

LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL ROLES OF IMAMS AND MUSLIMS IN OYO TOWN

By

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Abstract

The Imams play crucial roles in Nigeria, besides their spiritual and educational roles of leading prayers; interpreting and disseminating Islamic teachings; exhorting their congregations to serve Allah and embrace good acts, they also serve as community leaders with the mandates of providing guidance on ethical-moral issues in the society. These notwithstanding, many Imams are faced with daunting challenges such as low literacy level in western education, poor remuneration and unhealthy competition with other clerics. These place hindrances on their ability to fully play their leadership and educational roles in the society. This paper sought to investigate the roles of Imams in Nigeria with focus on Oyo town. It examined the perception of Muslims on the expected roles of Imams; the challenges being experienced in the course of performing their roles and methods of addressing these challenges. Questionnaires were administered on some sampled population in Oyo town. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to administer the instrument in mosques across the four local governments in Oyo town and frequency counts and percentage distribution were used to analyze the data collected. The paper revealed that the Imams have not optimally played their multi-faceted roles in the society due to various challenges. It thus recommends among others that Muslim leaders and Islamic Institutions should champion the course of providing adequate training for the Imams. Besides this, Imams should be given adequate financial support to enable them perform their roles effectively.

Keywords: Imams, leadership and educational Roles, among Muslims.

Introduction

The functions of Imams are generally perceived as being confined to the spiritual aspect of life. To many people, their task is to simply lead ritual prayers for the Muslims in their various mosques. But beyond this lies a more comprehensive roles of Imams which include providing effective leadership as well as educating their congregants, the objective of which is to strengthen Muslim's relationship with Allah and fellow humans in the Society. The Imam is thus saddled with the onerous task of guiding his congregants to live a purposeful life and secure the bliss of the hereafter. This goal is quite achievable if he provides good leadership to the members of his mosque.

Leadership is the process of inspiring, motivating, and guiding others to achieve a common goal or vision. A good leader possesses a combination of skills, traits, and qualities that enable him to influence and empower others to work towards a shared objective. Education on the other hand is an instrument for change and development. It is through education that the individual's life can be affected positively; hence, Onyeachu (2016) asserted that education brings about changes in behaviour of an individual. Such changes brings many benefits to the society and serve as catalyst that enhance national development. No wonder, Hassan (2019) regarded education as that which is critical in the development of modern societies.

In the purview of Islam, the role of education is to help an individual Muslim strengthen his *Iman* and surrender to the will of Allah, and to acquire wisdom which can transform him or her into a good Muslim. Furthermore, education in Islam is depicted in the Qur'an as guidance and instructions which are concerned with aspects of moral qualities and condemns all kinds of evil and sinful deeds, with the objective of promoting good *akhlāq* (behaviour) (Qur'an 58:11, 39:9). This work thus examined the leadership and educational roles of Imams with a view to determining the extent to which they perform these roles and identifying the means of enhancing and strengthening the functions of Imams in the Nigerian society.

Conceptual Review

Imām whose plural form is *A'immah* is an Islamic leadership position. Imām is most commonly used as the title of a prayer leader of a mosque. It is also used as an honorary title for a recognized religious scholarly authority in Islam. It is especially used for a jurist (*Faqīh*) and often for the founders of the four Sunni *Madhhabs* or schools of *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), as well as an authority on *Tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis). Scholars such as Al-Tabari or Ibn Kathir were as such regarded as Imams. It may also refer to the *Muhaddithūn* or scholars who created the analytical sciences related to Hadith (Imran, 2022). Among most Shia' Muslims, the Imams are absolute infallible leaders of the Islamic community after the Prophet. Shia's consider the term to be only applicable to the members and descendants of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, the family of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. In Twelver Shi'ism, there are fourteen infallibles, twelve of which are Imams.

In this context, Imam is conceived as the one who leads Islamic prayers such as the five daily prayers, the Jumat prayers, the 'Id prayers and others. He also serves as the spiritual leader of his Muslim community and provides religious guidance for them. The performance of these tasks will be enhanced if the Imams possess the following qualities:

Basic Qualities of an Imam

According to Imran (2022), knowledge is the first criterion for choosing an Imam. This is because members of the Islamic faith look to the Imam for answers and guidance. The Imam must possess adequate knowledge of the Quran, Hadith and other sources of the Shariah. He must have full grasp of the knowledge required for the practice of Islam and disseminate its teachings effectively. Besides this, the Imam is expected to be able to demonstrate high morals and ethical standards that are above reproach. He must be a God conscious and pious Muslim, who is mentally and physically sound, morally upright and deeply spiritual. In his submission, Kalim (2018) asserts that an imam must follow the laws of Islam and avoid errors in his everyday life. As a leader, he must lead by example and earn the trust of his followers and of society. This implies that the Imam is not only a spiritual and religious leader of the individual followers of Islam, he is also a social and political leader for the religion itself. He must have the

courage to lead well and do what is best for Islamic faith in the society while staying true to Islamic values and beliefs.

The focus of this work is the assessment of the leadership and educational roles of Imams. Thus, it is essential to examine the concept of leadership and education and their impacts on the functions of Imams in the Nigerian society

The Concept of Leadership and Education

Leadership trait is the ability of an individual or a group of people to influence and guide followers or members of an organization, society or team. Leaders are found and required in most aspects of society, including business, politics, religion and social- and community-based organizations. They are seen as people who make sound and sometimes difficult decisions. They articulate a clear vision, establish achievable goals and provide followers with the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve those goals. Some of the traits of an effective leader include self-confidence, strong communication and management skills, creative and innovative thinking, perseverance, willingness to take risks, openness to change, levelheadedness and reactivity in times of crisis (Gilman, 2016).

In the perspective of Islam, leadership position is considered a trust (*Amana*) as well as a responsibility. The main qualities of a good leader include *Al hikmah* (Knowledge, wisdom and insight); *Taqwa* (fear of Allah) ; ‘*Adl* (Justice) and *Rahmah* (compassion); Courage and bravery; Positive disposition to *Shura* (mutual consultation); decisiveness and being resolute; eloquence; selflessness and *Sabr* (Patience) (Imran 2022). This implies that a good leader is expected to uphold justice and fairness in all dealings; show mercy and kindness to their people; be truthful and transparent in their words and actions; possess wisdom and sound judgment; be aware of being accountable to Allah and their people; consult with their people and consider their opinions; remain humble and avoid arrogance. Beside this, a leader must be trustworthy and faithful to their duties.

Education on the other hand is the transmission of knowledge, skills, and character traits and it manifests in various forms. Such forms include the formal, non-formal and informal education (Bartlett, 2021). Formal education occurs within a structured institutional framework, such as schools, following a curriculum. Non-formal education also follows a structured approach but occurs outside the formal schooling system, while informal education entails unstructured learning through daily experiences (Barr & Parret, 2019). Education serves various roles in society, spanning social, economic, and personal domains. Socially, education establishes and maintains a stable society by imparting fundamental skills necessary for interacting with the environment and fulfilling individual needs and aspirations. In contemporary society, these skills encompass speaking, reading, writing, arithmetic, and proficiency in information and communications technology. Additionally, education facilitates socialization by instilling awareness of dominant social and cultural norms, shaping appropriate behaviour across diverse contexts. It fosters social cohesion, stability, and peace, fostering productive engagement in daily activities. Moreover, education plays a pivotal role in democracies by enhancing civic participation in politics, while also promoting equal opportunities for all.

In the purview of Islam, the pursuit of knowledge is seen as a Muslims’ pathway to the worship of Allah and a necessary tool required to live a purposeful life. Based on this, the acquisition of knowledge is obligatory. And this was expressed by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) thus:

“Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim.” (Tabari, 2015). Knowledge is thus regarded as a treasure that should be sought and shared with others; a lifelong process which is acquired from the cradle to the grave; a form of worship that helps the Muslims appreciate Allah's creation and a means to develop one's character, moral values, and spiritual growth. Muslims are therefore mandated to acquire both religious knowledge such as the Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, etc as well as other mundane knowledge such as the sciences and technology, the arts and all forms of crafts. This is further complimented in the emphasis placed on the value of critical thinking. Islam encourages critical thinking and reflection, as evident in the Quran's repeated calls to "reflect," "ponder," and "contemplate." (Qur'an 38:29). The scholars are therefore expected to play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting knowledge to future generations.

It is not a gainsaying that leadership and education are intertwined. This is because education is an important criterion in the selection of leaders. In the same vein, education is one of the most essential tools by which good leaders achieve great successes. This work as earlier stated assessed the leadership and educational roles of Imams in Oyo Town.

Leadership and Educational Roles of Imams

The Imams play a significant leadership role in the mosque as well as in various aspects of religious and community life. Some of these roles were highlighted by Gilman (2016). According to him, the Imams lead congregational prayers, including the five daily prayers, *Jumu'ah* prayers and other ritual prayers; they personify the values of Islam, serving as a moral and ethical example for their congregation; they oversee the administration of mosques and provide spiritual guidance and mentor-ship to their congregations; they engage in community service with focus on promoting the welfare of members of their congregations. They perform this task by visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, commiserating with others and conducting their ceremonies in Islamic way. In addition to these, the Imams provide support and guidance to their congregants on social issues, such as marriage and youth development. They also perform the onerous task of mediating conflicts and disputes within the congregation and the community, thereby promoting reconciliation and peace. Imams also oftentimes represent the Muslim community in public forums, media, and government engagements. They build relationship with and collaborate with other community leaders for community development

In the sphere of education, the functions of the Imams are not far-fetched. They give religious instructions by delivering regular lectures and sermons (*khutbah*). Through this, they provide guidance on Islamic teachings, practices, and interpretations. In the same vein, they provide insight and explanation on Islamic teachings embedded in the Qur'an, Hadith and *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), helping believers understand and apply religious teachings in their daily lives. They also use the mosques as platforms to advocate for social justice, human rights, and community service, while encouraging believers to work towards the betterment of society. Besides this, the Imams offer individual and family counseling, providing support on personal, social, and spiritual issues (Berry, 2016)

Statement of the problem

The indispensable roles of Imams in both social and spiritual lives of Muslims and the society cannot be over-emphasized. Most importantly, they are expected to perform certain leadership and educational roles which are capable of adding values to the society and aiding its betterment. The realization of these values has however remained an illusion as a result of some

challenges affecting the performance of the roles of Imams. Some of these challenges include the inadequacy of some Imams' knowledge of Arabic and Islamic Studies as well as the failure of most Imams to embrace western education. This particularly spur their inability to reconcile traditional teachings of Islam with modern development. Others include the incessant crisis occasioned by Imams' unhealthy competition with other scholars in the mosques and the Muslim community as well as sectarian differences among the congregants and the Imams. Beside these, the Imams' roles are usually hampered by their personal financial constraint due to their poor remuneration or the absence of it in most of the mosques. Needless to say that most of the mosques in the Nigerian society are inadequately funded.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study was to examine the extent to which the Imams perform their leadership and educational roles in Oyo Town. Specifically the study sought to achieve the following:

1. Find out the leadership roles performed by Imams in Oyo Town
2. Determine the educational roles performed by Imams in Oyo Town.
3. Identify the challenges hindering the performance of leadership and educational roles of Imams in Oyo Town
4. Proffer solutions to challenges facing the performance of leadership and educational roles of Imams in Oyo Town

This work was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the leadership roles performed by Imams in Oyo Town?
2. What are the educational roles performed by Imams in Oyo Town?
3. What are the challenges hindering the performance of leadership and educational roles of Imams in Oyo Town?
4. What are the solutions to challenges facing the performance of leadership and educational roles of Imams in Oyo Town?

Research Methodology

The study was carried out in Oyo Town. Oyo town comprises four Local Governments. They include Afijio, Atiba, Oyo East and Oyo West Local Governments. The population of this study includes all Muslims in Oyo Town. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study. Two mosques – a *Ratibi* mosque (in which daily ritual prayers are performed) and a Jamiah mosque (in which Friday prayers are performed) were purposively sampled from each of the four Local Governments. The study employed the use of self-designed questionnaire. A draft of the instrument was submitted to the two experts in the field of Islamic Studies for validation. Thereafter, the questionnaire was administered to elicit information from respondents.

The questionnaires were administered on 20 congregants of each mosque. This implied that 160 Muslims were sampled for this study. The sampling procedure is presented in the table below.

Serial number	Local Governments Selected	Number of Mosques	Number of Respondents
1	Afijio	02	40
2	Atiba	02	40
3	Oyo East	02	40
4	Oyo West	02	40
Total	04	08	160

The responses from the instruments were summarized using descriptive statistics of simple percentage. Frequency counts and percentage distribution of responses were then used for analysis.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the leadership roles performed by Imams in Oyo Town?

Table 1: Frequency counts and percentage distribution of responses to research question one

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	NS	SD	D	REMARKS
1.	Imams lead ritual prayers	81 (54.36)	49 (32.89)	01 (0.67)	11 (7.38)	07 (4.70)	Agreed
2.	Imams administer mosques activities effectively	76 (51.01)	49 (32.89)	10 (6.70)	05 (3.36)	09 (6.04)	Agreed
3.	Imams act as spiritual role models and living examples for the congregation	56 (37.58)	31 (20.81)	20 (13.42)	20 (13.42)	22 (14.77)	Agreed
4.	Imams provide guidance on Marriage and youth development	21 (14.09)	30 (20.13)	20 (13.42)	38 (25.51)	40 (26.85)	Disagreed
5.	Imams settle disputes among members	20 (13.42)	30 (20.13)	21 (14.09)	40 (26.85)	38 (25.51)	Disagreed
6.	Imams give support to members in need of welfare services (e.g. visiting, praying and organizing donations to assist the sick, assist the widows and commiserating with members during ceremonies)	20 (13.42)	22 (14.77)	17 (11.41)	42 (28.19)	48 (32.21)	Disagreed

7.	Imams build relationship with and collaborate with other community leaders for community development	20 (13.42)	15 (10.07)	14 (9.40)	52 (34.90)	48 (32.21)	Disagreed
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Table 1 revealed the respondents' Perception on Imams' disposition to their leadership roles in Oyo Town. The results indicated that 130 respondents' representing 87.25 percent agreed that Imams leads ritual prayers in the mosque. Only 18 respondents representing 12.08 percent disagreed while 1 respondent (0.67 %) was not sure. 125 respondents' representing 83.90 percent agreed that Imams administer mosques activities effectively. Only 14 respondents representing 09.40 percent disagreed while 10 respondents (06.70 %) were not sure. 87 respondents' representing 58.39 percent agreed that Imams give support to members in need of welfare services. 42 respondents, precisely 28.19 percent disagreed while 20 respondents (13.42 %) were not sure. 51 respondents' representing 34.22 percent agreed that Imams provide guidance on Marriage and youth development. 78 respondents representing 52.36 percent disagreed while 20 respondents (13.42 %) were not sure. 50 respondents' representing 33.55 percent agreed that Imams settle disputes among members. 78 respondents representing 52.36 percent disagreed while 21 respondents (14.09 %) were not sure. 42 respondents' representing 28.19 percent agreed that Imams give support to members in need of welfare services. 90 respondents, precisely 60.40 percent disagreed while 17 respondents (11.41 %) were not sure. 35 respondents' representing 28.19 percent agreed that Imams build relationship with and collaborate with other community leaders for community development. 100 respondents representing 67.11 percent disagreed while 14 respondents (09.40 %) were not sure.

Research Question 2: What are the educational roles performed by Imams in Oyo Town?

Table 2: Frequency counts and percentage distribution of responses to research question two

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	NS	SD	D	REMARKS
6.	Imams present lectures and sermons to impart Islamic teachings in members of the congregation	76 (51.01)	49 (32.89)	10 (6.70)	05 (3.36)	09 (6.04)	Agreed
7.	Imams make adequate use of citations in the Qur'an, Hadith and other sources of Sharia while presenting lectures and sermons	81 (54.36)	49 (32.89)	01 (0.67)	11 (7.38)	07 (4.70)	Agreed
8.	Imams present lectures and sermons to advocate social justice and contribution towards the betterment of society	76 (51.01)	49 (32.89)	10 (6.70)	05 (3.36)	09 (6.04)	Agreed
9.	Imams organise other learned	20	15	14	52	48	Disagreed

	scholars to give special lectures that promote members' spiritual guidance, and character building	(13.42)	(10.07)	(9.40)	(34.90)	(32.21)	
10.	Imams offer individual counseling to members	20 (13.42)	22 (14.77)	17 (11.41)	42 (28.19)	48 (32.21)	Disagreed
11.	Imams offer family counseling to members	21 (14.09)	30 (20.13)	20 (13.42)	38 (25.51)	40 (26.85)	Disagreed

Table 2 revealed the respondents' Perception on Imams' disposition to their educational roles in Oyo Town. Results indicated that 125 respondents representing 83.90 percent agreed that Imams present lectures and sermons to impart Islamic teachings in members of the congregation. Only 14 respondents representing 09.40 percent disagreed while 10 respondents (6.70 %) were not sure. 130 respondents (i.e. 87.25) percent agreed that Imams make adequate use of citations of the Qur'an, Hadith and other sources of Sharia while presenting lectures and sermons. Only 18 respondents representing 12.08 percent disagreed while 01 respondent (0.67 %) was not sure. 125 respondents representing 83.90 percent agreed that Imams present lectures and sermons to advocate social justice and contribution towards the betterment of society. Only 14 respondents representing 9.40 percent disagreed while 10 respondents (6.70 %) were not sure. 35 respondents, representing 23.49 percent agreed that Imams organize lectures in which other learned scholars are invited to give special lectures that promote members' spiritual guidance, and character building. Only 100 respondents representing 67.11 percent disagreed while 14 respondents (9.40 %) were not sure. 42 respondents representing 28.19 percent agreed that Imams offer individual counseling to members. Only 90 respondents representing 60.40 percent disagreed while 17 respondents (11.41 %) were not sure. 51 respondents representing 34.22 percent agreed that Imams offer family counseling to members. Only 78 respondents representing 52.36 percent disagreed while 20 respondents (13.42 %) were not sure

Research Question 3: What are the challenges hindering the performance of leadership and educational roles of Imams in Oyo Town?

Table 3: Frequency counts and percentage distribution of responses to research question three

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	NS	SD	D	REMARKS
11	Imams' insufficient knowledge of Arabic and Islamic Studies hinder performance of leadership and educational roles.	30 (20.13)	09 (6.04)	12 (8.05)	50 (33.56)	48 (32.22)	Disagreed
12.	Imams' inadequate knowledge of western education hinder performance of leadership and educational roles.	76 (51.01)	33 (22.15)	10 (6.71)	21 (14.09)	09 (6.04)	Agreed
13	Imams' inability to reconcile traditional teachings of Islam with modern development hinder performance of leadership and educational roles.	78 (52.35)	32 (21.48)	17 (11.41)	02 (1.34)	20 (13.42)	Agreed
14	Members' disagreement with Imam's teachings hinder performance of	20	19	11	51	48	Disagreed

	leadership and educational roles.	(13.42)	(12.75)	(7.38)	(34.23)	(32.22)	
15.	Imams' unhealthy competition with other scholars in the mosque and the Muslim community hinder performance of leadership and educational roles.	46 (30.87)	40 (26.85)	11 (7.38)	43 (28.86)	09 (6.04)	Agreed
16	Imam's personal financial constraints hinder performance of leadership and educational roles.	76 (51.01)	28 (18.79)	16 (10.74)	09 (6.04)	20 (13.42)	Agreed
17	Inadequate funding of the mosque hinder performance of leadership and educational roles.	76 (51.01)	28 (18.79)	10 (6.71)	15 (10.07)	20 (13.42)	Agreed
18	Misconception of Imam's roles due to the activities of few bad Muslim clerics hinder performance of leadership and educational roles.	46 (30.87)	40 (26.85)	11 (7.38)	43 (28.86)	09 (6.04)	Agreed
19	Imam's inability to relate with other leaders in the community hinder performance of leadership and educational roles.	40 (26.85)	46 (30.87)	11 (7.38)	33 (22.15)	19 (12.75)	Agreed

This result indicated that 39 respondents' representing 26.17 percent agreed that Imams' roles are being hindered by their insufficient knowledge of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Only 98 respondents representing 65.78 percent disagreed while 12 respondents (8.05 %) were not sure. 109 respondents' representing 73.16 percent agreed that Imams' roles are being hindered by Imams' inadequate knowledge of western education. Only 30 respondents representing 20.13 percent disagreed while 10 respondents (6.71 %) were not sure. 110 respondents' representing 73.83 percent agreed that Imams' roles were hindered by Imams' inability to reconcile traditional teachings of Islam with modern development. Only 22 respondents representing 14.76 percent disagreed while 17 respondents (11.41 %) were not sure. 39 respondents' representing 26.17 percent agreed that Imams' roles were hindered by Members' disagreement with Imam's teachings. Only 99 respondents representing 66.45 percent disagreed while 11 respondents (7.38 %) were not sure. Eighty-six (86) respondents' representing 57.72 percent agreed that Imams' roles were being hindered by Imams' unhealthy competition with other scholars in the mosque and the Muslim community. Only 52 respondents representing 34.90 percent disagreed while 11 respondents (7.38 %) are not sure. 104 respondents' representing 69.80 percent agreed that Imams' roles were being hindered by Imam's personal financial constraints. Only 29 respondents representing 19.46 percent disagreed while 16 respondents (10.74 %) were not sure. 104 respondents' representing 69.80 percent agreed that Imams' roles were being hindered by Inadequate funding of the mosque. Only 35 respondents representing 23.49 percent disagreed while 10 respondents (6.71 %) were not sure. 86 respondents' representing 57.72 percent agreed that Imams' roles were being hindered by Misconception of Imam's roles due to the activities of few bad Muslim clerics. Only 52 respondents representing 34.90 percent disagreed while 11 respondents (7.38 %) were not sure. 86 respondents' representing 57.72 percent agreed that Imams' roles were being hindered by Imam's inability to relate with other leaders in the

community. Only 52 respondents representing 34.90 percent disagreed while 11 respondents (7.38 %) were not sure

Research Question 4: What are the solutions to challenges facing the performance of leadership and educational roles of Imams in Oyo Town?

Table 4: Frequency counts and percentage distribution of responses to research question four

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	NS	SD	D	REMARKS
20.	Embarking on further studies to boost Imam's knowledge of Arabic and Islamic Studies	46 (30.87)	40 (26.85)	11 (7.38)	43 (28.86)	09 (6.04)	Agreed
21.	Embarking on further studies in western education to enable the Imams reconcile with modern trend	76 (51.01)	28 (18.79)	16 (10.74)	09 (6.04)	20 (13.42s)	Agreed
22.	Standardization and modernization of Traditional Arabic Schools which turn out Imams	78 (52.35)	26 (17.45)	10 (6.70)	15 (10.07)	20 (13.42)	Agreed
23.	Imams' attendance of seminars and workshops in order to become acquainted with modern development in Arabic and Islamic Studies	46 (30.87)	40 (26.85)	11 (7.38)	42 (28.19)	10 (6.70)	Agreed
24.	Neutrality of Imams regarding all religious schools of thoughts and political affiliation of congregants	81 (54.36)	49 (32.89)	01 (0.67)	11 (7.38)	07 (4.70)	Agreed
25	Imams' engagement in other halal works and businesses to secure alternative sources of income	76 (51.01)	49 (32.89)	10 (6.70)	04 (2.68)	10 (6.70)	Agreed
26	Adequate funding of the mosque by the individual Muslims and the Muslim community	81 (54.36)	49 (32.89)	01 (0.67)	11 (7.38)	07 (4.70)	Agreed
27	Raising funds through Zakat Sadaqah and other halal sources and channeling them to develop the mosque to enhance Imam's roles	79 (53.02)	46 (30.87)	10 (6.70)	05 (3.36)	09 (6.04)	Agreed
28	Establishment and implementation of adequate remuneration for the Imams by the congregation and the Muslim community	81 (54.36)	49 (32.89)	01 (0.67)	11 (7.38)	07 (4.70)	Agreed

The results in table 4 indicates that 86 respondents representing 57.72 percent agree that solutions to the challenges hindering the roles of Imam should include embarking on further studies to boost Imam's knowledge of Arabic and Islamic Studies . 52 respondents (34.90) disagreed while 11 respondents (7.38) are not sure. 104 respondents representing 69.80 percent agreed that Imams should embark on further studies in western education to enable them reconcile with modern trend. Regarding this position, 29 respondents (19.46) disagreed while 16 respondents (10.74) are not sure. 104 respondents representing 57.72 percent agree that Arabic Schools which turn out Imams should be standardized and modernized. 35 respondents (23.49) disagreed while 10 respondents (6.71) were not sure. 86 respondents representing 57.72 percent agreed that Imams should attend seminars and workshops in order to become acquainted with modern development in Arabic and Islamic Studies. 52 respondents (34.90) disagreed while 11 respondents (7.38) were not sure. 130 respondents representing 87.25 percent agreed that Imams should be neutral while dealing with all religious schools of thoughts and political affiliation of congregants. 18 respondents (12.08) disagreed to this, while 1 respondents (0.67) were not sure. 125 respondents representing 83.90 percent agreed that Imams should seek alternative halal works and businesses to boost his personal income. 14 respondents (9.38) disagreed while 10 respondents (6.70) were not sure. 130 respondents representing 87.25 percent agreed that the individual Muslim and the Muslim community should provide the required funding for the mosques. 18 respondents (12.08) disagreed while 1 respondent (0.67) were not sure. 125 respondents representing 87.25 percent agreed that funds should be raised through Zakat, Sadaqah and other halal sources and that such funds should be channeled to develop the mosques in order to enhance Imams' roles. 14 respondents (9.38) disagreed while 10 respondents (6.70) were not sure. 130 respondents, representing 87.25 percent agreed to the establishment and implementation of adequate remuneration for the Imams. 18 respondents (12.89) disagreed while 1 respondents (0.67) were not sure.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

This work has so far revealed that Imams in Oyo town have generally performed their traditional roles of leading prayers and serving as role models for Muslims in the town. In addition to this, they have performed their tasks as Islamic educators through deliverance of routine lectures and *Khutbah* (sermons) on different topics and themes bordering on religious issues and the means of living purposeful life. However, most Imams in Oyo town have not optimally performed their leadership and educational roles. This work has shown that most Imams having remained conservatively stacked to their traditional roles, do not perform other expected roles, such as giving counselling services to members; resolving disputes among members; initiating support for members that need welfare services and establishing link as well as building relationship with other community leaders for the development of the society.

These set-backs were occasioned by factors such as poor standard of Arabic Schools which produced the Imams; Imams' insufficient knowledge of both Islamic and western education; poor funding of the mosques and low or non-existent remuneration for the Imams. Based on these findings, the work conclude that the work of Imam transcend the traditional roles of leading prayers. The Imams are expected to play both leadership and educational roles in their various mosques. These roles could be further promoted if stakeholders abide by the following recommendations:

Arabic Schools which produce most Imams should be modernized and standardized to make them compliant with the demand of the 21st century. The serving Imams should not remain stagnant. They should seek further studies to boost their knowledge. This will spur them to function with utmost effectiveness. Participation in workshops, seminars and conferences is also an essential tool in this regard.

The recommendation given so far can be made achievable if the mosques are well funded. The members of mosques or the Muslim community leaders need to champion the course of raising funds for the mosques in their domain. The avenue of *Zakat, Sadaqat* and other revenue generation mechanism should be explored to fund the mosques. In addition to this, a platform should be established to provide remuneration for Imams. It is high time the Nigerian Muslims discarded the notion that the work of Imams is voluntary and that they can only receive occasional gifts from willing members. This notwithstanding, the roles of Imams should be part-timed. This will enable the Imams to explore other legitimate sources of sustenance and not depend solely on the mosque.

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