



PERCEPTIONS OF ARABIC AMONG YORUBA MUSLIMS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL COHESION IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic language education and their implications for social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data were collected from 235 valid respondents selected from four South-Western states using a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The findings revealed that Arabic is widely perceived as a language primarily associated with religious instruction, spiritual growth, and moral development rather than as a discipline with broad academic and professional opportunities. This perception influences educational choices, contributes to declining enrolments in modern Arabic schools, and limits awareness of diverse career prospects available to graduates of Arabic studies. Nevertheless, respondents acknowledged that comprehensive curriculum reforms, improved institutional support, and increased public awareness could enhance the relevance of Arabic education and expand employment opportunities in fields such as diplomacy, translation, international relations, media, and education. The study concludes that repositioning Arabic education through curriculum innovation, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and stronger collaboration among government, educational institutions, and Muslim organizations would improve graduate employability, strengthen educational inclusion, and promote social cohesion. The study recommends sustained policy support and public enlightenment to transform societal perceptions of Arabic as both a religious and socio-economic resource.

Keywords: Arabic language education, Yoruba Muslims, language perception, social cohesion, educational choice, South-Western Nigeria.



Introduction

Language is a fundamental medium through which individuals construct identity, preserve cultural heritage, and promote social interaction. Beyond its communicative function, language serves as an instrument for transmitting values, beliefs, knowledge, and traditions across generations. Within Muslim societies, Arabic occupies a unique position because it is the language of the Holy Qur'an, Islamic jurisprudence, and religious scholarship. Consequently, Arabic has continued to influence religious identity, education, and social cohesion among Muslim communities worldwide (Abdalla, 2025; Kankawi et al., 2026).

In Nigeria, Arabic has a long history that predates colonial rule. Through trans-Saharan trade, Islamic scholarship, and the activities of Muslim clerics, Arabic became an important language of literacy, administration, diplomacy, and intellectual exchange in many parts of the country. Among the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria, Arabic education has significantly contributed to religious instruction, moral development, manuscript preservation, and the emergence of indigenous Islamic scholarship (Fafunwa, 1995; Gbodofu, 2022).

Despite these contributions, Arabic is still widely perceived as a language reserved primarily for religious worship rather than as a discipline with broad educational and professional opportunities. This perception has influenced parents' educational decisions, students' career aspirations, and enrolments in modern Arabic schools. Contemporary studies indicate that Arabic education in Nigeria faces challenges relating to curriculum relevance, public perception, inadequate institutional support, and graduate employability, despite increasing recognition of Arabic in diplomacy, international relations, translation, media, and intercultural communication (Gbodofu, 2022; Sirajudeen & Rufai, 2023).

Social cohesion refers to the degree of trust, inclusion, participation, mutual respect, and shared identity that enable members of a society to coexist peacefully and contribute to collective development. Educational institutions and language policies play an important role in strengthening social cohesion by promoting inclusion and equal participation among diverse groups (Bello, 2025).

Although previous studies have examined the historical development of Arabic education in Nigeria and the challenges confronting Arabic schools, relatively few empirical studies have specifically investigated how Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic influence educational choices and social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria. Existing studies have largely focused on curriculum development and historical evolution while giving limited attention to the relationship between language perception, educational participation, and social integration (Toyib & Hassan, 2015; Kankawi et al., 2026).

This study therefore investigates Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic and examines the implications of these perceptions for social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria. The findings are expected to contribute to educational policy, curriculum reform, and strategies aimed at improving the relevance of Arabic education and enhancing the social integration of Arabic language learners within contemporary Nigerian society.

Statement of the Problem

Arabic has historically occupied a prominent position in the religious, educational, and intellectual development of Muslim communities in Nigeria, particularly among the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria. For centuries, Arabic has served as the principal language of Islamic scholarship, Qur'anic education, jurisprudence, and religious communication. Despite this long-standing heritage, contemporary Arabic education in Nigeria faces declining enrolments, inadequate institutional support, limited public recognition, and widespread misconceptions regarding its socio-economic relevance.

Among many Yoruba Muslims, Arabic is predominantly perceived as a language for religious worship and spiritual development rather than as an academic discipline capable of providing diverse career opportunities in education, diplomacy, international relations, translation, media, tourism, commerce, and public administration. Consequently, many parents encourage their children to pursue Western-oriented education while limiting Arabic education to religious obligations. This perception has contributed to reduced patronage of modern Arabic schools and has affected the career prospects and broader social integration of graduates of Arabic studies.



Although previous studies have examined the historical evolution and challenges of Arabic education in Nigeria, relatively little empirical attention has been paid to how Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic influence educational choices, career aspirations, and social cohesion within contemporary society. Furthermore, the relationship between language perception and social cohesion remains insufficiently explored in the Nigerian context. This gap limits the development of evidence-based educational policies capable of enhancing the relevance of Arabic education and promoting inclusive social participation among Arabic language graduates.

It is against this background that this study investigates Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic and examines the implications of these perceptions for social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic and assess the implications of these perceptions for social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives are to:

1. examine Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic language education in South-Western Nigeria;
2. determine the factors influencing these perceptions;
3. assess whether perceptions of Arabic influence parents' educational choices for their children;
4. examine the relationship between perceptions of Arabic and career aspirations among Arabic language learners;
5. investigate the implications of these perceptions for social cohesion and social integration; and
6. propose strategies for improving public perceptions of Arabic and strengthening Arabic education in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do Yoruba Muslims perceive Arabic language education in South-Western Nigeria?
2. What factors influence these perceptions?
3. Do these perceptions affect parents' willingness to enrol their children in Arabic schools?
4. How do perceptions of Arabic influence career aspirations among Arabic language learners?
5. What implications do these perceptions have for social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria?
6. What strategies can improve public perceptions of Arabic and strengthen Arabic education?

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute to knowledge and practice in several ways. First, it will enrich existing literature on Arabic language education, language perception, and social cohesion in Nigeria. Second, the findings will provide useful evidence for educational planners, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to improve the quality and relevance of Arabic education. Third, Arabic school proprietors and Muslim organisations will benefit from a better understanding of the factors influencing enrolment and public perceptions of Arabic. Finally, the study will provide a useful reference for future researchers interested in language policy, Islamic education, multiculturalism, and social integration in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Arabic Language Education

Arabic is one of the world's major international languages and serves as the official language of more than twenty countries. It is also one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Beyond its global significance, Arabic occupies a unique position in Islam as the language of the Qur'an and the principal medium through which Islamic teachings, jurisprudence, and intellectual traditions have been preserved and transmitted over the centuries (Abdalla, 2025; Kankawi et al., 2026).

In Nigeria, Arabic education predates colonial rule and has contributed significantly to literacy, scholarship, administration, diplomacy, and religious development, particularly in Northern Nigeria and among Yoruba Muslims

in the South-West. Traditional Qur'anic schools and modern Arabic institutions have played important roles in producing Islamic scholars, teachers, judges, translators, and community leaders (Fafunwa, 1995; Gbadamosi, 1978; Gbodofu, 2022).

Despite these contributions, contemporary Arabic education continues to face several challenges, including declining enrolments, inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, curriculum limitations, and persistent public perceptions that Arabic offers limited career opportunities. Recent scholarship argues that repositioning Arabic education through curriculum reform, digital technology, entrepreneurship education, and stronger integration with national educational policies would improve its relevance and attractiveness to younger generations (Gbodofu, 2022; Sirajudeen & Rufai, 2023).

Concept of Social Cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the extent to which members of a society enjoy mutual trust, shared values, inclusion, participation, and a sense of belonging that promotes peaceful coexistence and collective development. It encompasses the strength of social relationships, respect for diversity, equal opportunities, and citizens' willingness to cooperate in pursuing common goals. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011) defines social cohesion as the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members by minimizing disparities, avoiding marginalization, and fostering a sense of belonging.

Language constitutes one of the principal instruments through which social cohesion is achieved. Shared languages facilitate communication, promote cultural understanding, strengthen social identity, and enhance participation in economic and political life. Conversely, where speakers of a language perceive themselves as socially or economically disadvantaged, the language may gradually lose prestige, thereby weakening social integration (UNESCO, 2021). In multilingual societies such as Nigeria, educational and language policies therefore play critical roles in promoting inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and national unity.

Among Yoruba Muslims, Arabic extends beyond its religious function to serve as a marker of Islamic identity, scholarship, and cultural heritage. However, when Arabic is viewed solely as a liturgical language rather than a medium for wider socio-economic advancement, its contribution to social cohesion may be constrained. Improving public awareness of the broader educational and professional value of Arabic can therefore strengthen participation, inclusion, and intercultural understanding.

Arabic Education among Yoruba Muslims

Arabic education has a long history among the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria, dating back to the introduction of Islam through trans-Saharan trade and itinerant Muslim scholars. Traditional Qur'anic schools (Makarantar Allo) constituted the earliest institutions for Arabic literacy and Islamic education. Their principal objective was to enable learners to read, memorise, and understand the Qur'an while acquiring moral discipline and religious values (Fafunwa, 1995).

The twentieth century witnessed significant reforms in Arabic education through the establishment of modern Arabic schools by scholars such as Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilory and Shaykh Kamaluddeen Al-Adabiy. These institutions introduced structured curricula, graded classes, formal examinations, and broader subject offerings while retaining Arabic and Islamic studies as their core disciplines (Abubakre, 2004).

Despite these reforms, Arabic education continues to face challenges. Studies have identified declining enrolment, inadequate funding, limited employment opportunities, insufficient instructional materials, and persistent misconceptions regarding the relevance of Arabic in contemporary society (Gbodofu, 2022; Sirajudeen & Rufai, 2023). These challenges have reinforced the perception that Arabic education is primarily intended for religious leaders rather than professionals in diverse fields.

Recent developments, however, demonstrate increasing opportunities for graduates of Arabic studies in diplomacy, translation, international relations, journalism, education, tourism, media, migration studies, and intercultural communication. The growing economic and diplomatic relationships between Nigeria and Arab-speaking countries have further increased demand for Arabic language proficiency.



Empirical Review

Several studies have examined Arabic education and language perceptions in Nigeria. Fafunwa (1995) documented the historical development of indigenous education, including Qur'anic education, while Gbadamosi (1978) analysed the spread of Islam among the Yoruba and its influence on education and society.

Abdul-Rahmon (2008) argued that the continued association of Arabic exclusively with religion has limited its acceptance as an academic discipline capable of contributing significantly to national development. Similarly, Abdulraheem (2008) identified curriculum limitations and inadequate policy support as major constraints affecting Arabic education in Nigeria.

More recent studies provide additional perspectives. Gbodofu (2022) found that Arabic language teaching in Nigeria is constrained by shortages of qualified teachers, outdated instructional approaches, limited government support, and weak public perception of the discipline. Sirajudeen and Rufai (2023) observed that curriculum innovation, digital technologies, and improved teacher preparation could significantly enhance Arabic language education.

Outside Nigeria, Abdalla (2025) emphasised that Arabic education contributes not only to religious knowledge but also to moral development, intercultural competence, and global citizenship. Likewise, Kankawi et al. (2026) argued that Arabic literature and Islamic intellectual traditions continue to shape civic values, social responsibility, and national development in African Muslim societies.

Although these studies have contributed significantly to scholarship on Arabic education, few have specifically investigated how Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic influence educational choices, career aspirations, and social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria. This study addresses that gap.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). The theory explains how individuals derive part of their identity from membership of social groups and how such identities influence attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour. Yoruba Muslims who strongly identify Arabic with their religious identity may perceive the language primarily as a sacred symbol rather than as a socio-economic resource. Such perceptions influence educational decisions, occupational aspirations, and patterns of social interaction.

The study also draws insights from Language Ideology Theory, which explains how beliefs about language shape educational practices, language status, and opportunities available to language users. Language ideologies influence which languages are regarded as prestigious, economically valuable, or socially desirable. Within the Nigerian context, the dominance of English in administration, education, and employment has contributed to perceptions that Arabic possesses limited economic value despite its religious significance.

Together, these theories provide an appropriate framework for explaining how perceptions of Arabic influence educational choices and social cohesion among Yoruba Muslims.

Research Gap

Existing literature has concentrated largely on the historical evolution of Arabic education, curriculum development, and institutional challenges. Relatively few empirical studies have examined the relationship between language perception and social cohesion among Yoruba Muslims in South-Western Nigeria. Furthermore, limited attention has been devoted to understanding how perceptions of Arabic affect parents' educational decisions, career aspirations of learners, and broader processes of social inclusion.

This study therefore fills an important gap by investigating Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic within the broader context of social cohesion and educational development in contemporary Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a representative sample of Yoruba Muslims and examine their perceptions of Arabic and the implications of these perceptions for social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria. Descriptive survey research is particularly suitable for studies that seek to describe opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of a

defined population without manipulating any variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in South-Western Nigeria, comprising Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States. The region is predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group and is characterised by religious pluralism, with Islam, Christianity, and African Traditional Religion coexisting. Four states, Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, and Osun, were purposively selected because of their large Muslim populations, established Arabic educational institutions, and active participation in Islamic educational activities.

Population of the Study

The target population consisted of adult Yoruba Muslims residing in the selected states. The population included Islamic scholars, Arabic teachers, students of Arabic, parents, civil servants, traders, and other Muslim professionals who possess adequate knowledge of Arabic education and Islamic practices.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample of 250 respondents was initially selected from each of the four selected states, giving a total of 1,000 respondents. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the selected respondents during organised Islamic programmes and congregational worship sessions.

Of the 1,000 questionnaires distributed, 235 properly completed questionnaires were found valid and suitable for analysis. The remaining questionnaires were either not returned or were discarded because they were incomplete or contained inconsistent responses. Consequently, the analysis presented in this study is based on the 235 valid responses.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Yoruba Muslims' Perceptions of Arabic and Social Cohesion (QYMPASC). The instrument consisted of two sections.

Section A elicited respondents' demographic information, including age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, and state of residence.

Section B comprised Likert-scale items designed to measure respondents' perceptions of Arabic language education, career prospects, educational preferences, and the relationship between Arabic and social cohesion. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Validity of the Instrument

To ensure content and face validity, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review by specialists in Arabic Education, Educational Research, Human Geography, and Measurement and Evaluation. Their comments and recommendations guided the revision of ambiguous items, improved clarity, and ensured that the instrument adequately measured the constructs under investigation.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot study was conducted among Yoruba Muslims outside the selected study locations. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating that the instrument possessed satisfactory internal consistency for the study (Taber, 2018).

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires with the assistance of trained research assistants. Data collection took place during Jumu'ah congregational prayers, Asalatul programmes, and other organised Islamic gatherings. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was entirely voluntary. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion to maximise the response rate.

Method of Data Analysis

The completed questionnaires were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to the questionnaire items. The findings are presented in tables and discussed in relation to the objectives of the study.



Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles governing social science research were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection. Respondents were assured that the information provided would be treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes. No identifying information capable of revealing participants' identities was collected, thereby ensuring anonymity and privacy throughout the research process.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 235 valid questionnaires were analysed. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Tables 1–3.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Age (n = 235)

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–29	40	17.0
30–39	46	19.6
40–49	70	29.8
50 and above	79	33.6
Total	235	100.0

source: Author's analysis

Table 1 shows that respondents aged 50 years and above constituted the largest proportion of the sample (33.6%), followed by those aged 40–49 years (29.8%). Respondents aged 30–39 years accounted for 19.6%, while those aged 18–29 years constituted 17.0%. This indicates that the study drew predominantly from mature adults who are likely to possess considerable experience and knowledge of Arabic education and Islamic practices.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Gender (n = 235)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	104	44.3
Female	131	55.7
Total	235	100.0

Source: Author's analysis

Table 2 indicates that 131 respondents (55.7%) were female, while 104 respondents (44.3%) were male. The distribution suggests that both genders were adequately represented in the study.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification (n = 235)

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
NCE/Degree	73	31.1
Other Qualifications	162	68.9
Total	235	100.0

Source: Author's analysis

The educational profile of respondents indicates that participants possessed varying educational qualifications, thereby providing diverse perspectives on Arabic education and its implications for social cohesion. 73 respondents



(31.1%) possess NCE/Degree while 162 (68.9%) of the total respondents possess other qualifications aside from NCE and Degree.

Respondents' Perceptions of Arabic Language Education

To determine respondents' perceptions of Arabic language education and its implications for social cohesion, responses to the questionnaire items were analysed using frequencies and percentages.

Table 4. Respondents' Perceptions of Arabic Language Education

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	REMARKS
1	Learning Arabic promotes spiritual and moral development	134 (57.0)	101 (43.0)			Agreed
2	Arabic should be learnt primarily for Islamic knowledge rather than career development	96 (40.9)	34 (14.5)	54 (23)	51 (21.7)	Agreed
3	Mastery of Arabic mainly leads to careers as Imams, teachers, or Islamic scholars		74 (31.5)	74 (31.5)	32 (13.6)	Agreed
4	Modern Arabic schools are well structured to attract learners		40 (17)	47 (20)	96 (40.9)	Disagreed
5	Limited employment opportunities contribute to declining enrolment in Arabic schools		85 (36.2)	60 (25.5)	50 (21.3)	Agreed
6	The current teaching methods in Qur'anic schools require review.	39 (16.6)	73 (31.1)	77 (32.7)	46 (19.5)	Disagreed
7	Arabic education offers wider employment opportunities if properly reformed.	62 (26.4)	86 (36.6)	39 (16.6)	48 (20.4)	Agreed

Source: Author's analysis

The findings indicate that respondents generally perceive Arabic as an important language for religious instruction and moral development. Nevertheless, many respondents continue to associate Arabic primarily with religious occupations, reflecting persistent concerns about limited employment opportunities. At the same time, respondents acknowledged that comprehensive reforms to Arabic education could enhance its relevance and expand career prospects beyond traditional religious roles.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide important insights into Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic and the implications of these perceptions for social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria. The study revealed that respondents overwhelmingly perceived Arabic as a language primarily meant for spiritual growth, religious instruction, and moral development. This finding is unsurprising because Arabic occupies a central position in Islamic worship and

scholarship. For many Muslims, proficiency in Arabic is essential for understanding the Qur'an, performing daily prayers, and accessing classical Islamic literature. This finding agrees with Fafunwa (1995), Gbadamosi (1978), Abdalla (2025), and Kankawi et al. (2026), who observed that Arabic has historically served as both a religious and intellectual language among Muslim communities. The finding also supports Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which explains that members of religious groups often associate particular languages with their collective identity and cultural heritage.

The study further revealed that many respondents preferred Arabic education primarily for religious purposes rather than for career development. This perception reflects the long-standing belief that Arabic education mainly prepares learners for religious occupations such as Imams, Qur'anic teachers, and Islamic scholars. Although such occupations remain important, this narrow perception limits public appreciation of the broader economic and professional opportunities available to graduates of Arabic studies. Similar observations have been reported by Abdul-Rahmon (2008), Abdulraheem (2008), Gbodofu (2022), and Sirajudeen and Rufai (2023), who identified poor public perception and limited awareness of career prospects as significant challenges confronting Arabic education in Nigeria.

Another important finding showed that respondents generally believed that limited employment opportunities contribute to declining enrolment in modern Arabic schools. This finding reflects the growing influence of labour market considerations on educational choices among Nigerian families. Parents increasingly prefer educational programmes that promise better employment opportunities and economic mobility. Consequently, disciplines perceived as offering limited career prospects often experience declining enrolment. This finding is consistent with Human Capital Theory, which suggests that individuals invest in education based largely on expected future economic returns (Becker, 1993). It also agrees with empirical studies that have linked students' educational preferences to labour market expectations (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018).

The study also found that respondents believed Arabic education possesses considerable potential for wider employment opportunities if modern Arabic schools are properly restructured. This finding demonstrates that respondents do not reject Arabic education itself; rather, they recognise the need for curriculum reform, institutional strengthening, and better integration of Arabic education with contemporary labour market demands. Modern Arabic graduates increasingly contribute to translation services, diplomacy, journalism, international business, tourism, media, higher education, migration management, and intercultural communication. This finding supports UNESCO (2021), which emphasises that educational systems should equip learners with competencies that promote employability, lifelong learning, and active citizenship.

From the perspective of social cohesion, the findings suggest that improving public perceptions of Arabic education could strengthen social inclusion among Arabic language learners and graduates. When Arabic is recognised not only as a religious language but also as a valuable academic and professional discipline, graduates are more likely to participate fully in national development while maintaining their religious and cultural identity. Such recognition would reduce educational inequality, strengthen intercultural understanding, and promote greater social cohesion within Nigeria's pluralistic society. This observation aligns with OECD (2011), which argues that inclusive educational systems contribute significantly to stronger and more cohesive societies.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Yoruba Muslims continue to attach immense religious importance to Arabic. However, they also recognise the need to reposition Arabic education through curriculum innovation, improved public awareness, government support, and stronger connections between Arabic education and contemporary socio-economic opportunities. Such reforms would not only improve enrolment in Arabic schools but also enhance the contribution of Arabic education to national development and social cohesion.

Conclusion

This study examined Yoruba Muslims' perceptions of Arabic and their implications for social cohesion in South-Western Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that Arabic continues to occupy a central position in the religious, educational, and cultural lives of Yoruba Muslims. However, the language is still widely perceived as being

primarily associated with Islamic worship and religious scholarship rather than with diverse academic and professional opportunities.

The study further revealed that this perception has influenced educational choices, contributed to declining enrolment in modern Arabic schools, and limited the broader social and economic integration of graduates of Arabic studies. Nevertheless, respondents acknowledged that Arabic possesses considerable potential to contribute to national development if Arabic education is strengthened through curriculum reform, institutional support, and improved public awareness of its career prospects.

The study therefore concludes that changing societal perceptions of Arabic requires collaborative efforts involving government agencies, educational institutions, Muslim organisations, curriculum developers, and community leaders. Integrating contemporary skills, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, translation studies, and international communication into Arabic education would significantly enhance its relevance within the twenty-first-century knowledge economy. Such reforms would promote educational inclusion, improve graduate employability, and strengthen social cohesion among Yoruba Muslims and the wider Nigerian society.

Recommendations

The study recommends:

- i. The Federal and State Ministries of Education should strengthen the integration of Arabic education into Nigeria's educational system through curriculum review and improved funding.
- ii. Modern Arabic schools should incorporate digital literacy, entrepreneurship, translation, international relations, media studies, and information technology into their curricula.
- iii. Universities and colleges offering Arabic should establish stronger collaborations with employers, diplomatic missions, media organisations, and international agencies to improve graduate employability.
- iv. Muslim organisations should conduct public awareness campaigns highlighting the diverse career opportunities available to graduates of Arabic studies.
- v. Governments and educational stakeholders should provide scholarships, teacher training, and instructional resources to improve the quality of Arabic education.
- vi. Future researchers should employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to investigate the relationship between language perception, educational outcomes, and social cohesion in other regions of Nigeria.

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