RELEVANTIZATION OF ISLAMIC STUDIES IN NIGERIA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: A SWOT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the imperative of making Islamic Studies more relevant in higher institutions across Nigeria, considering the evolving educational landscape and the decreasing enrolment and funding for Islamic sciences. The study identifies opportunities and proposes strategies to enhance the effectiveness and applicability of Islamic Studies in higher education, ensuring that it addresses the dynamic needs of students and society. The research examines the current state of Islamic Studies in Nigerian higher institutions, highlighting challenges such as outdated curriculum, insufficient resources, and a potential gap between traditional teachings and modern societal demands. A SWOT analysis approach based on library data was used to examine available resources, publications, and existing studies related to Islamic Studies in Higher institutions in Nigeria. This study identifies opportunities for improvement, emphasizing the significance of aligning Islamic Studies with global educational standards, fostering interdisciplinary approaches, and leveraging technological advancements. Doing so, this study proposes approaches in curriculum reform to integrate contemporary issues, collaboration with other academic disciplines, the incorporation of practical and experiential learning, and the utilization of digital resources for a more engaging and dynamic learning experience. Additionally, the study suggests the importance of fostering partnerships between higher institutions, religious scholars, and industry stakeholders to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application. By implementing these strategies, the research contends that higher institutions in Nigeria can contribute significantly to the holistic development of students and prepare them to navigate the complexities of the modern world

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while upholding Islamic principles. However, Islamic Studies faces challenges from competition with secular disciplines, misconceptions about Islam, political and social instability, and the distortion of its teachings by extremist ideologies. This paper serves as a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in the enhancement of Islamic Studies in *the Nigerian higher education system*.

Keywords: Relevantization, Islamic studies, *Education*, Higher institution, Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

Islamic studies have played a vital role in the growth and development of Nigeria's education system by reflecting the nation's rich religious and cultural diversity. The curriculum has been used to teach both the material and immaterial needs of humankind, thereby allowing graduates to have strong-footing in mundane and religious responsibilities. Islamic Studies education enhances and provides the ethical values and behaviors required to produce graduates that are well-grounded and useful for societal growth and development. However, the Islamic studies journey within higher institutions in Nigeria is not without both challenges and opportunities. As the world evolves and educational paradigms shift, the imperative for relevantization ensuring that academic disciplines remain pertinent and responsive to contemporary needs becomes increasingly pronounced[1].

Within this context, Nigerian higher institutions stand as crucibles of knowledge, entrusted with the dual mandate of preserving academic heritage while propelling it towards new frontiers of relevance and innovation[2]. The opportunities for the relevantization of Islamic Studies abound, ranging from interdisciplinary collaborations to community engagement initiatives, from leveraging digital technologies to fostering dialogue and pluralism. By embracing these opportunities, higher institutions can position Islamic studies as a vibrant and integral component of the academic landscape, enriching both scholarship and society at large[3].

This paper explores the imperative of making Islamic Studies more relevant in higher institutions across Nigeria, considering the evolving educational landscape and the

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[1] Saheed Badmus Suraju, Curriculum Intergration and Islamic Studies in Nigeria. *World Educators Forum*. (2017).

[2] Aliyu Idris & Mohd Nor bin Nawawi, Issues and Challenges in the Implementation of the Integration of Knowledge in Islam in Nigeria Universities. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economic and Development* , . (2021). 81–89.

[3] Olatubosun, Aziz Azif, Islamic Studies in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects. In *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* (Vol. 3, Issue 2). (2013).

decreasing enrolment and funding for Islamic sciences. The study identifies opportunities and proposes strategies to enhance the effectiveness and applicability of Islamic Studies in higher education, ensuring that it addresses the dynamic needs of students and society. The research examines the current state of Islamic Studies in Nigerian higher institutions, highlighting challenges such as outdated curriculum, insufficient resources, and a potential gap between traditional teachings and modern societal demands. It then identifies opportunities for improvement, emphasizing the significance of aligning Islamic Studies with global educational standards, fostering interdisciplinary approaches, and leveraging technological advancements.

Doing so, this study proposes approaches in curriculum reform to integrate contemporary issues, collaboration with other academic disciplines, the incorporation of practical and experiential learning, and the utilization of digital resources for a more engaging and dynamic learning experience. Additionally, the study suggests the importance of fostering partnerships between higher institutions, religious scholars, and industry stakeholders to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application. There is a need to explore the interpolation of Islamic study with social science, humanity, and management.

By implementing these strategies, the research contends that higher institutions in Nigeria can contribute significantly to the holistic development of students and prepare them to navigate the complexities of the modern world while upholding Islamic principles. This paper serves as a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in the enhancement of Islamic Studies in higher education in Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

The findings of the study indicate that the Islamic Studies curriculum positively impacts the moral behavior of students attending Islamic schools in Lagos State. Specifically, the study found that Islamic Studies learning materials contribute to instilling authentic and balanced values in learners, particularly during their formative stages of mental and moral development. The research suggests that effective teaching techniques employed by Islamic Studies teachers play a crucial role in achieving both academic and moral goals. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating Islamic Studies education into the curriculum to promote moral development among students[4].

The findings of the study revealed significant positive effects of employing the inquiry method on the academic performance of Junior Secondary School students studying Islamic Religious Studies (I.R.S) in Katsina State, Nigeria. Specifically, students exhibited higher academic achievement when taught using the inquiry method compared to conventional

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[4] Abdulazeez, M. A., Impact of Islamic Studies Curriculum on Islamic School Students' Moral Behavior in Junior Secondary Schools in Lagos State, 7(1), (*JOURNAL OF EDUCATION*, 2020).

teaching methods. Furthermore, the study identified significant differences in the academic performance between male and female students, as well as between rural and urban students, when exposed to the inquiry method. These findings underscore the importance of integrating inquiry-based teaching approaches in Islamic Religious Studies instruction to enhance student learning outcomes[5].

The study's findings underscore both the urgent need for increased expertise in Islamic Studies for teaching core courses within private universities in Nigeria and the importance of prospective students having a rudimentary understanding of the discipline before enrolment. The study's findings underscore both the urgent need for increased expertise in Islamic Studies for teaching core courses within private universities in Nigeria and the importance of prospective students having a rudimentary understanding of the discipline before enrolment[6]. The study reveals that despite facing persistent low enrolment in higher institutions in Southwestern Nigeria, Islamic Studies has attracted scholarly efforts to stimulate interest among potential students. The primary concern lies in the discipline's uncertain prospects, prompting the proposal to integrate Islamic finance as a sub-discipline within its university-level curriculum. This strategic addition aims to enhance the functionality of Islamic Studies and produce more self-reliant graduates. The study, focusing on Lagos State University, Olabisi Onabanjo University, and Osun State University, employs a qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory approach to investigate these proposed changes and their potential impact.

The recommendation is to introduce a hybrid Islamic Studies and Islamic finance program in South-western Nigerian universities, alongside a curriculum review to incorporate Islamic finance components, fostering collaboration with relevant institutions, offering scholarships for Islamic Studies students, and urging the National Universities Commission to adopt the proposal[7]. The study's findings reveal that since 1999, private Islamic universities in Nigeria have actively pursued the Islamization of knowledge agenda. However, numerous challenges impede its effective implementation, including the absence of a universally accepted model, a shortage of qualified staff, financial constraints, student disinterest, and language-related issues. To address these hurdles, recommendations are proposed to facilitate the program's successful execution in institutions deemed conducive to its development.

A Previous study emphasizes the critical role of Islamic universities emerging within Nigeria's contemporary education sector, specifically in terms of the Islamization of

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[5] Aliyu, A., *Effect of inquiry method on academic performance of junior secondary schools students in Islamic religious studies in Katsina state, Nigeria*, (2015).

[6] Adenigba, S., & Hassan, Y. A., *Islamic Studies And Private Universities In South-West Nigeria: Challenges And Prospects*, Vol. 13, Issue 1 (2023), www.learningreligions.com/humility-

[7] Ashafa, S. A., *The Administration of Zakat in Lagos and Ogun States. 4*(21), (2014), 74–88.

knowledge. We argue that unless these universities fully integrate Islamic principles into their curriculum, they risk being perceived merely as extensions of conventional universities, lacking significant contributions to Islamic intellectualism. Furthermore, Studies observe that some private universities established by Christian individuals in Nigeria offer courses, potentially to attract Muslim students or for scholarly purposes[8]. Therefore, the distinctiveness of an Islamic university should not solely rely on its name but rather on its comprehensive Islamization of the curriculum, setting it apart from conventional institutions[9].

The abstract's finding reveals a significant correlation between teachers' classroom management strategies and the academic performance of Islamic Studies senior secondary school students in Ilorin East, Kwara State, Nigeria. Moreover, challenges facing teachers' classroom management strategies and students' academic performance were identified, prompting recommendations aimed at improving instructional resource provision, enhancing teacher utilization of resources, and establishing management-teacher interactive forums to facilitate idea sharing and improve student evaluation practices for better educational outcomes[10].

Given the challenges such as the inadequate background of Islamic studies teachers, the attitudes of policymakers, and the students' perceptions, Islamic universities are increasingly vital in modern times to revitalize Islamic studies in higher education institutions. This can be achieved by incorporating relevant and contemporary elements into the course curriculum[11].

The abstract's finding indicates that senior secondary school teachers and students of Islamic studies in Kwara State utilize instructional materials effectively for teaching and learning. Additionally, it emphasizes the recommendation for the government and stakeholders to provide regular training and re-training on the use of modern instructional materials to enhance pedagogical effectiveness.

The findings from the abstract indicate that in senior secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria, there is a varied utilization of instructional materials for teaching and learning Islamic studies. Some materials like Interactive White Boards, Photocopiers, Radios, Subject-specific software, and Televisions are frequently used for teaching, while others like DVD players, Notebooks, Smartphones, and Textbooks are used to different degrees.

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[8] Sikiru Adenigba & Yoosuf Akorede Hassan, Islamic Studies And Private Universities In South-West Nigeria: Challenges And Prospects, Volume 13, No 1,(Al-Basirah, 2023), 128-138.

[9] Ibrahim, R., A., The Challenges of Islamization of Knowledge in Nigerian Islamic Universities. *IIUM JoUrnal of EdUcatIonal StUdIES*, *4*, (2016), 78–99.

[10] Abdulganiyu, Sebutu, S., & Issa, M.-J. Teachers' Classroom Management Strategies and Islamic Studies Senior Secondary School Students' Academic Performance in Ilorin East, Nigeria). Vol. 5, Issue 2, (*Malaysian Online Journal of Education, 2021*).

[11] Saheed Badmus Suraju, Corricullum Intergration and Islamic Studies in Nigera. *World Educators Forum*, 2017.

Surprisingly, MP3 players are not utilized at all for teaching Islamic studies. Conversely, for learning, writing materials, MP3 Players, Radios, and Televisions are frequently used, while Drawing Books and Subject-specific software for learning aids are not used at all. The study also concludes that students make more significant use of instructional materials for learning Islamic studies compared to their teachers[12].

2.1 Integration of Knowledge from the Islamic Worldview

The integration of knowledge from an Islamic perspective brings together religious teachings and human intellectual pursuits to create a well-rounded, ethical, and meaningful understanding of the world. This approach is deeply rooted in Tawhid, the belief in the oneness of God, which serves as the foundation for knowledge. In Islam, there is no separation between religious and worldly knowledge; both are interconnected and should work together to promote spiritual and material well-being[13].

One of the key aspects of this integration is the balance between revealed knowledge (Naqli) and rational knowledge (Aqli). The Qurʾan, Sunnah, and other Islamic sources provide essential guidance on ethics, morality, and the purpose of life, while human reasoning and scientific discoveries help in understanding and improving the world. However, intellectual pursuits should always align with Islamic principles to ensure they contribute to justice, fairness, and the common good[14].

Another important framework for integrating knowledge is Maqasid al-Shariʿah, or the higher objectives of Islamic law. These objectives focus on protecting essential aspects of human life, such as faith, intellect, life, family, and wealth. When applied to knowledge and education, this framework ensures that learning and research serve humanity in ethical and sustainable ways. Whether in medicine, economics, or technology, Islamic principles encourage innovation that benefits society without causing harm[15].

Education plays a key role in integrating Islamic values with modern sciences, ensuring students develop both technical expertise and strong moral foundations. Efforts like the

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[12] Owoyale-AbdulGaniy, B., & Solahudeen, I., Use of Instructional Materials for Teaching-Learning of Islamic Studies in Senior Secondary Schools in Kwara State, 7(2), (*JOURNAL OF EDUCATION*, 2020).

[13] Norazmi Anas, Engku Ahmad Zaki Engku Alwi, Mohd. Hudzari Haji Razali, Roose Nilawati Subki & Nor Aini Abu Bakar, The Integration of Knowledge in Islam: Concept and Challenges, 13 (10), (Global Journal of HUMAN SOCIAL SCIENCE Linguistics & Education, 2013), 51-54.

[14] Nurkhamimi Zainuddin, Rozhan M. Idrus, and Ahmad Farid Mohd Jamal, Integration of Naqli (Revealed) Knowledge and Aqli (Rational) Knowledge in Postgraduate Courses for Open and Distance Learning, 6 (12), (International Journal of Social Science and Humanity,2016), 939-941.

[15] Muhammad Nazir Alias, Muhammad Najib Abdullah, Mohd Sham Kamis, ivAkhmad Jazuli Afandi & Nursyahidah Alias, SCIENTIFIC APPROACH AS THE BASIS FOR THE FORMATION OF MAQĀṢID ALSHARĪʿAH CONCEPT AND PRINCIPLES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY,12 (2), (Malaysia Journal of Syariah & Law, 2024), 350-363.

Islamization of knowledge embed ethical principles into fields such as business, law, and environmental studies. Beyond education, this integration extends to socio-economic development, guiding Islamic economics, ethical finance, governance, and sustainability[16].

In essence, integrating knowledge from an Islamic perspective means ensuring that intellectual and scientific progress aligns with divine guidance. This approach fosters a world where innovation and ethical responsibility go hand in hand, leading to a more just, balanced, and meaningful existence.

2.2 Concept of Relevantization,

The challenge of Western sciences stems from the secularization and fragmentation of knowledge, whereas the challenge of Islamic sciences necessitates a distinct approach grounded in the Islamic worldview. It has been recognized that the key solution to the Ummah's challenges lies in embedding the Islamic worldview within the existing body of secular knowledge. Moreover, offering a unified and balanced educational framework that combines Islamic teachings with conventional systems is essential in combating the intellectual and epistemological crises facing Muslims[17]. The Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences established in 1990, at International Islamic University Malaysia has taken a pioneering role in significant Ijtihad efforts to generate new knowledge in Islamic sciences. This highlights the central role of the Kulliyyah in facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration, enabling all university institutions to contribute to its ongoing growth and the production of meaningful outcomes[18].

According to Ibrahim Zein, the evolution of IIUM's educational model from its original iteration to a more inclusive one, was driven by the imperative to reform Islamic education through Integration of Human Knowledge (IOHK). This shift underscores the importance of contextualizing Islamic sciences appropriately[19]. While the initial concerns expressed by the First Rector of IIUM; Prof. Muhammad Abdul Rauf, were rooted in a traditional understanding of Islamic sciences from al-Azhar. The Second Rector, Prof AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, fervently advocates for the IOHK project to modernize Islamic education. Consequently, the establishment of KIRKHS by the Second Rector prioritizes the IRKH framework for teaching and learning Islam. This innovative approach aims to generate new

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[16] Akhtim Wahyuni, Integration of Islamic Values in Science Education 'A Reconstruction Effort in Education, 4 (2), (HALAQA: ISLAMIC EDUCATION JOURNAL, 2020), 163-167.

[17] Surajudeen, A. T., Zahiri, M., & Mat, A., Classification and Integration of Knowledge: The Qurʾānic Educational Model. (*Revelation and Science*, 2013), Vol. 03, Issue 02.

[18] Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, https://kulliyyah.iium.edu.my/ahaskirkhs/ (Accessed: 11/02/2025).

[19] Zein, I. M., Teaching and Learning Islam in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM): Some Aspects of Relevantization of Islamic Sciences. (*Revelation and Science, 2014)*, Vol. 04, Issue 02.

knowledge by synthesizing various perspectives on human identity and the purpose of life[20]. As the current Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr. Osman Bakar is focused on integrating revealed knowledge (wahyu) with rational knowledge (aql) through the Tawhidic Epistemology framework. His vision emphasizes producing leaders who uphold universal Islamic values and embody the principle of Rahmatan Lil Alamin (a mercy to all creation). A key part of his agenda is the Islamisation of Knowledge, which he sees as essential for embedding ethical and spiritual dimensions into various academic and professional fields. Through this approach, he aims to shape an education system that balances intellectual growth with moral and ethical integrity[21]. According to Mumtaz Ali (2023), on the position of Kamal Hassan, the term "relevantisation" is preferred over "Islamization" as a suitable descriptor for enhancing, reforming, revitalizing, and advancing the disciplines of Islamic revealed knowledge at IIUM. This preference arises from the fact that these disciplines inherently stem from and are firmly rooted in the belief system and normative values of Islam[22].

2.3 Islamic Studies in Nigerian Higher institution

Islamic studies have been gaining traction in recent times. International scholars survey the scope, nature, and progress of Islamic studies from eight different countries. According to Auda et al., (2008) the term "Islamic Studies" encompasses the examination of Islam and Muslim societies across a spectrum of disciplines and academic departments, including dedicated Islamic Studies programs, Religious Studies, History, languages and literature, Politics, Anthropology, Sociology, and interdisciplinary programs focusing on Middle East or South Asian Studies[23]. Researchers have conducted investigations into the historical progression and current methodologies within Islamic Studies across eight countries: The United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United States, Australia, Malaysia, and Turkey. Each country's analysis particularly scrutinized recent advancements in Islamic Studies and the responses of governments, policymakers, and funding bodies, as well as interactions between higher education institutions and faith-based organizations and communities. Case studies were developed for each country, excluding the UK, to showcase innovative practices in Islamic Studies within higher education[24]. In all surveyed countries, there was unanimous agreement on the growing

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[20] Muhammad Abdul Rauf, Annotated International Islamic University Malaysia Biography the First Rector, (CENTRIS I.I.U.M. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 2024).

[21] Daniya Afroz, Islamisation of Knowledge is important,' says New IIUM Rector in Speech at 40th IIUM Convocation, https://newsroom.iium.edu.my/index.php/2024/11/18/islamisation-of-knowledge-is-important-says-new-iium-rector-in-speech-at-40th-iium-convocation/ (Accessed: 11/02/2025).

[22] Mumtaz Ali, M., Islamization of Human Knowledge: From Prof. Kamal Hassan. Vol. 13, Issue 02, (*Revelation and Science, 2023*).

[23] Auda, J., Bernasek, L., Bunt, G., & Canning, J., *International approaches to Islamic studies in higher education*, (2008). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313156032.

[24] Ibid

significance of Islamic Studies, especially since 2001, fueled by heightened student interest and a recognized need for better engagement with Muslim communities. This has spurred the establishment of new courses, research centers, and collaborative efforts. Key developments include interdisciplinary centers, scholar networks, integration of training for local Muslim leaders, and the creation of modular courses for students across diverse degree programs[25].

However, In Nigerian universities, the inception of teaching Islamic studies courses often relies on traditional teaching methods without the use of technology, as observed by Ashraf et al. (2014). Critiques in the 20th century highlighted the need for methodological improvements, especially at the university level, to meet the demands for incorporating technological advancements into teaching and learning processes[26]. Given its followers comprise one-fifth of the global population, Islamic studies require a methodological and strategic overhaul to maintain relevance amidst globalization and modernity's challenges. Since the late 1970s, Islamic scholars have recognized this need and proposed various strategies to address the identified shortcomings[27].

Moreover, In many Nigerian universities, Islamic Studies is taught in English, despite key Islamic texts being in Arabic. The use of educational technology in teaching Islamic studies is limited, with a prevailing focus on rote learning and a reluctance to adopt innovative teaching methods[28].

3.0 Issues and Challenges of Islamic Studies Education in Nigeria

According to a study by B. J. Muhammad, (2018), there are Issues and Challenges in Islamic Studies Education in Nigeria. Among them is the lack of interest in studying Islamic Studies (IS) among Nigerian students despite its potential to foster moral and ethical development. Interest, recognized as vital for academic excellence, is divided into situational and individual types[29]. However, many students prioritize other disciplines over (IS), impacting their moral growth as they fail to integrate Islamic teachings into their academic pursuits. Parental influence is significant, as they are the first educators for children. Their educational background and awareness shape children's development,

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[25] Saheed Abdullahi Busari & Adnan Opeyemi Salaudeen, The Role of Islamic Social Finance Instruments Towards Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: A Juristic Analysis, (Kuala Lumpur, IIUM Press, 2024), 173-186.

[26] Ashafa, S. A., *The Administration of Zakat in Lagos and Ogun States*. (2014), *4*(21), 74–88.

[27] Muhammad, A. A., *A Critical Analysis on the Challenges of Teaching Islamic Studies in Nigeria Universities*, (2021), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366894348

[28] Alhaji Bala, A., Teaching Methodologies for Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities: Strategies, Evaluation and Way Forward Introduction. *RJITC*, (2023), *1*(02).

[29] Muhammad, Busari. Jamiu., Problems and Prospects of Teaching and Learning Islamic Studies in Primary and Post- Primary Schools in Nigeria: An Overview. (*International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications (IJSRP)*, 2018) *8*(3). https://doi.org/10.29322/ijsrp.8.3.2018.p7534.

including religious practices and moral values. Conversely, parental illiteracy may hinder academic and religious performance due to a lack of support. Neglected Islamic education at home can affect academic and religious performance negatively, while early exposure to Islamic teachings leads to positive attitudes and success. Qualified and dedicated teachers are crucial in shaping students' academic and moral development in the career of (IS). They serve as role models and create conducive learning environments[30]. However, some teachers lacking positive traits contribute to student disengagement. Pedagogy challenges persist, with traditional teaching methods dominating (IS) instruction despite the need for modernization. Inadequate facilities and instructional materials hinder academic performance. Diverse teaching approaches, including visual and audio-visual methods, are needed to enhance learning efficiency. Strong teacher-student relationships are emphasized for motivation and positive character development. Neglecting students' needs can harm their progress, highlighting the importance of dedicated teachers. Family, environmental factors, textbooks, and language barriers also affect students' academic and moral performance in (IS). Schools play a pivotal role, but the curriculum and time allocation for ISS are often inadequate[31]. Merging (IS) with other subjects raises concerns about its diminished significance. Instructional materials, multimedia, and Information Communication Technology (ICT) challenges persist despite efforts to digitalize education. Many schools lack resources, and some teachers lack digital literacy[32].

4.0 The Structure and Regional Variations of Islamic Studies in Nigeria

Islamic Studies in Nigeria includes key components such as Usul al-Din (Foundations of Religion), Aqidah (Creed), Qurʾan (recitation, memorization, and interpretation), Sunnah (practices and sayings of the Prophet), Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence), Hadith (Prophetic traditions), Tafsir (Qurʾanic exegesis), and Arabic Language (for understanding Islamic texts). Shariah is typically included within the study of Fiqh, covering Islamic legal principles and applications[33]. The structure of Islamic Studies varies across public and private universities, with religious-based institutions offering more intensive curricula. In Northern Nigeria, where Islam is more prevalent, Islamic Studies is more established and integrated into the education system, while in Southern Nigeria, where Christianity is dominant, its presence is less pronounced and may differ in content and emphasis. These

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[30] Olatubosun, Aziz Azif., Islamic Studies in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects. (*International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2013), Vol. 3, Issue 2.

[31] Akeem A Akanni, Oni Idris Ajani, Saheed Abdullahi Busari, Dawodu O Amina, The League of Imams and Alphas in Yorubaland, Edo, and the Delta (Rābiṭah): The Journey So Far, Ponorogo, Almanhaj: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial Islam, 2024). 389-401.

[32] Mutiah Badruddeen. Islam in Nigeria [Part III]: Islamic Education in Nigeria- An Evolution Across Three Generations. *Culture* . (2023).

[33] Saheed Badmus Suraju, Corricullum Intergration and Islamic Studies in Nigera. *World Educators Forum*. (2017).

variations reflect regional, institutional, and cultural influences on Islamic education in Nigeria[34]. To improve Islamic Studies in Nigeria, efforts should focus on updating the curriculum, integrating Shariah, advancing research, using digital learning, standardizing education across regions, strengthening institutional support, and promoting public awareness[35].

The matrix format depicts the factors influencing the relevantization of Islamic Studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions, and a useful guide towards a strategic plan to advance the relevantisation agenda of IS in Nigeria. This matrix visualizes how the proposed action plan can enhance the relevance of Islamic Studies, leveraging the strengths by utilizing experienced faculty to improve the curriculum and establish Islamic Studies as a rigorous academic discipline. The study found that seeking partnerships for funding and resources to modernize our facilities and curriculum can address weaknesses. There is the dire need to capitalize on opportunities by promoting interfaith dialogue and community engagement, thereby increasing the relevance of Islamic Studies in contemporary society.

SWOT Analysis for the relevantization of Islamic Studies in Southwest Nigerian tertiary institutions

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Strong historical background of Islamic education	- Limited funding and resources for Islamic studies
- Increasing demand for ethical and religious education	- Perception of Islamic Studies as less rigorous that can lead to employability
- Availability of experienced and knowledgeable faculty members	- Lack of modern curricula dimensions that can bridge the gap between traditional educational content and contemporary issues, methodologies, and teaching practices.
- Sufficient community support and engagement	- Insufficient research output from grants and publication

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[34] Busari Jamiu Muhammad, Problems and Prospects of Teaching and Learning Islamic Studies in Primary and Post- Primary Schools in Nigeria: An Overview, 8 (3) (International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, 2018), 230-238

[35] Saheed Abdullahi Busari, Rethinking Sociology from an Islamic Jurisprudential Perspective, In: Integration of Knowledge Across Disciplines, Lagos Harmattan School Book of Readings, Ed. Muritala A. Bidmos & Ismail A. Musa, Vol.2, (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2023), 111-138.

SWOT Analysis

Opportunities	**Threats**
- Islamic studies have demonstrated Increasing interest in interfaith dialogue	- Competition from secular studies like the challenges from non-religious academic disciplines in terms of demand and employability.
- Growing youth population seeking purpose who are actively looking for direction and meaning in their lives.	- Misconceptions and stereotypes about Islam such as incorrect beliefs and generalizations that many people hold about the religion and its followers.
- Potential for partnerships with international Islamic institutions through knowledge sharing, conferences, and exchange programs	- Political and social instability such as disruptions, workers' strikes, and uncertainties in a country's political landscape and societal framework, can significantly affect educational institutions, including Islamic Studies programs.
- Open to explore technology integration for online learning and research in Islamic Studies to enhance accessibility, engagement, and the overall educational experience	- Extremist ideologies affecting the perception of the actions and beliefs of radical groups have distorted public understanding of Islam and its teachings.

Table 1: from the authors

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The SWOT analysis of Islamic Studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions reveals several critical insights that can inform strategic planning and development within this academic field.

Firstly, the Strengths describe a strong historical foundation of Islamic education in Nigeria positions Islamic Studies favorably, fostering community engagement and increasing demand for ethical education. Experienced faculty members enhance the quality of education, offering deep knowledge and expertise that can attract students. Community support further strengthens these programs, suggesting a robust base for growth and enhancement. For Instance, the Markaz Agege Lagos, is an institution of learning that seeks to redefine higher education by fostering humane, disciplined, and critical-thinking graduates in line with Islamic principles, as seen in the Arabic and Islamic Training Centre

(Markaz), which has evolved since its establishment in Abeokuta in 1952 and relocation to Agege, Lagos, in 1957, to offer undergraduate programs in Arabic and Islamic education in southwestern Nigeria[36].

Secondly, the weaknesses present challenges, primarily due to limited funding and resources. This financial constraint hampers the modernization of curricula and facilities, leading to perceptions that Islamic Studies is less rigorous compared to secular disciplines. The lack of contemporary relevance in curricula can alienate potential students, particularly those seeking employability and alignment with modern societal issues. Additionally, insufficient research output limits the academic standing of Islamic Studies, making it challenging to attract grants and recognition. Studies have postulated the need for innovative source of funding for the Islamic studies education and school as a means of addressing it challenges[37].

Thirdly, the opportunities, explain how increasing interest in interfaith dialogue and the growing youth population searching for purpose can improve the interest in Islamic education. These trends suggest a readiness among students to engage with Islamic teachings that address contemporary issues. Furthermore, partnerships with international Islamic institutions can facilitate knowledge exchange, enhancing the curriculum and research capabilities. Embracing technology for online learning can also broaden access and engagement, making Islamic Studies more appealing to a diverse audience. For example, Bayero University, Kano (BUK), which has integrated interfaith dialogue programs into its Islamic Studies curriculum, fostering discussions on religious coexistence and contemporary issues[38].

Finally, several threats can jeopardize the potential growth of Islamic Studies. The competition from secular studies presents a significant challenge, as students may prioritize disciplines perceived to offer better employment prospects. Misconceptions and stereotypes about Islam further complicate public perception, often leading to stigma and resistance to Islamic education. Additionally, political and social instability, characterized by strikes and unrest, can disrupt academic activities, making it difficult for institutions to maintain consistent educational delivery. Lastly, the impact of extremist ideologies continues to distort public understanding, making it essential for Islamic Studies programs to actively counter these narratives.

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[36] Markaz Centre for Undergraduate Studies, https://markaz-uni.edu.ng/about-us/ (Accessed: 11/02/2025).

[37] Maunde Usman Muhammad & Usman Imam Bello, The Challenges Facing Islamic Education System in Nigeria, Vol 7, Issue 1 (Burjis: 2020), 56-62. See also: Rafiu Ibrahim Adebayo and Abdulganiy Ibrahim Jawondo, Innovative Funding of Nigerian Private Islamic Universities: The Option of Islamic Financial Products (IFP), 1 (1) (IIUM Journal of religion and Civilisatonal studies (IJC), 2018), 61.

[38] Centre for Islamic Civilisation and Interfaith Dialogue, Bayero University Kano, https://buk.edu.ng/node/88, (Accessed: 11/02/2025).

The plan to enhance Islamic education involves several key initiatives. First, the curriculum will be updated to include modern Islamic thought, contemporary issues, ethics in a digital age, and Islamic finance, ensuring alignment with national standards and supporting holistic student development. Technology integration through digital platforms and multimedia resources will improve accessibility and cater to diverse learning styles.

Ongoing professional development for teachers is essential to enhance their pedagogical skills and technology proficiency, fostering collaboration among educators. Strengthening community engagement through workshops and seminars will highlight the relevance of Islamic education, connecting schools, mosques, and community organizations.

Extracurricular activities such as debates and Quranic competitions will complement classroom learning and encourage holistic growth. The plan also emphasizes critical thinking and problem-solving by encouraging students to analyze contemporary issues from an Islamic perspective.

Improving proficiency in Arabic and English is crucial for understanding classical texts and engaging with contemporary discourse. Additionally, fostering cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity within the curriculum will underscore universal Islamic values.

Establishing research centers and supporting academic publications will advance knowledge in Islamic studies and promote innovative teaching methodologies. Finally, implementing feedback mechanisms will ensure continuous evaluation and improvement of educational programs, maintaining their effectiveness and relevance in Nigeria.

This study shows the need for strategic initiatives that leverage strengths, address weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and mitigate threats. By modernizing curricula, enhancing community engagement, fostering partnerships, and utilizing technology, Islamic Studies can improve its relevance and appeal in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Simultaneously, addressing misconceptions and promoting the positive contributions of Islam to society will be crucial in reshaping public perception and securing a sustainable future for Islamic education in Nigeria. Some of these strategies that may be considered are:

1. Curriculum Revision: Update the Islamic education curriculum to include relevant topics such as modern Islamic thought, contemporary issues facing Muslims, ethics in a digital age, and Islamic finance. Ensure that the curriculum is aligned with national educational standards while also addressing the spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual development of students.

2. Integration of Technology: Integrate technology into Islamic education by incorporating digital learning platforms, multimedia resources, and online courses. This can enhance access to educational materials, facilitate interactive learning experiences, and cater to diverse learning styles.

3. Teacher Training and Professional Development: Provide training and professional development opportunities for Islamic studies teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills, knowledge of modern educational practices, and proficiency in using technology in the classroom. Encourage ongoing learning and collaboration among educators to continuously improve the quality of instruction.

4. Community Engagement: Foster collaboration between schools, mosques, community organizations, and religious leaders to create a supportive environment for Islamic education. Organize workshops, seminars, and conferences to involve parents, community members, and stakeholders in discussions about the relevance and importance of Islamic education in contemporary Nigeria.

5. Extracurricular Activities: Offer extracurricular activities such as Islamic debates, Quranic competitions, community service projects, and leadership development programs to complement classroom learning and encourage holistic development among students.

6. Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Encourage critical thinking, independent inquiry, and problem-solving skills within the framework of Islamic education. Teach students to analyze contemporary issues from an Islamic perspective, evaluate different viewpoints, and propose solutions based on Islamic principles and values.

7. Language Proficiency: Enhance students' proficiency in Arabic and English languages, as proficiency in these languages is essential for understanding classical Islamic texts as well as engaging with contemporary Islamic discourse and global developments.

8. Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity: Promote cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and respect for diversity within the Islamic education curriculum and school environment. Emphasize the universal values of compassion, justice, tolerance, and mutual respect that are inherent in Islamic teachings.

9. Research and Scholarship: Encourage research and scholarship in Islamic studies by establishing research centers, publishing journals, and supporting academic conferences focused on relevant issues in Islamic education. This can contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the development of innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

10. Continuous Evaluation and Improvement: Implement mechanisms for continuous evaluation and improvement of Islamic education programs, curriculum, and teaching practices based on feedback from students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Monitor outcomes and make adjustments as needed to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of Islamic education in Nigeria.

5.0 Conclusion

The relevantization of Islamic studies in higher institutions in Nigeria presents a promising opportunity to bridge the gap between traditional teachings and contemporary challenges. By implementing strategic initiatives such as curriculum revisions, interdisciplinary approaches, technological integration, and community engagement, higher education institutions can ensure that Islamic studies remain vibrant, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of students and society. Through these efforts, Islamic education can continue to thrive, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to navigate the complexities of the modern world while honoring the rich intellectual and spiritual heritage of Islam.

The challenges facing Islamic study education in Nigeria require innovative solutions rooted in empirical evidence and critical analysis, as highlighted in this study. By adopting strategies such as curriculum revision, technology integration, teacher training, community engagement, and extracurricular activities, Islamic education can be revitalized to meet the needs of contemporary society while preserving its deep intellectual and spiritual traditions. Emphasizing critical thinking, language proficiency, cultural sensitivity, research, and continuous evaluation are essential components for ensuring the relevance and sustainability of Islamic education in Nigeria.

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