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Content Analysis of Some Historical Facts and the General Position of Islam on Girls Education

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Abstract

Thus, the general histories of education in Nigeria is well researched, but recent studies highlighting the place of Islamiyyah and Tsangaya educational systems not necessarily Western were scarce. This paper is based on extensive content analysis covering wide range of topics concerning girls' education in Northern Nigeria. The content and collection consists of three papers and essays published over a period of time. Readers of this article are thus, enabled to trace analyst's scientific approach a practice commended when reporting content analysis. The paper supports the fact that for quite a long time the general position of women and girls education has been a subject of repeated controversy among the Muslims ever since they came under the influence of Western civilization, culture and education. The paper has critically analysed some historical facts on the position of girl' education from the Islamic perspective. The analysis has uncovered that the idea that the North is lagging behind or educationally disadvantaged is an understatement. Islam as a religion is very mindful of knowledge, because the first revelation to Holy Prophet was on acquisition of knowledge. All that has uncovered and analysed are what is been taught in both the Islamiyya and Tsangaya schools.

Introduction: The report herein are on several viewpoints and the first of which is a published work of 2004 in the Sokoto Educational Review Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto, 7(3), 18–22 by Isah, A. titled 'Girls Education from the Islamic perspective'. The second is published in 2005 in the Kano Journal of Educational Studies KAJEST Department of Education, Bayero University Kano, 3(1), 8–12 by Dantata, F. also with title 'Acceleration of the Girl-Child Education in Northern Nigeria'. The third is the book by Dauda, A. titled 'Women Education: Its Problems and Prospects'. Kano: Manifold Publishing Company, 2000. In all, gender issues has been discussed and specifically, girls' education from the Islamic

perspective has been a matter of debate which has generated and is still generating a lot of heat among Muslims and non-Muslim scholars. So, there is every tendency of those Muslims who are not well versed or less acquainted with Islam to put the blame on Islam or to even misunderstand the concept of education for the two opposite sexes. Besides, the situation was further heightened with the clamour and expansion of Shari'ah in 1999 – 2007 in most of the States of Northern Nigeria. Consequently, there was obviously attacked, biased, and even condemnation of Islam concerning the position of girls' and women, both within and outside Nigeria (Isah, 2004). Besides, history has shown that much more information has become available on the norms and values of Islamic religion and culture which appeared to be powerful forces in the lives of people, families and communities all over the world (Salawu, 1998). In line with this therefore, there is the need to respond to people's perception of education in a clear and constructive way. First and foremost, both the *Islamiyyah* and *Tsangaya schools* widely spread across the Northern states right from time immemorial are educational systems which even preceded the Western type. Most of such claims and reports (Budzar & Ali, 2007; Bugaje, 2007; & Dauda, 2000) are a result of baseline surveys which specifically focused on Western education alone. However, not much has been done to explore the position of Islam on girl-child education as well as their enrolment in most of the *Islamiyya* and *Tsangaya* schools. The information below are all that has been reported and taught in both the *Islamiyya* and *Tsangaya* schools.

The Essence of Knowledge in Islam: As earlier stated, Islam as a religion is very mindful of knowledge, because the first revelation to Holy Prophet was on acquisition of knowledge, Almighty Allah (s.w.t) said to his messenger " Read in the name of Thy Lord" (أَفْرَأُ يَا سَمُّ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَّأَ 1) its importance as well as spread of knowledge to the whole of mankind. As a matter of fact, Islamic religion has an influence on the attitude of some Muslims specifically in Northern Nigeria where Islam predominates. In the light of the above, the Holy Qur'an and the *hadith* (authentic saying of the messenger of Allah, prophet Muhammad may the peace and blessings be upon him – P.B.U.H.) are the two fountain heads of anything Islamic. Subsequently, in order to find out the reality about girl-child education, it is worth mentioning that a close look at the five verses of the first revelation to the Prophet are necessary. These verses are about knowledge a translation of which reads:

1. "Read in the name of your Lord, Who has created(all that exists رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَّأَ) (أَفْرَأُ يَا سَمُّ)
2. He has created man from the a clot of blood (خَلَّأَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ)
3. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous (أَفْرَأُ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ)
4. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen (الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ)
5. He has taught man that which he knew not. (عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ) (Qur'an, Al'Alaq 96: 1-5).

Looking at it critically the first revelation to the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was concerned with knowledge, which has shown that Islam as a religion is based on knowledge. Islamically, therefore, the term knowledge is divided into two namely:

- i. Fardu'ayn, (فرض عين) and
- ii. Fardu Kifayah. (فرض كفاية)

The first is related to perennial knowledge derived from the revelations and the Prophet's messages, and the acquisition of which is compulsory for all. While the second is acquired knowledge in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities and its acquisition are obligatory only, to those individuals who are interested in it and want to pursue it. Here, one thing that should be borne in mind is that the first type of knowledge i.e. religious knowledge should be the foundation on which the second should be laid. This is so as every human would live two: the life here, and the hereafter in which one requires its peculiar education and knowledge to live (Isah, 2004). Similarly, these verses not only addressed humankind to seek for knowledge but clearly encouraged them to endeavour to delve in critical thinking. In other words, the verses inform us that engaging in critical thinking is a moral obligation on both men and women. Had these verses only been for men, it would be inconceivable to imagine the extent of progression that the society made in a mere twenty three years, which is the entire duration of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an (Dantata, 2005). So, in another revelation, Almighty Allah says: '[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded' (كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (Qur'an 38 Saad : 29).

It is worthy of note to mention that the word "men" in the above verse refers to humankind as it does so in several other places in the Holy Qur'an when Almighty Allah addresses humanity. The Holy Qur'an repetitively reminds people to ponder, think, analyse, and thus using their mind power to contemplate and understand, whilst making no distinction between men and women. As such, seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim irrespective of sex (Baden, 1992). Besides, the essence, of man's creation, according to the Holy Qur'an, is to worship Allah. For example, the Holy Qur'an says: 'And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me' (وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ) (Qur'an, 51 Adh-Dahaariyat: 56).

Similarly, specific commands for the equal rights of girls, women, men and the general public to pursue education could further be found in a sound Qur'an where Allah says: So know, [O Muhammad], that there is no deity except Allah and ask forgiveness for your sin and for the believing men and believing women. And Allah knows of your movement and your resting place'

(فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلِّبِكُمْ وَمُتَوَكِّفِكُمْ) Qur'an 47. Muhammad 19) The Almighty Allah stated his command with encouragement his messenger to know his creator and his deity before worshipping him. 'In essence, the

above Ayah does at least imply the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims regardless of their sex. To further elaborate on the issue of acquisition of knowledge by all and sundry, the Holy Qur'an also stressed the equality and equity of the two sexes by establishing the same ethical obligations and reward for women and men where Allah is saying: 'And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed'

(وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يظَلُمُونَ نَقِيرًا)
(Qur'an 4 Annisa'i 124).

Again in Suratul Ahzab Allah says, 'It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error'.

(وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَىٰ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلًّا مُبِينًا)
(Qur'an 33 Alahzab 36)

Specifically, respect for girls and womanhood is deeply embedded in Islam, to the extent that Islam in its teaching promulgates the doctrine of human equality, where both sexes are held to be equal in status and worth. In other words, Islam teaches that men and women are all creatures of Almighty Allah, existing on a level of equal worth and value, although their equal importance does not substantiate a claim for their equivalence or perfect identity. For instance, Almighty Allah condemned all inequality that could be attributed to sex, race, nationality, colour, or tribe in a comprehensive serve of the glorious Qur'an: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted"

"بِأَيِّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ"

(Qur'an 49 Alhujrat 13)

In line with the preceding verses, worship here is not restricted to the physical performance of religious rituals alone, but it embraces all aspects of human activities, faith, thought, feelings, and work. In addition, in the same Qur'an, Almighty Allah categorically stated that only the learned individuals among His servants truly fear Him. He Almighty said: And among people and moving creatures and grazing livestock are various colours similarly. Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving.

"وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَنُهُ كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ
غَفُورٌ"

(Qur'an, 35 Fadhira 28).

So, knowledge in this sense also involves broad, general and all contributory types of education and thus preventing girls from going to school or getting educated is against the principles of the shari'ah which commands all Muslims irrespective of sex to seek for

knowledge (Alhassan, 2015; Isah, 2004; & Abbas, 2003). However, even though the religion of Islam supports the education of girls be it western or otherwise if not contradicting with Islamic shari'ah as men and women are allotted what they earn; but still girl-child education is a complicated debate now-a-days in the Muslim world.

The Essence of Knowledge from the Sayings of the Holy Prophet: In another development, even some hadith from the Prophet were reported in which he emphasised to his companions that he left two things for mankind and none who hold fast to them will go astray. Thus, the two things here referred to the Book of Allah and the practice of the messenger. Furthermore, another hadith even made mention of a slave girl in which the Prophet submits that anybody who has one and educates and give her with better guidance will be rewarded abundantly (Doi, 1970).

"أيما رجل كانت عنده وليدة، فعلمها فأحسن تعليمها، وأدبها فأحسن تأديبها، ثم أعتقها وتزوجها فله أجران..."

(Sahih Albkhari 5083)

In addition, the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) emphasised to his subjects that 'the learned man leaves behind knowledge as inheritance; one who inherits it obtains a great fortune' (Bugaje, 2007). This point suggests that the Shari'ah does not even limit women to particular fields of study. However, like so many patriarchal societies at that time, even Prophet Muhammad (P. B. U.H) came at a time when the Arab society, was rife with abhorrent practices against girls and women (Abba, 2003).

A Look at Historical Facts: Similarly, history has shown that one of the most influential West African Jihad leaders of the 19th century Sheikh Uthman Bin Fudi, was also said to have followed the footsteps of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H). During his time and teachings, he condemned the hypocritical practice of some of the *Ulama* (scholars) of that time, who spent most of their time teaching other people, while at the same time leaving their female children and wives in ignorance (Dauda, 2000; Doi, 1970; Rufa'i, 2006). Even, as far back as the 16th century, there was proof that a knowledge bond for women had ensued under *Nana Asma'u*, a daughter to Sheikh Uthman Bin Fudi. Thus, *Nana Asma'u*, as the woman leader was reported to have led the campaign *Yan Taru* - Hausa appellation which plainly means "the collective" or "those who have come together" as tutors for the benefits of women and children under the able assistantship of *Jajis*, (leaders of the caravan which was the title of women who performed delegated responsibilities). Even though, the geographical area was so vast but those earlier scholars maintained regular ties and communications with their disciples. This was largely maintained by sending books, poetry, writings, and short messages through the use of the well-established trade routes. Nonetheless, based on the trends of experiences and developments in Northern Nigeria, still, there is every tendency by some ill-informed Muslims to prevent their daughters from going to school. Thus, many jurists have agreed that the Shari'ah does not prevent women from putting what they learn into practice for the benefit of themselves and their society provided they act in accordance with the general ethics of Islam (Dantata, 2005). Besides, it has been the basic stand of the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs ever since it

came into existence and formulated its approach to existing social and economic problems, that Islam is not a rigid framework of laws and institutions, but a set of principles capable of fresh application in changing social conditions (Isah, 2004).

Conversely, people have been exploited and deceived into resisting any change as a result of holding to misconceived notions about the basic principles of Islam as regards the roles and rights of the girl-child and women in a Muslim society. In this regard, Islam generally gives the girl-child and women much freedom in education (Abbas, 2003). Hence, almost all these decisions and actions lack Islamic basis though they are inappropriately related to Islam (Yusuf, 2010). Islam also teaches that in the sight of Allah, however, he gets most honour he who is most generous. In line with the proceeding verses, worship here is not restricted to the physical performance of religious rituals alone, but it embraces all aspects of human activities, faith, thought, feelings, and work.

Analysis of the Aforementioned: Therefore, it is worthy of note that based on the standpoint of Islam, the whole world is a field for women to seek their sustenance should they decide to do so without denial and molestation. Although, the restriction Islam places is that they should observe the rules of Islamic ethics which are meant to protect them (women) from molestation and to preserve public decency and morality (Rufa'i, 2006). So, the Shari'ah prescribes the search for knowledge as compulsory for the girl-child and women in the same way as it is compulsory for men. From the preceding deliberations above, one can see that Almighty Allah not only recommends, but is even insistent upon the equality of all, be they girls and boys, men and women as an essential characteristic of an Islamic society. In other words, men and women are equal as far as the basic human rights are concerned in Islam (Bugaje, 2007 & 2004). Also, if girls and boys, men and women are not enlightened how will they be able to perform their obligations to Almighty Allah, to themselves and humanity?

The evidence presented in this section suggests that, as far as human rights are concern there is no difference between girls and boys, men and women because they are both human beings. The girl-child and women have rights to make their destiny like men. It is then clear that the necessity for women to be properly and adequately educated is there in the Shari'ah. After all, the Shari'ah puts the whole universe at their disposal for their intellectual pursuits and it gives no human being any authority to curtail their obligation to develop their intellectual potentialities. So, from the preceding analysis, one can find out that many passages of the Qur'an and traditions of the prophet (P.B.U.H.) are showing the importance of knowledge. At this juncture, it is imperative to note that Islam considers education the basis of human development and the key to the growth of culture and civilisation (Isah, 2004). Therefore, several attempts have been made to categorically elaborate that Islam has given due prominence and recognition to girl-child education whenever it is practiced. It is common knowledge that some of the leading Islamic states in contemporary world were and still led by women. These were the case of Pakistan in Southeast Asia and currently Bangladesh (Bugaje, 2004). So, this could be the results of considerable rights, privileges, and educational opportunities accorded for them.

In summary of this section, it provides important insights because from the first revelation to the various hadith it has been inferred that education is not only a right but a responsibility on every Muslim, male or female. Also, the Prophet speaks volumes about the superiority of the person who seeks knowledge over the one who does not. The reference here to on superiority is to the person who seeks knowledge, man or woman. In this case, the superiority of the learned man over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars (Doi, 1970).

Conclusion: Hence, the take away message is that Islam promotes education, particularly girl-child education. Had it not been so, the world would not have witnessed the transformation of a society plunged in anarchy (Yusuf, 2010). Collectively, these studies outlined a critical role for girls and both the Holy Qur'an and hadith of the Holy Prophet does at least imply the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims regardless of their sex. Therefore, it is clear that the entire society in places like Yobe State stands to gain from the services of educated women, but gains nothing from idle and ignorant women (Mamu, 2009). Together the literature above made it clear that in Yobe State, when a comparison is to make between Muslim girls and their non-Muslim counterparts in other states, the former would appear to be lagging behind. This might also be based on the rigid socio-cultural values held by the majority of the people in Northern Nigeria in general and Yobe State in particular.

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