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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL INFORMATION	IC
INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS	1F
EDITORIAL NOTE:	
Addressing the Persistent Burden of Under-Five Mortality, and the Growing Importance of Healthcare	615
Marketing – G. E. Erhabor	
ORIGINAL ARTICLES	
Concordance Between Clinical and Histopathological Diagnosis of Skin Diseases in South-South Nigeria: A Two-Center Study	617
O. E. Ogunbor, C. R. Madubuko, C. A. Okoye, D. E. Imasogie	
Early Versus Delayed Oral Feeding in Emergency Gastrointestinal Surgeries	625
O. O. Akanbi, A. S. Oguntola, M. L. Adeoti, J. G. Olaogun, O. L. Idris, S. O. Fadiora	
Effect of Dietary Phosphate Restriction in Pre-Dialysis Chronic Kidney Disease Patients with Hyperphosphataemia in Southern Nigeria	630
I. R. Edeki, E. I. Unuigbo, E. I. Okaka	
Physicians' Perception on the Relevance of Healthcare Marketing in a Tertiary Hospital, South-West, Nigeria	638
T. O. Adebawojo, V. A. Adekiya, O. O. Abesin, N. H. Ugwuchukwu, O. I. Adeniji, M. D. Adekanle, T. O. Esan	
A Survey of What Healthcare Professionals Consider as Relevant for Decisional Autonomy in Health and Treatment in Nigeria	644
O. Sorinmade, O. Elugbadebo, T. Bello	
Risk Factors Associated with Under Five Children Mortality in Northeast Nigeria; A Retrospective Analysis of National Demographic and Health Survey Data	651
Y. A. Misau, M. F. Bashir, M. M. Dabo, A. S. Adamu, L. M. Dattijo, A. Z. Musa, S. M. Ahmad, J. Yaya, M. Meremikwu, B. M. Usman, N. K. Abdulhamid	
Relationship Between Blood Pressure Control and Self-Care Practices Among Hypertensive Patients Attending Family Medicine Clinic of Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Lagos, Nigeria	659
S. O. Odunaye-Badmus, O. O. Sodipo, S. O. Malomo, O. E. Oluwatuyi, R. N. Odiana	
Prevalence of Intestinal Parasitic Infections Among Pregnant Women: A Multi-Centre Survey	668
S. E. Ocheja, O. Adesina, O. Makanjuola	
Heart Rate Variability in Healthy Young Adult Nigerians	675
D. B. Adamu, B. S. Chori, O. Onaadebo, J. O. Ogedengbe, A. N. Odili	
Assessment of Rifampicin Indeterminate Results among Adult Patients attending a Tertiary Tuberculosis Treatment Center in Port Harcourt Rivers State using Shewhart control Charts: Implications for patients and Tuberculosis Control Programs	682
T. J. Abaate, A. A. Alali	
Prevalence of High Blood Pressure and Associated Factors among a Population of Apparently Healthy in-School Adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria: A Cross-Sectional Survey	691
E. M. Umuerrri, Patrick Oyibo, I. A. Oyibo, O. Eyawo	
A Comparative Study of Intelligence Quotients of Almajirai Attending Quranic Schools and Pupils of Selected Primary Schools in Zaria, Northwest Nigeria	699
A. Abubakar-Abdullateef, A. Mohammed, K. Kusi-Mensah, H. D. Mohammed, A. S. Kakangi	
Total Thyroidectomy versus Subtotal Thyroidectomy as a Suitable Surgery for Benign Thyroid Disorders	708
W. M. El-Sayed, S. Elhariri, M. S. F. Mekhaeel, I. Burud	
Trends in Dermatological Diagnoses During Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria: A Retrospective Study	714
C. C. Anaje, O. I. Ezejiofor, N. A. Enechukwu, C. I. Okpala, C. L. Onyekonwu, J. C. Nkesi	
Knowledge of Helping Babies Breathe Programme and the Determinants among Trainees in Edo State	721
I. G. Enato, O. K. Olaniyi, O. J. Uduebor, S. Oriaifo, E. Idemudia, I. A. Enadeghe, F. Okhamafe, O. Ezomo, E. M. Osazee, V. S. Effiong	
CASE REPORT AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Ebstein's Anomaly in a Young Nigerian Lady	727
S. E. Antia, G. C. Isiguzo, C. C. Ajaero, P. O. Okpala, C. N. Ugwu	
INDEX TO VOLUME 41, NO. 6, 2024	
Author Index	735
Subject Index	736



A Comparative Study of Intelligence Quotients of Almajirai Attending Quranic Schools and Pupils of Selected Primary Schools in Zaria, Northwest Nigeria

Une étude comparative des quotients intellectuels des Almajirai fréquentant des écoles coraniques et des élèves de certaines écoles primaires à Zaria, dans le nord-ouest du Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: *Almajiri* is a word that describes a child sent far away from his parents to study the Quran under the tutelage and care of a Muslim scholar, also known as a *Mallam*. In recent times, the capacity of the *Mallam* to cater for these children has declined, leading them to beg on the streets for sustenance. Cognitive capacity has rarely been studied amongst this population. This study was designed to compare the intelligence quotients of *Almajirai* attending Quranic Schools and that of pupils attending public primary school in Zaria, Northwest Nigeria

METHODS: A comparative cross-sectional study design was employed to compare the intelligence quotients of 401 participants (200 *Almajirai* and 201 public primary school pupils). All participants were administered a socio-demographic questionnaire and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children Fourth Version (WISC-IV).

RESULTS: Public primary school pupils performed significantly better than *Almajirai* on all administered subtests of the WISC-IV except arithmetic. The mean Full-Scale IQ score of *Almajirai* was significantly lower than that of public primary school pupils (60.30 ± 11.49 vs. 70.12 ± 11.9 , $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = -12.12-7.52). The intelligence quotient of *Almajirai* was associated with the age of the child and the father's level of education while that of public primary school pupils was associated with their current class in school.

CONCLUSION: Public primary school pupils performed better than *Almajirai* on intelligence tests indicating a need to reform *Almajiri* Education. It is recommended that the system be strengthened and its curriculum expanded to include other modules rather than its current restriction to religious education.

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KEYWORDS: Almajiri, Street Children, Intelligence Quotient, Cognitive Ability, Northwest Nigeria

RÉSUMÉ

CONTEXTE: Almajiri est un terme désignant un enfant envoyé loin de ses parents pour étudier le Coran sous la tutelle et les soins d'un érudit musulman, également appelé Mallam. Ces dernières années, la capacité du Mallam à subvenir aux besoins de ces enfants a diminué, les contraignant à mendier dans les rues pour survivre. La capacité cognitive de cette population a rarement été étudiée. Cette étude a été conçue pour comparer les quotients intellectuels des Almajirai fréquentant les écoles coraniques et ceux des élèves fréquentant les écoles primaires publiques à Zaria, dans le nord-ouest du Nigeria.

MÉTHODES: Une étude comparative transversale a été menée pour comparer les quotients intellectuels de 401 participants (200 Almajirai et 201 élèves des écoles primaires publiques). Tous les participants ont rempli un questionnaire sociodémographique et le test d'intelligence pour enfants Wechsler, quatrième version (WISC-IV).

RÉSULTATS : Les élèves des écoles primaires publiques ont obtenu des résultats significativement meilleurs que les Almajirai dans tous les sous-tests du WISC-IV, à l'exception de l'arithmétique. Le score moyen de QI global des Almajirai était significativement inférieur à celui des élèves des écoles primaires publiques ($60,30 \pm 11,49$ contre $70,12 \pm 11,9$, $p < 0,001$, IC à 95 % = -12,12 à -7,52). Le quotient intellectuel des Almajirai était associé à l'âge de l'enfant et au niveau d'éducation du père, tandis que celui des élèves des écoles primaires publiques était lié à leur classe actuelle à l'école.

CONCLUSION : Les élèves des écoles primaires publiques ont mieux performé que les Almajirai aux tests d'intelligence, indiquant un besoin de réformer le système éducatif Almajiri. Il est recommandé de renforcer ce système et d'élargir son programme pour inclure d'autres modules au-delà de l'éducation religieuse actuelle. WAJM 2024; 41 (6): 699 - 707

MOTS-CLÉS : Almajiri, Enfants des rues, Quotient intellectuel, Capacité cognitive, Nord-Ouest du Nigeria.

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Abbreviations: IQ: Intelligence Quotient; WISC-IV: Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children Fourth Version; VCI: Verbal Comprehension Index; PRI: Perceptual Reasoning Index; WMI: Working Memory Index; PI, Processing Speed Index