

CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN KANO METROPOLIS-NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Children are considered excluded if they are deemed to be at risk of missing out on an environment that protects them from violence, abuse and exploitation, or if they are unable to access essential services and goods in a way that threatens their ability to participate fully in society in the future. Using qualitative methods and data, the research explored the views and experiences of children about poverty and social exclusion by explaining and discussing the forms of exclusion experienced by children as well as the policy implications of child exclusion in the study area. Manifest and latent content analysis was employed to analyze the data collected through Focus Group Discussions with two groups of children comprising children living with their parents and Almajirai. Themes surrounding social and spatial processes include inaccessibility to play grounds and public spaces, quality education, the labour market and challenges with 'dress codes' and the label 'almajiri'. All children view poverty as not having what one need and key items that surfaced in the discussions are lack of money and lack of food. While the children living with their parents cited not having quality education as their counterparts in private schools and deprivation of adequate playing grounds as the forms of exclusion experienced, the almajirai emphasized stigmatization, deprivation of sleeping space and adequate food. The study concludes that children's concerns can only be addressed by coordinated policy which brings about improvement in the quality of children's present lives through educational development of all children and by involvement of children as active participants in decision-making in all areas of their lives so as to develop and implement policies that satisfy their needs.

Keywords: Exclusion, Poverty, Almajirai

1.0 Introduction

"... on lives in a world that is often hidden or neglected- a world of vulnerability and exclusion. And it calls on all of us to speak up for the rights of children and to act on behalf of those who need our protection".
(Annan, 2005)

'Social exclusion' has become central to policy and academic discourse in Western Europe,

and increasingly in other parts of the world (Mathieson et al, 2008). It is defined as a complex process operating across several dimensions or domains. It involves both the lack and denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether

in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole (Levitas et al 2007).

A lot of the world's children are living in cities; more than half of all children in industrialized countries live in urban areas and the same will soon be true of the developing world too (Chawla, 2002). In fact, millions of children today live in urban slums, many without access to basic services. They are vulnerable to dangers ranging from violence and exploitation to the injuries, illnesses and death that result from living in crowded settlements atop hazardous rubbish dumps or alongside railroad tracks. Their situations and needs are often represented by aggregate figures that show urban children to be better off than their rural counterparts, obscuring the disparities that exist among children in the cities.

Across Europe there is a growing movement to place children's needs and children's rights at the center of city and urban planning strategies. This development is built on the understanding that if cities are to become genuinely sustainable places where families choose to bring up their children, then it is important that all young people are valued, involved as participants in urban decision-making, and have their needs considered in city planning (Greater London Authority, 2004). Together with the recent moves to monitor and measure children's well-being and the focus on urban childhoods, there have been several new initiatives to document the circumstances of children in European and other world cities and to develop strategies to ensure protection of their rights and well-being. Some of these initiatives include the United Nation's State of the World's children annual report (UNICEF 2005, 2006), The Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children (UNICEF, 2012) which reports on children's school status for different

countries and The State of London's Children Report (2004,) among others.

For nearly nine decades from 1924-2014, the international community represented by the UN and its agencies (United Nations International Children Emergency Fund) has taken several measures to address the plight of children worldwide. Some of such commitments were made at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, from which the Millennium Declaration and subsequently, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) emerged subsequently the Sustainable Development Goals, and at the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Children in May 2002 which resulted in the outcome document 'A World Fit for Children'. These taken together, form a strategy – a Millennium agenda- for protecting childhood in the opening years of the 21st century. Furthermore, the MDGs have unified the international community around a set of common development goals, creating a rare opportunity to improve the lives of children, who now make up more than 40 per cent of the developing world's population and half the population in the least developed countries (UN, 2000). Similarly, states and local governments in Nigeria have taken relevant actions such as free education and health care services for children and women but the issue of food, shelter, environment and sanitation for children are rarely taken into consideration in spite of the significance of these factors in the survival and development of children.

In 2015, the world began working toward a new global development agenda, seeking to achieve, by 2030, new targets set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The proposed SDG target for child mortality aims to end, by 2030, preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 deaths per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortalities to at least as low as 25 deaths per 1,000 live birth,

Available statistics on children in sub Sahara Africa however, indicate a disturbing trend. UNICEF Data (2017) shows that the average risk for a child in sub-Saharan Africa to die between age 5 and age 14 is 17 times higher than the average for children in high-income countries. The top 25 countries with the highest mortality rates were also shown to come from the region. If current trends continue, more than three quarters of all countries in sub-Saharan Africa will miss the under-five mortality target, and 13 countries in the region will not reach the target until after 2050.

In Nigeria, millions of children lack access to formal education, adequate food and nutrition, healthcare services, sometimes abandoned or neglected and mostly vulnerable to violence due to a number of factors. Daily in the cities, children between the ages of five and eighteen years either from the urban zones or rural areas are seen roaming the streets seeking for alms or food from day break to sun set while it is expected that these children be in school or under the care of their parents. However, it appears no one is responsible for their wellbeing. The children, mostly males, rely on charity from individuals in the society for survival. The female children are also seen hawking edible items and also serving as guides to elderly beggars, especially the blind ones. Often times, these children obtain food and used clothes from garbage bins. In urban Kano it is widely believed that these children are from rural areas or from neighbouring states. It is however difficult to ascertain this claim without a comprehensive research. It is obvious that these children lack appropriate dwelling or homes which further heightened their vulnerability to disease infection and abuses/ exploitation. The plight of children particularly the underprivileged ones in northern Nigeria is a source of serious concern to the community, public commentators,

NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and governments.

With an estimated growth rate of 1.93% and fertility rate of 4.73 children born/woman, Nigeria, already the most populous African nation, has a rapidly growing population which accounts for one-sixth of the African population. At the time of the National Population Commission of Nigeria census conducted in 2006, the country's population stood at 140,431,790, and by July 2011, had grown to 155,215,576. The dominant population group is 15-64 years (55.5%) followed by 0-14 years (41.5%). Kano is a densely populated state in Nigeria with a population figure of 9,401,288 in 2006 and Kano metropolis with a population figure of 2,828,861 (NPC, 2009). The 2006 population and housing census report show that 33.08% of the total population of the country was of the age group six to nineteen years. Out of this figure, about 27% have never attended any formal or western school. For Kano state, about 34% of the total population of the state was children between six and nineteen years, and about 37% of this figure have never attended any formal or western education institution.

The idea that social exclusion may result from dim future prospects makes one think pretty quickly about children. 'Exclusion' may offer a useful label for the fate that awaits some children who suffer from various disadvantages in childhood which threaten their capability to achieve in the future. This includes disadvantage in traditional dimensions of 'child development': education and health. It could also include institutionalisation. Children living in institutions suffer many disadvantages including the obvious one of being excluded, literally, from normal family life and parental attention and affection.

Exclusion as suffered by children can be better understood by solid research and evaluation of interventions intended to

advance the rights of children. Dearth of reliable data on the nature, scope and impact of poverty and social exclusion of children from basic needs would not allow for proper planning and equitable distribution of resources for the overall economic and social development of nations. But then, what does poverty mean for children? How does the relative lack of wealth influence children's day-to-day lives? Is it through inadequate nutrition; fewer learning experiences; poor quality of residence; lower quality of schools; exposure to environmental toxins, family violence, and homelessness, services, and, for adolescents, jobs? Regular reports on the state of children are an essential tool in raising public awareness, achieving political support for improving children's living conditions, and promoting and ensuring children's rights (Barnes et al, 2009). Children are the future of any society or country. They are the future scientists, technologists, politicians, technocrats, etc that would provide the necessary direction for the development of the society or country in particular. It is imperative therefore to safeguard their future. It is in view of this that the study aims at assessing the extent of social exclusion of children in Kano metropolis to the basic necessities of life and the implication for self and national development by exploring the perceptions of Kano children about poverty and social exclusion, assessing the dimension

to which children are excluded, as well as policy implications.

1.0 Study area

The study area for this research is the Kano Metropolis (Figure 1), located between Longitudes $8^{\circ} 26'E$ to $8^{\circ} 41'E$ and Latitudes $11^{\circ} 87$ to $12^{\circ} 10'N$. It is composed of eight metropolitan Local Government areas: Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Kano Municipal, Nassarawa, Tarauni, Kunbotso and Ungogo occupying an area of about 683km^2 , is the largest town in Hausaland and the third largest in Nigeria (Falola, 2002). Kano is about 480km from the perimeters of the Sahara desert and 440km from Abuja, the Federal capital. It is located 472 metres above the sea level in the High Plain of Hausaland on a gently undulating topography underlain by rocks of the Basement Complex whose monotony is relieved by two regolith hills, Dala and Goron Dutse.

From the 1991 census figures Kano metropolis had a population of at least 1.6 million inhabitants. The 1996 census figures put Kano metropolis at 2828861 and a projected population of about 3758742 inhabitants in 2014 (NPC and Field survey, 2013). With this, Kano Metropolis has a population density of over 5000persons per square kilometer. Hausa-Fulani constitute the majority of the population while other dominant ethnic groups are Nupe and Kanuri natives, Yoruba and Igbo.

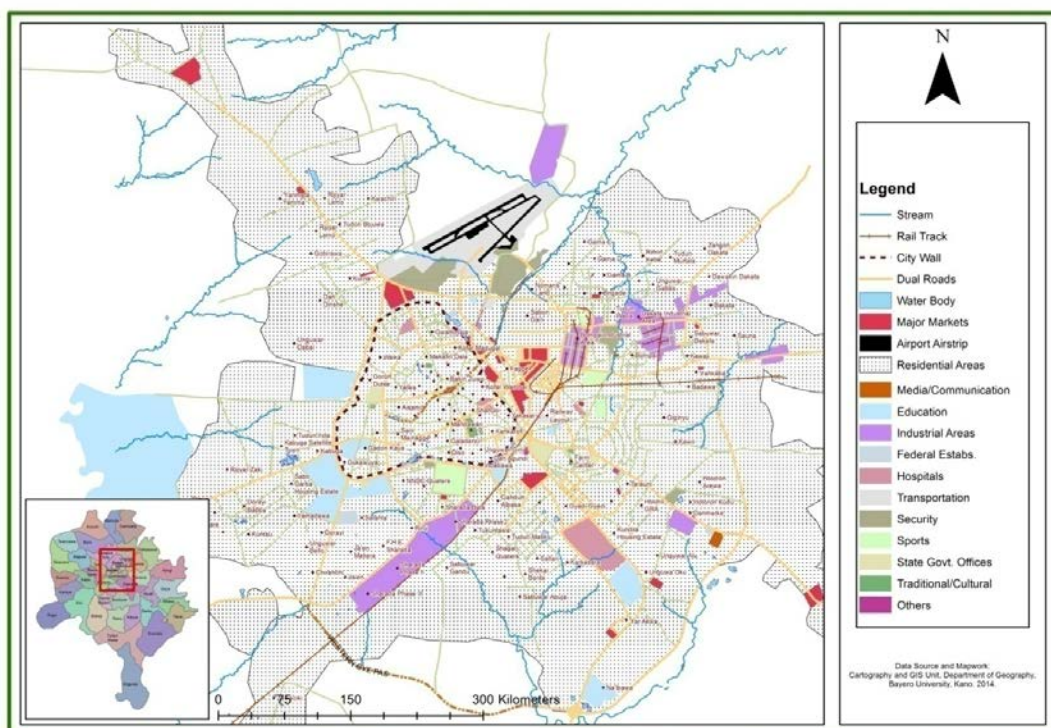


Figure 1: Kano metropolis

Source: Cartography and GIS unit, BUK (2014)

Foreigners are mainly Lebanese, Asians, and those from other African countries. Although with political independence in 1960 Urban Kano's political influence and economic attraction was unrivaled by any other settlement in northern Nigeria, it did not register spatially until the end of the civil war in 1970. The Oil boom era developments have incorporated adjoining villages such as Gama, Dawakin Dakata, Hotoro, Kawo, Giginyu, Unguwa Uku, Na'ibawa, Sharada, and Dorayi into the urban Kano and transformed it into a metropolis (Fig. 2). Indeed, Kano today is still among the largest urban centres in Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of population and spatial extent.

2.0 Method

Primary data was collected through Focus Group Discussion with selected children of sampled households and *almajirai*. Data for

this research therefore consists of qualitative types.

The population for the study is of the urban Kano which comprises eight Local Government Councils namely Municipal, Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Tarauni, Kumbotso, Nassarawa and Ungogo. For sampling children living with their parents, two local governments, Gwale and Tarauni were taken from the central urban area while one local government, Ungogo was taken from the peri-urban area. The population size of the peri urban part the metropolis is much less than the central part and there are more local governments located at the centre than at the periphery. This informed the selection of two local governments at the centre and one at the periphery. Each local government is divided into smaller administration units (Localities) from which three localities were sampled randomly using the random number table in

each local government. One Enumeration Area was randomly sampled from each of the three localities. 50 children living with their parents were sampled for Focus Group Discussion from randomly sampled households in each locality. However, only participants willing to take part were taken. Permission was also sought from their parents / guardians to participate in the discussions. For discussions with the *almajirai*, two Qur'anic schools were sampled from Gwale and Dala governments from which a total of 30 students were sampled for the discussion based on their willingness to participate and with permission from their head teacher.

Focus Group Discussions sought to explore the views of young ones (10-18 years) about city life, including their likes and their dislikes, attitude to school/education, leisure activities, access to and use of ICTs, child's experience of poverty and their priorities for change featured centrally. The FGD exercise was composed of two groups from each local government based on age; the first group included those between ten and fourteen years while the second group included those between fifteen and eighteen years. Thus, two groups each numbering between eight and ten were taken from each Local government. This consultation elicited data from children to get first hand information about their practical experiences. It is believed that children of this age group will be able to discuss their views without the supervision of any adult parent/guardian.

Valentine (2003) highlights that research within children's geographies frequently concentrates on two age groups, with children categorised as those aged five to sixteen, and youth comprising of those aged sixteen to twenty-five. However, the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) classifies all individuals under 18 as 'children'. This research work therefore focuses on children from age zero to 18 years.

For analysis, Focus Group Discussions were all transcribed from Hausa (the local language of majority of Kano residents) to English. The discussion data was obtained in the form of notes and audio recording. The process of analysis began with re-reading the text from the transcripts and listening to the audio tapes several times to capture the meaning given to the participants' experiences of social and spatial exclusion in the study area. While re-reading the text, the research objectives helped in formulating the themes that were used in the data analysis. For instance, recurring themes in the answers to a particular question were used to identify consistencies and differences. The responses were grouped together, and key themes were tagged in the text. The next step was to categorize the information; this was done thematically. Themes were identified using research objectives. In order to find coherence, the text was re-read several times to get the meaning of the communication.

Within major themes, sub themes were identified to help sort out the responses of participants. To determine which response was important, the number of times such responses were given to particular questions and the number of times certain themes were mentioned in the text were counted; this helped to bring out the general pattern in the data. According to Dunn (2005 in Zaami 2012), this process is referred to as manifest content analysis. For instance, respondents were asked to describe their experiences of exclusion. The responses from the children, especially *almajirai* were diverse, and themes emerging from them confirmed the existence of the stigma experience by the *almajirai*. Under this theme, subthemes emerged in relation to their stigmatization. The sub-themes that emerged included their lack of integration into the society as the children of the society, restricted access to sleeping spaces, difficulties in acquiring good food, and other matters. This process of identifying sub-

themes was important for locating key themes, patterns, ideas, and concepts within the data. Dunn (2005) refers to it as latent content analysis, which involves searching the text for themes. The last stage was to use the themes and connections to explain the findings and their significance for the analysis.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The Focus Group Discussion involved separate discussions with the two classes of children i.e the *Almajirai* and also the children living with their parents. Almost all of the participants aged between 15 and 18 years in Gwale are involved in petty businesses after school hours. Four of them are involved in tailoring (hand work) and one goes to the market to assist his father in trading. On the children's views about city life, their likes and dislikes, all the children that took part in the Focus Group Discussions are mostly worried about drug abuse by youth in the city and they are impressed by education, peaceful co-existence and job opportunities in the city. According to them,

"What impresses me most about city life is seeing a person of good character, who dresses well and always goes to school"

The children of Tarauni are also impressed by collaborative activities like the night patrols to ensure security of lives and properties in their neighbourhood.

For the *Almajirai*, most of the participants have stayed in the city for one to seven years. One of them however, has only been in the city for 6 months. What most of them are pleased with about the city is western education and having a form of trading after Qur'anic school. Some of the elderly ones of ages 15 and above engage in petty income generating activities like assisting traders at Kurmi market while the younger ones work as house helps or errand boys in some houses in order to obtain some income and food to eat.

Two of the participants attend primary and secondary school and are sponsored by the household head where they serve as house helps. What they dislike most about city life is violent crisis, criminality and drug abuse, insecurity and hunger. According to one of the participants,

"What I dislike most about city life is the prevalence of criminal activities and most especially, hunger. One has to go about begging for food and sometimes one can even spend the whole day without a meal"

On their understanding and experiences of poverty, Tarauni children are of the view that poverty refers to not having access to items you need or money to buy what you need after feeding:

"Like waking up one morning and not having any money to buy other items after feeding at home"

One of the children who is a secondary school student staying in the boarding house explains poverty as:

"Like waking up in school and having no money when all my provisions are finished and I need to buy some items like note books, or other writing materials or snacks during break time"

The Ungogo children are of the view that poverty refers to not even having food to eat. The *almajirai* understanding about poverty refers not having food, for some, it means not attaining western education, for others, poverty refers to being jobless which eventually leads to extreme poverty. According to one of the participants,

"in my own opinion, poverty means not having the money to buy what you want"

“..... when a person has no trade or source of income, then he is poor because joblessness will eventually make him poor”.

The understanding of exclusion by the children refers to not having what one needs or requires like good clothes or new clothes for *sallah* ceremony. One of the participants in Ungogo defines exclusion as:

“I think exclusion (*wariya* in Hausa language) refers to a situation of difference between those who have and those who don't have, like in the situation where some children are enrolled in school and others are not or when some children get new clothes for *sallah* and we don't get”

The children living with their parents do not consider themselves as being excluded in their neighbourhoods but the younger children of Gwale (10-14 years) expressed their experiences of being deprived of playing football in the only available field by their older ones who always took over the field to play their own game. According to one of them,

“the only form of exclusion we experience here is when we are playing football the older boys of our neighbourhood would just come and send us on errands and displace us from the only available playing field in our neighbourhood, sometimes claiming they're older than we are...”

One of the girls aged 11-14 years in Tarauni claimed they are excluded by their elder sisters in discussions or in visiting places who refuse to relate with them saying they are too young.

The *almajirai* repeatedly highlighted stigma as what they understand by exclusion i.e in the way they are generally seen and

treated as different from other children who are not *almajirai*. According to one of them and agreed by all,

“we are always seen and treated as different from other children in all aspects of life like where we sleep, what we eat, and in the way other children who live with their parents always seek for our trouble.

Another participant understands exclusion as:

“to me, exclusion means not having what I need in life when other children have access to that. For example, when some children are enrolled in western school and we are only allowed to attend Quranic School”.

Another participant explained his understanding of exclusion in the following words

“as for me, exclusion refers to being deprived of adequate sleeping space. In our school for example, up to 40 *almajirai* sleep in a hall which is not sufficient for us and even those who sleep in people's houses sleep in the zaure not where the children of the households sleep and the zaures are also not adequate”.

Almost all the *almajirai* agreed that they have been excluded from western school and from parental care; they also agreed that parents of other children also exclude them by siding with their children whenever they have misunderstanding or are in a fight with their children.

It is worth acknowledging however, that the participants are aware of the lifestyle of some of the *almajirai* and how it reinforces their stigmatization in the city. Specifically, participants admitted that the way some of them dress is disheartening.

“we face a lot of stigmatization in the city; I think part of it is because of the way some of us dress. For example, some of us wear torn clothes which are rarely washed. Any form of dress that gives one an awkward look that’s different from the normal will cause people to look at you differently”.

When asked whether they are being listened to, asked their opinion on issues relating to their lives or whether they are being ignored? All the children involved in the Focus Group Discussion claimed they are always given a listening ear especially by their parents. Though they are not always asked about their opinions on issues relating to their lives like choice of school to attend, they feel they are not ignored.

On their participation in community activities, Gwale children of age group 15-18 stated they usually engage in community activities like environmental sanitation (cleaning of gutters), one of the participants in Tarauni of age 18 assists in teaching in their *Islamiyya* school and almost all the participants in Ungogo take part in farming activities on their parents’ farmlands.

The *almajirai* on the other hand agreed that they are listened to by some of their teachers but are rarely asked their opinions on issues relating to their lives like trade, food, etc. The younger ones try to participate in community activities but indicated they are usually sent away because they are young. The older boys participate in community activities like environmental sanitation, wedding ceremonies but only with those who relate well with them.

On their views about school, health and housing, almost all children living with their parents do not feel deprived in any of the dimensions. However, one child of Gwale who attends a boarding secondary school claims they have inadequate teaching staff and feels

they are deprived in that dimension. The children of Ungogo claim they do not have a hospital in their area and resort to being treated at the pharmacy when sick and are taken to Murtala Muhammed General Hospital in the city only in severe cases of illness and the hospital is quite far from their area. Two of the participants in Ungogo aged between 15 and 18 years are not enrolled in western school and claim their parents did not enroll them because they cannot afford it. They however attend *Islamiyya* School and engage in petty trading and farming.

When asked their opinion about western education, all the *almajirai* agreed that it was good and they would like to enroll in school but either did not have any sponsors or their parents did not enroll them because they didn’t support it. They all agreed that they wanted to attain western education so they can get employed in future. When ill/sick, all the *almajirai* visit the chemists’ shop to buy drugs but in severe cases, they are taken to the General hospital in the city for treatment sponsored by their head teacher.

On the resources available in the neighbourhood e.g. access to sports, recreational and entertainment facilities, ICTs etc. Gwale children complained of lack of adequate play/recreational space in their neighbourhood. The only playing ground in the neighbourhood is owned by a traditional ruler who has turned it into a horse stable. They however have access to ICTs: television, telephone and radios in their homes. The available playing ground at Tarauni also belongs to a business man who rented part of it to car mechanics. Most of the open fields that were formally used by the children as playing grounds have been taken up by residential developments in the area. However, there is adequate playing field for the children in Ungogo but they complained of the condition of the field especially in their school. The fields are not well landscaped and have pot holes and are not good to play on in

wet season. According to one of the participants aged 11 years in Gwale,

“The adequate playing field available is the one at Kofar Na’isa ground provided by the state government and it is quite far from where we live. Our parents would not allow us to go there because we are still young”

All the children however are taken to the zoo by their parents during the Eid celebration periods.

On what they need that they do not have right now, that will help support them as youth growing in Kano, a major concern among the children of age group 15 to 18 years the delay in releasing their Senior Secondary Certificate Examination results and Admission into University. One of the participants claimed the SSCE-WAEC results of public schools for the current year have not been released as at the time of the research, while the results of some private schools have been released. According to one of the participants:

“I sat for the University Matriculation Examination last year and scored 198 and the University I applied for set the cut-off point for the programme I wanted at 200. This year I sat for the exam again and scored 206 but the cut-off point for the programme was jerked up to 220. Now I am praying to get admitted into another University”.

“I also sat for the UME exam this year and scored 215 points but the cut-off point for MBBS (medicine) which I applied for was set at 240. I filled a change of course form to study Pharmacy and now the cut-off point is set at 220. Now I can’t get admission into the University despite my efforts”

“....another problem we face is all the Universities no longer consider our

application if we don’t place it as first choice”.

The younger children stated they need adequate playing grounds so they can avoid being deprived by the older ones. All the children however complained of inadequate books/ library facilities in the public schools compared to what is obtainable in private schools.

When asked if they had any additional comments or suggestions concerning what were discussed so far, a participant from Gwale advised that there should be more Universities in the state so all children can get admission into university on graduation from secondary schools:

“My own suggestion is government should increase the number of Universities in the state. I think part of the reasons some children go into drugs is as a result of idleness and frustration from lack of admission into University after trying a number of times”.

Children also suggested the provision of additional recreational/sports centres in their neighbourhoods. Ungogo children wish their area can be better developed and provided with facilities as those provided in the centre of the Metropolis like medical centres, better access routes and tarred roads. They also want their area to be provided with good drainage systems so as to prevent malaria breeding mosquitoes and also avoid having to clean up gutters and create a nuisance in their paths. The girls do not face exclusion according to them but are more concerned about securing admission into universities after graduation from senior secondary school.

The older *almajirai* unanimously agreed to western education when asked what they needed most as youth living in the cities and didn’t have while the younger *almajirai* indicated comfortable sleeping space and good clothes. One of the participants

however, indicated trade with adequate capital. According to the younger boy,

“What I need most in this city is good sleeping space. The area provided for us in our school is not adequate. The rooms are not big enough to house our large number and there are so many mosquitoes”.

This study shows that location or residence of children also account for their out of school status as all children of Gwale and Tarauni are enrolled in school while about 13% of the sample in Ungogo are not enrolled in western school and claim its as a result of non affordability by their parents. The United Nation’s Out Of School Children study (2012) also shows that more rural children of primary school age (37%) were out of school than their urban counterparts (13%). This study reiterates this fact.

Results of this research support the work of Gupta, Wit, and McKeown (2007) who showed that Children in families with greater material resources enjoy more secure living conditions and greater access to a range of opportunities that are often unavailable to children from low-income families and on average, children living in low-income families have poorer health outcomes.

The findings of this work confirms conclusions reached by Aluko (2012) on the impact of poverty on housing conditions in Mushin area of Lagos state who revealed that poverty results in the poor health of the residents due to exposure to pollution of different forms and has adverse impact on the lives of people and housing condition.

Themes surrounding social and spatial processes in the focus group discussions include: (a) the poverty level of neighbourhoods (b) lack or inaccessibility to public spaces (such as recreational centres e.g. football playing fields) and better developed neighbourhoods (c) challenges in accessing

quality education and the labour market and (d) challenges with “dress codes and the label *almajiri*”.

The foregoing themes capture the ways in which children are excluded due to coming from poorer households/neighbourhoods and discrimination and prejudice practiced against the *almajirai* class of children.

Even though participants in the FGDs indicated their socio spatial exclusion in numerous ways, there were some commonalities in their experiences of social exclusion. According to Soja (2011), social and spatial processes are inseparable, and could be the cause of phenomena such as social exclusion. For instance, children living/residing in peri-urban and poor neighbourhoods tend to experience greater deprivation possibly because of the economic status of their households and because of their location of residence.

All children (including the *almajirai*) view poverty as not having what one need and key items that surfaced in the discussions are lack of money and lack of food (hunger). Another key factor in the discussions was the problem of drug abuse prevalent in the city. While the children living with their parents cited not having quality education as their counterparts in private schools and deprivation of adequate playing grounds in their neighbourhoods, the *almajirai* emphasized stigmatization, deprivation of sleeping space, adequate food, deprivation from western education and trade as the major types of exclusion they experience in Kano metropolis. The older children of Kano emphasized deprivation of access to university education and suggested establishment of more universities and some modification in admission criteria.

While exclusion for children living with their families has to do deprivation of access to playing ground and quality education as their counterparts in private schools, for the *almajirai*, the word may be speaking strongly of ‘the symbolic’ in addition to material word.

Here the notion of exclusion is strongly connected to the idea of 'stigma', referring to the way in which *almajirai* come to be viewed as standing apart from the 'normal society'. Fuller-Rowell et al (2012) have also shown that social-class discrimination may be one mechanism underlying social gradients in health.

4.0 Conclusion and Policy implications

Results of the study show that location, family economic status and child social status have significant influences on their experiences of poverty and social exclusion. The issue of child exclusion in urban Kano raises an important question:

'How can the standard of living of families in relatively deprived areas be improved effectively?

The study concludes that very little can be done to improve the lives of children in the study area without first addressing households'/family poverty, and it calls for policy-making that recognizes:

Children's concerns can only be addressed by coordinated policy in the following areas:

1. Bringing about improvement in the quality of children's present lives because children matter now, not just as future adults through educational development of all children. This can be achieved by re-invigorating the implementation of universal basic

education by a complete overhaul of pre-primary and primary schools and through direct penalties for parents who don't enroll their children in school.

2. Involvement of children as active participants in decision-making in all areas of their lives so as to develop and implement policies that satisfy their needs. This can be achieved by involving them as active participants in researches that identify their needs and expectations.
3. Introduction of the primary and secondary curricular into Qur'anic schools and the establishment of both Qur'anic and western education schools in rural areas so that children would not have to come to cities to seek only Qur'anic education. This way, the incidence of *almajirai* in the cities is reduced as well as their stigmatization as a social group in the cities and their full educational development is achieved.
4. Continued documentation of the circumstances of children and to develop strategies to ensure protection of their rights and well-being and ensuring that the targets of Millennium Development Goals (now sustainable development goals -SDGs) of child development are met

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