



## Islamic non-formal education as a community knowledge system for preventing youth crime

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### Abstract

**Background:** The escalating rate of youth crime in Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria—driven by poverty, high unemployment, and weakened traditional social structures—poses a severe threat to community safety and socio-economic development. Islamic non-formal education (NFE) institutions function as community-based knowledge systems that transmit moral and ethical information through culturally embedded channels. However, empirical research examining how information dissemination and religious knowledge transfer within these settings contribute to mitigating juvenile delinquency in this region remains limited.

**Purpose:** This study investigates how participants perceive the role of Islamic non-formal education as a moral information transmission system in preventing youth crime in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

**Methods:** The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, beginning with a quantitative descriptive survey followed by qualitative in-depth interviews to explain and contextualize quantitative findings. A total sample of 291 participants was selected, including 241 youths and 50 key informants such as religious and community leaders. Data were collected through the in-person administration of the Youth Perception of Crime and Islamic Non-Formal Education Questionnaire (YPCINFEQ) and face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were subjected to systematic thematic analysis. The two instruments yielded reliability indexes of 0.83 and 0.87, respectively.

**Results:** Findings indicated that drug trafficking and abuse is the most prevalent crime among youths, followed by assault and robbery. Qualitative data specifically identified "Yan Sara-Suka" (violent thuggery) as a dominant community-level threat. Poverty and unemployment were identified as the primary structural drivers of criminal involvement. Participants perceived Islamic NFE as an effective community knowledge system for crime deterrence, particularly through its capacity to provide employment skills and instill "God-consciousness" (Taqwa) as an internal moral regulator.

**Conclusions:** The study concludes that Islamic NFE functions as a community-based moral information ecosystem; however, its deterrent capacity is constrained by insufficient resources and limited modernization. It is recommended that NFE programs integrate Tarbiya (moral upbringing) with vocational training and be repositioned as active knowledge dissemination hubs that bridge religious information transfer with practical socioeconomic empowerment. These findings are limited by their perception-based, cross-sectional nature and should be interpreted accordingly.

### Keywords:

Islamic non-formal education  
Community knowledge systems  
Youth crime prevention  
Moral information transmission  
Religious knowledge transfer  
Information dissemination

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## INTRODUCTION

The escalating crime rate among youths globally is a pressing concern, with significant socio-economic implications. In many developing nations, including Nigeria, this issue is particularly acute, driven by a complex interplay of factors such as poverty, unemployment, inadequate formal education, and a breakdown of traditional social structures (Dölek & Adeleke, 2023; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). Nigeria, with its large youth population, faces considerable challenges in addressing juvenile delinquency, which often manifests in various forms including theft, substance abuse, cultism, and violent crimes (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Dölek and Adeleke (2023) maintain that youths in Nigeria have prominently featured on global crime maps due to a widespread array of illicit activities, including armed robbery, murder, rape, car theft, burglary, fraud, bribery, and corruption. These criminal activities not only jeopardize the safety and well-being of individuals but also hinder national development by diverting resources and eroding social cohesion.

Sokoto Metropolis, like many urban centers in northern Nigeria, is not immune to the challenges of youth crime. High unemployment among young people in northern Nigerian states leaves youths susceptible to recruitment and radicalization (Yusuf & Zakari, 2023). This vulnerability is further exacerbated by widespread poverty, underemployment, the *Almajiri* system, and ineffective governance, creating an environment where young people are more likely to engage in violent activities

(Amali & Buthelezi, 2024). According to Umar, Lumi, and Launi (2025), a lack of enabling environment in Sokoto has driven a significant number of its youth into street hawking and social vices including kidnapping, banditry, and other financial crimes. A report from the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (2021) noted that criminal gangs in North-West Nigeria have exploited security gaps to carry out mass kidnappings, with Sokoto State recording 176 kidnapping cases between July 2022 and June 2023 (Jack & Jackson, 2025).

Within the framework of information science, understanding youth crime prevention requires examining how communities organize, transmit, and internalize knowledge about moral conduct and social responsibility. Community-based information systems—defined as the informal networks through which knowledge, values, and behavioral norms are shared among members of a social group—play a critical role in shaping individual and collective behavior (Chatman, 1991; Savolainen, 1995). In contexts where formal information infrastructure is limited, these community knowledge systems become the primary channels through which moral and ethical information reaches at-risk populations.

Islamic non-formal educational institutions in Sokoto, including traditional madrasas, mosque-based study circles, and community learning centers, function as precisely such community knowledge systems. These institutions do not merely transmit religious doctrine; they operate as organized information environments in which moral values, behavioral norms, and practical life skills are encoded,

disseminated, and internalized through structured social interaction (Aziz & Huda, 2024). The information transmitted within these settings encompasses what Wilson (1997) describes as “everyday life information”—practical, value-laden knowledge that guides decision-making in daily social contexts. Understanding how this information flows, how it is received by youth participants, and how it influences behavioral outcomes constitutes a legitimate and important area of inquiry within library and information science (LIS) research traditions.

Formal education, while crucial, often falls short in reaching all segments of the youth population, particularly those who are out-of-school or marginalized. Moreover, the conventional curriculum may not adequately address the moral and ethical foundations necessary for crime prevention (Ngele, et al. 2025). Non-formal education (NFE), encompassing a wide range of organized learning activities outside the formal school system, offers a flexible and accessible platform for imparting knowledge, skills, and values tailored to specific community needs (Rogers, 2005; Bagudo & Yusuf, 2019). From an information science perspective, NFE settings represent alternative information environments—spaces where knowledge is co-constructed through participatory engagement rather than top-down transmission (Almeida & Morais, 2025). This distinction is analytically significant: unlike formal schooling, which relies on codified, institutionally validated information channels, Islamic NFE relies on tacit knowledge transfer, oral tradition, mentorship, and communal reinforcement

as its primary information dissemination mechanisms (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Within the context of a predominantly Muslim society like Sokoto, Islamic values hold immense potential for promoting moral rectitude and deterring criminal behavior. Islam provides a comprehensive moral and ethical framework that emphasizes justice, compassion, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others (Bello, 2021). Principles such as the prohibition of theft, violence, and deception, coupled with the encouragement of charitable acts and community welfare, are central to Islamic teachings. These principles constitute a structured body of moral information that, when effectively transmitted through community-based educational channels, can function as a powerful behavioral regulator. The concept of Taqwa (God-consciousness) operates as an internalized information filter—a cognitive and moral framework through which individuals evaluate behavioral choices against religious and ethical standards (Al-Ghazali, 1993). Similarly, Tarbiya (moral upbringing) represents a systematic process of moral information encoding that shapes character formation over time.

The theoretical framework guiding this study draws on Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977; Akers, 1998) and community information behavior theory (Chatman, 1991; Savolainen, 1995). Social Learning Theory posits that individuals acquire behavioral patterns through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within their social environments. Applied to the Islamic NFE context, this theory explains how youths internalize moral information transmitted by religious

teachers, community elders, and peer groups within mosque-based learning settings. Community information behavior theory, particularly Chatman's (1991) concept of "information poverty" and Savolainen's (1995) "everyday life information seeking," provides an analytical lens for understanding how marginalized youth populations access, process, and act upon moral and practical information within their community contexts. Together, these frameworks position Islamic NFE not merely as a religious institution but as a community information ecosystem that shapes information behavior and, consequently, behavioral outcomes.

Despite the intuitive link between religious knowledge transmission and crime prevention, empirical research specifically examining the information dissemination mechanisms of Islamic NFE and their perceived effectiveness in mitigating youth crime in Nigerian contexts—particularly in Sokoto—remains limited. Existing studies (Oyigbo & Festus, 2024; Nevisi & Sharaf, 2022) often focus on the impact of formal education or general community-based interventions, without deeply examining the unique contributions of religiously-informed non-formal knowledge systems. This research gap highlights the need for a targeted investigation into how participants perceive the information transmission functions of Islamic NFE programs and their role in youth crime prevention in Sokoto Metropolis.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this critical gap by examining how participants perceive Islamic non-formal education—as a community-based moral information system—in contributing to

crime prevention among youths in Sokoto Metropolis. By exploring the mechanisms through which moral information is transmitted and internalized, and by assessing their perceived impact on youth behavior, this research seeks to provide insights for policymakers, community leaders, religious institutions, and information science scholars concerned with community knowledge systems and informal information practices.

The objectives of the study are: (1) to identify the specific types of crimes prevalent among youths in Sokoto Metropolis; (2) to examine the underlying reasons for youths' involvement in criminal activities in Sokoto Metropolis; and (3) to explore how study participants perceive the role and effectiveness of Islamic non-formal education as a moral information transmission system in deterring criminal behavior among young people in Sokoto Metropolis.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), in which quantitative survey data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative interview data gathered to explain, elaborate, and contextualize the quantitative findings. This design was selected because it allows the qualitative strand to illuminate the mechanisms and meanings underlying the patterns identified in the quantitative phase, thereby producing a more comprehensive understanding of how Islamic NFE functions as a community knowledge and information system for crime prevention.

The integration of both strands occurs at the interpretation stage, where qualitative themes are used to explain and extend quantitative results.

The population included youths in Sokoto Metropolis who are learners of the Non-formal Islamic Educational programmes provided by the Sokoto State Agency for Mass Education. According to the Sokoto Agency for Mass Education, there are 1,293 youths currently

participating in its Non-formal Education Islamic Values programmes attached to Mosques and Islamiyah (670 Basic Literacy learners, 300 Post Literacy learners, and 323 Vocational Skills Acquisition learners) within Sokoto Metropolis. Additionally, the population included 12 religious leaders, 4 community leaders, and 34 facilitators knowledgeable about youth development and crime prevention. The total population stands at 1,343, as detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Population of the Study**

<b>LGA</b>	<b>Category/ Programme</b>	<b>Number</b>
Sokoto North	Basic Literacy Learner	100
	Post Literacy Learner	100
	Vocational Skills Learner	180
	Facilitator	17
	Community Leader	1
	Religious Leader	1
Sokoto South	Basic Literacy Learner	200
	Post Literacy Learner	200
	Vocational Skills Learner	32
	Facilitator	5
	Community Leader	1
	Religious Leader	1
Dange Shuni	Basic Literacy Learner	120
	Post Literacy Learner	NIL
	Vocational Skills Learner	NIL
	Facilitator	3
	Community Leader	1
	Religious Leader	9
Wamakko	Basic Literacy Learner	150
	Post Literacy Learner	NIL
	Vocational Skills Learner	36
	Facilitator	6
Kware	Basic Literacy Learner	100
	Post Literacy Learner	NIL
	Vocational Skills Learner	75
	Facilitator	3
	Community Leader	1
	Religious Leader	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1343</b>

Source: Research Result, 2025

The sampling strategy combined three techniques. Purposive sampling was employed to select 50 key informants—including religious leaders, community leaders, and facilitators—based on their expertise and direct involvement in Islamic NFE and youth development. This technique ensured that informants possessed the contextual knowledge necessary to provide meaningful qualitative data on information transmission mechanisms within NFE settings. Convenience sampling was used to recruit youth participants from accessible NFE centers (mosques and madrasas) within Sokoto Metropolis, acknowledging that this introduces sampling bias and limits the representativeness of findings beyond accessible centers. Proportionate sampling was applied to ensure that the distribution of youth participants across the three NFE programme types (Basic Literacy, Post Literacy, and Vocational Skills) reflected their proportional representation in the total population. These sampling limitations—particularly the reliance on convenience sampling and the exclusion of out-of-school youth not enrolled in NFE programs—constrain the transferability of findings and should be considered when interpreting results. A total sample of 291 participants was selected: 241 youths (125 Basic Literacy learners, 56 Post Literacy learners, and 60 Vocational Skills learners) and 50 key informants (34 facilitators, 5 community leaders, and 11 religious leaders).

The primary quantitative instrument was the Youth Perception of Crime and Islamic Non-Formal Education Questionnaire (YPCINFEQ), a structured questionnaire with 19 items across four sections. Section A captured demographic data; Section

B assessed prevalent crimes; Section C examined perceived causes of crime using a five-point scale ranging from “Not a Cause” to “A Major Cause”; and Section D measured perceived effectiveness of Islamic NFE using a five-point scale from “Not Effective” to “Very Effective.” A decision rule was established whereby items with a mean score of 3.50 and above on the five-point scale were classified as “Accepted,” while those below 3.50 were classified as “Not Accepted.” Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. It is important to note that no inferential statistics were conducted; therefore, findings reflect participant perceptions rather than statistically established relationships between Islamic NFE and crime reduction outcomes.

For key informants, a 10-item semi-structured interview guide titled the Crime Prevalence and Islamic Non-Formal Education Semi-Structured Interview Guide (CPINFESI) was used to gather in-depth qualitative data on information transmission mechanisms, community knowledge practices, and perceived effectiveness of Islamic NFE. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim. Qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis procedure: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Two researchers independently coded a subset of transcripts to establish inter-coder reliability, with discrepancies resolved through discussion.

Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary themes with selected informants to verify interpretive accuracy. Triangulation was achieved by comparing qualitative themes with quantitative patterns to identify convergences and divergences.

To ensure validity, both instruments were reviewed by experts in sociology, Islamic studies, criminology, and library and information science for face and content validity. Reliability was established through a pilot study using a test-retest method with 30 participants from a similar but non-included location. The YPCINFEQ and CPINFESI yielded reliability indexes of 0.83 and 0.87, respectively.

This study adhered to established ethical principles for research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. All participants

were fully informed of the study’s purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Written informed consent was obtained from all adult participants. Given the sensitive nature of crime-related discussions, confidentiality was strictly maintained: no personally identifying information was recorded in the dataset, and all qualitative responses were anonymized during transcription and analysis. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no incentives were offered that could constitute undue influence. Special care was taken to ensure that discussions of criminal activity did not expose youth participants to stigmatization or harm.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the demographic information in Table 2, the sample of 241 youths in

**Table 2. Demographic Information of Youths in Non-formal Education**

Demographic Information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	221	91.7
Female	20	8.3
Total	241	100
Marital Status:		
Married	149	61.8
Single	86	35.7
Others	6	2.5
Total	241	100
Highest Education:		
Quranic Education	195	80.9
Primary School	34	14.1
Secondary School	NIL	NIL
Vocational/Technical School -	12	5
None	NIL	NIL
Total	241	100
Employment Status:		
Employed	NIL	NIL
Unemployed	196	81.3
Self-employed	45	18.7
Total	241	100

Source: Result Research, 2025

non-formal education was overwhelmingly male (91.7%) compared to female (8.3%). A majority were married (61.8%), followed by single (35.7%) and others (2.5%). The vast majority had received Quranic Education as their highest level of education (80.9%), while 14.1% attained Primary School and 5.0% had attended a Vocational/Technical School. The largest proportion were unemployed (81.3%), with 18.7% being self-employed, and none formally employed.

The demographic profile is analytically significant from an information science perspective. The overwhelming predominance of Quranic education (80.9%) as the highest educational attainment indicates that Islamic NFE institutions represent the primary—and in many cases the only—formal knowledge system accessible to this population. This positions these institutions as critical community information environments for a population that is largely excluded from mainstream formal information channels. The 81.3% unemployment rate further underscores the socioeconomic marginalization of this group, reinforcing Chatman's (1991) concept of "information poverty," wherein individuals in

marginalized communities have limited access to information resources that could improve their life circumstances. These findings suggest that Islamic NFE centers serve not merely as religious institutions but as essential community information hubs for an information-poor population.

Based on table 3 presents the specific types of crimes prevalent among youths in Sokoto Metropolis. Drug trafficking and abuse ranked as the most prevalent crime (mean = 4.32), followed by assault (3.85) and theft/robbery (3.41). The high standard deviation for kidnapping (SD = 1.28) and theft/robbery (SD = 1.15) suggests notable variation in participant perceptions, which may reflect differential exposure to these crimes across different neighborhoods within the metropolis. Vandalism received the lowest mean score (1.92), suggesting it is perceived as less prevalent, possibly because property-related offenses of this type are overshadowed by more economically motivated crimes in a context of extreme poverty.

Qualitative findings from the interview phase provided important contextual elaboration that the quantitative data alone could not capture. Analysis of interview

**Table 3. Prevalent Crimes among youths in Sokoto metropolis**

Prevalent Crimes	Mean Score	Std Dev.	Ranking
Drug trafficking/abuse	4.32	0.82	1st
Assault	3.85	0.94	2nd
Theft/Robbery	3.41	1.15	3rd
	3.10	1.28	4th
Fraud/Cybercrime ('Yahoo-Yahoo')	2.76	1.02	5th
Cultism	2.45	0.89	6th
Vandalism	1.92	0.76	7th

Source: Research Result, 2025

transcripts revealed three dominant themes: (1) substance abuse as a gateway to violent crime, (2) politically organized thuggery, and (3) the normalization of crime within peer networks. Community and religious leaders consistently identified “Yan Sara-Suka” (violent thuggery) and the abuse of prescription drugs—particularly Tramadol and cough syrups—as the most visible and socially disruptive criminal phenomena. As one religious leader stated, “The young men take these pills and lose their sense of right and wrong. After that, snatching phones and breaking into houses becomes easy for them” (Informant, Interviewed, February 25, 2026).

Facilitators highlighted an increasing trend in political thuggery, where young people are organized into gangs to intimidate political rivals, often leading to violent communal clashes. The convergence between quantitative and qualitative findings is analytically significant: while the survey identifies drug abuse as the statistically most prevalent crime, the qualitative data explains the mechanism—substance abuse functions as an information distortion agent, impairing the moral reasoning capacity that Islamic NFE seeks to cultivate.

This finding aligns with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which posits that behavioral patterns are acquired through social modeling within immediate environments. The qualitative report of “area boy” circles and political thuggery gangs suggests that youths are exposed to and modeling aggressive behaviors observed in their urban social environments—precisely the type of negative social information environment that Islamic NFE aims to counteract through alternative moral modeling.

Based on table 4 presents the perceived causes of youth involvement in crime. Poverty and unemployment received the highest mean score (4.68, SD = 0.52), indicating strong consensus among participants regarding its primacy as a driver of criminal involvement. The notably low standard deviation (0.52) for this item reflects near-universal agreement across the sample, suggesting that economic marginalization is perceived as an unambiguous structural cause rather than a contested factor. Lack of access to quality education (mean = 4.45) ranked second, which is particularly significant from an information science perspective: limited access to formal education equates to limited access to structured information

**Table 4. Causes of Crimes among Youths**

<b>Causes of Crimes</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Std Dev.</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Poverty/unemployment	4.68	0.52	Accepted
Lack of parental guidance	3.94	0.91	Accepted
Peer pressure	4.12	0.85	Accepted
Lack of access to quality education	4.45	0.68	Accepted
Desire for quick wealth	3.62	1.04	Accepted
Exposure to violence in the media	2.88	1.12	Not Accepted

Source: Research Result, 2025

environments, leaving youths dependent on informal community channels—including Islamic NFE—as their primary sources of knowledge and moral guidance.

Qualitative findings elaborated on these structural causes through three emergent themes: (1) economic desperation as a rational response to systemic exclusion, (2) the erosion of traditional community information networks, and (3) the failure of formal information institutions. Facilitators noted that the lack of vocational skills leaves youths idle and vulnerable to the lure of quick money. Religious leaders argued that the breakdown of the traditional “extended family” watch system has created a “moral vacuum”—an information gap in which the informal transmission of community values and behavioral norms has been disrupted. From an information behavior perspective (Savolainen, 1995), this breakdown represents a failure of the everyday life information system: when traditional community knowledge networks erode, individuals lose access to the contextual moral information that guides socially responsible decision-making.

Notably, exposure to violence in the media was not accepted as a primary cause (mean = 2.88). This finding diverges from much Western criminological literature and may reflect the limited media access

of this predominantly Quranic-educated, unemployed population. This divergence warrants critical consideration: it may indicate that for this information-poor population, face-to-face community information channels carry greater behavioral influence than mass media—a finding consistent with Chatman’s (1991) observation that marginalized communities rely primarily on small-world, interpersonal information networks rather than formal media channels.

Table 5 presents participant perceptions of the effectiveness of Islamic NFE in deterring criminal behavior. All five dimensions of Islamic NFE effectiveness were accepted by participants. The highest-rated function—providing skills for employment and reducing poverty (mean = 4.58)—is particularly revealing from an information science standpoint: participants value Islamic NFE most not for its purely spiritual content but for its capacity to transmit practical, economically actionable information. This suggests that the perceived effectiveness of Islamic NFE as a crime deterrent is fundamentally linked to its function as a practical information and skills dissemination system, not merely a moral instruction platform.

Qualitative findings generated three major themes regarding the information

**Table 5. Effectiveness of Islamic Non-formal Education in Curbing Crime**

Role of Islamic NFE	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
Provides skills for employment, reducing poverty	4.58	0.62	Accepted
Offers a positive alternative to idleness	4.41	0.74	Accepted
Builds self-esteem and confidence	4.29	0.81	Accepted
Connects youths with positive mentors and role models	4.15	0.88	Accepted
Teaches life skills for better decision-making	4.02	0.95	Accepted

Source: Research Result, 2025

transmission mechanisms of Islamic NFE: (1) Taqwa as an internalized moral information filter, (2) Tarbiya as a systematic moral knowledge encoding process, and (3) the mentorship relationship as a tacit knowledge transfer channel. Religious leaders unanimously emphasized that “God-consciousness” (Taqwa) serves as an internal moral regulator that formal legal systems cannot replicate—functioning, in information science terms, as an internalized evaluative framework through which behavioral choices are assessed against moral standards. This concept aligns with Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) theory of tacit knowledge: Taqwa represents deeply internalized, experiential moral knowledge that cannot be fully codified or transmitted through formal instructional channels but must be cultivated through sustained community engagement and mentorship.

However, qualitative data also revealed a critical gap in the information dissemination capacity of Islamic NFE. Facilitators consistently noted that while Islamic values are highly respected as a “spiritual cure,” the non-formal nature of these schools limits their capacity to provide the economic alternatives—such as job placement services, vocational certification, and livelihood support—needed to translate moral knowledge into sustainable behavioral change. As one facilitator observed,

“We can teach them about Allah and what is halal and haram, but when they leave here and there is no job, the street has its own teaching” (Informant, Interviewed, February 25, 2026).

This observation powerfully illustrates the limits of moral information transmission

in the absence of structural economic support—a finding that echoes Almeida and Morais (2025), who describe NFE as a flexible tool essential for addressing the needs of marginalized populations, but one whose effectiveness is contingent on adequate resource allocation and institutional capacity.

The explanatory sequential design of this study enables a synthesized interpretation that transcends what either strand could produce independently. Quantitatively, Islamic NFE is perceived as effective across all measured dimensions. Qualitatively, this effectiveness is explained through specific information transmission mechanisms—Taqwa, Tarbiya, mentorship, and communal reinforcement—that constitute the community knowledge system of Islamic NFE. However, the qualitative strand also introduces a critical qualification absent from the quantitative data: perceived effectiveness does not translate automatically into behavioral outcomes when structural economic conditions remain unaddressed. This integrated finding suggests that Islamic NFE functions as a necessary but not sufficient condition for crime prevention—a nuance that perception-based quantitative data alone cannot reveal.

Several alternative explanations and methodological limitations must be acknowledged. First, respondents may have provided socially desirable answers, particularly given that the study was conducted within Islamic NFE settings where expressing support for Islamic values carries strong social expectations. Second, religious institutions may be perceived as culturally authoritative regardless of their

actual effectiveness in crime prevention, inflating perceived effectiveness scores. Third, broader structural economic conditions—poverty, unemployment, and political marginalization—may exert far greater influence on youth crime than moral educational interventions, a possibility that perception-based data cannot rule out. Fourth, the cross-sectional, perception-based nature of this study means that causal claims regarding the relationship between Islamic NFE and crime reduction cannot be substantiated. The findings reflect what participants believe, not what has been empirically demonstrated through behavioral measurement or longitudinal tracking. These limitations are important for interpreting the study's conclusions and for directing future research.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic non-formal education (NFE) functions as a vital community-based moral information system that can contribute to youth crime prevention in Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria. While the region faces significant criminal threats such as drug abuse and violent thuggery driven by economic marginalization and the erosion of traditional community networks, Islamic NFE effectively counteracts these challenges by instilling God-consciousness (Taqwa), providing positive mentorship, and transmitting moral knowledge. However, a critical gap remains between the spiritual efficacy of these institutions and their practical capacity to provide economic alternatives, suggesting that the deterrent impact of moral education is limited without tangible

socioeconomic empowerment. Therefore, to optimize their role as critical community information infrastructure, Islamic NFE programs must be modernized and funded to integrate vocational training, digital literacy, and livelihood support alongside moral instruction. Despite these insights, the study is limited by its reliance on a localized, convenience sample from accessible centers, its cross-sectional and perception-based data which precludes causal claims, and a heavily male-dominated participant base that restricts generalizability to female youth. To address these boundaries, future research should employ longitudinal and comparative designs with control groups of non-NFE youth, integrate inferential analyses, expand the demographic scope to include female and out-of-school populations, and qualitatively explore how digital platforms can enhance information transmission within these religious learning ecosystems.

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## Author Contributions

All the authors conceived and developed the idea of the study with the introduction and the review of the literature. "Abubakar Buhari and Murtala Ladan developed the methodology. Marwanu Abubakar together with Murtala Ladan went out for data collection and facilitated validity and reliability of the data while Abubakar Buhari did the analysis. Marwanu Abubakar discussed the findings and Abubakar did the conclusion and compilation of the references. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

### AI Declaration

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Grammarly, were used solely to assist with language editing, grammar correction, and improving the clarity of the manuscript, and were not involved in the study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or generation of scientific conclusions; all AI-assisted content was carefully reviewed and validated by the authors, who take full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

### Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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