



## FACTORS INFLUENCING BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE AMONG FEMALE MUSLIM STUDENTS IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF NIGER STATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

### Education

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### ABSTRACT

Higher Institutions of learning represent the most sophisticated secondary agents of socialization that could easily transformed social behaviours of individuals. These institutions bring together not only different peoples from varied albeit complicated socio-economic and political backgrounds, but formally inculcate values and attitudes to students. More so, many individuals, especially students that associate with these institutions are within the age bracket that is too sensitive and receptive to change. The situation is interestingly more germane to female gender, which not only too receptive to change but may be socio-culturally and economically too vulnerable. This paper investigates factors influencing behavioural change among Muslim female students of selected tertiary institutions in Niger State, Nigeria. The paper argues that Muslim female students of these schools, with their unique way of life are not only too vulnerable and receptive to such change factors, but other socio-cultural and institutional factors make their lives in these institutions troubling, worrying and could easily change from good to worse. The solution to this reality and social dilemma is to adhere strictly to the good teachings of Islam.

### KEYWORDS

#### 1. Introduction

This paper examines factors influencing the behaviour of female Muslim students in Niger State Tertiary Institutions of learning. Islam is a comprehensive way of life from cradle to grave and morality is one of the corner stones of Islam. Morality is one of the fundamental sources of a nation's strength, and conversely immorality is one of the main causes of a nation's decline. Islam has established some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed in all circumstances. To uphold these rights, Islam has provided not only legal safeguards but also a very effective moral system. Thus: [...] whatever leads to the welfare of the individual or the society and does not oppose any maxim of religion is morally good in Islam and whatever is harmful is morally bad.

Islam supports morality and matters that lead to it and stands in the way of corruption and matters that lead to it. The guiding principle for the behaviour of a Muslim is 'virtuous deeds'. This term covers all deeds not only acts of *Ibadat* but also the mundane activities of Muslims lives.

This research was conducted in five tertiary institutions owned by the state. The research was conducted using mixed methods approach comprising of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods. In collecting data for the study the instruments used include Observation and Questionnaire, complemented with interview. The respondents are staff and students of Niger state College of Education Minna, Niger state Polytechnic Zungeru, Niger state College of Nursing Sciences, Bida, Niger state School of Health Technology Tungan – Magajiya and Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. A total of 8,740 questionnaires were served out of which 6,935 (79.4%) were successfully retrieved and analysed.

#### 2. Factors that Influence the Behaviour of Female Muslim Students

There are some contributory factors that influence the behaviour of female Muslim students in Tertiary Institutions of learning in Niger State. These factors can be seen as things that have effect on the way a person thinks or behaves or on the way something works or develops. Therefore, these factors could be positive or negative depending on the situation and ones inclination. From the study conducted, the following are some of the factors found to have influence on the behaviours of the female Muslim students in Niger State Tertiary Institutions of learning:

##### 2.1 Peer Group Influence

Peer group influence is a force that gravitate friends together and mostly for evil or immoral tendencies. This factor was mentioned by almost all of the respondents, as a factor that has great impact on the

change of behaviour of female Muslim students in Niger State Tertiary Institutions of learning. It is a fact that these students come from different homes, cultures and socio-economic background, while the school has brought them together under the same environment. As young girls who are probably staying away from home for the first time, they are bound to meet and make new friends. As friends they will want to be doing things together, therefore the *Muslimah* will want to copy the life style of her friends who are non-Muslims consciously or unconsciously. By so doing, she begins to adopt a new life style, which is alien to her culture, religion and parental guidance. She does so forgetting Allah's injunctions that cautioned Muslims on associating with unrighteous friends thus: "Friends on that day will be foes, one to another, except the righteous."

##### In another *Ayah* Allah says:

Thou will not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having loving those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers or their sons or brothers or their kindred...

From Islamic point of view, it is pertinent that we watch the kind of company we keep as friends. As the popular Nigerian adage says, "show me your friends and I will tell you the type of person you are." Therefore, if any one believes in Allah and the message of the Prophet (SAW), then she is expected to keep good friends as company. Because what they do together has significant impact on her life and mode of behaviours.

##### 2.2 Freedom in the Western Style of Education

It has been earlier stated in this research, that the Muslim female student might be living outside the custody of her parents for the first time in a Tertiary Institution. These students struggle to strike a balance between their faith, family expectations, peer pressure and the new found freedom. This is because the female Muslim student now spends more time at school than at home. In school, she is on her own, guided only by her faith and respect for her family honour (if she has). It is a known fact that the students at the Tertiary Institution are on their own without parental monitoring at school. This gives most of the girls the idea or chance to try out certain things that will ordinarily not be accepted at home. Such attitudes like free mixing with the male counterparts, shaking hands with them, going to lonesome places with them etc. They claim to be equals, mutual friends or just friends, classmates or colleagues with the opposite sex. These relationships are not platonic. There is something unacceptable about it. As Muslim female they are expected to bear in mind Allah's warning that says: "And do not go near *Zinah* (adultery); indeed it is ever an immorality and an evil way." Islam forbids lonesomeness between two non-*Muhrim*, as such her free mixing with non - blood related men is

*Haram*. After all she is expected to be fully covered in their presence and she is not allowed to shake hands with them nor sit very close on the same sit.

### 2.3 Wrong Use of Modern Communication Systems

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has helped to revolutionize the community tremendously. The use of Internet, Communication satellite, mobile phones etc, has helped to bring people together distance, culture or language notwithstanding. Through the activities of home videos, satellites and other media agents, values (faulty or correct), fashions (modern, modest and immodest) are traded across cultures and nations. From the response gathered and the observations conducted, most of the female Muslim students and non-Muslims alike busy themselves with the social networks on their mobile phones, ipads, laptops, etc. They waste precious time chatting on WhatsApp, facebook, twitter, etc. These exposes them to vulnerable immoral contents displayed on these networks, instead of using it to search for relevant things that will benefit them academically. 'In as much as ICT is helpful, consequential to human and societal developments, the rate of abuse and un-regulatory ways they are used call for great concern.' Even though ICT is beneficial and good to humanity, the associated evils need to be checked and resisted by the Muslim *Ummah*. This is because most of these media promote fashion parades, illegal conversations between *non-Muhrims* and a host of other vices abhorred by Islam.

### 2.4 Social Life on the Campus and High Taste

As students, the female Muslim students in Tertiary Institutions battle with all sorts of social mingling and activities in the school system. Some of the things they see as social mostly have to do with associating with social clubs and associations like; Omega Sigma club, Kegaites club, Rotary club, etc. Now most of these clubs promote the taking of alcohol and even Indian hemp, while all of them have a dressing code on particular days of the week. They also organize parties where free mixing and sexuality are displayed. The aforementioned clubs do not exist in any of the state tertiary institutions of learning visited for this dissertation. Only cultural, tribal, religious, departmental and state associations were noted in all the Tertiary Institutions studied. That notwithstanding, the students also have different activities associated with the associations, some of which are frowned at by Islam. They organize parties, cultural week and association days where the students mix freely with each other. It was observed that some girls do go for night outings with their male friends who come to pick them at late hours from the hostels. Because of this they exhibit a different life style which makes others want to look and dress like their affluent friends. They are usually pushed to go borrowing from other friends whom they are close to or they start indulging in immoral acts in order to satisfy their high taste.

Another issue under this factor is having romantic relationship between the male staff and students of these institutions with the female Muslim students. In this case the female student is either influenced by the staff because she is lazy and wants high grades, she could not afford to buy lecture textbook or because the staff is interested in her and she gives in. From the male counterparts side it could begin from either casual brotherly friendship, or from group study and it will lead into an immoral relationship.

### 2.5 Economic Factor - Poverty

Going by the economic situation of the country, the female Muslim students in Tertiary Institutions are faced with one sort of economic hardship or the other. It is a known fact that life on campus is expensive; it requires a lot of money to survive. The following are some of the factors that contribute to the poverty/ economic hardship for the students:

**(a) Insufficient upkeep fee from their parents:** the female Muslim students from poor homes are not usually given enough provision /pocket money to go to school. These girls are told to manage the little resources available and when they run short of it there is no hope of getting more from home. They are left with no option than to look for any possible way to keep body and soul together. This may lead them to steal, prostitute, lie etc. in order to get what they can use to fend for themselves.

**(b) Distance from home:** some of the students come from distant places to study in Niger State, and their parents are not the one financing their education. Some of these female students don't even go

back home during vacations for fear of not having transport fare to return for the forthcoming session. Some of them indulge in petty trading in the hostels and even on campus during lecture hours. While some take for themselves the easy way out (prostitution).

**(c) High taste:** In order to look modern and belong, be like others who are financially buoyant, some of the female Muslim students take to unwanted attitudes on campus. They make friends with those who are not of the same financial standing as them. They want to be like them as such they resort to petty stealing, lying to them in order to gain favours and worst of all they go into prostitution just to meet up with their high taste.

All these are done in order to make ends meet and to cater for the various demands of the expenses incurred during the learning process such as registration, handbooks, etc. They indulge in these immoral attitudes forgetting that Allah SWT has warned us not to waste our life in any way. As Muslims we should always depend on Allah and indulge in lawful trading which is a blessed source of income. As stated in Qur'an thus:

O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: But let there be among you traffic and trade by mutual goodwill nor kill or destroy yourselves for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful.

Certainly it is better for the female Muslim students who are not financially supported by their parents, to do petty trading on campus than to engage in immoral acts in order to get worldly gains. Conducting in trade on campus is more honourable to them, as Allah will provide for them a source of sustenance.

### 2.6 Drug Abuse

Because of the unlimited freedom enjoyed by some of the female Muslim students at school, coupled with the influence of bad friends they take to the use of hard drugs. These drugs such as Tutolin cough syrup, whisky, dry gin etc give them a feeling of boldness and unshyness, which is one of the adornments of the *Muslimah*. They become so arrogant disheveled and acts indecently. If they run short of the drugs they can go to any length to get it including offering their bodies. Some of these students do lose their senses while some even die due to excessive use of the drugs. They have forgotten that Allah (SWT) has warned the Muslim against the use of intoxicants in the Qur'an thus:

O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, sacrificing to stones and divination by arrows are an abomination of *Satans* handiwork, eschew such abomination, that ye may prosper.

The Prophet (SAW) was reported to have said: Every intoxicant is *Khamr*, and very *Khamr* is Haram. Going by the Qur'anic injunction and the saying of the Messenger of Allah it is an obvious fact that no true Muslim is permitted to take any substance that can cause him /her harm. This harm could be either by way of losing one's senses by being unconscious or making one to misbehave. Even if that substance is made out of eatable things that are lawful for the Muslim the moment its natural form changes to a form that intoxicates then it is no longer lawful. It was reported that Umar (R.A) declared from the pulpit of the Prophet (SAW), "*Khamr* is that which befores the mind."

### 2.7 Nonchalant Attitude of Parents/Guardians

The parents who send their female wards to tertiary institutions with little resources to manage are directly or indirectly pushing them to be wayward. Some parents do not care how their female wards go to school and conduct their studies. Once they secure the admission and the initial take off provision is given the girl is left on her own. From the observation conducted it was noticed that some of such female students who come from poor homes do some petty businesses at the hostels, such as selling soup ingredients, sweets, plaiting hair, etc. However, some of these girls take the other way round to fend for themselves that is they indulge in promiscuous activities with men in order to get financially good.

Parents are expected to be alive to their responsibilities to both male and female children on equal terms without neglecting one over the other. Some parents find it difficult to sponsor their female children properly at the tertiary level, because probably they have male children whom they give priority to. While some honestly do not have, so they

take the risk of sending them with little to manage.

### 2.8 Lack of Religious Background

Ignorance is said to be a great affliction to mankind. Some of the female Muslim students in Niger State Tertiary Institutions are not left out of this disease. Some of them come from homes where religious education is not given priority over western one; as such they reach the adolescent age with little or no religious knowledge. This is one of the major contributing factors that influence the life of the female Muslim students with regards to their level of moral conduct in the Tertiary Institution. Because their sense of thinking is more of the western style than the Islamic style, they tend to be very free with the male counterparts. They shake hands with them, sit closely, wear transparent and immodest dress, leave their hair open, speak at the top of their voice when happy or sad (to express their feelings), etc. It was observed that they usually want to be noticed and admired by friends and colleagues. So they raise their voice unnecessarily to call the attention of others, wear high-smelling perfumes that holds in the air and most often they use noisy shoes. This, however, did not rule out the fact that there are more of the religiously educated females in Niger State Tertiary Institutions than the ignorant ones.

### 2.9 Location of the Institutions

The institutions visited in conducting this research are located strategically in the towns or along the way where the towns are located. From their various locations they are all easily accessible. That is to say that the link between the institutions and life outside the campus is not wide. People from these towns and visitors locate the schools with ease they come and go to conduct different activities. In so doing they have contacts with the female Muslim students of these institutions. It was observed that sometimes at night especially during weekends the schools become beehives of activities, with some of the students going out for weekends and some being visited by male friends.

### 3. Conclusion

It suffices to argue that, the moulding of the behaviours of female Muslim students in Tertiary Institutions of learning is a collective responsibility. It involves parents at the home front, authorities of tertiary institutions, lecturers, Muslim organizations etc. To join hands together to make female Muslim students aware of the role they are expected to play in future. With the use of Qur'anic precepts and *Hadith*, as a mother, sister, wife, and an in-law, she needs to be of good moral conduct. In Islam knowledge has an inestimable virtue and importance, it is one of the legacies whose benefit a person continues to draw even after he /she dies. The Prophet (SAW) has told us as narrated by Abu Huraira that:

If a man dies all his deeds are cut off except three things, a permanent charity or a piece of knowledge or a righteous son who prays for him.

In order to achieve the right approach to life it is better for one to adopt a balanced approach in all academic and scholastic endeavors, by seeking for a beneficial knowledge and not the type that will be of harm to man as stated in the Glorious Qur'an thus: "... And they learned what harmed them, not what profited them..."

It is clear that through allowing Islamic ethics and moral injunction to guide one's behaviour one will be able to attain an optimum level of felicity as well as spiritual redemption. This is because in Islam, knowledge, faith, action (good deeds) and morality (ethics) are inseparable. For the female to acquire such virtues, it means the *Ummah* will have a breed of upright children and future personality who are well groomed with the religious ethics.

<sup>1</sup> A. I. Doi, *The Cardinal Principles of Islam*, Hudahuda Publishing Company, Zaria, 1981

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Oxford University Press 7th edition.

<sup>3</sup> Qur'an 43:67

<sup>4</sup> Qur'an 58: 22

<sup>5</sup> Qur'an: 17:32

<sup>6</sup> J. Omede, "Indecent Dressing On Campuses Of Higher Institutions Of Learning In Nigeria: Implications For Counseling" *Journal Of Emerging Trends In Educational Research And Policy Studies (JETERAPS)*2(4)228-233 Scholarlink Research Institute Journals, 2011(ISSN2141-6990)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. pp.230-231

<sup>8</sup> The researcher is familiar with the afore mentioned clubs as they exist in Federal Tertiary Institutions where she studied and is aware of their activities.

<sup>9</sup> In most of the schools visited it was observed that some female Muslim students from far places indulge in petty trading in the hostel to make ends meet. It was also gathered that some of them don't go home for vacations; they remain on campus and continue with their trade with the long vacation students. As observed at COE Minna, IBBU Lapai and State Polytechnic Zungeru.

<sup>10</sup> Qur'an 4:29

<sup>11</sup> It was noted during my observation that some of these girls even display such drugs on their cupboards at their bed side corner in the name of medication.

<sup>12</sup> Qur'an 5:90.

<sup>13</sup> M. M. Khan, *Sahih al- Bukhari*,...op cit, vol.7, The Book of Drinks, chapter 4, *Hadith* 7.491 /492, p. 296.

<sup>14</sup> A. A. Al-Mundhiri, *Sahih Muslim*, ...op cit, vl.2, 40 Book of Drinks, chapter 7, *Hadith* 1269, p. 6956.

<sup>15</sup> As observed at NSCNS Bida, IBBU Lapai and NSSHT Tungan Magajiya.

<sup>16</sup> The factors here mentioned are as they were gathered from the questionnaires served in order to get the response of those directly involved in the subject matter. The researcher was able to go and make observations which were also used to give the above descriptive narration.

<sup>17</sup> A. A. Al-Mundhiri, *Sahih Muslim*,...op cit, Vol. 1, 25 Book of Waqf, chapter 2, *Hadith* 1001, p.506

<sup>18</sup> Qur'an 2: 102.

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