

## The Almajiri in our neighbourhood

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We are all familiar with the sight of the Almajiri. Even though a student of Islamic knowledge, his scholarship formerly provided for by “social goods,” is now devoid of the normal support enjoyed by students. For one, a lot of the Almajirai are so young, that it is rather premature for them to face the harsh elements on the street. They should at that age be in the warm embrace of their parents. As we cuddle our kids, we need to remember that the young Almajiri also needs to be shown love as that provides warmth and emotional support for optimal growth. Lack of that warmth and emotional support are part of the reasons why some of them grow up hardened, thinking that the society hates them. Secondly, their parents send them to the Mallams in other towns without providing for their needs such as food, shelter and clothing. It is common to see the Almajiri walking on bare foot and half clothed, looking for food. Thirdly, they could be influenced by bad elements that wish to indoctrinate them to harbor fundamentalist ideas. Overall, the Almajiri is often time a hungry, and angry individual who has

potential for various physical and emotional illnesses. Interestingly, most of the Almajiri are seen in Muslim dominated areas of northern Nigeria

It is indeed desirous that all Muslims seek Islamic knowledge. The question is, can it be done without the hardship faced by the Almajiri? The answer is a resounding Yes.

Recently, there were reports that the Federal Government has plans to ban the Almajiri system. The ban will be challenging, considering that the lack of provision of “social goods” by the political leaders are responsible for the eyesore that the Almajiri has become. Also, for a system that has been in practice for decades, an outright ban will not be the only solution. We need to also educate parents through the use of Religious and Traditional leaders to understand that it is possible for children to learn Islam while still living with their parents. Most importantly, parents should discharge their responsibilities to their children by providing them with all necessary emotional, financial and other supports to enable them grow optimally. Indeed, policies may be needed to

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awaken the parenting to live up to their duty of balanced parenting the practices. So also will be legislations to enforce parents to stop the practice. It will take a long period of societal reorientation for the bad in the Almajiri system to be stopped and their subsequent transformation. However, we need to start now. Other parts of the Muslims' world do not have the Almajiri system and yet Islamic knowledge is successfully transferred from one generation to another. This edition of the IMAN Medical Journal is very rich. The article by Sadiq A. A. looked

at the rights of patients against torture under the Nigerian law. It showed the overwhelming evidence against the use of torture inflicted on patients. This is a recommended article for reading by members of IMAN since most are health workers that come into contact with patients. There are other interesting articles on health records, the Islamic conduct expected of an ideal health worker towards effective service delivery, Assessment of public stigma towards mental illness etc.

Happy reading...