Leadership is an important component of institutional effectiveness. Public institutions require competent leadership to translate policies into programmes and ensure that resources are used effectively. Adamu and Shuaibu (2023) investigated leadership quality within the Almajiri administrative system in Gombe Local Government Area. The study examined competent and creative leadership as well as transparent leadership in relation to access to education. This finding is relevant because government intervention may fail even where financial resources and policies exist if administrative leadership is weak.

Political leadership is particularly important in ensuring continuity of educational reforms. Government initiatives may be introduced with considerable public attention but become less effective when administrative priorities change or institutional support declines. The experience of the Almajiri Model School programme demonstrates the importance of maintaining political and financial commitment beyond the initial establishment of educational facilities. Okonkwo (2022) discusses the relationship between political leadership and educational reform, while Ejalonibu et al. (2025) highlight the continuing need to evaluate the effectiveness of previous reform initiatives and strengthen the national policy framework.

Administrative effectiveness also depends on the competence of public officials responsible for implementing programmes. Officials must possess the ability to plan activities, supervise institutions, coordinate stakehold-

ers, manage resources and assess programme outcomes. Weak administrative supervision may result in poor attendance monitoring, inadequate teaching standards and insufficient attention to pupil welfare. Suleiman et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of local administrative participation in supporting the management of Almajiri Model Schools, particularly through staffing and the provision of essential school materials.

Another important leadership responsibility is the promotion of accountability and transparency. Government agencies and school administrators should be able to explain how resources are utilised and demonstrate whether interventions are producing the expected results. Administrative accountability is particularly important where public funds are allocated to educational and welfare programmes intended for vulnerable children. Effective leadership should therefore encourage proper financial management, regular institutional assessments and transparent reporting.

Leadership within traditional and religious institutions is equally significant. Mallams and community leaders possess considerable influence over the acceptance of educational reforms in many northern communities. Their participation can encourage parents to support integrated education and discourage practices that expose children to exploitation. Government leaders should therefore approach reform through consultation and constructive engagement rather than relying exclusively on administrative directives. This approach can improve trust, strengthen institutional cooperation and increase the likelihood of successful implementation (Mohammed & Duwo, 2024; Ejalonibu et al., 2025).

2.13 Stakeholder Participation and Community Governance

The Almajiri system is strongly connected to religious leaders, Mallams, parents, traditional authorities and local communities. Consequently, government intervention that does not adequately involve these stakeholders may encounter implementation difficulties. Usman (2008) identified ineffective communication and collaboration with community stakeholders as important challenges to integrating Qur'anic and formal education. Olutola *et-al.*. (2021) similarly recommended public enlightenment and incentives as part of efforts to improve integration. The implication is that effective governance requires participatory policy implementation. Rather than imposing reforms exclusively through government institutions, relevant stakeholders should participate in policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Community participation is particularly important because the Almajiri system is deeply connected to local religious and cultural practices. Educational reforms developed without adequate consultation may encounter resistance from parents and religious teachers who perceive them as attempts to undermine traditional Islamic education. Involving community representatives in policy discussions can help identify practical concerns, establish common objectives and develop solutions that are acceptable to local populations. Mohammed and Duwo (2024) demonstrate the importance of considering the views of Mallams, pupils, school heads, community leaders and religious leaders in discussions concerning the reactivation of Almajiri schools in Gombe State.

Parents are among the most important stakeholders because they make decisions concerning children's education, movement and general welfare. Their participation should extend beyond enrolling children in Qur'anic schools to include the provision of appropriate support and regular communication with teachers. Mallams also have an important role in maintaining educational standards, ensuring the safety of pupils and cooperating with government institutions. Traditional rulers and religious leaders can contribute through community mobilisation, public awareness and the promotion of responsible parental practices.

Civil society organisations and development partners can support government interventions through advocacy, technical assistance, training and the provision of welfare services. Their participation may also strengthen monitoring by identifying gaps between policy objectives and conditions within local communities. However, such support should complement rather than replace the responsibility of government to provide sustainable public services.

Stakeholder participation must also involve Almajiri children themselves in ways appropriate to their age and maturity. Their experiences and views can provide useful information about their educational needs, feeding

arrangements, safety and living conditions. Policies developed without considering the experiences of intended beneficiaries may fail to address the problems they are designed to solve. Consequently, effective governance should provide opportunities for meaningful consultation and feedback from pupils, parents and the communities in which traditional Qur'anic schools operate (Teke et al., 2022; Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning & UNICEF Nigeria, 2024).

2.14 Intergovernmental Relations

The Almajiri issue cuts across different levels of government. Federal institutions may formulate national policies and provide funding, while state and local governments are responsible for significant aspects of implementation and service delivery. This creates the need for effective intergovernmental relations. A weakness at any level can affect policy outcomes. For example, inadequate coordination between federal policy makers and state or local implementing institutions may result in incomplete projects, poor monitoring or inadequate utilization of available resources. The contemporary national policy itself emphasizes funding and collaboration with stakeholders as central to improving Almajiri education. Therefore, examining the relationship between federal, state and local institutions is essential to understanding the administrative dimensions of the Almajiri begging system.

The Federal Government is responsible for establishing national policy directions, providing statutory frameworks and coordinating relevant national institutions. The establishment of the National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education under the 2023 Act provides an institutional platform for coordinating national interventions. State governments, particularly those with substantial Almajiri populations, are expected to support the implementation of educational policies, provide relevant infrastructure and strengthen state-level institutions. Local governments are also important because of their proximity to communities, traditional institutions and individual schools (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2023).

Effective intergovernmental relations require clear administrative responsibilities and appropriate channels of communication. Where federal institutions develop programmes without sufficient consultation with state and local authorities, implementation may encounter difficulties arising from differences in local priorities, available resources and administrative arrangements. Similarly, state governments may struggle to sustain programmes where financial and technical support from the federal level is inadequate. The experience of Almajiri Model Schools demonstrates why coordination and shared responsibility are important for educational sustainability (Suleiman et al., 2025). Intergovernmental cooperation should also extend to the collection and sharing of information. Accurate data on Almajiri schools, pupil enrolment, teachers, welfare conditions and educational outcomes are necessary for effective planning. Federal and state authorities should develop compatible reporting systems that allow information to be shared with local implementing institutions. This would improve programme monitoring, reduce duplication and support evidence-based resource allocation.

Furthermore, the Almajiri challenge sometimes involves the movement of children across state boundaries. Where children leave their communities to study in other states, their welfare and educational supervision may involve more than one government authority. This makes intergovernmental cooperation particularly important in matters relating to registration, child protection, family tracing and the monitoring of educational institutions. The experiences discussed by Okonkwo (2022) during the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate the administrative and social difficulties that can emerge when the movement and welfare of Almajiri children are handled without adequate coordination.

2.15 Government Intervention and Sustainable Reform

The literature indicates that government interventions have not always produced sustainable solutions. Safiyanu and Bugaje (2020) argue that the Almajiri system has undergone considerable deterioration and requires serious reconsideration rather than superficial intervention. Amuda (2021) proposes vocational training and entrepreneurship as part of a sustainable approach to improving the socioeconomic prospects of Almajirai. Adegbite and Olatunde (2024) similarly argue that punitive approaches to street begging are inade-

quate without complementary welfare, vocational and community-based interventions. This suggests that sustainable reform should move beyond simply removing children from streets. It should address the root causes of the problem, including poverty, inadequate educational opportunities, weak family support, institutional limitations and insufficient livelihood opportunities.

One major intervention was the establishment of Almajiri Model Schools, which sought to combine Qur'anic education with conventional academic subjects. The initiative represented an attempt to provide pupils with a more comprehensive educational experience without removing the religious foundation of their learning. However, the programme faced challenges relating to institutional sustainability, school management, funding and community acceptance. These difficulties demonstrate that the establishment of educational facilities must be accompanied by appropriate administrative and welfare arrangements (Teke et al., 2022; Okonkwo, 2022).

The National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education Act, 2023, represents another important government intervention. By establishing a statutory commission, the Federal Government created an institutional mechanism for addressing the educational needs of Almajiri and other out-of-school children. The Act also provides for the promotion of literacy, skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development. Its significance lies in the recognition that the challenges of Almajiri education require a coordinated national response rather than isolated programmes operated by individual institutions (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2023).

The National Policy on the Enhancement of Almajiri Education further emphasises the integration of religious instruction with literacy, numeracy, life skills and entrepreneurial training. This approach recognises the importance of preserving traditional educational identity while improving the learning environment and welfare conditions of pupils. It also highlights the need to strengthen the capacity of Mallams and establish improved standards for the administration of Qur'anic schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025).

The idea of subtle reform is particularly relevant within the Nigerian cultural and religious environment. It suggests that reform should be introduced through gradual institutional improvement, constructive engagement and community participation rather than through abrupt measures that may create resistance. Such an approach does not mean tolerating child exploitation or neglect. Rather, it recognises that sustainable change requires an understanding of the cultural foundations of traditional education and the involvement of those who manage and participate in the system.

Practical reform may therefore involve registering Qur'anic schools, supporting Mallams through training, establishing school feeding arrangements, introducing basic literacy and numeracy, improving accommodation and sanitation, and creating opportunities for vocational education. Government can also work with parents and religious leaders to discourage the practice of sending children to distant schools without adequate provision for their maintenance. Such measures would improve the educational and welfare conditions of pupils while retaining the positive contributions of traditional Islamic learning (Mohammed & Duwo, 2024; Ejalonibu et al., 2025).

Ultimately, the effectiveness of government intervention should be measured by improvements in children's actual living and learning conditions. The number of schools constructed or policies announced is not, by itself, sufficient evidence of successful reform. More meaningful indicators include reduced child begging, improved attendance, better literacy outcomes, access to basic welfare services, increased parental responsibility and the development of productive skills. Government intervention should therefore be evaluated according to its contribution to the dignity, education and long-term development of Almajiri children.

2.14 Empirical Review

Empirical studies provide evidence concerning the causes, consequences and possible government responses to the Almajiri begging system. Olutola *et-al.*. (2021) conducted a survey of 653 Almajirai in Katsina State and found that socioeconomic and cultural factors significantly affected their integration into formal education. Particularly important were poverty, family background, inadequate financial resources, religious perceptions

and cultural factors. Amuda (2021) examined the relationship between Almajiri education and sustainable economic development and concluded that vocational education and entrepreneurship could contribute to improved socioeconomic outcomes for Almajirai. Edinyang *et-al.*. (2020) examined the Almajiri educational system and identified child labor, child neglect, street hawking and other social vulnerabilities associated with some contemporary manifestations of the system. Okonkwo (2022) examined the experiences of Almajiri street children during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted concerns relating to welfare, dignity and child rights. Adamu and Shuaibu (2023) investigated leadership quality in the Almajiri administrative system in Gombe Local Government Area, demonstrating the importance of administrative leadership in providing educational access. Adegbite and Olatunde (2024) examined street begging from a legal and policy perspective and concluded that punitive approaches alone are insufficient for solving the problem. Taken together, these studies show that the Almajiri begging system is multidimensional and cannot be adequately addressed through a single intervention.

Teke et al. (2022) conducted a study titled Problems and Prospects of Almajiri Integration Programme in North-West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. The study examined the challenges and prospects of integrating traditional Qur'anic education with conventional schooling. The researchers adopted an empirical research approach involving 240 Almajiri pupils and 60 Mallams who responded to questionnaires, while 33 community leaders and school heads participated in interviews. The study provided evidence concerning the practical difficulties associated with integrating traditional Qur'anic schools into the conventional educational system. Its inclusion of pupils, teachers and community representatives was particularly useful because it considered the experiences of different groups directly involved in the programme. The study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates that successful reform requires more than government policy formulation; it also requires the cooperation of educational institutions, religious teachers and community leadership.

Lawal et al. (2022) examined A Qualitative Study of Public Health and Policy Implications of Street Begging in Nigeria. The study investigated the development of street begging and its public health implications, using Abuja as its geographical focus. The researchers adopted a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and non-participant observation. The study covered 30 beggars, 16 personnel from relevant government ministries, two journalists and seven residents of selected communities. The findings indicated that relative deprivation and economic difficulties contributed to the involvement of individuals in begging. Some participants had engaged in begging for several decades and regarded it as a means of livelihood. The researchers also identified environmental and public health concerns associated with the phenomenon. The study is relevant because it establishes that street begging is connected to wider socioeconomic and administrative conditions. However, its focus on beggars generally rather than Almajiri children specifically creates an opportunity for further investigation into the experiences of children within traditional Qur'anic educational institutions.

Okonkwo (2022) conducted a study titled Islam and Human Dignity: The Plights of Almajiri Street Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria. The study examined the experiences of Almajiri children within the context of religious obligations, child rights, human dignity and public governance. It adopted a descriptive analytical approach, drawing on information from newspapers, academic publications and other documentary sources. The study discussed the difficulties experienced by Almajiri children during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the controversies surrounding their movement and evacuation across different states. It identified weaknesses in parental responsibility, child protection and political leadership as important issues affecting their welfare. The study is particularly relevant because it demonstrates how emergencies can expose weaknesses in the administration of vulnerable children's welfare. Nevertheless, its emphasis on the pandemic means that further empirical investigation is required to establish the continuing administrative and socioeconomic conditions affecting the Almajiri system outside emergency situations.

Onukwuba and Dominic (2022) investigated Almajiri, the Role of Parents and the Society. Their study examined the responsibilities of parents and the wider society in addressing the difficulties associated with the Almajiri institution. The researchers distinguished between more organised forms of Islamic education and less structured arrangements in which children may be exposed to street begging. Their discussion draws attention

to the responsibility of parents in determining the educational environment of their children and ensuring that adequate arrangements are made for their welfare. The study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates that the Almajiri challenge cannot be addressed exclusively through government intervention. Parental responsibility, community participation and the administrative conduct of religious institutions are equally important considerations. However, further research is necessary to establish how these responsibilities are coordinated within existing public policy structures.

Nnama-Okechukwu et al. (2023) conducted a study titled Vulnerable Children Aiding Visually Challenged Beggars in Nigeria: Need for Social Work Intervention. The researchers explored the experiences of children involved in assisting visually challenged individuals who beg in public spaces. The study employed in-depth interviews to examine the circumstances and risks associated with children's participation in street-based activities. Its findings highlighted the vulnerability of children involved in such activities and the need for coordinated social protection measures. The researchers argued for interventions that could keep vulnerable children within safer family and community environments. Although the study did not focus specifically on Almajiri pupils, it provides useful evidence on the wider problem of child involvement in begging. Its relevance lies in demonstrating that children's participation in street activities should be examined through the perspectives of child protection, family responsibility and social welfare administration.

Mohammed and Duwo (2024) examined Arabic Education in Nigeria and Re-Activating Almajiri Schools in Gombe State to Achieve Religious and National Objectives. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and involved 400 Almajiri pupils and 80 Mallams, while 46 community and religious leaders and school heads participated in interviews. The researchers examined the condition of Almajiri education, the challenges affecting its reactivation and the views of stakeholders concerning government intervention. Their findings indicated that begging was a major challenge contributing to the vulnerability and exploitation of pupils. The study also identified the reactivation of Almajiri schools as an important means of improving the educational environment. However, it noted that negative perceptions of pupils in traditional Qur'anic schools could create difficulties for reform. The study is particularly relevant because it provides evidence from Gombe State and demonstrates the importance of religious leadership, community acceptance and government participation in educational reform.

Makama et al. (2024) conducted a study titled Justification to Urgently End the High-Risk Child Begging Culture of the Almajiri System of Northern Nigeria. Published in the African Journal of Social Issues, the study examined the risks associated with child begging within the Almajiri environment. Its discussion draws attention to children's socioeconomic circumstances, child welfare, human rights and the dangers associated with prolonged street exposure. The researchers emphasised the need to address the conditions that expose children to exploitation and other forms of vulnerability. The study is relevant to the present research because it places child protection at the centre of the debate concerning the future of Almajiri education. However, the need remains for further investigation into the administrative structures responsible for implementing child protection and educational reforms at the local government level.

Aliyu and Kayode (2024) investigated Street Begging among School Age Children and Social Protection Policy in South-Western Nigeria. The researchers employed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving teachers, parents, school-age children and education officials in Ondo, Oyo and Lagos States. A total of 150 questionnaires were administered, while 12 respondents participated in interviews. The study identified poverty, unemployment, broken homes and inadequate feeding as important factors contributing to street begging among children. It also examined the contribution of social protection policies, including educational interventions, to reducing the problem. The findings indicated that although government programmes had contributed to addressing street begging, their implementation was affected by poor funding, changes in government, overstretched facilities and corruption. This study is relevant because it establishes the relationship between socioeconomic conditions, public policy and implementation challenges. Its findings provide a useful comparative basis for examining similar administrative difficulties affecting Almajiri children in Northern Nigeria.

Umar et al. (2024) examined Challenges of Inclusion of Almagirai in Nigerian School Feeding Scheme. The

study considered the difficulties associated with including Almajiri pupils in government-supported school feeding arrangements. It approached the issue from the perspective of educational inclusion, nutrition and the responsibility of government to support vulnerable learners. The study is relevant because feeding is directly connected to the conditions that encourage children to seek food through begging. Where pupils are enrolled in educational institutions but are excluded from basic welfare support, the objectives of educational inclusion may remain incomplete. The research therefore provides an important basis for considering school feeding as an essential component of Almajiri educational reform rather than treating it as an independent welfare programme.

Suleiman et al. (2025) conducted a study titled Challenges Affecting Implementation of Almajiri Model School Policy in Sabon Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The study examined the implementation of the Almajiri Model School policy, using Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Almajiri Bilingual Model Primary School in Maraban Gwanda as its empirical focus. The researchers adopted a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Their findings revealed that the local government contributed to the administration of the school through the recruitment and payment of staff, allowances for Qur'anic teachers and the provision of teaching and administrative materials. However, financial constraints remained an important administrative challenge. The researchers recommended stronger collaboration between host communities and security agencies to improve the school environment. This study is particularly relevant to the present research because it demonstrates the importance of local government capacity, institutional financing and community participation in the implementation of Almajiri educational policies.

Ejalonibu et al. (2025) examined the need for Reviewing and Co-developing a Robust Almajiri Policy Framework to Support Inclusive Education in the Country. Their policy analysis considered the historical development of Almajiri education, previous government reforms and the institutional implications of the National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education Act, 2023. The authors discussed the earlier integration initiatives, including the establishment of Almajiri Model Schools, and highlighted the continuing difficulties associated with incorporating traditional Qur'anic education into the wider educational system. Their analysis emphasised the need for a more inclusive policy framework that recognises the educational identity of Almajiri pupils while addressing their welfare and learning needs. The work is relevant because it links policy development with institutional coordination and the practical challenges of educational reform. Nevertheless, as a policy working paper, it differs from primary field research and requires complementary evidence from local communities and implementing institutions.

Abidakun and Lawal (2026) investigated Evaluation of the Sustainability of the Integrated Almajiri Education Programme in North-East Nigeria Using the CIPP Model. The study adopted a descriptive survey design involving 56 respondents, comprising 47 teachers and nine programme officials. It employed the Context, Input, Process and Product evaluation framework to examine the sustainability of the Integrated Almajiri Education Programme. The findings indicated that teachers generally accepted the objectives of the programme, but instructional resources, particularly technology-based materials, remained inadequate. The researchers also observed that teaching practices continued to rely largely on traditional methods despite the existence of supervisory arrangements. Although primary-level completion was relatively favourable, higher dropout rates at the junior secondary level raised concerns about sustained participation. The study concluded that inadequate resources, weak institutional coordination and insufficient alignment with local conditions limited programme sustainability. Its relevance to the present research is particularly strong because it provides evidence from North-East Nigeria and highlights institutional capacity, supervision, resource allocation and educational continuity as important determinants of reform effectiveness.

2.15 Gap in Literature

While there is vast amount of literature on Almajiri education, poverty, child rights and begging on the streets, there is still a huge gap in literature that systematically tries to look at the problem as a Public Administration and policy-implementation problem. Most of the current literature focuses on: educational integration; poverty; children's rights; socioeconomic vulnerability; religious education; and street begging. Few studies combine these aspects to examine the interconnectedness of government policy, institutional capacity, administrative

leadership, resource allocation and intergovernmental coordination and policy implementation as determinants of the continued existence of Almajiri beggars. This gap is significant especially because government has formulated policies and programmes to better the education of Almajiri, but the issue of street begging and vulnerability remains reported.

The empirical studies reviewed demonstrate that the Almajiri system is influenced by a combination of educational, socioeconomic, institutional and administrative factors. Teke et al. (2022) established the importance of integration and stakeholder cooperation, while Lawal et al. (2022) demonstrated the wider public health and socioeconomic implications of street begging. Okonkwo (2022) highlighted the relationship between child dignity, parental responsibility and governance, while Nnama-Okechukwu et al. (2023) drew attention to the importance of social protection for vulnerable children.

Similarly, Mohammed and Duwo (2024) demonstrated the importance of reactivating Almajiri schools through government and community participation, while Aliyu and Kayode (2024) identified poverty, unemployment, weak funding and implementation difficulties as factors influencing street begging among children. Suleiman et al. (2025) provided evidence of local government involvement in school administration, whereas Ejalonibu et al. (2025) examined the need for a more comprehensive national policy framework. The findings of Abidakun and Lawal (2026) further demonstrate that the sustainability of integrated Almajiri education depends on institutional resources, effective coordination and continuous educational participation.

Despite these contributions, some important gaps remain. First, several existing studies concentrate on the educational and social dimensions of the Almajiri system without sufficiently examining the administrative relationships among federal, state and local government institutions. Second, although poverty and child vulnerability are frequently discussed, the relationship between household economic conditions, institutional financing and the persistence of street begging requires further investigation. Third, the existence of government policies and intervention programmes does not necessarily establish the extent to which such policies are effectively implemented at the grassroots level.

Furthermore, limited attention has been given to the combined influence of leadership effectiveness, institutional capacity, stakeholder participation and intergovernmental coordination on the success of Almajiri reforms. The experiences of individual schools and communities may differ considerably depending on available resources, administrative commitment and the nature of community support. Consequently, findings from one geographical area may not adequately explain the circumstances in another.The present study therefore seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining the Almajiri begging system through a public administrative perspective, with particular attention to government intervention, policy implementation, institutional capacity, leadership, stakeholder participation and community governance. It recognises that sustainable reform requires an approach that addresses the educational, economic and welfare needs of Almajiri children while taking account of the cultural and institutional realities of Northern Nigerian communities.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Analytical Framework

The policy, leadership, institutional capacity, implementation, service delivery and outcomes were used as an analytical sequence to operationalize the objectives and hypotheses outlined in Sections 1.3 and 1.4 respectively in the literature review. The government policy (POL) and institutional capacity (INC) as independent variables and persistence of Almajiri begging (BEG) as the administrative outcome were considered. The absence of Almajirai (DEP) was considered as the welfare effect of begging system and described and examined in the context of BEG.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design of cross-sectional design with explanatory approach (correlational). The design is appropriate because the study focuses on obtaining perception-based data from

multiple types of respondents at one time and testing the relationships among policy, capacity, implementation and outcome variables. The study employed a predominant quantitative approach, as in previous empirical studies on Almajiri integration which employed a structured survey (Olutola *et-al.*., 2021).

3.3 Study Area and Population

The study has been conducted in some selected areas of Maiduguri, Borno State of Northern Nigeria which has a historical background of Almajiri and begging system in the area and this system is most prominently reported (Gomment, 2020; Sambo *et-al.*.2018). The region has high levels of poverty, and does have a long tradition of Qur'anic education, as well as a multi-level government system where the federal, state, and local governments share responsibility for education and social welfare. Data were sampled from some local government areas where Almajiri schools and other agencies of the government are functioning. The target population consisted of three groups of stakeholders, namely, (i) officials of public institutions responsible for Almajiri education, basic education and social welfare; (ii) Mallams and proprietors of Almajiri and Qur'anic schools; and (iii) community stakeholders (parents) and community and religious leaders. The population was treated as unknown size and large, due to the lack of a reliable sampling frame, especially for community stakeholders.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

3.4.1 Sample size determination

A sample size of 300 respondents was adopted. For a large population of unknown size, Cochran's (1977) formula, $n = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2}$, gives the minimum sample required for a given margin of error. At a 95% confidence level ($Z = 1.96$) and maximum variability ($p = q = 0.5$), a sample of 300 yields a margin of error of approximately ±5.7% ($e = \frac{\sqrt{(1.96^2 \times 0.25}}{300} \approx 0.057$, which is acceptable for social science survey research. The sample also satisfies the commonly used minimum for multiple regression with three predictors ($N \geq 50 + 8k$, where k is the number of predictors; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013) and allows comparison across the three respondent categories.

3.4.2 Sampling technique and allocation

A multistage sampling procedure was used. In the first stage, local government areas were purposively selected on the basis of the presence of Almajiri schools and implementing agencies. The second stage entailed stratification of respondents into the three categories. The third stage involved simple random or systematic sampling of the respondents in each stratum and convenience-assisted random sampling at schools and community gatherings where lists of respondents were not available. To prevent the loss of questionnaires due to non-response, a 7% buffer (20 questionnaires) was added, and 320 questionnaires were distributed resulting in 300 questionnaires that were returned. The questionnaires were distributed as shown in Table 3.1.

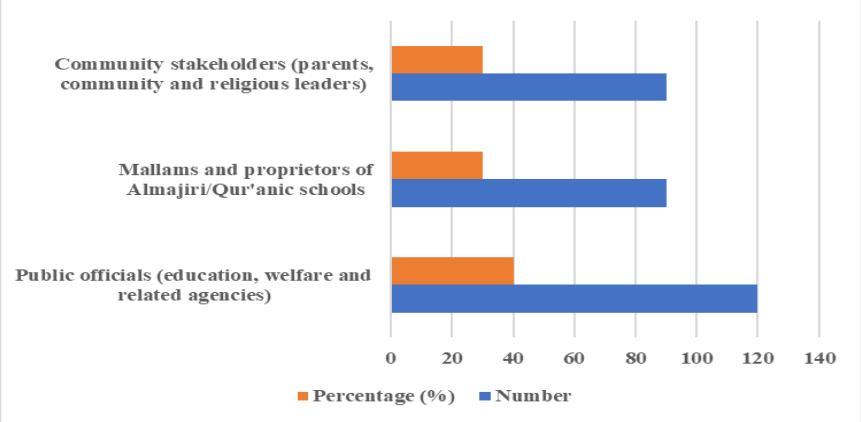


***Figure 1**: Allocation of the sample*

Source: *field research, 2026*

3.5 Research Instrument

Data were collected with a structured questionnaire, the Public Administration and Almajiri Begging System Questionnaire (PAABSQ). Section A captured respondents' demographic characteristics. Section B measured government policy, institutional capacity, policy implementation and the persistence of begging, and Section C measured the deprivation of Almajirai. All items in Sections B and C used a five-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Table 3.1: Constructs and measurement

Construct	Role	Dimensions measured	Items
Government policy (POL)	Independent	Clarity of objectives, integration of Qur'anic and formal education, welfare and skills provisions, funding, continuity	5
Institutional capacity (INC)	Independent	Personnel, financial and material resources, administrative leadership, monitoring, infrastructure	5
Policy implementation (IMP)	Independent	Intergovernmental coordination, stakeholder participation, supervision, service delivery, fund utilisation	5
Persistence of begging (BEG)	Dependent	Prevalence of begging, begging as survival, effectiveness of reforms and punitive measures	5
Deprivation of Almajirai (DEP)	Welfare outcome	Food, shelter, healthcare, family contact, protection from abuse, skills, educational progression	7

Source: field research, 2026

3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Content and face validity were established through review by the research supervisor and experts in Public Administration and education policy. A pilot test was conducted with approximately 30 respondents (10% of the main sample) outside the final sample. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above regarded as acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). Items that reduced the reliability of a construct were revised or removed before the main survey.

3.7 Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaires were administered in person by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. For respondents with limited literacy, particularly some Mallams and community members, items were read out and explained in Hausa and responses recorded by the research assistants. Completed questionnaires were collected on the spot to maximise the return rate.

Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS (Version 27). The data obtained were described by using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) to answer the research questions. One-way ANOVA was used to compare the differences between the categories of the respondents, and the effect size value was expressed as eta squared (η^2). Relationships were examined using Pearson's product-moment correlation. The assumptions of linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity and absence of multicollinearity (variance inflation factor below 10) were checked, and heteroscedasticity-consistent (HC3) standard errors (MacKinnon & White, 1985) were computed as a sensitivity check. Hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The respondents gave informed consent to participate in the study and their participation was voluntary.

Anonymity and confidentiality were provided, names were not recorded and the information was only collected for research purposes. No child respondents were involved in the study as it is a sensitive topic of discussion in which vulnerable children are involved. The relevant institutions were asked for permission to collect date.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 320 questionnaires were administered and 300 were duly completed and usable, giving a response rate of 93.8%. As shown in table 4.1 below, most respondents were male (77.0%), and 61.0% were aged 30 to 49 years. Tertiary education was the most common qualification (46.7%), while 32.0% had Qur'anic or Islamic education only, reflecting the mix of public officials and Mallams in the sample. Respondents were also experienced: 84.3% had at least five years of experience.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Respondent category	Public officials	120	40
	Mallams/proprietors	90	30
	Community stakeholders	90	30
Sex	Male	231	77
	Female	69	23
Age (years)	Below 30	30	10
	30–39	94	31.3
	40–49	89	29.7
	50 and above	87	29
Educational level	Qur'anic/Islamic only	96	32
	Secondary	64	21.3
	Tertiary	140	46.7
Experience (years)	Below 5	47	15.7
	5–10	107	35.7
	11–15	92	30.7
	Above 15	54	18

Source: field research, 2026

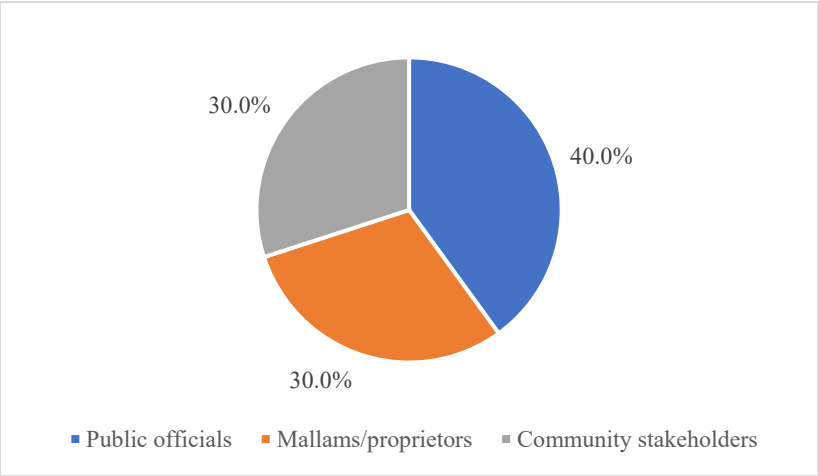


Figure 4.1: Distribution of respondents by category

Source: field research, 2026

4.4 Reliability of the Constructs

Cronbach's alpha ranged from .81 to .88, all above the 0.70 threshold, indicating good internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 4.2: Reliability and descriptive statistics of composite scores

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD
Government policy	5	0.86	2.45	0.76
Institutional capacity	5	0.84	2.09	0.7
Policy implementation	5	0.88	2.36	0.79
Persistence of begging	5	0.81	4.22	0.59
Deprivation of Almajirai	7	0.86	4.25	0.54

Source: field research, 2026

Note: Agree (%) = respondents rating 4 or 5 on the item (grand mean row: composite score of 3.50 or above). Criterion mean = 3.00.

According to table 4.3 below, respondents did not agree that government policy is adequate (grand mean = 2.45, SD = 0.76); every item fell below the criterion mean, and only 7.0% of respondents had a composite score indicating agreement. The highest-rated aspect was the integration of Qur'anic and formal education (M = 2.64), and the lowest was the clarity of policy objectives (M = 2.20). Even the best-rated aspect remained below the criterion mean.

Table 4.3: Respondents' assessment of government policy on Almajiri education

Item	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Decision
Government policy objectives on Almajiri education are clear	2.2	0.88	7	Disagree
Policy adequately integrates Qur'anic and formal education	2.64	0.94	18.3	Disagree
Policy makes adequate provision for welfare and skills acquisition	2.44	0.96	14	Disagree
Funding provisions for Almajiri policy are adequate	2.41	0.99	12.7	Disagree
Policy provisions are consistently sustained across administrations	2.57	0.96	16	Disagree
Grand mean (POL)	**2.45**	**0.76**	**7**	**Disagree**

Source: field research, 2026

Table 4.4 below shows that institutional capacity received the lowest rating of the three administrative constructs (grand mean = 2.09), with only 3.3% of respondents rating it favorably. Monitoring and evaluation were the weakest element (M = 1.84), followed by financial and material resources (M = 1.96).

Table 4.4: Respondents' assessment of institutional capacity

Item	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Decision
Responsible agencies have adequately trained personnel	2.08	0.89	7	Disagree
Agencies have adequate financial and material resources	1.96	0.87	5	Disagree
Administrative leadership is competent and transparent	2.36	0.97	11.3	Disagree

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are effective	1.84	0.84	2.3	Disagree
Almajiri schools have adequate infrastructure and facilities	2.21	0.92	8.3	Disagree
Grand mean (INC)	**2.09**	**0.7**	**3.3**	**Disagree**

Source: field research, 2026

Implementation was rated as weak as shown in table 4.6 below (grand mean = 2.36; 8.3% favorable). The lowest-rated item concerned the full utilization of approved funds (M = 1.96), while coordination across governments, community participation and visible service delivery each averaged about 2.5, still below 3.00 as shown in table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5: Respondents' assessment of policy implementation

Item	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Decision
Federal, state and local governments coordinate effectively	2.52	0.93	14	Disagree
Mallams, parents and communities participate in implementation	2.52	1.03	17.3	Disagree
Supervision of Almajiri schools is regular and effective	2.26	0.97	11.3	Disagree
Implementation has produced visible service delivery outcomes	2.52	0.97	16.7	Disagree
Approved funds for Almajiri programmes are fully utilised	1.96	0.9	5	Disagree
Grand mean (IMP)	**2.36**	**0.79**	**8.3**	**Disagree**

Source: field research, 2026

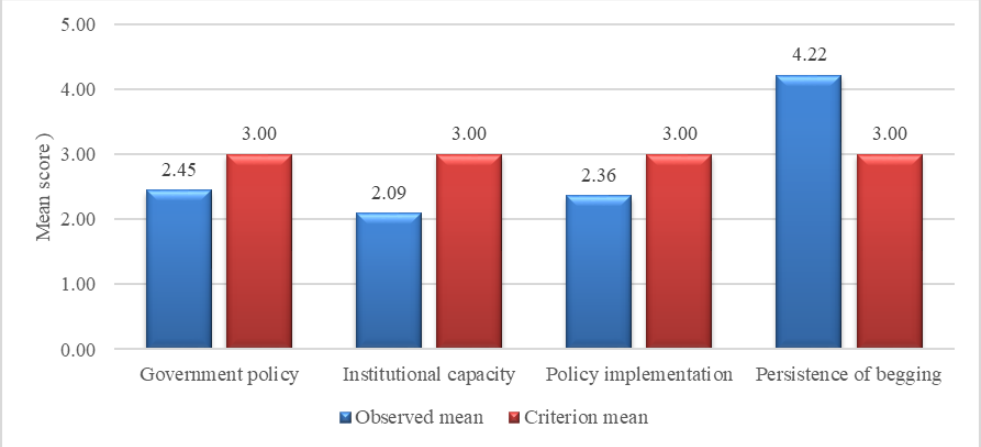


Figure 4.2: Grand mean ratings of policy, capacity, implementation and begging against the criterion mean

Source: field research, 2026

As shown in table 4.6 below, respondents strongly agreed that begging persists (grand mean = 4.22; 89.0% of respondents had composite scores of 3.50 or above). 90.0% agreed that begging remains widespread despite government intervention, 85.0% that it is the main means of survival for most Almajirai, and 79.0% that punitive measures alone have not stopped it.

Table 4.6: Respondents' assessment of the persistence of Almajiri begging

Item	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Decision
Almajiri begging remains widespread despite government	4.36	0.72	90	Agree

interventions				
Begging is the main means of survival for most Almajirai	4.25	0.77	85	Agree
Government reforms have not significantly reduced street begging	4.31	0.79	83.3	Agree
Many Almajirai spend more time begging than learning	4.07	0.84	77	Agree
Punitive measures alone have not stopped child begging	4.09	0.82	79	Agree
Grand mean (BEG)	**4.22**	**0.59**	**89**	**Agree**

Source: field research, 2026

The results in table 4.7 below indicated a widespread suffering among Almajirai. The grand mean of 4.25 and the fact that 90.0% of respondents had composite scores indicating strong agreement show that most respondents regarded deprivation as the typical condition of Almajirai. All seven indicators exceeded 75% agreement (Figure 4.3). Lack of healthcare (93.0%) and little contact with parents (92.7%) were the most frequently endorsed, followed by inadequate food (86.0%). Even the least-endorsed indicator, inability to progress to formal education, attracted 76.7% agreement.

Table 4.7: Respondents' assessment of the deprivation of Almajirai

Item	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Decision
Most Almajirai do not receive adequate food from their Mallams	4.3	0.76	86	Agree
Most Almajirai lack adequate shelter and sanitation	4.12	0.76	79.7	Agree
Most Almajirai have no access to basic healthcare	4.47	0.65	93	Agree
Most Almajirai have little or no contact with their parents	4.45	0.63	92.7	Agree
Most Almajirai are exposed to child labour, abuse or exploitation	4.23	0.77	82	Agree
Most Almajirai do not acquire any vocational or life skills	4.09	0.75	78	Agree
Most Almajirai are unable to progress to formal education	4.07	0.81	76.7	Agree
Grand mean (DEP)	**4.25**	**0.54**	**90**	**Agree**

Source: field research, 2026

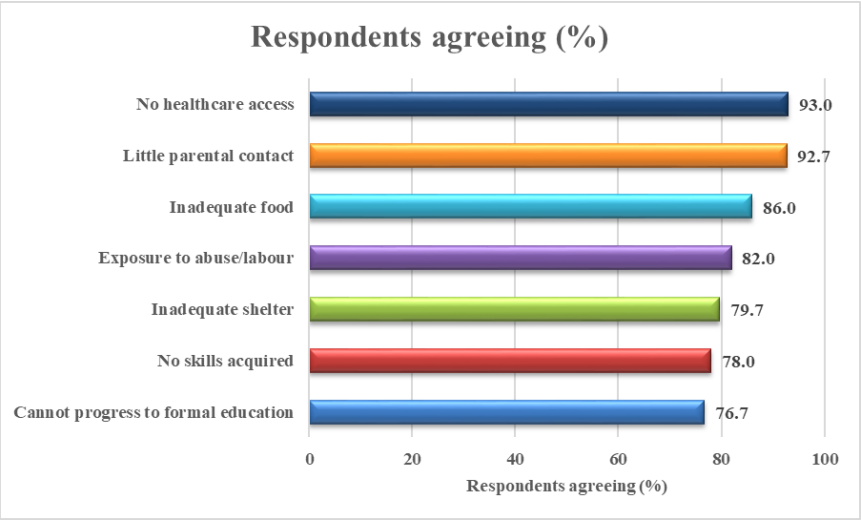


Figure 4.3: Percentage of respondents agreeing that most Almajirai experience each form of deprivation

Source: field research, 2026

As shown in table 4.8 below, respondent categories differed significantly on institutional capacity, policy implementation and the persistence of begging (all $p < .05$; Table 4.9), but not on government policy ($p = .067$) or deprivation ($p = .276$). Public officials gave the most favorable ratings of capacity ($M = 2.26$) and implementation ($M = 2.53$) and the lowest rating of begging persistence ($M = 4.06$), whereas Mallams reported the highest persistence ($M = 4.36$). The effect sizes were small (η^2 between 0.009 and 0.047), and all three groups remained below 3.00 on capacity and implementation and above 4.00 on begging persistence and deprivation.

Table 4.8: Mean scores by respondent category and one-way ANOVA

Construct	Officials	Mallams	Community	F (2, 297)	p	η^2
Government policy	2.58	2.36	2.37	2.73	0.067	0.018
Institutional capacity	2.26	1.98	1.98	5.71	0.004	0.037
Policy implementation	2.53	2.26	2.22	5.1	0.007	0.033
Persistence of begging	4.06	4.36	4.27	7.39	<.001	0.047
Deprivation of Almajirai	4.19	4.27	4.3	1.29	0.276	0.009

Officials = public officials; Mallams = Mallams and proprietors; Community = community stakeholders.

Policy, capacity and implementation were positively intercorrelated ($r = .43$ to $.47$), and each was negatively correlated with the persistence of begging ($r = -.40$ to $-.49$). Persistence of begging correlated positively with deprivation ($r = .52$), meaning that respondents who saw begging as entrenched also saw Almajirai as more deprived as shown in table 4.9 below.

4.9 Correlation and Regression Analysis

Table 4.10: Pearson correlation matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. POL	1	-	-	-	-
2. INC	0.45**	1	-	-	-
3. IMP	0.47**	.43**	1	-	-
4. BEG	−0.40**	−.44**	−.49**	1	-
5. DEP	−0.22**	−.26**	−.33**	.52**	1

*** p < .01. POL = policy; INC = institutional capacity; IMP = implementation; BEG = persistence of begging; DEP = deprivation.*

Source: field research, 2026

The model was statistically significant and explained 31.6% of the variance in the persistence of begging (adjusted $R^2 = 0.309$), $F (3, 296) = 45.52$, $p < .001$. All three predictors had significant negative effects. Implementation was the strongest predictor ($\beta = -0.324$, $p < .001$), followed by institutional capacity ($\beta = -0.236$, $p < .001$) and government policy ($\beta = -0.137$, $p = .017$). Holding the other variables constant, a one-point increase in perceived implementation adequacy was associated with a 0.24-point decrease in the persistence rating. Variance inflation factors (1.36 to 1.43) indicated no problematic multicollinearity. Residuals showed moderate negative skew (−0.64) and kurtosis (0.61), within the commonly used ±1 range, although the Shapiro–Wilk test was significant ($p < .001$), which is common in samples of this size. The Breusch–Pagan test indicated heteroscedasticity ($\chi^2(3) = 30.65$, $p < .001$); however, HC3 robust standard errors left all conclusions unchanged (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10: Multiple regression of persistence of begging (BEG) on policy, capacity and implementation

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	HC3 p	VIF
(Constant)	5.463	0.113		48.28	<.001	<.001	-
POL	−0.107	0.045	−0.137	−2.40	0.017	0.02	1.43
INC	−0.199	0.047	−0.236	−4.21	<.001	<.001	1.36
IMP	−0.242	0.042	−0.324	−5.72	<.001	<.001	1.39

R^2 = 0.316; adjusted R^2 = 0.309; F (3, 296) = 45.52, p < .001; Durbin-Watson = 1.98. HC3 p = p-value from heteroscedasticity-consistent standard errors.

Source: field research, 2026

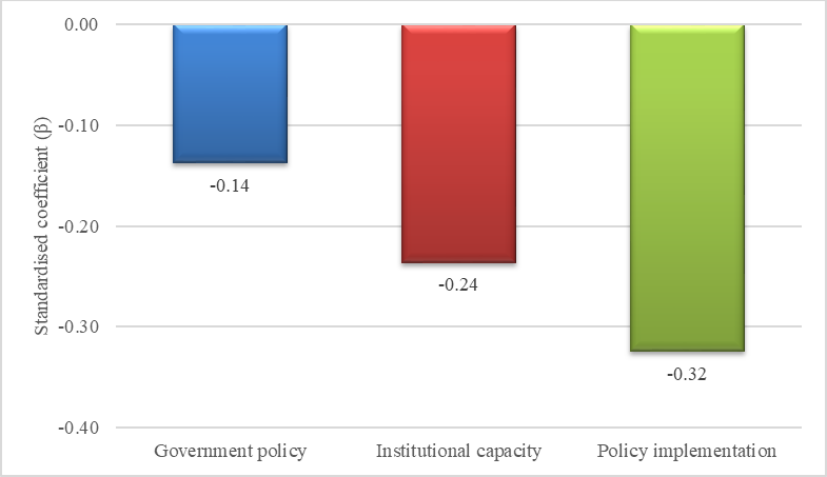


Figure 4.5: Standardized regression coefficients (β) predicting persistence of begging

Source: researcher's data, 2026

4.10 Discussion of Findings

The low ratings of the government policy (M = 2.45) support the argument that a government policy that builds schools alone is not likely to yield successful outcomes if government policies are not equally implemented to address the social and economic conditions that affect children (Olutola *et-al.*.2021). Funding, welfare and skills are among the priorities of the National Policy on the Enhancement of Almajiri Education, however the funding adequacy (M = 2.41) and the provision of welfare and skills (M = 2.44) were both found to be rated below the criterion mean in this study. This highlights a policy intent/perceived delivery mismatch. This, of course, requires a critical reading. In this analysis, respondents rated policy as experienced in their lives, not policy as written, so that it is impossible to determine if the problem is with the design of the policy or with implementation. The regression coefficient of the policy (β = −0.137) was the smallest, indicating that the policy is not as significant as the implementation itself, which means that the policy is rich but the capacity is poor.

The factors that predicted begging persistence the most were implementation and institutional capacity. This aligns with Sambo *et-al.*. (2018) who related weak governance and lack of enforcement of policy with child begging, while Adamu and Shuaibu (2023) attributed the administration to the access of education in the Almajiri system. The very low ratings of monitoring and evaluation (M = 1.84) and fund utilisation (M = 1.96) are in line with Usman (2008) who found that weak supervision, inadequate communication and collaboration were impediments to the integration of Qur'anic and formal education. Three cautions apply. First, the three predictors are moderately correlated with each other (r = .43 to .47), so the effects of each cannot be over-interpreted. Second, the model accounts for 31.6% of the variance in the data; this indicates that there is about 68.4% that is not accounted for. Weakness in the administration is not enough to explain the situation, but it is

a necessary component, as do poverty, lack of family support, and culture, which are not included in the model. Third, there can be a two-way cause: over time, the more that agencies are expected to provide aid and are pressed for resources, the less they will be able to measure, and the less they can measure, the more they will be tempted to provide.

The central finding is that respondents overwhelmingly regarded Almajirai as deprived under the begging system: 90.0% held that most Almajirai are suffering, and every indicator exceeded 75% agreement. This agrees with Olutola *et-al.*. (2021), where 92.3% of 653 Almajirai reported that Mallams did not provide food; the comparable item here drew 86.0% agreement. The figures are not equivalent, because Olutola *et-al.*. surveyed Almajirai directly in Katsina State, whereas this study captured adult stakeholders' perceptions, but the direction and rough magnitude are consistent. The high endorsement of limited parental contact (92.7%) fits Gomment's (2020) account of eroded parental and community support, and the endorsement of exposure to child labour and abuse (82.0%) matches Edinyang *et-al.*. (2020) on child labour, neglect and street hawking and Okonkwo (2022) on denial of child rights and dignity. The skills deficit (78.0%) supports Amuda (2021) that the absence of vocational skills sustains vulnerability. The correlation between begging persistence and deprivation ($r = .52$; shared variance = 27.4%) shows a clear but far from complete overlap. Begging is therefore better understood as both a symptom of unmet needs and a mechanism that exposes children to further harm, since time spent begging competes with learning. Importantly, the evidence does not implicate Qur'anic education as such. It points to the administrative conditions under which children are left to fend for themselves, which supports the distinction drawn in Section 2.1.1 between the educational tradition and the contemporary practice of child begging.

Public officials rated capacity and implementation more favourably, and begging persistence lower, than Mallams and community stakeholders. Two interpretations are plausible. Officials may have better knowledge of programmes that are invisible to outsiders, or they may be less critical in assessing institutions they manage, a form of self-assessment bias. Mallams, who deal with Almajirai daily, reported the highest persistence ($M = 4.36$). Usman (2008) attributed implementation failure in part to ineffective communication and cultural insensitivity, and the divergence found here is consistent with a gap in perception between implementers and the communities they serve. The consensus matters as much as the divergence: all three groups rated capacity and implementation below 3.00 and persistence above 4.00, so the main conclusion does not depend on any single group.

A large majority (79.0%) agreed that punitive measures alone had not stopped child begging. This is in line with Adegbite and Olatunde (2024), who found that anti-begging approaches often emphasise punishment without addressing socioeconomic causes, and with Safiyanu and Bugaje (2020), who argue for serious reconsideration rather than superficial intervention. The item measures perception and cannot show what would have happened under alternative policies, so it should be read as evidence of stakeholder dissatisfaction with enforcement-led approaches rather than as proof that such approaches fail.

Several limitations qualify the findings. The data capture the perceptions of adult stakeholders, not the experiences of Almajirai themselves, and self-report is open to social desirability and common-method bias. The design is cross-sectional, so the regression results show association rather than causation. Purposive selection of states limits generalisation to all of Northern Nigeria, and the sample was male-dominated, reflecting the gender profile of Mallams and officials. Residual non-normality and heteroscedasticity were present, although robust estimates produced the same conclusions.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Almajiri begging system is not primarily a product of the Qur'anic educational tradition but of weak public administration. Policies exist, yet limited institutional capacity and poor implementation leave many Almajirai dependent on begging for survival, and this dependence is associated with extensive deprivation in nutrition, healthcare, family contact, protection and skills. Most Almajirai, in the view of the stakeholders surveyed, are suffering as a result of the system. Sustainable reform therefore requires strengthening the administrative machinery that delivers policy, in addition to adopting new policies. Without

adequate funding, coordination, supervision and accountability, further policy declarations or enforcement measures are unlikely to end begging or the harms that accompany it.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Strengthen implementation and intergovernmental coordination. Establish a clear coordinating mechanism with defined federal, state and local responsibilities, a lead agency per state and joint quarterly reviews, because implementation was the strongest predictor of begging persistence.
2. Build institutional capacity. Recruit and train personnel, create dedicated monitoring and evaluation units with published indicators, and equip Almajiri schools with adequate infrastructure.
3. Ensure ring-fenced, transparent funding. Protect budget lines for Almajiri programmes and require regular public reporting and independent audit of fund utilisation, which was among the lowest-rated items.
4. Guarantee basic welfare within Almajiri schools. Provide school feeding, basic healthcare and adequate shelter and sanitation so that begging is no longer necessary for survival (Olutola *et-al*..2021).
5. Integrate vocational and entrepreneurship education. Combine Qur'anic instruction with literacy, numeracy, vocational and life skills (Amuda, 2021) to open pathways to livelihoods and formal education.
6. Adopt participatory governance. Involve Mallams, parents, and community and religious leaders in designing, registering, supervising and evaluating Almajiri schools, and improve communication between agencies and communities (Usman, 2008).
7. Shift from punitive to protective approaches. Complement enforcement with child-protection services, family-support measures, public enlightenment and poverty-reduction programmes targeting the households of Almajirai (Adegbite & Olatunde, 2024; Okonkwo, 2022).
8. Secure policy continuity and evidence. Anchor Almajiri reform in legislation and multi-year planning, and create a register and baseline database of Almajiri schools and learners to support accountability and evaluation.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes an integrated Public Administration assessment that links policy, institutional capacity and implementation to the persistence of begging and to the welfare of Almajirai, and it distinguishes the administrative sources of the problem from the Qur'anic educational tradition.

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