

An Assessment of Almajiri Integrated Model School Pupils' Performance in Qur'anic Subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria

Abdulhameed Ishola Jimba

Centre for Ilorin Studies (CILS) University of Ilorin, Nigeria

Corresponding email: jimba.abdulhameed@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

Almajiri is an education system practiced in northern Nigeria whereby Almajiri pupils are only exposed to Quranic learning. For these pupils to become relevant and valuable in this modern society, the Federal Government of Nigeria formulated a formalizing their Almajiri education system and integrated Western education without jeopardizing Quranic learning. To find out if Almajiri education is not being negatively affected because of the policy, this study assessed Almajiri Integrated School Pupils' performance in Quranic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The research method employed was a descriptive survey. Using the purposive sampling technique, four schools (2 urban and 2 rural schools) where the needed data were readily available were sampled. Two hundred seventy-three (273) subjects (94 from urban and 179 from rural areas) were purposively tested for the study. Pro-forma was designed as a research instrument and collected the 2013/2014 primary 3 Promotional Examination Results. The Percentage, Mean and Standard deviation, Bar Chart, and t-test statistical tools were used for data analysis. The study revealed, among others, that the general performance of Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils in the Qur'anic subjects was below average. The paper concluded an urgent need to empirically explore factors responsible for the low performance to improve it.

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INTRODUCTION

Over some decades ago, the northern part of Nigeria had been noted for the Traditional Qur'anic Education System (TQES), even before the advent of the western education system in the region. The education system started in the 11th century in the Kanem Borno Empire (Gambo, 2005) and later transformed to Almajiri Education System (AbdulQadir, 2003). However, the word "Almajiri" is derived from the Arabic word "Al-Muhājir," meaning a person who migrates from one place to another for a religious purpose (see Q.S. Ali Imran:195 and Q.S. At-Taubah: 100). The word was borrowed from Arabic into the Hausa language and was later corrupted to "Almajiri". Thus, within the Hausa language, it means a young child or an adult who moves from one place to another, mainly along the street, begging for sustenance. Technically, it means a traditional Qur'anic school pupil or student who leaves home to a distant place for Qur'anic education (Jimba, 2017; Khafidah et al., 2020).

Owing to the high value placed on the Almajiri education system in the north, the parents' pupils usually send them out, mostly from rural areas to urban where they can learn the Qur'an (Gambo, 2005) and (Zakir et al., 2014). In the pre-colonial period, it was the state's responsibility, communities, and the parents, to maintain the schools before the coming of the colonial masters. The scholars and the school system used to benefit a lot from Zakat (Poor due) and Waqf (Perpetual endowment) (AbdulQadir, 2003; Gambo, 2005). The Almajiri system of education was productive in the pre-colonial period, such that it has produced scholars, administrators, politicians, and clerks (Adamu, 2004). It perhaps is due to the availability of necessary facilities that aid the effective teaching-learning process, or the entire economic and political support, especially the physiological needs of the teachers and the pupils, catered for from the public funds to ensure the system's productivity. Moreover, the psyche of both the teachers and the pupils was then well-composed as there were no challenges whatsoever to disrupt the system.

However, consequent upon the British colonialism and Christian missionaries coming, the state's maintenance by the state, communities through public funds stopped automatically. Thus, the Almajiri system of education collapsed and was replaced with "Karatun Boko," i.e., Western education, and in order to survive and to continue their school system, the Mallams influenced the pupils to resort to begging for their sustenance and maintenance of the school (AbdulQadir, 2003; Gambo, 2005). Thus, this phase is the genesis of begging and menial jobs with which the Almajiris are identified today (AbdulQadir, 2003; Adamu, 2004). Therefore, Almajiri pupils were never beggars until the traditional Qur'anic school collapsed in the north, which negatively affected the socio-economic, political, cultural, and intellectual lives of Muslims in the country. Consequently, this condition resulted in a high dropout of the students from the school system, making a high population of the Almajiris. There are now millions of Almajiris across the country. For instance, the National Council for the Welfare of the

Destitute (NCWD) put the number to be about 7 million (Adamu, 2014). Unfortunately, it is a substantial human capital crying for positive exploitation and development.

Meanwhile, the aims of primary education, as introduced by the Christian Missionaries and later supported by the colonial administrators, were to instill biblical reading skills both in English and the local language of its recipients and to train them on gardening, agriculture as well as to become teacher-catechists and clergymen for the church (Imam, 2012). It was why the northern Muslim leaders initially rejected western education.

Incidentally, the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1999, during the administration of former president Olusegun Obasanjo, later launched the national free primary education and used Universal Basic Education (UBE) as the terminology for the scheme resulting in primary and junior secondary education in Nigeria (Oyelade, 2004). According to the National Policy on Education (2013) and (Education for All 2015 National Review), this UBE shall be free, compulsory, universal, and qualitative. One of the scheme's objectives is to ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative "and life" skills, and the ethical, moral, security, and civic values needed to lay a solid foundation for lifelong learning. Meanwhile, during this time, Almajiri education was being run informally. So, for Almajiri pupils, including all other traditional Qur'anic school pupils, to benefit from this scheme across the country, the Government of Nigeria set up a National Implementation Committee on Almajiri education in October 2010. The Committee succeeded wildly in implementing western education with Almajiri education and formalizing its existing curriculum (Semere, 2015).

The measure mentioned above and Islam's flexible attitude to all branches of knowledge later resulted in the formulation of a policy by the government of Nigeria. The Almajiri pupils of the north should subsequently be exposed to the modern education system, based on the understanding that the Western education system's curriculum content would not jeopardize the interest of the Islamic system of education. Thus, for the preservation and sustainability of Islamic culture of the north, significant and complementary roles both Qur'anic and western education developed the individual and the society at large. The existing Almajiri education system was formalized, and western education was integrated into it under the new scheme of Universal Basic Education (UBE). Hence, Almajiri Integrated Model School by the former President Goodluck Jonathan in April 2012 in Sokoto State, Nigeria (Elechi and Yekorogha, 2013) ensured that Almajiri pupils had a better life and contributed their quota to the nation through both Qur'anic and western education systems.

Therefore, since the commissioning of the school, no study has been conducted to ascertain if the performance of the school pupils in Qur'anic subjects: Arabic, Islamic Studies, and Qur'an memorization ("Tahfiz Al-Qur'an") is not being jeopardized as a result of the integration system (Abdulkarim & Suud, 2020).

Thus, this study aimed to assess the academic performance of Almajiri Integrated School Pupils in Qur'anic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Since this work dealt with assessing the academic performance of Almajiri pupils, it is apt to define the concept of academic performance. Thus, the term becomes the achievements in school, the teacher,s and the school according to specific measurement and evaluation techniques (Jimba, 2017). It is also seen as an actual premium upon which teaching and learning activities are measured using some criteria of excellence like good academic performance, poor academic performance, and academic failure (Fatai & Abdullahi, 2018). However, many variables influence the academic performance of students. These are instructional methods and materials, time of instructional delivery, learning environment, teachers' and students' characteristics, and teaching qualification. For instance, Che Noh, Omar, and Kasan (2013) asserted that a positive attitude affects students' motivation, meaning that they learn more about a subject if they have a positive attitude. Also, Abijo (2014) also claimed that when teachers lack instructional materials, effective learning cannot occur. Abdullahi (2014) also noted that teachers' characteristics have a significant impact on students' performance.

Similarly, it is pertinent to review relevant theories and empirical works on the influence of school location on students' performance. Many Almajiri pupils come from rural areas to urban areas to better access Quranic education (Gambo, 2005; Zakir et al., 2014). It, therefore, underlies the consideration of school location in this work to determine whether it will influence the pupils' performance or not. Thus, regarding the influence of school location on academic performance, Ajayi (2009) maintained that urban students perform better than rural students because qualified teachers, a conducive learning environment, and facilities are usually found in urban areas absent in rural areas. Chianson (2014) also asserted that low-performing youths are primarily found in rural areas. Moreover, long walking distance, fatigue, and hunger are also other common factors for poor performance as these lead students to drowsiness during learning (Mhiliwa, 2015).

Another related submission is that the challenges of higher poverty being faced in rural areas in Nigeria and the English language being the lingua franca opposed to the native language widely spoken in rural schools can primarily affect students' performance (Alordiah et al., 2015). In another study, Olonade (2000) discovered a significant difference between students' mathematics achievement in urban and rural schools. Further, Owwoye and Yara (2011) found a significant difference between students' academic achievement in rural and urban secondary schools using senior school certificates as a yardstick. In any case, performance can be influenced by the school location.

Meanwhile, Sulaiman (2004) viewed that the Holy Qur'an is the Holy book that provides for all aspects of human life. Thus, the aim of the Qur'anic/Almajiri education system is to intimate young Muslim children with recitation and

application of the Qur'anic teachings. Adequate attention and necessary provisions ought to be given to the teaching-learning process, teachers, and students to realize the pupils' expected performance.

Incidentally, the curriculum contents of the Almajiri Integrated Model School System include the following Core Subjects: English language, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies together with Hausa language, Computer, Physical Education, Handwriting, Commerce, Handcraft, Mechanic, vulcanizing and Islamic calligraphy, among others as Vocational skills of their curriculum. Other subjects on Qur'anic education involve a strong foundation in a recitation of the Glorious Qur'an, Tahfiz (Qur'an memorization with Tajweed), Arabic, Islamic Studies, Tawheed, Hadith, Fiqh and Sirah (Yusha'u et al., 2013).

There should be a review of relevant previous research works related to Almajiri pupils' performance at this juncture. For instance, Abubakar and Njoku (2015) found that most Almajiri Integrated Model School students performed better in Islamic Studies than their counterparts in the conventional Sultan Bello Junior Secondary School. They also observed that Almajiri influenced academic performance.

Moreover, the President, Civil Rights Congress of Nigeria (CRCN) posited that the new Almajiri education policy is likely to arm the Almajiris and their teachers. It implies that the policy may negatively affect the adequate performance of the teachers and pupils' academic performance, thereby inhibiting the accomplishment of the aims and objectives of Almajiri Education, which was traditionally to provide Muslim children with sound Islamic learning and to be helpful in the society (Kwagyang & Nik Mahmood, 2015). One of the challenges that may inhibit the excellent performance of Almajiri pupils is the dwindling capacity of Almajiri school teachers to cater to the pupils' needs coupled with the prevalence of the psychiatric disorder among the Almajiris. Their study further revealed that the pupils were more prone to having depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, and their social profile is most likely to expose them to mental health problems (Abdullateef et al., 2017).

However, the study's general objective was to assess Almajiri Integrated Model School Pupils' Performance in Quranic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the following:

1. The performance of Almajiri Integrated Model School Pupils in Qur'anic subjects in urban areas
2. The performance of Almajiri Integrated Model School Pupils in Qur'anic subjects in rural areas

Also, the following research questions were answered in the course of the study

1. What is the general performance of Almajiri Integrated School Pupils in Qur'anic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria?
2. What is the performance of Almajiri Integrated School Pupils in Qur'anic subjects in urban areas?

3. What is the performance of Almajiri Integrated Model School Pupils in Qur'anic subjects in rural areas?

Similarly, the following research hypothesis was formulated and tested: **H₀**: there is no significant difference between urban and rural Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils' performance in Qur'anic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

METHODS

This study aimed to assess Almajiri Integrated School Pupils' performance in Qur'anic subjects, i.e., Arabic, Islamic Studies, and Qur'an memorization (Tahfiz al-Qur'an), in Sokoto State, Nigeria. Therefore, the descriptive quantitative research method was employed, which Ogunbameru and Ogunbameru (2010) defined as a research method for describing a phenomenon. Thus, the research method is appropriate for the study since the description of the academic performance of the sampled subjects is involved based on data collection. Four out of the six schools (2 urban and 2 rural schools) that had pupils from primary 1 to 3 being the highest class that cut across the 4 schools, as at the time of data collection for this study, and where the data for this study were readily available were sampled, using the purposive sampling technique. Ninety-Four (94) pupils were selected from urban locations, while 179 pupils were tested from the rural area. Hence, 273 participants were used in this study. These pupils were chosen from each school using the purposive sampling technique due to their utter availability.

Research Instrument

A Pro-forma was designed and used to collect the 2013/2014 primary 3 Promotional Examination Results of the Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils. The Pro-forma has two sections; both sections 1 and 2 featured the name and location of the school, the academic session, i.e., 2013/2014, and the academic subjects considered under Qur'anic and secular subjects, respectively. However, to ensure the face and content validity of the instrument, it was given to the researcher's supervisor and an expert in Educational Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the inter-rater reliability method. Two raters collected the same data set at different times, subjected to Cohen's Kappa statistic to assess the level of agreement between the two raters; thus, the percent agreement obtained was 85%.

Data Analysis Technique

The percentage was adopted to describe the personal characteristics of the respondents. Research questions 1, 2 & 3 were answered using Mean scores and Standard deviation. In contrast, the 1 null research hypothesis: "there is no significant difference between urban and rural Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils' performance in Qur'anic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria," used the t-test

inferential statistics at the alpha level of 0.05. As shown in Table 1, the range score was also used to determine the ranges and grades of the various scores obtained in the subjects, which are statistically described using the bar chart.

Table 1. Range Score on the Ranges and Grades of the Various Scores/Mean Scores Obtained in Qur'anic Subjects

Maximum Score	Minimum Score	=	Range	Desired Level	=	Group Size
100	- 05	=	95	÷ 5	=	19

Table 1 shows that the minimum score is 05 subtracted from the maximum score of 100, giving the range of 95, and divided by the number of the group considered in the study, i.e., 5, giving the group size of 19 used to group the pupils' scores into various grades as shown below.

Table 2. The Ranges/Grades of the Various Scores/Mean Scores Obtained in Qur'anic Subjects.

S/N	Score	Grade
1.	5-24	Poor
2.	25-44	Fair
3.	45-64	Good
4.	65-84	Very Good
5.	85 & above	Excellent

Table 2 indicates that scores from 5 to 24 are Poor, 25 to 44 are Fair, 45 to 64 are Good, 65 to 84 are Very Good, and above 85 are Excellent.

RESULTS

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Table 3. School Location of the Pupils

School Location	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Urban	94	34.4
Rural	179	65.6
Total	273	100.0

Table 3 shows that 94 (34.4%) of the pupils sampled are from urban areas while 179 (65.5%) come from rural areas of Sokoto State, Nigeria; altogether, making 273 (100%) participated in the study.

Answering of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the general performance of Almajiri Integrated School Pupils in Qur'anic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria?

Table 4. Mean scores and Standard deviation on the general performance of Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils in Qur'anic Subjects

Descriptive statistics				
Pupils' performance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Qur'anic subjects	273	42.0672	10.22298	Fair

Table 4 reveals that the 273 sampled pupils obtain a mean score of 42.0672 and a standard deviation of 10.22298 in Qur'anic subjects. The general performance of the pupils in Qur'anic subjects was below average but fair, according to Table 2. Generally, therefore, the performance of the pupils is reasonably good.

Table 5. Bar Chart Descriptive statistic showing the Frequencies/ Percentages of Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils and their various Grades in Qur'anic subjects

Grade	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative %
Poor	41	15.0	15.0	15.0
Fair	115	42.1	42.1	57.1
Good	95	34.8	34.8	91.9
Very Good	19	7.0	7.0	98.9
Excellent	3	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	273	100.0	100.0	

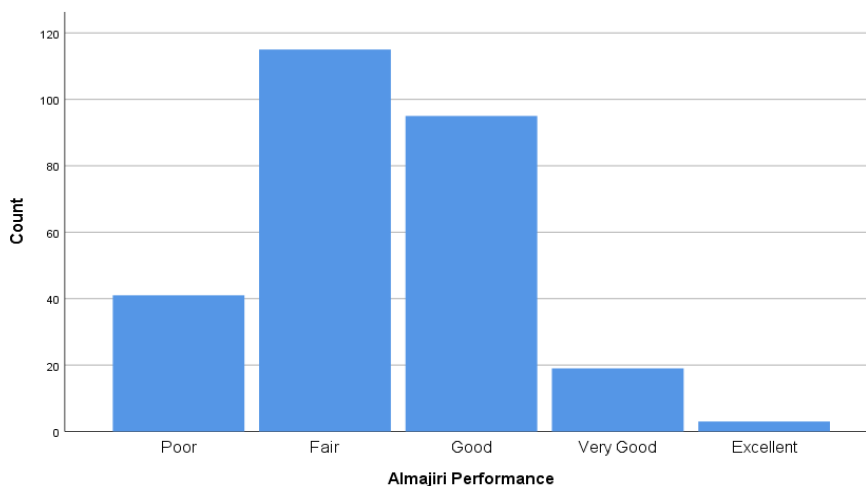


Image 1: Bar Chart Graph Showing Almajiri Pupils' Performance

Table 5 reveals that out of 273 (100%) sampled pupils, 41 (15.0%) obtained "Poor", 115 (42.1%) obtained "Fair", 95 (34.8%) got "Good", 19 (7.0%) performed well with "Very Good" while 3 (1.1%) obtained "Excellent" grade in Qur'anic subjects. In order words, the grades: "Fair" is ranked 1st, "Good" ranked 2nd, "Poor" ranked 3rd, "Very Good" ranked 4th, while "Excellent" is ranked 5th being the least. The majority of the pupils performed below average.

Research Question 2: What is the performance of Almajiri Integrated School Pupils in Qur'anic subjects in urban areas?

Table 6: Mean score and Standard deviation on Almajiri Integrated Model School Pupils' Performance in Quranic subjects in an urban location

Descriptive statistics				
Pupils' performance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Qur'anic subjects	94	43.1395	11.00332	Fair

Table 6 shows that the 94 sampled pupils in the urban areas of Sokoto State, Nigeria, participating in this study obtain a mean score of 43.1395 with a corresponding standard deviation of 11.00332 in the Qur'anic subjects. By implication, the performance of the pupils in the Qur'anic subjects was below average but fair based on Table 2.

Research Question 3: What is Almajiri Integrated Model school pupils' performance in Quranic subjects in a rural location?

Table 7. Mean score and Standard deviation on the performance of Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils in Qur'anic subjects in a rural location

Descriptive statistics				
Pupils' performance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Qur'anic subjects	179	41.5040	9.77323	Fair

As revealed in Table 7, the 179 sampled pupils in the rural location of Sokoto State, Nigeria, have a mean score of 41.5040 and a standard deviation of 9.77323 in the Qur'anic subjects. The performance of the pupils in Qur'anic subjects is below average but fair based on Table 2.

Hypothesis Testing

H0: There is no significant difference between urban and rural Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils' performance in the Qur'anic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Table 8. T-test Analysis on the Influence of School location on the performance of Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils in the Qur'anic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria

Location	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t-value	Sig.	Remark
Urban	94	43.1395	11.00332	177	1.27	0.127	Accepted
Rural	179	41.5040	9.77323	177			

As revealed in Table 8, the t-value (1.27) with a p-value of 0.127 is obtained when computed at the 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value (0.127) is more significant than the 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is retained. In other words, the difference between Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils' performances in Quranic subjects was not statistically significant at $p > 0.05$. Thus, the hypothesis retained no significant difference between urban and rural Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils' performance in the Quranic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings revealed that the general performance of Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils in the Qur'anic subjects was below average but fair. Unfortunately, this finding is against the expectations of many people who subscribed to modernizing the Almajiri education system and integrating western education with the system. When the policy was introduced, it would help the Almajiri pupils realize their potentials and bring about better performance of the pupils, especially in the aspect of the Qur'anic education system having been formalized. With this development, something is going wrong somewhere, perhaps on the curriculum implementation process or the curriculum itself. This low level of performance of the pupils may be that the pupils have a negative attitude because, according to Che Noh et al. (2013), students' positive attitude largely influences good performance.

The finding may also be due to the dwindling capacity of Almajiri school teachers to cater to the pupils' needs coupled with the prevalence of psychiatric disorder and depression, which Abdullateef et al. (2017) claimed. Also, as Abdullahi (2014) submitted, teaching qualification significantly impacted students' performance. Thus, the pupils' performance below average may also be connected with a lack of teaching qualification on the teachers taking the Quran. As observed by the researcher during data collection, some of the Quranic subject teachers were not professionally trained. In the same vein, there was no conducive learning environment equipped with adequate instructional materials to aid the teaching-learning process. This condition can obstruct effective learning, according to Abijo (2014) and Abdullah (2014). Furthermore, despite the government's provisions, the pupils may still roam about for their regular begging, do a menial job, and go back to school, having walked over a long distance. Perhaps, this issue is responsible for the pupils' low performance, because as respectively claimed by Alordiah (2015) that higher level of hunger in rural areas in Nigeria, and Mhiliwa (2015) that long walking distance, fatigue, and hunger are common factors that can primarily affect students' performance.

Therefore, all these highlighted possible causes of pupils' low performance need empiric research for prompt solutions. To achieve the aims of Almajiri education, which was traditionally to provide Muslim children with sound Islamic learning and to be helpful in the society (Kwagyang & Nik Mahmood, 2015), can be a mirage without addressing the issue.

Meanwhile, the finding aligns with the President's view, Civil Right Congress of Nigeria (CRCN). The new Almajiri education policy, if care is not taken, may cause a problem for the Almajiris and their teachers; perhaps, because of the fear that adequate necessary provisions and monitoring may not be in place to ensure excellent performance of the pupils in Qur'anic education.

However, the submission of Abubakar and Njoku (2015) is in contrast to this finding. Though they used Junior Secondary School Students for their study, they found that most Almajiri Integrated Model School students performed well in Islamic Studies and better than their counterparts in the conventional Sultan Bello Junior Secondary School. Urgent attention needs to be paid to the lower primary level to address the issue discovered in this study as soon as possible.

As for the influence of school location on Almajiri pupils' performance, the 94 pupils sampled from the urban area in the Quranic subjects were specifically below average. In the same vein, the 179 sampled rural pupils performed moderately in the Qur'anic subjects just like their counterparts in the urban area, but urban pupils performed very slightly better. The slightly higher performance of the urban pupils might be the terrain of the urban location. Though not significantly much, this finding is nearly in support of Ajayi (2009), who viewed that better teachers, a conducive learning environment, and facilities usually found in urban locations can cause students from an urban area to perform better a rural location. Chianson (2014) stated that low-performing youths are primarily found in rural locations.

Similarly, the finding is also almost in line with Owoeye and Yara (2011). They found that urban students performed better than their rural counterparts. Moreover, the result disagreed with Maliki et al. (2009). They discovered that students from rural schools performed better than those in urban schools using the 2006 JSS Mathematics test. Though their performance was not much, the urban pupils had access to better teaching-learning facilities than rural pupils. In any case, this finding, to some extent, supports the existing submissions that school location can influence student's performance.

Regarding the null hypothesis formulated in the study, the finding revealed no significant difference between Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils of urban and rural areas in Quranic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria. School location did not significantly influence the pupils' performance in Quranic subjects. This finding contradicted Olonade (2000), who discovered a significant difference between students' mathematics achievement in urban and rural schools. It is also in contrast with Owoeye and Yara (2011). They found a substantial difference between students' academic achievement in rural and urban secondary schools using senior school certificates as a yardstick. In any case, performance can be influenced by the school location.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed Almajiri Integrated Model School Pupils' Performance in Qur'anic subjects in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The study revealed that the general performance of Almajiri Integrated Model School pupils in the Qur'anic subjects was below average, but fair and no significant difference was found in the performance of the pupils in urban and rural areas of Sokoto State, Nigeria. Both the urban and rural pupils performed fairly, meaning that this result has raised a serious issue that needs to be addressed urgently to improve the pupils' performance. The low performance of the pupils implies that something is out of place in the policy. Therefore, all possible factors associated with the school curriculum and its responsible implementation process for this low performance, such as in the areas of instructional materials, teachers' characteristics and job performance, school environment/supervision, pupils' classroom attendance, age, gender, physiological and psychological needs need to be explored for prompt solutions. It will go a long way in helping in the realization of the objectives of the new policy of the Almajiri Integrated Model School system not only in the northern region but also all over the country.

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