

Assessing Islamic Moral Values Among Muslim Youth in Nigeria Penilaian Nilai Moral Islam dalam Kalangan Belia Muslim di Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Any society's stability hinges upon its members' collective adherence to moral principles and practices. Morality, universally relevant, acts as a unifying force that transcends religious, racial, and regional boundaries. This study examines the moral values of Muslim youth in Nigeria, highlighting the rising deviation from Islamic principles towards Western culture and immorality. Through a qualitative research strategy, data was collected by conducting interviews with selected youths across Nigeria and experts in Islamic moral teachings. Thematic analysis is applied to discern crucial patterns in the study. The study reveals that forsaking Islamic moral values and adopting Western culture results in moral decadence, which contributes to rising crime rates, including sexual assaults, substance abuse, highway robbery, educational setbacks, and mental health disorders. The root causes of the deterioration include the lack of individual morality, societal moral ethics, and ignorance of Islamic moral values. The study recommends integrating Islamic moral teachings from the Qur'an and Sunnah alongside encouraging positive cultural and moral behaviours to mitigate these challenges. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of raising awareness among youth regarding the detrimental effects of Western and non-Islamic culture. Tackling the shortcomings in personal and societal morality, addressing moral ignorance, and engaging parents, schools, and the community are suggested as essential measures to mitigate the impact of moral decline.

Keywords: Islamic moral values; Muslim youth; youth empowerment; cultural harmony; Nigeria

ABSTRAK

Stabiliti sesuatu masyarakat bergantung kepada pematuhan kolektif terhadap prinsip-prinsip dan amalan-amalan moral. Moraliti boleh diterapkan secara universal dan berfungsi sebagai daya penyatuan yang melampaui sempadan agama, kaum, dan kawasan. Kajian ini ingin mengkaji nilai-nilai moral dalam kalangan belia Muslim di Nigeria dengan mengambil kira peningkatan penyimpangan daripada ajaran Islam menuju budaya Barat dan tidak bermoral. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan kualitatif, kajian ini menggunakan kaedah pengumpulan data melalui instrumen temubual dengan belia terpilih di seluruh Nigeria dan pakar dalam pengajaran moral Islam. Analisis tematik juga digunakan untuk mengenal pasti corak penting dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pengabaian sifat-sifat moral Islam dan penerimaan budaya Barat menyumbang kepada kemerosotan moral yang menyebabkan peningkatan kadar jenayah, termasuk serangan seksual, penyalahgunaan bahan terlarang, rompakan, gangguan pendidikan, dan gangguan kesihatan mental. Punca-punca utama yang dikenal pasti termasuk ketiadaan moral individu, etika moral masyarakat, dan ketidaktahuan terhadap nilai-nilai moral Islam. Bagi mengatasi cabaran ini, kajian ini mencadangkan penggabungan pengajaran moral Islam dari al-Quran dan Sunnah, serta penekanan terhadap tingkah laku moral budaya yang positif. Selain itu, kajian ini juga menekankan keperluan untuk meningkatkan kesedaran dalam kalangan belia mengenai kesan yang merugikan dalam amalan budaya Barat dan bukan-Islam. Menangani kekurangan moral individu dan masyarakat, memerangi ketidaktahuan moral, dan melibatkan ibu bapa, sekolah, dan masyarakat adalah langkah-langkah yang disyorkan sebagai langkah penting dalam menangani kesan kemerosotan moral.

Kata kunci: Nilai moral Islam; belia Islam; pemeraksanaan belia; keharmonian budaya; Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

A code of conduct that is regarded as authoritative in determining what is right and wrong is referred to as morality. Morals define and are shaped by individual conscience, society, philosophy, and religion (Elçi et al. 2011).

In Islam, upholding a high moral standard is paramount for every Muslim in their daily life. The religion places a central emphasis on teaching and guiding adherents to cultivate the best manners and personal characteristics. The core objective of Islam, encompassing its beliefs, practices, and teachings on principles of morality, ethics, and behavior, is to nurture an Islamic personality that enables a Muslim to lead a peaceful and content life in this world and the hereafter. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explicitly articulated this mission, stating, "I was sent to perfect good character" (Maalik 2014). The adoption of non-Islamic moral practices often results in conflicts between Islamic laws and civil law, creating inconsistencies in the implementation of moral values due to their discrepancies (Musa et al. 2023). This underscores the vital role of aligning personal conduct with Islamic principles to ensure harmony between religious values and societal norms. An important claim made by some scholars of is that Islam provides a total model of society that has positive way of life (Stivens 2006).

Muslims should have high moral standards and a good personality to draw others to them. The great character and distinctive personality that had a lasting impact on history was the character derived from Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and was complimented by Allah (SWT) in the following verses: "And indeed, you O Mohammad are on an exalted character" (Quran 68:4). To improve people's moral character and enable them to see the world of beauty and perfection clearly and with knowledge, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established an example of good morals and perfect character. Therefore, developing the Muslims youth's moral is automatically linked to the learning of Islamic moral system. Learning of Islamic moral system plays a vital role in shaping moral among Muslims youth to be become citadel cultural of the community. The rapid social changes in lifestyle of some Muslims youths have led to unhappy in social life and culture among youths. These phenomena were indicated from morals, lifestyles, and social activities of adolescence in everyday life. These trends were revealed by youth morals, lifestyles, and

social activities in everyday life which resulted to the deterioration of Islamic and good cultural moral qualities of society in many places in Nigeria.

Hence, this study aims to assess certain immoral behaviors adopted by a segment of the youth population and its adverse effects on Muslim society in Nigeria. It contends that embracing Islamic moral values stands as the singular solution to deter youths from adopting Western culture, which serves as the underlying cause of the prevalent immorality and social disorder experienced by some individuals. Through a comprehensive examination of these immoral behaviors, the research seeks to underscore the critical role of reinforcing Islamic moral principles in fostering a resilient societal fabric and safeguarding the moral integrity of the youth population. Islam is a collective religion, in contrast to other religions, and this affects how every aspect is done. One of the key ideas stressed in Islam is the integrity of Muslims as well as the entire Muslim ummah (Chanzanagh & Akbarnejad 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islam, being a comprehensive way of life, encompasses a profound moral code that holds a crucial role in shaping the daily lives of Muslims. The teachings of Islam offer a robust and inclusive framework for individuals to navigate their worldly affairs effectively (Mohamed et al. 2013). This moral code in Islam serves not only to delineate but also to guide individuals on upholding specific moral principles in both their private and public spheres (America, 2014). Recognizing the potential consequences of moral decay and social unrest, Islam underscores the importance of moral instruction, emphasizing the dissemination of information regarding what actions are encouraged or discouraged (Halstead, 2007). Through this emphasis on moral guidance, Islam seeks to foster a society where individuals are equipped with the knowledge and values necessary to prevent moral deterioration and contribute to social harmony.

A growing concern among educators, administrators, and parents' focusses around the disturbing surge in teenage violence in contemporary society. It is undeniable that violence, disrespect, and moral deterioration are swiftly becoming pervasive in many school systems (Lindgren & Blount, 2011). Various studies indicate that Western civilization plays a significant role in fostering cultural, religious, and social transformations that

contribute to immoral tendencies within certain societies (Onyema, 2011). The apprehension regarding the normalization of such behaviors underscores the need for a comprehensive examination of the societal factors influencing the ethical landscape, prompting collective efforts to address and reverse these concerning trends. There are six good moral that every Muslim need to adopt which are: constant faith, good moral values, skillful in teaching, constantly giving advice, possessing psychological knowledge, knowledgeable and practicing the knowledge (Zakaria & Ismail, 2023). Some researchers affirm that people find themselves in their environment as how a poor child is deprived of entertainment and becomes a victim of violence (Gomaa et al. 2021).

Undoubtedly, Qur'anic education possesses virtues, objectives, and approaches that transcend time and are applicable to people of all eras (Hussin et al. 2020). The moral values of the youth find their true essence when rooted in Islamic moral sources, emphasizing the indispensability of Quranic teachings in shaping and nurturing virtuous character among the younger generation. Harris, (2021) affirmed the failure of modern western ethics in providing a universal and effective ethical theory has led to the marginalization of ethics in all aspects of life. As a result of that unstable social structures, strange and inconsistent political ideologies, economic difficulties, religious syncretism, materialism, and moral decadence have emerged. Implementing and integrating Islamic moral and social values has the potential to improve youth understanding and adoption of excellent moral values taught by Islam (Nurdyansyah & Arifin 2017).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing both primary and secondary data, to assess Islamic moral values among Muslim youth in Nigeria. Primary data is obtained through in-depth interviews with selected youth, scholars, parents, and community leaders, acknowledging their pivotal roles in shaping standard moral values within society. Secondary data, derived from the main sources of data in Islam, which is the Qur'an, hadith,

and as well as relevant literature, complements the primary data. The data analysis process involves multiple stages, including data cleaning, transcript analysis, coding, categorization, and interpretation. Secondary data serves as a supportive foundation where necessary. Thematic analysis is conducted using Atlas.ti software to systematically examine the collected data, ensuring a comprehensive and rigorous evaluation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The escalating concern about the erosion of morality within our culture is becoming increasingly pronounced, with a particular focus on the younger generation both locally and globally. Lack of Islamic ethics is a common behavioral problem in Muslim societies, and it is well understood by all parties involved, including Muslim youths, parents, religious leaders, and local leaders (Laeheem 2018).

Those with a sense of responsibility are actively seeking solutions to address the root causes behind the decline in youthful behavior, recognizing the imperative of placing a stronger emphasis on Islamic principles to counteract the societal decay of morals.

Undoubtedly, the primary moral crises affecting the youth, stemming from the adoption of Western cultures, manifest in issues such as crime, violence, substance abuse, and a concerning lack of respect for human life. These pressing challenges underscore the critical need for a concerted effort to realign societal values with Islamic principles, offering a path to counteract and reverse the moral degradation observed in contemporary society. Therefore, acquiring knowledge of Islam and embracing Islamic moral values plays a pivotal role in effectively addressing the pervasive issue of moral decadence in any society. The imparting of ethical principles and moral values to the youth fosters their holistic development, enabling them to contribute positively to their communities. It is evident that a sound religious upbringing is the foundation for instilling these ethical principles and moral values. Based on the insights gathered from the informants, Figure 1.1 provides a succinct summary of the research findings:

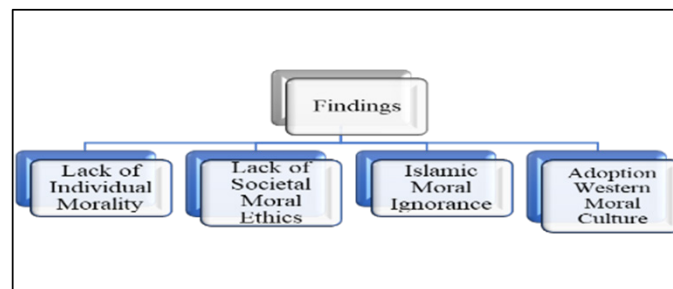


FIGURE 1. Summary of the findings

INDIVIDUAL AND MORALITY

Honesty, loyalty, good faith, and responsibility are examples of individual morality that serve as the foundation for an individual's decisions and judgments. Majority of the respondents affirmed numerous youths lack individual morality which leads to many social unrests. Individual morality help youth to abstain from intoxicant, smoking, drugs abuse, and avoiding danger, and being kind, and honest. Good deeds or actions are what Islam refers to as the guiding concept for Muslim activity which refers to all actions, not simply outward displays of worship but every action.

Therefore, Islam encourages Muslims to adopt some of the most important characteristics for him to be a good believer. Islam warns against arrogance and excessive attachment to this world's ephemeral pleasures. While it is all too easy to let the material world fill our hearts, Islam encourages people to keep God in their hearts and to use the material world in moderation and in accordance with God's guidance (America, 2014). Individual in Islamic society has a vital role to play in bringing positive change to every society. Corrupted individuals mind can also harm every society if morality and Islamic teachings are not given to youth.

Certainly, moral and ethical values serve as a guiding compass, enabling individuals to discern between right and wrong while establishing a universally accepted code of behavior for societal harmony (Rahman, 2018). Within Islam, morality is a crucial aspect of human existence as it contributes to shaping the ethical foundation inherent in all individuals. Morality instructs us on virtues like goodness, honesty, and discourages vices such as deceitfulness. Possessing these qualities aligns an individual with the accepted moral behavior in Islam, distinguishing a Muslim from those who do not adhere to Islamic ethical standards.

Consequently, adhering to Islamic moral values safeguards individuals from moral corruption in all facets of life.

SOCIETAL MORAL ETHICS

Societal values are standards that people, and social groups use to establish their own objectives and, in essence, to shape the nature and structure of social order in a group. These standards include what is desirable or not desirable, what ought to be or not ought to be, and acceptable and unacceptable. It is true that several societies in the county lacks societal moral ethics and values that govern the behavior of society based on cultural, religious, or philosophical beliefs, and may be organized in laws or other forms of social norms. Lack of societal moral ethics resulted in legal and ethical ramifications, as well as negative psychological and emotional consequences for society. Widespread societal immorality experienced increased crime, injustice, and inequality, resulting in a less harmonious and stable community.

Morality is one of the fundamental sources of strength for both individuals and societies, just as immorality is one of the primary causes of decline. While Islam respects individual rights within a broad Islamic framework, it is also concerned with the moral health of every society. Within Islam, the principle is clear; anything contributing to the well-being of individuals and society is deemed morally good, while anything causing harm is considered morally bad. Islam staunchly advocates for actions that promote morality and opposes those that contribute to corruption, underscoring the crucial role of morality in fostering a healthy and just society. The commands and prohibitions in Islam are geared towards nurturing Islamic morality. The absence of Islamic moral values can result in social unrest and turmoil within any society. Thus, there is an urgent

need for moral rehabilitation and heightened moral consciousness to safeguard our society from unrest and the encroachment of corrupted practices.

THE EFFECTS OF MORAL IGNORANCE IN A SOCIETY

The findings unequivocally delineate the repercussions of moral ignorance within societies, representing a perilous force capable of dismantling a nation's social harmony. The global landscape has witnessed the emergence of radical and extremist ideologies, posing a significant threat to international security by promoting excessive behaviors (Mujani et al. 2020). The core objective of Islamic morality and ethics is to secure the approval of Allah SWT. One of the prominent consequences of ignorance in many societies is the assimilation of un-Islamic cultural norms into Islamic communities, leading individuals to either endorse what is prohibited or forbid what is allowed in Islam. Widespread ignorance hampers individuals' ability to discern between halal and haram, contributing to a fundamental challenge in upholding Islamic principles.

The absence of moral knowledge in a society leads to the destruction of property, the mass murder of innocent people, intoxicant consumption, and many more corrupted practices. A peaceful society everywhere depends on human traits like tolerance, general good behavior, the propensity for collaboration, love of justice, and obedience, and others (Study, 2018). Immorality invariably leads to social disorder, characterized by the prevalence of immoral and disruptive behavior within society. This deterioration extends to vandalism, violence, greed, self-centeredness, theft, dishonesty, contempt for authority and the law, prostitution, drug use, and other self-destructive activities, spreading rapidly across various regions of the state. Effectively combating the progression of immorality in any society necessitates the concerted efforts of all stakeholders, including parents, schools, educational institutions, individuals, and the media. Each component must actively contribute to sensitizing youths on adopting Islamic moral teachings.

However, the findings from informants in this study underscored that the primary influencers in imparting moral values within a society are parents, schools, and the broader community, as depicted in Figure 2.1. This emphasizes the pivotal roles these entities play in shaping the moral fabric of the younger generation and highlights the need for collaborative action among them to address the

challenges posed by immorality and foster a more virtuous society.

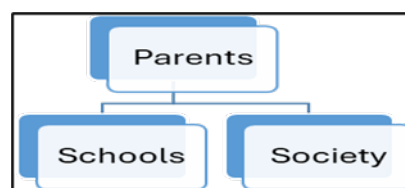


FIGURE 2. Key actors of societal morality

Figure 2.1 shows parents at the top because they are the first to give a child moral value either negative or positive, schools and society works together on any child after coming out from his parents' house and learning from both. Therefore, any society that needs good moral values consideration must be given to these three key actors of society.

Parents' Role: Several parents were inability to take care of their children as they take this not compulsory upon them. Some youth state that they take care and responsibility for themselves at the age of ten. Their parents are not aware how they live and survive. Some are school dropouts; some are hawking on the street, and some have engaged in several criminal acts. A child should be taught about the various golden moral values and virtues Islam at a young age. When the child begins to speak, teach them good words, and do what is good in their present. Children, more than anyone else, imitate their parents. If you notice any inappropriate behavior in your child, consider whether you, your wife, or a relative have acted similarly in front of your child (Hossain 2019). It is important to instill moral and spiritual ideals in children. They need to be taught the difference between good and wrong as well as which value to apply when. Factually, good virtues will accentuate a child's sparkling and vibrant personality. The youngsters will be ready and equipped to confront the world's good and wrong and to root out all illnesses. Such courageous individuals will contribute to the creation of a peaceful and prosperous sphere.

School Roles: Schools serve as a secondary agent of social interaction between youths. Therefore, it is part of the school's responsibility to facilitate the development of youth moral values. Schools should provide opportunities for all students to interact and discuss in a clean and honest moral value. Any school that failed to train its youths a good moral and character values will resulted to the hurting of students and causing societal problems (Kuehn 2022). The primary function of schools in Islam

is to aid in the early education of Muslim children by teaching students Islamic moral values and how to read and memorize the Qur'an (Baba, 2011). Schools should encourage critical thinking by implementing Islamic instruction. Every school has its own set of cultural norms and ethical code to guide children's behavior at school and relationships with others (Datta 2021). However, in Islam individual principles, norms, traditions, and, in some cases, unwritten rules, school culture and assumptions all are guided by Islamic principles as Allah says:

"Say, "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allāh, Lord of the worlds". (Al- An'am 6:162).

ADAPTION OF WESTERN CULTURE

Islam's model stresses justice and tradition as the cornerstones of a valid community and family life, while the Western secular model prioritizes a rational, reasoning mind in the pursuit of individual and collective fulfillment. Islam has the capacity to solve the social problem of religious education in multicultural societies (Toosi & Jamil, 2021). Therefore, there is no need for a Muslim to adopt any un-Islamic culture. Youth in several areas adopt the western culture in terms of dressing, barbing hair and almost every aspect of life. Western culture is always antireligion it tries to separate its way with Islamic way of life, According to Toosi & Jamil (2021). The concept of Western civil society, which is deeply obsessed with anti-state approaches and intermediaries separating religion's role, must be reconsidered. the Islamic society is under threat in this age of globalization because the Western system has devolved into an unstable and unbalanced system. Western media is now undermining the foundations of the Islamic society system. The concept of a strong societal system can be found in Islamic civilization. The widespread promotion of obscenity and nudity in Islamic societies is a result of Islamic societies' imitation of Western civilization. For the Islamic society to sate safe there is need to adhere strictly to the Islamic teachings and abstain from all immoral western cultures. This can be achieved through sensitization, preaching and advocating Islam in every society.

CONCLUSION

In Islam, morality extends its influence across every facet of a Muslim's life, ranging from everyday

greetings to matters of international relations. Its broad scope and universal applicability emphasize the comprehensive nature of moral principles within the Islamic framework. For a Muslim, it is not sufficient to personally embody virtue; there is an inherent obligation to promote virtuous conduct in others. This entails not only refraining from wrongdoing and sin but also actively encouraging and motivating others to follow the same path. In essence, Muslims are not just expected to uphold ethical standards individually but are also called upon to contribute to the overall moral well-being of society. This dual commitment underscores the integral role of individuals in fostering a morally healthy and upright community within the Islamic ethos.

There is need to set sensitization and da'wah comity in every society to admonish and teach the youths the Islamic moral values and its significance to ummah. Da'wah is the responsibility of all Muslims at every level. Aside from spreading the teachings of Islam, da'wah is essential to raise awareness among all societies that the teachings of Islam disseminated are true, pure, and from a genuine divine source that can cure all evils and make a good society (Ismail et al. 2018).

Islam, as a source of the highest moral standards for humanity, positions divine pleasure as a central goal in human life. Each moral virtue within Islam is carefully assigned a fitting place and function within the broader framework, emphasizing a sense of balance and proportion in addressing morality. Islam advocates for a way of life that promotes righteousness and actively works to free communities from the clutches of evil. Muslims are not only encouraged to embody virtue in their daily lives but are also tasked with actively combating vice and corruption within their communities. The collective responsibility to fulfill this duty rests on the entire Muslim community, and it would be a lamentable day if any group were to promote evil and suppress goodness. The influence of Islamic moral values on the behavior of the youth plays a significant role in curbing the immoral behaviors that afflict society. Some researchers propose the implementation of therapeutic communities and spiritual programs for the rehabilitation and treatment of drug addiction among the youth (Jodi 2018). The said programs apply Islamic values to increase the understanding and appreciation of residents to improve moral values and to avoid immorality.

Youth have a significant role in determining a society's degree of health and development. As no civilization can be self-sustaining without its human components, of which the youth constitute the largest workforce, there can be no sustenance of society without youths (George & Yanga 2014). Youths need to be made aware of their value and significance in society by individuals, parents, society, and educational institutions. They should also start to see themselves as agents of any society's fortune and advancement. Youth must be committed to instilling and upholding moral values throughout their lives, as these values will shape how they think, speak, and even act (George & Yanga 2014). Moral standards can rise in societies if youth zeal results in the restoration and adaptation of moral values. For that, youths must be disciplined and resist immoral behavior that will eventually lead to a loss of moral compass to uphold moral values.

By embracing Islamic moral principles youth can act as change agents in their society and illuminate the path for nations to achieve true prosperity, development, and functionality in a free and health society. Like other religions, Islamic traditions have their own perspectives on morality and democracy that can be applied to the resolution of international conflicts and the pursuit of justice for Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Saada 2023).

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

“Conceptualization, Aminu Yakubu., Azreen Hamiza Abdul Aziz.; methodology and software, Aminu Yakubu.; validation, Aminu Yakubu.; formal analysis, Aminu Yakubu., Azreen Hamiza Abdul Aziz.; resources, Aminu Yakubu; data curation, Aminu Yakubu; writing-original draft preparation, Aminu Yakubu.; writing-review and editing, Azreen Hamiza Abdul Aziz; project administration, Aminu Yakubu.; funding acquisition, Aminu Yakubu., Azreen Hamiza Abdul Aziz. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.”

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