

The Financial Problems of Tsangaya System of Education and its Effects on Almajiri in Potiskum Yobe State Nigeria

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Abstract

The study aims to examine the financial challenges of the Tsangaya system of education in Potiskum area of Yobe State and how it affects the Almajiri. Tsangaya is, generally called traditional Qur'anic school has been in existence earlier to the British colonization as a source of moral and scholastic training of the Muslim dominated societies in the northern part of Nigeria. The system which provides, essentially, basic Qur'anic education has contributed tremendously in promoting Qur'anic education, inculcating self-discipline, spiritual growth of Muslim individuals and the communities. The system is also facing several financial related problems which has affected Almajiri (students), teachers and the school as well. The Tsangaya system of education lack the required facilities for better teaching and learning such as provision of food, accommodation and other basic necessities, has affected the Almajiri. Therefore, this study employed a qualitative approach in exploring the financial problems of Tsangaya system of education and its effect on the Almajiri, this entails the techniques of documentation and interviews in collecting data while inductive approach of thematic analysis was utilized for data analysis. In depth interview was conducted in achieving the research outcome, The findings revealed that, the system of Tsangaya education were in existence in Potiskum area for a decade and it has affected the lives of the Almajiri in various spheres of lives and its lingering financial problems brought a negative effect to the socio- economic well-being of the Almajiri in the area.

Keywords: *Almajiri, Education, Effects, Tsangaya, Problems, Potiskum Yobe State*



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INTRODUCTION

Tsangaya is regarded as one of the main Islamic systems of education which has been developed in Nigeria. It is believed that the Tsangaya system has a long history of existence. Its origin can be traced to the old Timbuktu scholastic culture (Yahya, 2018). The word Tsangaya is derived from the *Sangaya* in Kanuri, which means educational institution (Bano, Antonis, & Ross, 2011). Consequently, *Sangaya* is the real name while Tsangaya is Hausa adulteration of the word. On the other hand, the term Tsangaya school is known as *Makarantar Allo* derives its name from what is largely visible in the school that is the wooden slate Allo in Hausa language. Apart from the general name, Tsangaya has other names such as: *Makarantar Muhammadiyya*, *Makarantar al-Qur'ani*, *Makarantar Toka*, etc (Babajo, Jamaluddin, & Hamid, 2017). At present, Tsangaya refers to the informal school or place where teaching and learning of the glorious Qur'an and other Islamic sciences is taken place. The early Tsangaya schools were day institutions, children are attending from the comfort of their homes living with their families receiving proper guidance, teaching and learning (Babajo, 2018).

Meanwhile, the term Almajiri is derived from the Arabic word *Almuhajirun* which means migrants. It generally refers to a person who migrated from his house to other places or to a popular teacher in searching for Qur'anic knowledge and other Islamic sciences (Olaniran, 2018). It is hinged on the Islamic concept of migration which is widely practiced or embraced especially when acquiring of knowledge at home is either inconvenient or insufficient. Besides that, the term Almajiri could be use to describe two phenomena. First, and foremost any person irrespective of gender, who is begging for alms on the street as a result of disability or deformity. Secondly, the children whom were sent to Tsangaya school who similarly wandering about with the purpose of getting assistance from the people (Hoechner, 2018). Almajiri schools was structured along three tiers: *Kolo*, *Titibiri* and *Gardi*. *Kolo*. *Kolo* is equivalent to the primary school age, aged between 7 to 15 years. The *Titibiri* is the secondary school equivalent while *Gardi* is equivalent to the tertiary level (Bambale, 2003).

This system of education had over a long period of time graduated many Islamic scholars who later took the responsibility of teaching and spreading the religion of Islam nationwide (Shehu, 2006). However, in the course of time, the Tsangaya system has been encountering some financial problems which need an immediate or urgent attention of the government and the individuals to rescue. This old system of education is still very relevant for the moral educational development in the society (Babajo, Jamaluddin, & Hamid, 2017). The study aims to examine the financial problems of the Tsangaya system of education in Potiskum area of Yobe State and to examine its effect of the Almajiri. The financial incapacitation of these Tsangaya schools which includes, lack of school buildings, poor remuneration for the teachers, student's hostels, and other physical facilities that will aid the teaching and learning. These have made the system non-attractive to students, parents and the teachers.

The Almajiri (students) have been exposed to various difficulties in the process of learning, the schools have no provision of any emergency cases such as first aids being prepared to the students in case of any health care or issues, there is no provision the food security, as the students has to go out to the streets or from house-to-house begging for alms and worst still, they even do the menials jobs to feed themselves (Magashi, 2015). These acts of begging have been exposing the Almajiri to many dangers, as a result of their intermingling with other people some of them resort to steeling, pick pocketing and are used by others to destabilized the peace of the state (Yusha'u, Tsafe, Babangida, & Lawal, 2013).

The financial challenges face by the Tsangaya system of education has contributed to the deteriorated nature of the schools and the bitter consequences has affected the Almajiri negatively in their academic performance, health status and socio economic and well-being of the Almajiri.

Potiskum is one among the 17 local governments in Yobe State, North-eastern part of Nigeria on the highway at 11°43N 11°04E. Potiskum has an area of 599 square kilometers (216 square meter) and a population of 250, 421 based on estimation in the year 2019. It has multi-ethnic group citizens, they are *Bolewa*, *Karai-Karai*, *Ngizim* and Hausa Fulani (Bigwan, Tinja, & Damen, 2012). Potiskum is the largest city in the state with affluent business in the district. It has been a blooming trade area in the state because of its strategic location as a center of learning, commerce and culture. People from neighboring states such as Gombe, Bauchi, Jigawa, Borno, Kano and various others from Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Benin and Central African Republic have patronized in the largest cattle market in sub-Saharan Africa which is located in Potiskum (Hassan,

Hassan, & Jambo, 2019). Potiskum was chosen as the area of study because Potiskum town is one of the areas that has many Tsangaya schools in northern part of Nigeria. The traditional leaders in the areas encouraged the development of Tsangaya system of education by inviting scholars and giving them all the necessary assistance to settle and establish the schools in the area. The schools followed the informal teaching and learning circle whereas the pupils or disciples came from various parts of Nigeria for the purpose of learning and memorizing the glorious Qur'an. It is a belief that a student would not concentrate to memorize the Qur'an while in his hometown.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many literatures that describe the history of Tsangaya system of education and the problems faced by the system. These studies are significant to this study as they provide basic information on the subject matter. However, there is no qualitative study that examine in details the financial problems of Tsangaya system of education and how it affects the Almajiri. The study found that there is a relationship between student's academic achievement and the improved school building conditions (Fisher, 2001). Zakir et al., (2014) explained that Almajiris roams the streets all day searching for the little food to eat from house to house, restaurants, and marketplaces. It is extremely difficult for these pupils to come across a balanced diet food on the streets, apart from the spoilt leftover.

The study highlighted that from close interaction and acquaintance with the Tsangaya schools, the Almajiri children eat all sorts of foods at once that sometimes have negative and dangerous feeding and nutritional effects (Shehu, 2006). As a result of the financial challenges, Almajiris cannot afford the health care services, and they received no treatments of any ailments from either government or private hospitals. Even in some places that medical care is free, Almajiri was marginalized because of his position in the society (Perverz, 2005). The unhygienic nature of the Tsangaya schools makes the Almajiri to urinate and pass stools anywhere, because the schools lack the availability of toilets (Zakir et al., 2014).

Abubakar & Muhammad (2020) exposed that Almajiris take their lessons under trees or in sheds if they are lucky. Where there is accommodation for the students, it is mostly overcrowded and poorly ventilated. Begging exposes the Almajiri to many dangers and difficulties as they are always on the streets begging for alms which may be hazardous to their lives (Yusha'u, Tsafe, Babangida, & Lawal, 2013). Though justifying this assertion, Shitu & Olaofe revealed that some analyst argues that Almajiris who merely relies on begging for their survival and does not know where their next meal will come from, can easily become victim of threats (Shittu, & Olaofe, 2015).

The study also reveals that as children whom are roaming in the streets face serious health challenges as a result of their exposure to sun, heat, cold, rain and other harsh weather conditions. These affect the health, mental, physical and wellbeing of the people. Children of the street suffer serious health problems due to their exposure to the harsh weather of extreme cold during the harmattan period and severe heat during the hot season, this puts their spiritual, mental, social and physical well-being at risk. (Thapa, Ghatane, & Rimal, 2009).

Besides that, the Almajiri have not been given financial support to afford the basic necessities during the entire period of his studies. All the schools investigated under this study have no hostel accommodation, food, and clothes among others for the students. The study also reveals that the absence of the financial support by government, non-governmental and individual in the

running of the Almajiris life and cater their essential needs, leads them to a terrible condition. Almajiris are experiencing intense lack of fundamental needs in their lives. The Family poor background and poverty has effect on the children's performance, achievements, health status and behaviors. Confirming the above statement Odumusu et-al, express that, children that grown up with the poor parents or under abject poverty have a high tendency of developing bad behaviors and performed below average in their studies (Odumusu et al., 2013). Most of the times, Almajiri went to other families and engages themselves as domestic workers at their tender age, washing plates, sweeping, going errand and other domestic works. That would not allow them to concentrate on their studies and achieve the objectives of being in school.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted the qualitative method of research whereas, documents and in-depth interview was conducted to ascertain the financial problems of Tsangaya schools and how it affects the Almajiri. structured interview was designed as a technique or instrument of collecting data that is widely used in qualitative research in order to ascertain the financial problems of Tsangaya system of education and its effect on the Almajiri (Punch, 2013). A structured interview is a type of interview in which the interviewer asks only a few predetermined questions while the rest of the questions are not planned in advance (Cachia & Millward, 2011). The participants of the Interview include, Almajiri, Teachers of Tsangaya, Experts from the Academia, Parents of the Almajiri, relevant government officials and people living with Almajiri. The study used the thematic data analysis in analyzing the data gathered from the interview. The interview participants were coded as *ALJ*, *ALM*, *GOF*, *PLA* and *ALJPR*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Financial Problems of the Tsangaya System of Education in Potiskum

Several years ago, the Tsangaya system of education in Potiskum, Yobe State is facing the financial problems which affect the smooth running and the successes of the system in general. Tsangaya system of education are not receiving any form of funding from the various governments, they are only either funded by community and individual efforts or not funded at all. Many of these problems that the system is suffering from originate from this lack of funding. Education, it is known that is an expensive venture requires sufficient funding for infrastructure, teachers, and teaching and learning materials amongst other forms of expenditure if it is to produce the right caliber of products. Given the poor state of funding for the entire spectrum of Islamic schools, it is no wonder that a majority of them are in such a despicable state (Mashema & Kawu). Shehu, observed that, the setback of the system resulted from the poor funding by the government. In most cases, they depend on only school fees that are usually token and meagre, and do not actually sustain the schools. The society still suffers from the hangover of the notion of the almost free and charitable "Tsangaya". Therefore, this problem as we all know, is very serious, because it has a direct bearing on the quality and standards of such schools and their outputs (Alao, 2017).

There are many financial challenges faced by the Tsangaya system of education in Potiskum, among them are:

Absence of School Infrastructures and its Effects on Almajiri

As a result of financial challenges of the Tsangaya system of education in Potiskum, issues of the physical structures available in the Almajiris schools such as classrooms, hostels, conveniences sports facilities are investigated. The study revealed that Tsangaya schools in Potiskum do not have a proper building arrangements or structures. There is no particular structure built for the purpose of teaching and learning activities in the schools. However, the Tsangaya schools that are situated on the outskirts of the town are built with thatches and sticks. The study explored the places lessons are taken in the Tsangaya schools include; uncompleted buildings, a temporary shed built outside the teacher's compound, spaces along the streets and outer spaces of people's compounds. All the respondents testified the scarcity of schooling facilities. Responding to the issues of hostels, classrooms and conveniences the participants confirmed that: *"The government's inability to provide financial assistance to the Tsangaya schools has make the system to be in deplorable conditions and affected the teaching and learning of the Almajiri, the absence of physical structures such as class rooms has affected the performance of the Almajiri as they were studying under the trees or in the bush, this has really affected their studies and their health status"* (ALM1).

The absence of financial support by the government and non-governmental organizations to the Tsangaya schools, is among the factors led to the unavailability of physical structures as stated by a participant: *"With the Tsangaya's in ability to finance the structures of the school, studies in an open place exposes many Almajiris into dangers, in a situation where there is hot or very cold weather the students may fall sick and subsequently affect their health conditions"* (ALJ2).

Besides that, another participant lamented on the problems faced by Almajiris on the issue of accommodation in the Tsangaya schools were he exclaimed that: *"Due to financial challenges faced by the Tsangaya schools in Potiskum resulted to non- availability of students hostels and accommodations, this necessitates them to be sleeping in an open space, in the case of rainy season or cold weather they sleep at other people's garages, this has exposed many Almajiris to health related dangers, sometime 10-20 Almajiris will be sleeping in a one garage without any ventilations this has caused many diseases to them and it has affected the smooth running of their studies"* (PLA).

Lack of Students Feedings and its Effects on the Almajiri

In a general perspective, all human being need food on daily basis to survive. Therefore, Almajiri on the other hands also needs food for their survival. The study reveals that there is a lack of meals in the Tsangaya schools in Potiskum. The governments at various levels have not provided the feeding to Almajiri. This necessitate the Almajiri to go out and beg for what to eat, the Almajiri's food begging has affected his life, health as well as his studies. The interview respondent has reiterated that: *"Due to the financial incapability of the Tsangaya teachers and the parents to take care of the Almajiri feeding, the Almajiri resorted to take their bowls and go for begging from house to house and the streets. The time they supposed to study was spent looking for food, this bagging has exposed the Almajiri to many dangers and it affected his health status and studies"* (ALJ3).

Besides that, another participant similarly disclosed that: *"The financial issues led to the absence of available food to the Almajiri, Almajiri have to beg in order to get food to eat. The disadvantages of begging by Almajiri are numerous. In addition to taking away a large chunk of the time that they could use in their Qur'anic studies, begging reduces their self-esteem and induces in them indolence, laziness and dependence on others. It also exposes them to some sorts of deviant*

behavior and immoral practices. Furthermore, it undermines the image of Muslims and portrays Islam as a religion of poverty, backwardness and filth” (ALM2).

Food is the basic necessity needed daily for the survival of any living being, therefore, the inability of the Almajiri to get three square meals daily is affecting his life, health and studies. In an interview with a participant revealed that: *“With the financial weakness, food is very difficult for us to get, and most of the time we acquired food through begging either from house to house, food vendor, or a restaurant. Almost all the food gotten used to be left over from the people. Sometimes the food is spoiled but we have to eat for our survival, because we do not have any alternative, which affect our health condition” (AMJ3).*

Absence of Health Care Services and its Effects on the Almajiri

A health care or medical facilities refers to the places where medical care services are provided, which includes clinics, dispensary and hospitals (Maina et al., 2019). Better health care services are paramount important to the physical and physiological development of human being.

Whereas the absence of medical facilities or its inadequacy in the Tsangaya schools in Potiskum expose many Almajiri to dangers. These affect the health, mental, physical and wellbeing of the people. Almajiri of the street suffer serious health problems due to their exposure to the harsh weather of extreme cold during the harmattan period and severe heat during the hot season, this puts their spiritual, mental, social and physical well-being at risk (Thapa, Ghatane, & Rimal, 2009).

However, two of the participants in an interview recalled that the financial incapacitation of the Tsangaya schools in Potiskum had made Almajiri vulnerable and facing difficulty as a result of the absence of health facilities in the Tsangaya schools. *“Financial incapability and the deplorable condition of the Tsangaya schools make the Almajiri vulnerable to many diseases and has no means of taking care of himself in either government nor private clinics, the Almajiri may find himself in a difficult situation that will affect his health and his performance in the studies” (ALJ1).* Similarly, statement by the second participant disclosed that: *“Lack of health care facilities to the Almajiri is affecting the studies and the life of Almajiri, whereas, Almajiri may fall sick and cannot afford the expenses of the medical services, he can only resort to traditional medicines of spiritual to cure his illness, this is affecting the life of the Almajiri and hinders the smooth running of his studies” (ALJ3).*

The study observed that there were no hospitals, pharmacies or clinics around the Tsangaya schools. The pupils could not afford the cheapest medicines either in the government or the private clinics, depicts the responses of the participants on the absence of medical facilities. A participant opined that the absence of medical facilities affected their studies, as stated that: *“With the absence of free and available medical services to the expense of Almajiri, in case of any diseases we cannot afford to go to hospitals we only pray to God to heal our sickness, sometimes, if the sickness persist can affect our body and can cause many damages to our body and we cannot be able to continue with our studies” (ALJ2).*

The Parents Poor Financial Background and its Effects on Almajiri

Chowdhury opined that the poverty of the family serves as the main cause of children to beg or roaming on the streets (Chowdhury et al., 2017). Most of the parents sending their children to the Tsangaya schools in Potiskum, Yobe State are laborer’s or minor traders that wander from one weekly market to another. The statement was confirmed by a respondent during an interview,

where he states that: *“As a result of poverty, parent’s sent their children to the Tsangaya schools without any provisions, children sometimes as little as three or four years of age would have to involve into street or door to door begging for food to eat on daily basis” (GOF1).*

However, one of the participants disclosed that: *“Inadequate intervention of the Almajiri’s parents due to the poor background, has negatively affected the smooth running of the Almajiris program. Levey was imposed on the Almajiri to pay the compulsory Kudin Laraba to the school on weekly basis. Therefore, Almajiri has to strive hard in sourcing and paying the fees during the period of his study regularly, otherwise he has to be punished” (ALM2).*

Usman argue that the disadvantaged situation of the Almajiri life cycle started from parent’s poor economic levels and the lack of skills acquisition, Islamic studies education and formal education (Usman & Romic, 2015). Absence of significant skills that can make them to get employment or self-reliance which are subjected to poverty and its related nasty experiences. Agreeing with the above views, one of the participants mentioned that: *“As a result of our inability to take charge of our wards financial responsibilities due to financial incapability, we resort to enrolling our children to the free Tsangaya schools instead of formal schools where fees are charged. Most of the times we are unable to give either school fees nor incentives to the teachers. Though, it’s our responsibility to cater the educational needs our children, which includes, payment of school expenses, feeding, clothing and other daily needs. These would assist them in achieving their desired goal of achieving the qualitative education and succeed in life” (ALJPR1).*

Lack of Financial Support from the Government and the Community and its Effects on Almajiri

There are many national and international organizations who are agitating for street child welfare. Among these organizations are: United Nations International Children’s Emergency Funds (UNICEF), Aid for Human and Children Aid Foundation. Despite this agitation, the absence of government support to the Almajiri pupils exposed many children to the street (Abro, 2012). Scholars like Isiaka strained the significance of government’s involvement in the Tsangaya Qur’anic school structure, with a view to improving the socioeconomic wellbeing of the Almajiris (Isiaka, 2015). Therefore, the Tsangaya system of education in Potiskum are facing the same challenges of not receiving any financial assistance from either the government or wealthy individuals, this has really affected the lives and conditions of the Almajiri. The interview participants explicitly stated that: *“The Absence of the financial support from the stakeholders towards the development of Tsangaya schools contributed to the deteriorations states of the schools, the schools needed financial support to build classes, hostels and other things. On the other hand, the financial incapacitation necessitates the Almajiris to move into the streets seeking for alms in order to take care of their selves” (ALJ1).*

Interview with participant reiterated that: *“We were not being given recognition by the government and the community at the same time, we have never received any financial assistance from the government, but sometimes people used to render token assistance in cash or kind, sometimes with food items especially from the parent or guardian of Almajiri” (ALJ2).* The setback that the Tsangaya schools falls into, has been as a result of the absence of financial support by the government and non-governmental organization to the Tsangaya schools, as a participant disclosed: *“Financial handicapped suffered by the Tsangaya schools is as a result of government in*

ability to support the schools, this financial difficulty has made the schools to be backward, hence affected the conducive environment for the studies of the Almajiri and made him perform below the expectation" (PLA1).

The study exposed that Almajiri have not been given financial support to afford the basic necessities during the entire period of his studies. All the schools investigated under this study have no hostel accommodation, food, and clothes among others for the students. The research also reveals that the absence of the financial support by government, non-governmental and individual in the running of the Almajiris life and cater their essential needs, leads them to a terrible condition. Almajiris are experiencing intense lack of fundamental needs in their lives (Odumosu et al., 2013). They do not have all the basic needs for the improvement of their survival. The participant reveals that: *"Lack of essential needs such as soap, shoes, detergents, tooth paste and others make people in the community are running away from us and as result we are always being isolated from the community which affects our social interaction with people and perceive Almajiri as inferior in the society" (ALJ3)*

DISCUSSION

The data gathered from interview indicate that Tsangaya schools in Potiskum, Yobe state were engulfed with so many financial challenges, ranging from unavailability of physical and infrastructures, feeding and health care services for the Almajiri. these challenges make the Tsangaya schools backward and has affected the level of performance, health status, security and socio-economic status of the Almajiri. The study found that government and communities' inability to financially support the Tsangaya schools has made the system unattracted and put the lives of the Almajiri in many dangers and exposed them to many social vices and other forms of insecurity in the state.

CONCLUSION

The study conclude that the financial problems faced by the Tsangaya schools in Potiskum area of Yobe State has contributed in making the system backward and negatively affected the Almajiri educationally, socially and economically. Whereas, the study has described that, the financial problems which includes school's infrastructures, feeding, health care services have affected the progress of the Tsangaya schools, and hence affect the Almajiri in his studies such as performance and his health care, well-being and social status. The host communities and the government are not giving adequate financial support to the Tsangaya schools, this make the system to be in a deplorable condition and the nemesis has backfired on the Almajiri and society at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher would like to recommend the following for the improvement of the condition of Almajiri and Tsangaya system of education in Potiskum local government area of Yobe State.

i. The government should finance, intervene and support in building the physical structure of the Tsangaya schools. which is boarding by nature, as there is no individual that can afford to

establish the Tsangaya school unless with the intervention of the government which will enable to reach out the basic minimum infrastructure and the welfare conditions of the Almajiris.

ii. State government and local government authorities should take active role in financing, supervising the activities of Tsangaya schools in the areas by giving them any possible re-enforcement and continue to assist teachers (with even mega amount of salary or allowances) in the Tsangaya schools.

iii. The government and stakeholders should come up with a salary scale structure in favor of the teachers of Tsangaya schools, or they should be included in the government's payroll, this is because they are currently run-on charity. The teachers are not in governments payroll.

iv. Awareness, the communities need to be aware of the importance of the Tsangaya schools in their midst, the teaching and learning the glorious Qur'an is a very vital to the social and moral development of the Ummah, therefore there is a need for the society to assist the schools financially.

v. Philanthropic activities, the wealthy individuals among the various communities should inculcate the gesture of generosity by assisting the Tsangaya schools with the required items which includes physical structures, feeding and other incentives to the teachers and the students. These would go along in curtailing the financial inabilities of the Tsangaya schools.

vi. Awqaf institutions, the institutions of Waqf should empower the Tsangaya schools with their funds and properties. Some of the waqf properties can be used as schools and be managed by the Tsangaya schools, cash waqf can be sourced and utilized for the payment of salaries, school's infrastructures, and other working materials.

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