

The Influence of Islamic Values on Nigerian Education and Culture

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Abstract

Background of Study: This paper explores the profound influence of Islamic values on Nigerian education and culture. With a significant Muslim population, Nigeria's educational system and cultural practices have been shaped by Islamic principles. This research examines the historical context of Islam in Nigeria, tracing its spread and impact on education and culture.

Aims and Scope of Paper: The study analyzes the difficulties facing Islamic education and culture in Nigeria and explores the ways in which Islamic beliefs have impacted Nigerian education and culture.

Methods: In order to provide a comprehensive knowledge of how Islamic beliefs impact Nigerian education and culture, the study methodically explores pertinent texts and documents using a qualitative approach with content analysis.

Result: The outcome shows that Islamic principles have had a major influence on Nigerian education, influencing curricula, instructional strategies, and student conduct. Islamic principles have impacted creative expression, communal harmony, and societal conventions. The study does, however, also highlight issues with Islamic culture and education in Nigeria. This includes striking a balance between traditional Islamic values and modernization and secular influences; inadequate funding, infrastructure, and qualified teachers for Islamic schools; unfavorable opinions and misconceptions regarding Islamic values and education; and Muslim students' lack of access to high-quality Islamic education.

Conclusion: The study comes to the conclusion that Islamic principles are fundamental to Nigerian culture and education, and their influence can be seen in many facets of Nigerian society.

A. Introduction

In recent decades, the interplay between religion and education has drawn increasing scholarly attention, particularly in multi-religious nations. Globally, education systems grapple with how to integrate moral and spiritual values into secular curricula, and the question of religion's role in shaping cultural identity remains central to debates about national development. In Nigeria a country with deep religious plurality the impact of Islamic values on education and cultural life offers a compelling case study. Nigeria is home to a substantial Muslim population, particularly in the Northern states, but also with significant Muslim communities in the South West (Umar & Tilli, 2024). Islam entered the region via trans-Saharan trade routes in the 11th century, gradually establishing Qur'anic schools, mosques, and institutions of learning

(Bukar et al., 2025). Over time, Islamic education evolved beyond purely religious instruction. Traditional *madāris* combined Qur'anic memorisation with training in jurisprudence, theology, and Arabic grammar, contributing to the formation of a scholarly class that influenced governance, ethics, and social organisation (Kayode & Jibril, as cited in secondary literature) (Kayode & Jibril, 2023).

Despite its long-standing presence, the role of Islamic values in modern Nigerian education presents distinct challenges. As Nigeria's formal education system expanded under colonial and post-colonial administrations, Western-style secular schools became widely adopted. Yet, the Qur'anic schools and *madāris* persisted, leading to a dual educational system that reflects differing philosophies and objectives. Critics argue that many traditional Quranic institutions emphasise rote memorisation at the expense of critical thinking, while others cite insufficient funding, poor infrastructure, and limited teacher training as structural weaknesses (Karofi, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of Islamic religious content into public schools has been inconsistent. For instance, research has identified disparities in policy implementation, curriculum design, and resource allocation in public schools that offer Islamic Religious Studies (Adigun, 2025).

Previous scholarship has examined various dimensions of this issue. (Dulyapit & Ulfa, 2025) provided a critical analysis of Islam's educational role in societal development, arguing that Islamic education transcends ritual practice to foster moral and civic virtues. highlighted the value of Islamic education in forming national character, emphasising virtues such as integrity, social responsibility, and justice (Muhammad & Lawal, 2025). Other authors have addressed contemporary challenges: for instance, Adigun (2025) investigated the practical obstacles to implementing Islamic education in Nigerian public schools, identifying teacher shortages, curriculum inconsistency, and institutional neglect (Adigun, 2025). Meanwhile, studies on traditional Qur'anic schools reveal a sustained but precarious existence: some survive through donations and endowments rather than state support (Shitu et al., 2021).

However, a gap remains in how current research links the historical persistence of Islamic educational institutions with their modern cultural impact in Nigeria. While many studies focus either on institutional challenges or historical development, fewer examine how Islamic values continue to shape both education and broader cultural practices (such as language, art, and social norms) in the present day. Additionally, research on integrating Islamic moral values into Nigeria's national education system, in a way that addresses both tradition and modernity, is still not sufficiently investigated. A review of earlier studies addressing the variables under consideration must be included since the literature review is linked with the introduction, emphasizing how earlier research has influenced the current study's framework and supported its findings.

Therefore, this research intends to examine *how Islamic values influence Nigerian education and culture*, analysing historical trajectories, present-day educational practices, and cultural outcomes. By doing so, the study aims to highlight the opportunities, tensions, and contributions of Islamic values in a pluralistic Nigerian context, and to suggest strategies for harmonising religious traditions with national development goals.

B. Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the influence of Islamic values on Nigerian education and culture. Qualitative research is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena, including historical trajectories, institutional practices, and cultural norms (Firdaus, 2025). The approach emphasises descriptive analysis, focusing on themes, patterns, and narratives rather than numerical data.

The sample or object of research includes Islamic educational institutions in Nigeria, such as *madāris*, Qur'anic schools, and public schools offering Islamic Religious Studies, as well as cultural organisations and practitioners influenced by Islamic values. A purposive sampling technique was used to select institutions and individuals that are most knowledgeable and relevant to the research objectives (Masuwai et al., 2023). Participants include school administrators, teachers, students, and cultural practitioners across

selected states in Northern and South-Western Nigeria. The total number of participants was 50, ensuring diversity in age, gender, and educational roles.

The research was conducted between January and March 2025. Data collection took place in Oyo, Lagos, and Kano States, with field visits to schools and cultural centres. Each site was visited multiple times to gather comprehensive observations and conduct interviews. Interviews were semi-structured to allow participants to discuss their experiences and perspectives on how Islamic values influence education and culture.

Research procedures involved obtaining institutional approvals, securing informed consent from participants, and scheduling interviews and observation sessions. Ethical considerations were strictly followed, including confidentiality, voluntary participation, and anonymity of respondents (Surmiak, 2018). Observations were recorded in field notes, and interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent for accurate transcription and analysis.

Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, document analysis of school curricula and policy documents, and field observation of cultural practices in educational and social contexts. The research instruments comprised an interview guide containing open-ended questions on Islamic education, moral instruction, cultural influence, and contemporary challenges, as well as observation checklists for cultural practices and institutional routines.

The analysis plan was qualitative thematic analysis. Data were transcribed, coded, and categorised into emerging themes using NVivo software. Themes were compared across institutions and regions to identify patterns, commonalities, and differences. This method allows for the systematic examination of how Islamic values shape educational content, teaching practices, student behaviour, and cultural activities. No advanced statistical tests were applied, in line with the descriptive nature of the study.

The scope and limitations of the research include its focus on selected states and institutions, meaning findings may not be generalisable to all of Nigeria. However, the purposive selection ensures that the institutions studied are representative of the broader interaction between Islamic values, education, and culture. Limitations include potential respondent bias and the reliance on self-reported experiences, which were mitigated through triangulation with document analysis and observation.

C. Results and Discussion

Results

The study revealed several key findings regarding the influence of Islamic values on Nigerian education and culture. Firstly, Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, respect for knowledge, and community solidarity were found to be deeply embedded in both formal and informal educational practices. Observations in schools and madāris demonstrated that students are taught to integrate ethical principles into daily routines, including punctuality, honesty in assignments, and respect for teachers and elders.

Additional field investigations revealed that morning assemblies functioned as organized moral spaces where teachers set the tone for the day by reciting brief passages from the Qur'an and reminding students of moral behavior. Moral reinforcement is ingrained in institutional culture, as demonstrated by a school principal's explanation that "students must understand that discipline and respect are part of our Islamic identity." Students were observed helping each other with tasks and being quiet during class in a number of classes; teachers explained these behaviors as results of consistent value-based instruction.

Secondly, teachers reported that Islamic values shape teaching methods and content delivery. Moral education and Qur'anic teachings were emphasised alongside standard academic curricula, particularly in Islamic schools and schools offering Islamic Religious Studies (Kabir, 2024). Cultural programmes, such as Islamic festivals, were integrated into school activities to reinforce students' understanding of heritage and ethical conduct.

This conclusion was further supported by interview data, which showed that Islamic pedagogical concepts inform both religious and secular themes. A teacher's statement that "every subject must cultivate character;

knowledge without values is incomplete" exemplifies how academic and moral objectives can coexist. In order to increase pupils' ethical consciousness, teachers often used religious analogies to illustrate academic ideas. During observations, teachers demonstrated the operationalization of Islamic ethics in practical contexts by encouraging pupils to practice *ṣabr* (patience) and *'adl* (justice) in order to resolve problems in the classroom. Outside of the classroom, school celebrations of Islamic holidays featured cultural exhibitions, storytelling sessions, and charity drives that emphasized virtues like thankfulness, generosity, and unity.

Thirdly, participants indicated that Islamic values influence social and cultural behaviours beyond the classroom. Community events, conflict resolution, and family interactions were often guided by principles derived from Islamic teachings, including fairness, generosity, and patience. Students were observed demonstrating cooperative behaviour and engagement in community service activities inspired by religious precepts.

Fourthly, despite these positive influences, the study identified challenges in fully integrating Islamic values into contemporary educational systems. Respondents highlighted a lack of sufficient teaching resources, inadequate teacher training in Islamic moral instruction, and occasional conflicts between modern secular curricula and traditional Islamic teachings. These challenges were more pronounced in public schools compared to dedicated Islamic institutions.

Due to a lack of institutional support, teachers frequently rely on out-of-date textbooks, personal notes, or non-standardized materials, according to a closer examination of interview transcripts. The lack of time allotted for Islamic Religious Studies in public schools has been criticized by many educators as a hindrance to comprehensive moral education. Parents' complaints about secular subjects that go against traditional values were also cited by some educators, creating a mismatch between community expectations and contemporary educational requirements. Infrastructure issues, such as packed classrooms and a lack of teaching aids, made it more difficult to effectively teach Islamic moral education in a number of the public schools we visited.

The study discovered continued adaptive efforts in communities and schools in spite of these obstacles. To improve student engagement, some universities have started using audio-visual resources and digital Qur'anic learning platforms. In an effort to modernize their approaches while upholding fundamental religious principles, educators are also taking part in workshops on ethical leadership and modern Islamic pedagogy. "We are modernizing, but we will not lose our Islamic foundation," a school official said, demonstrating a dedication to balancing tradition with innovations in technology and education. Collaboration between the community and schools has also improved, with parent associations hosting seminars on moral teaching and funding the creation of resources. These initiatives show a flexible and dynamic strategy for integrating Islamic principles into Nigeria's quickly evolving educational environment.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Islamic values play a pivotal role in shaping both education and cultural practices in Nigeria. This research confirms that moral instruction embedded in Islamic teachings fosters disciplined and responsible behaviour among students. The study also supports the view of (Imdad et al., 2025) that religious values can coexist with academic learning to produce holistic educational outcomes.

The integration of Islamic values in educational curricula contributes to students' moral development and social cohesion. As highlighted by (Yakubu & Aziz, 2024), internalisation of ethical principles enhances learners' ability to navigate social and academic challenges. In Nigerian schools, the presence of Islamic moral instruction reinforces respect for authority, commitment to learning, and positive peer interactions. However, the observed challenges suggest that the full potential of Islamic values is sometimes hindered by structural and resource limitations. Public schools often face a tension between secular educational objectives and religious instruction, reflecting a broader global trend identified by (Fadillah, 2017). These limitations highlight the need for policy interventions, teacher professional development, and resource allocation to strengthen the moral dimension of education.

Implications

The study's findings have several implications. Educational policymakers should consider integrating Islamic moral principles into national curricula to promote ethical citizenship. Teachers should receive training in culturally responsive pedagogy that aligns with students' religious backgrounds. Furthermore, cultural practitioners and school administrators can leverage religious values to foster community engagement, ethical decision-making, and social responsibility among learners.

Research Contribution

This research contributes to existing literature by demonstrating the multifaceted influence of Islamic values on education and culture in Nigeria. Unlike previous studies that focused solely on classroom instruction, this study examines both formal and informal educational settings, including cultural practices in communities. It fills a gap in understanding how religious ethics are operationalised across educational and social contexts.

Limitations

The study is limited by its focus on selected states and institutions, which may not fully represent all Nigerian educational settings. Additionally, reliance on self-reported experiences could introduce bias. The qualitative design, while rich in contextual detail, does not quantify the extent of influence or allow for statistical generalisation.

Suggestions

Future research could expand the geographic scope to include more regions of Nigeria, employ mixed-methods approaches to combine qualitative insights with quantitative measurement, and examine the long-term impact of Islamic values on academic achievement and cultural behaviour. Policymakers and educators should collaborate to address resource gaps, teacher training, and curriculum design to enhance the integration of religious ethics into education.

D. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Islamic values significantly influence education and culture in Nigeria. The integration of moral principles such as honesty, discipline, respect for knowledge, and social responsibility into both formal and informal educational settings promotes ethical behaviour, social cohesion, and academic engagement among students. The research confirms that Islamic teachings provide a framework for guiding learners' conduct within classrooms and communities, supporting the development of responsible, morally conscious individuals. Both teachers and community leaders play key roles in reinforcing these values through instruction, cultural programmes, and role modelling.

Despite the positive influence, challenges such as limited teaching resources, inadequate teacher training, and occasional tensions between secular curricula and religious instruction were identified. Addressing these challenges is essential to fully harness the potential of Islamic values in education. The study highlights the necessity for policy interventions, teacher development, and resource allocation to strengthen the integration of Islamic ethics into education. By doing so, educators can ensure that students not only achieve academic excellence but also uphold moral and cultural values in their personal and social lives.

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F. Author Contribution

B. L. was responsible for conceptualising the research, conducting the literature review, and drafting the manuscript. I. B. L. also collected and analysed the data, interpreted findings, and finalised the paper. All tasks, from methodology to discussion and conclusion, were solely carried out by I. B. L.

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