

# **COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADDRESSING THE ALMAJIRI SYSTEM IN NORTHERN NIGERIA**

**Tata Zuwaira, Dr. T. Santas and Prof. A. I. Igyuve**

*zuweeytata@gmail.com, 08036080771/ tsegyu@gmail.com, 08036379878/ anthonyIgyuve@gmail.com, 07032164366*

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## **Abstract**

Effective engagement with communities affected by the Almajiri system depends on effective communication strategies. Such strategies facilitate meaningful interactions among stakeholders, including religious leaders, educators, parents, and community members. This study evaluates the communication approaches employed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development to address the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria. A qualitative research methodology was used with data gathered from various sources, including books, newspapers, magazines, and academic journals. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory was applied to frame the analysis. This study identifies several communication methods used by the Ministry, such as town hall meetings, market square gatherings, community engagements, radio jingles, talk shows, flyers, posters, handbills, involvement of traditional rulers, churches, schools, age groups, women's associations, family heads, field visits, film shows, drama performances, and face-to-face meetings. Despite these efforts, the research has revealed that these strategies are not highly effective. This ineffectiveness can be attributed to various challenges, including cultural and religious barriers, resistance to Western education, lack of sincerity in policy implementation, and insufficient consultation with relevant stakeholders during the strategy design and execution phases. This paper recommends that future communication strategies correlated to the Almajiri system should be carefully tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of the specific population.

## **Introduction**

Worldwide, educating a nation's citizens is the most significant strategy for social development. Numerous studies on human capital development have emphasized that a nation's human resources, not its capital or natural resources, ultimately dictate the pace of its economic and social progress (Nsubuga, 2018). Education empowers people to access productive opportunities, leading to improved standards of living. It is recognized as an

instrument and process enabling people of all ages to actively contribute to national development, serving as a critical catalyst for change in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

However, the formal education system, including universal basic education (UBE), has encountered significant challenges in achieving Nigeria's goals and objectives. Despite rigorous educational planning, it faces issues such as inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure resources, teacher training, curriculum planning, and personnel conditions. Another educational system—the Almajiri system—has suffered even greater neglect from both the public and private sector in Nigeria. This system, which coexists with the formal education system, has not undergone similar planning efforts and, consequently, faces more challenges. To address these challenges, it is imperative that the Almajiri system undergo rigorous educational planning.

The Almajiri system is a traditional Islamic education system in Northern Nigeria, where children attend Islamic schools to study the Quran. Over the past few decades, this system has been overwhelmed, neglected, and abused (Christian, 2010; Abdullahi, 2011). Abdullahi (2011) highlighted that Nigeria's Almajiri children have been denied the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Abdulqadir (2015) observed that the contemporary Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria differs significantly from its pre-colonial form in terms of operations and output. He laments that the system has outlived its usefulness, as some semi-literate Qur'anic teachers now use it primarily to earn a living.

According to Garba (2022), Almajiri's issue children has been a persistent concern for Northern Nigerian elites, causing embarrassment to the region. The term "Almajiri" in Hausa can refer to individuals, regardless of gender, who beg for assistance due to deformities or disabilities; children aged seven to fifteen who attend informal religious schools and beg for alms; or even children engaged in labor to support themselves. Muhammad (2015) notes that Almajiri education in Nigeria began when Muslims sought Quranic knowledge without established procedures, relying on unconventional teachers known as "Malams" who introduced religious teachings. As Western influences penetrated Northern cities, some Malams were enticed by monetary gain and migrated to urban areas with their pupils, subjecting them to street life. Muhammad (2015) further explained that one teacher could have more than 100 pupils whom they cared for, including providing food and shelter. However, sustaining this process became increasingly challenging, leading pupils to engage in menial jobs during the day and beg for food from households. This shift marked a degradation of the once-organized system, leading to children roaming the streets and scavenging for food from garbage bins.

Integrating Almajiri education is essential to address the challenges facing the traditional Almajiri system. Integration involves merging the Western education system with the Quranic educational system. The establishment of Almajiri Integrated Schools (A.I.S) nationwide is one of the government's strategies to combat street begging among Almajiri children and youth. These schools accommodate Almajiri children who arrive in cities without provisions, exposing them to various risks. Many Almajiri children are orphans and vulnerable, and integration aims to provide them with both Traditional Quranic Education and Basic Western Education to improve their living conditions and empower them and their teachers. This approach aligns with the goal of achieving Education for All (E.F. A) and the Millennium Development Goals (M.D. Gs) in each state of the federation.

The National Policy on Education emphasizes that every child should receive quality basic education and equal educational opportunities regardless of background (FGN, 2014). Almajiri children often face challenges such as limited access to formal education, poverty, and social marginalization. To address these issues, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, has found policies and programs.

No doubt, to drive social change, communication is pivotal. Effective communication strategies are indispensable tools for addressing the complex challenges associated with the Almajiri system of education, particularly in specific regions. The significance of communication lies in its pivotal role in raising awareness about the intricacies of the Almajiri system and ensuring that both stakeholders and the public can grasp the complex issues at hand. Moreover, communication acts as a catalyst for advocacy efforts, playing a crucial role in influencing policy changes essential for implementing the needed reforms within the Almajiri system.

The ability to effectively engage with communities involved in the Almajiri system is made possible through well-crafted communication. This facilitates meaningful dialog among various stakeholders, including religious leaders, educators, parents, and community members. Engagement is vital for gaining insights into diverse perspectives and involving stakeholders in the collaborative development of viable solutions. Additionally, communication plays a pivotal role in resource mobilization. Well-articulated communication strategies attract support from donors and agencies willing to contribute to improving educational infrastructure and curricular enhancements within the Almajiri system. Furthermore, the deeply rooted cultural and religious aspects of the Almajiri system necessitate communication strategies that are sensitive to these traditions.

However, how effective are the communication strategies used by the Federal Government in curtailing this challenge? What communication challenges are encountered by government agencies responsible for the policies and programs of the Almajiri education system? Thus, the thrust of this paper is to assess the government through the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development communication strategies in addressing the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To determine the communication strategies employed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in the Northern Nigerian campaign against the Almajiri system.
2. To assess the effectiveness of the various communication strategies employed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in conveying information about the Almajiri system.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**An Overview of the Almajiri System in Northern Nigeria:** The term "Almajiri" is emblematic of a traditional Islamic educational and social structure in various parts of West Africa, notably northern Nigeria. This system, deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, has a history that spans centuries but has encountered mounting criticism and challenges in contemporary times, particularly about child welfare and education.

The etymology of Almajiri can be traced to the Arabic word *Almuhajirun*, signifying migrants, as it is commonly used in the Hausa language. This alludes to a customary approach to acquiring and memorizing the respected Qur'an. In this practice, young boys, at a young age, are entrusted by their parents or guardians to knowledgeable Islamic scholars, referred to as "Malams," for Qur'anic education. Bambale (2013) further categorizes Almajiris into three classes:

1. Gardi (Adult): Individuals who engage in labor-intensive work as a means of livelihood.
2. Titibiri (Adolescent): Adolescents who often resort to begging for food.
3. Kolo (Infant): Infants who are also involved in begging.

The term Almajirci encapsulates the activities undertaken by Almajiri, denoting pupils or students of traditional Qur'anic schools, while acquiring Qur'anic and Islamic education. It is essentially an educational system with a strong Islamic orientation. Alkali (2015) offers the perspective that Almajirci represents a semiformal system of Qur'anic education, primarily involving boys. Parents send them to reside with Islamic Malams for instruction in

the Qur'an and other Islamic texts. This practice originates from the Arabic root word 'Almuhajirun,' signifying "immigrants." This text is a historical reference to the period of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) when Mecca's people migrated to Medina. Traditionally, children are sent far away from their parents to live with a Malam, thereby acquiring religious knowledge while also learning to become self-sufficient. They engaged in activities such as begging for alms or working on their teachers' farms as compensation for their religious education and upbringing. Ayuba (2016) added that the pursuit of knowledge is religiously sanctioned, with the Prophet (S.A.W) advising Muslims to travel extensively in search of knowledge, including as far as China. Hadith supports this notion, stating, "Whoever is capable of seeking knowledge and sets out on this path will be walking in the way of God until their return, and whoever passes away while in the pursuit of learning shall be deemed a martyr." This underscores the importance of knowledge acquisition in Islam. However, it is essential to note that begging was not an intrinsic part of this practice from its inception because the Prophet of Islam discouraged begging. He advised that it is better for believers to engage in productive work, such as collecting firewood in the bush and selling it, rather than resorting to begging. Ibrahim (2017) aptly observed that while Islam encourages the pursuit of knowledge, it vehemently opposes begging and rejects the idea of children wandering on empty stomachs under the pretext of seeking Qur'anic education.

**Concepts of the Almajiri System of Education:** The Almajiri system, also known as Quranic Education, serves as a foundational method for imparting Quranic knowledge to Muslim children. Typically, this system involves young boys aged between 5 and 15 who are sent to Islamic schools commonly referred to as "Tsangaya" or "Makaranta." Within these schools, the primary objectives are memorizing and reciting the Quran and acquiring comprehensive Islamic teachings. Almajiri education is a significant component of the Northern Nigeria Islamic Education system. It represents a semi-formal education system, wherein children between the ages of four and eighteen are entrusted to itinerant Islamic teachers, often called Malams, for the purpose of Quranic learning and the acquisition of Islamic knowledge.

While the Almajiri system possesses inherent merits, its practice in northern Nigeria has become fraught with inequities and obsolescence, necessitating concerted efforts toward reform. The issue does not lie with the system itself rather than the processes. Traditional Qur'anic schools are, for the most part, confined to single classrooms located outside mosques, private residences, or under the canopy of trees. School environments are often characterized by unfriendly conditions, overcrowding, and inadequate hygiene.

One of the adverse consequences of this system is child labor, where Almajirai are obligated to support their teachers in sustaining themselves and their families. This entails not only procuring their own meals but also contributing to the welfare of their Malams. These Qur'anic schools follow distinct syllabi, methodologies and timetables, often extended over several years before a child completes his/her education. While the system originally had noble intentions and served a valuable purpose, it has, in contemporary times, regrettably transformed Almajirai (pupils) into tools for monetary gain. Some are even compelled to provide a fixed daily sum, fend for themselves, and purchase their own clothing. Consequently, they roam the streets, motor parks, houses, and other public places, soliciting money to avoid punishment from their Malams. In pursuit of financial sustenance, they engage in activities like washing dishes in restaurants or performing menial labor in undesirable settings. This exposes some Almajirai to negative influences and drives them toward forbidden behaviors, such as theft and involvement in violent activities for financial gain, ultimately diverting their focus away from knowledge acquisition.

Bako and Sule (2014) observed that in Northern Nigeria, the Quranic school system predates the Western education system, which was traditionally viewed as an integrated educational setup capable of providing

comprehensive training for children. However, the realities of the system have evolved, rendering it incapable of fulfilling its traditional role. This degeneration can be traced back to historical, socioeconomic, political, and cultural transformations that have shaped Nigerian society, with the colonial experience marking a significant turning point. the pursuit of Islamic education leads to the creation of virtuous individuals, and Islam, as a religion, places paramount importance on education. This not only encourages the pursuit of literacy but also encourages followers to seek knowledge more broadly.

Moreover, Islam places great emphasis on knowledge, viewing it as the foundation of human development and the key to cultural and civilizational growth. In addition to religious education, Almajiri children often undertake vocational training, acquiring skills in crafts such as blacksmithing, tailoring, and farming. This apprenticeship aspect of the system is designed to prepare students for practical livelihoods in adulthood.

The Almajiri system is deeply entrenched in the community and is supported by parents and religious leaders. Families often send their children to Quranic schools run by Islamic scholars or Mallams, with the community providing food and shelter for Almajiri students. An itinerant lifestyle is a hallmark of Almajiri students, who frequently move from one Quranic school to another to seek knowledge from various scholars.

**Conceptualization of Communication Strategies and Social Development:** These strategies are fundamental to articulating, explaining, and promoting a vision and a set of well-defined goals. Kibe (2014) maintains that organizations build a reliable, cohesive “voice” that links varied activities and goals in a manner that appeals to an organization’s stakeholders. Sackey (2014) opines that communication strategies also determine the nature of relationships and collaboration created with the most important constituents of the organization, such as investors... who are critical in the successful implementation of the program. According to Skinner and Rampersad (2014), a communication strategy is a well-organized set of actions to achieve specific objectives through the execution of a blend of communication methods, techniques and approaches. Throne (1980), as cited by Huang (2010), iterates that communication strategies are used to close the gap between the knowledge of the targeted party and that of the sender in real communication situations to avoid communication disruptions (Huang, 2010). Anjuwon and Okiyi (2018) corroborates that in social development strategies, communication techniques such as town hall meetings, market square meetings, community engagements, radio jingles and talk shows, flyers, posters, handbills, traditional rulers, churches, schools, age groups, women associations, family heads, field visits, film shows, drama, face-to-face meetings, and others are used. Strategic communication is deliberate, and emphasis is placed on designing appropriate messages, processes and delivery outcomes (Rhee, 2008). Some common communication strategies that could be employed in a campaign against the Almajiri system include (Abuh, 2015):

**Awareness Campaigns:** This group develops and implements awareness campaigns to inform the public about the Almajiri system, its implications, and the importance of reform. Use various media channels to reach a broad audience, including television, radio, social media, and community events.

**Media Outreach:** Engage with journalists and media outlets to obtain media coverage for the campaign. Press releases, interviews, and documentaries can be powerful tools for disseminating information and influencing public opinion.

**Community mobilization:** Work closely with local communities, religious leaders, and influencers. Organize community meetings, workshops, and awareness sessions to mobilize communities against the Almajiri system. Encourage community members to actively participate in the campaign.



**Advocacy and Policy Development:** Advocate for policy changes and reforms related to the Almajiri system. Engage with policymakers, legislators, and government officials to promote policies that support education, social integration, and child welfare.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** To engage with NGOs, community leaders, religious institutions, and other stakeholders that are involved or interested in child welfare. Collaboration with these entities can strengthen the campaign and create a unified voice against the Almajiri system.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish mechanisms to monitor campaign progress. Regularly evaluate the impact of the initiatives undertaken and adjust the strategies based on the received feedback and the campaign's effectiveness.

**Crisis Communication Planning:** Develop a crisis communication plan to address potential challenges, criticisms, or controversies that may arise during the campaign. Prepared to respond effectively can help maintain the campaign's credibility and momentum. These specific strategies employed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development depend on various factors, including their resources, target audience, and unique challenges posed by the Almajiri system in the context.

## **Literature Review**

### **Almajiri Education Reform Initiatives in Northern Nigeria**

In Nigerian political history, no government has paid more attention to Almajiri's issue than President Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015). On April 10, 2012, he became the first West African leader to make a bold step to address their plight by opening the Almajiri Modern School in Gasge Sokoto. In his speech captured by Fowoyo (2013, 70), Good luck Jonathan maintained that: This program will cover the 9.5 million Almajiri population scattered across the Northern states with conventional quality education as envisaged under this administration policy thrust in yet another development.” Jonathan’s administration made an effort to integrate Western education for the first time with Islamic education.

The modern Almajiri School in the Jonathan administration era was designed to accommodate subjects like English, Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies, Hausa, Computer, Physics, and Health Education, Handwriting, Agriculture, Trade, Commerce, Handcraft, and Mechanical and Islamic components of Almajiri system, such as Qira’atul Qur’an, Tahfeez, Jajweed, Arabic, Islamic Studies, Tauhid, Hadith, Fiqh, and Sira (Onitada, 2015). The administration constructed approximately 125 Almajiri Schools, and by November 2013, approximately 64 schools were commissioned in Adamawa, Borno, Gombe, Bauchi, Yobe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Oyo, Osun, Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti, Edo, Rivers, Kogi, Niger, Katsina, Taraba, and Nasarawa States. The remaining school buildings spread across 27 states of the federation were nearing 80% completion as of 2013 (Onitada, 2015). The defeat of Good luck Jonathan in the 2015 presidential election gradually led to the defeat of this noble idea. The question is how can a Christian leader spearhead healthy Islamic and Western education, whereas under the leadership of a Moslem President, the plight of these Almajiri children is worst. This suggests that the patriarchal nature of elites in northern Nigeria may not be interested in a system of education that will lead to the liberation of the mind. It is obvious that those who refuse reforms in Almajiri education are simply against the type of education that will question gender imbalance and children’s rights and possibly invoke a genuine democratic value re-orientation. Otherwise, there is no way to explain the total neglect of close to 10 million children from Northern Nigeria, the future of which is currently bleak.

Leaders of thought from Northern Nigeria like Paul Unongo have lamented the homelessness of the Almajiri system and called for the adjustment of the system (Unogo, 2020). Philip Njamanze advocated for the quarantine of all Almajiri children in the country as a way of checking the spread of the virus as well as dictating those from

neighboring African countries (There's sabotage in COVID-19, 2020:9). Of course, Islam abhors the Almajiri syndrome, especially at the height of growing insecurity and moral degeneration. However, the campaign should aim to convince Islamic scholars from an Islamic point of view about the gains of this reality (Abdullahi, Citation 2020:14). Former Emir of Kano and former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) have recently been leading voices in abolishing the Almajiri system. He had quoted several times from Hadith in the book of Muwatta saying: 'La Tas Alan Ahdan Shai'an, Wa In Kunta Labudda Sa'ilan Fas'al Indani Suldani (Don't go and beg anyone for anything and if it is necessary you must ask, then go and ask those in power). The Emir wondered why a Dutse father should send his child to Kano without adequate parental provision. He went on to ask if there were no Islamic teachers in Dutse. His view is that parents shy away from their responsibilities and that asking someone else not Allah for anything is prohibited in Islam (Mohammed, 2020).

The Almajiri system has been described as anti-development because rather than teaching young children vocational skills, it makes them easy recruits of gangs and terrorist groups (Dismantling the Almajiri System, 2020:9). In a world driven by science and technology thus noted Obioha (2020) the Almajiri system is moribund because it does not encourage competition in work, trade, and politics.

### **Channels of Communication for Development Agencies**

Communication, in this regard, does not just occur between the agency and the target group intended to benefit from a proposed or planned project; there are other media that can always be used. The channels of reaching and mobilizing people for awareness, support, participation, and, above all, successful execution of any program, are many. The development agency, depending on what project it is planning to execute, who its target group is, or in what environment that project is to be executed, may decide to use all available media. Therefore, knowing these media of communication which are professionally referred to as agents of communication by Sambe (2005) is, therefore, very pertinent.

**Oral medium:** This is associated with oral communication. The development agency can never be dumped or mutated. Oral communication is very important in any context; it appears to be the foundation upon which all other forms of communication thrive (Chiakaan & Ahmad, 2014). The face-to-face medium involves spoken words. The agent speaks or plans within him/her very well on the type of project or policy to be implemented, taking into consideration the target group and other factors. It then proceeds to speak to people either on an individual basis or both an individual and group basis.

The verbal medium offers the following advantages to a development agent:

1. This gives room for immediate feedback to the agent's communication encounter with the target group, which indicates the group's readiness or appreciation for the proposed project or not.
2. It enables the agent to reach his target group immediately with information about his project.
3. Whatever is not understood by the person or people being spoken to can be asked with immediate clarification. This implies that messages through this medium are better comprehended, and since this is the case, people can be more easily persuaded to embrace and participate in the project.
4. People tend to cultivate and sustain a personal relationship with the agent as they interact physically. This occurs more particularly where the agent sounds very eloquently and convincingly and is perceived as honest and serious.
5. In participatory development, which is the best approach in achieving development, oral communication involving oral medium is the best tool because it offers the target group more physical learning approaches that enable them to embrace and practice effectively what they are being taught.

The disadvantages, however, associated with the oral medium are that it may only be more suitable for a group that is highly concentrated or localized. This is the reason why it appears to be more applicable in a rural setup. It also appears to be time-consuming for a program that involves people who are located in or scattered throughout a society. The development agent, using oral medium, can, at the same time, use non-verbal media. Non-verbal media are used in non-verbal communication to reach people with messages. Communication involves nonverbal symbols that use paralinguistic signals and symbols. According to Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014, p.14), the use of paralinguistic signals involves the tone of voice and countenance to convey ideas and information; messages are conveyed to target groups not by exactly what they mean but by the way or manner in which they are conveyed. For instance, when a development agent tells farmers in a very soft tone: "Please, apply this fertilizer on your adama farm three weeks after germination." This tone is appealing and more friendly. When he tells them harshly "Go and apply this fertilizer on your adama farm after three weeks of germination" this connotes order. The agent should always be polite and friendly.

**Written Media:** Development agencies may use pamphlets, newsletters, newspapers, books, magazines, billboards, and other written materials to transmit development ideas, messages, or information to a target group or people. This entails writing stories, feature articles, editorials, pictures, advertisements and cartoons that can persuade a target beneficiary group to understand, accept, support and participate in a project, policy or program for its successful execution for the well-being of such a group. While written media are highly appreciated, particularly for their permanent and reviewability nature, their drawback lies in the fact that they are more effective in a literate society. A development agency that relies on written media may appeal more to the literate class.

**Traditional Media:** It is perplexing that some people, especially youth in modern Nigerians, detest traditional values. Whenever they are linked to their tradition or culture, they may not feel comfortable. Some of these youth often bear two to three English or Arabic names, such as John Joseph, Elizabeth Michael, Joshua Love, Ahmad Ahmed, Mohammed Abdullahi, and Abubakar Bashir Mohammed, and so on. They hate their villages, which are their places of origin; likely where they can be buried when they die. Some of them can barely speak their dialects; they hate everything about their tradition. Their lives are completely swallowed by foreign tradition. This is rather unfortunate, as a person without tradition is like a person without roots and history. One without tradition is tantamount to one denying their parents to others. It means one has no foundation, and as such, one's life is built on confusion, ignorance, and falsehood. Therefore, it cannot stand. Neglecting traditional communication that often employs traditional media is therefore detrimental to developmental efforts by governments, organizations, or individuals.

Traditional media involves the use of talking drums, folk media, animals' horns, bush burning and smoke, gunshots, traditional songs and music, flutes, town criers and so on to mobilize people for a policy, project or program that can change their lives from bad to good. Sambe, (2005) posits that when you speak to a typical Tiv, Idoma, Jukun, Yoruba, Kuteb or Fulani man in his language, using idioms and dealing with problems directly relevant to his situation, you are into folk media, oral media and interpersonal media. Traditional media can inform, educate, and entertain people who belong to that tradition. Using the traditional media is advantageous because it makes people feel that they are a part and parcel of that program; it makes them feel that they are the originators and owners of that program.

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

This segment reviews empirical studies related to this research. To start with, Akintola (2016), in the research titled: "Analyzing the Impact of Government Communication Strategies on Social Issues: A Case Study of the Almajiri System in Nigeria," aimed to evaluate the efficacy of government communication strategies in tackling the Almajiri system and to identify the primary communication channels utilized by the government. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combined surveys and content analysis of government communication



materials, supplemented by interviews with government officials and community leaders. The research was contextualized within the broader framework of government communication strategies addressing social issues, with a specific focus on the Almajiri system. The findings revealed limited awareness among the specific population regarding the Almajiri system, inconsistencies in messaging across different communication channels, and a positive correlation between community engagement and awareness.

Ibrahim (2017) assessed "Community Perceptions and Engagement in the Federal Ministry's. Almajiri Campaign: A Qualitative Inquiry," primarily aimed to investigate community perceptions of the Federal Ministry's Almajiri campaign and to comprehend the extent of engagement within the designated communities. Employing a qualitative research design, the study used in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to obtain detailed and nuanced data on community perceptions and engagement with the Almajiri campaign. The study's Theoretical Framework was grounded in social change theory to analyze the data and interpret the findings. The results focused on community perceptions of the Almajiri campaign and the level of engagement within the targeted communities. These findings not only underscored the campaign's effectiveness but also pinpointed areas for improvement, offering insights into factors influencing community participation.

Bala (2019) conducted a study titled "Assessing Religious' Role Institutions in the Communication against the Almajiri System." The primary aim was to evaluate how religious institutions contribute to communication efforts against the Almajiri system, focusing on raising awareness and addressing associated issues. The study employed a methodology that included interviews, surveys, and content analysis of communication materials. The theoretical framework was grounded in the theory of religious influence. Findings indicated the contributory role of religious entities in addressing this societal issue, revealing varying levels of engagement among religious institutions and highlighting challenges in coordinating efforts due to differing perspectives.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The diffusion of innovation theory guided the study. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory, introduced by sociologist Everett Rogers in 1962, offers a structured approach to understanding how novel ideas, technologies, and innovations spread within a society. This theory breaks down the process into stages, involving different groups of people and being influenced by various factors. This analysis explores the crucial aspects of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory and its relevance in contemporary research, particularly in the context of combating the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria.

According to Rogers, an innovation, whether it is an idea, practice, or object, is considered new by individuals or societies. It is classified into five types: the relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, treatability, and observability. Adopter categories, ranging from innovators to laggards, are identified based on individuals' innovativeness in a social system. Communication plays a vital role in the diffusion process, using channels such as mass media, interpersonal networks, and social media to disseminate information. The diffusion process unfolds over time, with innovations progressing through adoption stages at different rates influenced by societal and individual factors.

Everett Rogers described the diffusion of innovation theory through extensive research on the spread of agricultural innovations in rural communities. Its application has been extended to various fields, including healthcare, technology, and social change. The objectives of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory include explaining adoption patterns, guiding communication strategies, and informing policies and interventions. This aims to answer why and how individuals or societies adopt innovations at different rates, assist in designing effective communication strategies, and provide insights for policymakers and practitioners to encourage widespread adoption.

In the context of the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria, this research identifies innovations and strategies used by the Federal Ministry. It explores adopter categories to identify the segments of the population that are more receptive to the campaign. This paper assesses the effectiveness of the communication channels employed in the campaign and evaluates the temporal aspects to understand the duration and pace of the adoption process.

The diffusion of innovation theory is a valuable framework for understanding innovation adoption and designing effective communication strategies. Its application to evaluating communication strategies against the Almajiri system provides valuable insights for policymakers and researchers working toward social change. By considering key concepts, adopter categories, and communication channels, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of the diffusion of anti-Almajiri innovations.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted the quantitative survey method widely recognized in social science research and was specifically designed to reveal insights into people's opinions, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors. The survey method, as elucidated by Obiekezei in Adamu (2010), aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of viewpoints on a subject, providing a holistic perspective of the prevailing circumstances at a specific juncture.

The rationale for opting for survey research is grounded in the understanding that communication plays a significant role in fields closely linked to human decision-making. Further, the survey was deemed significant because of the arguments made by academics like Barbie (2001), who highlighted the usefulness and significance of surveys by pointing out that they are most likely the greatest research techniques available to social scientists who want to gather unique data to characterize a population that is too big to be closely observed.

Furthermore, the population includes all staff and members of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and residents of Kano State. Due to practical constraints associated with collecting data from every unit in this extensive population (Yusuf, 2003), adopting a more manageable and representative approach is imperative. According to citypopulation.de (2022), Kano has a total population of 15,462,200 residents. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, as reported by Hajiah Jemila Bello from the Human Resource unit, the ministry is organized into Administration and Supplies, Women Affairs and Gender Empowerment, Child Development, Social Development and Finance and Account Departments. The ministry's workforce is estimated at 12,780. Consequently, the total population under investigation is 15,474,980.

In addition, the researcher opted for a combination of purposive and stratified sampling methods. This study adopted the purposive sampling technique because the researcher needed information from specific people in the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and residents of Kano State. In addition, stratified sampling was used. The state was divided into three senatorial districts (Central, North and South Senatorial Districts), with one local government in each district.

In the Kano South Senatorial District, the Bebeji Local Government Area was selected; Dala Local Government Area was selected in Central District; and Danbata Local Government Area was chosen in the Northern District. Further, five wards were selected from each of the studied local government areas via stratification. These wards are Adakawa, Barkin Ruwa, Dogon Nama, Kantudu and Gobirawa in Dala LGA; Anadariya, Baguda, Durmawa, Gargai and Gwarmai in Bebeji LGA; and Fagwalawa, Goron Maje, Gwanda, Kore and Sansan in Danbata LGA. The stratified sampling technique was adopted because it enabled the partitioning of a population into subpopulations. Thus, the views of each stratum were examined.

The study's sample size was 400, which was determined using the Yaro Yamane sample size determination formula. The formula thus follows.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Here, "n" signifies the sample size, and "N" represents the total population. The factor "e" denotes the desired precision level. This method ensures that the sample size is both scientifically determined and representative of the broader population.

Where:

$$N = 15,474,980$$

$$e^2 = 5\% \text{ or } 0.05, \text{ respectively}$$

$$n = ?$$

$$\text{Therefore, } n = \frac{15,474,980}{1 + 15,474,980(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{15,474,980}{1 + 15,474,980(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{15,474,980}{15,474,981(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{15,474,980}{38,687.4525}$$

$$n = 399.97 \approx 400$$

$$n = 400 \text{ (Sample Size)}$$

Sample Fraction

$$SF = \frac{400}{15,474,980} = 0.0000258482$$

In addition, data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Because the questionnaire was appropriate for the study and conceals respondent's identity, the researcher decided to use it. There were two sections on the questionnaire used in this study. While the second section's questions were both open-ended and closed-ended, the first section asked respondents for their demographic information.

Furthermore, an availability method was employed to distribute the questionnaire. The data were presented using frequency tables and charts and mean deviation tables using the Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D) measuring scales. The criteria mean for the accepted result was pecked at 3 point and above, while the rejected result was put at 2 point and below.

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

The researcher distributed 400 copies of the questionnaire, out of which 377 were returned. However, 369 were found valid and used for the analysis. The percentage representation is shown in the following chart:

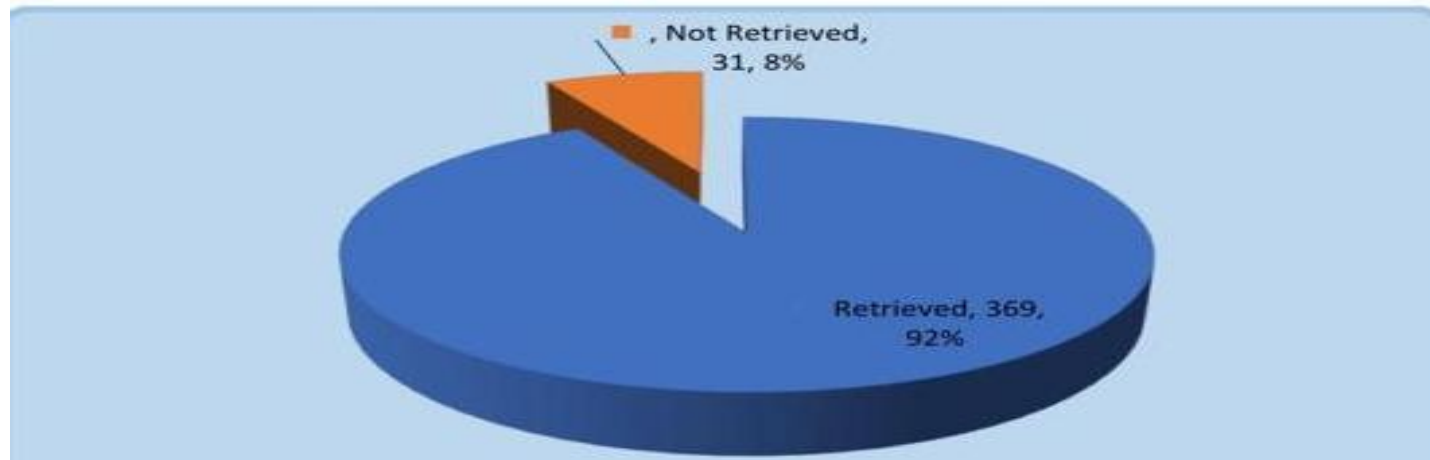


Figure 1: Response rate analysis

Table 1: Communication Strategies Employed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in the Northern Nigeria Campaign against the Almajiri System

Options	AS	A	U	SD	D	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
Mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, social media, and billboards	118	197	3	21	30	369	3.9	Accepted
Information education communication (IEC) materials	103	57	9	88	112	369	2.8	Accepted
Town hall meetings	11	8	19	93	238	369	1.5	Rejected
Announcement through a town crier	44	51	10	185	79	369	2.4	Rejected
Drama	5	11	30	214	109	369	1.8	Rejected
Words spoken in worship centers, schools, and markets	25	37	21	222	64	369	2.2	Rejected
Distribution of handbills, pamphlets, flyers, and leaflets	18	23	26	191	111	369	2.0	Rejected
Posting posters on walls and other strategic locations and using banners	37	21	9	199	101	369	2.1	Rejected
Use of family heads, women's associations, traditional rulers, and film shows	23	17	24	127	178	369	1.8	Rejected

The data presented in Table 1 indicate that, beyond traditional media channels, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has not effectively employed alternative communication strategies to address the Almajiri System in Northern Nigeria. This suggests a significant gap in the ministry's approach, highlighting the need for more diversified and innovative methods to tackle this pressing issue.

**Table 2: Effectiveness of Various Communication Strategies employed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Conveying Information about the Almajiri Campaign**

Options	AS	A	U	SD	D	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
The target audience in Northern Nigeria perceives the communication strategies employed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development as effective in addressing the Almajiri system.	29	17	11	144	168	369	1.9	Rejected
The communication strategies implemented by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development are relevant and resonant with the concerns and priorities of the target audience in Northern Nigeria regarding the Almajiri system.	18	22	9	181	139	369	1.9	Rejected

Table 3 presents participants' responses regarding the communication strategies employed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development to address the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria. The data indicate that most respondents perceive these communication strategies as ineffective. This conclusion suggests the need for reassessment and improvement of current approaches to enhance their efficacy.

### Conclusions

The analysis and review of documents revealed that the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development employs a variety of communication strategies to address the Almajiri system. These strategies

encompass oral communication as well as the use of mass media channels such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and books. Additionally, they include posting information on walls, employing billboards, banners, leaflets, handbills, and using drama. Anjuwon and Okiyi (2018) corroborated these findings by noting that social development strategies frequently incorporate communication techniques like town hall meetings, market square meetings, community engagements, radio jingles, talk shows, flyers, posters, handbills, and traditional media, such as interactions with traditional rulers, churches, schools, age groups, women's associations, family heads, field visits, film shows, and drama. These methods align with the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, which elucidates adoption patterns, guides communication strategies, and informs policies and interventions. The theory helps to understand why and how individuals or societies adopt innovations at varying rates, thereby aiding in the development of effective communication strategies and providing insights for policymakers and practitioners to promote widespread adoption.

Further, the findings indicate that these communication strategies are not highly effective. This ineffectiveness is attributed to several challenges, including cultural and religious resistance to Western education, insincerity in implementing government policies and programs related to the Almajiri system, and insufficient consultation with relevant stakeholders during the design and implementation phases. This is consistent with Akintola's (2016) findings, which highlighted limited awareness among the target population regarding the Almajiri system, inconsistencies in messaging across various communication channels, and a positive correlation between community engagement and awareness. Bala (2019) also noted that difficulties in coordinating efforts because of differing perspectives had hindered progress on the Almajiri system. In contrast, Ibrahim (2017) reported that community engagement by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development regarding the Almajiri system produced positive outcomes, which contradicts other findings.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The analysis of data reveals that the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development employs various communication strategies, including town hall meetings, engagement with religious leaders, mass media use, and collaboration with community leaders, to address the challenges associated with the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria. However, it is evident that these strategies have not achieved their intended effectiveness. The ineffectiveness is attributed to several challenges, including cultural and religious resistance, reluctance toward Western education, a lack of genuine commitment to implementing government policies and programs related to the Almajiri system and insufficient consultation with relevant stakeholders during the design and execution of these communication strategies. It is recommended that future government communication initiatives regarding the Almajiri system should thoroughly consider the specific needs and characteristics of the specific population.

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