



## **Child Rights Protection as a National Security Strategy: Assessing the Security Implications of the Contemporary Almajiri System in Kaduna State (2016–2025)**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

The contemporary Almajiri system has become an important subject of policy and scholarly discourse due to growing concerns about its implications for child protection and national security in Northern Nigeria. This study assessed child rights protection as a national security strategy by examining the security implications of the contemporary Almajiri system in Kaduna State between 2016 and 2025. A mixed-method approach was adopted, combining questionnaires, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary evidence from government reports and scholarly publications. The findings revealed that inadequate child protection within the contemporary Almajiri system contributes to educational exclusion, neglect, exploitation, poverty, unemployment, and increased vulnerability to criminal exploitation and violent extremism. The study further established that these challenges are driven primarily by structural factors, including weak implementation of child protection policies, inadequate integration of Qur'anic and formal education, poverty, and limited institutional coordination rather than the philosophy of Islamic education itself. The study argues that strengthening child protection systems should be viewed as a proactive national security strategy capable of reducing social vulnerability and promoting sustainable peace. It recommends improved enforcement of child protection legislation, greater investment in inclusive education, stronger collaboration among government agencies, religious institutions, traditional leaders, civil society organisations, and local communities, and the integration of Qur'anic and formal education to enhance children's welfare, human development, and national security in Kaduna State and Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Child Rights Protection; National Security; Almajiri System; Human Security; Kaduna State.



## 1. Introduction

Children's rights protection has become an increasingly important component of national and human security discourse because the welfare of children directly influences social stability, economic development, and sustainable peace. International instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognize every child's right to education, protection, healthcare, and opportunities for holistic development irrespective of social, cultural, or economic background. Despite these commitments, millions of children across Africa continue to experience neglect, exploitation, abuse, and educational exclusion arising from poverty, conflict, weak governance, and inadequate social protection systems (Human Rights Watch, 2021). These challenges not only undermine children's development but also create conditions capable of threatening long-term national security by increasing social inequality, marginalization, and vulnerability to crime and violent extremism.

The consequences of weak child protection extend beyond the immediate welfare of affected children. Educational deprivation, persistent neglect, and prolonged exposure to poverty increase children's vulnerability to criminal exploitation, unemployment, social exclusion, and recruitment into violent or extremist groups. Such conditions weaken social cohesion, reduce human capital development, and create security risks capable of undermining sustainable peace and national development. Increasingly, scholars and policymakers acknowledge that strengthening child protection should be viewed not merely as a humanitarian responsibility but as a preventive national security strategy that addresses the structural drivers of insecurity before they escalate into broader societal threats.

Kaduna State provides an important context for examining this relationship because of its large population of Almajiri children and its history of recurring security challenges. Although legislative frameworks such as the Child Rights Act (2003) **and the** Kaduna State Child Welfare and Protection Law (2018) establish mechanisms for safeguarding children's rights, implementation has remained inconsistent due to institutional weaknesses, inadequate funding, and limited coordination among relevant stakeholders. As a result, many vulnerable children continue to experience conditions that expose them to exploitation and social marginalization despite existing legal protections.



Against this background, this study assesses child rights protection as a national security strategy by examining the security implications of the contemporary Almajiri system in Kaduna State between 2016 and 2025. Specifically, it investigates how weaknesses in child protection, educational inclusion, institutional support, and social welfare influence children's vulnerability and broader security outcomes. By shifting the focus from documenting child rights violations to evaluating the role of effective child protection in promoting national security, the study contributes evidence that can inform policies aimed at strengthening child welfare, improving educational opportunities, reducing social vulnerability, and fostering sustainable peace and security in Kaduna State and Nigeria.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite existing child protection laws and policies, many children within the contemporary Almajiri system in Kaduna State continue to experience educational exclusion, neglect, exploitation, and inadequate social protection. Weak implementation of child protection policies, widespread poverty, and poor institutional coordination have limited efforts to improve the welfare of Almajiri children, leaving many vulnerable to abuse and social marginalization. These challenges indicate that existing interventions have not sufficiently addressed the underlying factors affecting child protection.

The consequences of inadequate child protection extend beyond child welfare to national security. Children who lack access to education, care, and economic opportunities are more vulnerable to criminal exploitation, violent extremism, and other forms of insecurity. Although previous studies have examined the Almajiri system from educational and socio-economic perspectives, limited attention has been given to child rights protection as a national security strategy. This study therefore assesses the security implications of the contemporary Almajiri system in Kaduna State between 2016 and 2025, with the aim of providing evidence to strengthen child protection policies as a means of promoting sustainable peace and national security.



### 1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to assess child rights protection as a national security strategy by examining the security implications of the contemporary Almajiri system in Kaduna State between 2016 and 2025.

#### Specific Objectives

- i. To examine the relationship between child rights protection and national security in Kaduna State.
- ii. To assess the extent to which the contemporary Almajiri system affects child rights protection in Kaduna State.
- iii. To evaluate the security implications of inadequate child rights protection within the contemporary Almajiri system.
- iv. To identify the challenges hindering effective child rights protection in the contemporary Almajiri system in Kaduna State.

### 1.4 Empirical Review

Ifayomi, Ali, and Ellis (2024) conducted a systematic review of 31 empirical studies on child abuse in Nigeria using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches. The study found that poverty, weak institutional capacity, harmful socio-cultural practices, and ineffective reporting mechanisms significantly undermine child protection and expose children to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The authors recommended strengthening child protection systems through improved policy implementation and institutional collaboration. However, the study focused on child abuse generally and did not examine how child rights protection contributes to national security within the contemporary Almajiri system, thereby creating a gap addressed by this study.

Yakubu, Abubakar, and colleagues (2021) reviewed strategies for reforming the Almajiri educational system using documentary analysis. They found that the traditional Almajiri system had gradually deteriorated due to poverty, weak government support, and policy inconsistency, resulting in poor child welfare and educational exclusion. The study recommended integrating Qur'anic and formal education to improve children's welfare and



promote national development. However, it did not assess child rights protection as a preventive strategy for addressing national security challenges.

Abubakar and Mohammed (2022) examined the relationship between educational deprivation, youth vulnerability, and insecurity in Northern Nigeria using a mixed-method approach. Their findings showed that limited access to education and weak social support increase young people's vulnerability to crime and insecurity. They recommended strengthening education and child welfare programmes as preventive measures. However, the study focused on youth generally rather than Almajiri children and did not specifically examine the role of child rights protection in enhancing national security.

UNICEF Nigeria (2024) reported that Northern Nigeria accounts for the highest proportion of out-of-school children due to poverty, insecurity, weak educational infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers. The report emphasized that improving child protection, educational access, and social welfare is essential for reducing children's vulnerability to exploitation and social exclusion. Nevertheless, it did not specifically assess the security implications of child rights protection within the contemporary Almajiri system in Kaduna State. This gap provides the justification for the present study, which examines child rights protection as a national security strategy between **2016 and 2025**.

### **1.5 Theoretical Framework: General Strain Theory**

This study is anchored on General Strain Theory (GST), developed by Robert Agnew (1992), which explains how persistent social and economic hardships influence individuals' behaviour. The theory argues that people exposed to deprivation, neglect, and blocked opportunities are more likely to experience frustration and emotional strain, increasing their vulnerability to antisocial or criminal behaviour. Agnew (1992) identified three major sources of strain: the inability to achieve valued goals, the loss of positive influences such as family support and education, and exposure to adverse conditions including poverty, abuse, and neglect. When these strains are not addressed through effective social support, individuals may adopt harmful coping mechanisms (Agnew, 2006).

General Strain Theory is relevant to this study because many children within the contemporary



Almajiri system experience educational exclusion, poverty, neglect, and inadequate social protection. These conditions create cumulative strain that increases their vulnerability to street survival, criminal exploitation, and recruitment into violent groups. The theory therefore suggests that **effective child rights protection** through access to education, social welfare, family support, and institutional care can reduce these vulnerabilities before they develop into broader security challenges. Consequently, the study adopts General Strain Theory to explain how strengthening child protection can serve as a proactive national security strategy, promoting social stability, sustainable peace, and human development in Kaduna State and Nigeria.

## 1.6 Methodology

This study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy and employed a **mixed-method survey design** to assess child rights protection as a national security strategy within the context of the contemporary Almajiri system in Kaduna State between 2016 and 2025. The study was conducted in Kaduna North, Sabon Gari, and Kagarko Local Government Areas, representing the three senatorial districts of the state. The target population comprised Almajiri children, Mallams (Qur'anic teachers), parents, security personnel, government officials, and representatives of relevant non-governmental organisations. Using the Taro Yamane formula, **a sample size of 400** respondents was drawn from a population **of 1,392,819**.

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). **A total of 361** questionnaires were administered, of which **351** were validly completed and returned, representing a **97.23% response rate**. Additionally, **15 key informant interviews** and **three focus group discussions involving 24 participants** were conducted to obtain detailed insights from key stakeholders. Secondary data were sourced from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, policy documents, and other relevant documentary materials. To ensure the quality of the instruments, expert validation and a pilot study involving **30 respondents** were conducted.

Quantitative data were analysed using **descriptive statistics**, including frequencies,



percentages, and mean scores, while qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions were analysed through **thematic content analysis**. The integration of both approaches enabled the triangulation of findings and provided a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between child rights protection and national security within the contemporary Almajiri system. Throughout the study, ethical principles including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the protection of vulnerable participants, particularly children were strictly observed to ensure the credibility and integrity of the research.

## 1.7 Results

**Table 1: Relationship between Child Rights Protection and National Security**

| Statements                                                                                   | SA  | A   | N  | D  | SD | Mean        | Decision        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|----|-------------|-----------------|
| Effective child rights protection promotes social stability.                                 | 139 | 120 | 42 | 28 | 22 | 3.93        | Accepted        |
| National security is strengthened when children's rights are adequately protected.           | 146 | 124 | 41 | 25 | 15 | 4.03        | Accepted        |
| Protecting vulnerable children reduces the risk of radicalization and criminal exploitation. | 131 | 118 | 52 | 32 | 18 | 3.89        | Accepted        |
| There is a strong relationship between child rights protection and sustainable peace.        | 143 | 115 | 48 | 28 | 17 | 3.96        | Accepted        |
| <b>Grand Mean</b>                                                                            |     |     |    |    |    | <b>3.95</b> | <b>Accepted</b> |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025.

The findings in Table 1 indicate that respondents perceived a strong relationship between child rights protection and national security, with a **grand mean of 3.95**. The majority agreed that effective child rights protection promotes social stability (Mean = 3.93), strengthens national security (Mean = 4.03), reduces children's vulnerability to radicalization (Mean = 3.89), and contributes to national peace and development (Mean = 3.96). The high level of agreement demonstrates that respondents view child protection as a critical component of sustainable peace and security in Kaduna State.



**Table 2: Contemporary Almajiri System and Child Rights Protection**

| Statements                                                                                             | SA  | A   | N  | D  | SD | Mean        | Decision        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|----|-------------|-----------------|
| The contemporary Almajiri system limits children's access to quality education.                        | 168 | 111 | 42 | 18 | 12 | 4.15        | Accepted        |
| Many Almajiri children require stronger protection against abuse and exploitation.                     | 162 | 108 | 39 | 27 | 15 | 4.07        | Accepted        |
| Existing child protection measures within the Almajiri system are inadequate.                          | 150 | 120 | 45 | 21 | 15 | 4.05        | Accepted        |
| Strengthening child protection within the Almajiri system is necessary to safeguard children's rights. | 144 | 126 | 39 | 27 | 15 | 4.02        | Accepted        |
| <b>Grand Mean</b>                                                                                      |     |     |    |    |    | <b>4.07</b> | <b>Accepted</b> |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025.

The findings in Table 2 produced a **grand mean of 4.07**, indicating strong agreement that the contemporary Almajiri system presents significant challenges to effective child rights protection. Respondents agreed that many Almajiri children have limited access to quality education (Mean = 4.15), are exposed to abuse and exploitation (Mean = 4.07), experience inadequate protection of their legal rights (Mean = 4.05), and lack sufficient welfare and institutional support (Mean = 4.02). These findings suggest that strengthening child protection mechanisms within the Almajiri system is essential for improving children's welfare and long-term development.

**Table 3: Security Implications of Inadequate Child Rights Protection within the Contemporary Almajiri System**

| Statements                                                                                      | SA  | A   | N  | D  | SD | Mean | Decision |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|----|------|----------|
| Inadequate child rights protection contributes to the growth of unemployed and unskilled youth. | 156 | 123 | 39 | 21 | 12 | 4.11 | Accepted |
| Weak child protection increases children's vulnerability                                        | 165 | 120 | 33 | 21 | 12 | 4.15 | Accepted |





| Statements                                                                                         | SA  | A   | N  | D  | SD | Mean        | Decision        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|----|-------------|-----------------|
| to recruitment by extremist groups.                                                                |     |     |    |    |    |             |                 |
| Poor child protection contributes to street violence and insecurity.                               | 150 | 129 | 39 | 21 | 12 | 4.09        | Accepted        |
| Strengthening child rights protection is essential for sustainable peace and national development. | 156 | 126 | 39 | 18 | 12 | 4.13        | Accepted        |
| <b>Grand Mean</b>                                                                                  |     |     |    |    |    | <b>4.12</b> | <b>Accepted</b> |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025.

The findings in Table 3 reveal a **grand mean of 4.12**, indicating widespread agreement that inadequate child rights protection has serious implications for national security. Respondents agreed that poor child protection contributes to the growth of unemployed and unskilled youth (Mean = 4.11), increases children's vulnerability to recruitment by extremist groups (Mean = 4.15), contributes to street violence and insecurity (Mean = 4.09), and poses long-term threats to peace and national development (Mean = 4.13). These findings underscore the importance of strengthening child rights protection as a preventive strategy for reducing insecurity and promoting sustainable national development.

## 1.8 Discussion of Results

The findings in **Table 1** demonstrate a strong relationship between child rights protection and national security, with a grand mean of **3.95**. Respondents agreed that protecting children's rights promotes social stability, strengthens national security, reduces the risk of radicalization, and contributes to sustainable peace. These findings suggest that child protection should be viewed as a preventive security strategy rather than solely as a social welfare responsibility. The findings support General Strain Theory (Agnew, 1992), which posits that reducing social deprivation and providing supportive environments decrease the likelihood of antisocial behaviour. The findings also agree with UNDP (2023) and UNICEF (2024), which emphasize that investments in child protection, education, and social welfare enhance social cohesion, strengthen human security, and reduce the conditions that fuel conflict and insecurity.



The findings in **Table 2** reveal that respondents strongly agreed that the contemporary Almajiri system presents significant challenges to effective child rights protection, with a grand mean of **4.07**. Respondents identified limited access to quality education, exposure to abuse and exploitation, inadequate legal protection, and insufficient welfare support as major concerns. These findings indicate that strengthening child protection mechanisms within the Almajiri system is essential for safeguarding children's rights and improving their long-term well-being. The findings corroborate **Yakubu et al. (2021)**, who reported that poverty, weak institutional support, and inconsistent educational policies have weakened the traditional Almajiri system. Similarly, **Ogouno et al. (2022)** found that inadequate implementation of child protection and educational reforms has left many Almajiri children vulnerable to neglect and exploitation. The findings in **Table 3** further indicate that inadequate child rights protection has significant implications for national security, with a grand mean of **4.12**. Respondents agreed that weak child protection contributes to unemployment, increases vulnerability to extremist recruitment, fuels street violence, and threatens sustainable peace and development. These findings are consistent **with** Abubakar and Mohammed (2022), who found that educational deprivation and poverty increase youth vulnerability to insecurity, and with Omede and Bakare (2021), who argued that socio-economic inequalities are major drivers of insecurity in Nigeria. Overall, the findings demonstrate that strengthening child rights protection through improved education, effective policy implementation, and enhanced social welfare should be regarded as a strategic investment in national security, capable of reducing social vulnerability and promoting sustainable peace in Kaduna State and Nigeria.

## 1.9 Conclusion

This study assessed child rights protection as a national security strategy by examining the security implications of the contemporary Almajiri system in Kaduna State between **2016 and 2025**. The findings established a strong relationship between child rights protection and national security, demonstrating that inadequate protection of Almajiri children contributes to educational exclusion, neglect, exploitation, unemployment, social marginalization, and increased vulnerability to criminal activities and violent extremism. The study further revealed



that weak implementation of child protection policies, poverty, inadequate institutional support, and limited integration of Qur'anic and formal education remain major barriers to protecting the rights and welfare of Almajiri children. These conditions not only undermine children's development but also threaten social stability and sustainable national development. The study therefore concludes that strengthening child rights protection should be regarded as a proactive national security strategy rather than merely a social welfare intervention. Enhancing access to quality and inclusive education, strengthening child protection institutions, improving policy implementation, and fostering collaboration among government agencies, religious leaders, traditional institutions, civil society organisations, and local communities are essential for reducing children's vulnerability to insecurity. Investing in child protection will not only safeguard children's rights and well-being but will also promote social cohesion, sustainable peace, and long-term national security in Kaduna State and Nigeria.

#### **1.10 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Government should strengthen the implementation and enforcement of child protection laws to ensure that the rights of Almajiri children are adequately protected.
- ii. Federal and State Governments should integrate Qur'anic education with formal and vocational education to improve educational opportunities and future employment prospects for Almajiri children.
- iii. Social welfare programmes should be expanded to address poverty, improve child welfare, and reduce children's vulnerability to abuse, exploitation, and criminal recruitment.
- iv. Religious leaders, traditional institutions, civil society organisations, and local communities should collaborate in promoting child rights awareness and monitoring the welfare of Almajiri children.
- v. Security and child protection agencies should adopt child-centred preventive approaches that recognize child rights protection as an important component of national security and sustainable peace.



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