

Evaluating the Historical Development and Challenges of Islamic Education in Ilorin, Nigeria

Masud Ibrahim Oniye: Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria; oniyemasud@unilorin.edu.ng +2348033850768

Yunus Olayinka Garba: Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria; olashile4real@gmail.com +2347039814863

Abstract

This study evaluated the historical development and challenges of Islamic education in Ilorin, Nigeria. The study specifically examined the historical milestones relevant to the development of formal Islamic schools, sources of funding, the schools' contributions to Ilorin's development, and the major challenges confronting formal Islamic schools in the area. A descriptive survey research design with a historical approach was adopted for the study. The population comprised proprietors, principals/head teachers, teachers, and Islamic scholars in formal Islamic schools within Ilorin Emirate, Kwara State. A sample of 321 participants was selected using purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Historical Development and Challenges of Islamic Education Questionnaire (HDCIEQ)" and oral interviews. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. The findings revealed that the historical development of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin was influenced by the reformative efforts of Sheikh Kamaldeen, educational reforms, and increased awareness of Islamic education. The study also showed that funding sources included community contributions, religious organisations, Islamic NGOs, and internally generated activities. Furthermore, the study revealed that formal Islamic schools contributed significantly to the preservation of Islamic values, increased access to education, and socio-economic development of Ilorin. However, inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor infrastructure, lack of curriculum standardisation, and limited government support were identified as major challenges facing the schools. The study recommended improved funding, infrastructural development, curriculum standardisation, and enhanced government support for formal Islamic schools in Ilorin.

Keywords: *Islamic Education, Historical Development, Educational Challenges, Ilorin, Nigeria*

Introduction

Education occupies a central position in the development of every society because it serves as a means of transmitting knowledge, culture, morality, and social values from one generation to another. In Islam, education is highly valued and regarded as both a religious obligation and a tool for moral and intellectual development. Islamic education, therefore, emerged as a system designed not only to teach Qur'anic recitation and Arabic literacy but also to promote ethical conduct, spiritual growth, and societal harmony. In Nigeria, Islamic education predates Western education in many parts of the country, especially in Northern Nigeria and parts of Yorubaland such as Ilorin, Kano, and Sokoto. Among these centres, Ilorin has historically

gained prominence as one of the leading centres of Islamic scholarship in Yorubaland, earning the popular title “Ilu Alfa,” meaning “the city of Islamic scholars.” The city became widely recognized for its long-standing tradition of Qur’anic learning and Arabic scholarship, and for the establishment of formal Islamic schools that contributed immensely to religious and socio-cultural development in the region (Aliyu, 2019).

The origin of Islamic education in Ilorin can be traced to the early nineteenth century, following the migration and activities of Sheikh Salih Alimi, popularly known as Shehu Alimi, a Fulani Islamic scholar associated with the Sokoto Islamic reform movement. Although Islam had existed in Ilorin through earlier Muslim traders and itinerant scholars, the arrival of Sheikh Alimi significantly strengthened Islamic propagation and institutionalized Islamic learning in the town. Historical records indicate that Sheikh Alimi established Qur’anic teaching circles and promoted Arabic literacy, thereby transforming Ilorin into a major centre of Islamic civilization in Yorubaland. His activities also contributed to the establishment of the Ilorin Emirate in the early nineteenth century, which further encouraged the spread of Islam and Islamic scholarship in the region (Eliasu, 2019).

As Islam expanded within the Ilorin Emirate, numerous Qur’anic schools, Arabic learning centres, and mosque-based educational institutions emerged across different communities. Initially, Islamic education in Ilorin was informal and centred around mosques, scholars’ residences, and community gathering places where pupils were taught Qur’anic recitation, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic grammar, and moral instructions. Over time, these traditional systems evolved into organized, formal Islamic schools. During the colonial and post-colonial periods, Islamic education in Ilorin underwent modernization through the introduction of structured curricula, classrooms, administrative systems, and the integration of secular subjects alongside Islamic studies. The emergence of notable educational systems such as the Adabiyya and Markaziyya schools represented major milestones in the modernization of Islamic education in Ilorin. These institutions combined Islamic and Western educational models in order to enable Muslim students to compete favourably with graduates of missionary and government schools while preserving Islamic identity and values (Aliyu, 2019; Adeshina & Suleiman, 2024).

Today, Ilorin possesses a large concentration of Islamic schools ranging from traditional Qur’anic schools to nursery, primary, secondary, and advanced Arabic institutions. Virtually every district within the emirate has one or more Islamic schools established by individuals, Islamic scholars, organizations, or community associations. The rapid growth in the number of Islamic schools reflects the deep attachment of the people of Ilorin to Islamic education and moral upbringing. Islamic schools in Ilorin have produced renowned scholars, judges, teachers, administrators, preachers, and professionals who have contributed significantly to religious, educational, political, and socio-economic development within and outside Kwara State. The city’s reputation as a centre of Islamic scholarship has also attracted students from across Nigeria and neighbouring West African countries seeking Arabic and Islamic education (Sidiq, 2024).

The sustainability and growth of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin have largely depended on various sources of funding. Traditionally, Islamic schools were financed through community support, donations from wealthy Muslims, zakat, waqf endowments, and contributions from parents and guardians. In modern times, tuition fees, philanthropists, alumni associations,

Islamic organizations, and occasional government assistance have also become important sources of financial support for many schools. Despite these funding mechanisms, many Islamic schools continue to struggle with inadequate finances which affect infrastructural development, teacher welfare, instructional materials, and administrative efficiency. Some schools operate under poor learning conditions due to insufficient classrooms, inadequate libraries, limited access to modern educational technologies, and shortage of qualified teachers (Aliyu, 2019).

Despite these challenges, formal Islamic schools have contributed significantly to the development of Ilorin society. They have played important roles in promoting literacy, preserving Islamic culture and traditions, inculcating moral discipline, and fostering peaceful coexistence among members of the community. Islamic schools have equally contributed to manpower development by producing scholars and professionals who serve in religious institutions, schools, government establishments, and private organizations. Through community service, religious enlightenment, and moral instruction, these institutions have strengthened social cohesion and reinforced the identity of Ilorin as a centre of Islamic civilization in Yorubaland. The contributions of prominent Islamic scholars such as Sheikh Yahaya Agodi and Sheikh Okutagidi further demonstrate the impact of Islamic educational institutions on the intellectual and spiritual growth of the Ilorin Emirate (Ridwan et al., 2022; Sidiq, 2024).

However, despite the remarkable achievements of Islamic education in Ilorin, formal Islamic schools continue to face several challenges that threaten their growth and sustainability. Among the major challenges are inadequate funding, a shortage of qualified teachers, poor infrastructural facilities, curriculum imbalance, limited government support, and societal preference for conventional Western education. The influence of globalization and technological advancement has also created pressure on Islamic schools to modernize their instructional methods while maintaining their religious identity and traditional values. In some cases, administrative problems, low teacher remuneration, and inadequate integration of secular subjects have affected the quality and competitiveness of Islamic schools within the contemporary educational system (Adeshina & Suleiman, 2024; Solagberu, 2018).

Against this background, this study seeks to evaluate the historical development and challenges of Islamic education in Ilorin, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to identify historical milestones in the development of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin, examine the sources of funding for these schools, investigate their contributions to the development of Ilorin society, and assess the major challenges confronting formal Islamic schools in the emirate. The study is expected to contribute to the existing literature on Islamic education and to provide useful recommendations for policymakers, educational administrators, Islamic organizations, and other stakeholders interested in advancing Islamic education in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Islamic education has historically played a significant role in the religious, moral, intellectual, and socio-cultural development of Ilorin, Nigeria. Over the years, formal Islamic schools in the emirate have contributed immensely to the preservation of Islamic values, the promotion of Arabic literacy, and the training of scholars and professionals serving both the religious and secular sectors of society. The reputation of Ilorin as a centre of Islamic scholarship has equally

been sustained through the activities of these schools and notable Islamic scholars within the emirate (Aliyu, 2019; Sidiq, 2024). Despite these contributions and the increasing number of Islamic schools across Ilorin, many of these institutions are presently confronted with numerous challenges, such as inadequate funding, a shortage of qualified teachers, poor infrastructural facilities, limited government support, curriculum imbalance, and difficulties in integrating Islamic and Western education effectively. These challenges have continued to affect the quality, administration, sustainability, and overall development of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin (Adeshina & Suleiman, 2024; Solagberu, 2018).

Furthermore, although several studies have examined Islamic education in Nigeria, limited scholarly attention has been given to the historical development, funding mechanisms, contributions, and challenges of formal Islamic schools specifically within the Ilorin Emirate. Existing studies have focused more on the spread of Islam and the contributions of individual Islamic scholars without providing a comprehensive evaluation of the developmental milestones and contemporary issues facing formal Islamic schools in the area (Eliasu, 2019; Ridwan et al., 2022). Consequently, there is inadequate empirical evidence on how these schools have evolved over time, the sources of their financing, their contributions to societal development, and the major problems hindering their effectiveness. Against this background, this study seeks to evaluate the historical development and challenges of Islamic education in Ilorin, Nigeria.

Research Questions

In order to give direction to this study, the following research questions are raised:

1. What were the historical milestones that are relevant to the development of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin?
2. What had been the source of funding in formal Islamic schools in Ilorin?
3. In what ways have the formal Islamic schools contributed to the development of Ilorin?
4. What are the major challenges facing formal Islamic schools in Ilorin?

Literature Review

Concept of Islamic Education

Islamic education is a comprehensive system of learning aimed at developing individuals' intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Unlike secular education, which primarily focuses on intellectual development, Islamic education seeks to produce balanced individuals with sound knowledge, strong moral character, and devotion to Allah. According to Aliyu (2019), Islamic education combines religious instruction with character formation, enabling learners to become responsible members of society. Similarly, Issa and Jibril (2024) explained that contemporary Islamic education has evolved beyond traditional Qur'anic instruction to include science, mathematics, languages, social sciences, and vocational education while maintaining Islamic

ethical principles. This integration has made Islamic schools increasingly relevant within Nigeria's educational system.

Historically, Islamic education in Nigeria preceded Western education in many northern communities and parts of Yorubaland, particularly Ilorin. Fafunwa (1974) observed that Islamic schools provided organized educational opportunities centuries before colonial education was introduced. Today, formal Islamic schools combine Arabic studies, Islamic sciences, and secular subjects in order to prepare learners for both religious and contemporary societal responsibilities (Adeshina & Suleiman, 2024). Historical Development of Islamic Education in Ilorin. The history of Islamic education in Ilorin is inseparable from the spread of Islam and the establishment of the Ilorin Emirate during the nineteenth century. According to Eliasu (2019), although Islam had earlier reached Ilorin through traders and itinerant scholars, the arrival of Sheikh Salih Alimi significantly transformed the town into a major centre of Islamic scholarship. His establishment of Qur'anic schools and promotion of Arabic literacy laid the foundation for organized Islamic education in the emirate. Aliyu (2019) noted that Islamic education initially took place in mosques and scholars' residences, where pupils learned Qur'anic recitation, Arabic grammar, Hadith, Fiqh, and Islamic ethics. As enrolment increased, these informal learning centres gradually developed into structured institutions with classrooms, administrative systems, and standardized curricula.

A major turning point occurred during the educational reforms introduced by Sheikh Kamaldeen Al-Adabiyy, whose establishment of the Adabiyyah School transformed Islamic education in Ilorin. Jimoh (2022) explained that Sheikh Kamaldeen introduced modern instructional methods, classroom organization, timetables, examinations, and the integration of Western subjects into Islamic schools. Although these innovations initially attracted resistance from conservative scholars, they were later accepted and became the foundation for contemporary formal Islamic schools. More recently, Adeshina and Suleiman (2024) argued that the modernization of Arabic and Islamic education between 1943 and 2015 significantly expanded educational opportunities for Muslim children while preserving Islamic identity. Similarly, Sidiq (2024) emphasized the contributions of Sheikh Yahaya Agodi in strengthening Islamic scholarship, improving school administration, and expanding access to Islamic education throughout the Ilorin Emirate.

Sources of Funding for Formal Islamic Schools

Funding remains one of the most critical determinants of educational development. Formal Islamic schools depend on multiple financial sources to sustain their academic programmes and infrastructural development. Aliyu (2019) identified tuition fees, community donations, zakat, waqf endowments, philanthropists, and voluntary contributions as the principal funding sources for Islamic schools in Ilorin. Suleiman (2010) similarly observed that community participation has historically been the backbone of financing Islamic education, as government intervention has generally been limited. Recent studies indicate that many Islamic schools have diversified their income sources. Issa and Jibril (2024) reported that schools increasingly rely on internally generated revenue through agricultural projects, commercial ventures, alumni associations, and partnerships with Islamic organizations to supplement tuition income. Likewise, Abdulrahman (2018) argued that Muslim organizations and charitable foundations have continued to contribute significantly to educational development through scholarships, infrastructural support, and teacher sponsorship. Despite these funding mechanisms,

inadequate financial resources remain a persistent challenge affecting staff welfare, provision of instructional materials, technological facilities, and infrastructural expansion (Adeshina & Suleiman, 2024).

Contributions of Formal Islamic Schools to Community Development

Formal Islamic schools have contributed significantly to educational, religious, economic, and social development in Ilorin. Aliyu (2019) argued that Islamic schools have preserved Islamic traditions and promoted Arabic literacy while simultaneously expanding access to formal education. By integrating Islamic and secular subjects, these schools have produced graduates who serve as teachers, judges, administrators, entrepreneurs, and public servants. According to Abubakar (2022), Islamic schools have contributed to reducing illiteracy and improving educational opportunities among low-income families because their tuition fees are generally affordable. The schools also play important roles in moral development by inculcating discipline, honesty, responsibility, and peaceful coexistence. Ridwan, Abdulganiyu and Ishola (2022) highlighted the contributions of prominent Islamic scholars, particularly Sheikh Okutagidi, whose educational activities promoted Islamic scholarship and strengthened religious consciousness throughout Ilorin. Similarly, Sidiq (2024) noted that Islamic schools have continued to preserve Ilorin's identity as one of the foremost centres of Islamic civilization in Yorubaland. Issa and Jibril (2024) further observed that the introduction of digital technologies into some Islamic schools has improved instructional delivery, expanded learning opportunities, and enhanced institutional competitiveness within Nigeria's educational system.

Challenges Facing Formal Islamic Schools

Despite their achievements, formal Islamic schools continue to face numerous challenges. Aliyu (2019) identified inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor infrastructure, limited government support, and curriculum imbalance as major constraints confronting Islamic schools in Ilorin. Similar findings were reported by Abdul-Raheem (2020), who noted that many Islamiyyah schools lack adequate libraries, laboratories, classrooms, and instructional facilities necessary for quality education. Adeshina and Suleiman (2024) argued that curriculum standardization remains a significant concern because different Islamic schools use different curricula, leading to inconsistencies in teaching quality and learners' academic outcomes. The authors further noted that balancing Islamic studies with secular education continues to present administrative and instructional challenges.

Issa and Jibril (2024) identified inadequate integration of information and communication technology (ICT), insufficient teacher training in digital pedagogy, and limited access to educational technologies as emerging challenges facing Islamic schools in the digital era. Furthermore, Solagberu (2018) emphasized that globalization and modernization have increased societal expectations of Islamic schools, compelling them to improve educational quality while preserving their religious identity. Poor remuneration, inadequate supervision, and limited government recognition have also contributed to teacher turnover and declining institutional capacity.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have investigated different aspects of Islamic education in Nigeria and Ilorin. Aliyu (2019) examined the modernization of Islamic education through the Adabiyah and Markaziyyah educational systems in Ilorin using historical research methods. The study found that educational reforms significantly modernized Islamic schools and increased their acceptance among Muslims. However, the study focused mainly on modernization, without examining funding mechanisms or current institutional challenges. Adeshina and Suleiman (2024) investigated the modernization of Arabic and Islamic education in Ilorin Emirate between 1943 and 2015 using documentary and historical analyses. Their findings indicated that modernization improved access to education and enhanced educational administration, although curriculum integration and funding challenges persisted. Issa and Jibril (2024) explored Islamic education in the digital age using selected formal Islamic schools in Ilorin. Their study revealed increasing adoption of digital instructional technologies but identified inadequate ICT infrastructure and teacher digital competence as major constraints.

Ridwan et al. (2022) investigated the role of Sheikh Okutagidi in the spread of Islam within Ilorin Emirate. Their findings showed that Islamic scholars contributed immensely to educational development through preaching, the establishment of schools, and the mentorship of younger scholars. Sidiq (2024) studied the educational contributions of Sheikh Yahaya Agodi and found that his educational reforms strengthened Islamic scholarship and institutional development across Ilorin Emirate. Abubakar (2022) examined the contributions of Islamic education to the development of Ilorin using a historical approach. The study established that Islamic schools have contributed substantially to literacy development, moral education, and socio-economic growth.

Gap in the Literature

The reviewed literature demonstrates that previous studies have concentrated on the modernization of Islamic education (Aliyu, 2019; Adeshina & Suleiman, 2024), the contributions of individual Islamic scholars (Ridwan et al., 2022; Sidiq, 2024) the socio-economic impact of Islamic education (Abubakar, 2022) and the digital transformation of Islamic schools (Issa & Jibril, 2024). However, there is limited empirical research that simultaneously examines the historical milestones, funding sources, contributions, and contemporary challenges of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin within a single comprehensive study. This gap justifies the present study, which evaluates the historical development and challenges of Islamic education in Ilorin, Nigeria. The review also aligns with the study's objectives and other issues.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a historical approach to evaluate the historical development and challenges of Islamic education in Ilorin, Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to examine both the historical evolution and the present condition of formal Islamic schools in the study area. The historical aspect assisted in tracing the origins, growth, and major milestones of Islamic education in Ilorin, while the descriptive survey aspect facilitated the collection of current data on funding sources, contributions, and the challenges facing formal Islamic schools. The study population

comprised proprietors, principals/head teachers, teachers, and Islamic scholars in formal Islamic schools within Ilorin Emirate, Kwara State.

A sample size of 321 participants was used for the study. The study employed a multi-stage sampling design involving purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling. The purposive sampling technique was used to select recognized formal Islamic schools in Ilorin Emirate based on their relevance to the study, while the stratified sampling technique was used to group respondents into categories such as proprietors, principals/head teachers, teachers, and Islamic scholars. Thereafter, simple random sampling technique was employed to select respondents from each category to ensure fairness and equal representation of participants in the study. The instrument for data collection was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled “Historical Development and Challenges of Islamic Education Questionnaire (HDCIEQ)” alongside oral interviews for selected Islamic scholars and school administrators. The data collected were analyzed using mixed statistical tools, such as Infographics for research questions 1-3, while mean rating and standard deviation were used to answer the research question 4.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	108	33.6
Female	213	66.4
Total	321	100
Category		
	Frequency	Percentage
Proprietors	18	5.6
Principals/head teachers	84	26.2
Teachers	168	52.3
Islamic Scholars	51	15.9
Total	321	100

The table shows the demographic distribution of the respondents used for the study. Based on gender, 108 respondents, representing 33.6%, were male, while 213 respondents, representing 66.4%, were female, indicating that female participants constituted the majority of the respondents. The table further reveals that teachers had the highest representation with 168 respondents (52.3%), followed by principals/head teachers with 84 respondents (26.2%), Islamic scholars with 51 respondents (15.9%), and proprietors with 18 respondents (5.6%). This implies that teachers formed the largest category of participants involved in the study.

Question One: What were the historical milestones that are relevant to the development of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin?

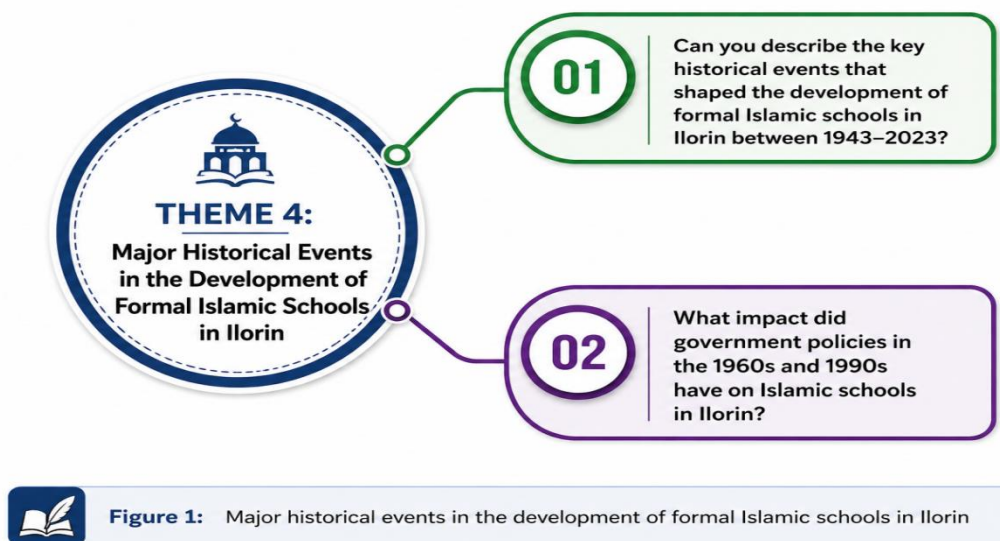


Figure 1 presents a conceptual diagram illustrating the major historical events in the development of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin. Accordingly, the historical milestones relevant to the development of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin revolved around two major themes. First, the development of these schools was shaped by significant historical events that occurred between 1943 and 2023, which marked different phases of their establishment, expansion, and institutional transformation. Second, government educational policies introduced during the 1960s and 1990s had a profound impact on the administration, curriculum, recognition, and overall development of Islamic schools in Ilorin. Together, these historical events and policy interventions served as critical milestones that influenced the growth, modernization, and sustainability of formal Islamic education in Ilorin over the eight-decade period.

Question Two: What had been the source of funding in formal Islamic schools in Ilorin?



Figure 2 presents a conceptual illustration of the funding sources of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin. Basically, the sources of funding for formal Islamic schools in Ilorin are derived from multiple channels. The diagram indicates that funding is generated through activities affiliated with the schools, suggesting that internally organized programmes and school-related initiatives contribute to their financial sustainability. It also identifies the main sources of funding as a key aspect of the schools' financial structure, implying that the institutions rely on established revenue streams to support their operations. Furthermore, the diagram shows that formal Islamic schools receive financial support from the government, private individuals, and religious organizations, highlighting the importance of external stakeholders in financing educational activities. Collectively, these funding mechanisms demonstrate that the financial sustainability of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin depends on a combination of internally generated activities and external support from public institutions, philanthropists, and faith-based organizations.

Question Three: In what ways have the formal Islamic schools contributed to the development of Ilorin as their host community?

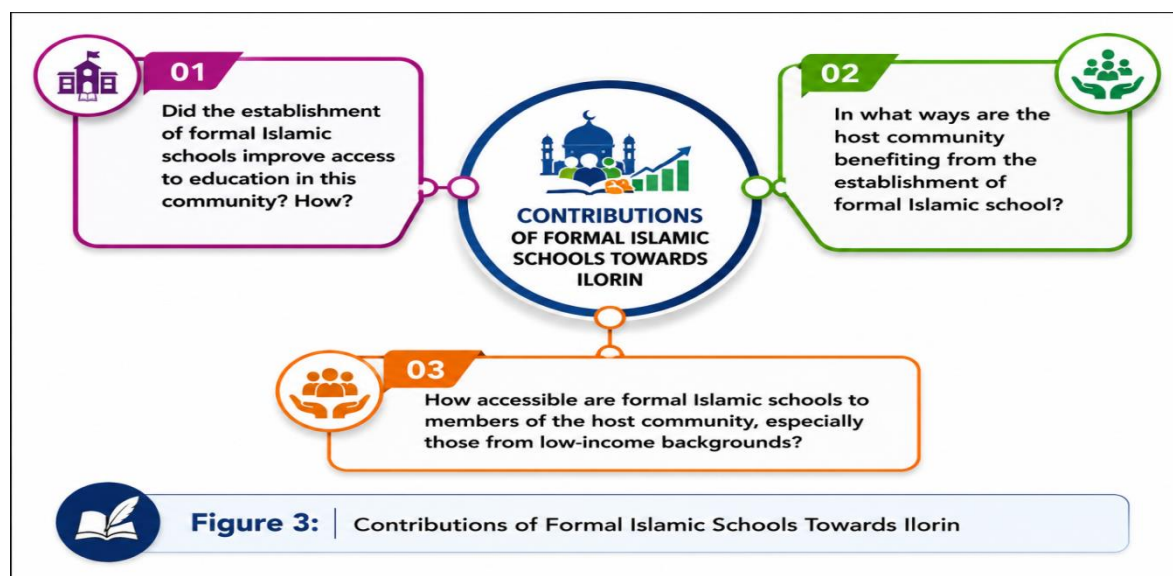


Figure 3 presents the contributions of formal Islamic schools towards the development of Ilorin. It was revealed that formal Islamic schools have contributed significantly to the development of Ilorin by improving educational access, promoting community development, and providing inclusive learning opportunities for residents. The establishment of these schools has expanded access to formal education within the host community by making both Islamic and Western education more readily available to children and young people. The schools have also benefited the community through social, educational, and human capital development by producing morally upright and educated individuals who contribute positively to society. In addition, the diagram indicates that formal Islamic schools have remained accessible to members of the host community, particularly individuals from low-income backgrounds, thereby promoting educational inclusion and reducing barriers to learning. Overall, the establishment of formal Islamic schools has enhanced educational opportunities, strengthened community development, and fostered social and economic advancement within Ilorin.

Question Four: What are the major challenges facing formal Islamic schools in Ilorin?

A cut-off score of 3.0 was used as the baseline for determining participants' responses since the questionnaire items on the challenges facing formal Islamic schools in Ilorin were structured in a five-point response type. Therefore, items found with mean scores equal to or above 3.0 were affirmed, while items with mean scores below 3.0 were remarked otherwise.

Table 2: Challenges Facing Formal Islamic Schools in Ilorin

N	Items	Mean	S.D	Remarks
1	Funding of formal Islamic schools is insufficient.	3.86	1.00	Affirmed
2	Formal Islamic schools lack adequately qualified teachers.	3.69	0.99	Affirmed
3	The physical infrastructure in formal Islamic schools is inadequate for effective learning.	3.66	0.95	Affirmed
4	There is no standardised curriculum used across formal Islamic schools in Ilorin.	3.79	0.95	Affirmed
5	Formal Islamic schools are not given equal recognition and attention by the authorities.	3.83	0.93	Affirmed
6	Students in Islamic schools are often discriminated against in society.	3.74	0.93	Affirmed
7	Government agencies do not adequately supervise or regulate formal Islamic schools.	3.88	0.96	Affirmed
8	Formal Islamic school managers in Ilorin do not possess the required educational experience or the essential expertise in school organisation, administration, and management.	2.93	0.95	Not Affirmed
9	Formal Islamic schools lack the necessary literature in a few key areas for efficient instruction.	3.64	0.95	Affirmed
10	Poor remuneration hinders the growth of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin.	3.72	0.98	Affirmed

Source: Field Work (2025)

As shown in Table 5, it was affirmed that the respondents affirmed that challenges facing funding of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin include inadequate provision of funds, lack of adequate qualified teachers, inadequate physical infrastructure, lack of standardised curriculum, lack of adequate recognition by government authorities, discrimination against students of formal Islamic schools, inadequate supervision by government agencies, lack of necessary literature for efficient instruction, and poor remuneration. However, the respondents refute the fact that formal Islamic school managers lack the required educational experience or expertise in school administration, organisation, and management. This implies that formal Islamic schools in Ilorin face a lot of challenges in their activities.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the historical development of formal Islamic schools in Ilorin was shaped by major milestones such as the reformative efforts of Sheikh Kamaldeen in 1938, his resistance by conservative Islamic scholars, the eventual acceptance of educational reforms by other scholars, and the influence of government educational reforms of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. This finding corroborates Jimoh (2022), who asserted that Sheikh Kamaldeen's modernization of Islamic education generated strong opposition from conservative scholars in Ilorin, while Abdulrahman (2018) noted that Muslim individuals and organizations have contributed immensely to the development of modern Islamic education in Nigeria through school establishment and educational support programmes.

The study also showed that the major sources of funding for formal Islamic schools in Ilorin include contributions from local Muslim communities, religious organizations, Islamic NGOs, philanthropists, and income-generating activities such as farming, poultry, fishing, and sales of stationery materials. This finding aligns with Suleiman (2010), who observed that Islamic schools in Nigeria largely depend on community support and internally generated revenue due to limited government assistance.

The findings further indicated that formal Islamic schools have contributed significantly to the development of Ilorin by preserving Islamic values and culture, increasing access to education, reducing the number of out-of-school children, and providing affordable education for low-income families. This supports the findings of Abubakar (2022), who maintained that Islamic education has contributed to the socio-economic development of Ilorin, while Abdur-Razaq (2019) asserted that the culture and identity of Ilorin are strongly connected to Islamic principles and educational traditions.

Finally, the study discovered that formal Islamic schools in Ilorin are confronted with several challenges, including inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor infrastructural facilities, lack of standardised curriculum, limited government support, and inadequate monitoring and quality assurance. These challenges negatively affect the quality and sustainability of Islamic education in the area. The finding concurs with Abdul-Raheem (2020), who emphasized that many Islamiyyah schools in Nigeria still struggle to meet modern educational standards because of poor infrastructure and outdated administrative practices. The shortage of qualified teachers was linked to poor remuneration, which often forces trained teachers to seek better opportunities in government and private conventional schools. The lack of curriculum standardisation also contributes to inconsistencies in teaching and evaluation processes.

Recommendations

- I. Government and educational stakeholders should strengthen support for the development of formal Islamic schools by recognizing their historical contributions and integrating them more fully into the educational system.
- II. School proprietors, Islamic organizations, philanthropists, and Muslim communities should diversify and strengthen funding mechanisms for formal Islamic schools by establishing sustainable endowment (waqf) schemes, expanding income-generating ventures, and encouraging greater community participation.
- III. Formal Islamic schools should consolidate and expand their contributions to educational and community development by increasing access to quality education, promoting Islamic values and cultural heritage, and implementing programmes that reduce the number of out-of-school children, particularly among economically disadvantaged families in Ilorin.
- IV. The Kwara State Ministry of Education, quality assurance agencies, and school proprietors should collaborate to address the major challenges confronting formal Islamic schools by standardizing the curriculum, improving teachers' remuneration and professional development, upgrading school infrastructure, and strengthening

monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms to enhance educational quality and long-term sustainability.

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