

# The Role Of Friday Khutab (Sermons) In Resolving Contemporary Challenges Of Girl Child Education And Violence Against Women In Northern Nigeria

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*Abstract: Education being an instrument for the total deliverance of the individual and the society is the right of all Nigerian citizens—the boy, the girl, the young, and the old. The Nigerian constitution guarantees equal access to education and prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, sex, or place of origin. This study therefore investigated the role of Friday Khutab (Sermon) in resolving contemporary social challenges of girl child education and violence against women. The sermons, prepared and delivered by Imams in the Jumu'a mosques are sought to play a great role in educating, sensitizing, guiding and encouraging Muslims towards such social contemporary issues and challenges. This study adopted survey research design and structured questionnaire and interview were used as instruments for data collection. The structured questionnaire was validated by experts in Islamic studies department of Aminu Saleh College of Education, Azare. The reliability index yielded 0.76 using test and retest method. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used in analysing respondent's opinions as regards all questions that were asked. The result indicated that girls did not have adequate access to education as the boys did. Gender disparity in education was high. The Imams sermons did not centered on girl-child education and violence against women. To overcome this challenge, government should intensify more efforts in several projects/initiatives such as UNESCO and UNICEF to bridge the education gap between girls and boys in the affected areas.*

*Keywords: Friday Sermons, Imam, Islamic Law, Muslims, Society.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a complex society with different religious beliefs, ethnic groups and diverse norms and traditions (Yesufu, 2016 & Ogoloma, 2012); above all, there is high level of ignorance, misunderstanding and misperception of concepts of life, the challenges of the present time and the demands and responsibilities of contemporary life. However, religion plays important role in the life individuals in Nigeria (Ikechi-Ekpendu, Audu & Ekpendu, 2016) and people rely on

Islamic Scholars to guide them in all aspects of life and human endeavour.

Many parents do ask themselves some questions such as must I send my child to school? What type of school a child should be sent to? When and where? Do the girl children have right to education? If yes, what type of education and at what age? As a citizen what right do I have and what is my responsibility? Does girl child have right to own wealth, or engage in a business activity, or be employed by the government, individual or private organization? Is there any difference in the parental responsibilities – towards their

children- in the past and present time? Is fatherhood a biological activity only or it is a biological and responsibility. Which is the most important, the quantity of children or their quality? Is time for marriage determined by 'means' or 'age'? Is husband responsible for feeding, shelter, and education of his family or Allah?

Islamic religion has provided answers to all these questions based on the principles of social and natural justice, equity and fairness as enshrined in Holy Quran and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him - PBUH); but most of those upon whom people relied may not know this or are shying away from the reality and true teaching of Islam, or it may be because of their shallow level of Islamic knowledge, exposure, lack of awareness and primitive ideas (Bani and Pate, 2015).

Islam rates knowledge or education very high and Muslim must seek for knowledge so as to free themselves from ignorance. Commenting on the knowledge in Islam, Wani and Maqbool (2012) pinpointed that Islam provided great impetus for the human pursuit of knowledge. Based on this, the first verse that revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was '*Iqra*', meaning "read," which opens doors to read, write, and ponder. Thus, the Holy Quran urges the mankind to think, ponder, reflect and acquire knowledge that would bring them closer to God and his creation. Islam does not segregate that only men should search for knowledge where ever it, rather it urges both men and women. Hence, Education is important for every Muslim society as the Prophet made it incumbent on all Muslims (Huda, Yusuf, Jasmi & Zakaria, 2016).

Proper knowledge/education equips one with necessary skills that will enable an individual to have better living in the society, while someone who lacks adequate knowledge will violate laws of society, such as, violence against women, thereby causing nuisance to the entire community. The United Nations as cited in World Health Organisation (2021) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life". The Irish Observatory on Violence against Women (2013) opined that violence against women occurs in multiple forms. Among the main ones are: domestic violence (physical abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse, sexual violence), rape and sexual assault, prostitution and trafficking, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and sexual harassment.

Acquisition of knowledge is done through formal school setting as in western and Islamic systems of education through the qualified teachers. Knowledge can also be acquired at home through good parenting. This type of education equips individual how behave well in the society. In Islamic system of knowledge acquisition, teaching or imparting knowledge is shouldered on the 'Imams' in some cases, where on Friday Prayers, the chief Imam presents sermons to the audience/listeners who in turns expect the followers to emulate or work with the teachings in the sermons. Friday sermons are the prepared lectures or teaching of Islam on topical issues, such as, violence against women, knowledge acquisition, insecurity, joblessness, etc, which Chief Imams

are expected to deliver sermon on the topic in the mosques before Jummuat/prayer is said.

All these topical issues must be well and carefully addressed, otherwise, Nigerian society would hardly solve the problems of unemployment which has a great link to insecurity and peaceful coexistence, poverty, maternal mortality, child abuse (especially girl child), drug abuse and other social vices. The issue of unemployment has contributed greatly to the number of children who are out of school, election violence and insurgency and other criminal activities. Many times, unemployed and jobless persons are encouraged to marry wives so that 'blessing' would come and they would get money, then they produce children whom they cannot cater for, believing that Allah is responsible for all their needs with or without the father doing anything.

Sometimes, based on misconceived Islamic injunctions, girls are not sent to school or given any skill that would equip her in day-day life, and such are divorced within short time after marriage, neither marriage nor education, and life become very difficult later. From the literature review conducted, it indicated that a research on these topical issues linking it to Friday sermons is rare in Nigeria and Northeastern in particular, based on this foregoing, the researchers deem it fit to investigate the role and relevance of Friday Khutab (sermons) in resolving contemporary challenges of girl child education and violence against women in Northern Nigeria.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

- ✓ To examine the role and relevance of Friday Khutab (Sermons) in addressing contemporary challenges of Girl Child Education and Violence Against Women in Northern Nigeria;
- ✓ To determine whether Imams frequently prepare and deliver sermons related to Girl-Child Education; and
- ✓ To determine whether Imams prepare frequently and deliver sermons related to violence against women.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is set to answer the followings questions as outlined below:

- ✓ What are the role and relevance of Friday Khutab (Sermons) in addressing contemporary challenges of Girl Child Education and Violence Against Women in Northern Nigeria?
- ✓ Do the Imams frequently prepare and deliver sermons related to Girl-Child Education?
- ✓ Do the Imams frequently prepare and deliver sermons related to violence against women?

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey research design and the stratified random sampling technique was used to gather data for this work. Therefore, Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno states form the strata where two major towns were randomly

selected from each state. Also, in each town, three mosques (Izala sect, Darika sect and Neutral group) were also randomly selected. Twenty-four (24) Khutubah were collected from each sect in each town for analysis, while three (3) followers / members of sects were sampled as respondents. In all, a total of 6 towns, 18 mosques, 432 sermons and 54 respondents analyzed to gather the information for this research using qualitative analyses. Table 1 below depicts the sample structure. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire and Interview, which was validated by senior colleagues in the department of education and Islamic studies. The instrument yielded 073 reliability index for structured questionnaire.

State	Selected Major cities	Name of selected Mosque	No. of Khutubah (sermon) selected	No. of sect members selected
Adamawa	Jimeta	Izala sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Darika sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Neutral Group (Emir)	4 x 6 = 24	3
	Yola	Izala sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Darika sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Neutral Group (Emir)	4 x 6 = 24	3
Bauchi	Bauchi	Izala sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Darika sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Neutral Group (Emir)	4 x 6 = 24	3
	Azare	Izala sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Darika sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Neutral Group (Emir)	4 x 6 = 24	3
Borno	Maiduguri	Izala sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Darika sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Neutral Group (Emir)	4 x 6 = 24	3
	Muguno	Izala sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Darika sect	4 x 6 = 24	3
		Neutral Group (Emir)	4 x 6 = 24	3
Total	6	18	432	54

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Table 1: Samples of Major Cities and Mosques Selected for the Study

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data gathered from the field is presented here using both qualitative and quantitative data analyses. The research questions raised in this study are answered one after the other as follows:

#### ANSWERING OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**RESEARCH QUESTION ONE:** What are the role and relevance of Friday Khutab (Sermons) in addressing contemporary challenges of Girl Child Education and Violence Against Women in Northern Nigeria?

Item No.	Item Statement N = 54	Frequency			Percentage (%)		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
1	Friday sermons help Muslims in the community to have better understanding of their religion	42	12	54	77.78	22.22	100
2	Chief Imam delivers sermons on benefits of knowledge to the community.	21	33	54	38.89	61.11	100
3	Chief Imam gives sermons on issues relating girl child education.	17	37	54	31.48	68.52	100
4	Chief Imam delivers sermons relating to role of educated women in the society.	14	40	54	25.93	74.07	100
5	Chief Imam frequently gives sermons that encourage ladies to continue their education after primary school.	18	36	54	33.33	66.67	100
6	Chief Imam delivers sermons on rulings that prohibit violence against women in Islam.	13	41	54	24.07	75.93	100
7	Chief Imam presents sermons on violence against married women by their husbands.	15	39	54	27.78	72.22	100
8	Chief Imam delivers sermons advising men to shun the act of violence against women.	21	33	54	38.89	61.11	100
9	Chief Imam presents sermons relating to punishment for men who lacks justice to their wife(ves).	29	25	54	53.70	46.30	100

10	Chief Imam gives sermons on rewards of men who take good care of women in the society.	31	23	54			
					57.41	42.59	100

KEY: N = Number of respondents. Source: Fieldwork (2018)  
Table 2: Responses of followers as regards role and relevance of Friday Khutab (Sermons) in addressing Girl Child Education and Violence Against Women in Northern Nigeria

Information in Table 2 depicted responses of followers as regards role and relevance of Friday Khutab (Sermons) in addressing Girl Child Education and Violence Against Women in Northern Nigeria in an attempt to answer research question one in this study. The first five item statements (Item No. 1-5) addressed girl-child education. It is evident that item statement had responses of 42 equivalent to 77.78% which implies 'Friday sermons help Muslims in the community to have better understanding of their religion', whereas Muslim follower responses were 'No' to item no. 2-5, meaning that Chief Imams do not deliver sermons on benefits of knowledge to the community, issues relating girl child education, issues relating to role of educated women in the society and sermons that encourage ladies to continue their education after primary school. The Muslim followers 'No responses' percentages for item no. 2-5 were high (61.11%, 68.52%, 74.07% and 66.67% respectively).

Similarly, item no. 6-10 addressed violence against the women. Muslim followers 'Yes responses' to item no. 9 and 10 were little bit above average (i.e. 53.70% and 57.41%), which implies that Chief Imam presents sermons relating to punishment for men who lacks justice to their wives and on rewards of men who take good care of women in the society. However, Muslims followers 'No responses' to item no. 6-8 were high side with 75.93%, 72.22% and 61.11% respectively indicating that Chief Imam did not delivers sermons on rulings that prohibit violence against women in Islam, violence against married women by their husbands and advise men to shun the act of violence against women.

**RESEARCH QUESTION TWO:** Do the Imams discuss issues related to Girl-Child Education in their sermons?

Mosque	No. of Sermons Analyzed	Frequency of Sermons delivered on Girl-Child Education	%	Frequency of Sermons delivered not base on Girl-Child Education	%
Izala sect	144	78	18.06	66	15.28
Darika sect	144	-	-	144	33.33
Non-Sect (Emir)	144	-	-	144	33.33
Total	432	31	18.06	401	81.94

KEY: % means percentage. Source: Fieldwork, 2018  
Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of Sermons delivered on Girl-Child Education across different Mosques

In order to answer research question two in this study, sermons delivered by Imams were analysed and result is presented in Table 3. It was discovered that only in Izala sect mosque where sermons related to Girl-Child Education was delivered totaling 78 sermons representing 18.06% out of 432 (100%) sermons studied. However, 81.94% of the sermons did not talk on Girl-Child Education by Imams in other sect

Mosques. From the foregoing, it can be inferred that Imams in various Mosques did not discuss sermons that related to Girl-Child Education issues.

Analysing this qualitatively when an interview was conducted to ask one of followers in Izala mosque on whether Imam's sermons do centre on "Girl-Child Education", he replied: "In this mosque, Imam occasionally delivered sermons on the topic, 'Girl-Child Education'. The Imam in many times had delivered sermons on importance of education in Islam, most especially women. He (the Imam) had once said, if you train a girl, it is as if you have trained a nation, because woman give births to both male and female children".

Another follower of the mosque was asked of the same matter, he said that: "The Imam do encourage men to sponsor their wards, especially female ones to study both Quranic and western education as these are best legacies that any responsible parents can leave behind for their wards".

Similarly, on this subject matter, a follower responded that: "Look. I cherished this Imam because he speaks 'gaskiya' (truth). In many of his sermons, he asked the parents to sponsor their children in both Quranic and western education so that they will help in our society tomorrow. These children, especially female among them can become medical doctor who will attend to future generation of mothers in our various hospitals".

In the same vein, a follower also said that: "I had heard Imam on different occasions during the 'Khutubah' (sermon) session saying that education is lost property of Muslims, therefore, wherever you see it, grab it. He added that parents should strive hard to make sure that they sponsor their female wards in the field like Medicine and Education. These will make them to be medical doctors in future who will attend to future pregnant mothers in the hospitals and teach future generations in various schools we have".

Another worshipper replied that: "In fact par your question, the Imam had delivered sermons relating to Girl-Child Education in the past. I can one of his sermon which quoted that Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W) said: search of knowledge by Muslim male and female is compulsory, therefore, Islam is religion of wisdom and acquisition of ilm (meaning knowledge)".

In another relation, a respondent (follower) said that: "In many occasions, the Imam of this 'masallacin' (mosque) had delivered 'Khutubah' (Sermons) on the need to acquire both Islamic and western education by our teeming youths. He pointed out that female children must be encouraged in all ramifications to pursue medical related courses to ease the suffering of pregnant mothers in our various hospitals. He added that it is high time northerners woke up from slumber to allow female children go to school, if not we will be subjected to allow non-Muslims male doctors or nurses to see what Allaah has made private in our dear wives or mothers during child delivery".

However, many worshippers interviewed in Darika and Emir Mosques on whether Imam Sermons centred on Girl-Child Education. The following responses were received. A follower from Darika mosque responded that: "In fact I don't think if the Imam of this mosque had ever presented any sermon on such matter, but you can interview another person to hear his view on it". Another follower in the Darika mosque

said that: No, No, No, since I've become an adult and commenced attending Jumua't (Friday) prayer, Imam has neither delivered sermons on the importance of education in Islam nor Girl-Child Education".

In another narration, another worshipper said: "I think this is my 11<sup>th</sup> years of observing Jumm'at (Friday) prayer in this mosque, on no account I have heard Imam delivering sermon on education generally, not to talk of Girl-Child Education". Moreover, an interviewee said that: "The Imam is not concerned with any current issues. He rather sticks to old 'Khutubah' (Sermon)". Another follower said that: "To me, this Imam only studies Islamic education through informal system of education, to tell him to deliver sermons on what he has not valued will be very difficult". Another worshipper from Darika mosque opined that: "Sincerely speaking, though Islam places importance to acquisition of knowledge, but I had not heard him once delivering lecture on the subject matter you asked of".

Furthermore, interviews conducted at non-sects (Emir) mosques revealed the following opinions or views of followers or worshippers on the bone of contention: A worshipper said that: "This is a 'gargajiya' (means old people) mosque, do you think Imam would deliver any sermon related to Girl-Child Education here? I don't think so". The sermon the Imam used has been predated for long and it does not change". Another believer that was interviewed responded that: "Imam would rather discuss this topical issue in another arena, not at the mimbar (a station where Imam stands during sermon), because the sermons the Imam used have been documented from the first Friday of Islamic year (Muharram) till the last Friday of same year (Dhul-Hijjah)".

In another narration, an interviewee responded that: "The Imam has never delivered sermon that related to Girl-Child Education. The sermons he delivers are already printed in book name "Sermons Book" from the beginning of Islamic year till the end of it. The sermons therein were only related to occurrence of each month of the year. For instance, during month of Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca), the sermon will be based on that hajj, etc..."

In another interview, an interviewee stated that: "The Imam in this mosque deliver sermon not based on any current issue as relating to Girl-Child Education. The Imam used ready-made sermons and in this type of sermon, new / current issues are not discussed in it because it has been pre-written before now as such, to add new thing in it may be difficult".

Also, a respondent from non-sects (Emir) mosque responded that: "Imam does not prepare any new sermon on Fridays; rather Imam uses the one that is written in a particular month that suits that Friday". Another worshipper in the Emir mosque responded that: "The answer to your question is No, because Imam is using old Khutubah (sermon) to prepare his sermon on every Friday. In fact, he would deliver the sermon in Arabic and the interpretation is left for the followers".

**RESEARCH QUESTION THREE:** Do the Imams discuss issues related to violence against women in their sermons?

Mosque	No. of Sermons Analyzed	Frequency of Sermons delivered on Violence against women	%	Frequency of Sermons delivered not base on Violence against women	%
Izala sect	144	56	12.96	88	20.37
Darika sect	144	23	5.32	121	28.01
Non-Sect (Emir)	144	-	-	144	33.33
Total	432	79	18.28	401	81.71

KEY: % means percentage. Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of Sermons delivered on Violence against women across different Mosques

In order to answer research question three in this study, sermons delivered by Imams were analysed based on violence against women and result is presented in Table 4. It was evident that both Izala and Darika sect mosques had sermons related to violence against women, totaling 79 sermons representing 18.28% out of 432 (100%) sermons studied. Meanwhile, 81.71% of the sermons did not talk on violence against women. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that Imams in various Mosques did not discuss much sermons related to violence against women.

Qualitatively, interviewees from Izala sect mosques replied interviewers when question relating to sermons on violence against women was asked. A respondent said: "I prefer praying in this mosque to another because of nature of Imam's sermon which is on current affairs, he enlightened us on a Friday to be kind to women, as he quoted one of the traditions of the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) said He is amongst his community, any man who does not kind to women". Another follower from the same mosque when asked the similar question, said, our Imam in this mosque discourages men from being crude to women as it is not allowed in Islam. He added that, Imam said that was the practice during pre-Islamic era (Jahiliyah period) and Islam comes to eradicate it". Besides, a follower also commented that he had heard Imam during Friday sermons one day saying, as husband you give your wife what you eat and drink. It's not allowed for you to eat something good and give your wife what is not good. Eat what our wife eats in terms of food provision".

In another relation from another mosque sect follower who said that; our Imam delivers sermon on kindness to women, but it can be only once in a four month. The sermon on how to relate to women is not common". Another respondent from the mosque argued that I can remember well that there was a Friday when our chief Imam talked at length relationship between a man and women. The sermon on that day centred on the taking care of well-being of our women in the society, especially one's wife." Moreover, when asking question relating violence against women, a follower from Darika sect opined that the Imam in their mosque do preach on kindness to woman, but the sermon does not regular". However, some followers were being asked where they responded that their Imam do not discuss sermon on violence against women".

As per Non-sect (Emir) mosque, when asked about the issue relating to violence against women in the Imam's sermon. A follower responded that, here in this mosque, Imam

does not have any current affairs sermon except the prepare one from first month of hijrah (Muharram) to the end (Dhul-Hijjah), but we do listen to 'pre-khutuba' (a sermon delivers by a knowledgeable) before Imam ascends Pulpit". Another interviewee replied: there is nothing like that in this mosque, Imam do not prepare sermon based on violence against women". In addition, another respondent said that, "this is 'native mosque' where introduction of topical issue in the Friday sermon is not welcomed". In essence, it can be concluded that Friday sermons prepared at the Emir mosques do not accommodate topical issues, such as, violence against woman, girl-child education, etc.

#### SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

This study discovered the following:

- ✓ Friday sermons can play a great role in information/knowledge disseminations in term of girl-child education programme and violence against women.
- ✓ Few Friday sermons were delivered to Muslim followers on education of girl-child
- ✓ Friday sermons were not centred on violence against women. Available records showed that only 18.87% of the sermons were delivered on kindness to women in the study areas.

#### WAY FORWARD

Based on the findings from the study, the following way-forward are recommended to the organizations that monitor the activities of different Muslim sects in the region:

- ✓ The councils of Imams and elders should be incorporated in any government programme that shall benefit the community and Imam should be informed categorically that such issue be discussed at Friday sermons from time to time in as much as such topical issue does not against the tenet of Islam.
- ✓ Conferences and seminars that will include Imams and elders should be organized so as to give them orientation required for the programme.

- ✓ Certain allowance should be set aside for the Chief Imam of various Islamic sects by local government Chairmen.

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