

**INTERNALIZING THE VALUE AND VIRTUES OF LAYLATUL QADR AS A PANACEA TO
SUICIDE AMONG THE MUSLIM UMMAH IN ORO COMMUNITY, KWARA STATE,
NIGERIA**

BY

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Abstract

The proliferation of suicide in the world in which Nigeria is inclusive is at alarming rate. This act of self-killing has brought depletion in the workforce and immense sorrow to the families of suicide victims. However, Islam prohibits this act of self-murder and provides many ways to avoid the menace. Such ways are strong faith in Allah (Imān), steadfastness (Istiḳāmah), endurance (Sabr) as well as utilizing LaylatulQadr for spiritual freedom from bondage, economic hardship, failure, broken relationships, societal discrimination, extreme poverty, etc. Hence, the paper explores descriptive research methods on documents, analysis of previous articles and literatures on the subject matter. This research reveals that suicide is real in Nigeria and its environs. To this end, this paper suggests internalizing the value and virtues of LaylatulQadr as Panacea for suicide among the Muslim Ummah in Oro Community, Kwara state, Nigeria. The paper aimed at analyzing the concept of suicide, its causes, effects in the society as well as Islamic perspective of suicide. The paper showcases the night of power as spiritual solution to the Muslims' challenges. The paper concludes with suggestions that are beneficial to faithful Muslims such as there should be more enlightenment by the Muslim scholars on the significance of self-devotion especially in the mid-night prayers, Dhikr (Allah remembrance), charity and other good deeds during and beyond Ramadan.

Keywords: *LaylatulQadr, Panacea, Suicide and Ummah*

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately one million people die each year from suicide. The fact is that a suicidal person is in so much pain that he or she can see no other option. A suicidal person is often blinded by feelings of self-loathing, helplessness, hopelessness, and isolation. The person hardly sees any way of finding relief except through death. ("Monthly Media Reports on Suicide Incidents in Nigeria," 2023). Furthermore, Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented spate of suicides in 2019, especially with media coverage of such incidents. It is noted that in 2019 media recorded high rate of suicide victims while in 2020 there was a slight drop in the incidents in the entire Nigeria. Also, the leading method of suicide shifted from use of sniper insecticide which came tops in 2019. However, suicide by hanging have been on top since year 2020 up to 2023. ("Monthly Media Reports on Suicide Incidents in Nigeria," 2023).

The word "suicide" can be described as the act of intentional killing of oneself. Suicide has two types; the first one is active suicide which means take own life in a direct way such as by using poison, knife, spear, rifle, jump from height or in fire and the other one is passive suicide which means going to refrain from striving to remain alive, for example stop eating and drinking, not treating or taking care of wound which you know later become the cause of death, not trying to escape from fire, stay motionless in water and there are so many other examples also. ("Suicide in Islam," 2023). Some of the factors responsible for this menace in Nigeria and its environs can be traced to economic hardship, academic failure, broken relationships, societal discrimination, matrimonial pressure, rape, extreme poverty, etc. There are many people who are not capable of withstanding life's challenges and the best way they think can solve their problem is suicidal (Ifiokobong, 2023).

Indeed, suicide is a desperate attempt to escape suffering that has become unbearable to some people whereas the act is seen by Islam as unlawful. This study therefore examines internalizing the value and virtues of *LaylatulQadr* as a panacea for suicide among the Muslim *Ummah* in Oro Community, Kwara State, Nigeria. Therein, conceptual clarification of suicide and *LaylatulQadr* shall be discussed. Also, Islamic perspective on suicide as well as effective utilizing of *LaylatulQadr* period to curb suicide in the society and Oro community in particular.

Conceptual Clarification of Suicide and *LaylatulQadr*

Suicide: According to Cambridge Advance Learner's Dictionary (2010), suicide is the act of killing yourself intentionally, or a person who has done this to *attempt/commit suicide*. It is also any act which has the effect of causing one's defeat. Also, fiokobong (2023) defines suicide as the deliberate action taken to terminate one's life. Similarly, suicide is defined by Merriam-Webster's dictionary as "the act or an instance of taking one's own life voluntarily and intentionally". The Oxford dictionary also defines the word as "the act of killing oneself deliberately" Emile (1982) states that: "the term suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result. Werth (2013) states that there are four prominent types of suicide:

- Fatalistic suicide: This is where somebody feels that life is in the extreme end and there is no way a human being can live under that given conditions.
- Anomic suicide: This is where one finds life as being meaningless especially due to loneliness or isolation.
- Altruistic suicide: This is when one sacrifices his or her own life for the sake of society.
- Egoistic suicide: This is a situation where one decides to end his or her own life after failing to meet personal or societal expectations.

Thus, suicide is a voluntary determination of putting an end to one's life or voluntary self-killing.

LaylatulQadr: Arif (2023) defines LaylatulQadr, or the Night of Power, is a special night during which Muslims believe that the fate of humanity is decreed. It is believed to fall on one of the odd-numbered nights during the last ten days of Ramadan. Also, Arif (2018) states that the meaning of "*Qadr*" is veneration or honour, i.e. it is a night that is venerated because of its special characteristics, and because the one who stays up during this night becomes a man of honour. And it was said that *Qadr* means constriction, in the sense that the knowledge of precisely when this night is, is hidden. Al-Khaleel ibn Ahmad said: it was called Laylat al-Qadr because the earth is constricted by the great numbers of angels on that night, and *Qadr* means constriction. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): "*But when He tries him, by straitening his means of life [fa qadara 'alayhirizqahu]...*" [al-Fajr 89:16], i.e., by constricting or reducing his provision. Furthermore, Ibrahim, Nasir and Omar (2023) highlight that Islamic scholars differ regarding the meaning behind the name of '*Laylatul-Qadr*'. Some scholars defined '*Qadr*' in the context of this holy night as 'destiny/decreed' (qadar). To them, this meant that this was the night in which the destiny of each person was decided. It would be this night in which a person's sustenance, lifespan, and other critical matters would be sealed for the coming year. In support of this, 'Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allāh be pleased with him) said:

It is written in *Umm al-Kitab* (the Heavenly copy of the Qur'an) during *Laylatul-Qadr* what shall come to pass in the following year of good and evil, sustenance, and lifespan. Even the pilgrimage of the pilgrim (shall be decided); it will be said 'so-and-so will perform pilgrimage' (on this night).
Tafsir al-Baghawi 7/227-228.

Similarly, Al-Hasan Al-Basri (d. 110 H), Mujahid (d. 104 H) and Qatadah (d. 117 H)—three renowned early Muslim scholars—shared this view and were reported to have said that "all the affairs of lifespan, deeds, creation, and provision are decreed on *Laylatul-Qadr* in the month of Ramadan and will come to pass in the coming year." Al-Bayhaqi, *KitabFada'il Al-Awqat*, 213.

Imam Al-Nawawi concludes his discussion on *Laylatul-Qadr* by saying: "It was named *Laylatul-Qadr*, meaning: the night of judgment and discernment (in the affairs of men). This meaning is what is true and popular." *Al-Majmoo' Sharh Al-Muhadhab*, 6/447.

Other scholars defined the meaning of '*Qadr*' as 'power,' indicating the greatness of the honor and might of the night. *Tafsir Al-Baghawi*, 8/48. Similar to this view is the interpretation of '*Qadr*' as 'power' in that

the righteous deeds performed during this night are far more powerful than they would be on any other night. Thus, LaylatulQadr is a night of decree where Allāh decides either to change or remains firm with what He had decreed for his/her servant while at his/her mother's womb. Allāh says in the Glorious Qur'an: 'Allāh eliminates what He wills or confirms, and with Him is the Mother of the Book' Chapter 12:39

Notable Cases of suicide in Nigeria

Chukwuma& Samson (2017) assert some of the notable cases of suicide in Nigeria as follow:

1. 35-year-old medical doctor, Allwell Orji, jumped into the Lagos Lagoon on the Third Mainland Bridge and died.
2. A 500-level Urban and Regional Planning undergraduate of LadokeAkintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomosho, AdesojiAdediran, hanged himself inside his hostel room.
3. A 19-year-old student of Babcock University in Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, VerishimaUnokur, committed suicide in his parents' home in Mafoluku area of Oshodi, Lagos.
4. A manager with a commercial bank, OlisaNwokobi, shot himself in Lagos.
5. Also, a 44-year-old bank manager and graduate of Abia State University, Uturu, killed himself because he was under pressure from his bank over loan repayment.
6. A Police officer killed himself after shooting lover in at Chapel of Redemption Agba Dam Housing EstateIlorin, Kwara state Olalere Michael.<https://massmediang.com>
7. 20-year-old man commits suicide in Lagos, SodiqOlayemi committed suicide in the Epe area of Lagos state by hanging inside an uncompleted building in the area. Guardian.ng
8. A secondary school student of Oro Grammar School, Oyeniyi Mathew, committed suicide by hanging himself on a tree. (Masurah. M, personal communication, May 5,2023).
9. A 55- year- old welder, Baba Afusah in Oro hanged himself inside his personal room over loan repayment, 2022. (Hammed.A., personal communication, May 2, 2023).
10. A 300-level Economic/Political science, A.K.A Jasola, Kwara State College of Education, Oro committed suicide by poisoned herself in her hostel over disappointment on the part of her lover. (Akanbi.... , personal communication, May 8, 2023).

Causes and effects of Suicide in Nigeria

Ifiokobong (2023) asserts that some of the following are the causes of suicide in Nigeria:

1. Deplorable Economic Situation: Nigerians are facing really hard times because of the poor economic situation and this has resulted in a loss of jobs, poverty, low standard of living, etc.

2. Depression: it is the state when one completely loses interest in anything in life as there is no hope to go on living. Heartbreak, unfulfilled dream, loss of a job, failure. All these results to depression and as such also leads to suicide.

3. Drug Addiction: People that are addicted to drugs are often victims of suicide.

4. Rape: Rape victims also are prone to suicide as they can't cope with the traumatic experience.

5. Failure: Another cause of suicide is a failure. People that keep failing at what they do don't see themselves good in anything and their insecurities get the better part of them which results to depression and eventually suicide.

Also, several studies have shown that risk factors for suicide include mental disorder (such as depression, personality disorder, alcohol dependence, drug abuse or schizophrenia), social isolation and lack of support, reactions to failure and disappointments, response to accumulated domestic violence, unemployment and some physical illnesses, such as neurological disorders, cancer and Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV) infection. (Ifiokobong,2023)

Adversely, Tracy (2022) has observed that when the death is a suicide, the families of the victim have feelings like:

- Extreme guilt for not preventing the suicide
- Failure because a person they loved felt unloved and completed suicide
- Anger or resentment at the person who chose to take his or her own life
- Confusion

- Distress over unresolved issues (many of which often exist in families where one person has a mental illness, which is common in people who die by suicide)

Unfortunately, friends and family of suicide victim experience impacts on their own mental health. In a Canadian study, parents who lost a child to suicide typically have higher rates of depression, physical problems and low income. Anxiety and divorce are very common effects on parents after a child's suicide. (Tracy, 2022) Another study showed that children of parents who committed suicide are at a significantly increased risk of committing suicide themselves. The younger the child at the time of the parent's suicide, the greater the risk of his or her own suicide. (Tracy, 2022)

There is a stigma around that death and people often treat the loved ones of the person who committed suicide differently. Because of this, one effect of suicide on family and friends can be extreme isolation.

Islamic perspective on Suicide

In Islam, suicide is one of the major seven destructive sins which the Messenger of Allāh admonished Muslims to shun. The Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) was reported to have said:

Avoid the seven destroyers.” They said: “O Allāh’s Messenger! And what are they?” He replied: “Committing Shirk with Allāh, magic, to kill someone that Allāh has prohibited – except for just cause – consuming Riba (Usury), consuming the wealth or property of an orphan, to flee on the day of the march (to battle), and to slander the chaste, unaware, believing women.” (Bukhari)

Allāh also says in ***Qur’ān*4: 29** “And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allāh (Glory be to Him) is Most Merciful to you”. And the one who does that is faced with a warning of eternity in the Fire of Hell, where Allāh (Glory be to Him) will punish him with the means that he used to commit suicide.

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, "Whoever fasted the month of Ramadan out of sincere Faith (i.e. belief) and hoping for a reward from Allāh, then all his past sins will be forgiven, and whoever stood for the prayers in the night of Qadr out of sincere Faith and hoping for a reward from Allāh, then all his previous sins will be forgiven " Book 32, Hadith 231

In addition, Muslim scholars agreed on five main objectives of the Islamic Law (*Madāsīdush-Shar‘iyah*). These objectives are as follows: the preservation of the self; the preservation of the reason; the preservation of the religion; the preservation of the property/monetary; and the preservation of lineage. Therefore, suicide is considered as one of the major sins in Islam as it violates the objectives of preserving the human soul. Killing or harming others is forbidden in Islam. Thus, act of suicide is prohibited by Islam. The Glorious *Qur’ān* says:

And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allāh is to you ever Merciful. (Chapter 4:29)

...And do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction. (Chapter 2:195)

The prophet (peace be upon him) was reported to have said:

Whoever kills himself with an instrument, will be punished with it on the Day of Resurrection.

Also, in another Hadith

Whoever kills himself with an iron tool, then his tool will be in his hand and he will keep stabbing himself with it in the Fire of Jahannam, forever and ever. Whoever kills himself with poison, then his poison will be in his hand and he will keep taking it in the Fire of Jahannam forever and ever. Whoever kills himself by throwing himself from a mountain, will keep falling in the Fire of Jahannam forever and ever.) This Hadith was also collected in the Two Sahihs: (**Al Bukhari and Muslim**)

Also, it was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (May Allāh be pleased with Him) that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said:

Whoever throws himself down from a mountain and kills himself will be throwing himself down in the Fire of Hell forever and ever. Whoever drinks poison and kills himself will be sipping it in the Fire of Hell forever and ever. Whoever kills

himself with a piece of iron will have that iron in his hand, thrusting it into his belly in the Fire of Hell for ever and ever. **Sahih Al Bukhari 5778 and Sahih Muslim 199**

Anas bin Malik(R) reported Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

None of you should make a request for death because of the trouble in which he is involved, but if there is no other help to it, then say: O Allāh, keep me alive as long as there is goodness in life for me and bring death to me when there is goodness in death for me. **Sahih Muslim 6480.**

Internalizing the Value and Virtues of LaylatulQadr as a Panacea for Suicide among the Muslim Ummah in Oro Community, Kwara State, Nigeria

Islam makes certain times and places sacred for the benefit of faithful believers. One of those times is the special nights called LaylatulQadr (Night of Majesty). The virtues of these nights is discussed in the entire SūratulQadr in the Glorious Qur'ān. The Surah is quoted below:

Verily, We have sent it (this Qur'an) down in the Night of Al-Qadr (Decree). And what will make you know what the Night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is? The Night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months (i.e. worshipping Allāh in that night is better than worshipping Him a thousand months, i.e. 83 years and 4 months). Therein descend the angels and the Rūh [Jibrīl] by Allāh's Permission with all Decrees,
(All that night), there is peace (and goodness from Allāh to His believing slaves) until the appearance of dawn. [Chapter 97:1-5]

Among the unique virtues of these special nights is that *LaylatulQadr* is among them. Allāh also says in the Glorious Qur'an:

We sent it (this Qur'ān) down on a blessed night [(i.e. the Night of Al-Qadr) in the month of Ramadān]. Verily, We are ever warning [mankind that Our Torment will reach those who disbelieve in Our Oneness of Lordship and in Our Oneness of worship]. Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments. As a Command (or this Qur'ān or the Decree of every matter) from Us. [Chapter 44:2-4]

"Narrated `Aisha: Allāh's Messenger (Peace be upon him) said, "Search for the Night of Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan." Sahih Al-Bukhari 2017.

In *al-Saheehayn*, it is reported from the hadeeth of `Ā'ishah (may Allāh be pleased with her) that when the last ten days of Ramadān came, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) would stay up at night, wake his family and gird his loins. (al-Bukhaari, 1920; Muslim, 1174).

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said,

Whoever fasted the month of Ramadan out of sincere Faith (i.e. belief) and hoping for a reward from Allāh, then all his past sins will be forgiven, and whoever stood for the prayers in the night of Qadr out of sincere Faith and hoping for a reward from Allāh, then all his previous sins will be forgiven. (al-Bukhaari, 1910; Muslim, 760).

From the above quoted Hadith, one key point mentioned before benefiting from Allāh's Mercy on that night is 'sincere faith' technically called "*Imān*". The actual meaning of *Imān* and its components was explained in the below Hadith thus:

Inform me about Imān (faith)." He (the Prophet) answered, "It is that you believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and in the Last Day, and in fate (*qadar*), both in its good and in its evil aspects. (Abdulazeez, 2020)

Thus, those who committed the active or passive suicide lacked sincere faith in Allāh (the Creator of all mankind) and the contents of His Divine Scripture. The Glorious *Qur'ān* declares:

Do the people think that they will be left to say, "We believe" and they will not be tried? But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allāh will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars. Chapter 69:2-3

Also, in another *Qur'ānic* verse, Allāh says:

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient. *Qur'ān* 2: 155

It should be noted that Muslims should have strong faith in Allāh before their shortcomings are forgiven. There is also a special link between this night and seeking forgiveness from God. It was narrated from 'Aishah that she said:

O Messenger of Allāh, what do you think I should say in my supplication, if I come upon Laylatul-Qadr?" He said: "Say: '*Allāhummainnaka 'afuwwuntuhibbul-'afwa, fa'fu 'anni* (O Allāh, You are Forgiving and love forgiveness, so forgive me). Sunan Ibn Majah 3850

Furthermore, the moment the sins are forgiven by Allāh, His Mercies and blessings follow as described in the Glorious *Qur'ān* thus:

And said, 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers. Chapter 71:10-12

Indeed, with Allāh's forgiveness during the night of *LaylatulQadr*, the physical, social and spiritual such as poverty, frustration, fear, stigmatization, failure, barren, indebtedness, etc. challenges are solved .

Suggestions

1. Muslims should shun suicide as it is one of the destructive sins in the sight of Allāh.
2. They should know that death is not end of everything but the beginning of another life in Barzakh before final Day of Judgment.
3. They should realize that killing a soul in Islam is like destroying the whole nation while spare a soul is like spare the whole nation.
4. They should not despair mercy of Allāh in any situation and condition they found themselves.
5. They should see challenges as a means of spiritual elevation and expiation of sins.

Conclusion

This paper has brought to the limelight that internalizing the value and virtues of LaylatulQadr as a panacea for suicide among Muslim Ummah in Oro Community. It can be drawn from the study that Muslim should never despair of the Mercy of Allāh despite the challenges they are facing. Also, Muslims should see both blessings of Allāh and the hardship as a means of testing their levels of Iman (faith) in Allāh (Chapter 86: 15-16)

However, committing suicide should not be seen as the last result for any of challenges. The fact is that after hardship, ease shall prevail. (Chapter 94: 5-9). But, for those who committed suicide because of any eventuality, who is going to earn the reward of their challenges? Therefore, strong faith in Allāh, patience, seeking forgiveness and sincere supplication during the Night of Power shall be a panacea for Muslims Ummah in time of difficulties than killing themselves.

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