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## ARABIC LITERACY AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERCEPTION IN ZAMFARA STATE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF POST-1999 EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

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### Abstract

*Since the reinstatement of Shariah law in Zamfara State in 1999, Arabic has regained its symbolic importance in religious and cultural spheres. However, its function in formal education and its perceived societal importance remain unclear. This study carefully examines post-1999 educational policy in Zamfara State to evaluate the significance of Arabic literacy within the broader educational framework and societal attitudes. It analyses the incorporation of Arabic in curriculum development, educator training and institutional backing, largely employing secondary sources like policy documents, scholarly assessments and educational reports, while also addressing community views on its significance for daily life and economic prospects. It indicates that despite its religious importance, Arabic often lacks structural support in educational policy leading to its marginalisation compared to English and Hausa. This gap impacts identity, educational accessibility and the role of conventional Islamic knowledge in a society that is rapidly evolving.*

**Keywords:** Arabic literacy, education policies, socio-economic perception, Zamfara State.

### 1. Introduction

In States such as Zamfara where Islamic education has traditionally influenced cultural, religious and intellectual life, Arabic literacy has been a fundamental aspect of Northern Nigeria. Arabic literacy, initially acquired in Qur'anic and *Tsangaya* institutions, signified both intellectual and moral authority in addition to religious

proficiency (Boyi, 2013). Arabic attained renewed significance in public discourse, mosque sermons, judicial processes and Islamic education following the reinstatement of *Shariah* law in Zamfara State in 1999, the first State in Nigeria to implement it under the new democratic framework. The extent to which this symbolic

value has been converted into tangible structural or socio-economic support for Arabic within the State's educational system remains inadequately examined.

Although Arabic is acknowledged as one of Nigeria's languages of instruction especially in Islamic and Arabic studies, the National Policy on Education (NPE) notes that state-level implementation often depends on political will, resources and socio-cultural priorities (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013). Arabic literacy seems to lack sufficient investment in terms of curriculum development, teacher training and access to modern learning materials even in Zamfara State despite the rising number of Islamiyyah and integrated schools (Adamu & Ngaski, 2020). Furthermore, larger economic reality shapes society perceptions of Arabic more and more; English and Hausa are usually seen as more sensible for social mobility and employment.

This study critically assesses post-1999 educational policy in Zamfara State to analyse the structural and social positioning of Arabic literacy. The study attempts to examine the following questions: How have state and national measures addressed Arabic literacy in Zamfara since 1999? What are the existing public perceptions on the socio-economic value of Arabic literacy? To what did the impact of modern pedagogical approaches on Arabic language undermine sustainability in the State? The study contends that Arabic is marginalised in formal education planning despite its symbolic significance in the Islamic identity of Zamfara State.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine Arabic literacy education approach in Zamfara State since 1999.
- ii. To examine the socio-economic perspective of Arabic literacy among the people of the State.
- iii. To illustrate the impact of modern pedagogical approaches on Arabic language undermine sustainability in the State.

## 3. Methodology

This exploratory study primarily employs secondary data to critically evaluate the public discourse surrounding Arabic literacy and educational policies in Zamfara State. Sources comprise government reports, Articles from 1999 to present, national and State education policy documents and other relevant media publications. To advance the study, limited primary data such as quotations from Islamic scholars included in public interviews or reports and remarks from educational officials are also incorporated. Thematic analysis of the data facilitates the identification of trends in policy direction, implementation and societal perception.

## 4. Conceptual Review

### 4.1. Arabic Literacy in Context:

Arabic literacy holds significant religious and historical relevance particularly in Zamfara State and Northern Nigeria. Traditionally, it signifies the ability to read and write in Arabic, particularly for religious activities such as Qur'anic recitation, Hadith studies and Islamic jurisprudence (Abdullahi, 2017). Arabic literacy has historically represented religious authority and social difference among various Muslim communities in West Africa. Arabic literacy is often confined to religious contexts with no consideration for its applicability in secular domains especially in commerce, science and governance (Oladosu, 2006). This study examines Arabic literacy in its formal-institutional context (as a

subject or medium of instruction in educational institutions) and its religious-functional context (associated with Qur'anic education). Analysing the role of Arabic in policy necessitates a complicated dynamic stemming from its dual nature as legislators must reconcile its symbolic significance with its practical utility.

### 4.2. Socio-economic Perception of Language and Literacy:

The socio-economic perspective evaluates language or literacy proficiency within a community about access to economic opportunities, employment and social advancement. In multilingual nations such as Nigeria, the predominant roles of English and, to a lesser extent Hausa in official education, administration and commerce influence this perspective (Bamgbose, 1991). Arabic retains significant religious and cultural capital yet, its perceived value for upward mobility is relatively diminished as compared to English. This influences policy priorities and educational choices. Parents and students frequently prioritise languages that offer clear pathways to careers and status, sometimes marginalising Arabic despite its significant symbolic value. According to Abubakar and Uba (2019), Arabic is occasionally seen as "a sacred language for religious devotion, yet offers minimal competitive advantage in the employment sector".

### 4.3. Language and Education Policy in Nigeria:

Within its multilingual approach, Nigeria's educational policy acknowledges the value of Arabic as well as other indigenous and foreign languages. Particularly in Islamic and Qur'anic studies, the 2013 National Policy on Education (FRN) notes Arabic as one of the languages that can be taught and used in classrooms. Nonetheless, the actual application of this strategy is unequal especially in States like Zamfara State where budgetary and infrastructure limitations affect schooling. Policy manuals sometimes lack clear guidelines for creating Arabic teacher preparation, curricular integration or language evaluation outside of religious education. As Galadanci (2014) points out, Arabic education in Nigeria has historically suffered from neglect and tokenism; it has survived more by means of community-based projects than by official governmental sponsorship. This policy contradiction helps to explain Arabic's unclear position in formal education in the State and the nation as a whole.

### 4.4. Religion, Language and Identity:

Language is quite closely associated with identity in Northern Nigeria. Apart from the sacred language of Islam, Arabic is a cultural symbol that links nearby Muslim communities to a larger Islamic universe (Hunwick, 2003). For many in Zamfara State, Arabic serves as a mark of Islamic identity and religious legitimacy. Usually, this symbolic value takes front stage above debates about its practical use. However, in a competitive school system, identification by itself cannot maintain a language. Arabic has to be relevant outside mosque and Islamic school (madrasah) as Western-style education spreads and globalised demands develop. This tension between Arabic's cultural role and its marginal practical application forms a central concern of this study.

## 5. Literature Review

### 5.1. Historical Context of Arabic Literacy in Zamfara State

Arabic literacy in Zamfara State is profoundly rooted for centuries-old tradition of Islamic scholarship predated colonial conquest of Nigeria. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Islam penetrated Hausaland, including Zamfara State, introducing the Arabic language as a medium for

religious and intellectual discourse (Hunwick, 2003). Arabic became essential to Islamic scholarship, legal studies, governance and territorial expansion. In the precolonial era, proficiency in Arabic was perceived as a marker of religious devotion and social status mainly reserved to a scholarly elite (*Ulamaor Malam*) who maintained spiritual and judicial power within their communities (Abdullahi, 2017).

The development of Arabic literacy was much impacted by Zamfara State's posture within the larger Sokoto Caliphate. Under Shehu Usman dan Fodiyo, the 1804 Sokoto Jihad not only restored Islam but also institutionalised Arabic as the official language of government, legal paperwork and academia in the Caliphate. Scholars, emirs, Islamic judges (*alkalai*) and officials from Zamfara area sent official directives in Arabic. Manuscripts from this era expose a flourishing intellectual culture in which Arabic was used to produce judicial decisions (*fatāwā*), historical chronicles, religious texts and poetry (Boyd & Mack, 1997; Galadanci, 2014).

Focussing on the memorising and recitation of the Holy Qur'an, the traditional Qur'anic schools (*makarantar allo*) were the main educational establishments teaching pupils to Arabic grammar (*nahw*), morphology (*ṣarf*) and ancient Islamic books written in Arabic (Kani & Gada, 2001). Many times working from mosques or personal homes, teachers used hardwood slates (*allo*) as teaching aids. Although primitive by modern standards, this kind of schooling successfully maintained Arabic literacy over generations and generated a literate class able of interacting with Arabic books for religious and legal purposes (Kani & Gada, 2001).

But a dramatic change was brought about by British colonial rule in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The colonialists instituted a dual educational system: traditional Islamic education, left mostly unmonitored and unsupported and Western-style English education for administrative needs (Fafunwa, 1974). Arabic, mostly regarded as a religious language was not included into official curricula. This indicated the start of the marginalising of Arabic literacy in official educational planning (Masama & Abubakar, 2021). Arabic lost ground to English and Hausa in public life but Islamic education survived in private and community-led institutions; it stopped being a language of State affairs.

Afterwards independence Nigeria tried to bring this dualism together. according to Galadanci (2014), Arabic was first brought into public schools by several State and Federal initiatives mostly in relation to Islamic Religious Studies (IRS). These initiatives were unequal, though and frequently underfunded. Usually limited to religious content, Arabic education paid limited regard to Arabic as a stand-alone language of literacy, communication and research. The vast majority of Arabic teachers were products of traditional *madaris*, many without official Academic training which further limited the modernising of Arabic education in Nigeria and Zamfara State in particular (Galadanci, 2014; Yahya, 2021).

The significant occurrence transpired in 1999 when Zamfara State became the first State to officially reinstate Islamic legal codes under Shariah jurisdiction in Nigeria. This action was both legal and profoundly symbolic, thereby maintaining Islamic identity in the face of rising secularism. Arabic was reinstated in official legal documents, sermons (*khutbah*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The establishment of new Shariah courts necessitated the recruitment of judges, clerks and interpreters proficient in Arabic

(Loimeier, 2007). The integration of religious and secular subjects, exemplified by *Islamiyyah* and integrated Qur'anic schools (institutions), has gained prominence in certain regions of Indonesia and Sudan and has been adapted in Nigeria's Northern States, resulting in a notable increase in enrolment.

Even with this clear comeback, challenges remain; Arabic has symbolic value and spiritual power but its real inclusion into modern schooling is poor. Arabic is little used as a teaching language outside of religious subjects and graduates of Arabic have mostly limited employment opportunities outside of Islamic schools and religious institutions. Arabic is also sometimes associated with Islamic education which complicates its encouragement as a language and cultural asset outside of religious uses (Oladosu, 2006). Many schools have inadequate comprehensive Arabic language education in their curricula and inadequate training programmes and accreditation mechanisms affect the quality of the teachers (Oladosu, 2006).

Moreover, legislative inconsistencies and insufficient monitoring methods further hinder efforts to institutionalise Arabic education. While national and State policies, such as FRN 2013, provide for Arabic education, they fail to specify precise criteria for curriculum development, evaluation or teacher recruitment. This leads, as Abubakar and Uba (2019) assert to a system in which Arabic instruction is either symbolic or driven by private religious entities unregulated by official oversight.

Arabic literacy in Zamfara State is thus at a turning point. Even though the institutional structures needed for its maintenance and modernisation are not properly developed, the historical depth and cultural significance are kept. Policies have to go beyond simple symbols and concentrate on curriculum reform, teacher training and improving public view of Arabic as a valid language for education, identity and socio-economic involvement if Arabic is to grow as a major component of Zamfara State's educational future.

## 5.2. Review of Post-1999 Educational Policies in Zamfara State

The reintroduction of Islamic legal codes in Zamfara State in 1999 marked a significant transformation in Nigeria's post-colonial governance. Zamfara State as the first State to adopt comprehensive Shariah law has established itself as a model for Islamic revival in moral, legal and educational domains. This change attracted renewed public and governmental interest in Islamic and Arabic education. Despite the investment of symbolic and political capital, a detailed analysis of the policies enacted post-1999 indicates that systematic improvements in Arabic education have remained inconsistent, underfunded and inadequately incorporated into the broader educational framework.

The Zamfara State Arabic and Islamic Education Board is a recent institution established by the government to promote Islamic and Arabic literacy following the adoption of Shariah. According to Abubakar & Uba (2019), the body was tasked with overseeing Arabic and Islamic schools, standardising curricula and ensuring teacher quality. Nevertheless, the board faced significant challenges including inadequate funding, limited autonomy and disputes with other educational departments. Consequently, it struggled to implement cohesive methods that could integrate Arabic education with national standards (Abubakar & Uba, 2019). Most of the changes made after 1999 were more about political affirmation of Islamic culture than about improving education.



Some people thought of Arabic schooling as a language and mental discipline that could be used for its own growth, rather than as a way to express the religion (Yahaya, 2021). So, when the government put money into mosque-based Qur'anic recitation competitions or built Islamiyyah schools, it was usually just for show. It did not address the real needs of Arabic education like training teachers, providing curriculum materials, setting up fair assessment systems or giving students clear career paths (Yahya, 2021; Oladosu, 2006).

In both public and private religious schools run by Arabic, memorising and reciting the Qur'an and fundamental grammar usually take front stage. Focused mostly on classical Arabic for religious texts, these courses frequently take from inherited Islamic learning patterns from Sudan, Egypt and Northern Nigeria's madrasah legacy. Modern standard Arabic (MSA) or functional Arabic that might be applied for journalism, diplomacy or professional work is hardly included. Many times, the curriculum lacks horizontal integration with other disciplines and growth, so restricting the whole development of students (Galadanci, 2014). Arabic is an optional subject at the elementary and secondary levels according to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), although application in Zamfara has been uneven. Most public schools either approach the topic as a supplement to Islamic Studies or lack skilled Arabic lecturers. Apart from some religious schools, Arabic is not taught as a language of instruction hence it is still kept in a marginal role. This lowers the desire of learners to become fluent or see Arabic as a means of social and economic progress.

The lack of qualified, licensed teachers in Zamfara State is maybe the biggest challenge to Arabic education. According to the study conducted by Yahaya (2021) pointed out that many Arabic teachers are products of informal Islamic education programmes with little or no knowledge of contemporary pedagogical theory or modern teaching methods. There is no coordinated effort to certify, upskill or evaluate Arabic instructors; teacher training colleges in the State rarely provide strong programmes for Arabic educators. Consequently, teaching quality varies greatly; many students get rote training devoid of literacy, comprehension or expressive usage of Arabic (Yahya, 2021).

The fragmentation of the dual system further complicates the issue. Teachers from religious institutions or *tsangaya* schools are excluded from official education systems due to unrecognised qualifications. On the other hand, Arabic teachers educated in traditional universities or institutes of education often encounter challenges when integrating into Islamic school systems. This creates a systematic gap that undermines policy coherence and the standardisation of Arabic education (Oladosu, 2006).

Literacy in Arabic is sometimes seen as psychologically helpful but not everyone can learn it. Women still do not take part in Arabic schooling much in many rural areas of Zamfara State because of poverty, early marriage and social norms. Not many efforts have been made to fix this problem through girl-friendly Islamic schools or other rewards. Most of these efforts have been driven by donors rather than government action. Arabic education is still not very open to everyone because there are not any policies or buildings that are gender-sensitive (Boyd & Mack, 1997).

### 5.3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Policy Implementation Gaps

Even though there are a lot of Arabic and Islamic education programmes, Zamfara State does not have a good way to track and collect data to see how well its policies are working. Abubakar & Uba (2019) explain that there is not enough reliable data on things like student attendance, teacher performance, curriculum results or learner development to figure out how well policies are working or where they need to be improved. Most reviews are ad-hoc or based on anecdotes and are not done by the Ministry of Education but by NGOs or religious groups.

Also, people who have a stake in Arabic education and people who make laws about education in general do not collaborate together very much. For example, the lessons taught in Arabic and Islamic schools are not being looked at or changed as much as those taught in mainstream subjects. This makes the difference between religious and secular ways of learning even bigger and it makes Arabic education even more separate from the rest of the world (Abubakar & Uba, 2019). Adopting Shariah in Zamfara State gave Arabic education a boost but policies made after 1999 have not been able to keep this boost going into a real change in education. The lack of gender and inclusion frameworks, overemphasis on religious symbols and professionalised teacher training are some of the things that are holding back the growth of Arabic literacy. Arabic policies need to change from empty gestures to systematic reform based on pedagogy, justice and responsibility if it wants to grow in Zamfara State as a sacred language, a language of cultural capital and a language of socio-economic chance.

### 5.4. Socio-economic Perception of Arabic Literacy in Zamfara State

Arabic literacy in Zamfara State fills a special place in people's societal consciousness. It is closely entwined with Islamic identity, moral development and conventional validity. Beyond its religious importance, however, Arabic literacy is sometimes seen in society as either neglected in practical, developmental and professional aspects or appreciated symbolically yet under utilised. This diverse view affects the direction of Arabic education towards various levels of Zamfara society as well as its financing and implementation.

Arabic literacy is especially seen as a signal of devotion and respectability in Zamfara State where over 98% of the population are identifies as Muslim. Men especially who can read and understand the Qur'an in Arabic are highly valued in both rural and metropolitan areas. These people often act as Imams, Islamic lecturers (*malamai*) and family and religious matter adjudicators. Arabic literacy thus serves as a kind of theological and cultural capital with social power inside Islamic circles (Galadanci, 2014; Yahya, 2021). Many parents send their children to Qur'anic (or *tsangaya*) schools to inculcate Islamic discipline, social respect and Arabic-based religious knowledge rather than only for modern education (Galadanci, 2014). Though these kinds of literacy are honoured in ceremonial and spiritual settings, they are hardly linked with official work or upward social mobility. This contradiction reveals a continuous conviction that Arabic literacy belongs in the field of the holy rather than the economical (Oladosu, 2006).

Arabic education is sometimes seen as having little economic value, regardless of its significance to religion. Many former students of Arabic or Islamic studies in Zamfara struggle to find work outside of low-paying teaching roles or religious organisations. Particularly in the public sector and official employment markets, this circumstance supports the impression

that Arabic education is less “marketable” than modern education (Abubakar & Uba, 2019). Employers in both public and commercial sectors sometimes give English competency and Western educational credentials top priority, therefore excluding persons educated mostly through Qur’anic schools. Many Arabic-literate young people wind up as unregulated teachers at informal *Islamiyyah* schools or take up low-paying employment to survive because of this gap between education and employability. Yahya (2021) claims that Arabic students who discover their educational background does not easily translate into socioeconomic chances are becoming discouraged.

Religious standards and modern goals are becoming more and more at contrast with each other among young people. Many young people are still told to learn Arabic for religious reasons but an increasing number of individuals are realising that learning English and professional skills are better for their careers and their finances. As a result, some young people see Arabic classes as extra rather than necessary for their development. This makes it harder for them to learn Arabic well even if they know a lot about the Qur’an (Galadanci, 2014). Also, the fact that Western educational standards are used so often in professional development classes, hiring for government jobs and getting into universities supports the idea that Arabic is not as important in today’s business world. Since then, people of that age have changed their minds and now see learning Arabic as more of a cultural or spiritual benefit than a way to get ahead financially (Oladosu, 2006).

Arabic education is sometimes sponsored locally by Islamic organisations, mosque-based funds or community donations. Yet, these kinds of help are mainly unofficial and unpredictable. More specifically following the 1999 Shariah adoption, the Zamfara State Government has tried to institutionalise Arabic education but these initiatives have not resulted in any significant economic integration (Uba, 2019). Structured routes for Arabic educated people to enter official sectors or employ their literacy in modern industries including media, law, diplomacy or translating services remain lacking (Abubakar & Uba, 2019; Yahya, 2021). Furthermore, despite certain government scholarships are available for students studying Islamic or Arabic languages, they are generally underfunded, unstable or confined to study in particular institutions, mostly overseas. Arabic literacy outside mainstream development planning has been maintained by the neglect to establish local centres of excellence for Arabic education that also address employability and innovation.

### 5.5. Challenges to Arabic Literacy Development in Zamfara State

Considering its significance in religious traditions, Arabic literacy in Zamfara State encounters various constraints that hinder its development. While Arabic serves as the cornerstone of Islamic education in the state, it occasionally lacks the necessary resources and focus to thrive for both religious and practical objectives. These challenges encompass legislative deficiencies, teacher shortages, inadequate educational infrastructure and societal perceptions that constrain the potential of Arabic literacy to benefit individuals and the broader community (Loimeier, 2007).

**Poor Educational Infrastructure:** The absence of suitable educational infrastructure is a primary barrier to the advancement of Arabic literacy. According to the study conducted by Abubakar and Uba (2019), claim that despite the presence of numerous Qur’anic and Islamic schools in Zamfara State, they frequently

lack modern educational resources and well-maintained facilities. Students mostly rely on memorisation and recitation strategies to study Arabic which may limit their understanding of the language. Frequently lacking of textbooks, language laboratories or other resources that could enhance the engagement and efficacy of studying, these institutions of higher learning encounter. As a result, students do not consistently attain a high level of proficiency and the quality of Arabic instruction is inconsistent (Abubakar & Uba, 2019).

**Shortage of Qualified Teachers:** A further major obstacle is the absence of competent Arabic teachers. Many of the local teachers lack professional training in Arabic instruction outside of strictly religious settings. Most of them have attended informal Islamic schools (*madaris*) and might not be conversant with contemporary teaching techniques (Oladosu, 2006). Lack of training makes it challenging for teachers to include pupils in meaningful activities and inhibits their capacity to teach Arabic as more than merely a religious language. The quality of Arabic education stays poor without appropriate professional development and certification initiatives (Oladosu, 2006).

**Cultural and Economic Barriers:** Arabic is seen in Zamfara State mostly as a tool for religious education not as a means of social development. Many families give Western education often in English top priority, thinking it provides greater employment opportunities. This perspective results in the view that Arabic literacy is less helpful for work or career advancement. Parents may thus be reluctant to make investments in Arabic education particularly if they believe it to give low financial returns (Yahya, 2021). Family members in rural places also have a hard time paying the fees for private Qur’anic schools because of problems with their finances. A lot of families also cannot afford extra school supplies like books or extra lessons which makes it even harder for kids to get a good Arabic education (Oladosu, 2006). Because of this lack of money, Arabic education cannot reach its full potential.

**Limited Integration with Formal Education:** In Zamfara State Arabic education is not always linked to the regular school structure. A lot of schools teach Arabic but most people only see it as a part of religion studies and not as a full subject with real-world uses (Abdullahi, 2017). Because of this, students are rarely given the chance to use Arabic in professional settings like law, writing or translation. Most of the attention is still on Qur’anic Arabic which is important but not as useful in today’s job market (Galadanci, 2014). Because of this gap, learning Arabic does not have as much of an effect on career and economic growth as it could. Students lack the resources they need to use their Arabic skills in ways that could help them get jobs.

**Weak Government Support:** The government of Zamfara has tried to support Arabic education, especially since Shariah law was put in place in 1999 but there is still not enough overall support from the government. According to Galadanci (2014), a lot of projects either lack enough money or were not carried out properly, which has left Arabic schooling deficient. Slowly but surely, programmes have been put in place to help Arabic teachers and incorporate Arabic into official school systems. Also, there are not many organised methods for people who can read and write in Arabic to get professional jobs. Because of this policy hole, Arabic cannot be fully included in the region’s plans for economic growth (Yahya, 2021). Arabic is also kept separate from other subjects like science, technology and business because it is mostly studied as a faith

subject and not as a way to improve society and the economy. Without the right policy backing and investment, Arabic education will only be useful for its religious purpose which limits its wider use (Galadanci, 2014).

## 6. Findings

In Zamfara State, learning Arabic is deeply rooted in Islamic education. However, the study results show that it faces many problems that make it hard to use as a tool for wider educational and economic progress. The challenges encountered, ranging from inadequate educational facilities to societal attitudes, highlight the difficulty of enhancing Arabic literacy in the state. These problems not only make it hard for individuals to learn Arabic but they also limit the language's ability to make a big difference in the regions progress.

## 7. Discussion

Primary data from interviews with teachers, students and government officials in Zamfara State lead to important findings about the level of Arabic literacy in the State. A lot of people who responded, especially teachers, said that the lack of proper training and professional growth was a big problem. Teachers are frustrated that Arabic lessons do not employ modern teaching methods. A lot of people still use old-fashioned ways of memorising things by heart which are good for religious education but fail to provide with ease or useful language skills. One teacher said, *"We teach Arabic the old-fashioned way by reciting, memorising and repeating"*. This method does not make it easier for kids to use language outside of the Qur'an.

On the contrary, students frequently noted the few chances to use Arabic outside of the classroom. Many believe that Arabic is mostly related with religious studies and that it offers less professional possibilities than English or other worldwide languages. *"I want to be able to use Arabic in my work one day but none of anyone teaches us how to write reports or interact with it in a professional setting"*, one student said.

The study also uncovered another significant issue: the pervasive perception of Arabic as solely a religious tool. While many acknowledge its importance in Islamic education, several individuals struggle to perceive it as a medium that can facilitate financial opportunities. Parents predominantly hold this perspective; a significant number prioritise Western-style education over Arabic literacy. A community leader stated, *"I recognise the importance of Arabic; however, my primary concern is my child's acquisition of English to secure employment and achieve success in life"*.

Furthermore, reoccurring in the findings were underfunding of Arabic education initiatives and lack of resources for them. Many students have a limited and uneven education in Arabic due to the lack of appropriate teachers and the absence of set courses for the language. The lack of government funding for the growth of Arabic language resources aggravates this situation since it forces schools to depend on obsolete materials.

## 8. Recommendations

The following major suggestions are meant to solve these issues and raise Arabic literacy in Zamfara State:

- 1) One of the major ideas is to focus on improving the quality of Arabic education by having programmes to train teachers. Teachers should be familiar with modern

methods of teaching that focus on practical language skills rather than memorisation by heart. This could include classes on how to teach using communicative methods, how to use technology in the classroom and cultural aspects of the Arabic language. Giving teachers opportunities for professional development and licensing programmes would also help make sure they use the newest ways to teach.

- 2) In order for Arabic to be taught in schools, it needs to be connected to real-life situations that people can use. This can be done by making a standard curriculum that includes current Arabic as well as studies of the Qur'an. This can be used in fields like business, law, diplomacy and translation. Arabic should be offered as an elective in schools and its use in a wide range of professional areas should be encouraged. It will no longer be seen as just a holy language but as a language that is very important in today's global society.
- 3) The State government has to actively assist initiatives for Arabic literacy. Allocating more money to Arabic-speaking schools, enhancing the infrastructure of the educational facilities and guaranteeing that Arabic textbooks and learning materials are easily accessible would help to accomplish this for everybody. More government projects aiming at the creation of Arabic teaching resources and curriculum fit for contemporary educational requirements also are needed. More cooperation with national and international agencies could also provide additional funds as well tools for the growth in Arabic literacy.
- 4) It is very important to change how people think about Arabic. Parents and community leaders should know that learning Arabic is valuable not only for religious reasons but also for personal and professional growth. Community-based activities and awareness efforts that stress how important Arabic is in today's economy and labour market could help close the gap between old and new ideas about the language. A big part of changing people's minds could be having local leaders and other important people talk about the benefits of learning Arabic.
- 5) The Arabic schooling of Zamfara State does not appear to be limited to religious studies. In order to make Arabic more useful in everyday life, literacy efforts should expand to include useful ways to use the language in speaking, writing and business. Colleges and universities should create Arabic classes that teach students how to use the language in many fields, such as journalism, translating and foreign relations. Giving kids internships, seminars and training in these areas could also help them get jobs by giving them real-world experience.
- 6) Since digital tools are becoming more and more important in education, Arabic teachers need to start using them right away. Arabic learners and teachers should be able to use digital tools to learn and practise the language. For this, it might need to use digital textbooks, the internet and Arabic language tools. Digital instruction should be part of teacher training so that teachers can use technology effectively in the classroom. This can help close the gap for students who live in remote areas and do not have easy access to traditional learning tools.

## 9. Conclusion

This study looks at how many people can read and write Arabic in Zamfara State by looking at historical, socio-economic and developmental aspects. Religious education depends on being able to read and write Arabic. However, its socio-economic growth potential is limited by a lack of infrastructure, qualified teachers and ways for students to be integrated into formal education. Even though the study shows that Arabic has a lot of promise for professional and educational growth, it is mostly used to teach religion. Support from the government, training for teachers and raising understanding in the community can help more people learn Arabic and understand how important it is in professional and religious settings. To get the most out of Arabic learning in Zamfara State, new ways of teaching, changing policies and getting people involved are all needed. These methods can elevate Arabic literacy, so fostering personal development and improving education, employment and societal advancement in Zamfara State and Nigeria as a whole.

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### Oral Interviewers

- Dr. Aminu Umar Gummi. (2/6/2025). Executive Secretary Aged 56, Zamfara State Arabic and Islamic Education Board.
- Isiya Muhammad. (2/6/2025). Mai Anguwa, Aged 55, Samaru Phase II, Gusau Town, Zamfara State.
- Nura S. (3/6/2025). Student, Aged 16, GDSS Damba, Damban Laka Community, Tudun Wada Ward. Gusau LGA, Zamfara State.
- Mal. Ismail A. Shinkafi. (3/6/2025). Teacher, Aged 40, Shinkafi Academy, Samaru behind Nepa Transmission Station, Gusau LGA, Zamfara State.