



Appraisal Of Curriculum-Based Moral Instruction Strategies of Nigeria's Islamic Religious Studies (IRS) Basic Education Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the moral instruction strategies in Nigeria's Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) of Islamic studies, assess their effectiveness in instilling moral values, and identify challenges affecting their implementation in Nigerian education schools. Library-based research design which relies on the systematic collection and analysis of information from existing literature was adopted. The research discovered dramatization, dramatization, discussion and questioning, Storytelling and Qur'anic narratives, memorization with application, sīrah and biography studies, and role modeling, and role playing as the curriculum-based moral instruction studies in the IRS curriculum. The existing related literature indicate that the identified strategies are powerful for moral instruction. However, their effectiveness in classroom is retarded by a number of discovered factors including; assiduousness of moral Instruction; mode of teaching morality which rather than aim at moralizing the learners emphasizes moral concepts and theories; unavailability of qualified teachers; Institutionalized materialism, tribalism and political patronage; lack of effective sanctions on culprits; inadequacy of teaching resources, and assessment difficulties. The paper finally concluded that curriculum-based moral instruction in IRS has great potential for shaping student character, but its success depends on effective teacher training, availability of resources, improved assessment methods, and innovative pedagogy adapted to 21st-century realities.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a paramount means of making people recognize and live by acceptable moral values and creating smart, autonomous, religious, responsible, skilled and well-behaved human resources (Wynne, 1986). One of the crucial goals of education in Nigeria is the inculcation of national consciousness, unity, and moral values (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Moral instruction is not only a dominant educational concern to the country but also an operational subject in its primary and secondary schools (Taiwo, 1999). Thus, the National Policy on Education (2014) states that instructions at all levels of education should be geared towards

inculcating respect for the worth and dignity of the individual; faith in man's ability to make rational decisions; moral and spiritual principles in interpersonal and human relations; shared responsibility for the common good of the society; promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and acquisition of functional skills and competencies necessary for self-reliance.

Moral Education refers to the process of suppressing the immoral behaviours in individuals while bringing out the Moral qualities in individuals (Taiwo, 1999). It is the process of introducing ethical values, integrity, and social responsibility for students in the early stage to help them grow

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into individuals who respect others, act with kindness, and contribute positively to their communities (Vishwankar Public School, 2025). New Horizon Gurukul Pre School (2025) sees it as "teaching values, ethics, and principles in order for the individual to distinguish what is right and wrong. A curriculum of moral education is normally made up of such topics as honesty, compassion, fairness, responsibility, and respect for others which guide the students to exercise self-discipline, compassion, a great sense of ethics, distinguish right from wrong and make sound moral decisions (Vishwankar Public School, 2025). It also consists of instructional strategies including problem-based learning, working in groups, discussions, dilemmas and values, the role-playing method, Storytelling method and Teacher as a Role Model (New Horizon Gurukul Pre School, 2025).

Within this framework of Nigeria's moral instruction programme, Islamic Religious Studies (IRS) plays an important role of developing the character and moral orientation of Muslim learners. The two primary sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah are replete with moral teachings which in Arabic translates as *akhlaq* or *adab* although it has been suggested that the word *akhlaq* refers to moral philosophy (ethics) while *adab* denotes the actual practices of moral philosophy, that is, morality. The Nigeria's IRS curriculum for secondary schools was thus designed by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to promote understanding of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the principles of Islamic faith and practice, while also equipping students with moral virtues such as honesty, tolerance, patience, and respect for others (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council-NERDC, n. d). Moral instruction within IRS trusts on curriculum-based strategies, which include structured teaching methods embedded in the curriculum itself. This paper aims to ascertain the key moral instruction strategies in the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) of Islamic studies, assess their effectiveness in instilling moral values, and identify challenges affecting their implementation in Nigerian education schools.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nigeria today is beset with innumerable moral problems that need ardent attention and lasting solution, including formal instruction in schools using viable strategies among other things, to save the country from imminent decline. These societal problems which are really bastardizing the country's enabling environment reflect in the nation's educational institutions where students exhibit numerous forms of immorality including dishonesty, intolerance, disrespect, disobedience, cheating during examination, dishonesty, riots, cultism, kidnapping, raping, and abuse of drugs (Muhammed-Lawal & Salahu-Deen, 2021). This moral decline is an issue of great concern that calls for the reexamination the nation's philosophy and methodical approach to protect Nigeria's moral values that make for peaceful co-existence, progress and development in the society (Abdullahi, Idi, and Soja, 2024).

One of the causes of Nigeria's moral decadence is the teachers' use of non-effective approaches to the teaching of moral instruction in schools (Njoku & Njoku, 2014). Some of the teachers have acquired neither the content knowledge about moral concepts and theories nor the pedagogical skills of teaching the students moral values effectively (Gui1, Yasin, Nur, Abdullah and Saharuddin, 2020). Their lessons on moral values are therefore characterized by emphasis on traditional or lecture method in which teacher talk predominates student activities and in which drilling and chanting are frequent (Humphreys & Crawford, 2015). The present paper seeks to appraise the effectiveness of curriculum-based moral instruction strategies in Islamic Religious Studies in Nigerian secondary schools. This is crucial because it is through the strategies that the moral aspects as well as the knowledge and actions, both of which are also connected to values and norms of education, are transferred to the learners.

Purpose of the Study

This paper aimed at examining and evaluating the curriculum-based strategies for moral instruction in IRS Basic education

curriculum with the view of highlighting the strengths and weaknesses in them. It has the following objectives to attain:

1. To identify curriculum-based strategies used in teaching morals through IRS.
2. To appraise the effectiveness of these strategies.
3. To suggest improvements for better implementation.

Research Questions

This paper has the following research questions to answer:

1. What are the key moral instruction strategies embedded in the IRS curriculum?
2. How effective are these strategies in instilling moral values?
3. What challenges affect their implementation in Nigerian secondary schools?

Significance of the Study

One of the significances of the study is that its findings will assist Nigeria curriculum developers and educational policy-makers in selecting the right teaching strategies for the various Islamic moral themes included in the basic education curriculum of Islamic studies as well as in reviewing the curriculum. Another significance of the study is that its findings will assist curriculum planners in planning curriculum of Islamic studies. The findings will also be of relevance to Islamic studies teachers who will be more informed regarding the relative strengths of the strategies of teaching Islamic morality in the nation's institutions of Basic education.

Scope and Delimitation

The study is limited to curriculum-based moral instruction strategies in IRS at the Nigerian basic education level. It does not cover higher education or other faith-based curricula. The focus is on curriculum prescriptions, documented teaching strategies, and their appraisal through library research rather than empirical fieldwork.

Conceptual Clarification

Islamic morality and curriculum-based instruction strategies are the basic concepts underlying this paper and needing clarification. Islamic morality is the code of conduct embodied in the Glorious Quran, as interpreted by prophet Muhammad (SAW) and learned Muslim scholars, especially during the early phase of the development of the religion. The key components of Islamic morality include steadfastness, integrity, kindness, endurance, and observance of promises and these are the values stressed by the Qur'an. On steadfastness, the Qur'an states: "*And God loves those who are always firm and steadfast*" (Q. 3: 146). It upholds the moral values of compassion, gentleness, benevolence, self-discipline and the culture of lenience, forbearing and forgiving in the following verse: "*Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; for Allah loves those who do good*" (Q. 3: 134). As for the observance of promises, the Glorious Quran: "*And fulfill every covenant; verily covenants will be questioned about*" (Q. 17:34). It says, regarding endurance (As-Sabr), "*O ye who believe: persevere in patience and constancy, lie in such perseverance; strengthen each other and fear Allah that ye may prosper*" (Q. 3:200).

Curriculum-based instruction strategies are the methods of teaching contained in an education programme which also contains learning experiences, and student performance evaluations (University of Delawayo, n. d). A well-planned curriculum containing research-based teaching strategies has the potential of improving teaching and learning activities and significantly impacting student progress and teachers' quality and teacher retention (Tunnell, 2022). Examples of curriculum-based teaching strategies include discussions, practical exercises, group work, project-based learning, and technology integration that interest students and promote learning; and Assessments of students' comprehension, knowledge, and abilities in relation to the curriculum's goals (Team Creatrix, 2023). (Tunnell, 2022).



Theoretical Framework

This research is placed within a multi-theoretical framework that combines Cognitive Moral Development Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Islamic Moral Philosophy (Tawhidic Paradigm). The Cognitive Moral Development Theory (Lawrence Kohlberg) focuses on the thinking process that occurs when one decides whether a behaviour is right or wrong. According to this theory, moral reasoning develops through six hierarchical levels, grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Preconventional level consists of stages 1 and 2, and during the level, morality is externally controlled and the rules conformed to, in order to avoid punishment or receive rewards. Conventional level consists of stages 3 and 4, and in it, conformity to social rules is to win the approval of those who fix them or to maintain social order. Postconventional or principled level includes stages 5 and six, and in it, morality is defined in terms of abstract principles and values that apply to all situations and societies (Sanders, n. d). this theory provides insight to the present study into how the moral reasoning of IRS students evolves and how curriculum-based strategies can be designed to target students at appropriate developmental levels.

Albert Bandura's Social learning theory holds that people learn by observing others. The theory emphasizes that learning occurs in a social context through observation, imitation, and modeling. Moral behavior, is therefore learned through both formal instruction and exposure to role models and social reinforcement. According to the theory, individuals can acquire new behaviors not only through direct experience but also by watching others and seeing the consequences of their actions. This theory has been applied extensively in educational settings, where teachers leverage modeling to demonstrate skills and behaviors, they want students to adopt. (McLeod, 2025A). It is relevant to this study as it highlights the importance of teacher behavior, peer influence, and classroom environment in the moral development of students. Curriculum-based strategies in IRS must therefore include opportunities for students to observe and

internalize moral values through interactive, experiential learning processes

Islamic Moral Philosophy (Tawhidic Paradigm) is based on the concept of Tawhid, an Arabic verbal noun which literally means unification and technically means realizing and maintaining Allah's unity in all of man's actions which directly or indirectly relate to Him. It is the belief that Allah is One, without partner in His dominion (Rubūbiyah), One without similitude in His essence and attributes (Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt), and One without rival in His divinity and in worship (Ulūhiyah or 'Ibādah). The omission of any of these three aspects is referred to as Shirk (lit. sharing); the association of partners with Allah. In Islamic terms, is in fact idolatry (Philips, 2005). Tawhid is the fundamental principle upon which the Islamic moral system is built. Tawhid framework is essential for this study as it ensures that the appraisal of curriculum strategies is not only pedagogically sound but also theologically grounded. It provides a culturally and religiously relevant lens through which to assess whether IRS strategies genuinely reflect Islamic moral values and effectively inculcate them in students

Review of Related Literature

The related literature was reviewed under three sub-themes: the light of historical overview of IRS in Nigerian education, curriculum design for moral instruction in IRS, and moral teaching strategies in use in IRS. Suraju (2017) defines Islamic Religious Studies as an interdisciplinary program that focuses on the diverse range of experiences and a subject through which everything about the religion of Islam can be learnt and taught. Ibarahim & Idris (2014) trace the origin of Islam, and hence Islamic Religious studies in Nigeria to the Introduction of Islam into the areas that now form the northern part of the country, to activities of Muslim merchants. Alkali (1967) identifies two types of Islamic schools in Nigeria, before the arrival of the colonial masters, namely the Traditional Islamic Schools (Makarantun Allo) and Ilm schools (Makarantun Zaure) existed and gradually reached their peak in the 15th to 16th century before the colonial era and do exist even today.

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Liman (2021) maintains that the Traditional Qur'anic school was the primary level of Islamic education and that the *Ilm* schools which taught *tafsir*, Hadith, *Sirah*, *fiqh*, *usulul fiqh*, *ilm tauheed*, *Tasawwuf*, *Tibb*, *Tarikh*, *Nahwu* and so on were for the older students.

Ibrahim & Idris (2014) highlight the change brought about by Western education introduced into Nigeria by colonial masters. According to them, Muslims perceived the introduction of Western Education into the northern part of Nigeria as way for propagating Christianity to the region with dominant of Muslim Ummah. This made the British reluctantly add Islamic subjects or the IRS in their educational system in order to persuade parents to enroll their children into the western schools. The colonial government also established several schools in the early 1930s, in response to appeal by Nigerian Muslims while many popular Muslim missionary organizations sprang up and built numerous primary and secondary schools to teach western education alongside Arabic and Islamic Studies. Since 1950s, the syllabi for Islamic and Christian Education were drawn up by State and Federal Ministries of Education due to multi religious and cultural nature of the country.

The IRS as a subject in Nigeria's basic education curriculum has the aim of producing religiously, morally, and academically well-adjusted individuals who can think critically and its constitutive elements are the Arabic Alphabet, the Qur'an, Hadith, *Tawhid*, *Fiqh*, *Sirah*, and *Tahdhib* (National Policy on Education, 2013). According to Idoko (2023), the IRS curriculum which was introduced into the National Education Curriculum by the Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in the 1950s was primarily designed from the Glorious Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) and other textual traditions in Islam. Following reservations voiced by some Muslim scholars that the curriculum content was narrow in scope, that the programme fell short of creating well-formed individuals, and that the syllabus did not capture important concepts, the NERDC reviewed it together with other subjects in 1984, to address the problems. The new curriculum now covered almost every

important area of Muslim life and stipulated that Islamic Studies was to be geared towards students' spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual formation.

A number of studies investigated the relative effectiveness of specific moral instruction strategies, including the use of digital tools in learning, demonstration, storytelling, activity-based and brainstorming, and inquiry and other approaches in teaching religious studies in general and the teaching the IRS in Nigerian educational Institutions, in particular. An example of the former is, Al-Hawamleh's (2019) investigation of the role of storytelling in religious moral education, in promoting students' moral consciousness. The aim was to find out the extent storytelling helps learners in internalizing moral behavior in the light of Islamic ethics and values. He designed and administered an opinion questionnaire on religious education teachers in Irbid, Jordan. The research discovered that teachers were very positive about the effectiveness of storytelling in inculcating moral behavior.

In a more specific study, Audi & Garba (2019) investigated the impact of demonstration method in teaching Islamic Studies in Kaduna State (Nigeria) secondary schools and found that the performance of students taught Islamic Studies using demonstration method was better than those taught using conventional method. Abubakar's (2018) assessment of the effects of activity-based and brainstorming instructions on students' performance in Islamic Studies in Junior Secondary Schools in Kaduna state, Nigeria similarly revealed that students taught Islamic Studies using activity-based instruction performed significantly better than those taught with conventional method. Ismaila (2023) realised, in a research on the effectiveness of inquiry-based learning strategy on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in Islamic Studies in Taraba State, Nigeria using a non-equivalent group quasi-experimental design that the post-test mean achievement scores of students taught Islamic Studies using inquiry-based learning strategy was significantly higher than that of those taught using lecture method.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted library-based research design which relies on the systematic collection and analysis of information from existing literature. The design was found appropriate since the present study has the focus of appraising curriculum-based moral instruction strategies as documented in the Nigerian IRS curriculum and related scholarly works. The research's sources of data are both primary or documentary materials (Al-Qur'an, Hadith, National Policy on Education and Basic Education Curriculum for Islamic Religious Studies) and secondary (peer-reviewed journal articles; books and academic works on curriculum studies, pedagogy, and Islamic moral education; and working papers and conference proceedings. Data were collected by systematically searching academic databases and online repositories. It was analyzed using content analysis which focusses on curriculum objectives for moral instruction, strategies prescribed in the IRS curriculum, effectiveness of these strategies as discussed in scholarly literature, challenges and gaps in implementation, and suggested improvements from contemporary studies.

Research Findings: The Identified IRS Curriculum-Based Moral Instruction Strategies

Results of the content analyses of the Nigeria curriculum of Basic Islamic religious studies revealed that the IRS curriculum prescribes several teaching strategies for moral instruction as summarized below:

1. Dramatization: the teacher guides the pupils/students in dramatizing the curriculum content that involves skills such as salah and hajj
2. Demonstration: the teacher demonstrates Islamic rules of conduct relating to table manners, sneezing, greeting and so on.
3. Storytelling and Qur'ānic Narratives: Teaching through stories of prophets and Qur'ānic parables.
4. Discussion and Questioning: Encouraging learners to reflect on moral lessons and apply them to life situations.
5. Memorization with Application: Recitation of Qur'ān and Hadīth combined with their practical relevance.
6. Sīrah and Biography Studies: Lessons from the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his companions (Sebutu et al., 2021; Azeez & Adeshina, 2013).
7. Role Modeling: Teachers embodying Islamic morals for students to emulate.
8. Role playing: some moral lessons such as Islamic greetings, respect to parents is taught with pupils/students assigned roles to play

Effectiveness of the IRS Curriculum-Based Moral Instruction Strategies

The existing literature indicates that the identified IRS curriculum-based instructional strategies identified by the study, including dramatization, demonstration, activities, problem solving, storytelling and Qur'ānic Narratives, role modeling, discussion and questioning, memorization with application, and sīrah and biography studies are generally effective in theory, particularly when teachers actively engage students in reflective and participatory learning. These student-centred approaches are effective in promoting moral development by encouraging students to actively engage with ethical dilemmas and promote a deeper understanding and internalization of ethical principles. (Cui, Yasin, and Saharuddin, 2024).

Research by Nair, Yusof & Hong (2013) indicates that storytelling method significantly enhanced the interest, motivation and achievement of the pupils more than the conventional method. A research by Narvaez (2023) in Cui, Yasin, and Saharuddin (2024) shows that discussion strategies encourage students to express their ideas and participate in debates about moral issues thereby significantly improve their moral reasoning skills. Role modelling makes teacher's as role models, central to teaching, enabling them to exhibit ethical character, integrity, and empathy which work on



their students to exhibit the same traits and develop sterling character (New Horizon Gurukul Pre School, 2025). Role-playing strategy relates to Kohlberg's theory of moral development because in it, the teacher can assign learners roles within a moral conflict scenario. It can create empathy in learners, expand their moral perspective, and help them internalize different sides of an argument (McLeod, 2025A). Demonstration strategy is a powerful and interactive teaching technique that helps students better understand complex concepts and allows learners to observe, engage, and even participate in the learning process, turning abstract ideas into concrete experiences (Teachers Institute, 2023).

The identified curriculum-based IRS moral instruction strategies such as storytelling, role modeling, and discussion are therefore powerful for moral instruction. However, in practice, many teachers adopt rote learning approaches especially the lecture method that prioritize memorization over moral application (Bello, 2017). The lecture method which although having many advantages, has several limitations including learners' passiveness in the teaching-learning process, one-size-fits-all approach or the overlooking of diverse learning styles and paces within a classroom, limited student engagement, dependence on instructor's skill, and limited practical application (Siddiqui, 2024). The reliance on rote memorization undermines the holistic *tarbiyyah* goal of Islamic education, which requires active reflection and moral practice (Olanrewaju, 2023).

Constraints of Islamic Moral instruction

The impacts of curriculum-based instruction strategies is however negated by the numerous problems facing the implementation of Islamic studies curriculum and rendering the curriculum of limited consequence on moral learning outcome of students. These are highlighted below.

Assiduousness of moral Instruction:
One of the challenges to moral instruction in Nigeria schools is that moral instruction can be an assiduous task due to the nature of morality and philosophy. Thus, moral issues which are open to

debates and controversies even among philosophers. For example, controversy exists between the consequentialists and the deontologists regarding what is good life or what makes an act to be wrong and the other right. While the consequentialists hold that it is the result or the intended result of an act that makes it right or wrong, the deontologists argue that a bad act remains bad and a good one remains so regardless of the result (Abdullahi, Idi, and Soja, 2024).

Mode of teaching the subject: Approach to teaching moral instruction is another obstacle to teaching the subject in Nigerian schools. According to Abdullahi, Idi, and Soja (2024), teaching morality is one thing but moralizing is another thing entirely. Moral instruction should therefore aim at moralizing the learners rather than merely stuffing their brains with moral concepts and theories because examples are always better than precepts. Some teachers who are be able to teach moral concepts and theories very well may not live what they teach, hence the desired outcome may not be achieved (Ogoma & Omotayo, 2015).

Unavailability of qualified teachers:
Unavailability of teachers also constitutes another challenge to teaching moral education in both primary and secondary schools. This partly results from the poor disposition of the federal government towards humanities which encourages and motivates some students to study science courses rather than humanities (Abdullahi, Idi, and Soja, 2024). The few teachers of moral instruction in supply also lack necessary commitment to the job and has negative implications on the moral behavior of the school pupils (Njoku & Njoku, 2014). Moreover, the few available teachers are frequently transferred from one school to another and this affects their teaching of moral instruction. They are also said to adopt poor teaching methods in imparting moral instruction in schools (Abdullahi, Idi, and Soja, 2024).

Institutionalized materialism, tribalism and political patronage: Some other obstacles that hinder the implementation of Moral instruction in Nigeria's institutions of learning are institutionalized



materialism, tribalism and political patronage. Materialism makes both leaders and followers in the society always yearn after material wealth with neither discretion. no appreciation of the importance of Moral uprightness. Tribalistic individuals and political bigots wish and look for good things only for their tribes' men and women and political associates, leading to social injustice like inequitable distribution of social amenities, goods and services. It also leads to corrupt practices in the selection, recruitment and promotion in the civil services. Hence, institutionalized materialism, tribalism and political patronage deny room for proper moral training in the nation's educational institutions (Taiwo, 1999).

Lack of effective sanctions on culprits:
Absence of effective sanctions on the wrong doers is another obstacle to moral education in Nigeria. education Institutions, and that is, lack of effective sanctions. This partly results from the modern legal system that has brought unfair and inconsistent system or sanctions, making it possible for some powerful individuals in the community to get away with their immoral and scandalous behavior. This significantly affects moral education in Nigeria's educational institution (Taiwo, 1999).

Inadequacy of teaching resources:
Teaching resources like legible chalkboard, textbooks, teaching aids and digital tools are either non-existent or inadequate (Humphreys & Crawford, 2015). Moreover, funds are not made readily available to purchase basic materials needed for improvising, many teachers do not feel motivate to teach (). Olanrewaju (2023) observes that the unavailability of instructional materials affects the effective delivery of IRS curriculum delivery. Availability and proper use of instructional materials on the other hand can make teaching more meaningful and concrete.

Assessment Difficulties: The affective domain is hard to measure using conventional examinations, leading to neglect of moral objectives (Bello, 2017). The persistent issue of assessing moral outcomes highlights a gap in curriculum implementation. Although IRS aims to produce morally upright students, the absence of effective tools to evaluate attitudes, values, and

behavior means these objectives remain largely aspirational (Bello, 2017). Without innovative forms of assessment, such as reflective journals, teacher observations, and community feedback, moral instruction risks being superficial.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the appraisal shows that curriculum-based moral instruction in IRS has great potential for shaping student character, but its success depends on effective teacher training, availability of resources, improved assessment methods, and innovative pedagogy adapted to 21st-century realities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Nigeria basic education teachers should employ the use of the curriculum-based moral instruction strategies for better inculcation of moral behaviour in their students.
2. Government should train and retrain the basic education teachers in the use of the curriculum-based moral instruction strategies to enhance their performance in teaching morality.
3. Instructional materials should adequately be provided by the government to facilitate teaching and learning processes in the schools
4. Nigerian authorities must ardently fight corruption in schools and the general society to eradicate or minimize its effects.

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