



## Exploiting Chatman's Theory of Normative Behavior as a Frame for Investigating the Menace of Contemporary Al-Majiri Education System in Northern Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The motive for this paper is to present a theoretical framework that can be used to investigate menace of contemporary Al-Majiri education system. The objective is to enable information provider on street kids to design information program that will eradicate menace of contemporary Al-Majiri education system in Northern Nigeria. To achieve this aim the paper discusses Epistemic belief, Early Stage of Al-Majiri Education System, and Contemporary Al-Majiri education system, Chatman Theory of Normative Behavior serves as a theoretical frame work for this paper. The paper also analyzes how the construct of Chatman Theory of Normative behavior can be used to explain the menace of contemporary Al-Majiri Education system.*

**Key words:** *Epistemic, Belief, Al-Majiri, Education system, Contemporary*

### I. Introduction

The contemporary Al-Majiri system of education is a heinous system that makes life miserable for millions of children in northern Nigeria (Salau 2015). The Al-Majiri system of education as practiced today in the northern Nigeria is a completely bastardized system compared to the form and conditions under which the system was operating and its output during the pre-colonial period (Abdulqadir, 2003). As the system is currently being practiced today, between ten to twenty million almajiri children roam the streets begging for food and shelter for survival (Olufon, 2016). Almajiri as the children are commonly referred to suffer from social violence, child stealing, diseases, hunger, abuse (homosexuality and pedophilia), used as slaves, brainwashed and recruited for anti-social activities and used for destructive and violent activities (Obaro, 2016)

To ameliorate the menace of contemporary almajiri education system scholars have suggested total ban, remodel and integration into conventional western educational system ((Abdulkadir, 2003, Shitu and Olaofe, 2015, Benjamin, 2016, and Bature and Bawa 2013). While these perspectives help in establishing Almajiri Model Boarding schools, however only less than five percent of the children are captured by the Federal Government's program (Obaro, 2016). Hence the number of Al-Majiri on the street keeps increasing. In order to eradicate the menace of contemporary Al-Majiri education system and reduce the number of street kids in northern Nigeria, there is need to explore how Al-Majiri parents understand contemporary Al-Majiri education system in a socio cultural context. Understanding context and situation of Al-Majiri parents have the potential of designing an information program that will discourage Al-Majiri parents from partaking in contemporary Al-Majiri education system. This paper argues that to extirpate the menace of contemporary Al-Majiri education system there must be proper understanding of context and situation of Al-Majiri parents especially the epistemic belief of contemporary Al-Majiri education system.

### II. Epistemic Beliefs

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that addresses questions about the nature of human knowledge and justification of knowing Muis et al (As cited in Gu, 2016). In the same way Bonjour (as cited in Chinn, 2009) states that epistemology is the branch of philosophy that investigates what knowledge is and how people know whether they know something. It addresses questions such as: What is knowledge? How do people know if they really have knowledge? How do people come to know what they and what provides a justification for any knowledge that they have?

Epistemic beliefs are one component of the cognitive and affective conditions of a task, it influence the standards individuals set when goals are produced, and epistemic beliefs translate into epistemological standards that serve as inputs to metacognition (Muis, 2007). Therefore, the term epistemic beliefs reflect the individuals' beliefs about knowledge and knowing Murphy et al. (as cited in Gu, 2016). Hence, this paper use the term epistemic beliefs to refer to beliefs and theories Al-Majiri parents hold about the nature of contemporary Al-Majiri education system.

### III. Early Stage of Al-Majiri Education System

The word Al-Majiri is derived from the Arabic "Almuhajirun", meaning an emigrant. It usually refers to a person who migrates from the luxury of his home to other places or to a popular teacher in the quest for Islamic knowledge. During the pre-colonial era, the Almajiri education system, originally called the Tsangaya was established under the Kanem-Borno. Empire, over seven hundred years later, the Sokoto Caliphate was founded principally through an Islamic revolution (Jihad led by Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio (1754-1817) based on the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. These two empires run similar Qur'anic learning system which includes Islamic principles, values, jurisprudence and theology which over time came to be known as the Almajiri system (Abdulqadir, 2003, Dialog, 2012 and Shittu and Olaofe, 2015).

The then almajiri education system was supported by states, communities, the parents and complemented by teachers and students. The system was funded by the state treasury and the state zakka funds, and was under the control of the emirs of the traditional government system that existed before the coming of the British. The community provided charity to the students. Couple with learning, the students were at liberty to acquire a vocational and occupational skill in between their Islamic lessons and so were involved in farming, fishing, well construction, masonry, production, trade, tailoring, small businesses etc. Begging for alms was never part of their practice (Abdulqadir, 2003, Dialog, 2012).

### IV. Contemporary Almajiri Education System

Unlike pre-colonial Nigeria, when the al-Majiri education system flourished and recorded exceptional accomplishment in literacy and social services, the coming of British colonial system in 1904 destroyed the system by killing and disposing emir who resisted being colonized, while those who were subjugated accepted their new roles as mere traditional rulers used only for the indirect rule, British took control of the state treasury and deliberately abolished its state funding meant for al-Majiri education system, claiming that, they were mere religious schools, western education was introduced and funded instead (Abdulqadir, 2003, Dialog, 2012, Shittu and Olaofe, 2015).

The responsibility of the Al-Majiri students were then taken over by the local scholars who deemed it a moral and religious duty to educate these children for the sake of Allah. With the increasing level of poverty in the country, the care of the Al-Majiri became overwhelmingly burdensome for the Mallams who were left with no choice but to send these little boys out to beg from the good will of the society, (Dialog, 2012). Regrettably, the pupils who were meant to be trained to become Islamic scholars have now had to struggle to cater for themselves. The Almajiri children (fall between the age of 4 and 15 years) grows up in the streets without the love, care and guidance of parents; his struggle for survival exposes him to abuse, social exclusion and chronic poverty in all ramifications, which serve as a potential materials for recruitment into religion, ethnic and political crises and in the extreme case terrorist group (Obaro, 2016) Christian (as cited in Goodluck and Julian, 2012).

### V. Theory of Normative Behavior

The theory of normative behaviour by chatman (2000) states that the norms and value system of the community govern behaviors and information Burnett, Besant, & Chatman, (as cited in Musa 2013). In other words, inhabitants of a social world viewed their behaviour as the most appropriate for that particular context Chartman ( as cited in Abubakar,2015). The theory of normative behaviour has four conceptual elements (social norms, worldview, social types, and information behavior)

**Social Norms:** It is a guide for understanding what is right or wrong in a social appearance and activities. In essence, it is the acceptable public behaviour of members of the small world group Chatman (as cited by Musa 2013). Small worlds have been described as "social environments where individuals live and work, bound together by shared interests and expectations, information needs and behaviour and often economic status and geographic proximity as well" Burnett, Jaeger and Thompson ( as cited in Abubakar, 2015)

**World View:** world view is being shaped by social norms of members of small world group, world view provide the lens or boundary of behaviour. It is a system of shared experiences that provide an outlook or point of view (Chatman, 1999). Factors that shape world view includes language, values, meaning, symbols, and a context that holds the world view within temporal boundaries Pendleton and Chatman (as cited by Musa, 2013).

**Social Type:** Social types determine how individuals are perceived and defined within the contest of their social world, this classification of individuals is based on their behaviors and the roles they play within their small world Burnett and Jaeger, Chatman (as cited in Abubakar 2015). Furthermore, Burnett &Nocasian (as cited in Musa, 2013) State that "information (even if it is accurate) coming from an individual typed as untrustworthy or from one who is seen to be at odds with the norms of the world will, often, not find an easy welcome from other members of the world"

**Information Behaviour:** information behaviour is defined as "the totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use" (Wilson,2000). Similarly, Fisher, Erdelez, and McKechnie (as cited by Musa, 2015) conceptualize human information behavior as how people need, seek, manage, give, and use information in different context. Burnett

and Jaeger, (as cited by Abubakar 2015) explain further that information behaviour as “the full spectrum of normative behavior (regarding information) available to member of small world group.

## VI. Theory of Normative Behaviour and Menace of Contemporary Almajiri Education System

Theory of Normative Behavior provides four conceptual constructs (Social Norms, worldview, social types, and information behaviour) that aid in analyzing how individual's everyday world may shape their actions and inaction (Chatman, 2000). The element of chatman theory of normative behavior and how each is used to explain menace of Al-Majiri education system are discussed below

The concept of social norms defines “standards with which members of a social world comply in order to exhibit desirable expressions of public behavior” (Chatman, 2000). An information programmer who is interested in designing an information program that will eradicate the menace of contemporary Al-Majiri education system can apply this construct to ask the following questions. What are the socio-cultural value almajiri parents attach to contemporary almajiri education system? What are the socio cultural beliefs of Al-Majiri parents regarding contemporary al-Majiri education system? How does the socio cultural belief influence almajiri parents towards engaging in almajiri education system?

Worldview is a collective perception held by members of a social world concerning those things that are deemed important or trivial. Worldview has also being described as a philosophy that shapes beliefs Pendleton and Chatman (as cited by Musa, 2013). Hence, an information programmer applying construct of world view can ask the following questions. What perception do Al-Majiri parents have regarding Almajiri education system? How al-Majiri parents' collective attitudes mold their thinking about contemporary Almajiri education system?

Social type refers to the way people are perceived and labeled or stereotyped in a social setting. Scholars who are interested in alleviating or eradicating the menace contemporary al-Majiri education system can apply this construct to ask the following questions. What social types exist among Al-Majiri parents? How does the social type influence Al-Majiri parent in partaking in Almajiri education system? How do Al-majir parent view the critics of contemporary Al-majiri education system?

Information behavior describes the many ways in which human beings interact with information, in particular, the ways in which people seek and utilize information (Bates, 2010). An information designer applying construct of information behaviour can ask the following questions. What are the available information on contemporary Al-Majiri education system? How do Al-Majiri parents source and use information about contemporary Al-Majiri education system? What influence do the available information on contemporary Al-Majiri education system have on Al-Majiri parent and why?

## VII. Conclusion

This paper concludes that chatman theory of normative behaviour is eminent guide for understanding the menace of contemporary Al-Majiri education system. All the constructs are crucial factors for analyzing menace of contemporary Almajiri education system. The paper also raises questions which information programmers, scholars, organizations can ask in order to reduce the number of Almajiri children on the street.

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