



FACTORS AFFECTING THE LEARNING OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AMONG STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ILORIN, KWARA STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the factors influencing the study of Islamic studies in selected secondary schools in Ilorin, Kwara State. Four secondary schools were chosen for this research. A qualitative research approach was employed for this study. The in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the four selected public secondary schools in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The interview transcripts were analysed using qualitative inductive data analysis techniques. The analysis uncovered several factors relating to the interest of students in learning Islamic studies in Nigerian secondary schools. These include the unsuitable medium of instruction, lack of instructional resources, and teachers' lack of interest in teaching, parent attitudes, and insufficient time allocation, among other factors influencing student interest in learning Islamic studies. Recommendations were made based on the findings of this study

Introduction

Knowledge is a great virtue and is an esteemed part of Islam. This is the reason that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, “*Ṭlabal‘Ilmfarīdatun‘alāKulli Muslim*” “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim” (Ibn Majah, 2024, 1: no. 224). This hadith denotes the significance of education in Islam. Therefore, pursuing knowledge of Islamic teaching is crucial for every Muslim male and female, old and young, because knowledge is a paramount tool for knowing and understanding the principles of Islamic teaching. Muslims cannot perfectly worship their lord and Creator without proper understanding and knowledge of Islam. The personal

development of a good character and high moral and ethical values has been the main objective of Islamic education. Additionally, Islamic education is not only focused on the transmission of knowledge and instruction but also on the training of the mind and the education of the whole being (Nasr, 1990). Accordingly, Atique (2012) aptly explains that education in Islam aims to couple and balance humanity's physical and spiritual development. The Qur'an says, "And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colours. Among His servants, it's the learned who fear God: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving." (35:28). In addition, Allah (SWT) sent the final messenger, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w), to teach the Qur'an to mankind and to serve as a model teacher for all to learn from until the last day. The Qur'an says:

Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him, and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious (Q4: 36).

Allah (SWT) has provided guidelines for living a moral and dignified life favourable to Him, sometimes through passages of the Glorious Qur'an. Accordingly, Aliyu, Abdur-Rafiu and Jayakumar (2024) viewed Islamic studies as a subject that aims to provide knowledge about Islam and its principles to Muslim children, which aids in the cultivation of the moral qualities that define a decent Muslim as both an individual and a member of society. Therefore, Islamic Studies is essential as it is of immense value to students' lives.

According to Adamu, Bashir and Abdullahi (2021:1), Islamic studies "train the sensibility of students in such a manner that their relationship with the creator, human relation, attitude to life, approach to all kinds of knowledge, and general decisions are all regulated by the value of Islam". Thus, Islamic Studies significantly facilitates students' knowledge of Islam and its teaching. It also comprises human relationships with their creator and others, relationships with the physical, economic, social, and cultural environments, and an understanding of other creatures.

According to Muhammad, Yunusa and Chubado (2022: 41), Islamic education is "one of the best systems of education, which makes an ethically groomed person with all the qualities which he/she should have as a human being". Additionally, Mohamad Johdi (2009: 2) elaborates on the aims and objectives of Islamic education. According to him, Islamic education aims:

to provide the teachings of the Holy Quran as the primary source of education; to provide experiences which are based on fundamentals of Islam as embodied in the Holy Quran and Sunnah which cannot be changed; to provide experiences in the form of knowledge and skills with clear understanding that these experiences are likely to be changed in the

light of changes in society; to develop an understanding that knowledge without the basis in faith and religion is incomplete education; to develop commitment towards the basic values which have been prescribed; to develop a sense of accountability towards the Almighty creator so that man can perform and succeed in the life; to encourage international brotherhood irrespective of differences in races and origins; to foster great consciousness of the Divine Presence in the universe; to bring man nearer to an understanding of God and of the relation in which man stands to his Creator; to develop piety and faith among the followers; to produce man who has faith as well as knowledge in spiritual development; and, to develop high quality of a good man who are universally accepted and has faith in righteous religion.

Islamic education, therefore, aims to inculcate good values in Muslim students for their survival in this present life and life after death. Islamic Studies education can also develop positive attitudes in students, such as faith, piety, virtue, God-fearing, self-restraint, respect for elders, open-mindedness, etc. Thus, Islamic education plays a crucial role in the development of individual Muslims and their community. It is the most important means to guide learners and Muslim Individuals to achieve the purpose for which they are created and to realise their life purpose.

However, despite all the benefits that may accrue from Islamic Studies education, students show little interest in the subject. Nevertheless, Students' interest has been considered an important factor in achieving the primary aims and objectives of education and student achievement (see Uyun et al., 2022, Yahyah & Kewulere, 2024; Lawal & Solarim, 2018, Adamu, Bashir & Abdullah, 2021). Learning motivation is among the major factors that affect student participation in the learning process (Uyun et al., 2022). Accordingly, Wilson (2017) cited in Yahyah and Kewulere (2024:71) stated that students tend to shy away and become frustrated with the subject because of their poor interest and attitude, which makes them weak academically and pay little or no attention to the subjects in the classroom. Similarly, in their study of students' indifference towards the study of Islamic studies in Nigerian Higher Institutions, Lawal and Solarim (2018) found that the low enrolment in Islamic Education is primarily due to inferiority complex, parental influence, and poor background in Islamic Studies. Thus, it is acknowledged that students' lack of interest affects their performance in Islamic religious studies in Nigerian schools.

Aims and Objectives of Islamic Studies in Nigerian Schools

Islamic Studies was introduced as a subject in the Nigerian school syllabus to develop Muslim students' intellectual, moral, and spiritual skills and provide them with knowledge of Islam and Islamic culture through strategic methods and approaches. It is a subject that is aimed at helping students gain Islamic knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of their role as vicegerents of Allah. According to Aminu (2024), Islamic studies education aims to inculcate Islamic morals, values, norms, principles, ideology and intellect for the economic development of Muslim nations. Accordingly, AbdulKabir (2023) reveals that "the main objective of Islamic religious studies in Nigerian primary and secondary schools is to teach Muslim children the fundamental knowledge of Islamic studies so that they can properly understand their religion and inculcate Islamic moral and ethical values so that they can live fruitful lives". Similarly, Umar, Abdullahi and Aminu (2020) state that the main purpose of Islamic studies in Nigerian schools is to provide the students with knowledge and wisdom that establishes the standard of value and judgment that pertains to all spheres and activities of human life.

Furthermore, the purposes of teaching Islamic studies in Nigerian schools, as outlined in the National Policy of Education of 2004, are:

- i. To develop students' spiritual, intellectual, physical, and moral aspects for Ibadah.
- ii. Make students understand the existence and oneness of Allah.
- iii. To provide students with a broad knowledge of Islam as a religion, culture and civilisation.
- iv. To provide students with knowledge of the Quranic and prophetic Sunnah as sources of Islamic knowledge.
- v. To assist the learners to know how to worship Allah in the way He should be worshipped
- vi. To prepare the students to perform their roles and responsibilities towards Allah, other human beings, and themselves, and make significant contributions to the development of contemporary Muslim communities.
- vii. To assist students in understanding and finding solutions to the problems of modern Muslim communities (National Policy on Education, NPE, 2004).

In addition to the foregoing, the aim of Islamic studies in the Nigerian school curriculum, according to the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (2007), as observed by Abdulazeez (2020:299), is:

- i. Accepting Allah (the Exalted) as the only source of morality and the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists;
- ii. Fostering an attitude of appreciation to Allah and submission to the moral commands and guidance of Allah, in both our worship of Him and our social conduct;
- iii. Awakening of the intellect faculty and reasoning based on the Qur'an injunctions: "Will you not use your reasoning?", "Will you not ponder and reflect?".
- iv. Support of the pursuit of beneficial knowledge, as stated by Prophet (SAW): "the search for knowledge is a duty for every Muslim" and its application for the benefit of mankind in sciences, technology, and medicine, etc.;
- v. Prioritising all aspects of the individual and the community development by giving suitable weight to the social, physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual human needs,
- vi. Promoting equality, brotherhood, and human rights through practical means to achieve ethnic harmony and social solidarity instead of greed and selfishness.
- vii. Recognising Allah's presence as a Witness of all our thoughts, actions, and behaviour serves as a deterrent to illicit acts, be it in the public or private and as a good incentive to an excellent character.

Thus, the aim of Islamic studies education is to fulfil our first objective in life to faithfully serve Allah, who created us. Islamic studies education aims at developing Muslim individuals spiritually, physically, morally, intellectually, psychologically and socially. Based on the above discussion, it is expected that Islamic schools should train and help students develop their sense of spirituality to have a positive relationship with Allah, the creator. In addition, it emphasises the development of the individual in learning their relationship and duties towards their creator, fellow human beings, and other creatures so that they would be able to perform their duties according to the teachings of Islamic principles.

Statement of problem

There is no denying that students' interest in Islamic education is grossly declining and continues to decline. This decline comes from factors related to the curriculum contents, students, teachers, learning environment, teaching method, Arabic language proficiency and assessments, parent influence, peer influence, and lack of proper and adequate instructional material resources. For instance, Olaitan (2017), cited in Ali et al (2024, p.202) wrote that "secondary school students exhibit a lack of interest in offering Islamic Studies as a subject or selecting it as a field of study". Similarly, Adamu, et al (2021) wrote that "many Nigerian University students lack genuine

interest in studying Islamic Studies and they give little or no attention to it and always run or dream after other disciplines to become contemporary professionals but ignorantly forget to insert Islamic teachings into their struggles to be morally and ethically professionalized” (p. 6).

Hence, the student's lack of interest would lead to the underachievement of the Islamic Studies education goals of inculcating the right values and behaviours among the students to bring about changes in an individual, and society as dictated by their religious belief, and become a responsible individual. Recognising the significance of Islamic education as the means of inculcating Islamic teachings and values into Muslim individuals, it is pertinent for Muslim students to have a deep and sustained interest in learning the subject. Based on the foregoing, the purpose of this research is to explore the factors that contribute to students' low interest in Islamic religious studies education in Nigerian secondary schools. The study also sought to contribute to enhancing the teaching and learning of Islamic religious studies in Nigeria's secondary school system by examining the Islamic teachers' and students' perceptions to improve students' interest in the subject. Therefore, the study aims to provide discourse on the factors influencing student interest in learning Islamic education and proffer possible solutions to problems.

Purpose of the study

Accordingly, the general aim of this study is to identify the factors influencing students' desire in learning Islamic education. Specifically, this study is set:

1. To evaluate the purpose of Islamic religious studies in Nigerian schools
2. To investigate the factors affecting students' interest in learning Islamic education in Secondary Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State.
3. To scrutinise the actual state of Islamic studies in Nigerian secondary schools.

Research Question

The following are the research questions that guided the collection of the data for this study:

1. What are the purposes of Islamic Religious Studies in Nigerian secondary schools?
2. What are the factors influencing students' interest in learning Islamic studies?
3. What are the challenges faced in the pedagogy of Islamic Studies in selected secondary schools in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Methodology

The study is qualitative research that employs a case study research design. Qualitative research is an approach to social science research that emphasises collecting descriptive data in natural settings, uses inductive thinking, and emphasises understanding the subject's point of view (Creswell, 2014).

Yin (2003) asserted that case study researchers intend to produce comprehensive data and analyses of a single or multiple cases, like a study of an individual as a case study, a group of people, an event or a program. 12 students from the selected schools participated in the in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect data. The researcher randomly selected three private and three public schools in Ilorin, Kwara State. At each school, 6 Islamic Studies teachers were randomly selected. Therefore, 12 Islamic Studies teachers were purposively sampled to participate in the study. All the selected teachers willingly participated in the study, and their teaching experience ranges from ten to fifteen years.

Studies on the factors affecting students' interest in Islamic education in Nigerian schools

Various studies have shown that students are not very interested in learning Islamic studies in Nigeria. For instance, Adamu *et al* (2021) analysed key challenges in teaching Islamic studies in Nigerian universities by investigating the various issues facing its teaching, learning, and development that always result in distress or failure for the designed goals of the course. Their research findings revealed that methodological, linguistic, and technological aspects directly impact the process of teaching and learning of Islamic studies in Nigerian Universities.

Kazeem and Balogun (2014) revealed that Islamic education has had difficulties with acceptability, funding, and enlightenment among Muslims and Nominal Christians in their study on the challenges faced by Islamic education in Nigeria. They argued further that Islamic education has not fostered the Islamization of knowledge and seeks to reshape all the branches of human knowledge, humanities, pure and applied sciences, per the Islamic view and perspective.

Similarly, Aliyu, Abdur-Rafiu and Jayakumar (2024) found that among the factors that determine students' selection of Islamic studies in secondary schools in Nigeria are parental influence, teachers' attitudes, teaching techniques, and the use of technology as an instructional medium. Likewise, Ibrahim and Abdulhamid (2017) studied the meaning and relevance of Islamic Education, the negative attitude of students towards embracing it, and the factors responsible for that negation. Their study also revealed that the majority of the students who are pursuing Islamic education are not as proficient in Arabic as they are in the English language. Their study also showed that Western culture and environmental influences contributed

significantly to the students' negative attitude towards the subject, in the sense that the school and home environment are not encouraging Islam and the acquisition of its knowledge.

Another factor raised by Busari (2018) is that Islamic education is viewed as an elective in Nigerian schools, rather than a compulsory subject that can develop students' faith, spirituality, and intellect. The author further noted that to reduce the number of subjects taught in primary and post-primary schools, the Federal Ministry of Education merged Islamic religious studies with other related disciplines. This, without doubt, is among the major factors that influence students' interest in the subject and decrease its value and effectiveness in the lives of Muslim children.

Another identifying factor influencing students' interest in Islamic education, according to various researchers, is the method of teaching. The popular methods of teaching Islamic studies education in Nigeria are rote learning, memorisation and note copying. Thus, memorisation is the norm and primary means of teaching with the teacher at the centre of activities (Yahyah & Kewulere, 2024). Although memorisation has its place in Islamic education, it cannot, on its own, arouse the pupil's real interest and imagination, nor capture their involvement in the learning process. Similarly, Mariya (2013) believed that students will perform better in Islamic studies when taught using guided inquiry and lecture methods.

Hence, many researchers have researched students' interests and educational performance in Islamic education. The present study is unique from the above-mentioned studies because the current research is not only focused on the influencing factors alone it is also concerned with how to increase students' interest in Islamic religious studies and determine the challenges facing teachers and students in teaching and learning Islamic education.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the interview were subjected to thematic analysis. This analysis used coding, categorising, and interpreting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Research Questions 1: What are the purposes of Islamic Religious Studies in Nigerian secondary schools?

Perceived Multiple Perspectives Regarding the Aims and Objectives of Islamic Religious Studies

Islamic Studies is a dynamic course of instruction that focuses primarily on providing guidelines for the Muslim youth to live a moral and dignified life, favourable to the Almighty Allah. Based on the interview in this research, all of the teachers state that the general objectives of Islamic Studies education in Nigeria are the inculcation of Islamic teachings and values in the

students and also to provide them with knowledge of divine revelation of the Glorious Quran and Prophetic Sunnah, worships such as performing daily prayers, respect for parents and other moral and value ethics. For example, Informant teacher A made the following comment:

Islamic religious studies is a subject that teaches Muslim children about their religion and the importance of their creation and worship... It also inculcates Islamic ethical values and morals in the learners. It also aims to teach the individual how to relate to or have good relationships with society, their family, and the world.

Teacher B explained that the Islamic religion studies:

Apart from the teaching of the glorious Quran, the prophetic Sunnah, and the story of other prophets. Islamic religious studies are also concerned with how to teach Muslim children to become pious beings who are conscious of their religious duty ...And to provide them with the required knowledge to carry out their religious role.

Teacher C also explained that:

Islamic religious studies is a subject that teaches students the revealed book, the Quran and Hadith, Fiqh, etc. Islamic religious studies also provide Muslim youths with the history of their religion and also teach and encourage Muslim children to be obedient servants of Allah ...and to develop them morally and spiritually.

Teacher D added further that:

Islamic religious studies aim to impart Islamic knowledge, values, and skills to the Muslim young generation. They teach students to be good students and good citizens, morals and values that guide their behaviour in society, and how to respect elders. They also present them with past events so that they will understand and appreciate the role of earlier Muslim scholars.

Teacher E acknowledged that Islamic studies education aimed to develop and prepare students intellectually, morally, spiritually, and socially to be able to carry out their role and responsibility as obedient servants of Allah. Similarly, Teacher E supports the notion that the purpose of Islamic religious studies in Nigerian secondary schools is “Islamic studies focused on the teaching of the Qur’anic knowledge and the prophetic Sunnah and to develop students intellectually, spiritually and physically to become better human beings.”

When students’ perceptions were analysed, it was found that all the students shared similar opinions regarding the purposes of learning Islamic Religious Studies. They all believed that the purpose of learning Islamic Studies was to know more about the teachings of the Islamic religion. The following remarks expound on their responses to the issues.

“We learn Islamic studies to know about our religious duty and social responsibility and to know about the history of Islam,” ST1.

Islamic studies teach us the message of the glorious Quran and the stories of the Prophets and other prophets like the Prophet Daud, Sualiman, Yusuf, Lukma, Zakariyyah, etc., and also of the other messengers of Islam like Jubril, Minkail, and so on. ST2

Learning Islamic studies aims to understand and memorise certain parts of the holy Quran and other beneficial Islamic teachings. ST3

We learned many meaningful and useful moral lessons from Islamic religious lessons like respect for our religion and others' religions, for our parents and elders, obedience, truthfulness, etc. ... Our teacher also always advised us to pray regularly and also taught us how to pray" ST4,

We learn Islamic studies to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of our religion because all the topics we learn in Islamic studies are important and useful for us in serving Allah", ST 5

Islamic religious studies teach us good attitudes, respect for our parents, teachers, siblings, families, even our classmates and friends. It teaches us to respect all other human beings" St6

All the respondents acknowledged the uncommon goals and knowledge offered through Islamic Studies education. The signs of such opportunities were attached to the fact that all the respondents emphasised that Islamic Studies subjects provide them with knowledge and skills to prepare them to become good and obedient Muslims. Thus far, the discussion has shown that the informants demonstrated fair knowledge of the goal of Social Studies. Their view corroborates Aminu (2024), AbdulKabir (2023), Umar *et al* (2020), that Islamic studies education seeks to instil Islamic values, norms, principles, ideology and intellect for the benefit of Muslim individuals and the development of entire nations. Consequently, the primary objective of Islamic Studies is to prepare the students to perform their obligations towards Allah, other human beings, and themselves, while significantly contributing to the development of contemporary Muslim communities and providing assistance to students in understanding and finding solutions to the problems of modern Muslim communities' (National Policy on Education, NPE, 2004).

Research Question 2: What are the factors influencing students' interest in learning Islamic studies?

Based on the findings of this study, the following major factors have influenced students' interest in learning Islamic studies:

1. Teaching approaches

Observation revealed that the pedagogical methods of teaching Islamic studies education in Nigeria for the past decades were teacher-centred centre rote learning, memorisation and note copying approach. However, based on the participants' responses to the interview questions, all the teachers claimed to use a wide range of appropriate and cooperative learning methods such as dramatisation, discussion, Socratic questioning, and inquiry methods. Mariya (2013) argued that students can perform better in Islamic studies when taught using guided inquiry and lecture methods. The following are some of their responses to the question:

"To be a professional teacher of Islamic education, the teacher has to know the teachings of the Quran and Hadith and must be able to use them in their teaching process", Teacher A.

I followed the Quranic and prophetic teaching methods in teaching because I know that as a Muslim and a teacher of Islamic education, I need to be versed in the sources of Islamic education that is Quran and Hadith as well as the Islamic disciplines that provide the tools in teaching about Islamic faith and duties according to its principles" Teacher B.

I believe that teachers are the role models and the most important factor responsible for developing students' knowledge and values. Therefore, I always try my best to use the appropriate methods for every lesson I teach the students, Teacher C.

Teacher D echoed these sentiments when she reported that:

The popular methods I use in teaching students are instruction, practical, demonstration, role model and exemplary method...I also gather some important and relevant information from the available materials regarding the issues that are related and concurrent in society, and discuss them with the students so that they will know the pros and cons of such issues.

Contributing to the same issue, Teacher E. had the following to say;

I always follow Quranic instructions and Sunnah in teaching students...these two primary sources of Islamic religious knowledge are important for us as teachers of Islamic studies to know, understand and master so that we apply them in our teaching... Allah (SWT) says in the Glorious Quran "certainly you have in the messenger of Allah an Excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the final day, and who remember Allah much. The Prophet (saw) also told his followers before his death that I left two things for them (the Quran and my Sunnah), whoever holds tight to them will never go astray. This, I think, is enough evidence to know that these two sources are very important for Muslim individuals to learn and master, particularly for teachers of Islamic education."

In addition, Teacher F expressed that:

No method is superior and we can adapt to a single method it depends on the topic because there are some factors that we need to consider before adopting any method, for example like age; we must consider the age of students because although most of the I use dramatization, role play methods; demonstration and excursion, group or individual assignment methods based on the topic we are treating, but I normally consider my students and its adaptability for the topic before choosing a method.

The analysis of the students' interviews reveals that Islamic Studies teachers used different methods to teach them. The following are some of their responses to this issue.

Our Islamic studies teacher used to give too many notes to copy, which made us feel bored during the Islamic studies period. After we finished copying the notes, sometimes the teacher just gave simple explanations depending on the remaining time, and they didn't give practice.”, ST 1

Sometimes I don't attend the Islamic religious studies class because the teacher's teaching makes me get bored, like when the teacher gives too many notes to copy and gives some explanations sometimes, if we don't understand, they will not give us a chance to ask questions for clarification. ST2.

ST 3 reported that “

“Too much note copying makes me bored and sleepy, particularly when it includes Arabic text, because sometimes we will even ask to copy some Quranic verse and Hadith in the Arabic language and ask us to memorise them.

Our teacher is aggressive. When he asks us to memorise some text and we do not, we will be beaten, so sometimes I am afraid to go to class. ST4,

Our teacher wrote too much on the chalkboard or gave the note to the class captain for us to copy, and then went back to the staff room until the period for his subject was over, and then came again. Sometimes he explained the previous note in the next Islamic studies period, and sometimes he may not explain. So at times when the teacher left, I also left the class and came back when it was time for another lesson, ST5.

Our teacher always wrote the notes on the chalkboard while we were busy copying it. Sometimes she gave some explanation at intervals, in which we did not pay much attention because if we did not fasten our notes, she would erase them and continue the note. ST6

Based on the findings of this study, the teaching method employed by some of the teachers of Islamic education is one of the major factors that led to students having less or no interest in learning the subject. It was also discovered that the students were not satisfied with their Islamic

education teachers' teaching approaches. These participants' views corroborate the finding of Adamu *et al* (2021) that Islamic Studies teachers are unfriendly, unapproachable, uncaring, incapable of handling the subject matter of their responsibility, lacking exemplary personality, and unreliable as role models and experts. As a result, they create many unresolved problems in the hearts of Muslim University students, discouraging them from attending classes.

2. Arabic Language Proficiency

Arabic language proficiency is among the most significant factors that affect students' interest and obstacles to teaching and learning Islamic religious studies in Nigerian secondary schools. Arabic language proficiency is important to Islamic education since the primary sources of Islamic education (Qur'an and Hadith) are written in Arabic; it is required for Islamic students to be able to read, write, and understand Arabic text. However, based on the interviews in this research, the study revealed students' difficulties in understanding the Arabic language and copying Arabic notes due to their little or no experience in Arabic. The following remarks captured their narration on this issue:

"I usually don't like the Islamic studies subject because of the Arabic aspect of it....there is no way we copied notes without copying Arabic, which is very difficult for me to write, and it makes me feel tired in the subject to the point that I sometimes skip class" ST1.

In addition, another student stated that:

"I do not hate Islamic studies, I like it because it teaches me more about my religion and how to worship my creator, but when it comes to Arabic terminology of the subject, it makes me completely lose interest in the subject because I can read talk let of understand, Arabic text." ST2.

Two of the participants stated emphatically that they had no background in the Arabic language when they said ST 3 and ST 4, they stated that they never attended any Arabic school and did not expect to be teaching it in their schools. They thought they would be only learning about Islamic history in Islamic studies, not knowing that they would be asked to copy and memorise Arabic texts.

ST5 began their responses with very similar responses that

"I have never attended Arabic school, I never go to madrasa. So I don't know how to read and write Arabic words, and as a result, my grade score in Islamic studies is very poor."

ST 6 student also echoed these sentiments when he reported that

Islamic studies have several Arabic texts, like Quranic verses or some prophetic Sunna that we are supposed to write and memorise, and these texts are always necessary to remember for the examination. I have difficulty in writing and understanding Arabic words, so I don't like the subject and always hesitate to attend the class"

Their responses suggest that students with little background knowledge of the Arabic language may not perform well in Islamic education and may lose interest in the subject.

When teachers' perceptions were analysed, it was found that all the teachers shared similar opinions with students. They all believed students lost interest in Islamic studies due to difficulties reading, writing, and understanding Arabic texts. For instance, teacher A responded that:

"Some of our students feel Islamic studies is a difficult subject because of its Arabic origin. They find it difficult to copy Arabic notes, even if they manage to copy the notes, some of them cannot read what they copied, although we used to explain the notes to them in the language they understand"

Another respondent's teacher B made a similar point when she said:

"Students' inability to read, copy and understand Arabic text affects their interest and performance in Islamic education...students' ability to read, write and memorize Arabic texts will help them in understanding and comprehend the lesson taught and therefore passing the given exams, the case here is that 90 percent of our students cannot read Arabic text talk less of understanding it, I believed this is one of the main reason that makes student have no interest in the subject"

Teacher C echoed these sentiments when he expressed that:

It is not a deniable fact that most reliable sources of Islamic education or Islamic studies can only be found in the Arabic language... this is why the Arabic language is important for Muslim children and students, although we do not expect them to master the language as linguists will do, they should possess a certain degree of Arabic language to assist them in understanding Islamic studies subject and perform well in the examination...however, majority of our students have a poor background in Arabic that makes them hate Islamic studies subject.

In addition to what the previous participant said, Teacher D stated that:

It is a well-known fact that the Quran and Hadith are the primary sources of knowledge in Islam, and there is no way we can teach Islamic religious studies without teaching these two important sources of knowledge, which makes knowledge of the Arabic language important for our students if they want to excel in their studies. However, the students find learning Arabic very difficult and show no interest in it, no matter how hard we make them see the reason they need to have background knowledge of the Arabic language in their studies and life.

Teacher E remarked that:

“Some of our students show low interest in Islamic religious lessons and sometimes even find flimsy excuses to absent themselves from class...I later found out that some of them, though not all ran away from the class because of their inability to read and copy Arabic notes.”

Teacher F, in his response, also explained that:

“Every Muslim student must learn Islamic religious studies in both lower and upper secondary schools in Nigeria, not for knowledge gain alone but because it is a prerequisite of their religion. However, many students are not interested in the subject, if they were given a choice between Islamic studies and other subjects they would gladly choose other subject to Islamic religious studies because of my observation and understanding of their attitude towards the subject...some will not come to class, the one came will may not have a notebook, if we ask them to buy Islamic studies materials they will say they don't know how to read some of its contents because they were written in Arabic”

Drawing on the synthesis of the narratives offered by the respondents, it is apparent that students have difficulty learning Islamic religious studies because of their inability to read, write, and understand Arabic text. These settings significantly contribute to the disinterest in Islamic religious studies in Nigerian secondary schools. This finding corroborates Adamu *et al.*'s (2021) findings that many Nigerian students lack sincere interest in studying Islamic Studies, paying it little to no attention. It also corroborates Aliyu *et al* (2024) that students choose to skip the Arabic language course and instead pursue other subjects due to their fear of the Arabic language.

3. Curriculum content

The majority of the participants' teachers believe that Islamic religious studies have the potential to develop good values in the learner, but believe that there is a distinction between policy and practices that is also considered among the factors that led to students' disinterest in the subject, as was manifested in their response to the researcher's probe. For example, teacher A said:

I believed the Islamic religious syllabus was formulated with a broad range of content to build and develop Islamic knowledge and values in the students at each level. However, I think the syllabus seems too broad for the shortest time of one or two periods of 40 minutes to cover, and some of the content also seemed too wide and ambiguous for secondary students' level, perhaps this may be one of the reasons that made the students lose interest in the subject ...”

These pieces of evidence indicate that the Islamic Studies syllabus used in our schools is too broad and difficult for some students to comprehend. In other words, there are too many topics to be covered within a short period of a year.

...there is a need for the government or the Ministry of Education to provide us with the needed material resources to facilitate or to make learning Islamic studies more fun and interesting to the learners. One, there is a need for the provision of current and relevant textbooks. Two, we need electronic gadgets in terms of television, computer, radio and so on. Doing this will make the teaching and learning of Islamic studies conducive and more interesting for the students

Teacher C also stressed that:

As teachers, we are expected to use various techniques, instructional materials, and different kinds of activities to make teaching and learning of Islamic studies meaningful and lovable for the learners. However, several factors that include the unavailability of material resources, time factor, students' attitudes towards learning...some of our students have no interest in Islamic education...it's like a tug of war when it comes to the Islamic studies period"

Teacher C remarked further that:

Some of us teacher takes teaching as just part-time work and don't put much of their mind on it and as far as I'm concerned from my end, I think we need to organize a forum whereby all the teachers that are involved in Islamic Studies will sit down and think of how we can work out on how to the teaching and learning of Islamic Studies and make students develop greater interest in the subject

Teacher D said that:

One of the major problems we face with Islamic Studies generally is that the number of periods allocated to it is too small compared to other subjects that repeat five or more periods.... Both the periods and time allotted to the Subject are not enough for them to cover the subject syllabus and engage the student's active participation in the teaching process...structure of the class, time allocated for the delivery of the curriculum... the problem of getting current textbook and teaching resources and materials ... the inability of the students to have the financial backing to provide for themselves for the materials needed for their learning impede the effective teaching and learning of Islamic religious studies and demotivate students interest in the subject"

Teacher E declared that.

The time allocated for the Islamic Studies subject is not enough to teach Islamic Studies as a subject. Take for instance now the schedule for teaching Islamic Studies is 45 minutes and in a situation where one wants to explain one certain concept that goes beyond spending 45 minutes and this 45 minutes per class one has two periods per week so of which one will not be able to cover the topic schedule for that week, so in this regard, I'm imploring the government to please extend the period for this subject instead of two times in a week maybe should be having it four or five periods per week.

Teacher F also echoed these sentiments when he expressed that:

The time allocated in the timetable is not enough, it is just only 40 – 45 minutes per period, for both the teaching, explanation, and copying notes.....we have the slow ones among the students and if we give them plenty of time to copy the note to copy we will

not be able to explain it for them, and if they take the note home after copying it they will not bother to go through it, so if we asked them any question about the note they copied they will not be able to answer them so we have to give them an explanation on them then they will be able to contribute. But let's say the time factors are relevant or are adequate, that is, the time given for the lesson is enough, we will be able to give them time to copy and explain it to them, and they understand it better, and we have more interest in the Islamic studies subject.

4. Parent Influence

The parent and home environment can significantly influence students' enthusiasm in learning. Analysis of data revealed that among the factors hindering students' interest in Islamic education was the parental influence on their children's education. For instance, teacher A reported that:

"...some of the parents are ignorant of Islamic teachings, which makes the students not dedicated to the subject...some parents see the teaching of Islamic values as imposing on their children, like wearing the hijab (head cover) and decent clothes"

Teacher A's response suggests that a lack of parental encouragement or negativity concerning their children's education greatly influences students' learning interests. Accordingly, teacher B also remarked that:

The attitudes and behaviour demonstrated by the parents play a great role in students' interest in learning... Some parents show nonchalant attitudes toward their children's education, particularly Islamic religious studies. For example, if a teacher of Islamic studies requests the audience of parents to discuss their ward's issue, they will not come, but if it is maths, English, or another science subject, they will come."

Teachers C, D, and E echoed these sentiments when they admitted that some parents showed little interest in their children's education, hardly visited the schools, or checked their children's performance; even if we invited them to discuss their children's performance, they would not come.

Teacher F in his response to the same question affirmed that: *"Parents are no longer interested in their children's education nor ready to provide them with what they need in school"* The informant expressed further that: *the way the parents react to their children's performance in Islamic education greatly influences students interest in the subject...parent didn't care whether the students pass the Islamic studies as they do for the subject like Mathematics, English, Biology and other Science subjects."*

The study revealed that some parents exhibit nonchalant attitudes toward their children's education, particularly in Islamic religious studies. This confirms Aliyu *et al.*'s (2024) view that the majority of parents, due to their religious beliefs and expectations, do not permit their children to pursue Islamic Studies as a career.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced in the pedagogy of Islamic Studies in selected secondary schools in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

In response to the question, the participant teacher mentioned students of interest, lack of proper and adequate instruction, students' absenteeism,

1. Students' Lack of Interest

Students' lack of Interest was among the many challenges the teachers faced in teaching Islamic studies, and they said it affected their teaching process. If the students love and are interested in the subject, it will allow them to learn and gain more knowledge. However, the participants' teachers expressed that students see Islamic studies as boring and show no interest in the subject. They believed that if not for the sake of mandated examination, the students might not attend class when it is Islamic studies period. They reported that students' lack of interest in the subject affects them negatively and results in poor performance in Islamic education. In confirming some of these participants' responses, Adamu *et al.* (2008) opine that factors such as the interest of the Student, teachers, and parental factors, school curriculum deficiency, the Country's official language barrier and pedagogical problems militate against its potency.

2. Lack of proper and adequate instructional material. Resources:

All the participants in the study revealed that the lack of proper and adequate instructional resources is among the greatest challenges facing them in the teaching of Islamic education. The following remarks expounded their responses to the issues:

Teacher A remarked that: *"In my school, we do not have up-to-date textbooks of Islamic religious studies, as we've been using the same old textbooks for more than two decades, which I think is no longer relevant for our students..."*

Teacher B expressed that:

"We teachers of Islamic studies, based on my 12 years of teaching experience, can confidently say we are facing the problem of lack of appropriate and current materials... we rely on our knowledge of particular topics to deliver lessons"

In addition, Teacher C described the challenges as:

In our schools, we face many challenges ranging from the structure of the class to the time allocated for delivering the curriculum. The problem is getting current textbooks and other teaching materials resources to facilitate the teaching and learning of Islamic education and allow the teacher to deliver effectively.

Another respondent, Teacher D, elaborated further on the challenges as follows:

...teaching aids are not provided in most cases, so we go on improvisation... As we all know, 80% of Islamic studies material is written in Arabic, and most of our students have no background knowledge of the Arabic language. Therefore, as a teacher of Islamic studies, I always struggle to get the right and appropriate materials to deliver quality lessons to the learners....so also as I said earlier, the period allotted for Islamic studies in the school timetable is not enough; these are among the major problems I, as a teacher, am facing..."

Teacher D's submission corroborates Badirudeen's (2024) observation that "most of the time, the lecturers improvise within their locality or teach arithmetically to the students and the role of instructional materials in teaching". Accordingly, Teacher E described how the country's imbalanced society and economic situations influence their teaching profession. He said:

"We teachers are experiencing a lot of difficulty and challenges in terms of incentives for the job, poor salary structure, late payment of our salaries and allowances, non-inclusion in decision making in matters concerning us..."

According to Teacher F:

Teachers face challenges when it comes to teaching Islamic studies firstly we lack material resources, secondly time factors, thirdly current Islamic studies textbooks, as well as students' attitudes.... the lack of or insufficient proper material resources did not allow students opportunities to acquire Islamic knowledge and skills and the development of Islamic teachings and values required to sustain and improve their way of life and actively contribute to the development of the society in which they live.

Drawing on the synthesis of the narratives offered by the respondents, it is obvious that a lack of or a shortage of current and proper instructional materials, a lack of student interest in

Islamic studies lessons, inadequate periods and time allotted in the school timetable for Islamic religious studies, are not enough for effective teaching. This is compared with the findings of Badirudeen (2024:8), who identified that not all Islamic Studies lecturers are Arabic literate, resulting in the inadequacy of the available textbooks to teach the students. This is compared with the findings of *Muhammad, Yunusa and Chubado (2022)* where a lack of adequate teaching aids and textbooks was identified among various factors that impact the effective teaching of Islamic studies in public primary schools.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study examines factors influencing students' interest in learning Islamic religious studies.

Research Questions 1:

The research question investigates teachers' and students' perceptions of the aims and objectives of Islamic Religious Studies in Nigerian secondary schools. The analysis of the results of the findings reveals that all the participants, both teachers and students, had positive perceptions about the aim and objectives of Islamic education. They all believed that Islamic education aimed at the inculcation of Islamic teachings and values in the students and also providing them with knowledge of the divine revelation of the Glorious Quran and Prophetic Sunnah, as well as developing learners morally, spiritually, and socially, is the primary aim of Islamic Education. This view supports that of Atique (2012), who expressed that the purpose of education in Islam is to associate and balance the physical and spiritual development of humanity.

It was also revealed that Islamic religious studies aim to provide Muslim youths with the history of their religion and teach and encourage Muslim children to be obedient servants of Allah. The participants' students also acknowledged the uncommon goals and knowledge offered through Islamic Studies education. However, despite knowing the benefits that may accrue from Islamic studies as declared above, Students still show a lack of interest in Islamic Studies as a subject.

Another essential finding of this study is that relevant and current Islamic Studies textbooks are not available in schools, and a lack of effective supervision and evaluation of the Islamic Studies curriculum also influences student interest in the subject. This finding is consistent with AbdulKabir (2023) that the lack of essential material resources and current and proper Islamic studies textbooks has resulted in many Islamic studies teachers utilising outdated materials, which has also greatly influenced students' interest in Islamic Studies

Research Question 2

The second research question investigates the major determinants of students' interest in learning Islamic religious studies. The overall findings showed that several factors, including teaching approaches, Arabic language proficiency, curriculum content, and parent influence, among other factors, led to students' low interest in Islamic studies. This finding corroborates Ibrahim and Abdulhamid (2017), who admitted that most of the students pursuing Islamic education are more fluent in English than they are in the Arabic language. The finding also confirms Aliyu, Abdur-Rafiu and Jayakumar (2024) that parental influence, teachers' attitudes, teaching techniques, and the use of technology (instructional media) are the elements that determine students' selection of Islamic studies in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges facing teachers and students in teaching and learning Islamic education?

The last research Question examines the challenges faced by the teachers. The study revealed numerous problems surrounding the effective teaching and learning of Islamic religious studies in Nigerian secondary schools. Some of the problems faced are consistent with what others like Kazeem and Balogun (2014), Aliyu, Abdur-Rafiu and Jayakumar (2024), Ibrahim and Abdulhamid (2017), Busari (2018) and Yahyah and Kewulere (2024) noted as factors hindering the successful teaching and learning of Islamic religious studies and other educational subjects in Nigerian secondary schools. Generally, the challenges do not have much to do with the teachers alone; other stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, curriculum developers and parents, are jointly responsible for such challenges. The above statement is in line with Owoyale-AbdulGaniy& Ibrahim's (2020:276) statement that “government in collaboration with stakeholders should ensure that teachers and students are given regular training and re-training on the use of modern instructional materials that would facilitate effective pedagogy”.

Instructional materials are the tools that are used to disseminate curriculum information and make it clearly understood and meaningful to the students. From the basic information collected from the participants, it is clear that both human and material resources are needed to effectively facilitate the realisation of the Islamic Studies curriculum; likewise, achieving its prime objective of instilling Islamic teachings and values in Muslim children while making it interesting to students. The availability of proper and adequate instructional materials in the curriculum is a crucial approach to improving teaching and learning quality at all levels of education. All the participants revealed that students' interest in Islamic studies is influenced by

the lack of proper and adequate instructional resources, hindering effective teaching and learning. These findings are consistent with the study of Owoyale and Ibrahim (2020), which concluded that the lack of instructional materials makes it difficult for effective teaching and learning of Islamic Studies in senior secondary schools in Kwara State.

The study revealed that the degree of students' nonattendance in class was among the many challenges the teachers faced in teaching and learning Islamic studies, and greatly affected the effective teaching process. Some participants' teachers also mentioned students' lack of interest, students' background in the Arabic language, inadequate proper and current material resources, improper teaching medium, the time allotted for the subject, textbooks, as well as nonchalant attitudes of parents towards their children's education hinder the effective teaching and learning of Islamic religious studies in Nigeria schools and immensely contribute to students loss of interest in the subject. It was also revealed that the current books and other materials used in teaching Islamic studies are outdated and cannot meet students' needs and motivate them.

Based on the findings, several factors influence students' interest in learning Islamic education, such as students' lack of background knowledge of the Arabic language, lack of instructional materials, and an improper medium of instruction among the problems facing the teaching of Islamic studies education and considered among the factors contributing to the lack of interest among students in learning Islamic education. To make Islamic studies more understandable and interesting to the students, Islamic studies should be taught through translated work in learners' local or national languages. Hence, the provision of relevant teaching and learning materials and specialised books will enable efficient and effective teaching; it will also help in realising the Islamic religious studies objectives.

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