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ISSUES AFFECTING ALMAJIRI SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA: WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH) PARAMETERS IN SOKOTO

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ABSTRACT

Background: There are many dimensions to the consequences of lack of sanitation, that are threat to public health. Diarrhea and relations due to poor WASH kills and put on cost on family and economy at large. Poor WASH affects economy in the sense that, millions of persons are unable to yield maximum productivity due to sickness, millions of working hours lost, and millions of schooling hours lost.
Aim: This study performed an assessment of water, sanitation, and hygiene among Almajiri schools in Sokoto state, Nigeria.
Method: A survey using a sample size of 300 schools gotten via simple random sampling, analyzed with descriptive statistics and chi-square test.
Findings: The Almajiri schools surveyed, 3.3% of them have basic sanitation; 6.7% had limited sanitation; and most of them (90.0%) have no service at all (unimproved sanitation facilities or no sanitation facilities at the school). No Almajiri school had basic hygiene services (that is handwashing water and soap at the latrine vicinity), 33.7% had limited hygiene services, that is, they recorded acquiring of handwashing facilities with water but no soap available at the school at the time of the inspection, 66.6% of the schools had no services, that is no handwashing facilities or no water available at the school during the survey. Chi-square test has shown that there is significant difference in levels of water, sanitation, and hygiene among Almajiri schools in Sokoto state, Nigeria at $p<0.05$.

KEYWORDS

Almajiri, disease, sanitation, handwashing, health, education

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INTRODUCTION

A person that migrates for the sake of Almighty Allah or anything regarding Islamic religion is dubbed as Almuhajir as drawn from the famous Arabic language. However, that same word was corrupted by the Hausa people in their Hausa language as a result of the interaction of Islam and Hausa land from the time immemorial in history (Auta, 2021; Isiaka, 2015). That Arabic word Almuhajir was transmogrified by Hausa language to another new word dubbed as Almajiri, which then was put to use as a Hausa word. It typically refers to a person who has left his house or town and attend a boarding school in the sought of Islamic knowledge. The word Almajiri is refering to a single person, Almajirai is for many people, and Almajirici is the name of the practice, the schools were Almajirai are taught are dubbed as Almajiri school (Gomment & Esomchi, 2017).

Usually, the Almajiri students are small boys that left their homes or towns at tender age, some of them at the age of seven or above and the norm has been practiced in many parts of Hausa land that are now covering parts of Nigeria, Niger, and the likes. Mostly people that speak Hausa language or emanates from the olden Sokoto Caliphate. There are many believes Almajiri schools or their system of education has backing from the traditions of Islam since its inception in Mecca and during the time first contact of Islam with the region of Hausa land or during the advent of Sokoto Caliphate; because Islam has been built upon by the pillars of knowledge, scholarship, teaching, to all (including adults and children) (Auta, 2021; Bashar, 2021; Gomment & Esomchi, 2017; Joda, 2021). In the Almajiri school systems, mostly children and adults (in some instances) are taught on Quranic sciences, and other Islamic education literatures according to the status of learning or class of the various students or pupils therein.

In the olden antecedents of Islam and Hausa land the system of Almajiri have been augmented or shouldered by the Islamic system that put responsibility of education on the government led by Emirs through the treasury which s garnered from Zakat (Alms giving), war, and others lawful sources of money to the state (Zubairu & Yahaya, 2020). Likewise, wealthy individuals and other citizens of Islamic state voluntarily augment Almajiri system of education by giving monetary and other support. Therefore, the system has put down an antecedent characterized with successes and prosperousness (Joda, 2021). This had happened because has since its inception recognized that humans need strong financial sources to achieve its goals; therewith, zakat a parcel of the instrument that strengthen Muslims and lay justice and social peace was created to be a pillar of Islam that the state collects from citizens with all ways possible (Bashar & Malami, 2019; Meerangani, 2019). Additionally, there are provisions in the olden system to enable students or pupils to learn several vocational skills that will support their education or become a source of livelihood later in life as Islam discredit idleness among its adherents (Gomment & Esomchi, 2017).

It is evidently covered that, from the past it has shown as related by many studies that, the Almajiri system of education was laid on a powerful platform and has been prosperous. However, the advent of Westerners that colonized the Hausa land has led to the withdrawal of support by the government and transferring it unto Western form of education, a situation that has thrown the Almajiri system into difficulties and allowed the children Almajiri to languish in many challenges (Hassana et al., 2021; Zubairu & Yahaya, 2020). There are issues in the system of Almajiri, such as lack of funding by the present systems of governments in the country, lack of intervention from the governments of all tiers, lack of concern by most of the public, lack of infrastructures, lack of shelter, lack of clothing, lack of healthcare (Abdulkadir & Idriss, 2021). All of these were due to abandonment by governments, parents, community, and wealthy people, in turn leading to the Almajiri so often becoming a threat in his school and to the public health (Abdulkadir & Idriss, 2021; Zubairu & Yahaya, 2020).

One of the leading problems that face the Almajiri schools is the lack of water, sanitation, and hygiene as can be seen by preliminary search and related by past opinion or theoretical studies (Abdulkadir & Idriss, 2021; Mohammed & Yusuf, 2015). On the other hand, one best way to provide education to all is to ensure that school have safe drinking water, improved sanitation (latrine), and hygiene in schools in order to allow the children gain their right to education, health; and emphatically support the attainment of sustainable development goals

(SDGs). Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in schools' studies increases life skills and mobilizes communities, governments, parents, and institutions to improve WASH conditions (UNICEF, 2012). The true cost of lack of WASH or open defecation is very vast and powerful to force all stakeholders sit up to make efforts to address the situation; as it is increasingly becoming comprehensible that poor sanitation leads to poor health, and unnecessary deaths, every day people are dying due to water-related problems. There are many dimensions to the consequences of lack of sanitation, that are threat to public health. Diarrhea and relations due to poor WASH kills and put on cost on family and economy at large.

Poor WASH affects economy in the sense that, millions of persons are unable to yield maximum productivity due to sickness, millions of working hours lost, millions of schooling hours lost. Healthcare is being overwhelmed due poor WASH and consumed money that should have been used for other parts of the economy. Likewise, people with poor WASH have to waste time in queue to get access to public toilets/facilities, waste hours in search for place to defecate; that is why in the year 2015 only the world had lost about 222.9 USD due to poor sanitation (LIXIL et al., 2016). Water, a major component of WASH is the most vital part of the all organisms living on earth that accounts for 75% total mass of organisms and 99% part of all molecules (Del Giudice et al., 2009). Despite the significance of WASH in health of Almajiri and the entire public health, there is apparently no study that assessed it in Sokoto Almajiri schools. Therefore, the aim of this study was to assess water, sanitation, and hygiene among Alamjiri schools in Sokoto state, Nigeria, by studying the level of water supply, hygiene services, and sanitation services among Almajiri schools in Sokoto state.

The hypotheses for the study are:

1) H1: There is no significant difference in levels of water services in Almajiri schools in Sokoto state;
2) H2: There is no significant difference in levels of sanitation services in Almajiri schools in Sokoto state; and
3) H3: There is no significant difference in levels of hygiene services in Almajiri schools in Sokoto state.

METHOD

A survey qualitative design was used for this study. This design is appropriate for areas where little has been reported and that is the reason that motivated the researchers to explore the subject of the study. Also, a qualitative approach allows the researcher to use a naturalistic method to gain in-depth understanding on Almajiranci in Sokoto state. Accordingly, this study employed qualitative techniques in both the collection and analysis of the data. The research designed was desirable for the objective of data collection source for addressing the research question.

The population of this study includes all the Almajiri schools in Sokoto state, Nigeria. The sample size was calculated using Raosoft calculator at 5% margin of error, 95% confidence limit, and 40 percent response distribution, and 1600 population size. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the size be (300) one hundred and fifty schools. Thus, the sampling technique was the simple random probability sampling.

The instrument for this study was a semi-structured questionnaire designed by the researchers and with full support and suggestions experts. The questionnaire consisted of three

sections, section A carries the water services assessment, section B carries the questions about the sanitation services assessment of Almajiri in schools in Sokoto state, Nigeria, section C carries questions about the assessment of hygiene services of Almajiri schools in Sokoto, Nigeria.

This method used to collect data in this work was using a semi-structured questionnaire, and a simple random strata probability sampling. The method utilized in the analysis of the data gathered in this work was the interpretation and presentation of data collected using Special Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and frequency distribution tables.

This study was carried out in Sokoto state, Nigeria Town, the inhabitants with the majority of the area's inhabitants being members of the Hausa and the Fulani ethnic groups. The Hausa and the Fufulde languages are widely spoken in the area while Islam is the commonly practiced religion in the LGA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Summary Showing Chi-Square Values for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Services in Sokoto State Nigeria

Hypotheses	Chi-Square Test	Remark
H1: There is no significant difference in levels of water services in Almajiri schools in Sokoto state	50.	Accept null hypothesis
H2: There is no significant difference in levels of sanitation services in Almajiri schools in Sokoto state	434.	Accept null hypothesis
H3: There is no significant difference in levels of hygiene services in Almajiri schools in Sokoto state	200.	Accept null hypothesis
General remark	There is significant difference between level of WASH services in Almajiri schools in Sokoto, Nigeria	

From this table, Chi-square test has shown that there is significant difference in levels of water, sanitation, and hygiene among Almajiri schools in Sokoto state, Nigeria at $p<0.05$. It means that WASH level in Sokoto State is low.

Research Question One: What is the Level of Water Supply Services among Almajiri Schools in Sokoto State?

Table 2. Revealing the Outcome of Water Services Supply Survey at Almajiri Schools in Sokoto State, Nigeria

S/N	Service/Nature of Observation	Frequency (Percentage)
Basic service	Presence of basic service of drinking water from an improved source and water is available at the time of the visit	50 (16.7%)
Limited	Presence of drinking water from an improved source or no water is available at the time of the visit	150(50.0%)
No service	Drinking water from an unimproved source or no water is available at the time of the visit	100(33.3)
	Total	300(100.0%)

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2022

From table 2, results for water services in Almajiri schools in Sokoto has divulged that only 16.7% of them had basic water services, that is availability of drinking water from an improved source; 50.0% had limited services, that is presence of water from an unimproved source or no water was inaccessible at the time of the inspection; and 33.3% had no service, that is no drinking water at all or it was emanating from an unimproved source. This finding shows poor water services in Almajiri schools, like what was reported by Mustapha et al. (2022), that water scarcity was an issue in rural areas of the state, majority using water from an unprotected hand dug wells. The situation is escalated due to poor water policies in the state, arid nature of the land, and the popular practice of open defecation in the area (Magami & Ibrahim, 2016; Mustapha et al., 2022). Meaning that, the majority of the Alamjiri children are exposed to water with possible contamination from open defecation, and in turn leading to poor health and jeopardizing their right to health, right to education, and productivity; despite the need to set a school in an environment that ensures protection of lives of school actors from menaces like pollution (Abubakar & Raji, 2021; Dalhat, 2016; Olatunji & Thanny, 2020). Water is life, it is needed for food, and other essential needs of life that is indeed a human right supposed to be accorded to all (Magami & Ibrahim, 2016).

Research Question Two: What is the Level of Sanitation Services among Almajiri Schools in Sokoto state?

Table 3. Showing the Results of the Survey Pertaining Sanitation Services among Almajiri Schools in Sokoto State, Nigeria

S/N	Service/Nature of Observation	Frequency (Percentage)
Basic service	Improved sanitation facilities at the school that are single-sex and usable at the time of the visit	10(3.3%)
Limited	Improved sanitation facilities at the school that are not single-sex or not usable at the time of the visit	20(6.7%)

No service	Unimproved sanitation facilities or no sanitation facilities at the school	270(90.0%)
	Total	300(100.0%)

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2022

The results in table 3 has shown that the Almajiri schools surveyed 3.3% have basic sanitation (improved sanitation facilities at the school that are single-sex and usable at the time of the visit); 6.7 % limited sanitation (Improved sanitation facilities at the school that are not single-sex or not usable at the time of the visit); and most of them (90.0%) have no service at all (unimproved sanitation facilities or no sanitation facilities at the school). Low sanitation was noticed in this study, in conflict with an urban study from, that revealed improved sanitation services in the schools observed in Kazakhstan (Toleubekov et al., 2022). Similar to this study results in table 2, there was a related challenges of WASH in a Ghana community including inadequate toilets, and handwashing facilities (Mensah et al., 2022). Sanitation as regards to this study is dubbed as present of latrines that ensures separation of human from human excreta. These latrines supposed to be enough and accessible for males, and females, and different staff (Mensah et al., 2022). Failure of WASH in schools has at least led to deaths of 800 children due to diarrhea only, because lack of latrine elicits open defecation that also threatens public health at large (Mensah et al., 2022).

Research Question Three: What is the Level of Hygiene Services among Almajiri Schools in Sokoto State?

Table 4. Revealing the Level of Hygiene Services among Public Secondary Schools in Sokoto State, Nigeria

S/N	Service/Nature of Observation	Frequency (Percentage)
Basic service	Handwashing facilities with water and soap available at the school at the time of the visit	0(0.0%)
Limited	Handwashing facilities with water but no soap available at the school at the time of the visit	100(33.7%)
No service	No handwashing facilities or no water available at the school	200(66.6%)
	Total	300(100.0%)

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2022

Table 4 has shown that no Almajiri school had basic hygiene services (that is handwashing water and soap at the latrine vicinity); 33.7% had limited hygiene services, that is, they recorded acquiring of handwashing facilities with water but no soap available at the school at the time of the inspection; 66.6% of the schools had no services, that is no handwashing facilities or no water available at the school during the survey. This is similar to a low handwashing practice reported in a study among Ebonyi secondary schools' students in Nigeria, despite the important of handwashing in prevention of disease (Azuogu et al., 2016).

Discussion

Water, sanitation, and hygiene are basic human rights that shall be given to all, mores especially the Almajiri children (Toleubekov et al., 2022). However, there is scarcity of data assessing the problems of Almajiri education in Sokoto. Likewise, the problem of infrastructure of Almajiri schools have been compounded with lack of WASH at appropriate levels. This work is out to help in providing data to know the actual problem of WASH regarding Almajiri education in the Sokoto sate, a role model state in the northern extraction of the country and other nearby Muslims countries that share common background before and after colonial invasion. It has shown that one of the major factors affecting the Almajiri was their neglected environment bedeviled with poor WASH (Joda, 2021).

It is indeed imperative to seek the support of governments at all tiers on Almajiri; likewise, wealthy individuals, and the community need to come up with suitable support. Parents or wards are supposed to be compelled or persuaded to take proper responsibility of their children at Almajiri schools, and there is need for truthfully incorporation of Almajiri schools in basic education scheme of the state or country at large (Maigari, 2017; Sarkingobir et al., 2019; Sarkingobir & Sarkingobir, 2017). When there is no WASH, children Almajiri are forced to indulge in open defecation which is detrimental.

Open defecation is a behavior of passing faeces in fields, bushes, waterbodies, markets, and any other open space available. Human feces involve a huge number of microbes especially in children that in turn pollute our fascinating environment and elicit many health problems (Charles, 2021). Every one gram of feces contains 106 viruses, 106-108 pathogenic bacteria, 103 protozoan cysts, and 10-104 helminths eggs that can cause harm to any human that take them into his body's. These microbes are the causers of cholera, typhoid fever, trachoma, schistosomiasis, anemia, etc. (Saleem et al., 2019). Additionally, children or women that into open defecation risk being rape, attacked by mob, attacked by reptiles on their search for field to defecate (Saleem et al., 2019; Sarkingobir & Sarkingobir, 2017). Also, the practice causes malnutrition in children and risks of poor academic performance in children that take in water or food contaminated by microbes spread by open defecation of themselves or others (Fauziah et al., 2022). Likewise, there was a low practice of handwashing practice in Imo school children, Nigeria (Nwajiuba et al., 2019). A practice that has been very essential in preventing diseases especially the infectious ones, therefore failure to abide by it could lead to public health risk (Agbana et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Water is essential for life, enough improved toilets and proper hygiene (handwashing practices) are essential in scuttling the chain of disease transmission (like reducing risk of trachoma, polio, typhoid fever, schistosomiasis, etc) and reducing risk of rape, reptiles attack, anemia, etc. However, the results of this study reveal that there are poor WASH parameters in Almajiri schools, and can inflict their right to health, right to education, and can affect public health at large. It was due to persistent negligence on the Almajiri education by the governments at various tiers, communities, rich people, and the parents. The consequent effect of poor WASH is outrageous on the Almajiri children and encourages the chain of disease transmission in the community they live. There is need for the governments, wealthy people,

and parents to join hands and integrate Almajiri into basic education schemes or augment it with funds and facilities for the benefit of all.

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