

## ISLAMIC MORAL VALUES AS PANACEA FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ABUSE AMONG MUSLIM PREACHERS IN YORUBALAND OF NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Before the invention of social media, it is informing that itinerant Muslim preachers had a small or restricted audience, which hindered the global spread of *Da'wah*. The twenty-first century with its modern evolving trends avails contemporary Muslim preachers the opportunity of utilising social media to promote religious ideals and raise *Da'wah* awareness. Be that as it may, the unrestrained use of social media presents a detrimental challenge among contemporary Muslim preachers, particularly in Yorubaland where moral decadence includes, character assassination, slandering of scholars, attracting followers with misleading and deceptive outbursts, dissemination of false and unverified information that goes against Islamic moral values, is prevalent among the preachers. It is glaring that there is a need for transformation to ward off the abuse. The research attempts to modify this by unraveling the application of Islamic moral values as a panacea for the social media abuse among contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland. To fulfill the set goals, the research explores the study's historical context, summarises Islamic moral principles, analyses social media as a concept, discusses its misuse, and evaluates the need and importance of applying Islamic moral principles. The research adopted an analytical method. The study asserts that the social media abuse and cyber bullying of scholars can be curbed by appropriately implementing Islamic moral values.

**Keywords:** Moral; social media; Muslims; Yorubaland; Preachers.

### Introduction

Islam, being a comprehensive religion, seeks to maintain and enhance universal human decencies. (Hashi, 2011). Given the interpretation that Islam seeks to promote morality, all Muslim preachers are to incorporate Islamic moral principles into their *Da'wah* activities. It remains undeniable that the Islamic moral ideals that the Prophet Muhammad personified contributed to the accomplishment of his mission. Many who accepted Islam were drawn to him because of his morally upright traits—truthfulness, trust, tolerance, and self-worth. From the beginning of time, Muslim preachers have followed this pattern and passed it down in the *Da'wah* arena.

Out of strong desire to preserve Islamic teachings in Nigeria, early Muslim preachers in Yorubaland practiced Islamic ethics to the best of their abilities. Not until social media became ubiquitous and ever-expanding did Yorubaland's Muslim preachers, particularly the younger ones, succumb to the moral corruption that permeates modern society. This can be attributed to social media's unrestricted access, which allowed amoral people to gain notoriety in the *Da'wah* community. As a result, many modern Muslim preachers in Yorubaland fail to uphold the ethical standards of *Da'wah* set down in the Qur'an, which include tolerance, wisdom, and good counsel.

Given its effectiveness, accessibility, and openness, social media has undoubtedly become a useful tool for communication in facilitating the global dissemination of Muslim preachers' *Da'wah* activities in the twenty-first century. (Muhammad & AbdulKareem, 2022). It is impossible to gloss over how social media has changed Islamic *Da'wah* to reach audiences outside of pulpits, mosques, schools, and local communities. Muslim preachers now have the platform to engage in public discourse and voice their thoughts to a wider audience thanks to social media. (Olalekan & Badmus, 2024). Be that as it may, reprobates among contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland have usurped and taken over social media, using it as a platform to spread their hate speech, verbal abuse, slanderous and libelous remarks and attacks against others all of which go against Islamic morality. (Dauda, 2023).

In opposition to the breach in the application of Islamic ethics and misuse of social media, which impairs the efficacy of *Da'wah* among contemporary Muslim preachers, this study explores Islamic moral values as a panacea for social media abuse among Muslim preachers in Yorubaland, Nigeria. The objective of this study is the proper application of Islamic ethical values to ward off the abuse of social media and retrace its unrestrained usage for character assassination, slandering of scholars, attracting followers with misleading and deceptive outbursts, dissemination of false and unverified information among contemporary Muslim preachers, particularly in Yorubaland.

Academic interest in social media has grown significantly since a large body of prior research has examined its effects, particularly in the *Da'wah* domain. During this study, the researcher looked through earlier material. Islamic *Da'wah* can be enhanced by social media, as explored in the essay "Social Media and Its Utilization for *Da'wah* by Selected Muslim Scholars in Northern Nigeria" by M.S. Muhammad and A. Lawal. As a result of social media, they argue in their analysis, Muslim society has seen developments that have a big potential to affect both the individual and collective levels. (Muhammad & AbdulKareem, 2022). The current study, however, is focused on modern Muslim preachers in Yorubaland, whereas the survey in the article concentrates on *Muslim intellectuals in Northern Nigeria*. In a research article titled: "*Impacts of Dacwah Activities of Selected Muslim Scholars on Social Media Platforms on Yoruba Muslims*" by A.D. Olalekan and S.S. Badmus, the authors delve into the prospects of social media and prove it as an avenue where the *Da'wah* struggles of some Muslim personalities have been exceedingly flourished. It is submitted in the article that religious scholars now have a creative way to offer their audience instructive and worthwhile teachings thanks to social media platforms. (Olalekan & Badmus, 2024). It is important to highlight that the article's main focus is on the benefits of using social media appropriately for *Da'wah* operations rather than the misuse of the platform that is occurring among modern Muslim preachers in Yorubaland and necessitates drastic measures.

A worthwhile article that extensively scrutinises the misuse of social media is K.O. Dauda's "*Social Media for Islamic Da'wah and Peaceful Coexistence in Yorubaland, Nigeria*". Dauda asserts that Muslim leaders, preachers, and organisations, as well as individual believers, have embraced social media channels to propagate and disseminate Islamic teachings as well as acquire relevant knowledge and information about Islam. (Dauda, 2023). Based on his research, he claims that some Yoruba Muslim preachers abuse social media to spread hate speech, defaming other Muslims, claiming that other Muslims are unbelievers, and condemning other Muslims. (Dauda, 2023). According to Dauda, Yoruba Muslim preachers (*Du'at*) who misuse social media in the course of their *Da'wah* have disregarded certain Islamic morals and tenets that could guarantee ethical and successful *Da'wah* propagation capable of fostering peaceful coexistence. (Dauda, 2023).

The aforementioned makes clear that even though researchers have been examining how social media is being used and abused, the application of Islamic moral standards in social media usage has not generally piqued writers' interest in a significant way. This is a lingering hole that this study

endeavours to bridge. The components of this study are four, to wit, moral values in Islam: an insight, social media and contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland: prospects and challenges, application of Islamic moral values in social media platforms by contemporary Muslim preachers, and a conclusion.

### **Moral Values in Islam: An Insight**

Generally, moral values can be referred to as attitudes and beliefs of someone who helps people to decide what is right and wrong. Morality is influenced by the rules and cultural norms in which a person is raised so that it is internalised within a person. (Masita, 2019). Relating this to Islam, moral values in Islam encompass the concept of righteousness, good character, and the body of moral qualities and virtues prescribed and entrenched in both the textual provisions of the Qur'an and Sunnah. (Shah, Sarwan, Jadoon, Awan, Zia & Arif, 2022). Moral values in Islam cover the broad spectrum of personal moral conduct of a Muslim as well as his social responsibilities. Islamic moral values comprise humility, modesty, control of passions and desires, truthfulness, integrity, patience, steadfastness, and fulfilling one's promises, while the social life consists of social responsibilities, parents, relatives, and neighbours are based on kindness, and consideration. (Nuriman & Fauzan, 2017).

It is reasonable to assert here that Islamic law has been promulgated to instill gracious behaviour and lofty morals among its adherents and to refine their characters, all of which contribute to general well-being among people and society. One of the cardinal objectives of *Shari'ah* is aiming to guarantee a safe and peaceful existence for all and sundry and provide adequate protection of all aspects of human lives, whether in the arena of beliefs, wealth, honour, or peace of mind. In Islam, human well-being begins and ends with manners and ethical standards. It starts with inviting people to embrace guidance and righteousness and culminates in inculcating moral values among human beings indicative of humanity, nobility, and love. (Shah, Sarwan, Jadoon, Awan, Zia & Arif, 2022). Islam builds a higher system of morality by which mankind can realise its greatest potential and eternal success. Islam forbids the soul from vices such as self-seeking egotism, tyranny, wantonness, and indiscipline and encourages virtues like kindness, generosity, mercy, sympathy, peace, disinterested goodwill, scrupulous fairness, and truthfulness towards all creation in all situations. (Nuriman & Fauzan, 2017).

Undoubtedly, it is discerned from the above that Islamic moral values endeavour to shape and retrace human activity in a Muslim society, to promote and guide their dispositions to the benefit of the whole society and its individuals, and to bring for all individuals a good conclusion in the other life. Moral values in Islam then, whether they are individual such as sincerity, patience, charity love, soul combating, or common such as self-feeling, obligation, and call for Islam, are meant to bring an individual and society benefit and protect human benefit. Islam makes the moral side a measure of good deeds, and the main side in values is the main objectives for the message of Islam. The Noble Prophet came to complete good morals, and Islam cares for the development of moral feeling in human nature, and makes correctness the guide to human behavior both publicly and privately, as Islam assures the moral side in all worship. (Nuriman & Fauzan, 2017).

On a general note, Islamic moral values are the embodiment of the primary source of Islamic law i.e. Qur'an and *hadith*. The Qur'an as a divine book abounds in excellent moral suggestions and precepts and replete with virtuous deeds and enjoins the believers to inculcate them and exhibit them in their daily life. Likewise, Prophet Muhammad was raised to perfect good conduct which he was able to accomplish as he epitomised noble characters and worthwhile disposition to the extent that Allah praised him with the nobility of character in the Qur'an. By implication, the injunctions laid down by Allah in the Qur'an for moral standards and the exemplified ethical conduct of the Prophet are referred to as Islamic moral values in this context. Islam encapsulates basic moral norms and values

with a wide range of behaviour for the individual and shows him the way to the highest possible moral excellence which can save the entire humanity from the chaos and anarchy that have overtaken it today. (NOUN, 2020).

### **Development of Islam In Yorubaland**

Geographically, Yorubaland occupies a land which lies on the South-Western part of Nigeria between the third and the sixth degrees of North latitude. It is bounded on the North, and on the East, roughly by the River Niger, on the South, by the Bight of Benin, and on the West, by Dahomey (now Benin Republic) and Togo (Johnson, 1978). The Yoruba constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria and they effectively occupy the whole of Ogun, Ondo, Oyo and Lagos States and a substantial part of Kwara and Kogi States. A considerable number of Yoruba people also inhabit the South-Eastern part of the Republic of Benin (former Dahomey). All these areas formed what was known as the Yoruba country before the European partition of Africa (Atanda, 1987).

The Yoruba country lies roughly between latitude 6° and 9° North and longitudes 2° 30' and 6° 30' East, with an estimated area of about 181,300 square kilometres. Pockets of the Yoruba are found in other parts of Nigeria, in some West African countries and even in the West Indies and South America, but the area defined above is regarded as the traditional homeland of the Yoruba people (Johnson, 1978). As an ethnic description, the word "Yoruba" was first recorded in reference to Oyo Empire in a treatise written by the 11th century Songhai scholar Ahmed Baba. It was popularized by Hausa usage and ethnography written in Arabic and *Ajami* during the 19th century originally referring to Oyo exclusively.

By and large, before the advent of Islam, the people were predominantly adherents of Yoruba Traditional Religion. The traditional religion was based, according to Oluremi (2006), on worshipping deities who may be broadly classified into four, namely: Olodumare, national deities, ethnic deities and ancestors. The Yoruba believe in the existence of a Supreme God whom they refer to as Olodumare, i.e. the Owner or Lord of Heaven. A few deities were of national importance and worshipped throughout the entire Yorubaland. They include Oduduwa (the creator of the earth), Obatala or Orisanla (the god of whiteness or white cloth), Ogun (the god of iron), Esu or Elegbera (devil), Ifa or Orunmila (god of divination), Sonpona (god of small pox), Osanyin (god of medicine) and Sango (god of thunder). Ethnic deities are confined to particular Yoruba communities.

The deities are the patrons and guardians of the communities. Osun (goddess of river) in Osogbo, Oju Osi of Abanta in Ijebuland and Olumo Rock in Abeokuta are some of the ethnic shrines in Yorubaland (Oluremi, 2006). In addition to the national and ethnic deities, ancestor worship is also rampant among the people. The spread of Islam in the region only reduced the strength of the traditional religion; there is still fair proportion of Yoruba practising the idolistic faith currently.

The exact period that Yorubaland came in contact with Islam is very contentious. Al-Ilori (2014) gives justification for the contention by reiterating that Islam in Yorubaland passed, indisputably, through three stages namely: advent, spreading and development stages. He maintains that failure to acknowledge the aforementioned stages propelled some historians into mistaking a stage for another.

The historical development of Islam in Yorubaland is shaped by four forces. It is known that the old Oyo Empire was very proximate, geographically, to the ancient Mali Empire which had assumed, by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the stronghold of Islam in West Africa. Adetona (2016) asserted that the first contact of the Yoruba to Islam in that period was through the influence of caravan trade that existed among neighbouring regions. Hence, Islam was known to Yoruba people as *Esin-Imale*, a patronymic reference to Mali. He further submitted that this account is highly probable by the fact that Dyala traders from Mali reached the Yoruba kingdom at about that time.



Some words have also been borrowed from Songhay to buttress the earlier view. For example, the Songhay word for a holy man is Alfa, same with Yoruba and the political title of *barakoi*/ *bara-koi* used by Governors in the Bara province in the north inland Delta of Songhai in the sixteenth century and later used by the Commander of the Calvary was adopted by Yoruba as *Parakoyi* with similar connotation and political authority.

The second force in the historical development of Islam in Yorubaland is constituted by some Nupe and Hausa Muslims who lived as immigrants in the Yoruba Old Oyo Empire towards the half of the 16th century (Arikewuyo, 2019). Although, Islam was not deep rooted then as it was only the faith of the strangers, but the *Alaafin* (ruler) often maintained cordial relation with the strange Muslims who usually offered him spiritual assistance in the moment of tribulation. A very big mosque was erected in 1550 by those Hausas which was regarded as the first mosque in Oyo-Ile (Al-Ilori, 2014).

It is worthy of note that before the half of nineteenth century, Islam in Yorubaland had not assumed conspicuous recognition as it was only being practiced secretly and individually. This does not suggest that it had not arrived in the region, as history has asserted that various Yoruba cities have had their first mosques early in the eighteenth century. The first mosque in Iseyin was erected in 1770 by Mallam Aboki from Katsina; Iwo also got her first mosque during the regime of Oba Muhammad Lamuye in 1755 and Ketu, a Yoruba domain which has now fallen to Benin Republic, got her first mosque erected in 1760 by one Mallam Sofu (Al-Ilori, 2014).

The third force in the history of Islam witnessed an unprecedented development in Yorubaland towards the half of nineteenth century which marked the beginning of successive armed struggles against the Yoruba pagans by the Islamic State in Ilorin (Al-Ilori, 1975). The struggles were responsible for the expansion and extension of Islam to other parts of Yorubaland. The triumph of Muslims in the said struggles was interrupted by the arrival of the colonial masters.

The fourth force that shaped the development of Islam in Yorubaland was occupied by individual scholars from Ilorin who took the bull by the horn in spreading and preaching Islam to various cities of Yorubaland. The missionary conversions of the pagans by those scholars continued until the arrival of the Christian missionaries who subdued them with material wealth and colonial support (Al-Ilori, 1975).

It is apparent from the foregoing that the characters who played key roles in the development of Islam in Yorubaland until the arrival of colonial masters towards the end of nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth centuries were the Negroes of Mali, Nupe and Hausa Muslims, and finally the Ilorin scholars and *Mujāhidūn*. On the arrival of the British colonial masters and most especially after the 1914 amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates, the long-achieved legacies of Islam in Yorubaland were subjected to humiliation and target of the dual Christian missionaries and colonial masters. They introduced policies which jeopardized the implementation of *Shari'ah* that had been in use in notable Yoruba cities such as Iwo, Ikirun and Ede; and they converted a large proportion of Muslims through the newly introduced western educational system.

The struggle to combat the new challenges by Yoruba Muslims gave birth to the influx of Muslim organizations and Islamic institutes in the last century. Notable among the premier organizations that rose to the challenges were: Ahmadiyyah Muslim Jamācat of Nigeria in 1916; Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria in 1923; Nawairudeen Society of Nigeria in 1939; and Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria in 1954 (Opeloye, 2013). The uniform mission of the organizations was to combat the conversionary mission of the Christian missionary through the western education system (Oloyede, 2015).

From 1950s onward there was takeoff of major Arabic institutes in Yorubaland which aimed at supplying man-power for Islamic mission and strengthening the knowledge about Islam in a period characterized by low shortage of capable Islamic scholars. Hence, the following institutes were created by prominent Muslim scholars in Yorubaland: Arabic and Islamic Training Centre, Agege established in 1952 by Shaykh Adam Al-Ilori (d. 1992); Arabic Institute of Nigeria, Elekuro Ibadan, established in 1958 by Shaykh Murtadha AbdusSalam (d. 2007) and Al-Azhar Institute, Ilorin established in 1963 by Shaykh Kamaldudeen Al-Adabi (d. 2005). The aforementioned institutes are the springboards for other Arabic and Islamic institutes in Yorubaland.

It is note-worthy that Islam was handed down to current Muslims in Yorubaland through the direct channel of various Muslim organizations and the Arabic/ Islamic institutes. Hence, the Muslim organizations and the various institutes of Arabic are credited for preserving Islam from the plots targeted at eroding the faith and converting its faithful in the twentieth century. Currently, due to the efforts of the aforementioned forces, the development of Islam has reached its peak in Yorubaland as manifest in the rate of Muslim scholars, Muslim Students, Arabic and Islamic institutes and centres, Muslim organizations, Islamic centres and mosques, Islamic publications, Muslim Universities and the acceptance of current Islamic awakening and revivalism.

### **Social Media and Contemporary Muslim Preachers in Yorubaland: Prospects and Challenges**

Before delving into the prospects and challenges facing Muslim preachers in the use of media, it is apposite to explain the concept of “social media”. Social media is a phrase consisting of two words. The word “social” means communication with others by sharing information with them and obtaining information from them. At the same time, “media” literally implies communication devices, such as the Internet (TV, radio, and newspaper media are examples of more traditional types). The modification of the two words defines social media as a website or application that allows people to share their content very quickly and efficiently and as a means of communicating with people you know or strangers. (Tarequl Islam, 2019). Kaplan and Heinlein in their word submit that social media include web-based and mobile technologies that are used in turning communication into interactive dialogue. It is a group of internet-based applications that are built on ideological and technological foundations which is termed and referred to as web 2.0 for the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It exists to provide communication among people regardless of the distance, making it open to people to easily share; information, files, photos, videos, etc. (Olalekan & Badmus).

Nonetheless, social media is made up of various user-driven platforms that facilitate diffusion of compelling content, dialogue creation, and communication to a broader audience. It is essentially a digital space created by the people and for the people, and it provides an environment that is conducive for interactions and networking to occur at different levels. (Olalekan & Badmus).

The advancement of social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, TikTok, and personal blogs have gloriously allocated space for *Da'wah* activities. (Olalekan & Badmus). It is worth noting that *Da'wah* activities have been enhanced with the use of social media. Aside from being an interactive medium and communication vehicle among people in general, it is also used as an inevitable tool for Islamic messages delivery in various forms, and these include religious lectures, photos, drawings, cartoons, Islamic memes, religious appeals, inspirational Islamic stories, video clips of spiritual songs, wisdom words, religious slogans, studies on Qur'an and Hadith and its interpretation. (Olalekan & Badmus). Arising from the above, it is evident that, in recent times, social media has become an effective and adaptive means of propagating the teachings of Islam and an ideal platform for the dissemination of Islamic beliefs.

## Prospects

It is without doubt that attention, focus, social interactions, and engagement have been shifted from physical to virtual on social media and social media become the latest means to pass Islamic messages to the teeming population of Muslim audiences. (Haruna, 2022). Like every other person in the Muslim world, contemporary Muslim preachers explore social media to spread *Da'wah*. In the nick of time when social media platforms gained traction and proved to be a viable tool for long-term awareness-raising, Muslim preachers in Yorubaland set up pages and oversaw several pages and handles to enhance *Da'wah* activities. Notable *Da'wah* impacts have been realised in Yorubaland. It is glaring that the vast majority of contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland who judiciously take advantage of social media to convey *Da'wah* to the mass of people and their extensive online presence on social media platforms has influenced the widespread virtual spread of Islamic teachings to a larger audience.

In Yorubaland, there are outstanding *Da'wah* practitioners who propagate *Tawhīd* cut over various media outlets. A leading voice and reputable Imam in Oyo is renowned on social media as a *Da'wah* activist who uses his pulpit to promote the oneness of Allah and liberate people from paganism cum syncretism. In Yorubaland of Nigeria, *Jalabi* has been the theme of some contemporary Muslim preachers and the featured theme has exposed the evil of *Jalabi* and the exploitative gender of its perpetrators. Some leading institutions like As-Sunnah Academy, Darun-Naim, and Maktab among others organise both local and international conferences, open seminars, and workshops that are disseminated via social media on a local and global scale, to educate the general public about Islam and its ethical principles. Fundraising for the poor and those whose health is on the verge of death owing to financial constraints to take proper care of themselves is one of the noteworthy effects of modern Muslim preachers in Yorubaland using social media.

Nonetheless, it is imperative to emphasise that social media has availed contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland of the opportunities to live stream broadcasts of Islamic lectures, conferences, seminars, and programmes, share videos, images, and audio clips to convey Islamic teachings to a wider audience, engage in meaningful discussions with non-Muslims, allow *Da'wah* practitioners to engage in inter and intra-religious dialogue and debate and facilitate the formation of online forums in a bid to foster a sense of unity among the Muslim *Ummah*. (Dauda, 2023). Given this, it can be concluded that social media has had the following effects on modern Muslim preachers in Yorubaland: it facilitates *Da'wah* activities, expands the audience, acts as a learning platform for the dissemination of Islamic knowledge, and effectively dispels various myths about Islam. (Haruna, 2022).

## Challenges

Despite its potential for the propagation of Islamic teachings and ethos, social media has witnessed misfits in the *Da'wah* space as it opens the door for ignorant charlatans posing as scholars. Some notorious Muslim preachers in Yorubaland have gone far in misusing social media and mismanaging their social accounts and social handles and this has become the apple of discord among the Muslim preachers. These self-acclaimed preachers have turned social media into a battleground where scholars engage in combat over the issue of *Manhaj*, inadvertently lend credence to cybercrime, fraud, and cultism, grant people free entrance to paradise and hellfire based on their whims and caprices, mock a Muslim deceased by exposing his/her hidden flaws and shortcoming while families mourn his/her French leave and among other societal vices perpetrated by the unscrupulous elements whose activities and demeanour are detrimental and antagonistic to the Islamic creed.

Some Muslim preachers, particularly the Youth, have been influenced by their social media fame and ability to profit from their followership to fabricate false accusations, cast doubt on the veracity of an *Ahādīth* that has been widely authenticated, disparage the Prophet's companions, and even kill

their personas in an attempt to gain notoriety and increase their following. People are at a crossroads and find it difficult to avoid heresies because of the few bad apples among modern Muslim preachers, who, unbeknownst to the rest of the Muslim community, masquerade as sincere preachers. It is heartrending to recount the recent social media promotion of these quacks in the *Da'wah* arena where they mockingly displayed their intoxicated eulogy of the Prophet with “*Inna Salata*,” passed a verdict declaring that anyone who goes against *Mawhud* will not be allowed to enter paradise, and made numerous outrageous claims, such as that Prophet Muhammad was taken to a sorcerer by referring to Waraqat bn Nawfal.

As a result of the above-mentioned shenanigans and unethical practices, the tripartite of *Da'wah* which acts as a paddock around which the cattle of Muslim preachers graze has been disclosed and the moral values of Islam degraded and worn out like that of a used engine among contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland. It is on this that Alawiye and Paramole submit that Yoruba Muslim preachers misuse social media by misrepresenting Islam as a result of a lack of knowledge, by verbally abusing rival scholars without restraint, by reacting to unverified information, and by using social media without restraint to pursue personal fame and favor. (Dauda, 2023). To this effect, it is apparent that the lack of cooperation and cohesion, coupled with frequent criticism and brutal attacks on one another's initiatives are posing enormous threats not only to the efficacy of *Da'wah* but also to the attempt to dispel Islam as a religion of peace. (Haruna, 2022).

### **Application of Islamic Moral Values in Social Media Platforms by Contemporary Muslim Preachers**

In *Da'wah* parlance, the application of Islamic moral values is one of the practical qualifications of Muslim preachers. In Islam, a preacher is expected to be freed from any sort of viciousness and possess high behavioural qualities termed in this context as Islamic moral values. Thus, it is incumbent upon Muslim preachers to exhibit high moral standards, and virtuous manners that will strengthen their missions and endear him to people as a role model worthy of emulation. (Haruna, 2022). Given the myriad challenges posed by the abuse of social media among contemporary Muslim preachers, it is obvious that there is a need for a paradigm shift in the *Da'wah* realm and a dire need for the application of Islamic moral values.

Considering that the Qur'an and Sunnah are the fundamental sources of Islamic morality, it is necessary to highlight the moral principles that Muslim preachers should incorporate into their sermons. Muslim preachers are therefore expected to uphold the following moral principles:

1. **Wisdom, Beautiful admonition, and Good communication approach:** The values that constitute Islamic morality are broad. However, the indispensable values that Muslim preachers ought to imbibe are wisdom, beautiful admonition, and a good communication approach. It is established that social media has a larger audience comprising Muslims and non-Muslims. To call non-Muslims to Islam and to call Muslims to goodness, preachers need to be discerned, passing inspiring and thought-awakening admonition and persuading and appealing communication approach. (Shehu, 2017). This approach will enable Muslim preachers to stay away from fallacy and respond to oppressive voices with a call to fair dialogue. This *Da'wah* ethic of a caller is entrenched in Q16: 125 which reads: “*Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good admonition and have disputations with them in the best manner...*” It is deduced from this verse that acceptance of *Da'wah* and its impacts is contingent on the approach or methodology adopted by the preacher. The lack of this among scholars makes people turn a deaf ear to Islamic messages conveyed to them and hamper the efficacy of *Da'wah* in Yorubaland. For this to serve as a panacea, contemporary preachers are urged to promote Islamic teachings with wisdom, beautiful preaching, and a good communication approach.
2. **God-consciousness and Sincerity:** One of the essential moral values a preacher must



inculcate is the consciousness of his creator. God-consciousness as Islamic moral values implies saying and preaching what Allah and His prophet have laid down. It is expected of Muslim preachers to be watchful of their tongues and mindful of their utterances at all times, so that their statements would not go against any teachings of Islam. The Qur'an provision that underpins this assertion is Q 33: 70 which reads, "*Believers, fear God and say the right word*". The prophet explained the evil of losing tongue to speak whatever comes out of it while instructing Mu'adh stressing that one of the things that will cast people to hellfire on the Day of judgement is the output of their tongues. Sincerity in devotion and actions is a basic requirement for the acceptance of deeds be it *Da'wah* mission or other. Sincerity is a guard that guides preachers not to be carried away by their media fames. Contemporary Muslim preachers should assess themselves and adourn their practices and services to Islam with sincerity for it to culminate into success for them here and hereafter. A sincere preacher will not compromise his religion, morals, and knowledge for public fame or worldly gain. The factor that fuels the ember of moral deviation among contemporary scholars is a lack of sincerity. Having said that, adhering to this would close the gate of baseless verdicts, outrageous statements, misuse of textual provisions to suit one's volition, and other vices prevalent on social media among contemporary preachers.

3. **Continuous Seeking of Knowledge:** One of the factors that weaken the strength of Muslim preachers in Yorubaland is the massive deficit of knowledge. On social media, students who should be receiving scholarly instruction have become the Mufti of the day. Islam holds that acquiring knowledge is a never-ending endeavor, with Muslims obligated to learn continuously and pass on their knowledge to others till their dying breath. Muslim preachers in the modern day are compelled by the rapidly changing trends in Islamic study to dedicate themselves to personal growth by improving their *Da'wah* skills and resources. Even though preaching is a collective obligation in Islam, insight and a comprehensive understanding of what to preach as criteria for Muslim preachers are explicitly mentioned in Qur'an 12: 108. In Yorubaland, contemporary Muslim preachers are exhorted to broaden their knowledge and students should be eager to learn and refrain from dragging speakers with experts who have received extensive instruction in Islamic scholarship.
4. **Moderation, Leniency, and Proper Management of Intra-Religious Differences:** One of the indispensable values set-asides for Muslim preachers is moderation. Muslim preachers are obliged to incorporate this value specifically while preaching. It is a unique peculiarity of Muslim *Ummah* and a significant feature for which *Ummah* is known. In Yorubaland today, one of the burning factors that promote the abuse of social media among contemporary Muslim scholars is the lack of moderation. The charlatans masquerading as scholars are drowning in the ocean of laxity while some fundamentalists who claim to adhere to *Sunnah* are overwhelmed by fanaticism. The extremists among contemporary Muslim preachers keep issuing legal verdicts with blind condemnation for some cultural practices such as the prohibition of *Owoikona*, and condemning translation of *Khutbah* among others. The implication of this is that it opens the door for destructive dialogue where the audience will be expecting "*Esi oro*" from their respective factions. As a result, cohesion and unity are cleaved asunder among contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland. To redress this crookedness, contemporary *Da'wah* activists should be moderate and lenient and as well learn how to manage intra-religious differences. In Qur'an 2: 143, Allah lends credence to this saying, "*And thus we have made you a moderate community*". Prophet Muhammad also encouraged believers to "*make things easier and discourage them not to make things difficult and give good tidings and do not make them run away (from Islam)*". (Niwarz, Ishfaq & Attaullah, 2018, 52). These are the moral values preached by Islam, thus, Muslim preachers should pay heed to the direction of Allah giving to Musa in Q 20: 44 when He said, "*But speak gently to him; perhaps he may yet take heed or even feel afraid*"

5. **Humility and Forgiveness:** Islamic ethics promote humility and encourage forgiveness. It is not an understatement to submit that the lack of humility among contemporary Muslim preachers especially the youth in Yorubaland led to continuous disputes, several attacks, and slandering of scholars in modern time. Arrogance which Islam frowns at has been the hallmark of contemporary Muslim preachers. The attributes of a true believer and a sincere preacher include humility as mentioned in Q 25: 63. Allah says: *“The true servants of Allah are those who walk upon the earth with humility and when they are addressed by the ignorant ones, their response is, peace”*. From this, it is concluded that rather than starting a conflict, a Muslim preacher ought to be a mediator working toward fostering peace. Nonetheless, the inability to forgive has led to tragic situations involving contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland threatening one another with legal action, with the audience only acting as spectators on social media, waiting to see how the story plays out among contemporary Muslim scholars on social media. In light of this, Muslim preachers are to adhere to the Islamic moral of forgiveness value which recommends overlooking shortcomings. The context of *Sūratu'l-A'rāf*, verse 199 enjoins believers to, *“Be tolerant; enjoin what is right; and avoid the ignorant”*
6. **Refrainment from Societal vices:** It is crystal clear that moral values comprise the dos and don'ts, rights and wrongs, and virtues and vices. As the foregoing virtues are considered Islamic moral values, it is informing that abstinence from vices like pride, envy, hypocrisy, slandering, and the like is also part of Islamic ethics. There are copious textual provisions that condemn social vices. However, Qur'an 39 points out these vices in detail. In the *Sūrah*, Allah forbids mockery, defamation, offensive nicknames, suspicion, backbiting, and spying. Muslim preachers are obliged to dissociate themselves from these vices and incorporate moral virtues.

### Conclusion

Arising from the foregoing examination, the research discovered the following:

- a. Social media has played a pivotal role in enhancing *Da'wah* activities of Muslim preachers in Yorubaland.
- b. Some bad apples among contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland misuse social media to promote vices, defame other scholars, and cause confusion and chaos among the preachers and Muslim audience.
- c. The abuse of social media calls for serious reformation which can be actualised through the application of Islamic moral values.
- d. The study exposes the applicability of Islamic ethics to contemporary Muslim preachers in Yorubaland.
- e. Qur'an and *Sunnah* constitute moral values in Islam.

### Recommendations

The research, therefore, recommends the following:

- a. Muslim preachers should explore social media massively for mass dissemination of Islamic teachings.
- b. That Muslim preachers should imbibe Islamic moral values in their actions and speeches and honourably present Islam to people in a dazzling manner to show the beauty of Islam.

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