

Review Article

Belief System among Rural Dwellers of Sokoto and Kebbi States

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Abstract: This paper intends to examine the factors that are responsible for the decay in educational sector in rural areas pertaining to Islamic beliefs and practices in rural communities of Sokoto and Kebbi states. The Paper further outlined the problems and providing possible solutions to them.

Keywords: Islamic beliefs and practices in rural communities of Sokoto and Kebbi states.

INTRODUCTION

This paper titled “the belief system among the rural dweller of Sokoto and Kebbi States” Belief system among rural dwellers it entails all Islamic and non-Islamic Activities by Muslims living in rural areas. It means all activities by rural dwellers with the belief that they are putting into practice. This include the customs, tradition as well as their superstitious beliefs which are already part of their day to day activities and their normal life.

Aspects of belief system, the customs and traditions of Muslims in rural communities of Sokoto and Kebbi States ,superstitious beliefs will all be discussed. factors that are responsible for the decay in educational sector in rural areas pertaining to Islamic beliefs and practices in rural communities, further explains the cause of low Islamic education in the rural communities thereby identifying problems and providing possible solutions to them.

Factors Responsible For Malpractice

The factors responsible for malpractices in belief system in the rural communities in general and those rural communities chosen for the research in particular include the following.

Lack of Home Training

Women all over the world are significant in the upbringing and early stage learning of every child. They are therefore, considered to be the first teachers to their children who teach the basics and preliminaries of Islamic teachings in their homes. That is why literacy

among such mothers is regarded as very important in the development of Islamic knowledge among the environment which is regarded as necessary and inevitableⁱ. That is why the Prophet (SAW) in his *hadith* is reported to have said;

*Of all that a father can give to his children, the best is their good education and training.*ⁱⁱ

Examples of the effects in illiteracy of mothers is that mothers cannot teach their children supplications, cannot make corrections regarding religious theoretical and practical practices and do not even serve as examples to their children in relation to practical and religious aspects of the religion. where as the Hadith of the Prophet (SAW) says

*Every one of you (people) is responsible, and everyone is responsible for whatever falls under his responsibility. A man is like a shepherd of his own family, and he is responsible for them.*ⁱⁱⁱ

This, therefore, indicates the importance of proper home training as the responsibility of the parents. Gudai in Gwandu local government of Kebbi state is the village found with the highest issues of illiteracy among mothers while Barkeji is having the least according to research finding^{iv}.

Moral Decadence among Parents

Due to the influence of parents in the life of their children, parents have a major role in shaping the behaviors of their children which is why immoral

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behaviors on the parts of parents is one of the major contributing factor causing malpractices in beliefs and practical observance of the religion. Example of moral vices, which lead to moral decay in our children, include un cleanliness in the house and body, lack of respect on the part of parents to one another as well as abuses rendered by parents to one another and the children as well.^v Allah (SWT) made mention of the importance and significance of proper moral upbringing in a Qur'anic verse which says;
O you who believe! Ward off your selves and your families against fire (hell) whose fuel is men and stone^{vi}.

The prophet (SAW) in a Hadith is also reported to have said;

Look very carefully and minutely as to where you are placing your child, because genes and hereditary qualities are transferred in a concealed and unintentional way and have their effect.^{vii}

These among others are some of the moral vices which lead to moral and intellectual decay due to lack of Islamic knowledge mostly on the part of the women (mothers) who are the primary teachers in the house. Moral decadence among parents is mostly found in Zuguru according to interview conducted, even though the other villages also have cases of moral decay on the part of parents.^{viii}

General Illiteracy

Illiteracy among the general public in our rural environment is another major contributing factor responsible for malpractices in belief and practical observances. This is to say that, general illiteracy of very important aspect of the religion such as inheritance, zakah, marriage, business and general conduct leads to so many problems such as divorce and family crises^{ix}. More so, the disregard for the rulings and commandments of Allah (SWT) thereby leading to vices such as adultery and fornication, drinking of alcohol, gambling, bribery and corruption as well as theft which also contributes to malpractices in the practical observances. The Glorious Qur'an and hadith stress the importance of knowledge in the verse which says;

Only those of Allah's servants who are learned truly fear Him.^x

The prophet (SAW) is reported to have said;

The search for knowledge is a duty for every Muslim, male or female.^{xi}

Another hadith states;

The ink of the scholar is more precious than the blood of the martyr.^{xii}

These among others are some of the verses and ahadith that stress the importance of knowledge in Islam. Illiteracy therefore, is shun upon and discouraged in Islam. This is why the hadith of the Prophet (SAW) states;

Woe unto him who knows not (have no knowledge)^{xiii}

Another hadith states thus;

Be a scholar, or a teacher or a listener, or fond of. And don't become the fifth, you will be destroyed^{xiv}

General illiteracy therefore, is mostly found in Gudai village of Kebbi State and Taloka village of Sokoto state.^{xv}

Low Level of Preaching Activities

Low level of preaching activities in rural communities is another major factor that hinders Islamic development in the educational sector in relation to Islamic teachings in rural communities. Though, the *Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah Wa Iqamatis Sunnah* is doing a great job as well as other Islamic organizations such as Muslim Sisters Organization (MSO) and Federation of Muslims Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN)^{xvi} in organizing preaching activities in the villages, yet regular activities are not conducted especially those that affect women, mostly in Madadi village in Kebbi state.^{xvii} Thereby, improving their Islamic knowledge. That is to say, that these preaching activities are usually done once in a while instead of doing so on regular basis.

These among others are some of the major contributing factors that are responsible for malpractices in the practical observances in our locality today. They tend to hinder Islamic educational development in these rural communities and therefore need to be addressed in order to bring about more understanding of Islamic morals, Islamic knowledge and proper understanding of Islam among our communities at the grassroots.

Aspect of Belief System

Belief system constitutes the six articles of faith which comprise of belief in the Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah, belief in the Prophets, the Books, the Angels, the Day of Judgment and belief in *Qadr* (luck) good or bad. These would be discussed one after the other.

Belief in Allah

This is the first half of the basic testimony of faith, *shahadah*. The theological term that expresses the concept of unity (*tawheed*) . It entails total belief in the Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah as mentioned in *Suratul Ikhlas* the 112th chapter of the Qur'an which states;

Say; *He is God, the One and only God. The Eternal the Absolute. He begets none, nor is He begotten, and there is nothing that could be compared to Him.*^{xviii}

This *surah* can be said to have embraced in the clearest of terms, the principal and most fundamental ideas of the great truth of Islam. God's oneness is such that there is no reality and no true and permanent existence except His. He has no associates and therefore, considers *shirk* (associating God with something) as the major sin that will automatically make a believer to be called a *kafir* (non believer). Muslim theologians such as Imam Al-Ghazali arrived at lists of the most essential attributes of God. These include.

- Knowledge: God knows everything.
- Power: God can do anything.
- Will : everything happens according to God's will
- Speech: the Qur'an is the eternal speech of God
- Life: God lives eternally
- Hearing: nothing one says is hidden from God
- Sight: God is everywhere, nothing is hidden from His sight

Other attributes of Allah are implied by the above mentioned lists as well as the 99 names of Allah. These among others are things a Muslim must believe in about the superiority of Allah above all and sundry. The interviews conducted reveal that people generally believe in Allah. *Wallahu a'a lam* and Allah knows best.^{xix}

Belief in the Messengers of Allah

The foremost messenger is Muhammad (SAW) as the second half of the *shahadah* (testimony) states; *Muhammad is the messenger of God*. A messenger is one who brings a revelation of the heavenly book. They are men chosen by Allah (SWT) at different times and sent to different nations of the world. Allah chose only good truthful men as His prophets and messengers so that people could trust them and they would serve as the best example to their people. The Qur'an made mention of 25 messengers and prophets, the first of whom is Adam (AS) and the last of who is Muhammad (SAW).

The messengers of Allah all believed in Allah and submitted their hearts to him. However, it was through Muhammad (SAW) the last prophet that the religion was given in its full and final form. This is found in the verse of the Qur'an which states;

This day I have completed for you your religion and fulfilled my favor on you, and chosen for you Islam as a religion.^{xx}

The Qur'an, therefore being the true and final message of Allah which has never been changed or lost needs no new messenger to bring it again. Therefore,

there have been no messengers or prophets after Muhammad the last prophet and there will be no more. This article of faith is considered to be believed by all according to interviews conducted in the course of this research.

Belief in the Revealed books

Revealed Books means specific manifestation of the heavenly book *Ummul kita'b*. The revelation of *al-Taura* to Musa (AS), *al-Zabur* to Dawud (AS), and *al-Injil* to Isa (AS) came from the same heavenly book as does the Qur'an. These earlier revelations were incomplete in that they didn't contain the entire heavenly book. It is believed that the earlier books were corrupted which was why prophet Muhammad (SAW) was sent with an uncorrupted and complete redemption. Details of the messages may differ according to local or temporal needs, but the basics are the same. They have one origin; God the Most High, who creates, proportions well, determines and guides.^{xxi} This can be seen in the verse which states;

All this has been indeed stated in the earlier revelations the scriptures of Abraham and Moses^{xxii}

A Muslim therefore must believe in all the revealed books as being originally Allah's^s revelation which is generally so based on the interviews conducted.

Belief in angels

Angels are Allah's creation from light. They are servants of Allah who are in total obedience to Him and never disobey Allah's^s orders. Some of them have specific duties as mentioned in the Qur'an such as angel Jibril who is in charge of bringing down revelation to prophets. Raqib and Atid, are the angels assigned to every individual, Ridwan in charge of the gates of paradise, Munkar and Nakir in charge of questioning in the grave etc. these among others are some of the angels mentioned with their specific duties. Some angels are made mentioned in the glorious Qur'an with their duties in the verse which states thus;

Yet there are guardians watching over you, noble recorders, who know all that you do.^{xxiii}

Muslim must therefore, believe in their existence as the creation of God which is generally accepted by all and sundry based on the interview conducted in the area.

Belief in the Day of resurrection

Belief in the Day of Resurrection entails to believe that there is life after death. It means that a Muslim must have it at the back of his mind that whatever he does shall be accounted for in the life after death. The Glorious Qur'an presents many pictures of both paradise and hell indicating that both have seven levels. Heaven is explained to be a well watered garden

in which the occupant live a serene life of enjoyment, while the hell consists of different kinds of punishment. This can be found in many verses as thus;

Their reward (awaits them) with their lord; the gardens of Eden through which running waters flow, in which they will abide forever. God is well pleased with them and they with Him^{xxiv}.

Suratul naba' is a chapter in the glorious Qur'an which so much discusses about paradise and hell and those that will be their occupants. Belief in the day of resurrection is among the articles of faith that is accepted by all in respect of the rural areas where this research was conducted according to information based on interviews conducted.

Belief in Qadr good or bad

Belief in *Qadr* means to believe that whatever happens to a Muslim whether good or bad has already been pre-ordained by Allah. It means to have total faith that Allah (SWT) has destined all that will happen and that whatever happens is for the common good. That is why Islam encourages Muslims to accept whatever comes their way and that what is yours will be yours no matter what and vis-à-vis. This is indicated in the hadith which states;

Young man, I will teach you some words. Be mindful of God and He will take care of you. Be mindful of Him and you shall find Him at your side. If you need help, seek it from God. Know that if the whole world were to gather together in order to help you; they will not be able to help except if God had written so. And if the whole world were to gather together in order to harm you; they would not harm you except if God had written so. The pens have been lifted and pages are dry.^{xxv}

Belief in these articles of faith therefore is one of the fundamental basic things that a Muslim must believe in order to have firm faith. A Muslim must firmly and sincerely believe in all the above mentioned to be a true Muslim. It should be noted that, though, a majority of the people believe in this article of faith, yet some still believe in sooth Sayers and fortune tellers. This is affirmed based on interviews conducted with the maximum casualties found in Gudai.^{xxvi} It should however be noted that they do so without knowing the implication.

Customs and traditions of rural dwellers

Customs and traditions are simply explained as the integrated system of learned behavioral pattern which are characteristics of the members of a society passed from generation to generation^{xxvii}. The two are a product of man's relationship with his environment in the sense that any community without customs and traditions is not in full existence.

From the above definition, it can be said that customs and traditions can be said to be totally of man's way of life. Therefore, customs and traditions of Muslims in rural areas mean all ways of life in regard to the rural areas in Sokoto and Kebbi states in particular and which are not Islamic in nature.

It therefore entails all activities outside the pillars of Islam and the articles of faith. Sometimes these activities can even be regarded as innovations (*Bid'ah*) which are assumed to be part of Islam which in the real sense are not, because they are neither found in the Qur'an nor in the Hadith of the prophet (S.A.W).

From the above analysis therefore, it can be said that most of the customs and traditions of the rural dwellers are generally innovations as the customs and traditions of Hausa people are generally interwoven with the Islamic religion.

These customs and traditions are grouped into 5 in line with classification of innovation.

- Compulsory innovations (*Wajiba*)
- Encouraged innovation (*Mandub*)
- Prohibited innovation (*Muharrama*)
- Disliked innovation (*Makruh*)
- Intermediate innovation (*Mubahiya*)

This research is going to discuss disliked and prohibited innovations in the study area.

Disliked innovation (*bid'ah*)

This kind of innovation consists of customs and traditions found in our localities that are interwoven with religion and that which is discouraged by the religion and which cannot be found in the Qur'an and *Ahadith* of the prophet (SAW). These customs and traditions are still practiced in our rural communities today with the belief that they are in accordance with the dictates of Islam out of lack of proper knowledge of its *hukum* among the rural dwellers. An example of this innovation is teaching of children in a mosque. It is disliked Islamically and is discouraged if the children do not play in the mosque.^{xxviii} But if in the course of learning they tend to play, then it is considered to be prohibited. Yet one finds many places in the rural areas where mosques are used as schools for Islamic learning such as in Taloka of Goronyo local government^{xxix}. Other examples are ceremonies attached to circumcision in our rural communities today. When a child is being circumcised, a ceremony is arranged where a lot of money will be spent which is also considered as an innovation disliked by the *Shariah* this is also practical in, Yaule Birni and Ceberu in Gwandu local government of Kebbi State^{xxx}.

Other innovations in relation to marriage are also among major customs and traditions that are highly regarded as Islamic in nature whereas the religion has strongly discouraged them. Money being collected by the bride from the groom as *Hakkin Shinfida*^{xxxi} which is

prohibited by the *shariah* is still in practice in our rural communities.

These among others are examples of some customs and traditions that are being practiced in our localities today as part and parcel of Islamic ruling but are termed in Islam as innovations which are disliked and even discouraged by Islamic religion unknown to our brothers and sisters in the rural areas.

From the above stated examples, it can be seen that a lot of superstitious beliefs and practices are originally aimed at encouraging Islamic practices by Muslims but are later hold unto by ignorant Muslims as the real Islamic injunction with their consequences.

Prohibited innovation (muharrama)

This kind of innovation consists of customs and traditions found in our localities that are interwoven with religion which are prohibited by the religion and cannot be found in the Qur'an and *Ahadith* of the prophet (SAW).

An example of this kind of innovation is the programs that are being conducted during marriage ceremonies in which both males and females are in attendance. It is prohibited in Islam due to the fact that males and females end up mixing up in the same place who are not *Muharrams*. These activities are being practiced in places like Goronyo and Sanyinna. Another example is that of eating and drinking during condolence visits.^{xxxii} This is to say that people now go to condolences and stay over from morning till sunset in order to eat and drink all kinds of foods as if it were ceremonies which is now commonly practiced in places such as Sanyinna, Zoguru and Barkeji.

These among others are examples of some innovations being practiced in our environments which are prohibited by Islamic religion.

Superstitious belief in rural Muslims

Superstition means belief in things that are not real or possible.^{xxxiii} It means belief that a particular thing will happen if and when a particular thing is done.

Muslims in the rural areas are generally superstitious in nature. Because of the interwoven nature of religion and customs in the rural settlement, they tend to observe these superstitious activities as religious. Though it should be noted that a lot of these superstitious beliefs are established by the learned in the

society in order to instill practice of religious observance right from childhood, yet most of the consequences associated with them are not real not to talk of being religious in nature, example of these superstitious beliefs includes:

- The person who dies on Friday or on *Eid* Day will go straight to paradise. This is a superstitious belief that gives Friday superiority over other days. Fridays being known as Muslim sacred days just as Sunday is a day sacred to Christians.^{xxxiv}
- If a girl does not cover her hair with a scarf; the devil will urinate on her head. This is another superstitious belief by Muslims especially in the rural areas. It is actually a way to encourage women especially young children to always cover their head as in conjunction with Islamic rulings.^{xxxv}
- If you eat food as you walk, you are in fact eating with the devil. This is another superstitious belief that discourages the habit of eating while walking which is also disliked in Islam.^{xxxvi}

These among others are some of the superstitious beliefs that are innovative but are encouraged and fellowship is observed. This should therefore be moderated in our society and particularly in the rural areas. This is therefore classified as prohibited) Innovation (*Muharrama*).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some of the recommendatios of the research: _

- Islamic organizations like izala, Tijjaniyyah, Qadiriyyah, J.N.I and others alike should set up a team of preachers charge with the responsibility of teaching the people in the areas about the Islamic shariah concerning all acts of ibadat.
- Establishment of centres of Islamic learning by the government.
- Government should also give Islamic scholarship to the rural dwellers
- Islamic Competition should organized by both the government and Islamic organization so as to encourage them to pay much attention in seeking for Islamic knowledge.
- Government should fight poverty in the area. This is because poverty play a major role in preventing people from studies.

END NOTES

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