

THE ECONOMICS OF *MAWLID* FESTIVALS IN KANO CITY 1940s-2020

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ABSTRACT

While *Mawlid* festivals have attracted substantial scholarly attention for their theological, cultural and political dimensions, their economic implications remain insufficiently examined, particularly within urban West African contexts. Focusing on Kano City, Nigeria, this article investigates the economic impact of *Mawlid* festivals in a setting where informal enterprises and small-scale businesses dominate the local economy. The study addresses a critical gap in the literature by foregrounding the material and economic dimensions of religious celebration, thereby expanding prevailing interpretations of *Mawlid* as primarily devotional or cultural phenomena. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study draws on in-depth interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis to assess the festivals' influence on local trade, employment generation, tourism-related services, religious consumption practices and patterns of urban economic circulation. The findings demonstrate that *Mawlid* festivals function as seasonal economic accelerators, stimulating commercial transactions, enhancing income opportunities for informal sector actors and reinforcing networks of religious patronage and philanthropy. Beyond their spiritual significance, these festivals operate as structured sites of economic production, redistribution and social capital formation. The article argues that *Mawlid* celebrations in Kano exemplify the embeddedness of religious practice within urban economic system. By situating religious festivals within the framework of cultural economy and informal urbanism, the study contributes to broader debates on religion and development in Africa. It also advances understanding of how devotional practices shape local economic resilience.

Key Words: *Mawlid*, Festival, Kano, Economic impact

Introduction

Mawlid festivals, which celebrate the birth of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and some Muslim saints, are deeply ingrained tradition in many Muslim-majority cities worldwide. In Kano city, Nigeria, these festivals have become an integral part of the urban landscape, attracting millions of devotees, tourists and traders. *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city typically involve processions, prayers, religious lectures, feasting and cultural performances. These festivals not only showcase the religious and rich cultural heritage of Kano city but also generate and promote significant economic activities. Despite their economic importance, the impact of *Mawlid* festivals on the local economy of Kano city remains understudied. Existing research on *Mawlid* festivals not only in Kano city but also in different parts of the Muslim world has primarily focused on the spiritual and cultural dimensions of the festivals and overlooked the economic aspects of the events. This knowledge gap is particularly significant in the context of Kano city, where the informal sector and small-scale enterprises dominate the local economy.

This paper seeks to address this knowledge gap by investigating the economic impact of *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city. Using qualitative research method, this study examines the impact of *Mawlid* festivals on local businesses, employment, tourism, prayer economy and overall economic growth of the city. By exploring the economic dimensions of *Mawlid*, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between culture, religion and economic activities in Kano city.

Unlike most of the studies conducted on the economic impact of festivals in different parts of the world, which mainly focus on the role of visitor's or tourist's spending on food, accommodation and other expenditures in boosting the economy of the host communities; in this paper, in addition to the economic role of tourism, the main focus is on the financial expenditure of *Mawlid* festivals organizers and that of local participants in the community. This is because in Kano city, the *Mawlid* festival is considered as one of the most important Islamic religious festivals by its advocates. They believe that those who spend their money in organizing the festival will be rewarded by God. Therefore, the organizers and the general public spend a lot in organizing and conducting the festivities and in most cases taking care of some of the visitor expenditures, such as feeding and accommodation for free. The *Mawlid* organizers and participants' financial expenditures, especially during the *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival season, directly and indirectly contribute in boosting the local economy of Kano city.

This paper is structured as follows: the next session present the theoretical framework that underpins the analysis. This is followed by a brief historical overview of *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city, which situates the phenomenon within its broader socio-religious context. The paper then examines the nature of *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city focusing on their organization, activities and patterns of participation. The subsequent section examines the economic activities associated with *Mawlid* festival in Kano city focusing on local businesses, employment opportunities, tourism, transportation and the dynamics of the prayer economy. The final section concludes the paper by summarizing the key findings and reflecting on their broader implications, followed by the references.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the intersecting frameworks of cultural economy and informal urbanism, which provide an analytical lens for understanding the economic dimensions of religious practices in urban African contexts. The concept of cultural economy emphasizes the ways in which cultural practices, symbols and meanings were embedded within the economic processes (Scott 462). It highlights how cultural events, such as religious festivals, generate economic value through networks of production, consumption and exchange. In the context of *Mawlid* festivals in

Kano City, this framework enables an analysis on how devotional practices simultaneously function as sites of economic activities, where religious expression intersects with commerce, labour and material exchange. Complementing this, the framework of informal urbanism draws attention to the role of informal networks, practices and economies in shaping urban life, particularly in cities of the Third World countries (Roy 157). Given that Kano's economy is largely driven by informal and small scale enterprises, this perspective is essential for understanding how *Mawlid* festivals create temporary but significant economic opportunities outside formal regulatory structures. By integrating these frameworks, this conceptualizes *Mawlid* festivals not merely as religious or cultural events, but as dynamic socio-economic processes embedded within broader systems of urban informality and cultural production.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design aimed at exploring the economic dimensions of *Mawlid* festivals in Kano City. Data were collection through a combination of in-depth interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis. The interview component involved purposive sampling of key participants, including religious leaders from different religious groups such as the Tijjaniyya and Qadiriyya orders, festival organizers, traders and attendees who are directly or indirectly involved in *Mawlid*-related economic activities. This sampling strategy ensured the inclusion of diverse perspectives relevant to the study. In total twenty people were interviewed in Kano City. All interviews were conducted in Hausa language, recorded, translated and analyzed by the author.

Participant observation was conducted during major *Mawlid* celebrations in Kano City, where the author observed and participated in *Mawlid* festivals performances and procession of different Islamic groups in Kano City. The author also observed the commercial activities taking place during the festivals and pattern of participation and exchange. After each observation, an observation report was prepared, which was later corroborated with the other sources of data. This enable a contextual understanding of the economic interaction associated with the festivals. In addition, documentary sources including previous studies, manuscripts, sermons and relevant reports were analyze to complement primary data.

Fieldwork was carried out as part of the author's ongoing PhD research on the history of *Mawlid* festivals in Kano City from October 2023 to July 2025. Data were analyzed thematically, focusing on patterns related to economic activities, income generation and the broader relationship between religion and urban economic life.

***Mawlid* Festivals in Kano city**

Some Islamic historians and writers believed that *Mawlid* festivals, especially *Mawlid al-Nabiy* were started in the 6th century A.H by the Fatimid Dynasty in Egypt from there it spread to other parts of the Muslim world. In Kano city, however, it is not certain when *Mawlid* festivals, particularly *Mawlid al-Nabiy*, started to be celebrated. However, some oral traditions had indicated that the festival has been celebrated in the city long before the 19th century Jihad in Hausaland (Adam, interview with Freedom Radio Kano). Traditionally, the *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival was celebrated in Kano city in two parts, on the 12th night of Rabi al-Awwal, Sufi Muslims in the city celebrate the birthday ceremony of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) through reading the Qur'an and some devotional odes of the Prophet and, on the 19th day of Rabi al-Awwal, they also celebrate the naming ceremony of the Prophet in a traditional festival known as *Bikin Takutaha* on top of the Dala Hill (Makwarari, personal interview).

In the mid-twentieth century, new models of celebrating *Mawlid al-Nabiy* were introduced to Kano city. In the 1940s, under the influence of Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse, 'the Niassian *Mawlid* model' was introduced to Kano by Shaykh Tijjani Usman Zangon Barebari. In 1949 also,

another model of celebrating *Mawlid al-Nabiy* was introduced by Shaykh Nasiru Kabara, ‘the Kabara model’. The year 1952 marked the beginning of another milestone in the development of *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city. The Saint *Mawlid* festival was introduced for the first time in the city by Shaykh Nasiru Kabara when he initiated the birthday festival of Sidi Abdulqadir Jilani (the founder of the Qadiriyya Sufi order) known as *Maukibin Qadiriyya* (Kabara, personal interview). Moreover, in 1958 the *Mawlid* festival of Shaykh Ahmad Tijani (the founder of the Tijjaniyya Sufi order) was also initiated in Kano city by Shaykh Sani Kafinga (Kafinga, personal interview) arguably in reaction to the formation of *Maukibi* festival by Shaykh Nasiru Kabara which seems to be an extension of the religious rivalry between the Qadiriyya and the Tijjaniyya Sufi orders in Kano city during the period. In 1986, the National *Mawlid* Festival of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass was initiated by the Tijjaniyya Association – Majmu’ul Ahbab Shaykh Ibrahim Niass of Nigeria in Lagos and was first celebrated in Kano city in 1993 (Majma’ul Ahbab 1). Moreover, in the late 1990s, the Shia community in Kano city started conducting *Mawlid* festivals of Prophet Muhammad and some Shia Imams by organizing *Mawlid* processions annually in the city (Al-Hassan, personal interview). Between 2007 and 2010, another festival *Zagayen Takutaha* (*Takutaha* Procession) was initiated to celebrate Prophet Muhammad’s naming ceremony in Kano city by some Islamic singers (*Sha’irai*) that included Malam Bashir Dan-Musa and Sharif Rabi’u Usman Baba. Apart from these public *Mawlid* festivals, private individuals and groups, including *Islamiyya* schools, also organize *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festivities to commemorate the Prophet’s birthday festival.

These festivals are celebrated at different periods of time. In the contemporary period, these festivals are celebrated within a period of about six consecutive months, from *Safar* (the Second month of the Islamic Calendar) to *Rajab* (the seventh month of the Islamic calendar). As a result of its wide acceptance by the majority of Kano city’s Islamic community, *Mawlid* festivals particularly *Mawlid al-Nabiy* became the second popular Muslim festival celebrated by the Muslims in the city after the two *Eids* festivals. Thus, one cannot imagine the socio-religious and economic impact these festivals have on the host community – Kano city.

The Nature of *Mawlid* Festival in Kano city

As highlighted earlier that traditionally the *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival in Kano city was celebrated through the recitation of the Qur’an and some devotional odes and poems of the Prophet, such as *Al-Ishiriniyyah* and *Dala’ilul Khairat* (Adam, interview with Freedom Radio Kano). By the mid-20th century new models of celebration were introduced by the Tijjaniyya and Qadiriyya Sufi orders, respectively. The new *Mawlid* models featured highly organized public celebrations that drew large crowds from Kano city and beyond. Both Tijjaniyya and Qadiriyya models emphasized historical narrative sessions of the Prophet’s birth during the festival. The model also featured the congregational remembrance of Allah (*Dikhr*), poetic eulogies of Prophet, religious lectures, processions, feasting (*Walima*) and all night vigils (Khalil, personal interview). The *Mawlid* festivals organized by the Tijjaniyya and Qadiriyya (and later the Shi’a) and some *Islamiyya* schools in Kano city are considered as public *Mawlid* festivals while the *Mawlid* sessions and lectures organized by private individuals and groups at their houses and mosques are seen as private *Mawlid* festivals.

Moreover, with the development of Saint *Mawlid* festivals by Sufi orders in Kano city and the emergence of the anti-Sufi groups, such as the *Jama’atu Izalatil Bid’a wa Iqamatil Sunnah* in 1978, that opposed most of the Sufi orders practices, including the different types of the *Mawlid* festivals; the Sufi orders also made efforts to further develop the practices and to make them more acceptable to the public by making the religious festivals more vibrant and ceremonial. The emphasis of the Sufi orders on adornment, cleanness and feeding good food and drinks during the

Mawlid festivals led to the emergence of many *Mawlid* traditions, such as *Mawlid* feast (*Walimar Maulidi*), *Mawlid* clothes (*Kayan Maulidi/ Ankon Maulidi*) and *Mawlid* gifts (*Hadayar Maulidi*) (Khalil, personal interview). These have a lot of economic impact on Kano city.

The Economic Impact of *Mawlid* Festivals in Kano city

The term “economic impact” when used in isolation can have several meanings and be interpreted from different angles. The purpose of economic impact analysis is to measure the economic benefits that accrue to a community (Diedering and Kiatkowski 248). The economic impact of events on the macro-economy of the region is categorized into primary and secondary economic impacts. The primary impact is the direct economic impact of the event while the secondary impact is that which results from the introduction of new money into the economy (Jeneczko, et al. 11) In the context of this paper, economic impact is seen as the wide range of direct and indirect changes in the economic activities (positive and negative) of Kano city resulting from *Mawlid* festivals.

Like all other religious festivals, *Mawlid* festivals have impacted the socio-religious and economic aspects of Muslim communities. In Kano city, the festivals serve as a booster for a number of economic activities, especially during the season (Khalil, personal interview). In the first place, the organizing committees of different public and private *Mawlid* festivals spend huge amounts of money¹ annually in organizing and conducting *Mawlid* festival activities. This money is spent in paying for goods and services. These include payments for the services of *Mawlid* venue organizers, such as carpenters, electricians, rental service providers and decorators, the provision of food and drinks used during the period of the festivals, etc. This assists in boosting many petty businesses and provides job opportunities for many people as well as the emergence of new businesses.

For example, rental service business is one of the new businesses that *Mawlid* festivals played a vital role in its development in Kano city. Rental service operators provide *Mawlid* organizers with virtually all the necessary facilities required in organizing the venues of the public, private and *Islamiyya Mawlid* festivals. The equipment includes chairs, canopies, mats and carpets, buntings, temporary pulpits, loudspeakers and amplifiers, among others. Certain amounts of money are paid for the rent of the equipment to operators of those rental businesses. For instance, a canopy (of small size) is rented at the rate of 800-1000 Naira and 1500-2000 for a big canopy; a complete sound system is rented at the price of 10,000-20,000, depending on the type of the sound system one requires, etc. And these prices changed over the period of time, for example, from 2000-2005 a dozen plastic chairs were rented at the rate of 200/300 Naira per day; by 2020 the price was increased to 600-800 Naira, so also other equipment (Dalha, personal interview). The hike in the renting prices of equipment was not only as a result of the increased demand of the equipment; other factors such as inflation in the market price of renting equipment and the rise in living conditions in the society contributed to the this situation.

¹ For example the organizing committee of Sheikh Tijjani Usman Zawiyya was said to have budgeted about 50 million Naira to each of the two major *Mawlid* al-Nabiy sessions in 2024; and this is excluding other voluntary financial expenditure from different individuals and groups affiliated to that particular Tijjaniyya Zawiyya.

Table 1, Renting prices of *Mawlid* equipment and its variation from 2000 - 2020 (Sani and Dalha, personal interviews)

SN.	Type of Equipment	Renting Price in 2000s in Naira	Renting Price in 2020	Specification
1	Plastic Chairs	300	600	Per doze
2	Canopy – small size and big size	1000/2000	3000/2000	Per unit
3	Arabian Canopy	2000	3500	Per unit
4	Cushion Chairs	5000	7000	Set of three
5	Carpet – different sizes	500, 1000 and 2000	1000, 2000 and 5000	Per unit
6	Mat	100	200	Per unit
7	Generator – different capacity 2900W, 8000W	500 / 1500	1500 / 3000	Per unit
8	Standing fan	1000	2000	Per unit
9	Microphone and wireless microphone	300 / 1000	500 / 2000	Per unit
10	Amplifier – big and small	1000 /1500	1500 / 2500	Per unit
11	Loudspeaker	500	1000	Per unit
12	Security light – big, medium and small	500 / 1000 / 2000	1000 / 2000 / 3000	Per unit
13	Lamp holder wire	1500	3000	13 pieces lamp
14	Buntings	500	1000	A role of about ten yards
15	Sound system different capacity	7000 /10000 / 15000	15000 /20000 / 30000	Complete set
16	Speaker – big, medium and small	1000 / 1500 / 2000	2000 / 3000 /4000	Per unit
17	Temporary pulpit (<i>mumbari/ gadon aba'i</i>)	10000 / 15000 / 40000	15000 / 30000 / 70000	Complete facility, 3 sizes
18	Power arm & mixer	1500	2500	Complete unit
19	Transportation (full load)	10000	20000	For a distance of about 10km.

The emergence of renting service business in Kano city saved *Mawlid* organizers a lot of money they hitherto spent in purchasing some of the equipment while at the same time it provided jobs for the operators. As a result, the rentals service business has now become established in Kano city and provides full time services to the general public not only during *Mawlid* festival periods but also to other life cycle events, such as marriages, deaths and Qur’anic graduation ceremonies throughout the year. However, the *Mawlid* festival season remains one of the most important seasons for the rental service business operators, especially in Kano city. During the festive periods, they made a lot of profit from their business, as *Mawlid* organizers used to queue to rent some of their equipment (Dalha, personal interview).

Nevertheless, event venue organizing business or decoration services is the sister business to rental services that developed in Kano city mainly as a result of *Mawlid* festivals. Event venue

decorators are used to decorate *Mawlid* venues, both private and public, with different colors of cotton materials and lights. Decorators are being paid a good amount of money for their services during the *Mawlid* festivals, as they do not only decorate the venue, they also provide the materials used in the decoration (Aminu, personal interview). The prices of decorating services differ considerably, depending on the type of services the *Mawlid* organizers require and the materials to be used for decoration. For instance, event venue decorators charge between 30,000 – 60,000 Naira to decorate private *Mawlid* venues and 100,000 to 300,000 Naira for public *Mawlid* venue decoration. Like rental service operators, events venue decorators make a fortune during the *Mawlid* festival season. Their work has now become a full time business. They provided their services to other events and ceremonies organizers throughout the year.

The food and drink business is another area of the local economy that is affected by the *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city. Initially, during the *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival season, Muslims used to provide simple traditional Hausa food and drink (*Tuwo* and *Kunu*) and distribute freely to participants and neighbors. By the mid-twentieth century, with the development of new models of celebrating the festival and the introduction of Saint *Mawlid* festivals, the celebration took a new dimension and become more ceremonial. The two dominant Sufi orders in Kano city, particularly the Tijjaniyya, emphasize the importance of cleanliness of the adherents and the *Mawlid* venue as well as eating good and delicious food and drinks during the *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival, as it is considered the most important Islamic festival (Khalil, personal interview).

As a result of the emphases on feeding good food and drinks during *Mawlid* festivals, the food and drinks business used to record positive economic gain, particularly poultry in the business. Provision of food and drinks became the essential component of the *Mawlid* organizing committee's annual expenditure; in fact, food and drinks were normally allocated considerable amount of most the *Mawlid* organizers' expenditure (Malami, personal interview). During the *Mawlid al-Nabiy*, festival it has now become part of tradition for the family heads to buy *Mawlid* fowls (*Kajin Maulidi*) with which to prepare the festival meal for their families. This resulted in boosting the fowls business and poultry farming in Kano city, as many people including house wives, venture into poultry farming especially on the approach of *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival season. According to one of the domestic poultry farmers in Kano:

Mawlid al-Nabiy festival season is the period we used to record the highest sale and we get more profit during the period. Due to the high demand of the fowls, I used to sell all that I have reared purposely for the *Mawlid* season (Sani, personal interview).

According to Hussaini Dandago a fowl's seller at Kurmi Market in Kano City: The *Mawlid* festivals period especially *Mawlid al-Nabiy* season, is the most important period for the fowl selling business in Kano city. The business records the highest patronage annually during *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival season. The prices of fowls increased over the period of time not only as a result of the high demand of fowls but mainly as a result of the general increase in the living condition in Nigeria (Dandago, personal interview).

These indicated that *Mawlid* festival seasons particularly *Mawlid al-Nabiy* season represented one of periods during which poultry farming and fowl's selling experienced an increased in demand which in turn led to increase in the prices of fowls and the general well being of those involve in this business due to the increase in their profit.

Table 2, prices variation of fowls during *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city from 2000 – 2020 (Dandago)

SN.	Species of fowl	Average price in 2000 in Naira	Average price in 2020
1	Cock and hen	700	5000
2	Duck	1000	8000
3	Pigeon	200	1000

A table showing the price variation of fowls in Kano city from the year 2000 to 2020 which indicated an upward significant increase of fowl price over the period of two decades.

Other animal species, such as cows, rams and camels were also used for preparing the *Mawlid* festive meal, however, fowl species identified above are the popular food ingredients (known as *Kajin Maulidi*) used in preparing *Mawlid* meal while rams, cows and camels are popularly used during *Eids* festival in Kano City. In addition, food items, such as noodles and flour, are the food stuffs highly used during *Mawlid* festivities. Flour is used in making bread, snacks, meat pie and other varieties of baked food used.

By selling more foodstuffs, we got more profit higher than what we used to get during the *Mawlid* off season which we reinvest in our business. (Bulai, personal interview).

This also indicated that *Mawlid* festivals season is a period of increase demand of food items which resulted in boosting food items business in Kano. Moreover, in an interaction with one of the managers of one of the drinks sellers at Singer market in Kano, he stated that:

Mawlid festivals, particularly *Mawlid al-Nabiy* have positive impact on our business of selling soft drinks and water. Annually during the month of Rabi al-Awwal, especially during the first three weeks of the month, we used to record the second highest sales of the year particularly on the average prices minerals and bottle water. The demand for average price soft drinks and bottle water increased with about 25% in our stores and shops across Kano and sometimes this increased demand affect the prices. Due to the increased demand of drinks during the *Mawlid* festivals season, we used to focus our attention on the supply of the types of drinks the organizers normally buy such as 50cl and 35cl capacity drinks. Even the companies that produce these types of drinks used to produce more during the *Mawlid* festivals period. (Sufaye, personal interview)

The increase demand of drinks by *Mawlid* organizers means more sells and more profits for those in the drinks business in Kano. In an Interview with provision store owner at Kurmi market, he stated that:

Mawlid festival, particularly *Mawlid al-Nabiy*, is one of the most important festive seasons that are boosting our business. For instance, during the month of Rabi al-Awwal the demand for minerals and water (both sachet and bottle water) increased with about 50% and it gradually decreases to about 30-20% in the months of *Rabi al-Thani* and *Jumadal Awwal*. The increase in the demand of our products mean more profit for us as the more we sell the more profit we get (Darma, personal interview).

The second act emphasized by the Sufi orders during the *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival is cleanliness and wearing new clothes as one of the ways to honor and respect Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). This motivates their followers to start buying new clothes for themselves and their family members (*Dinkin Maulidi*) to be used during the *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival in the same way they do during the Eid Fitr festival. As a result of this, the cloth and textile business is now recording a significant boost during the *Mawlid* festivals. The textile business has been receiving more patronage during the *Mawlid* festivals season, as it now becomes part of the tradition of the

followers of Sufi orders to buy new clothes even during the *Mawlid* festivals of their respective saints. A textile trader at Kantin Kwari market stated:

The demand for textile materials increases during *Mawlid* festivals season in Kano city. Many Muslims are now buying new clothes for themselves and their family members which they used during the public or private *Mawlid* festivities. People are now buying between two to three sets of clothes to celebrate *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival with. The more textile materials people buy during the season the more profit we get and in turn we also increase our supply and therefore the impact will also reach up to the factory level (Koki, personal interview).

The demand of new clothes during *Mawlid* festival season resulted in boosting textile business in Kano City as well as the increase in the income of the local textile business entrepreneurs in Kano City.

As a result of buying new textile materials for the purpose of celebrating *Mawlid* festivals, the local tailoring business also recorded positive improvement during the festivals to the extent that some tailors in most cases could not meet the target promises they made to their clients. This explains the high rate new clothes used during the *Mawlid* festivals. In an interview with local tailor at Dukawa quarters, he stated that

During the off season he normally used to make about one or two sets of clothes due to low patronage. However, during the *Mawlid* festival season he used to make between three to four sets of clothes due to the increased patronage of their tailoring services as a result of *Mawlid* festivities (Hadi, personal interview).

Obviously, this resulted in increased income for the local tailors in Kano city. Other businesses associated with clothing, such as caps and shoes also made fortunes during the *Mawlid* festivals season.

In addition, *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city attract religious devotees and participants from within and outside Nigeria to the city annually. This resulted in boosting some economic activities in the city. Some scholars argue that religious festivals have a significant positive economic impact, primarily through increased tourism, local business revenue from increased spending on food, merchandise and services, as well as job creation in hospitality and related sectors. Daldy extols the positive economic impacts of events on the localities, arguing that events bring a large number of people from outside into the locality. These people spend their money on accommodation, shopping, food, drinks, local transportation, etc. This spending provides economic boosts to local enterprises in the locality. The injection of income resulting from visitors' expenditure has the potential to create job opportunity and indirectly to the development of other sectors of the local economy (Esu et al. 339). Gaur and Chapnerkar also explained the phenomenon of consumerism as a result of festival tourism and noted that there are two extremes: the deep-rooted religious beliefs of the people motivate high spending during religious festivals, and bring money into circulation. This leads to inflation in anticipation of the high demand for items in the market (Nair and Babu 94).

In Kano city, for instance, during the Saints *Mawlid* festivals organized by the Qadiriyya (the *Maukibi/ Mawlid* festival of Abdal Qadir Jilani) and the Tijjaniyya (the National *Mawlid* of Shaykh Ibrahim Niassé) annually, the followers of these Islamic groups from different parts of the world, such as Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Senegal, Ghana, Sudan, Iraq and Algeria, etc. troop to Kano city to participate in these festivals. The influx of more people into the city during *Mawlid* festivals season results in boosting some business activities. Similarly, small businesses also flourished, particularly around *Mawlid* festival venues. On visiting public *Mawlid al-Nabiy* and saints *Mawlid* venues in Kano city, such as the Zawiyaa of Shaykh Tijjani Usman Zangon Barebari,

Wali Mai-giginya Cemetery during the Maukibi Festival and Shaykh Muhammad Rabi'u Islamic Center Kofar Mata during the National *Mawlid* of Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse, one can notice the presence of many small business operators setting up temporary tents and canopies where they sell their products. These include Islamic books sellers, Sufi saint posters sellers, food and drink hawkers, readymade clothes and carpet sellers and traditional herbal medicine sellers, among others. These types of business operators gain a lot of profit from the transactions they make at the different *Mawlid* venues in Kano city that improves their incomes considerably. Interacting with one Malam Muhammad Mailittafi, an Islamic books seller during the recent National *Mawlid* festival of Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse in Kano city, he stated that because of the good profit and high sells they recorded during the *Mawlid* festivities, he used to travel to wherever the annual *Mawlid* of Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse were took place in Nigeria just to sell his books (Mailittafi, personal interview).

Another area of the economy that received more patronage during the *Mawlid* festivals is the printing press business (known as Business Center in Kano city). *Mawlid* organizers provide business center operators with the job of printing invitation cards, posters, banners, pamphlet and small books containing poems and odes of Prophet Muhammad and some saints, among other paper work, during the *Mawlid* festival season. Getting more of these types of works means more income for the business center operators. Islamic booksellers, particularly at Kurmi Market, situated at the heart of Kano city received more patronage as a result of *Mawlid* festivals. The demand of Islamic books, especially Sufi books, increased during the *Mawlid* festival season. According to Aminu Usman a bookseller at Kurmi Market:

Annually during the *Mawlid al-Nabiy* season, we experience a boost in our business as more people come to purchase Islamic books, especially the once related to Sufi orders, which they distributed to participants. People come from as far as Ghana, Cameroon, Chad and Niger to buy these types of books and this has positive impact on book selling business. (Auwalu, personal interview)

This shows that Islamic books especially those associated with Sufi orders were on increase demand during *Mawlid* season not in Kano city but also in other major Islamic cities in Northern Nigeria and some parts of West Africa. This increase demand of Islamic books annually boosted the Islamic book selling business in Kano City as one of the major centers of this business in West Africa.

In another direction, some life cycle events, such as marriages, are now incorporated into *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festivities in Kano city, particularly by the followers of the Sufi Orders. The month of *Rabi al-Awwal* is one of the peak periods for marriages in the city partly due to the belief held by some that marriages conducted at the places of *Mawlid* festivals or in the month of *Mawlid* will get the blessings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The more marriage conducted during the festive season, the more the demand of wedding materials in Kano city, ranging from clothes, house building materials and house renting services, enamelware and kitchen utensil and furniture businesses, among others. These businesses recorded positive change during *Mawlid* festivals due to increased demand of their products and services.

Moreover, transportation sector especially local transportation is another area that feels the impact of *Mawlid* festivities annually in Kano city. During the *Mawlid* season, the movement of and people, goods and services increase. Many people from different parts of Kano and beyond come to Kano city using different means of transportations, such as cars, motorcycles and tricycles, among others, to take part in different types of *Mawlid* festivities in the city using the services of transporters. This results in the increase demand of the transporter's services. The more patronage

of their services, the more money they make with multiplying effect on the other sectors of the economy, such as fuel marketers (petroleum and Gas) and government revenue generation etc.

In another direction, the *Mawlid* festival season is the period during which the economic condition of the *Mawlid* organizers is boosted significantly, particularly the Shaykhs, *Muqaddams* and leaders of different Sufi centers or *Zawiyas* (Islamic scholars). This is through what Benjamin F. Soares called the prayer economy. This is a situation whereby adherents used to bring forward different types of gifts (*Hadaya*) to Islamic scholars in their domains in order to pray for them, or to bless them, especially during some religious occasions, such as the annual visits and *Mawlids*. Soares stated that:

Such gifts can range from the very modest – a few measures of grain or a single coin – to the munificent – large sums of cash and commodities such as new cars. Thus those things considered gifts (*hadaya*) include some of the most important material tokens of value in the wider society. (Soares 745)

Soares also cited Murray Last to have used the idea of the prayer economy to describe the rather complex but pervasive practice in Kano city in which considerable sums of money are given to Muslim scholars for prayers, blessings, and Islamic medicine (Soares 740). People make such transactions, he argues, in order to ensure political and financial success and or build a base for such success (Soares 740). The *Mawlid* festival season is the time during which this type of transaction is more pronounced. Followers of different Islamic scholars in the city used to gift these scholars with different types of gifts so that they may be blessed during *Mawlid* festival activities. One of the contemporary critiques of *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city described the system of prayer economy during *Mawlid* festivals in the following lines:

In this city (Kano), there were Shaykhs who started celebrating their own *Mawlid* festival during their lifetimes. This made some of their followers give more attention and priorities to their shaykh's *Mawlids*, spending huge amount of money in organizing these events and gifting the Shaykhs with different item such as clothes, money, cows and rams in form of *Hadaya*. Therefore, organizing *Mawlid* festivals had become a business venture for some religious leaders in Kano city. During the festivals, they requested for donations and contributions in the form of *hadaya* from their followers, politicians and government officials and in return they blessed them (*sa musu Albarka*) and pray for them (Triump)

Although this view is critical to *Mawlid* festival organizers, however, it highlights some of the realities of the prayer economic system in Kano city, particularly during the *Mawlid* festival season.

By contrast Malam Maisalati Indabawa described the system as a voluntary practice through which disciples (*Muridai*) and other followers of different Shaykhs, including politicians and government officials, willingly give some personal gifts to Islamic scholars, especially on the occasions of *Mawlid* festivals. He stated

Some politicians and wealthy individuals in Kano used to bring personal gifts for the Shaykhs and Khalifas during *Mawlid* seasons such as clothes, cows and money as *Hadaya* and according to Sufi practice all *Hadaya* that was brought is for the Sufi master. The Shaykh may distribute it among his disciples (*muridai*) which is the normal practice, or he may decide to keep the *hadaya* for his personal use. Even the *muridai* and other followers around the Shaykhs were also trying to bring their *hadaya* to the Shaykhs, no matter how little, so that they may also be blessed (*neman albarka*) (Indabawa).

The gifts are not only limited to cash and other materials; the scholars are also gifted with *Hajj* and *Umrah* free tickets by some wealthy followers and the politicians. Through this system of gift

giving to Islamic scholars whom they reciprocate with prayers and blessings, many scholars have become millionaires, owning business establishment, estates and plazas in the city.

However, in spite of the positive role played by *Mawlid* festivals in boosting different economic activities in Kano city, some businesses are affected negatively by the festivals. For instance, during *Mawlid al-Nabiy* festival annually on the 12th and 19th Rabi al-Awwal, the road that connects Kurmi Market with Kofar Wambai and Kantin Kwari markets is usually blocked for some time, thereby limiting the movement of goods and services between these markets, which negatively affects many businesses. Some shop owners along Kurmi Kofar Wambai Markets to Jakara and Goron Dutse Road also close their stalls for fear of violence normally perpetrated by some rival thugs ('Yandaba) during the Takutaha and Maukibi festivals procession. From the Kofar Kabuga axis of Kano city to Kofar Mata the story is not different. Also, the high traffic caused by *Mawlid* festival processions, particularly during the Maukibi Festival, the Takutaha procession and the Shia *Mawlid Muzahara*, limits the smooth movement of people, particularly within the main areas of Kano city and has a negative impact on many local business activities along the procession routes. Therefore, the economic impact of *Mawlid* festivals on Kano city is multidimensional in nature.

Conclusion

Going by the discussion above, one can conclude that the economic impact of *Mawlid* festivals in Kano city is profound. The festival season can be considered as the boosting/booming period for some businesses in the city; tourism, textile and tailoring, food and drinks, event decoration and renting services, local transportation and many other businesses enjoy the season. Apart from boosting businesses, *Mawlid* festivals help in providing temporary jobs for many people annually. Event venue organizers, carpenters, electricians, food vendors, hawkers and other laborers used to make good fortunes during the festivities. The *Mawlid* festival season does not also go down well with some businesses due to the high traffic and insecurity recorded during the festivities. The situation causes a negative economic impact to some businesses. Despite this, this paper has argued that the positive economic impact of *Mawlid* festivals by far outweighs its negative impact in Kano city.

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