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A Proposed Framework of Unemployment and Youth Restiveness in the North-Eastern Nigeria: Exploring the Role of the "Almajiri" Culture

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the "Almajiri" culture and how it has contributed to unemployment, poverty and youth restiveness in the North-Eastern Nigeria. Using descriptive approach and contends analysis to generate empirical data, the paper discovered that "Almajiri" culture depicts a missing gap in the previous studies. In the sense that a causal relationship exist between the "Almajiri" culture and unemployment which lead to poverty and youth restiveness. More so as unemployment in Nigeria increase by 16% from 2011 to 2013 representing 39.9%, with youth unemployment representing 50% of this, where the north-eastern region continue to manifest the worst poverty rate compare to the other five geo-political zones couple with the existence of about 10 million "Almajiris" in the entire northern region which is much more than the total population of Sweden and the result of several investigation panels revealing the involvement of "Almajiri" in most of the violence occurring in the northern region from 1980 to 2010, where the vulnerability of the "Almajiri" due to abject poverty makes them a tool for unleashing violence by some unscrupulous elements. The paper therefore, concludes that unless the 'Almajiri' culture is properly redefined and address the persistence violence in the northern Nigeria will continue to pose a serious threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian state is undoubtedly the highest populated in the African continent and indeed the eight in the global ranking with an estimated population of over 150 million people based on the figures derived from the 2006 census. Nigeria has an average GDP of \$207.11 billion and estimated per capita income of \$1,401 the country seems to have the second largest economy in Africa (Salami, 2011). Though some report recently consider Nigeria as having the largest economy in Africa. It is also the largest oil producer of in Africa and the sixth oil in the world (Bright, 2011).

As laudable and impressive as the above statistics appear to be Nigeria tend to struggle economically, as the country depicts a picture typical of a fractured state. Which is extremely rich but its citizens remain poor, many extremely so. Since the returned of civil rule in 1999, the Nigerian state continue to suffered growing insecurity and legitimacy crises, which has manifested in the declining capacity of its institutions to effectively discharge public goods, including security,

transportation, water, medical care, power and education. (John & Bright, 2011).

Poverty and unemployment continue to pose a serious threat to the Nigerian state, because as observed by Oba dan and Odusola (2001), unemployment in Nigeria became more pronounce in the 1980s and this trend has been on the increase ever since. In 2008, 15% of the Nigeria's labour force was unemployed and in 2011 the figure rose to 20% while the figure is estimated to be around 39.9 % in 2013 (Lamido, 2013); and the victims of this ugly scenario are the youths because as observed by Akanda and Okuwa (2009) about 60% those unemployed in Nigeria are youth whose aged falls between 15-25 years, while Rotimi (2011) ranged it between 18 and 45 years. Hence Youth unemployment has been one of the major problems facing the country. A high level of underemployment and unemployment depict the most critical socio-economic issue which is negatively affecting the country. While the labour force displays a geometric increment the economic structures appear inadequate to absorb labour market entrants. (Bright, 2011).

The above scenario portrays youth unemployment is a gigantic problem to Nigeria

which has continue constitutes a real danger to the country's democracy. This is because these jobless youths who are constantly running the street could easily be manipulated by some unscrupulous elements to engage in violent activities which can create a serious havoc to the corporate existences of Nigeria as a nation (Uddin & Uddin, 2013).

Problem statements:

The north-Eastern Nigeria which is made up of six states namely Adamawa, Bauchi, Bornu, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe continue to witness an increasing incidence of violence and lawlessness, despite the existence of state of emergency in Adamawa, Bornu and Yobe where the vehement cycle of violence unleashed on the various communities by the dreaded and extremist group of Boko Haram has continue to instill fears among the citizens and the global society that the insurgency has gone beyond religions colorations, for instance, on September 29, 2013 44 students were killed college of agriculture Gujba Yobe state,(Daily Independent,2014), in 11 January the group attacked kawuri a town in Bornu state killing 85 wounding several peoples,(Reuters, 2014), on 11 February 2014 the insurgents attacked Konduga in same Bornu state killing atleast 39 peoples,(BBC Africa,2014), on 25 February the group attacked federal government college Buni Yadi in Yobe state killing atleast 59 students(Sahara reporters, 2014), in recent time the group seems to be operating freely attacking and overrunning several cities such as Bama(2nd September, 2014), Gwoza, Madagali, Michika, Uba, Chibok, Mubi(Wednesday 28 October, 2014) just to mention few, as well as the sporadic incidences of bomb blast as follows: football viewing center(Damaturu),stadium(Mubi town) in bank (Azare town) bus station(Gombe town), and in market.

This may have a strong connection with high rate of unemployment and poverty among the youth which is more severe in the north-Eastern part because according to report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS 2012). North-West and North-East geopolitical zones manifest the highest rates of poverty with 77.7% and 76.6% respectively. This may be the rationale why these zones are riddled with violence and terrorism. According to Shuaibu,(2008) unemployment, bad governance, corruption and poor basic social services, create an atmosphere for some disgruntled youths to be radicalized hence constituting a threat to the society. The situation in the north-eastern geo-political zone is such ugly that there is persistent of attack and killing almost on daily basis by the insurgents. Properties worth billions of naira and several lives have been destroyed as a result of restiveness by this group of confused and frustrated youths who advocate the total renunciation of western education and claim to be struggling to overthrow the Nigerian government thereby establishing a Sharia law.

As observed by Gurr,(1970) in the relative deprivation theory an individual who cannot meet up his basic needs have more tendency for violence than a rich person. More so as the number of the foot soldiers of the extremists group keep on swelling despite the ferocious onslaught on their membership by joint task force this may have a strong linkage with the existences of battalions of Almajiris in the region which provide an easy sources of recruitment for the group more as the Almajiris were implicated in the "mai tatsine" (meaning one who curse) insurgency back in the early 1980s by the reports of several investigation committees.

Against the above background this study is bound out of academic curiosity to explore the nexus between the Almajiri culture, poverty, unemployment and the continuity crisis in the North-Eastern Nigeria.

Research objectives:

The purpose of every Research is provide solution to a giving problem through an organized investigation of the phenomenon, however, without a clearly defined objectives it is very difficult to obtain the right solution to the existing phenomenon. With a view to facilitate a clear-cut approaches with a clearly defined objectives, this study proposes four research objectives:

1. To investigate the relationship between almajiri culture (lack of formal education, absence of parental care, rural-urban migration,) and unemployment(poor skills, low income trap, economic inactive).
2. To investigate the level of almajiri involvement in the ethno-religious crisis occurring in the north-eastern nigeria.
3. To assess the impact of almajiri culture in increasing the rate of poverty in the north-eastern Nigeria .
4. To examine the relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness in the north-eastern Nigeria.

Literature review:

Almajiri:

Almajiri is a Hausanised version of the Arabic term „AL-MUHAJIRIN“ meaning someone who migrated from one place to another for religious cause. It is therefore use in reference to immigrant children who move from rural areas to urban areas in search of Qu'ranic education. These Schools served as the equivalent of both the nursery and primary levels of knowledge acquisition. History have it that the *Almajiri* system of education began in the early part of 11th Century, which was promoted and sustained by the then Islamic scholars in an attempt to spread and consolidate Islamic knowledge acquisition, prior to the amalgamation of the Southern and the Northern Protectorates of the colonial- Nigeria by the British in 1914.

Youth Restiveness:

The National Youth Development Policy (2001) defines youth as all persons within the age bracket 18-35. Youths made of up about 40 percent of the Nigerian population. More so 2006 census figures showed the number of persons between the age of 10 and 24 in Nigeria was 45.4 million representing 34 percent of the total population.

Elegbeleye (2005) view youth restiveness as “an organized sustained protest plan and embarked consolidated body of youths in order to enforce a desired outcome or effect a social change in a given society.” It involves the use of violence and other non-conventional ways of showing dissatisfaction such as the disruption of law and order, physical confrontation and assault.

As observed by Okafor (2011) youth restiveness is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria however, the causes may not be the same from one state to another or from one time to another. For instance looking at the political history of Nigeria one is apt to concur with the fact that factors like political, economic and religious appear to have been the main motivators of youth restiveness in Nigeria.

Elegbeleye (2005) clearly explain the inherent danger associated with youth restiveness in society when he opined that. A law-abiding, focused, and disciplined, youth signify a very bright future for a nation. While a lawless, violent and indulgent youth pose a serious threat to a nation's peace and security.

Unemployment:

Simply define; unemployment connotes the situation of an individual or group of individuals who do not have a job. The International Labour Organization - ILO (2007) conceptualized unemployment from perspective of the number of people who are economically active yet without work to do, therefore available and seeking for job, this number includes all persons who voluntarily quit and those lost their jobs (World Bank, 1998). To Adebayo (1999) unemployment can only exists when there is competent labour force willing to work but do not get jobs. Scholars have identified Various forms of unemployment which include frictional, structural, cyclical and seasonal unemployment (Adebayo, 1999; Damachi, 2001).

Evidence from the data released by NBS in 2010 showed that Unemployment in Nigeria cut across educational level, gender and age group. For those with school leaving certificate, 14.8% were unemployed, while those with post-primary education, 23.8% were unemployed, and for those with higher education 21.3% were unemployed. For the age group, persons between the ages of 25-44 years 17% were unemployed And for person between the age 15-24 years, 41.6% were unemployed. As the gender the data revealed that 17.0% of male and 23.3% of females were unemployed (NBS, 2010).

Review of empirical literature:

Unemployment is indeed a major problem affecting the lives of the significant number of youth in Nigeria resulting to frustration, dejection and emotional problems and in most cases over dependency. As observed by Njoku and Ihugba (2011) high level of unemployment among Nigerian youths has contributed in significance way to the increasing rate of poverty and insecurity in the country. This is because several studies in the past have provided evidence linking Unemployment worldwide to economic problems, poverty and insecurity.

The magnitude of unemployment can only be appreciated if the Federal Bureau of Statistics can make available an accurate figure of the number of unemployed youths roaming the Nigerian streets. Notwithstanding, Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) asserted that from the data obtained from the National Manpower Board and Federal Bureau of Statistics revealed that the youth in Nigeria constitute eighty (80) million which represent about 60 percent of the country's total population. They went further to stated that about Sixty four (64) million of these youth are unemployed while 1.6 million of them are underemployed.

Several studies on unemployment in Nigeria have identified number of factors responsible for the increasing trend of unemployment experiencing in the country.

To Bello,(2003) mismanagement of government funds, harsh economic conditions and policies, ugly incidence perversion of corruption, insecurity of the Nigerian environment and political instability have been responsible for the increase level of unemployment in Nigeria. On his part Alanana(2003) view unemployment in Nigeria as a result of so many factors such as population growth. He maintained that Nigerian state continued to witness high rate of population increase. Which give rise to an overwhelming increase in the number of young people thereby resulting to an existences of a large number of the working age population which the economy cannot fully absorb. Another factor identify as the rationale behind the ugly scenario is that rural-urban migration especially by the youth. This seems to be supported by the United Nations Report (1999), which observes that the high level of geographical mobility by the African youth tend to form of rural to urban areas which has a huge repercussion on the economy by increasing the number of unemployed youth. Evidence abound that In Nigeria the number of youths migrating to cities from rural areas supersedes any other migrants, where as in those cities few job opportunities exist. Thus, the continue inflows of jobless youths into these urban centers has continued to create unemployment.

Factor responsible for unemployment as observed by Echebiri(2005) is the Lack of employable skills by the youth as a result poor skills

either to due lack formal education or an ineffective school curricula. Several scholars have argued that in Nigeria generally, there is a problem of mis-match between the job seekers skills and the needs and demands of employers of labour (Mcgrath, 1999; Kent and Mushi, 1995). To them, there is absence of quality in the Nigerian education system which ended up supplying the labour market with half-bake graduates who do not possess the required skills needed in competitive business world. Oladele, Akeke and Oladunjoye (2011) stated that most of the Nigerian graduates display poor entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment.

Another factor identified by scholars as contributing unemployment is the perception of Nigerians (both policy makers and the youth themselves) about employment which is limited only to a salaried job. it is imperative to note that the above perception has negatively influence the educational institutions in Nigeria. More so as curricula and training programmes are prepared based on this perception, which is primarily geared towards preparing young people for government jobs this lead to the problem of skills mismatch between the job seekers and the available jobs in the private sector Since government jobs do not seems to absorb all the labour force in the country(Morphy,2008).

Musari,(2009) identified bad governance, poor coordination, ineffective resources allocation, overlapping of responsibilities, and lack of sustainable mechanisms for unemployment as the major factors responsible for the perpetual unemployment in Nigeria. In same parlance, Okafo,(2011), identified poor infrastructural facilities in the rural areas as the major cause of unemployment in Nigeria as it makes the life in rural areas boring and unattractive, hence Youths move to cities in search greener pasture and attractive life style, because of the concentration of industries and social amenities in the urban centers. He further asserted by the year 2020 Nigeria could be over 180 million taking into cognizance the census figures of 2006 which puts the country's population at 140,431,790 with the annual growth rate of 3.2, this is further supported by the statistics release by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) which shows that population of Nigeria has increase to 164,385,656 in 2011. It is believed that this rapid population growth has resulted to an ever increasing labor force, thereby outstripping the supply of jobs (Okafor, 2011).

According to Okafor (2011) the above development is not without attendant negative socio- economic and psychological consequences on the Nigerian state. One of these social consequences ugly scenario of youth unemployment which pave the way for the development of homeless thugs and urban urchins who exhibit all sorts of criminal behaviour. According to Adesina, (2013) all the cases of terrorism, ethno-religious and Political violence,

ravaging Nigeria today are no doubt the result of unemployment and poverty among the youth. To Lamido (2013) the increasing number of street urchin, vagabonds and homeless youth who are constantly roaming the street of Nigerian cities have led to an alarming rate of terrorism in the northeast region, hostage taking/kidnapping in the south-east region, militancy and arson in the south-south region and armed robberies in the south-west region.

This paper therefore attempt to explore the linkage between the Almajiri culture and the above ugly scenario observed by Okafor,(2011) Lamido(2013) and Adesina(2013). More so as Almajiri culture was built on the idea of taking children at a very tender age from their parental care and homes thereby entrusting them into the care of local Islamic teachers who in turn take them to different cities to study, in most cases it takes the dimension of rural-urban migration. The Almajiri are mostly found in the northern part of Nigeria usually between 7 to 15 years, the system was initially establish to promote disciplined and scholarship among the Muslim by youth through inculcating the spirit of perseverance and self-denial. However, the system has undergoes negative changes as a result of abused, where after taking the boys to big cities these boys are left to wander about the streets begging for alms with a view to find a means of feeding sustaining themselves, even their teachers in most cases depend on what the children brought home from the street-begging (Obioha, 2009; Thinkquest, 2010).

They therefore ended up becoming thugs and street urchin for they neither receive the Islamic knowledge nor attend the formal educational institution hence they are with no any meaningful skills which can provide them with employment or atleast self-reliance because they are not trained in any skill. This subjected them to poverty and its attendant evils of frustration and crimes.() the almajiris are the common sight in northern cities they are estimated to constitute about 10 million which is one million more than the total population of Sweden, the implication of these huge number is that approximate in every 7 Nigerian Muslim atleast one is Almajiri, in the north-eastern city of Bornu which is a stronghold of bokoharam it is estimated that about 1.1 million almajiris exist (Abdullahi, 2013) where Such children, trained as beggars which negatively affect them psychologically as they tend to exhibit a behavioural pattern which portrays them as psychologically inferior, without any sense of self-worth, in most cases they ended up joining gang of criminal and vagabonds. More so Several investigations penal about the ethno-religious crisis in the early 1980s have implicated Almajiri system in most of the unrest and political violence in North(Aghedo,2013).

Youth restiveness, unemployment and almajiri culture: the nexus:

Studies by Herrenkohl, Roy C. *et al* (1991) revealed that abuse and neglecting little children create a negative impact on their latter lives by transforming them into total liabilities incapable of contributing socially, political and economically to their immediate societies. This is epitomized by the predicaments of Almajiris in which parental negligence gradually and unceremoniously reduced and convert them into mere errand boys of the wealthy families, plate washers for restaurants and markets cleaners. Under this situation, penury continues to characterize these children even in their adulthood this is because as observed by Osiruemu (2007) "penury begets poverty" this is more evident when one look at the appearance of a typical Almajiri who can easily be distinguish from the rest of the society by his unkempt hair, tattered clothes, awful state of hygiene and diseases-afflicted skin, (Awefeso, 2008).

The Almajiri system has contributed to urban congestion thereby increasing the number of jobless youth in the cities this because as observed by Subbarao; Mattimore, Plangemann (2001) Some of the lazy parents in the rural areas especially the polygamous once that can neither adequately cater for themselves nor their large families deliberately push these children to street of metropolitan areas under the guise of Almajiri thereby subjecting these children to utter deprivation which invariably force them to look for an alternative means of livelihood in street begging which constitute the easily accessible option. However, the ugly practice of street begging exposes these children to all sources of vulnerability such as immoral act, vile and deviant behaviors as they tend to interact and associates with persons of low virtue such as gamblers, drug barons and harlots. (Awofeso; Ritchie and Degeling 2003).

As rightly observed by Christian (2010) the lack of formal education by Almajiris invariably makes them an easy target of being utilize as fuel in political violence by desperate politicians. They therefore constitute a serious security threat as many of them have in the past involved actively in political and ethno-religious violence.

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According to Winter, (1987) the almajiris ideally are supposed to acquire skill in one trade or the other in the course of their studies. However, significant number of them hardly gains knowledge in any meaningful trade hence ended up as street urchin and thugs without any marketable skill. The existence of these jobless youths in the urban centers makes these cities crime ridding occasion by political or religious uprising. The almajiris were believed to be used in fueling the crisis that engulf the north in the past such as the Bulunkutu riot in Bornu, Dangungu and the maitasine riots in Kano riot in Kaduna, (Shuaibu, 2008).

The success recorded so far in Nigeria by Boko Haram in the north east by overrunning and capturing many cities is seen by some concern citizens as connected with the proliferation of the almajiri culture. Because it is believed that the founder of the sect, Mohammed Yusuf capitalized on the existence of large number of almajiris in the north-east especially in Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa to recruit his followers who continue to unleash persistent violence on the region even after his demise evidence is gradually to manifest linking bokoharam to almajiri because the 35 bokoharam suspect released in May 2013 admitted being *almajirai*. (Alli, 2013).

Methodology:

In this cross-sectional survey, the data will be collected from the selected public organizations, employees through the distribution of questionnaires and the data will be analyzed and interpreted through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 19.0 to determine the relationship involved. In the context of this study using Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling to identify each of the employees at every management hierarchy which had lower level management, middle level management and top level management. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a total of 175 respondents will be selected to become the respondents in this study to answer the questionnaires given. This study is going to identify the relationship between variables by using Pearson correlation. Besides that, the most influential transformational leadership styles effectiveness criteria that lead to public service servants' job performance will be analyzed based on the Multiple Regression Analysis. In addition, this study also aims to identify the level of public service servant job performance based on descriptive analysis.

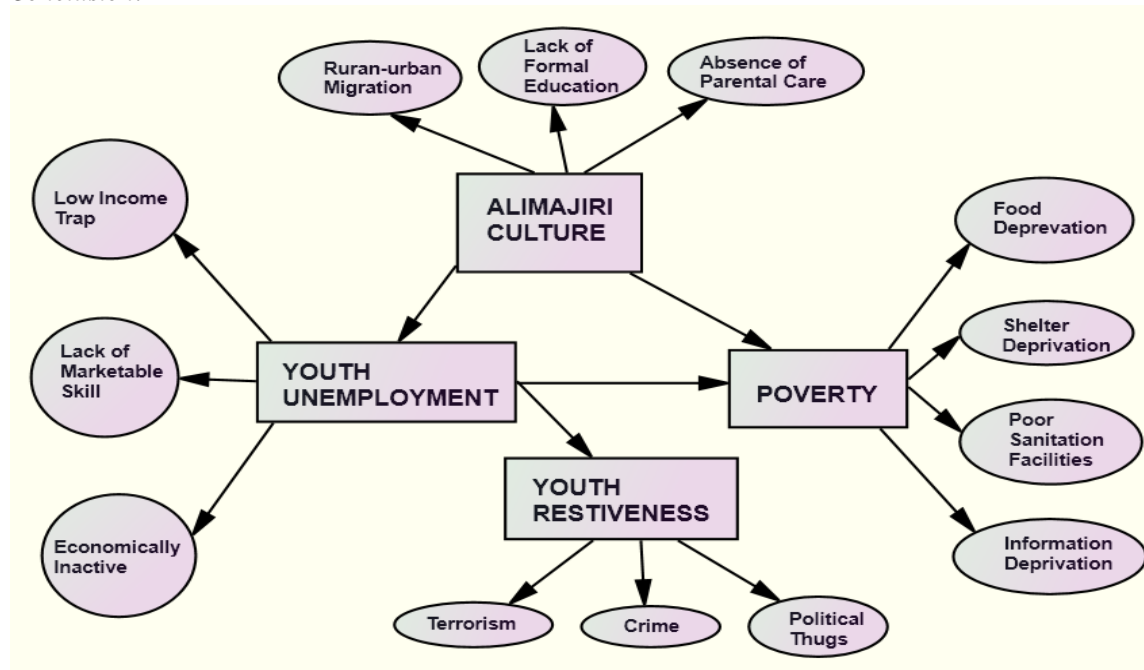
Conclusion:**Diagram 1:**

Diagram 1 above shows the relationship between ‘almajiri culture’ unemployment and youth restiveness. In this diagram the almajiri culture consists of three factors (*i.e.* rural-urban migration, absence of parental care and deprivation of formal education). Thus, this model will describe the roles of these factors in creating unemployment and how unemployment lead to youth restiveness with poverty serving as a mediating factor so this proposed model will provide an insight as to whether the almajiri culture will directly result to youth unemployment through poor skills, economically inactive and low income trap on the other hand the model will also provide an insight on the relationship between unemployment and poverty vis-a-vis the almajiri culture by looking at factors such as hunger or food deprivation, homelessness or shelter deprivation, poor sanitary conditions and information deprivation the model will thus try to assess the impact of all these factors in promoting restiveness in youths such as political thuggerry, crime and terrorism. From the conceptual framework, the independent variable is the almajiri culture, while the dependable variables are youth restiveness and unemployment where poverty serve as the mediating variable. The conceptual framework therefore highlights that almajiri culture leads to unemployment and unemployment results to poverty which galvanizes into restiveness.

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