

**ALMIJIRAH'S PROCESS OF COMBINING ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS FOR SELF-RELIENCE IN
NIGERIA**

**PROSES ALMAJIRAH MENGGABUNGGAN PENGETAHUAN ISLAM
DAN KETERAMPILAN KEWIRAUSAHAAN UNTUK KEMANDIRIAN
DI NEGARIA**

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Abstract:

Islam emphasises educating both men and women alike. Muslim women from the first generation of Islam have shown deep interest in studying the Hadith of the Prophet (SAW), and have contributed a great deal to the development of the science of Hadith. They have contributed in academia, the business and financial sectors, medicine and science, and numerous other fields of knowledge. This paper intends to describe the process followed by the Muslim female Almajirah in the acquisition of Islamic knowledge and entrepreneurship skills in Niger State, Nigeria. The data collected for this work in terms of the number of Madaris visited, the number of students and other relevant information collected were presented in tabular format. The data presented provides more information on the coverage of the study area as conducted in this research. The method of data collection is oral interview complimented with observation. The experiences of the Muslim female Almajirah under studies, and as an entrepreneur, of this system of learning were also narrated in descriptive term. It is concluded that the Muslim female Almajirah, if given the right training and conducive environment will be able to contribute positively in all spheres of life endeavour; and especially in terms of the spread of Islamic knowledge, moral training and self-reliance

through acquisition of religious knowledge and a viable trade that can sustain her to enable her fend for her needs.

Keywords: *Almajirah, Combining, Islamic knowledge, Entrepreneurship, Self-reliance*

Abstrak:

Islam menekankan mendidik baik laki-laki maupun perempuan. Wanita Muslimah dari generasi pertama Islam telah menunjukkan minat yang mendalam untuk mempelajari Hadits Nabi (SAW), dan telah memberikan kontribusi yang besar bagi pengembangan ilmu Hadits. Mereka telah memberikan kontribusi di bidang akademis, bisnis dan sektor keuangan, kedokteran dan ilmu pengetahuan, dan berbagai bidang pengetahuan lainnya. Makalah ini bermaksud untuk mendeskripsikan proses yang diikuti oleh Almajirah wanita Muslim dalam perolehan pengetahuan Islam dan keterampilan kewirausahaan di Negara Bagian Niger, Nigeria. Data yang dikumpulkan untuk pekerjaan ini dalam hal jumlah Madaris yang dikunjungi, jumlah siswa dan informasi relevan lainnya yang dikumpulkan disajikan dalam format tabel. Data yang disajikan memberikan informasi lebih lanjut tentang cakupan wilayah studi seperti yang dilakukan dalam penelitian ini. Metode pengumpulan data adalah wawancara lisan yang dilengkapi dengan observasi. Pengalaman Almajirah perempuan Muslim yang sedang menempuh studi, dan sebagai seorang wirausahawan, sistem pembelajaran ini juga dicitrakan secara deskriptif. Disimpulkan bahwa Almajirah Muslimah, jika diberikan pelatihan yang tepat dan lingkungan yang kondusif akan mampu memberikan kontribusi positif dalam segala bidang kehidupan; dan terutama dalam hal penyebaran pengetahuan Islam, pelatihan moral dan kemandirian melalui perolehan pengetahuan agama dan perdagangan yang layak yang dapat menopangnya untuk memenuhi kebutuhannya.

Kata kunci: *Almajira, Penggabungan, Ilmu Islam, Kewirausahaan, Kemandirian*

A. Introduction

Islam attaches great importance to the quest for knowledge as can be seen from the precepts of the Qur'an and *Ahadith* of the Prophet (SAW). From the birth of Islam to the completion of revelation the Muslim *Ummah* has been urged to seek for knowledge as well as to seek for a lawful means of livelihood. In like manner all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah had one trade/profession or the other. Nuhu (AS) was a carpenter, Dawud (AS) was a black smith, and Muhammad (SAW) was a trader and a shepherd of which most of the messengers were said to be shepherds. Islam emphasises educating both men and women alike. Muslim women from the first generation of Islam have shown deep interest in studying the *Hadith* of the Prophet (SAW), and have contributed a great deal to the development of the science of *Hadith*. They have contributed in academia, the business and financial sectors, medicine and science, and numerous other fields of knowledge. Scholars agreed that women should get proper educational facilities to nourish their intellectual capabilities in accordance with Islamic principles. Women's attainment of proper education can ensure an educated next generation, as they are the prime educators of their children. However, attempts must be made to ensure that the educational system is based upon Islamic principles. On this ground the Muslim female *Almajira* is seen as one amongst equals in terms of acquiring both religious knowledge and entrepreneurship skills in order to make her fit into the modern society, where she can contribute to the development of Islam and be economically stable to meet up with the challenges of time. This could be in terms of taking care of her family and the proper upbringing of her children. As the first teacher to the child she needs both the knowledge and entrepreneurial skills to make her life easier and better. The wisdom behind combining Islamic knowledge and entrepreneurship skills can be seen when one looks at it from the angles of: human nature, because man is created as a seeker of the bounties of his creator it is human nature in having lust for ownership and possession of worldly good/material things and wealth in all its forms. Allah (SWT) says in the Glorious Qur'an: "And you love wealth with inordinate love!"¹ Islam emphasizes morality and consciousness of Allah (SWT) not only as a means of improving healthy environment that has a positive impact on the economy but also serving as a means of cleansing the society from destructive practices that lead to total moral decadence. In order to strike a balance man has certain needs which are described in terms of economic and human development in Islam thus; all the parts of man are created by Allah and human

¹ A. Y. Ali The Holy Qur'an Arabic Text, Transliteration and English Translation, Eliash Family Book Service Charminar, Hyderabad- India, 2000, Qur'an 89: 20

beings have two basic needs. These needs are spiritual needs which are fulfilled through belief in Allah, and physical needs which are met by making the best use of all resources created by Allah for man². Since every Prophet sent by Allah had one form of trade or vocation, then it becomes imperative for every student of learning to acquire a skill and learn a trade with which he/she will depend. It is important to add that learning a trade/entrepreneurial skill alongside acquiring the religious knowledge will keep the *Almajira* busy at the same time focused on her studies. That means she will "use one stone to kill two birds", she is acquiring the knowledge of Allah towards achieving felicity in the Hereafter and also a trade to keep her above board by being financially independent.

B. Methods

The approach used in writing this paper is a literature study approach. Basically the literature study is the same as research in general, but the research data obtained is secondary data using the literature study method. The three steps that the researcher will take in preparing this article include: first, finding and collecting reference sources that are relevant to the theme of this research. Second, several scientific papers that have been collected are then processed and elaborated, in order to comprehensively explain the inter-sections of this article. Third, as the last step, the researcher concludes specifically referring to the title raised in this study, namely process of the *Almajirah* combining Islamic knowledge and entrepreneurship skills.

C. Result and Discussion

1. The Wisdom for Entrepreneurship from the Qur'an and *Sunnah*

The Qur'an mentions many industries, trade and commerce, terming them as Allah's favours and bounties to mankind. As it is in the manner of the Qur'an Allah (SWT) gives vivid examples with His chosen Prophets and Messengers saying in reference to Prophet Dawud (AS):

...And We made the iron soft for him (commanding): make thou coats of mail, balancing well the rings of chain armour, and work ye righteousness...³

²N. Ahmad, K. A. Bhatti and M.U. Arshad "Economic Growth and Human Development in Islam", *Al-Qalam* Vol.18, no.2, December 2013, pdf, p.1.

³Qur'an 34: 11

In another *Surah* Allah says:

It was We who taught him the making of coats of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each other's violence. Will ye then be grateful?⁴

Allah (SWT) says about Prophet Suleman (AS):

...And We made a font of molten brass to flow for him; and there were jinns that worked in front of him by the leave of his Lord. And, if any of them turned aside from Our command, We made him taste of the chastisement of the blazing fire. They worked for him as desired, (making) Arches, Images, basons as large as wells and (cooking) Cauldrons fixed (in their places); "Exercise thanks, sons of Dawud, but few of My servants are grateful."⁵

And, He (SWT) says about Dhul-Qarnayn and his building of the high dam:

He said, "(the power) in which my Lord has established me is better (than tribute). Help me therefore with strength (and labour): I will erect a strong barrier between you and them. "Bring me blocks of iron". At length, when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountain-sides, he said, 'Blow (with your billows).' Then when he had made it (red) as fire, he said, 'Bring me that I may pour over it, molten lead. 'Thus, were they made powerless to scale it, or to dig through it.'⁶

In the Qur'an Allah (SWT) mentions the value of iron in an emphatic manner as well as the construction of the ark of Nuhu (AS) and great ships in the sizes of mountains that sail the seas bringing goods from far across nations for the benefit of mankind. It also mentions other skills such as fishing, hunting and diving in deep sea for pearls, corals and valuable stones found under it; as well as rearing animals (animal husbandry). The Prophet (SAW) was reported as saying:

Allah did not send a Prophet without his having tended sheep." The listeners asked, "You too, oh Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Yes, I tended sheep for wages for the people of *Makkah*⁷

Any work or profession that provides the needs of man is encouraged in Islam in as much as it is done within the parameters of the *Shari'ah*. Even professions that are considered lowly and degrading are looked upon with esteem and honour; such as digging wells, cutting

⁴Qur'an 21: 80

⁵Qur'an 34: 12-13

⁶Qur'an 18: 95-97

⁷ M. M. Khan, (1985), *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al- Bukhari*, Arabic- English, Vol.3, The book of Hiring, Chapter 2, *Hadith* No.463, p.253

and selling firewood, excavation of latrines, pasturing etc. it however discourages begging in all its ramifications. As it is reported that the beggar will be raised in the day of judgement with a bear face (skinless face).

In another tradition the Prophet (SAW) Said: “No one earns his food better than the one who works with his hands, and the Prophet of Allah, Dawud, earned his food by working with his hands.”⁸

The general rule in regard to earning a living is that Islam does not permit Muslims to earn money in any way they like, rather it differentiates between lawful and unlawful methods based on the criterion of the overall well-being of the society. This differentiation is based on the general principle that any transaction in which one person gains results in another’s loss is unlawful, while any transaction which is fair and beneficial to all the parties concerned and which is transacted by mutual consent is lawful. Allah (SWT) says:

O you who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities, but let there be trade amongst you traffic and trade by mutual good-will, nor kill (or destroy) yourselves; for verily, Allah hath been to you Most Merciful! If any do that in rancour and injustice, - soon shall We cast him into the fire; and easy it is for Allah.⁹

2. The *Almajirah/Khadimah (Hadimah)*¹⁰

The *Almajirah* (female resident learner) is referred to with different name at the various *Madaris/ Zawaya* in the state depending on the nature of her enrolment at the institution for easy identification.

In Suleja area they are referred to as “*Yaran Goyo*”¹¹ meaning foster children who are handed over to the head of the *Madarasa/Zawiyyah* by their parents. In some *Zawaya* at Minna and Wushishi they are of two categories; the *Hadimai*¹² (servant) and the *Almajirai*.

The *Hadimai* (singular *Hadima*) is brought to the *Mu'allim* to serve him in the process of which she is expected to gain intellectual, spiritual and moral training from the *Mu'allim* and

⁸M. M. Khan, (1985), *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al- Bukhari*, Arabic- English, Vol.3, The book of Sales (Bargains), Chapter 16, *Hadith* No.286. p.163

⁹Qur'an 4: 29-30, (see also Qur'an 80:24-32, 35:12,3:109,42:12, 13:26,11:6)

¹⁰*Hadimah* is the Hausa pronunciation of the word *Khadimah* which is originally an Arabic word (see footnote 12)

¹¹*Malam Aminu Nasir*, (45 years), Scholar, interviewed on 04/03/2018 and 20/05/2020 at *Riyadul Qur'an*, Anguwan Barebari, Suleja

¹² The Arabic word is *Khadima* from the root word *Khadama, Yakhdumu, Khudima*, which means serve or servant, or to serve for a role or function, *Al- Munjid fi Luggah al-Arabiyyah*, Dar al-Mashraq, Bairut, 1973, P.

his family. She is particularly seen as an adopted daughter of the *Mu'allim*, she is therefore treated as a part of the immediate family member of the *Mu'allim*. In most cases the *Hadima* lives under the *Mu'allim* and he is responsible for choosing her a life partner and will eventually take responsibility of her marriage after graduation. She is taught how to combine the quest for knowledge and entrepreneurial skill; as they are meant to learn one handicraft, vocational skill or business/trade in order to be self-reliant in future¹³. In this case the parents of the girl do not bring anything to the *Mu'allim* as she has a different position compared to the *Almajirah*.

The *Almajirah* is brought mainly for the purpose of acquiring the religious knowledge and moral training. Here the parent /guardian of the *Almajirah* have to agree with the terms and conditions of her acceptance as a resident learner¹⁴. This means that failure to comply with the laid down terms and conditions may lead to rejection of the intending resident learner. The choice of spouse is based on the interest of the parent so also is the issue of her furtherance of studies and the choice of a vocational skill she is to acquire.

The difference between the two is that the *Hadima* has become a member of the family of the *Mu'allim*¹⁵ as explained by *Malam* Farouk that they become like the *Mu'allims*' children and are assigned specific duties in the house while the *Almajirah* is just like any other learner whether resident or not. However the purpose of both is the acquisition of the religious knowledge especially learning the Qur'an, moral/spiritual development and skills acquisition in order to be self-reliant.

3. The Learning Pattern and Acceptance of learners

In Niger State the *Madaris/Zawaya* has the following settings of learning sessions which cuts across all of the *Zawaya/Madaris* visited.

- (a) The normal setting of *Makarantar Allo*: This setting consists of both the resident and non-resident learners who gather at the feet of the *Malam* to learn the Qur'an and some aspects of Islamic knowledge. Here there are conditions set for the acceptance of the learner even though it is not written in black and white (there is no written conditions on paper form); it is practiced in all of the *Madaris* where the *Almajirah* is accepted as a border. The parents have to provide certain things which include and not limited to; 20-40 (*Mudu*) measures of rice, 50 measures to one bag of sorghum/millet/maize, five

¹³ Some of the *Hadimai* learn a skill from within the *Zawiyya* while some of them are enrolled or attached to a female neighbor from whom she learns.

¹⁴ As gathered from all of the *Madaris/Zawaya* visited, those whose parent/guardian are unable to meet up with the conditions stipulated are returned home so that they will not be a burden on them.

¹⁵ *Malam* Farouk (34 years) who studied at *Wushishi* under *Sheikh* Habibu in an interview at Paiko on 6/03/2018

liters of palm oil, two packets of seasoning cubes and the sum of #5000-#10,000 naira. These items and sums accepted vary among the *Madaris*; the items are brought only annually. In terms of health challenges cases are taken care of by the *Malam*, however if the ailment persists the attention of the parents is called so that they can take full responsibility of their ward. In addition to this the learners are expected to come along with sleeping mat, *Hijab*, feeding utensils and some toiletries in other to maintain personal hygiene.¹⁶

Those whose parents wish that they attend conventional schools buy the school uniform for their wards as well as payment of the school fees. This depends on what school the child is enrolled in as some parents do prefer private schools to public ones as noted at Lapai; where a substantial number of the girls are enrolled into private conventional schools.

Here the learner may leave after graduation and *Walimatul Qur'an*. Whether the learner leaves or stays after the graduation *Walima* is dependent on the agreement reached between the *Malam* and the parents/guardian of the learner. However at some instances the interest of the *Almajirah* is considered; whether she wants to go into *Tahfiz* (memorization) class or not. On the other hand the financial capacity of the parents matters most, that is if they will be able to take financial responsibility of the *Tahfiz* section as it is a little above the usual resident type of learning in most of the *Madaris/Zawaya*.¹⁷

(b) *Tahfiz*: This is a more organized class of learners, as they have either graduated recitation of the glorious Qur'an or are brought into the *Madaris* to memorize the whole Qur'an. Under the *Tahfiz* there are two categories of learners as observed in some of the *Madaris* and *Zawaya*. For example at *Faidhatul Ibrahimiyah* school of *Qur'anic* and Islamic Studies, Bida; the learning is programmed to run for three terms per session that is in an academic year as organized by the Sheikh and they have the part-time and resident learners. For each learner a form is purchased at the rate of 200 naira; the part-time learners pay the sum of #2.200 naira per term while for the resident learners the sum of #12.200 naira is paid with 40 measures of rice and a bag of either maize or sorghum per term¹⁸. The fee payable differs from one *Tahfiz* to another, while others

¹⁶ As gathered from the various *Malamai* at different locations in the state

¹⁷ Sheikh Suleman Abubakar Jekada, (63 years) Scholar, interviewed on 12/02/2020 at *Zawiyyah Sheikh Ahmad Sufy, Bantigi Umaru Majigi Ward, Bida*

¹⁸ Sheikh Suleman Abubakar Jekada, (63 years) Scholar, interviewed on 12/02/2020 at *Zawiyyah Sheikh Ahmad Sufy, Bantigi Umaru Majigi Ward, Bida*

do not separate the *Tahfiz* and *Makarantan Allo* in terms of fees or condition of acceptance. That is to say the learner is allowed to proceed with *Tahfiz* after completing the recitation of the glorious Qur'an orally.

(c) *Islamiyyah*: This is like an adoption of the modern secular schools pattern of learning where the learners are shared into classes called *Fasl/Manzil*. They learn in accordance with the age and capability of the learners that is by age group and in classes. They are tested, assessed and examination is administered both orally and in written. They also purchase entry form and pay school fees per term, the fees ranges between #1000- #2000 naira per term. The time table is organized in a manner that three to four subjects are taught daily. It runs two sessions daily. The morning sessions begins from 8:00am- 12:30pm and the afternoon session between 2:00pm/2:30pm and ends at about 5:30pm/6:00pm every day of the week except Thursdays and Fridays. "The purpose of establishing the *Islamiyyah* is to enable graduates obtain a certificate that will enable them further their studies at the Higher Islamic, College of Arabic and Islamic Studies (CAIS) or a *Ma'ahad*"¹⁹.

(d) Islamic Training Centre/Institute: The *Madarasah* under the *Zawiyyah* is registered with the State Education Board as *Islamiyyah/Madarasah* not as female *Almajirai* boarding institutions. They however make convenient arrangement between the parents and the *Sheikh* to make it easier for both parties in terms of accepting the female resident learner. For instance at Centre for Islamic Training Minna during the annual graduation *Walimah* of the second set of grandaunts the parents agreed to pay the sum of #5000 naira annually and a bag of any type of grain or cereal²⁰. At another *Madarasah* the resident female learners are brought to the *Sheikh* as *Hadimat*²¹ or *Yaran Goyo*²², this category of learners live in the house of the *Sheikh* and are treated as foster children in the house with special attention paid to their learning activity more than anything else. They part-take in house hold chores but are more involved in the learning program and

¹⁹Malam Faisal, (35 years) A Graduate of Community Health and son to Imam Muhammad Aminu, the Imam Paiko Central Mosque, interviewed on 06/03/2018 at *Madarasatul Faidhatul Islamiyyah waTahfizul Qur'an*, Paiko

²⁰Sheikh Muhammad Isah Kutigi, (50 years), Scholar/ Proprietor, interviewed 08/03/2018 at Centre for Islamic Training: Abdullahi bn Fodio Model School, Dutsen kura, Minna

²¹ The Arabic word is *Khadima* from the root word *Khadama, Yakhdumu, Khudima*, which means serve or servant, or to serve for a role or function, *Al- Munjid fi Luggah al-Arabiyyah*, Dar al-Mashraq, Bairut, 1973, P. 171

²²Sheikh Imam Muhammadu Habibu M. Inuwa Wushishi, (72 years), Scholar, interviewed on 09/03/2018 at *Zawiyya Liman Shehu Habibu, Wushishi*

moral training (*Tarbiyyah*). In addition the learners under the institute/centre are more advanced in learning Arabic language than those of the earlier mentioned learning programs.

In all of the *Madaris/Zawayya* recitation of the glorious Qur'an and its memorization is the core subjects. Other field of Islamic knowledge that is emphasized is *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) which contains detailed information on how to perform *Ibadat*(worship) in Islam in accordance with the teachings of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The subjects studied include but are not limited to the following:-

- a. The study of the Qur'an, *Tajweed, Tafsir, and Asbab al-Nuzul*
- b. In the field of *Fiqh* they study books such as *Kawaidi, Ishmawiy, Ahadhari, Iziyyah Matan al-Umdah al- Ahkam , Bulugh al- Maram,*
- c. In the field of *Hadith* they study *Hamsuna Hadith, Arbauna Ahadith of An-Nawawi, Majma' al- Baharain, Lubab al-Hadith*
- d. In the field of *Madhu* they study *Diwani, Tania, Al-Baidhah, al-Burdah, Hamziyyah, Ishiriniyyah*
- e. In the field of *Tauhid* they study *Giza 'ul Wildani fiy 'Aqa'id al-Imani, Al-Aqa'id al-Tauhidiyyah, Hayt al-Islam, Muqarrarah al-Tauhid*
- f. In the field of *Sirah* they study *khulasah al-Nur al-Yaqin fiy siratil Sayyidil Mursalina, Siratun Nabiy, Tarihul Islam, Faidhul Ahmadiy*
- g. In the field of Arabic language they study books on *Durus al-Arabiyyah, Nahawu al- Wadi'u, Kaifa Ta'allamu al-Arabiyyah, Bari wa Biba, Asma'ul Ashya'i, Ta'alim al- Arabiy*²³

The learners do study according to their capability therefore the learning of other fields of study differs. As girls their age is also considered in terms of teaching those books of *Fiqh* and other branches of knowledge. Apart from the Qur'an a maximum of three books are learnt concurrently from other fields of learning²⁴.

In *Madaris/Zawayya* where the learners do not attend secular schools there are four sessions of learning daily²⁵ In *Madaris /Zawayya* where the learners do attend secular schools

²³ The books named under each item is as discovered from the various *Madaris/Zawayya* visited in March 2018 and February 2020

²⁴ Malam Isah Umar Tegina, (46), Zonal Member Zakat Committee Kagara Emirate, interviewed at Kagara on 15/06/ 2019. At Unguwan Sarki Tegina

²⁵ *Subhi*: 4:3am-6:00am/5:30am-7:30am (*Zaman/karatun Asuba*), Morning:8:00am-11:0am/8:30am-11:45am (*karatun Safe*), Afternoon:2:00pm-5:30pm/2:30pm-6:00pm (*karatun Rana*) and Night:8:00pm-10:00pm/8:30pm-10:15pm (*karatun Dare*)

the timing for the sessions are either two or three times daily where the afternoon session is suspended on weekdays but are observed on Saturdays and Sundays.

The girls are usually thought by the *Malam* or *Sheikh*. However where the wife/daughter(s) of the *Malam* is versed in learning she takes responsibility of teaching the girls under the guidance of the *Sheikh*. In some instances the older learners are assigned to teach the younger ones. In both cases the *Malam* assigns a certain day in the week where he personally assess the learners by asking them to recite to his hearing what they have learnt within the week. He makes observations and corrections and gives the final decision on the progress or otherwise of the *Almajirah*.

4. Acquisition of Entrepreneurship Skills

In terms of learning the entrepreneurship skills the learners are usually taught house chores first by the *Malams*' wife/wives. The girls first learn the type of trade or business which the *Malams*' wife is engaged in especially those that are brought between the ages of 6-7years. By eight years of age the girls' interest and inclination suggests the type of entrepreneurship skills she is willing to learn. At this stage the attention of the parent is needed especially if she is to be registered under a trainer so that they bear the financial responsibility of the training. Usually Thursdays and Fridays are the days set aside for training in any form of entrepreneurship skill. There are those who do on daily basis in between the breaks before the next learning session of the day as presented in table 1 below. The data for the information was collected using a semi- structured interview schedule.

Table 1: Schedule of Training and Learning the Entrepreneurship Skills

S/N	Type of Entrepreneurship Skill	Time for Training		Duration	Remark	Percentage	
		Weekly	Daily			No.	0/0
1.	Tailoring and Knitting of cardigans and shawls	Yes	No	1-3years	Freedom <i>Walimah</i>	200	31.35

2.	Making of beaded and string jewelries	Yes	No	1-2 years	Freedom <i>Walimah</i>	100	15.67
3	Hard and liquid soap making and room freshener	Yes	Occasionally	1-6 months	No <i>Walimah</i>	60	9.4
4	Hair dressing and henna design	Yes	Occasionally	1 year	No <i>Walimah</i>	75	11.76
5	Weaving and ornamental design	Yes	No	1-3 years	No <i>Walimah</i>	30	4.70
6	Local drinks, snacks and sweets	No	Yes	1month	No <i>Walimah</i>	65	10.19
7	Sales girls in shops and pharmacies	No	Yes	1-3 years	Freedom and <i>Walimah</i>	30	4.70
8	Making of spices and soup condiments	Yes	Occasional	1-6 months	No <i>Walimah</i>	78	12.23
Total						638	100

Sourced from the field work on this research conducted on 03/2018 & 02/2020

The table above shows the identified entrepreneurship skills that the female *Almajirai* engages during their course of study. From the above presentation it shows that 31.35 percent of the *Almajirai* learn tailoring and knitting which is more of fashion designing, as it is the most learnt entrepreneurship skill with 200 *Almajirai*. The sales girls are more of shop keepers who also learn the business skills required to run those types of businesses in which they are trained. They are strictly not allowed to go beyond the neighborhood so that the authorities of

the *Madarasa/Zawiyya* can keep an eye on the apprentice *Almajira*. Those who work in pharmacies are mostly those who are interested in the medical line of learning.²⁶

5. Criteria for Accepting an *Almajira* as an Entrepreneur Apprentice

Every entrepreneur has criteria for the acceptance of apprentice who learn the skills under her training. The conditions for acceptance for each of the identified skills on the table above will be explained as follows:

- a. Tailoring and knitting: The sum of #1,500 - #3,000 is paid as tuition fees, and then a pair of scissors, a tape, white chalk and brown paper (10 sheets) is brought by the apprentice as her required working tools.
- b. Making of beaded and string jewelries: The sum of #1,500 is paid as tuition fees, then a pair of pliers and protective hand gloves are part of the requirements
- c. Hard and liquid soap making and room freshener: the sum of #1,000 only is paid as apprentice tuition fees
- d. Hair dressing and henna design: No tuition fee is paid the apprentice only needs to acquire a hair splitter (*Tsinken Kitso*) or a wooden comb for hair plaiting and then a tray, black cello tape, empty sachet water bags (about ten pieces) and a packet of razor blade for the henna design.
- e. Weaving and ornamental design: The apprentice pays #1,000-#1,500 naira as tuition fee. She then brings along a carving knife which is usually a small sized one or one that is designed for the purpose of carving from the black smith. Then she gets a protective hand gloves.
- f. Local drinks, snacks and sweets: No amount is charged. All that is needed is the full attention and regular participation of the apprentice when these items are produced.
- g. Sales girls in shops and pharmacies: Here no tuition fee is paid, they only need a guarantor for the apprentice.(the guarantor is to vouch for the *Almajira's* integrity and her punctuality)
- h. Making of spices and soup condiments: No amount is charged as the apprentice is made to take active role in terms of selection of the spices, measurement in quantity,

²⁶Sheikh Usman Baba Doko (70 years), Scholar, interviewed on 11/02/2020 at *Zawiyyatul Faidhatul Ibrahimiyah*, Niger Low Cost, Lapai,

process of making the soup condiment/sauce like locust bean (*Daddawa*) preparation etc.

Apart from the requirements mentioned the apprentice are usually fed lunch by their trainers and the sum of #100- #200 naira is given to the apprentice weekly depending on the type of entrepreneurship skill she is learning. This is more practiced by those who charge a tuition fee even though they return to the *Zawiyyah* for lunch²⁷.

6. The Procedure for Learning the Entrepreneurship Skills (Apprenticeship)

- a. In all of the entrepreneurial skills the apprentice starts with observation for a period of about two weeks before she starts participating in simple skills of the particular skill she is being trained. If she becomes proficient in a skill she is upgraded to the more advanced aspect of the art until she learns all of the technicalities involved in the particular vocation she is learning. On acquiring the needed skills she is now tasked with the duty of teaching new apprentices how to acquire same skills. By the time she perfects her skills she is trusted for example, to handle production of the materials in knitting, carving, tailoring etc. At the end of the training a freedom *Walimah* (ceremony) is organized, even though it might not be an elaborate one it is meant to thank Allah (SWT) for His blessings and to give the trainee the go ahead to practice on her own. No certificate is given to the graduate as they underwent the training under women who mostly are house wives that conduct their trades from the home.
- b. Those who learn how to make local drinks, sweets and snacks often start from their first day of training as these ones do not require the acquisition of any complex skills. All they need to do is to concentrate in order to note the measurement of the ingredients. The same applies to those who learn how to make soaps and room fresheners. No *Walimah* is organized for the learners as the duration of learning is not long and no certificate is given either. This is because most of them learn under the wives or children of the *Malamai* or from women in the neighborhood who needed extra hands in conducting their trade thereby using the opportunity to train the *Almajirah* to acquire the skills.
- c. The shop keepers or sales girls on the other hand needed to be more active and attentive so as to identify and know the prices of items, master the act of recording the sales

²⁷ It is mandatory for the learners to be at the *Madara/Zawaya* for the observance of the canonical *Salawat*, therefore when they return they pray *Salatul Zuhr* and eat before going back to their various places of apprenticeship.

made, arrangement of items in the shops, maintaining customer friendly attitude and above all earning the trust of her trainer. Here at the end of the agreed period of training a *Walimah* is organized which often comes up at the convenience of the trainer. At some instances the trainers do give a startup incentive to the trainee but in most cases nothing is given²⁸. The startup incentive is given to those who stayed until the end of the appointed term of training, during the freedom *Walimah* of the grandaunt she will be given such incentive. While those who left unceremoniously do not receive any incentive. It is left for her to go and make good the training she acquired in her home town or husbands' house as the case may be. There is no certificate given at the end of the training.

- d. The spices and soup condiment entrepreneurs are made to play active role in the selection of the spices to be mixed for a particular use. The combination of spices to be used for taking tea and pap or gruel (*kunu/koko*) is different from the one to be used for eating food or addition in soup. The packaging of the spices is now undergoing a novelty where they are stored in airtight plastic containers as compared to when they are just served in polyethene bags or wrapped in paper. For the making of soup sauce the procedure of fermenting the selected ingredients i.e either pure locust beans or mixed with soya beans is being monitored by the apprentice. She part takes in the process of pounding and shaping the end product into small pieces so that it dries quickly for further processing or outright sale of the product. By the end of the apprenticeship program the apprentice will have had some incentive to start up her business. This is because the trainers do save some token amount out of what is given to her from the gain made from the sales of the products for the apprentice within the period of their training²⁹.

Generally the apprentice and their trainers maintain a cordial relationship even after graduation, some do keep on coming back to upgrade their skills where new ideas emerge like in tailoring and knitting. Some also depend largely on their trainers in terms of acquiring the needed working materials for the particular trade/vocation. There is a social cohesion between the trainers and trainees especially when there is any occasion like weddings, birth, *Walimatul-Qur'an*, death and even casual visits to keep up the relationship between them.

²⁸ Aunty Mary, (64 years) retired nurse,(she runs a chemist shop in the neighborhood), interviewed on 11/02/2020 at at her resident in Niger Low Cost, Lapai

²⁹ Maman Aisha *Mai Daddawa*, (50 years), interviewed on 03/04/2020 at *Gidan Parai*, Unguwan Yamma, Kontagora

The relationship with graduates is not severed in any way as the trainers are women and with the current wave of easy communication through the use of mobile phones, they always keep in touch. Sometime the trainees who happen to live in bigger cities after marriage do interact with their trainers through the social media. They send pictures of new styles in the fashion world to one another which is different from what are available in the locality³⁰. Hajiya Gaji³¹ remarked that some of them will send money for us to produce the locust bean (*Daddawa*) we will pound it and send it to them in the city or their various villages while they do the packaging. I am thrilled that some of them have made our products to be found even in supermarkets and big shops in some cities.

Goggo relates that these girls are very creative and industrious even as apprentice and that is why they became more innovative than us because they now use the resources available to them in their localities to produce new things apart from what they have learnt here with us. Some of them introduced the making of incense burner to our trade and it is now selling like there's no other product on ground³².

The relationship is built on respect and obedience which is the beauty of the behavior of the *Almajirah* when compared to other apprentices who are not from the *Zawayya*. The *Almajira* is submissive, she does not argue with you nor does she refuse to adhere to your rules and regulations. They are always willing to assist you even in aspects of your house hold chores and care of your children³³. "The *Almajira* is hard working. I have trained more than twenty girls (*Almajirai*) and I can say that they are trustworthy and reliable. I have never come across any one that is stubborn"³⁴.

So far, I have trained seven *Almajirai* out of which three have graduated and got married, two have done their *Walimatul-Qur'an* and have joined the *Tahfiz* class the two here are still in the training process. With my interactions with them compared to those that are none *Almajirai*, I will say they are unique quite different in behavior; they are calm, obedient, hardworking and very mindful of what they are here to learn. When asked if the *Almajirai* are fast or slow in the learning she replied; yes they are quick to grasp what you have taught them because I have trained five of them in weaving, they are quick to apologize when they make

³⁰ Usaina Bebeji, (40 years), A tailor, interviewed on 15/06/2019. *Gidan* Alh. Sulen Bebeji, Kontagora

³¹ Hajiya Gaji, (58 years), An expert in the production of *Daddawa* (Locust beans sauce), interviewed on , 14/04/2020 at Nasarawa Kainji

³² Goggo (56years) , ornamental designer, interviewed on 14/02/2020 at *Zawiyyah Sheikh* Idris Fogun, Bida

³³ *Malama* Aisha, (49 years), *Gidan* Fulako, Agaie, 06/03/2019

³⁴ *Lubabatu Malam*, (40 years) a house wife who trains the *Almajirai* in hair plaiting and henna design and sewing, interviewed on 15/04/2020 at her residence in Wushishi

an error and take corrections easily. They are very humble and respectful, easy going you love working with them as if you would not want to graduate them³⁵.

The procedure for the skill acquisition is a stress free one for the *Almajira* as can be seen from the foregoing explanations. The study period does not interfere with the skill acquisition as each activity is assigned a due time frame.

D. Conclusion

The *Almajirah* is a hard-working female learner who is sent to live under the custody of a *Sheikh* at a *Zawiyyah* away from home in order to learn the religious knowledge that will enable her to live a prosperous life in this world and the hereafter. Bearing that in mind she strives to strike a balance between here and the hereafter by acquiring a skill that will help her fend for herself and to safe guard her integrity as a woman. Thus, this paper takes a look at the various efforts made by these young female learners in terms of combining both Islamic religious knowledge and the acquisition of the entrepreneurship skills. The process of acquiring the entrepreneurship skills was identified including the schedule for apprenticeship. It is discovered that with the efforts made by the *Almajirah* with the understanding and help of her *Malam*; she is able to achieve both and make good use of both in her life as she progresses in her life after marriage. It is concluded that the Muslim female *Almajira*, if given the right training and conducive environment will be able to contribute positively in all spheres of life endeavour; and especially in terms of the spread of Islamic knowledge, moral training and self-reliance through acquisition of religious knowledge and a viable trade that can sustain her to enable her fend for her needs.

³⁵ Inna Wodu (52 years) is a neighbor to *Malam* Baba Doko Lapai who have been training the female *Almajirai* in her business of making local drinks and snacks interviewed on 11/02/2020 at Niger Low Cost, Lapai.

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4. Hajiya Gaji, (58 Years), production of (Daddawa) Locust beans sauce, Nasarawa Kainji.
5. Khalifah Shehu Adam Bida, (69 Years), *Ma'adat Ta'alimul Arabiyah wa Tarbiyatul Islamiyyah*, Ban wuya, Bida.
6. Lubabatu Malam, (40 Years), hair plaiting and henna design and sewing, Wushishi.
7. Mainuna Tswako, (18 Years), a learner, *Zawiyah Shehu Idris Fogun*, Bida.

8. *Malama* Aishatu, (48 Years), Makarantar Malam M. Inuwa, Makera, Paiko.
9. *Malama* Mamma, (68 Years), the wife to Malam Usman, *Zawiyyah* Shehu AbdulQadir Emi Fulako Agaie
10. Matan *Malam* Sharu Zakari, (65 Years), *Zawiyyah* Sharu Zakari Kontagora
11. Sayyidah Matan Sheikh Ghali, (54 Years), *Zawiyyah* Shehu Ghali, Nasarawa, Kainji
12. *Malama* Aisha, (49 Years), Emi Fulako, Agaie.
13. Maman Aisha, (50 Years), (Mai Daddawa)production of locust beans sauce, Unguwan Yamma, Kontagora.
14. *Malam* Isah Umar Tegin, (46 Years), Zonal member Zakat Committee Kagara Emirate, Unguwan Sarki, Tegin.
15. *Malam* Faisal, (35 Years), *Madarasatul Faidhatul Islamiyyah waTahfizul Qur'an* lil *Sheikh* Usman Imam, Paiko.
16. *Malam* Farouk, (34 Years), Islamiyyah Teacher, *Madarasatul Faidhatul Islamiyyah wa Tahfizul Qur'an Lil Sheikh* Usman Imam, Paiko.
17. *Malam* Aminu Nasir, (45 Years), *Riyadul Qur'an*, Anguwan Barebari, Suleja.
18. *Malam* Hassan Musa, (53 Years), Alfa Musa Islamic School, Bida –Mokwa Road, Edati.
19. *Malam* Idris Muhammadu Inuwa, (56 Years), *Makarantar Malam* Muhammadu Inuwa, Makera, Paiko.
20. *Malam* Muhammad Sani Ahmad Nagwade, (65 Years), Makarantar *Sheikh* Ahmad Nagwade, Rimaye, Kontagora.
21. *Malam* Haliru Shariff Zakariyau, (42 Yaers), *MakarantarMalam* Shariff Zakari, Anguwan Mahauta, Kontagora.
22. *Malama* Maimunatu Muhammad Sani, (46 YearsY, *Nurul Faidhatul Islamiyyah*, Anguwan Tivi, Mokwa.
23. *Malama* Amina Isah Kutigi, (48 Years), *Nurul Faidha Islamiyyah*, Kutigi.
24. *Malama* Khadijat Adam Raji, (53 Years), *Mariyatul Qibtiya* Islamic Training School, Ban wuya Area, Bida.