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COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF ARABIC LITERACY AND YOUTH IDENTITY IN ZAMFARA STATE: A CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

Arabic literacy has spiritual, moral and social weight, especially among the young, that transcends the ability to read and write in numerous towns all throughout Zamfara State. Within a fast-changing cultural environment, this study investigates how Arabic education still shapes young identity and affects social affiliation. Using oral interviews and community observations, the study shows how diverse groups of people, including parents, elderly people and religious teachers, see young Arabically educated people. It also considers how growing uncertainty, young unemployment and the state's changing attitude to educational policy are redefining these impressions. This study regards literacy as a cultural practice that binds people to histories, expectations and community values rather than as a neutral ability. According to findings, even as its economic significance is under more doubt, many Arabs still find great dignity and identity in their language. Through the lens of their education, this article provides a view into how communities reconcile tradition and change as well as how young people see their place in society.

Keywords: *Arabic literacy, youth identity, community perception, Zamfara State, cultural education*

1. Introduction

The cultural and spiritual life of Muslim people in Northern Nigeria has historically revolved mostly around Arabic literacy. In places like Zamfara state, where Islamic traditions are deeply rooted in daily life, the ability to read and interpret Arabic is sometimes considered not only as an academic talent but also as a mark of religious piety, moral discipline and cultural identification. Arabic education provides both a link to their historical and theological legacy and a means of social legitimacy among the young, particularly those who attend Qur'anic and Islamiyya schools (Boyi, 2013). But recently, the meaning and position of

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Arabic literacy have been more challenged. Since Nigeria's return to democratic control in 1999, educational reforms have stressed formal Western-style education, frequently excluding traditional Islamic learning systems (Fafunwa, 2004). In Zamfara state, where Arabic literacy is still somewhat common, this change has spurred difficult debates on the importance of Arabic education in a nation struggling with rising unemployment, young restlessness and mounting insecurity (Umar, 2018). For many families, even as they worry about their children's limited access to modern employment markets, the moral lessons ingrained in Arabic education are absolutely vital. The issue of identity, of how young people describe themselves in a society that demands formal certifications more and more while nevertheless honouring Islamic knowledge, lies central in these conflicts. Arabic literacy can be a source of identity and pride for some young people; for others, it can seem to be a barrier to possibilities. These conflicting ideas are not only intellectual; they also affect how young people view their future, how their communities treat them and how much education is appreciated in daily life.

This study therefore aims to investigate how Arabic literacy helps to build young identity in Zamfara State. It looks at how community members, including parents, religious academics and young people, understand the social function of Arabic education among more general political and cultural developments. This essay seeks to give voice to a generation negotiating the fine balance between tradition and transformation by listening to local stories and personal experiences.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To explore how Arabic literacy influences the way young people in Zamfara State see themselves and their roles in society.
2. To examine how communities in Zamfara State perceive Arabic-educated youth in terms of values, behaviour and social standing.
3. To understand how insecurity and educational changes are shaping attitudes toward Arabic literacy in Zamfara state

3. Methodology

The study utilised a qualitative approach based on cultural and interpretive research. Data were gathered via in-depth interviews and informal interactions with parents, Islamic teachers (Mallams), Arabic-educated young people and community elders across a few rural and semiurban districts of Zamfara State. Purposive sampling lets participants be selected to guarantee valuable, experience-based insights. The study gave narratives and local viewpoints top priority, letting respondents who spoke Hausa or Arabic laterally translate and thematically analyse their opinions. Throughout the fieldwork, ethical issues like secrecy, among others, were carefully followed.

4. Literature Review

A literature review is a critical analysis of existing research on a particular topic, providing an overview of the current state of knowledge and understanding (Hart, 2001, p. 15). It involves a systematic search, appraisal, and synthesis of literature to identify patterns, themes, and gaps in the existing body of research (Cooper, 2010, p. 12). According to Randolph (2009), a literature review is "a comprehensive and critical analysis of the existing literature on a specific research topic" (p. 2). It aims to provide a thorough understanding of the research topic, identify gaps in current knowledge, and inform the development of research questions or hypotheses (Creswell, 2014, p. 28). A literature review can be defined as "a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing existing research" (Tranfield et al., 2003, p. 209). It involves a rigorous and transparent process of searching, selecting, and analysing literature to provide a comprehensive overview of the research topic (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009, p. 672).

4.1.1. Arabic Literacy in Northern Nigeria

Arabic literacy in Northern Nigeria is a cultural inheritance, a religious requirement and a great instrument for forming identity, not only a method of communication. In mostly Muslim areas like Zamfara State, Arabic reading and writing proficiency is intimately related to religious faith, moral upbringing and social respect. Parents often see Arabic literacy as a means of spiritual fulfilment since they believe that a child who can read the Qur'an in Arabic bears a divine gift and is therefore likely to lead an Islamic-orientated life (Sanusi, 2011).

Through trade, migration and study, Arabic literacy historically arrived in Northern Nigeria alongside Islam, hence creating a lengthy legacy of Qur'anic and Islamic learning (Abubakar, 2019). Children have been enrolled in Qur'anic schools for centuries, where they memorise verses of the Qur'an, pick up Arabic grammar (nahwu), and receive instruction in ethical behaviour grounded in Islamic principles (Umar, 2001). Often informal and run by neighbourhood Mallams, these schools have great cultural validity but do not provide certifications or regular credentials. Sending a child to an Islamiyya school is not only an educational decision but also a cultural and spiritual obligation for many families, especially those from rural areas (Baba, 2020).

Value for Arabic literacy in the community goes beyond mere religious performance. Those who speak Arabic well generally hold positions of honour, such as counsellors to traditional leaders, judges in Sharia courts or imams. Their education lends moral legitimacy, and they are regarded as keepers of divine wisdom. Arabic literacy in this setting, as Yakubu (2018) notes, has a kind of "social capital"; it gives respect, trust and leadership possibilities even in the absence of Western school credentials.

Arabic literacy has not been without difficulties, especially in contemporary Nigeria. National education strategy has given Western-style education top priority since the return to democratic government in 1999 as the basis for national unity and economic growth. This change has put pressure on conventional Islamic education systems, sometimes seen by legislators as outdated or ineffective in the global employment market (Fafunwa, 2004). Many Arabic schools have been pushed to the edges of the official education system, as Ajayi and Haastrup (2013) point out, and their graduates battle to find routes into civil service or formal employment.

A great social contradiction resulting from this gap between cultural worth and economic possibilities is evident. Although those with Arabic-educated backgrounds are valued in their communities, they are usually left out of the advantages of national growth. Many young people in Zamfara State discover they are torn between the restrictions of non-recognition in the larger economy and the honour of religious literacy (Abubakar, 2019). This has begged important issues on how to balance conventional schooling with modern reality both inside and beyond the area.

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Arabic literacy, yet, carries on despite these struggles. Its religious importance alone permits it to exist, but it also relates to a deep cultural tradition in which literacy is a road to societal integration and study is a type of piety. Arabic schools often serve as secure places that provide not just knowledge but also discipline, ethical growth and community cohesion in regions where governmental structures are inadequate or distant. Especially in impoverished and unsafe areas, they are among the limited institutions where youth can find structure and a sense of purpose (Yakubu, 2018).

In this way, knowledge of Arabic is not merely about the written word; it is about identity, tradition and the need to remain grounded in a world that is rapidly changing. To appreciate its relevance in Northern Nigeria, one must listen not only to government data or education statistics but to the lived realities of individuals for whom Arabic literacy is a lifeline of cultural survival and spiritual meaning.

4.1.2. Youth Identity and Education

The issue of identity, particularly among youth, is one of the most dynamic and frequently debated themes in social and cultural studies. Identity is not only about who a person is; it reflects how individuals see themselves, how they are seen by others, and how they interact with the world around them. Erik Erikson (1968), a basic thinker in developmental psychology, views youth identity as a process impacted by both internal decisions and external stimuli. During the journey from childhood to adulthood, young individuals begin to rethink their responsibilities, values and future pathways. In locations where tradition and modernity constantly intersect, such as Northern Nigeria, these concerns are far from straightforward.

Within Northern Nigeria and especially Zamfara State, Arabic literacy is quite important in determining this identity. Many boys and girls are exposed to Qur'anic education from an early age, where Arabic represents faith, morals and cultural legacy rather than only a language of study. For these young people, being able to read, write and recite Arabic often comes to define them. Parents sometimes refer to Arabic-educated children as "wellbehaved" or "God-fearing", tying literacy in Arabic with good character, obedience and spiritual consciousness (Yakubu, 2018). The language thus becomes more than a tool; it becomes a cultural identification badge that determines how young people hold themselves and how they are perceived inside the society.

Leading scholar in cultural identity theory Stuart Hall (1996) reminds us that identity is changing. Experiences, knowledge and social connections facilitate the formation and reorganisation of one's identity over time. Two conflicting elements form young people in Zamfara State's flexible identity: the social and economic attraction of Western-style education and the cultural pride of Islamic education. Arabic literacy frequently lacks the official legitimacy needed in the employment market of today, even when it gives moral grounding and societal regard. Some young individuals feel themselves trapped between the rejection they encounter in the formal economy and the praise they receive inside their culture.

This issue is particularly clear in rural communities where many Arabic-educated young people find themselves appreciated in family events and mosques but neglected in issues of employment or modern civic participation. Ibrahim (2017) notes that this could result in what he describes as a "dual identity struggle" as young people negotiate between the anxiety of economic exclusion and the cultural security of Islamic values. This inner conflict might affect not just their self-esteem but also their sense of belonging in the conventional and modern spheres.

Still, it would be false to see Arabic literacy just through the prism of constraint. Arabic provides a venue of empowerment for many young people, particularly those who feel alienated from Western systems of schooling. It links them to worldwide Islamic traditions, to their forebears and to a feeling of direction anchored in devotion to God and society. Actually, Arabic schools can act as safe havens where young people discover discipline, routine and a moral compass in places afflicted by societal neglect and insecurity. As Yakubu (2018) notes, the social networks created by Arabic education may become the pillar of community support during difficult times.

Thus, the meaning of education is significantly more profound than what is sometimes gauged by credentials or national standards. Arabic literacy shapes how young people view themselves: as respectable sons and daughters, as future leaders, as spiritual beings and as stewards of their history. Notwithstanding still existing difficulties, particularly in terms of social mobility and economic inclusion, the cultural value that Arabic education offers is rather strong. It enables many young people to negotiate the demands of contemporary life without losing view of who they are.

4.1.3. Community Perceptions of Arabic-Educated Youth

Yakubu (2018) reports that Arabic-educated young people are typically viewed with great moral respect in many rural and semi-urban areas of Northern Nigeria, especially in Zamfara State. As leaders in the community, prayer leaders and even marriage partners, they are said to be courteous, disciplined and spiritually grounded with qualities that appeal to us. Arabic literacy is not just a kind of education but also a moral credential, a symbol of moral rectitude and commitment to Islamic values, inside the shared imagination. Those who have been through Qur'anic or Islamiyya education are viewed as "custodians of values", according to Sanusi (2011), and are frequently trusted with resolving conflicts, preaching or mentoring local young people.

However, this view is not consistent. Although many parents and seniors respect Arabiceducated young people, a rising number of community employees, particularly among the younger generation, are starting to wonder about the financial value of this kind of education. Some Arabic-educated young people are observed as "left behind", unable to compete in a system that favours formal certifications and English-language communication, in places where unemployment increases and government positions are few (Ibrahim, 2017). This changing story exposes a generational change in value systems whereby the once unquestioned appreciation of Arabic literacy is now balanced against its economic consequences.

Arabic literacy, however, remains a cultural anchor despite these growing questions, particularly in rural areas where access to official schooling is either restricted or pricey. Baba (2020) notes that Arabic-educated young people are frequently more visible, more active in community events and more trusted in such surroundings than their contemporaries who drop out of official education. They are called upon to lead prayers, translate sermons or instruct youngsters, therefore fulfilling significant social duties that support community life.

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Furthermore, the respect offered to Arabic-educated people is usually derived from religious feeling and cultural memory. Elders often compare what they observe as the moral decline in current secular education with the discipline of the Arabic school system. Arabic literacy to them is about humility, spiritual depth and community service, not about job or financial success (Ajayi & Haastrup, 2013). Even as young expectations change, this attitude is still quite entrenched in local conversation. Nonetheless, there are conflicts that cannot be overlooked. While Arabic literacy generates morally decent people, some parents have voiced worries about the lack of the skills required to negotiate contemporary Nigerian culture. Families where survival depends on formal employment or access to state resources have especially serious issues here. Consequently, there is a rising need to combine Arabic education with aspects of Western learning in order to produce what some call a "dual path" model of learning (Abubakar, 2019). This approach lets young people keep their religious and cultural basis while also being ready for economic involvement.

Notwithstanding these inconsistencies, young Arabs from Zamfara State keep showing agency and perseverance. They negotiate a difficult environment in which their restricted economic choices confront their ideals, yet which they are praised for. Many of them carve out roles for themselves by means of teaching, preaching, and community service, therefore demonstrating the great relevance of their education, albeit unusual by national standards within their social setting. Therefore, community views show a dynamic interaction of history, aspiration and adaptation. Arabic literacy opens hearts; commands respect and creates bonds of trust inside a society confronting both cultural continuity and change even if it may not open paying jobs for everybody.

4.1.4. Educational Reform and Cultural Tension

Emphasising universal access to Western-style education, national curriculum uniformity and English-language competency, education policy has changed dramatically since Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1999. These changes have generated cultural conflicts, especially in Northern Nigeria, where Arabic and Islamic systems of education remain firmly ingrained even while they have sought to modernise education and increase economic competitiveness. Fafunwa (2004) contends that the national education system sometimes reflects colonial legacies, giving Western values and pedagogies top priority while marginalising indigenous and religious learning methods.

These changes have caused anxiety among local populations in places like Zamfara State, who see Arabic literacy as a necessary component of cultural survival and moral development rather than as an option. According to Ajayi and Haastrup (2013), the integration of Islamic education into official education has sometimes been done in a way that reduces its depth and provides token participation rather than true respect for its methods and worldview. Many Arabic teachers and Mallams thus feel shut out of policy debates, and pupils taught in Arabic literacy find no obvious route into official institutions or employment.

The minimal acceptance of Arabic-based degrees in the civil service and labour market is one of the most prominent symptoms of this cultural struggle. Many young people feel their knowledge undervalued merely because it is not packaged inside the framework of national credentials or English-based instruction, even after years of study at Qur'anic or Islamiyya schools. Abubakar (2019) says that this mismatch between official institutions and local values has contributed to increased discontent among Arab-educated young people, some of whom feel left behind by a system that neither acknowledges their knowledge nor offers pragmatic prospects for growth.

Complicating this even further is the growing North-wide insecurity, which has caused many official schools to close. Arabic schools have sometimes stayed open in such surroundings, offering not only intellectual but also emotional and spiritual guidance. For families displaced by conflict or financial difficulty, Baba (2020) adds that Islamiyya schools are perceived as safer, more stable and more morally based substitutes for Western-style schools. Interestingly, then, the very system that provides solace during a crisis is the one that is least appreciated in state financing and policy development.

Some communities are also seeing that Arabic education ought to be reformed from inside, not from outside, and that it should be enhanced rather than abandoned. Demand for curricular innovation, integration of vocational skills and organised paths to higher Islamic study reflects changing knowledge of what Arabic literacy can be in the modern world. Sanusi (2011) contends that genuine transformation depends on a balanced approach whereby Arabic education is not perceived as backwards but as a partner in national growth.

These competing demands underline the significance of culturally sensitive educational programmes that honour local customs yet ready young people for the modern reality. If reform is to work in settings like Zamfara State, it must start with the knowledge that Arabic education is crucial in creating resilience against social and political change as well as identity and community cohesion, not with the notion that it is less than.

4.1.5. Insecurity and the Role of Literacy

Particularly in rural states like Zamfara, the continuous instability in Northern Nigeria has had a significant impact on the educational situation. Along with upsetting official education, armed banditry, insurrection and communal violence have changed public opinion about the value and goal of education. Arabic literacy, especially via Islamiyya and Qur'anic education, has become a steady and culturally trusted substitute in this framework of fear, uncertainty and state fragility. Yakubu (2018) notes that Islamic schools remain open in many areas where state schools have closed or are too hazardous to visit, providing not just education but also an emotional and spiritual haven.

Arabic literacy has come to represent continuity and resistance in areas where the state is either absent or mistrusted. For displaced families and children impacted by conflict, Baba (2020) emphasises that Islamic schools are typically the first place of return: places where hope, discipline and order are rebuilt. Though sometimes lacking infrastructure or state assistance, these institutions offer a familiar environment where young people may discover direction, community and significance. When state-sponsored social safety is absent, they cover psychological as well as educational deficits.

Moreover, insecurity has further disorganised the function of formal schooling in the minds of many rural residents. While Arabic literacy is presented as a kind of protection not only against worldly hazards but also against moral decline, public schools are progressively seen as dangerous or morally lax. Sanusi (2011) notes that in many northern towns, families saw Islamic knowledge as a protection in a world they believe to be even more hostile and dangerous. Especially in uncertain times, this spiritual framework

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emphasises the concept that Arabic education is about grounding the soul, not only about jobs or upward mobility.

Simultaneously, the hard economic reality brought upon by conflict has driven some young Arabs to the sidelines. Many find themselves unable to break out from the cycles of poverty and dislocation without official credentials and with limited career choices. Still, they are rather important even with these limitations; they serve as informal counsellors, religious guides or community scribes. Ibrahim (2017) contends that although these positions might not match traditional conceptions of work, they are highly appreciated in their local settings and significantly enhance community life.

Amazingly, the rising insecurity has spurred fresh calls to rethink how young empowerment campaigns and peacebuilding may include Arabic literacy. Particularly when their moral training, community trust and cultural knowledge are actively engaged, scholars and practitioners both are starting to consider Arabic-educated young people as possible agents of stability rather than as passive victims of insecurity (Abubakar, 2019). This creates fresh directions for considering education not only in financial terms but also in terms of its social and spiritual force to ground people during difficult times.

All things considered, even if insecurity has made structural issues related to Arabic literacy more difficult, it has also shown ongoing importance. Far from being gone, Arabic literacy remains a moral compass and cultural lifeline for those confronting disruption and violence. Understanding its importance in this sense helps one to have a more complex and respectable perspective on education in crisis situations.

5. Findings

The results of this study expose nuanced and complicated views on Arabic literacy and young identity in Zamfara State. Arabic literacy is associated with emotions of marginalisation, adaptability and generational conflict even if it is still held in great cultural value. Interviews and observations revealed the following themes:

5.1.1. Arabic Literacy as a Symbol of Honour and Identity

Arabic literacy was clearly seen as a way to tell the spiritual and moral difference between young people and older people. People who took part often said that young people who learnt Arabic were "clean", "disciplined", and "God-fearing". Not only were these young people praised for how well they knew the Qur'an and other Islamic texts but also for how well they behaved: being polite, humble and in control of their morals. Some respondents in Tsafe asserted that "When you see a boy who has finished the Qur'an, you can tell by the way he moves and talks." You will know that he has light inside him. Literacy in Arabic fits into this spiritual framework of education, which is based on a moral hierarchy that has been respected for hundreds of years.

5.1.2. Community Recognition without Economic Mobility

Though most of the respondents expressed worry that their knowledge does not translate into economic opportunity, the cultural respect for Arabic-educated young people reflects. Young people expressed regularly sentiments of being "seen but not supported". One male respondent said, "They call me 'Mallam', yes. They do indeed respect me. Respect, though, does not feed you. When it comes time for employment, they reply, "I lack what they want." This discontent represents a terrible paradox between institutional exclusion and cultural approbation.

For many young people, lack of official accreditation or governmental recognition presents obstacles in acquiring professional training, continuing education or work. Many commenters pointed out the absurdity of official systems treating even years of study graduates from longstanding Qur'anic schools as "uneducated". Parents expressed such worries; one mother said, "My son has finished memorising the Qur'an and people trust him, but still, he cannot even get a government job."

5.1.3. Informal Leadership and Community Roles

Arabic-educated young people are very important members of their communities even though they are neglected by official institutions. Guiding prayers, translating religious books, resolving conflicts and training young people, they can act as unofficial leaders. Though rarely paid, these roles are quite valuable. One respondent said, "The Mallam is like our mentor. We listened to him even though he is young. He imparts knowledge not available elsewhere.

Arabic-educated young people were also sought after in some communities for funerals, naming rituals and community meetings. These offerings help them to be guardians of spiritual and cultural continuity. Although their influence could be informal, it is important for maintaining communal life, particularly in rural places where government presence is lacking.

5.1.4. Changing Aspirations and the Demand for Integration

Changing Aspirations and the Demand for Integration: Fascinatingly, the study found that both young people's and their teachers' aspirations were changing. Many of the respondents expressed their wish to combine modern skills such as computer literacy, the English language and entrepreneurship with Arabic instruction. This was presented as extending Islamic education to suit modern living, not as a rejection of it. "We are not against Western education," one Mallam said. All we want it to be is the Qur'an. Let them grow to know both. That achieves equilibrium. If only their education could be properly recognised, several young individuals shared this feeling, expressing desire in teaching, translating or even public servant employment.

5.1.5. Insecurity and the Endurance of Arabic Schools

The growing uncertainty in Zamfara has ironically improved the visibility and fortitude of Arabic schools. Many Islamiyya schools stayed open at times when banditry or attack fear caused government schools to close, albeit in a limited and careful manner. Parents trusted these schools more, noting the character of the teachers, the proximity of the learning environment and the sense of safety anchored in faith. "We still drove our children to the Mallam even if the roads were not safe," a Bungudu father said. He teaches them how to live good lives and how to fear God, not only the Qur'an. Arabic literacy thus serves not just as an educational route but also as a coping method, providing structure and goals amid social upheaval.

5.1.6. Gendered Experiences of Arabic Education

Even though most public reports centre on males in Qur'anic education, the results showed that girls also engage in Arabic literacy mostly via women's learning circles and Islamiyya institutions. Many female participants spoke of how knowing Arabic enhanced their chances for marriage and reinforced their roles as mums and community leaders. A young woman from

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Kaura Namoda said, "People admire a woman who can read the Qur'an. Even my husband feels proud when I am teaching my children. Still, gender restrictions exist. Once they hit adolescence, some females said they stopped attending classes since families gave marriage first priority over ongoing education.

The results show Arabic literacy as a living tradition, one firmly rooted in cultural pride and moral worth but under major pressure from modern demands and structural exclusion in general. Holding on to their spiritual legacy while searching for fresh opportunities, the young people at the centre of this study are negotiating these crossroads with resilience, ingenuity and a search for balance.

6. Discussion and Analysis

The results of this study confirm again that Arabic literacy in Zamfara State is a profoundly ingrained cultural and moral identity rather than only an educational achievement. Viewed through a lens of Cultural Identity Theory (Hall, 1996), the experiences of Arabic-educated young people show how education shapes social meaning, belonging and personal value in addition to imparting knowledge. Arabic literacy serves as a cultural script in societies where Islamic culture still defines daily life; it teaches not only how to read but also how to live.

One of the most shocking facts is the duality of recognition: Arabic-educated young people remain almost invisible in the official state apparatus even if they are valued in their hometown. This reflects Ibrahim's (2017) finding that many young Muslims with Islamic education have a split identity: celebrated for their moral foundation yet excluded from the institutional structures of mobility. The theory that one can be valued in social terms yet depreciated in economic terms captures the larger conflict between structural marginalisation and cultural capital.

This gap is made bigger by the fact that Nigeria's official education system still favours English-language credentials and Western-style learning, leaving little room for knowledge systems that are based on culture. In 2004, Fafunwa warned of the dangers of educational methods that do not take into account local circumstances. He said that good education should connect with people's core values. For many people in Zamfara State, Arabic education meets that need, but it is not recognised in national policy or the economy, which some respondents called "*respect without reward*".

The collected data also shows how the threat of violence has made learning Arabic not only important but also vital. In places where regular schools have closed because of violence, Islamiyya schools have kept going with few means and the trust of the community. This calls into question the idea that traditional ways of learning are out of date. Instead, it shows that Arabic literacy could be a more resilient way of life in times of disaster because it is rooted in religion and community relationships (Baba, 2020). Not only do these places teach religion, but they also provide mental stability, routine and a sense of purpose, which are things that official institutions sometimes struggle to do when they are under a lot of stress.

The outcomes from the collected data also indicate an increasing confidence for educational integration. The interest from youth and Mallams for a hybrid model – integrating Arabic education with practical skills and formal acknowledgement – indicates that Islamic education is not static. Instead, it seeks a suitable position within broader modifications. Identity is not static but rather negotiated, as Hall (1996) asserts; young Arabs educated in Arabic are actively negotiating their position within a culture that frequently overlooks or misrepresents them.

Gender dynamics also showed themselves in striking ways. Although Arabic literacy gives girls, particularly in home and spiritual life, a valued role, access to consistent education for young women remains uneven. Social standards of modesty and marriage sometimes cut off their education. But the voices of young women gathered when interviewed contradict the belief that religious education is constrictive; rather, they see it as liberating, spiritually and socially.

Discovering significance, understanding one's identity and sustaining existence through narratives are superior methods for acquiring Arabic in Zamfara State compared to numerical assessments or examination results. It remains a significant aspect of self-perception among youth and a means by which communities uphold their ideals amidst change, uncertainty and reform. If officials in Northern Nigeria genuinely aim to enhance children's education, they must first recognise the significance of Arabic literacy not as an outdated leftover but as a vibrant culture that continues to influence the minds, hearts and lives of youth.

7. Practical Solutions

1. The Ministry of Education should work with Islamic education boards to set up a formal procedure for graduates of Qur'anic and Islamiyya schools to get certified. This would make it easier for young people from Arabic-speaking backgrounds to get more schooling, vocational training or jobs as teachers at respected institutions.
2. The government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should help build community-based learning centres where useful topics like English literacy, ICT, tailoring and starting a business are taught in a practical way. These centres can be built inside existing Islamiyya institutions so as not to upset the balance of power.
3. Local councils and donor groups should start targeting programmes that give Arabiceducated young people the tools they need to start their own businesses or work as teachers, scribes or peace activists in their communities. These programmes should include initial financing, mentoring and apprenticeships.
4. Arabic classes for women should be held in safe community spaces and with open class times. Female malamas should be taught and urged to hold learning circles for girls and married women, especially in places where people are very traditional.
5. Islamiyya schools should be part of city disaster plans because they help keep things running normally when there is a problem. Teachers can learn basic psychological help and conflict-sensitive education to help communities heal and stay connected during times of violence or displacement.

6. Conclusion

In Zamfara State, literacy in Arabic remains a significant aspect of youth identity and cultural heritage. While it may not consistently provide direct access to formal employment, it offers spiritual sustenance, ethical direction and acknowledged societal functions. Young individuals educated in Arabic are resolute in their pursuit of societal integration, despite encountering obstacles such as the

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need for educational reform and uncertainty regarding future prospects. Recognising and supporting this form of learning through policy, integration, and empowerment will ensure that tradition and progress coexist harmoniously.

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