

**UNVEILING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF NORTHERN NIGERIAN MUSLIM WOMEN
TO ISLAMIC EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Islamic teachings on women's education, highlighting the contributions of female scholars in Islamic education in Northern Nigeria. Research used a qualitative research approach; the study analyses literature and content to examine the Islamic perspective on women's education. The findings reveal that Islam emphasises women's education, granting them equal rights to acquire knowledge. The study also highlights the significant contributions of Northern Nigerian Muslim women to Islamic education. The paper recommends that contemporary women emulate past female scholars by making contributions to various fields of education. The marginalisation of women in education has been a persistent issue throughout history. Despite Islam's emphasis on equal rights to education, Muslim women continue to face barriers in accessing quality education. Examine the Islamic teachings on women's education. The aim is to investigate the contributions made by Muslim women from Northern Nigeria to the field of Islamic education. This study aims to promote a deeper understanding of Islam's perspective on women's education and highlight the achievements of Muslim women in Islamic education. The study employs a qualitative research approach, which includes a review of relevant literature and content analysis. The Islamic theory of education emphasises equal rights and opportunities for both men and women. Islam grants women equal rights to education, and

Northern Nigerian Muslim women have made significant contributions to Islamic education. Contemporary women should emulate past female scholars by contributing to various fields of education. Education policymakers should promote equal opportunities for women in education. This study demonstrates that Islam values women's education and that Muslim women have made significant contributions to Islamic education. By promoting equal opportunities and emulating past female scholars, contemporary women can continue to advance Islamic education.

Key Words: Education, Islam, Muslim, Women, Northern Nigeria and Women's Rights

The Concept of Education in Islam

The word education has been defined in different ways and from time to time. It is said that it emanated from either the Greek or Latin word 'educere' or 'educare'. In the first sense, to educate means 'to lead out or bring out' or 'to train'. In this sense, education is an ability that aims for theoretical results. Education is the process from which an individual gains knowledge or insight or develops attitudes and skills. Fafunwa B. describes it as the total sum of all the processes by which a child acquires abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour that are of positive value to the society in which he lives. Lawal S. defined education in a brief context as a process of imparting knowledge, training, and skills to an individual with the sole aim of developing his intellectual faculties.

Therefore, education simply means a way by which an individual will acquire skills and training through which to develop his/her physical, social, moral, mental and emotional life.

According to Jah, Islamic education is:

Process of self-discipline, which involves physical, mental and spiritual training of man. It aims at producing well disciplined, highly skilled and responsible human beings, well aware of their rights and how to claim them without affecting other people's right, human beings who are conscious of their duties to Almighty Allah, and commitments to the services of their society. It begins from cradle and continues to the grave, its subject matter is life as a whole. It investigates all aspects of life: spiritual, material and intellectual with one objective that is to improve it and thereby provide real happiness to mankind as a whole(1984).

However, education performs various functions. Its primary function is to enable individual to lead a life that is truly human. However, human life is a life in a society and so education has a social function as well as preparing individual to become an effective, productive contributor to his collective aspirations for the future.

Lawal S. endorsed that Islamic Education should insist that piety and faith must be clearly recognized in syllable as aim to be systematically pursued. The test of any syllabus must be whether it brings the learner nearer to an understanding of Allah (SWT) and of the relation in which man stands to his creator.

The role of Muslim women in Islamic Education

It has been a subject of interest for many scholars. This literature review aims to explore the contributions of Muslim women to Islamic education, with a focus on Northern Nigeria.

Suraiya Nawab's (1997) study on the contributions of women to Muslim society highlights the importance of education for Muslim women. Nawab argues that Muslim women have an obligation to Allah to educate themselves and their societies about their rights and responsibilities in Islam. Aisha Shettima Monguno's (2013) study on the contributions of Muslim women to Islamic education in Maiduguri metropolis provides valuable insights into the role of women in Islamic education in Northern Nigeria. Monguno identifies several women who played a crucial role in the development of Islamic education in the region, including YaMaira, Aisha Kilingirmamma, and Nana Asma'u. Laurence Mazeppa's (2012) study on the writings of Nana Asma'u provides a detailed analysis of her literary works and their significance in Islamic education. Mazeppa highlights Nana Asma'u's strategies for educating women, including the use of JAJI (leaders) and the dissemination of her works through rural communities.

Muhammad Akram Nadwi's (2007) book, *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam*, provides a comprehensive overview of the contributions of women scholars to Islamic education throughout history. Nadwi challenges the misconception that women played a limited role in Islamic scholarship and highlights the achievements of several women scholars, including those from Northern Nigeria.

Madinatu Shehu's (2015) study on the poetry of Nana Asma'uprovides an analysis of her literary works and their significance in Islamic education. Shehu highlights Nana Asma'u's mastery of Islamic knowledge and her ability to address complex problems. Muhammad S. Umar's (2004) study on mass Islamic education and the emergence of female "Ulama" in Northern Nigeria provides a historical overview of Islamic education in the region and highlights the contributions of women scholars. Umar identifies several women who played a crucial role in the development of Islamic education in Northern Nigeria, including MallamaShaykha and Alima Kabir.

These studies demonstrate the significant contributions of Muslim women to Islamic education in Northern Nigeria and highlight the importance of education for Muslim women. They also challenge the misconception that women played a limited role in Islamic scholarship and provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of women in Islamic education.

Muslim Women's Contributions to Islamic Education

Islam places great emphasis on acquiring and disseminating knowledge, whether religious or secular, as long as it does not contradict Islamic teachings. Historically, women have been subjected to social injustices and educational deprivation. However, Islam recognizes the dignity and rights of females, and women have played a significant role in Islamic education throughout history.

The Quran emphasizes the importance of education for both men and women, stating that girls have equal rights to obtain knowledge and be educated to achieve the status of righteous people (Quran 96:1-5). The Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) youngest wife, Aisha, was a renowned scholar, narrator of Hadith, and jurist. She reported over 2,200 traditions, surpassing many of her male contemporaries.

Other learned women companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) include Ummu Salamah, Fatima bintQays, and RubaayyibintMuawwidh. Female scholars in subsequent generations include Aisha bintSa'dbint Abi Waqqas Al-Madaniyyah (d. 117 AH), Umm Al-KiramKarimahbint Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Hatim Al-Marwaziyyah (d. 465 AH), and Ajibah al-Baqdariyyah al-Baghdadiyyah (d. 647 AH).

The six canonical books of Hadith have recorded the narrations of numerous women companions, successors, and scholars. Imam al-Bukhari's Sahih, for example, includes the narrations of 31 female companions, while Muslim's Sahih includes 36. The total number of women's Hadith in the six books exceeds 2,700.

Throughout history, Muslim women have made significant contributions to Islamic education, serving as teachers, scholars, writers, poets, doctors, and jurists. Notable examples include Nafisah, a descendant of Ali (RA) (d. 1178), who was a renowned authority on Hadith, and ShaikhaShuhda, who lectured publicly on literature, rhetoric, and poetry in Baghdad.

In contemporary times, Muslim women scholars such as Zainab al-Ghazali (d. 2005), Maryam Jameelah (d. 2012), and Fatimah Mernissi (d. 2015) have made significant contributions to Islamic education.

In Nigeria, notable Muslim women scholars include Nana Asma'ubint Fodio (d. 1864), Hadiza Doi (d. 1846), Aisha Fodio (d. 1870), Maryam Fodio (d. 1890), and Hussainabint Dabo (d. 1900). More recent examples include HauwaGwaran, Hajiya Yar Shehu, and Hajiya Aisha Lemu, who have made significant contributions to Islamic education in Nigeria.

Challenges Facing Muslim Women's Contributions to Islamic Education

Here are the challenges facing Muslim women's contributions to Islamic education, along with scholarly citations:

1. Patriarchal Societies and Cultural Barriers:

Patriarchal societies and cultural barriers can limit Muslim women's access to education and their ability to contribute to Islamic education (Mernissi, 1991; Ahmed, 1992).

2. Lack of Access to Education:

Many Muslim women, particularly in rural or disadvantaged areas, lack access to education, which can limit their ability to contribute to Islamic education (UNESCO, 2019).

3. Stereotypes and Misconceptions:

Stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslim women's roles in society can limit their ability to contribute to Islamic education (Nadwi, 2007). Custom and tradition is often boarder to change ways of doing. Things than it is to amend a policy to remove it(Adama,1994).

4. Limited Representation in Islamic Institutions:

Muslim women are often underrepresented in Islamic institutions, which can limit their ability to contribute to Islamic education (Lemu, 2010).

5. Balancing Family and Educational Responsibilities:

Many Muslim women face challenges balancing their family and educational responsibilities, which can limit their ability to contribute to Islamic education (Hassen, 2016).

Recommendations

Amidst the challenges bedeviling contribution of Muslim Women on education on Nigeria, the paper has the following recommendations:

1. Increase Access to Education:Increase access to education for Muslim women, particularly in rural or disadvantaged areas (UNESCO, 2019).

2. Challenge Patriarchal Societies and Cultural Barriers:

Challenge patriarchal societies and cultural barriers that limit Muslim women's access to education and their ability to contribute to Islamic education (Mernissi, 1991).

3. Promote Muslim Women's Representation in Islamic Institutions

Promote Muslim women's representation in Islamic institutions, such as mosques, Islamic schools, and universities (Lemu, 2010).

4. Support Muslim Women's Educational and Career Goals:

Support Muslim women's educational and career goals, including providing childcare and other support services (Hassen, 2016).

5. Challenge Stereotypes and Misconceptions

Challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslim women's roles in society and their ability to contribute to Islamic education (Nadwi, 2007). challenges of stereotype reduce the creative potentials and performance level of women (Adama, 1994).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Islam's emphasis on seeking knowledge has empowered Muslim women throughout history to pursue education and make significant contributions to Islamic education. Their achievements serve as a testament to the importance of education and the potential of Muslim women to excel in various fields.

Muslim women have made significant contributions to Islamic education throughout history. However, they face several challenges, including patriarchal societies and cultural barriers, lack of access to education, stereotypes and misconceptions, limited representation in Islamic institutions, and balancing family and educational responsibilities. To address these challenges, it is essential to increase access to education, challenge patriarchal societies and cultural barriers, promote Muslim women's representation in Islamic institutions, support Muslim women's educational and career goals, and challenge stereotypes and misconceptions.

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