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Attitudes of Parents Towards Islamic Studies at the University Level: A Case Study of the Department of Islamic Studies, Yobe State University, Damaturu

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Abstract:

The study investigated the attitudes of parents towards sending their ward to pursue Islamic Education as a course at the university level. The study became imperative because the department is one of the richest departments in the university in terms of staff strength and its programs both at undergraduate and post graduate are fully accredited. Despite all these, there has been constant decline in student enrollment compared to other departments in the university. The main objective of the study is to identify the causes of this negative attitude, assess its effects on the department and the society; come out with strategies for enhancing parental engagement and support for Islamic studies, to improve student enrollment and academic outcomes. To explore the causes of this trend, the study adopted survey research design and the data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency counts and percentages. The study identified that many parents have the notion that professional courses are the only marketable and Islamic Education is confined to mosques and it is for moral upbringing only. The study recommends increase awareness of parents on the potentials of Islamic Education.

Keywords: Parents; Attitudes; Yobe state university; Islamic studies

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Islam, as a divine system revealed by the Almighty Allah, encompasses comprehensive laws and regulations intended for the benefit of mankind. These divine principles aim at securing the well-being, safety, and happiness of people in both this world and the Hereafter. Allah the Almighty revealed this religion to His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and The Prophet delivered the religion faithfully, and offered sincere guidance to the Ummah.

The term education in general, is the process of training societal norms, values and desirable attitudes from one generation to another. Islam places a great emphasis on knowledge. In fact, the very first revelation from the Qur'an was a clear call to learning and the pursuit of knowledge. As a result, Islam and knowledge are seen as inseparable twins. Through knowledge, Muslims understand the principles of Islam and discover the means to attain societal progress and development. Bello, (2020).

According to Fafunwa (1995), for centuries, scholars have realized that Islam as a religion has contributed substantially to world civilization, culture and education. It was Islam that revived the human pursuit of science and it was through the Muslim scholars, not the Roman that the modern world achieved light and power through science.

Yobe, as a state carved out from Borno as well as an area where the ancient administrative capital of the Kanem- Borno Empire was located, is one of the Islamic regions in northern Nigeria that has upheld and maintained Islamic teachings. As part of the Kanem Borno Caliphate, Islamic scholarship is deeply rooted in the fabrics of people in the area. This legacy of scholarship has been and keeps on being passed to generations using the Islamic Education system.



However, the arrival of colonial masters and their subsequent takeover of the northern emirates, and the establishment of eastern primary schools, which gradually replaced traditional Islamic schools, marked the beginning of a significant decline in Islamic education throughout the northern emirates in general, and Yobe State in particular. Bello, (2022) in response to this decline, reports that some devout Muslims, took an initiative to establish formal Islamic schools across various educational levels whose graduates contributed tremendously to religious, educational and socio-economical development.

Historically, its graduates have played a vital role in the development of Yobe state. Its product served the needed manpower in various sectors of development and particularly the education sector. Interestingly, they continue to offer more to Yobe state and contribute their quota towards its development in the present and future.

Yobe State University was established in 2006 by the then Executive Governor, Late Alhaji Dr. Bukar Abba Ibrahim. The university was initially named: Bukar Abba Ibrahim University, Damaturu. According to Maidugu (2021) the name of the university was changed to Yobe State University, Damaturu in the Year 2012 during the first tenure of His Excellency, the Executive Governor Alhaji Ibrahim Geidam. The Department of Islamic Studies was one of the fully accredited departments in the university.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Islamic Studies holds significant potentials for contributing to the development of Yobe state specifically, and Nigeria in general. Despite this, the Department of Islamic Studies at Yobe state University continues to face notable challenges, particularly regarding the admission of qualified candidates into its B.A. Islamic Studies (Hons) program. As one of the disciplines offered up to the PhD level, and apart from being a fully accredited de-

partment in the university, in the first five years of the establishment of the department, the number of admitted students has not reached 50. This decline can be partially attributed to prevailing attitudes among parents, guardians, students, and educational administrators toward Islamic Studies as an academic discipline. In addition, the general societal perception of Islamic Studies as a limited or less lucrative field of specialization continues to affect interest in the program.

Culturally and religiously, Islamic Studies are deeply ingrained in the lives of people in Yobe state, where Islam is the official religion of the state. Traditionally, many parents and guardians enrolled their children in informal Arabic and Islamic schools from a young age to equip them with basic religious knowledge. With the advent of formal Islamic education, some parents embraced the new system, enrolling their children in large numbers. These students went on to earn academic qualifications, some eventually attained Ph.D. degrees and specialized in various areas within Islamic Studies.

However, a considerable number of parents and guardians still discourage their children from selecting Islamic Studies as a specialization at the university level. This is largely due to the mistaken belief that a degree in Islamic Studies limits career prospects to religious institutions like mosques. In reality, the graduates of this field are well-positioned to work in diverse sectors such as banking, judiciary, paramilitary services, and other professional domains. Ultimately, the lack of sufficient encouragement for students to pursue Islamic Studies at the tertiary level continues to hinder the growth of the discipline. Addressing these misconceptions and promoting awareness of the career opportunities available to Islamic Studies graduates will be a key to reversing this trend.

This seeks to investigate why parents send their wards to integrated schools where Islamic Education is taught, send them to evening Islamiyyah schools, Tahfiz for Qur'anic memorization

and discourage them from furthering their education at the university level by persuading them to pick courses other than Islamic Studies.. Not all courses are professional courses and it has been observed that, some of the courses they choose have the same opportunities in the labour market with Islamic Studies. The study will dig in the real causes of the problem to change the trend and boost the entry capacity of the department so that the society will have workforce with academic and moral background.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to examine the reason why the number of candidates willing to study B.A Islamic studies keeps decreasing in Yobe State University, Damaturu over the years. The specific objectives are to:

1. Assess parental attitudes toward Islamic Studies as a field of study at the university level, specifically within the context of Yobe State University Damaturu.
2. Analyze students' interest and disposition toward specializing in Islamic Studies.
3. Recommend strategies for enhancing parental engagement and support for Islamic studies, aiming to improve student enrollment and academic outcomes.
4. Explore the significance of Islamic Studies in tackling societal and developmental issues.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

At the university level in today's educational system, parents often have a considerable influence on their children's academic decisions. In many cases, they are actively involved in selecting the course that their child will study. This direct interference means that parents can sometimes act as the primary decision-makers in their child's academic journey.

The concept of attitude, as defined by Aronson (2008, p. 114), refers to “an opinion that includes an evaluative and an emotional component.” Within the scope of this research, the term refers to how parents perceive the value and future benefits of their children’s chosen field of study. It also reflects their beliefs about the importance of being engaged in their child’s education, both at home and at school, and how these beliefs shape the nature and level of their involvement (Henning, 2013).

This study aims to explore parents’ attitudes toward Islamic Studies as an academic discipline at the university level, with focus on Yobe State University. The researchers will highlight the extent to which parental involvement influences students’ choice to pursue Islamic Studies and provide a thorough examination of parental roles in the academic decision-making process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey research design in the assessment of attitudes of parents toward Islamic studies at the university level.

In assessing the attitudes of parents toward Islamic studies at the university level, data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency counts and percentages. The primary source of data in this research were the opinions gathered from parents, guardians, educational personnel and students in the study area. These opinions were obtained through major tools, which are:

Questionnaire: as a tool for collecting data, the researchers initiated questionnaires in order to explore parents' attitudes towards studying Islamic studies at the university level.

In this study, a sample of 700 questionnaires were initiated and distributed among parents, guardians, students and educational personnel from different socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, the sample included the elite, middle class and lower class, males,



females, educated and uneducated ones. Where 600 out of the initiated questionnaires were duly completed. This indicates 85.72% response rate, which is considered adequate enough for analysis.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

SECTION ONE: Demographic Information

SECTION TWO: Parents' General Perceptions on Higher Education

SECTION THREE: Parents' Attitudes Towards Islamic Studies

The above sections were having three options from which the respondents made their choices by either choosing AGREE, DISAGREE, OR UNDECIDED. That was done to facilitate quantification and analysis of the data.

2- Interview: As a tool for data collection, interview is designed to collect information from educated and uneducated as well as educationists' respondents which involves personal meetings with them. The interview was conducted orally, recorded with the consent of the interviewees and treated along with the questionnaires in the analysis section.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The data of this research were analyzed in relation to the mentioned problem, particularly to determine the reason parents agree or disagree to allow their children to study Islamic Studies at the university level. The analysis focused on various factors such as the fear of unemployment or inability to secure white-collar jobs after graduation, lack of awareness about the roles of Islamic Studies' graduates in different sectors of society.

Table 1: Parents' General Perceptions on Higher Education

University education is important for the future of children		
Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	453	75.5%
Disagree	96	16%
Undecided	51	8.5%
Total	600	100%
I prefer my child to study courses that will guarantee employment		
Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	465	77.5%
Disagree	88	14.66%
Undecided	47	7.8%
Total	600	100%
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Total	600	100%

This table shows that, a total of 75.5% responded that, university education is important for the future of children, where the remaining 24.5% do not agree or are skeptical as shown on the table. Moreover, 77.5% of the respondents also agreed that, they prepare their children to study courses that will guarantee employment, while the remaining 22.5% disagree or are skeptical as shown on the table.

This goes to say that, university education is very paramount, and parents prepare their child to study professional courses that will secure job opportunities than other courses.

Table 2: Parents' Attitudes Towards Islamic Studies

I consider Islamic Studies a respectable course at university level, which I will fully support my child to study		
Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	89	14.83%
Disagree	499	83.16%
Undecided	12	2%
Total	600	100%
Islamic Studies has limited career opportunities compared to other fields		
Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	483	80.5%
Disagree	102	17%
Undecided	15	2.5%
Total	600	100%

This table indicates that, 77.5% of the respondents expressed a negative view, disagreeing the perception that Islamic Studies is a respectable course at university level, which parents should fully support their children to study, where the remaining 22.5% do agree or are skeptical as shown on the table. Moreover, 80.5% of the respondents also agreed that, Islamic Studies has limited career opportunities compared to other disciplines, while the remaining 19.5% disagree or are skeptical as shown on the second part of the table above.

It can be inferred through the above findings that, parents in the study area have a predominantly negative perception of the job prospect of Islamic Studies' graduates in the labour market.

This view was shared and supported by M. Isah Gana – a civil servant – when asked to give his views on the future of B.A Islamic Studies and Arabic Graduates in the labour market. He

says: most of Arabic and Islamic Studies' Graduates end up in the classroom, they will not be able to secure jobs at other government organizations such as (NNPC) , (FIRS) etc. He said he will rather allow his children to learn Islamic studies at the lower level of education to enable them understanding the religion of Islam properly, but at the university level he prefers his children to read other professional courses that will attract job opportunities for his children after graduation.

Table 3: Total number of registered students in Islamic Studies department, Yobe State University, Damaturu.

S/N	ACADEMIC SESSION	NO. OF REGISTERED STUDENTS
1.	2010/2011	34
2.	2011/2012	41
3.	2012/2013	34
4.	2013/2014	19
5.	2014/2015	47
6.	2015/2016	72
7.	2016/2017	76
8.	2017/2018	95
9.	2018/2019	95
10.	2019/2020	73
11.	2020/2021	57
12.	2022/2023	52
13.	2023/2024	48

Source: Department of Islamic Studies, Yobe State University, Damaturu, 2025

The above table (Table 3) shows the number of registered students of Islamic Studies, Yobe State University, Damaturu, starting from 2010/2011 to 2023/2024 academic sessions. The table clearly indicates that, 32 students were registered in 2010/2011 academic session. Where in the following 8 academic sessions the number decreased to 19 students in the year 2013/2014 academic session and rose sharply to 95 students during the 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 academic sessions which



marked the peak enrollment in the history of the department. Currently the figure dropped again to 48 students in the 2023/2024 academic session.

FINDINGS:

This study has revealed the following findings:

Many parents who have acquired western education and some with formal Islamic studies background hold negative attitudes toward Islamic Studies education at the university level in Yobe state, and prefer their children to study professional courses.

These negative attitudes have significantly affected the number of candidates applying to study B.A Islamic Studies in the state.

Majority of parents believe that Islamic Studies education is significant or even compulsory for their children at the lower level of education to enable them understand the religion of Islam properly.

Islamic Studies, as a course, is not confined to the mosques and classrooms as perceived by many parents, graduates of Islamic studies have job opportunities in military and paramilitary as well as many government and private agencies.

CONCLUSION

This research titled: " Attitudes of Parents Towards Islamic Studies at University Level: Case Study of the Department of Islamic Studies, Yobe State University, Damaturu", concludes that, many parents who have acquired western and formal Islamic education hold negative attitudes toward studying Islamic Studies at the university level in the study area. This is due to their fear that, the field may not help secure blue-collar

job opportunities after graduation. However, they strongly believe that Islamic Studies education is significant or even compulsory for their children at the lower level of education, as it enables them to properly understand the religion of Islam.

RECOMMENDATION

Government agencies, islamic scholars and organizations should raise awareness among parents and guardians about the importance of islamic education and how it contributes to the social, economic and political development of our community, together with the career prospects of its graduates.

The Department of Islamic Studies should conduct sensitization visits to government and private Islamic Schools to educate parents, staff and students about the opportunities Islamic Studies offers as a course at the university level.



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