

# **I** NVESTIGATION OF PERSONAL HYGIENE AMONG *ALMAJIRI* *CHILDREN* IN SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA

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## **ABSTRACT**

**A** *Almajiri* is an Islamic student who attends Islamic school in Nigeria and other African countries. Particularly, *Almajiri* is the oldest major way of obtaining Islamic knowledge in the Northern Nigeria. One unfortunate concern pertaining *Almajiri* is lack of adequate care from the parents, government, philanthropists, and the public; which consequently plunged the *Almajiri* child into many troubles. Many of them are wallowing in the streets, markets, packs, etc begging while wearing untidy garments. Thus, this paper determined the state of personal hygiene of *Almajiri* in Sokoto using cross-sectional descriptive design. Therein 240 *Almajiri* children were recruited as respondents, and the collected data was analyzed with thematic networks. They were from various villages across Sokoto state, no one is doing *Almajiri* in his village (town), they all came from diverse villages across

### **Introduction:**

The word *Almajiri* was derived from Arabic language '*Almuhajir*', which means somebody, who migrated from place to place in the course of Almighty Allah. In the Holy Quran, the supreme book followed by Muslims, the seeking for knowledge has been emphasized for every Muslim (male or female). In fact it is mandatory for any Muslim to seek for religious knowledge throughout his life or to get sufficient awareness of fundamental rites, while some people among Muslims most seek for knowledge of worldly affairs (e.g sciences and technology). Therein, Quran is a book meant for reading (Ali, 1987). Besides Quranic commandments to seeking knowledge, the life of the Prophet Muhammad

Sokoto state. Thus, their care is now on the necks of *Mallams* (teachers), seniors and few places where they work .The intimate parental care was missing. 33.3% of the respondents have shoes, while the majority 66.7% have no shoes. 33.3% wore dirty clothes, 33.3% wore clean clothes, and 33.3 % wore dirty and torn clothes .Most of the respondents (66.7%) have clean teeth ,and 33.3% have unclean teeth .Half of them admitted the use of brush ,16.7% admitted the use of artificial brush (*Makilin* ) ,and 66.7% admitted the use of natural sticks for brushing their teeth. The 50% of the respondents reported that they have water at their schools. 33.3% said they take bath daily, few (16.7%) said they do it once a week. All the respondents wash hands always when eating, 33.3% wash hands with soap after toilets, and 66.% said they only use water. 50% of the *Almajiri* submitted that at their schools there were toilets .Thus they have to opt for open defecation. 33.3% wash garments weekly, and 66.7% wash their garments rarely. 66.7% said they get food through begging, and 33.3% get food through mental/ domestic job .This work revealed poor personal hygiene state among *Almajiri* in Sokoto state, Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Almajiri, personal hygiene, Quran, children, public health, Sokoto state.*

Peace be upon him) who came with Qur'an was spent on teaching, that is why many Muslim scholars migrated to various places of the world in search for both religious and worldly knowledge (science, social science, education etc) in that course they wrote many books. But in all their struggles for knowledge, they relied on provisions from their pocket fundings, guardian funding, or in rare cases charity or government. In Northern Nigeria, before the inception of colonial masters, that was how it was practiced ( Nigeria Research Network,2013; Amzat, 2015). By the time, colonial masters came, there were well established traditional systems of governance headed by *Sarakuna* (Emirs) and they were the funders of *Almajiri* system of education using the treasury, as echoed by many . It was said, by the time colonial masters overthrown the traditional chiefs, they entrenched *makarantun boko* (western schools),

which they funded instead of the olden *makarantun Allo* (*Almajiri* schools). Later, the *Almajiri* system becomes helpless, with no funding. But even with that scenario, rich people, and parents should be the sponsors of teaching, learning and education of Muslims. But, we don't know what goes wrong and *Almajiri* were left to resort to begging and languish. As taught by Islamic scriptures begging is forbidden, except to the weak people that have no any means besides that. But, unfortunately these *Almajiri* resorted to the forbidden begging. Instead, their parents should shoulder their responsibilities of education, rich Muslims should use their wealth in that regards ( Onoyase, 2010; Ogunkan, 2011; Aghedo, 2017; Sarkingobir *et al.*, 2019).

Personal hygiene such as bathing are well entrenched in every culture, thus a widely practiced norm with variations depending on the culture and Environment. It is one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves and others from illness. It includes ,washing hands on several basis, being careful in coughing or sneezing , use of gloves or masks in occasions , to avoid infection, cutting of nails ,brushing , washing of hair ,using perfumes, regular bathing ,among others (Ahmadu *et al.*, 2013; Chaudhari *et al.*, 2015).But, *Almajirai* are children living in horrific conditions, they left their homes (some for long) at early age with no fund to cater for their studies, they are mostly living with no food except (the one gotten through begging), they don't have good shelter, there is no enough sanitation or water supply in their shelters, not even first aid facility (Okugbeni, 2013). These are some of the unfortunate conditions of *Almajiri* as of today(Sarkingobir *et al.*, 2019).This paper investigated personal hygiene, one of the public health issues of *Almajiri* in Sokoto state, Nigeria .

## Materials and methods

### Study area

By 1817, jihad occurred which swept across Bilad Sudan ( Western Sudan /West Africa ) and resulted in the formation of Caliphate by 1804 consisting of over 31 emirates .The Caliphate was founded on the basis of justices, integrity ,honesty ,and multicultural statecraft, and mutual coexistence within the dimensions of political leadership, economics, social

imperatives and diplomatic affairs .In 1903, the colonialists disrupted the Caliphate and made it under their watch using indirect rule for easy grasp .Still the modern Nigeria has continue to be conditioned by the footprints of the pioneer Sokoto Caliphate (Munir and Odeh, 2014; Sheriff,2016).

Sokoto state is located in the Northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The state was created in 1976 comprising of 23 local government areas namely, Binji, Bodinga, Dange-Shuni, Gada, Goronyo, Gudu, Gwadabawa, Illela, Tangaza,Tureta, Wamakko, Wurno, and Yabo. Sokoto state, the seat of the Caliphate, has a population of 3, 696,99 million based on 2006 census ,consisting of predominantly *Hausa /Fulani* people ,and other minority groups like *Zabarmawa, Tuareg*, who speak *Hausa* as the predominant language of communication .It remain predominantly Muslim state ,and the centre of Islam and learning. The Sultan is the head of the Caliphate and wielded power as the spiritual Muslim leader in the country and neighbouring countries .In every local government there are at least two district heads, which are turbaned by the Sultan, and the public have much respect to them. They have no precise political or official power in government, rather than ceremonial and traditional influence. In fact, there are no group of people who exerts power over the common men (their subjects ) like them .Under the district heads there are *Hakimai* and below them there are others. This shows a hierrachy of good structure, which serve as vehicle for influencing the public. This same opportunity utilized by colonialists to maintain power and the polio eradication strategies .The other groups that wielded power over the public are the clerics. At least ,in the state there are ,the *Sunni ( Izala and Dariqa )* and Shia groups. The Sunni groups have been useful in overcoming the noncompliance to polio immunization through advice, sermons, and preachings .They can also be useful in delivering campaigns seeking voluntary blood donation in the state (Munir and Odeh, 2014).

### Study design, sampling, and analysis

Crossectional descriptive study was carried out ,therein, data was collected from 240 Almajiri respondents using simple random sampling across Sokoto East Senatorial District .Children were interviewed using semi

structured questionnaire ,which was analyzed using them network methods .Frequency and percentages were presented on a frequency table .

## Results

Table1: Demographic characteristics of respondents from Sokoto state, Nigeria

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
9-10 years	120	50.0
11 -15	120	50.0
Religion	240	100.0
Islam	240	100.0
Sex		
Male	240	100.0
Place of Origin		
Sokoto state	240	100.0
Western education		
Did not attended western school	240	100.0

Table 2: result of investigation of personal hygiene among Almajiri in Sokoto state

Personal hygiene parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Having shoes at the time of interview		
Yes	160	66.7
No	80	33.3
Nature of clothes		
Dirty	80	33.3
Clean	80	33.3
Dirty and torn	80	33.3
Nature of teeth		
Clean	160	66.7
Unclean	80	33.3
Use of toothbrush		

Yes	120	50.0
No	120	50.0
Type of toothpaste		
Artificial	40	16.7
Natural	160	66.7
Do you have water at school ?		
Yes	120	50.0
No	120	50.0
How many times do you take bath ?		
Daily	80	33.3
2 days	40	16.7
Weekly	120	50.0
I bath with :		
Soap	160	66.6
Only water	160	66.6
I wash hands before eating		
Yes	240	100.0
No	0	0.0
I wash hands with soap after toilet		
Yes	80	33.3
No	160	66.7
Do you have toilet for defecation		
Yes	120	50.0
No	120	50.0
When do you wash clothes?		
Weekly	80	33.3
Rarely	160	66.7
Source of food		
Begging	160	66.7
Menial /domestic work	80	33.3
Nature of nails		
Clean	120	50.0
Long and dirty	40	16.7

Short and dirty		33.3
Nature of hair		
Clean	120	50.0
Shoe and dirty	120	50.0

## Discussion

The results of this study were presented in tables 1,2. The respondents were *Almajiri* children drawn from various *Almajiri* schools from Sokoto East Senatorial District. All the respondents were Muslims, males, and below the age of 17. They were from various villages across Sokoto state, no one is doing *Almajiri* in his village (town), they all came from diverse villages across Sokoto state. Thus, their care is now on the necks of Mallams, seniors and few places where they work. The intimate parental care is missing.

33.3% of the respondents have shoes, while the majority 66.7% have no shoes. 33.3% wore dirty clothes, 33.3% wore clean clothes, and 33.3% wore dirty and torn clothes. Most of the respondents (66.7%) have clean teeth, and 33.3% have unclean teeth. Half of them admitted the use of brush, 16.7% admitted the use of artificial brush (*Makilin*), and 66.7% admitted the use of natural sticks for brushing their teeth.

In any school there should be clean, portable, and accessible water. Islam stressed the importance of water for uncountable uses. "And we put from water everything that lives". The half of the respondents reported that they have water at their schools. 33.3% said they take bath daily, few (16.7%) said they do it once a week. All the respondents wash hands always when eating, 33.3% wash hands with soap after toilets, and 66.7% said they only use water.

Half of the *Almajiri* submitted that at their schools there are toilets. Thus the half has to opt for open defecation. Open defecation is a threat to public health. One who defecates in the open is capable of spreading diseases and harming the environment (Sarkingobir and Sarkingobir, 2017). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said "there is no harm, and no one should be harmed". 33.3% wash garments weekly, and 66.7% wash their garments rarely. 66.7% said they get food through begging, and 33.3% get food through mental/ domestic job. Begging is typical child labour that is disastrous to the child. Islam abhors begging by the adults, let alone the children. It is an abomination of the dignity of the child (Maigari, 2017; Saiful Islam, 2015)

Personal hygiene practices are diverse .It include washing, bathing, cleaning of teeth, trimming of nails and hairs,among others .Personal hygiene is essential for maintenance of personal and public health .That is why they plainly sought in the Islamic teaching ( Quran and hadith) ( That and Qureshi,2013; Kiani *et al.*,2015; Bajirova,2018).Personal hygiene is essential for health of all,let alone the children,children who studies Quran should serve as good role model to others .Health is a necessary condition needed to preserve life ( Islamic Religion Website, 2015).Imam Gazali said " A proper understanding and implementation of religion, from the standpoint of both knowledge and worship ,can only be arrived at through physical health and life preservation ". That is why Islam give paramount recognition and careful attention to health ,Muhammad pbuh said " Second to faith ,no one has ever given a bigger blessing than health " . He also said " No one will step his feet further until he gave answers on how he spent his life .....and how he utilized his health ".Every Muslim has right to health and its protection as one of the roles vested upon him ,leaders and the society at large .Allah (swt) says " He has set the balance of everything, so that you might not transgress the balance .Give just weight and fall not short in balance (Ali,1987; Al-Khayat, 2004).An individual has to protect his health ,because a Hadith said " Your body has a right over you ".The society too has the responsibility of promoting anything that will enhance and protect the health of its members ,in view of what Prophet said " There should be no harm on oneself and others "; " Whosoever harm others call for Allah's curse on him " ; and " Whosoever believe in the last day should not harm his neighborhood "( Al-Khayat, 2004).Prophet Muhammad ( peace be upon him ) said , a stronger believer is better than the weak believer .Thus believers must take care of their health so as to attain that bitterness ,which is attained using methods including personal hygiene ( Stacey, 2013).Health can be preserved through good practices of personal hygiene( Bajirova, 2018).

Similarly, Islam also have put the weight of upbringing of children (including knowledge provision) on paretnts .Thus, parents need to take good care of their wards whenever they are sending them to *Almajiri*, in such a way they do when sending them to the western schools ( UNICEF/ Al-azhar University, 2005; Liman, 2012).Specifically, hygiene is crave in the books of Islam .Hygiene of hair and nails and trimming have been craved from the traditions of Islam .Feet are always washed in Ablution, the hands too are washed ,and it is a strong injunction .Miswak ( Brushing of teeth ) is called for in the Ahadith ,and it is beneficial to health from

Islamic and public health dimensions. In a nutshell, Islam has called for many practices that are essential in maintaining spiritual personal and public health. This indeed shows an interplay of Islam and public health, and the prove that Islam has laid foundations for modern day science and technology; a portend can be seen from the history of how prominent Muslims made many contributions to the birth and development of science and technology of today ( (Abd Alrahman, 1996, De leeuw *et al*,1999; Fatah Yasin, 2013; Kiani *et al*, 2015; Bajirova, 2018).

### Conclusion

This study shows that there is poor personal hygiene state among Almajiri in Sokoto state, Nigeria.

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