

Unpacking Muslim Scholars' Political Apathy in Northern Nigeria: Beyond the Pulpit to Political Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Muslim scholars have historically been recognised as key figures in stabilising both the spiritual and political spheres in Northern Nigeria. Despite these roles, they have increasingly shown a decline in active engagement, creating space for incompetent or self-serving individuals to dominate governance. Sectarian divisions, lack of political literacy, financial limitations, and negative perceptions of politics as a 'dirty' game all worsen political apathy. This study argues that the withdrawal of Muslim scholars from political engagement, such as contesting, contradicts the theological and historical foundations of Islam, which emphasise leadership, public welfare, and justice. Consequently, this apathy diminishes scholars' moral authority and hinders Muslim communities from influencing governance positively. The study aims to highlight the necessity of redefining scholars' roles beyond the pulpit to include active involvement in governance. A descriptive approach within the qualitative method was employed, relying largely on secondary sources and personal interviews with Muslim scholars and politicians in Northern Nigeria. This triangulation fosters a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and impacts of political apathy among scholars. The findings indicate that factors such as godfatherism, greed among scholars, misconceptions among the public, and sectarian divisions contribute to this apathy. It also reveals that, whereas Christian clerics actively contest elections, Muslim scholars largely abstain, leading to a leadership vacuum. This results in a decline in public trust. Therefore, by engaging in politics with integrity, Muslim scholars can restore public confidence and exemplify leadership based on Islamic principles of justice and accountability.

Keywords: Muslim scholars; political apathy; engagement; northern Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Several studies have recognised the significance of politics and political participation in Islam and identified a concomitant relationship between the two in

influencing decision-making and attaining progress. Since the early period of Islam, the concept of *al-din wa al-dawla* was believed to have a unifying force (Latief et al., 2023). Politics is seen as an act of *Ibādah* (Worship) in Islam and a part of worldly careers in democracy, such that combining both by a Muslim is encouraged as a means to seek the pleasure of God (Aliyu, 2011). It was declared that when Islam is stripped out of politics, it will be transformed into another separate entity and a new religion, such as Buddhism or Christianity (Al-Qardawi, 1998). In a demonstrative manner, it was further described that a Muslim may be in the midst of prayer and dive into the ocean of politics while reciting Qur'anic verses that deal with the core of political matters, such as commands and prohibitions (Al-Qardawi, 1998). This assertion by al-Qardawi does not mean diving into politics in a practical sense; instead, it was emphasised to show that, spiritually, by pondering upon the teachings of the verses on governance while in prayer. This is a testament that engagement in political discourse and governmental issues is not alien to Islam. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad was reported to have enjoined the appointment of one person out of three as their *Amir* (leader) when they intend to embark on a journey (Abdussalam, 2011).

Despite this background, some scholars disagree with the foundational structure of Politics in Islam. It was postulated that Islamic primary sources, specifically the Quran and the Sunnah (Prophetic tradition), are not concerned with the exact universal system of administration and government, but with the ethics and values of a simple and undeveloped society (Kirmanj, 2008). This assertion attributed the politicisation of Islam to Umar's (RA) expeditions and extensions of Islamic territories throughout Arab and non-Arab lands (Kirmanj, 2008). In another vein, proponents of this view argue that internal and sectarian power struggles, as well as political arguments and debates, were key factors that contributed to the politicisation of Islam during the first centuries of Muslim history (Kirmanj, 2008). In contrast, the findings of Bedir (2020) have affirmed that the ultimate criterion of politics comes from the prophetic foundations. Al-Mallah (2011) clarifies that Islam came to establish a new community (*Ummah*), under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who established the Islamic state in a theocratic-democratic way. This is regarded as the basis for political engagement in Islam.

Furthermore, from the Prophet's leadership paradigm in Medinah to the model exhibited by the Sokoto caliphate in northern Nigeria, it is explicit that Muslim scholars are the central figure in shaping governance. However, many scholars in northern Nigeria withdraw from active participation and mediation for fear of losing their credibility, allowing non-Muslim clerics to dominate the aspects of the contest. This has created a vacuum exploited by self-serving and incompetent people to represent, thereby eroding public trust. By examining the historical foundations, contemporary challenges, and potential tactics for the engagement of Muslim scholars. This study argues for a redefinition of scholars' role beyond the axis of pulpit to active-ethical political engagement based on the teachings of Islamic principles of justice, accountability and welfare. It interrogates why Muslim scholars in Northern Nigeria exhibit political apathy despite the potential of restoring the ideal of politics. And what roles did Muslim scholars in the past play in politics, and how have these roles changed over time? What are the challenges and effects of apathy on governance, as well as the strategies for effective political engagement? Therefore, this study would examine the historical and religious foundations of Muslim scholars' political engagement in Northern Nigeria. The study will assess the effect of disengagement and propose practical strategies for engagement in politics without compromising the ideals of Islam and personal credibility.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a qualitative-descriptive design utilising both primary data through interviews and secondary literature review. Sources such as classical Islamic texts, scholarly articles on Islamic political thought, historical discourse on Nigeria's politics and Muslim participation were analysed. These enable a rigorous discourse of Islamic governance and civic engagement and the relevance of Muslim scholars as agents of transformation. The primary data were generated through semi-structured interviews with Muslim scholars, politicians, and community leaders. The study has gained first-hand insights into the challenges facing the Muslim scholars' engagement. The direct quotes from the respondents strengthened the study analysis by displaying how lived experiences match or deviate from common expectations. The methodology, therefore, triangulates textual, empirical, and historical data. This allows for identifying factors influencing political apathy and perceived notions and assumptions associated

with political engagement and apathy. The methodology denotes more of a descriptive than an analytical approach as it explores “what” is happening, but with limited engagement in testing causal relationships. Notwithstanding, the synthesis of sources provides a broad understanding of the topic.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Political Engagement and Apathy in Islam

Political engagement entails the involvement of individual citizens of a particular country in devising, selecting, planning, and implementing governmental policies and Programmes. It involves voluntary activity, direct or indirect selection, nomination, or election of leaders, formulation of policies and programs, community services, and other civic engagement procedures (Falade, 2014). It encompasses various activities from voter turnout to formal political representation, advocacy, community leadership, consultation, and ideas (Al-Momani et al., 2010). Generally, the extent to which people engage in politics varies from person to person. There are inactive participants, voting specialists with less concern on political activities, parochial participants who engage when it suits their interest, communalists who combine voting and community affairs but are exempt from campaign, campaigners whose attention is more on campaign than community services, and the last category, complete political activists (Falade, 2014). In Nigeria, religion played a vital role in generating positive and negative political engagement effects. Muslim scholars are the real agents of political mediation between people. The role of Muslim scholars sometimes falls under doctrinal divisions, leading to uncensored utterances and apathy (Kayode, 2023). These divisions would obliterate the people's confidence and trust in the scholars' roles, which go beyond mere preaching and include other societal engagements, including politics. Muslim scholars were believed to be the Prophet's heirs in their political and social relations. They are expected to demonstrate a high sense of restraint regarding political trust.

In describing the effect of political apathy in Nigeria, Bugaje (2016) argued that the current Nigerian democracy, characterised by inconsistencies, is due to people's attitudes, folding their hands to watch, as he alleged ‘robbers’ stole votes and ran away to announce themselves as victors. There is no denying that the system of politics and representation requires people with integrity and diligence who will rejuvenate political

altercations. Therefore, apathy is seen not as a solution but a setback to development. When citizens become apolitical, it may give room for unscrupulous individuals to misuse and manipulate the vote, favour incapacitated persons to occupy key positions, and decide people's fate unnecessarily. Moreover, deficient love and devotion to the development of the state, destructive political tendencies, mistrust, and lack of confidence between the public and institutions intensify apathy (Udenta, 2024). Apathy led good people, clamouring for democracy, to shun away from participating in elections, stop contributing to public opinions, or engaging in party activities.

In projecting the manner in which non-Muslims participate in Nigeria's politics, Oluremi, 2017) asserts that, it is noticeable that contemporary Nigerian church leaders like Prof. Yemi Osinbajo (a renown Pastor in Redeemed Christian Church of God and Vice President of Nigeria 2015-2023), Pastor Tunde Bakare, and many more are now deeply involved in politics and governance, to the extent of holding political offices. They are seen taking to the streets, leading protests, and demanding their rights from the government. In addition, the governor of Oyo state, Seyi Makinde, was reportedly invited to members of Christ Survival Miracle Church and their religious leaders to participate fully in politics (Musa, 2021). These statements point to the fact that, since leaders in other faiths can participate, express their views, and protest for their rights, Muslim scholars must go beyond that and participate fully to complement the essence of ensuring and establishing justice. Hence, there is a need for Muslim scholars to showcase their religious teachings confidently in governance.

Muslim Scholars: Features and Identity

Muslim means 'someone who submits, surrenders, or yields to Allah's commands (Hussain, 2013). A Muslim believes in Allah's Will and professes a word of testimony. Muslim identity, in general, is a kind of identity that Islamic institutions, organisations, or associations can influence. It encompasses personal recognition and attachment to the Islamic religion and its values. Qur'anic values defined the identity that Muslim is required to identify with (Zuriet & Lyausheva, 2019). The term 'Muslim scholars' in Islam simply referred to '*Ulama*', the plural form of *Alim*, which means the people who understand or possess knowledge (Muid, 2017). Muslim scholars are described as learned men who interpret *Shari'ah* (Jawondo, 2019). This study identifies Muslim

scholars as those who have knowledge, expertise, and exert religious rulings. Those who possess significant erudition, knowledge of contemporary globalisation, and deep knowledge of Islam, including Qur'an, hadiths, and other jurisprudential sciences. Abdulganiy (2014) cited the statement of Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali, that, "there is nothing precious than knowledge; the kings are rulers of (common) people while the Ulama are the rulers of the kings" This statement defined the identity of scholars in society by involving their roles and engagement.

Moreover, Hamid Bobboyi (2011) identified three categories of Muslim scholars in the *Bilad as-Sudan*. These are Court *Ulama*, Independent *Ulama*, and activist *Ulama*. The court *Ulama* usually bases their associations with kings and other people in authority to garner some advantages for Islam or to save its adherents from reprehension. In addition, the Court *ulama* prepare to pray for the rulers on any occasion and for all purposes; whenever those in authority commit injustice, they pitch their camp on the side of the rulers and use their logic to mystify the event. Their *fatwas* (Islamic verdicts) are usually inclined to justify rather than clarify, even where the "official position" lacks clarity. In the case of independent scholars, they shunned all interaction with the State and struggled fiercely to guard their independence. Their impact on the State policy and affairs of the society is minimal, for they regarded the State as evil and had nothing to do with state functionaries. The activist *Ulama* are just like the pioneer activists of Islam. They interact with leaders and say the truth whenever circumstances warrant; they guard their independence and believe that safeguarding the interests of Islam would be obtained through interaction with the ruling authorities. As such, in most cases, the court Ulama and activists were the only group that interacted with leaders. The former would be considered allies of the leaders and usually side with the ideology of the politicians; the latter mainly influenced the political activities based on their popularity and acceptance by the public. Independent Ulama also plays a role in politics where necessary, particularly when consulted. The implications of their engagement are measured by the level of their positive impact during mediation, restraint against exploitation, and how they influence and engage fully in politics.

Furthermore, Ibrahim (2014) also classified Muslim scholars into two groups in the Nigerian context: Traditional and Modern. Traditional scholars were described as having full-fledged adherence to the teachings and conduct of the Prophet, and

disregarding Western and materialistic lifestyles. However, they are versed in Qur'an, Hadith, Arabic grammar, Jurisprudence, and other branches of Islamic knowledge. Conversely, modern scholars possess both Western and Islamic knowledge and do not disregard some emerging issues of the contemporary world. Lastly, those who lean towards little strict tradition and little towards modern science. In this case, scholars were categorised based on their beliefs and perceptions of spiritual and mundane life. So, Muslim scholars nowadays are full-fledged in all ramifications as Islam has left no stone unturned.

Sheikh Uthman bin Fodio, in his book *Wathiqatul Ikhwan Litabyiini dalilaat al-kitab was-sunnah wa al-jamaa*, has also classified scholars into two categories: the *Ulama al-Su* and the *Ulama al-Din* (13-15). Labdo (2015) describes the former as those who aim to acquire wealth and prestige and live comfortably. They usually used un-Godly tricks in achieving their aims; they befriended tyrant, corrupt, and unjust leaders either through conniving silence in the face of injustice and corruption or by twisting religious texts to justify the un-Godly actions. Meanwhile, the latter possesses the golden attributes of knowledge and piety. Enjoin good, forbid evil, and help the truth over the false and the oppressed over the oppressor. They are consistently upright in their dealings with the people.

Roles of Muslim Scholars in Northern Nigeria's Politics

Muslim scholars usually educate, enlighten, guide, and pray to people in their religious and daily routine. Bunza (2014) stated that the role of *Ulama* (Muslim scholars) in Muslim society transcends from spiritual to temporal, in the form of economic, political, social, and even personal aspects of life. *Ulama* play a role as protectors of and upholders of justice; they protect and support the weak in the face of aggression from a powerful government, group, or individual. Stressing that no system or government can survive without collaborating or striking a deal or pact with the *Ulama* to ensure the endorsement of their voices, which mostly echo on behalf of the voiceless masses. Bala (2011) corroborated this, saying that the *Ulama* have the authority and competence to check the arbitrary use of state power. They should also have a decisive voice in articulating, reviewing, and ratifying all governmental policies, such that no other group has sufficient knowledge and commitment to the *Shari'ah*. On

his part, Ibrahim (2014) acknowledged the necessity for *Ulama* to speak up and stimulate the *Ummah* (community) for economic and other developmental purposes. Therefore, Muslim scholars determine how Muslims understand Islam and the world. This has thus streamlined the foundational role of *Ulama* beyond the pulpit, but in rejuvenating and articulating the political future of the society.

Muslim scholars' role is equated with that of *Ahl A-Hal Wal-Aqad* (those capable of deciding political and spiritual aspects of the people) (Abdulkarim, 2010). Therefore, Scholars could be seen as spiritual leaders influencing the congregation and served as judges, lawyers, expert witnesses, and market inspectors. Moreover, they played a significant role in unifying society. As such, the role of *Ulama* varies in nature and strength from one state to another in the Muslim society. Historically, Muslim scholars have played a significant role in the political activities of northern Nigeria. The region with historic luminaries such as El-Kanemi in Borno, Dan-Fodio and his lieutenants in Hausa land, and other parts of the Yoruba areas. Their roles extend beyond Islamic revival or proselytisation but engagement in political campaigns and establishment of the empires, and their role in serving humanity at various capacities, such as Imams, *Qadis* (judges), *Wazirs* (viziers), treasurers, scribes, chief of police, as well as diplomats (Jawondo, 2019).

Scholars' political engagement will be a key to progressive and decisive change. Despite having the chance to bring leadership change, some Nigerian scholars disregard contest and distance themselves from governmental activities to preserve their honour. Additionally, Bobboyi (2011) states that leaders should always be craving the company of religious scholars and be determined to listen to their guidance. Political leaders must beware of the evil scholars who are greedy for material things. Scholars' role is beyond preaching and advising. As advisors to the constituted authority, they should seek Allah's pleasure rather than luxuries or other worldly things. Preaching and advising form only a part of the responsibilities of Muslim scholars in society.

A former Governor of the North West, late Malam Usman Faruk (d.2020), pointed out that a scholar's role befits much administrative and professional milieu due to their high intellectual standing. Likewise, Emirs and Chiefs should serve as royal fathers to the Islamic Organisation (Faruk, 2013). This statement is an eye-opener that

scholars are like administrative engineers who have knowledge and intellectual wisdom to handle issues related to society. Moreover, Dahiru Umaru (d.2022) asserts that the main contending political parties from the early 1950s to the late 1960s were the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). The former was made up of most Northern Emirs, and the latter, NEPU, was headed by people with sound Islamic scholarship, like Malam Aminu Kano, and Aliyu Akilu, etc., who emphasised and advocated for more social justice to the people (Dahiru, 2011). This has further proved that since independence, scholars from the northern part of Nigeria have played a tremendous role in politics. Therefore, confining the roles of scholars to spiritual activities would be an irrelevant ideology in contemporary times. The major problem with scholars is that, despite their bounteous role as intellectuals in nation-building. Some were relegating their intellect to mere allies of politicians. Islam encouraged seeking Allah's guidance in all aspects of human endeavours; through such guidance, no dirty element would get access to the system. Therefore, political apathy due to perceived assumptions of its dirty nature will not deter good scholars from other shortcomings.

Challenges Facing Muslim Scholars in Northern Nigeria's Politics

In every aspect of human endeavours, there must be challenges that might hinder progress. Some of these challenges include:

Disunity or Sectarian Division

This is regarded as a significant challenge that affects Muslim scholars' engagement in the northern parts of politics. Muslim scholars in the north are divided into different sects and do not speak with a single voice during elections. Instead, every scholar/organisation represents solely the interest of their sectarian unit rather than speaking out for their followers. That is why politicians used the divide-and-rule policy to influence many scholars. It reached the extent that any scholar who speaks against the bad leadership of the incumbent administration would face the threat of suspension, sacking, or removal from leading people in prayer and other religious preaching. He might rarely get the backing of his fellow scholars, even if what he was saying is proper. A perfect example is the case of Sheikh Nuru Khalid, the Chief *Imam* of Apo Juma'at mosque, Abuja('Buhari Has Failed Us" – Video That Got Apo Chief Imam

Sheikh Muhammad Nuru Khalid Suspended, 2025). Sometimes scholars engaged in open criticism of politics against each other instead of closed-door dialogue. A case of Izala Jos branch leader with his deputy over the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Mr Peter Obi ('Outrage as Sheikh Jingir Sparks Ethnic Tension Over Peter Obi's Visit to Igbo Muslim Scholar', 2025). These and many other cases silenced the voice of Muslim scholars. As a result, some choose to remain apolitical.

Greediness from some Muslim Scholars or Muslim Organisations

Many Scholars used to serve as prayer mongers to the politicians. Personal interview with Dr Auwal Abdullahi, a politician and a scholar, stated that some scholars were reported to have queued up at the houses of some politicians to share or demand some tokens in terms of fertiliser, motorcycles, bags of rice, etc. This led some political thugs to attribute some names to scholars like "*Fararen Yan Kalare*", meaning 'White Thugs' (A. Abdullahi, personal communication, 12 November 2021). Because they believed that these scholars knew the attitudes of some politicians, instead of cautioning, admonishing, and advising them, they lined up to take money and remain mute. Sometimes, Muslim Scholars used to abandon their role of guiding people and leaders, but promote some candidates and feeble politicians. It was opined that they could hardly differentiate the role of 'Ulama, who serves as an advisor to politicians, from that of fellow advisors due to today's devastating and exacerbating state of politics. It reached the extent that some Muslim scholars were praising politicians at the place of the preaching. This and many other attitudes led people to show less confidence in the representation of some scholars (A. Abdullahi, personal communication, 12 November 2021). As such, it was reported further that some politicians used to visit Muslim scholars at night with bags full of money as a strategy to silence them (A. M. Girbo, personal communication, 24 December 2023). Some scholars used to accept such an offer. This leads to a compromise in terms of representing people by the scholars. This is also part of the divisive tool used by the politicians. Only a few escape from this trick to preserve their dignity in the face of politicians (A. M. Girbo, personal communication, 24 December 2023).

Illiteracy of the Muslim Followers

Illiteracy and wrong perceptions among the followers are common challenges. When some scholars praise or urge Muslims to yearn and expect good from their leaders, the followers usually wail: “*Malam ma ya karba*” (meaning Malam also received his share). In addition, some Muslim followers used to allegedly accuse *Ulama* of not publicly criticising leaders in the State. On another occasion, when a religious scholar aspires to contest for any political seat, they usually look at it negatively instead of well-wishes from the people. It reached the extent that in Gombe State, some Muslims refused to follow one scholar in prayer because he showed interest in contesting for the Federal House of Assembly Member(A. Abdullahi, personal communication, 12 November 2021).

Financial Problems

With the current nature of Nigerian politics, which mainly looks like a capitalist system of governance in the country, wealth is the determining factor of earning trust from the people. Muslim scholars who show interest in contesting political seats are facing mockery and rejection by the people, challenging their competency in terms of finance rather than integrity(Maina Adamu & Muhammad, personal communication, 26 December 2021). In fact, in Nigeria today, anyone who wants to contest an election must use money to buy the people's mandate(Maina Adamu & Muhammad, personal communication, 26 December 2021). In addition, the forms for expressing interest and nomination are still worth millions of Naira. For example, in Nigeria, the two major political parties, like the All Progressive Congress (APC), sold their presidential form at 100 million for presidential and 50 million Naira for Governors; and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) sold forms for presidential at the range of 30 – 40 million and Governors 20 million Naira(Olajide Olufunsho, 2024). Despite these massive amounts, there are records that some renowned pastors like Tunde Bakare and Professor Yemi Osinbajo were able to purchase the forms worth 100 million each from the All Progressives Congress (APC). However, no Muslim scholar in the northern parts of the country could do so under the mega parties. This does not mean the scholars dislike it or have no interest; some scholars are interested in participating in the contest, but due to financial issues, they cannot afford to contest.

Politics of god-fatheris

It is crystal clear that Muslim scholars believe in Allah as the one who gives power to whomever He wishes and takes it from whoever He wishes. They also believe that if one is patriotic and competent enough, one may win an election without the intervention of any godfather. However, in Nigeria, the case seems partially different; some people believe that only your godfather determines your political fate and decides whether you can win or not. In this case, Muslim scholars in the north are facing challenges from these so-called godfathers. Because the rule for obedience to the godfather requires agreement for the award of multi-million dollar contracts in reciprocation (H. Muhammad, personal Communication, 21 December 2021). In this case, many politicians think these scholars will never compromise on many aspects, so they rarely nominate them for powerful seats.

Challenges from fellow Muslim Scholars

In this regard, due to the perception of some scholars that the current democratic dispensation is just like a dirty game in which those who want to gain worldly rewards would participate. Some scholars used to accuse their counterparts contesting any political seat of disregarding God consciousness. Although the protagonists of such an idea may accept a political adviser post if given. Some scholars may weep by saying, *Malam wane ya baude*, meaning ‘such scholars have deviated from the spiritual to the material world’ (Maina Adamu & Muhammad, personal communication, 26 December 2021).

In other words, the majority of the Muslim scholars who participated in politics experienced challenges from fellow Muslims. Some said abusive words to their representatives without addressing that particular problem.

Lack of awareness

This is one of the significant challenges of Muslims in general. For instance, in some places where there are mixed religions (Muslims and Christians), even when Muslims are the majority, Christian clerics occupy the maximum percentage of political offices due to a lack of awareness. The reason was that the non-Muslims, through their District Church Council (DCC) and Local Church Council (LCC), used all their technical

experience to campaign for votes for their candidates. They participated as returning officers, electoral observers, presiding officers, and in other positions during the election. Nevertheless, on the side of Muslim scholars, when they finished casting their vote, they will fold their arms (M. Yakubu, personal communication, 8 January 2022). However, a gigantic effort was made by some Muslim Youth who established an organisation in 2018 to awaken their people to participate in similar activities. This effort led to the selection of a deputy Imam in Kaltungo as Local Government Chairman. However, his leadership faced challenges from Muslim youth due to a lack of awareness of the gradual use of political techniques (H. Kaltungo, personal communication, 8 January 2022).

General Problem among the Muslim Ummah

This is another fundamental issue bedevilling the progress of our society. The social altercation, economic inappropriateness, unclean politics, and spiritual degeneration of the system or some members overseeing the system of politics, led many scholars in northern Nigeria to refrain from participation. In most cases, society influences people gradually, and even the knowledgeable would fall into the trap of renegades. When Muslim scholars fail to deliver effectively, it will affect other prospective aspirants.

These challenges might be curtailed when the Muslim societies unite themselves as one community, apply wisdom in speaking and actions, and become aware of emerging issues that are not contrary to the teachings of Islam. Muslim scholars see it as a duty bound upon them to secure both Western and religious education. Furthermore, Muslim scholars, leaders, and all those who are seeking any political positions should know that leadership in Islam is a responsibility and not a privilege. In line with this, the prophetic tradition narrated on the authority of Umar (RA) that the Prophet (May peace be upon him) said:

“Beware, every one of you is a shepherd/guardian answerable for his flock. Caliph is a shepherd over the people and shall be questioned about his subjects and how he conducted their affairs.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 7138, book 93, Hadith 2)

This proved that, as the father is a shepherd morally and legally bound to ensure the maintenance and well-being of his family, the government also has a similar

responsibility. It became necessary for the government or those in authority to ensure the moral, spiritual, social, and economic well-being of the individuals and the society.

Effects of Political Apathy by some Muslim Scholars in Gombe State

The main effects of shunning politics by Muslim scholars in northern Nigeria include causing incompetent people to run the affairs of the people. This, in turn, will weaken the hope of the masses to get justice (M. B. Doma, personal communication, 11 November 2021). The way ignorance of the gravity of sins among businessmen can lead to charging interest (usury) in business transactions. Likewise, when the people of knowledge were to shun politics, governance, or administration of the State. In that case, it may fall into the hands of the ignorant who may deal unjustly among people. Political apathy by scholars is like opening the door for intruders to enter a private room and decide how to conduct private life. Similarly, when Muslim Scholars shun politics, it may lead to the occupation of some critical positions like health, education, security, judiciary, and land ministries by non-Muslims or less qualified people (U. I. Taliyawa, personal communication, 18 September 2022).

Scholars distanced themselves from politics due to people's impression and perception that joining politics with *Da'wah* is just like compromising the preaching. Muslim scholars from among the elders can hold the position of arbiter, counsellors, or guides who help issue a fatwa (verdict) on emerging issues and allow other forms of engagement to youth. Some scholars felt that for any scholar to participate fully in a contest, he should be relieved from *da'awah* (Islamic propagation) because merging the two may be challenging for him (A. M. Girbo, personal communication, 24 December 2023). At this juncture, it is important to state that what is required from the scholars participating in politics is that they should not allow either politics or religious activities to sway them or to compromise their Islamic ideals and identity. Instead, when he is in the mosque or religious gatherings, he should focus on it and show a model to his followers, and when it comes to politics, he should do it to represent people, not for personal gain. He should not allow either of the activities to lure him to deviations since both Islam and politics are God's trust.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is paramount to state that Muslim scholars in Northern Nigeria have historically played a central role in mediating, guiding and transforming governance. Yet a considerable number of these scholars have now withdrawn from politics, most especially from contesting, due to some misperceived assumptions of compromising religious integrity. This apathy created a chance for less qualified people to dominate governance, thereby eroding public trust. Therefore, active participation centred on Islamic principles of justice and accountability is necessary to restore Muslim scholars' moral authority and good representation. Sectarian unity, enlightenment of followers, and adopting a transparent leadership paradigm can enable scholars to harmonise *da'awa* with politics. In addition, it will enable Muslim scholars in northern Nigeria to reclaim their historical role and contribute meaningfully to the politics and governance in Nigeria. The study recommends that:

1. There is a need for institutional reorientation across sectarian groups in northern Nigeria to create an advanced training platform that will connect youth, scholars, and community leaders. This platform should focus on civic engagement, political strategy for scholars, and leadership ethics.
2. Scholars should adopt an institutionalised model of harmonising *da'awa* with political contest without compromising either and with the avoidance of conflict of interest;
3. Establish a community crowdfunding to support scholars contesting elections without compromising integrity; and
4. Develop intra-sectarian coalitions for a unified voice in political affairs.

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