

## **The Effect of Qur'anic Recitation Competition to the Contemporary Muslim Women in Northern Nigeria**

Ahmad Muhammad Gusau

Department of Islamic Political Science  
Academy of Islamic Studies University of Malaya  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

### **Abstract**

*The importance of the Qur'an to the life of a Muslim cannot be over emphasised. It suffices to mention that it is a book of guidance that is responsible for the tremendous success recorded by the early Muslims. Indeed, its recitation provides the heart with the utmost tranquillity and protection from the satanic temptation. Women could be said to be more exposed to the treacherous activities of the Satan (devil), perhaps because of their nature of creation that is attractive or for the heedless attitude of most females to the injunctions of Shari'ah. Therefore, the introduction of Qur'anic competition that permits women participation is gaining acceptance among the contemporary females and has a positive imprint on the life of the females. Thus, more females are showing more interest in learning the Qur'an than music and other devilish activities. This paper is therefore aim at evaluating the factors that are responsible for the attraction of females to Qur'anic competition as well as to assess the effect of the competition on the life of female Muslims. In addition, difference in opinion among scholars with regard to legality of participation of female in Qur'anic competition is deliberated. Likewise means of enhancing female participation in the competition is critically discussed. The qualitative method was employed in conducting this study*

### **Objective**

The main objective of this paper is to understand the challenges of the contemporary Muslim women in northern Nigeria, the effects of the Qur'anic Recitation Competition to Muslim youth especially female in the transformation of their morality. The factors responsible for the attraction of Muslim female to the Qur'anic Recitation Competition and the opinions of scholars regarding the legality of Muslim female in the knowledge and

Qur'anic recitation competition would be discussed. The need to create additional ways in encouraging, integrating knowledge of the Recitation and Memorization of the Glorious Qur'an as well as modern knowledge to the Muslim youth in northern Nigeria particularly Muslim female will be highlighted accordingly.

### **Methodology**

Qualitative method was adopted and instrument used in the process of data collection was interview, available documentary sources and observation method was implemented. Equally some Nigerian citizens from both Nigeria and Malaysia were involved. Participant who contested in the Qur'anic recitation competition at Local, national and international levels were also interviewed. Carolyn and Palena (2006) mentioned that in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique with either a small number of respondents on a particular idea, program, or situation.

### **Results**

Some of the interviewees happened to be part of the beneficiaries from the Qur'anic Recitation Competition and their opinions were mentioned and analysed. Most of them were contributing and disseminating the Qur'anic and Tahfiz knowledge to their respective communities. Similarly the Center for Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto is the initiator of the competition since 1986 and this has brought a lot of impact in the modification of individuals, students, parents, wealthy individuals, participants, state governments and the country itself, 24<sup>th</sup> National Qur'anic Recitation Competition (2010).

### **Introduction**

Islam permits both men and women to seek for knowledge. Therefore in this regard women are equal to men in searching knowledge of the Glorious Qur'an. Equally seeking knowledge is considered as acts of Ibadah i.e. worship in (Q2: 31-32). Abu Hurairah (RA) reported Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has said: "Allah makes the way to paradise easy for who facilitates the path in search of knowledge." (Muslim). In spite of the above evidences, there were individuals who do not care to learn the recitation of the Glorious Qur'an but concentrate and struggle to obtain material benefit in our present contemporary world especially in some places in the current study area of this study. In supporting this, Amina (2004) stated that parental negligence concerning the nonchalant attitude towards the discipline, education as well as security of the members of the family. The author added that

women are like their men counterparts are naturally created with potential abilities such as intelligence, creativity, moral judgement (etc) and other endowment that which when fully exploited could assist tremendously in the survival and growth of any society. Similarly, in another work the researchers explained that Islam has very specific obligation, guidelines, limitations and responsibilities for both men and women. The researchers also proves in (Surah 4:32) it has laid down intricately with several far-reaching implications in mind so as to prepare the women society in facing the current global challenges, Normazla et la. (2005). There is need for both male and female youth to learn and understand as well as memorise the Glorious Qur'an because by reading, memorising and use of Qur'anic knowledge could help ones to participate, enhances and transform their entire life as well as their society morally, socially, educationally and economically. This was supported in International Forum on Women in science and Technology in Muslim countries (2011) highlighted that it is part of their efforts to improve health and education to eradicate poverty and advance women's empowerment. Therefore the knowledge of the Glorious Qur'an was very essentials to each and every Muslim individual and their communities. It is through knowledge of the Qur'an other knowledge could be derived, the Qur'an also differentiates between mankind. See (Q4:32), (Al-Zumar: 9).

### **Women in other civilization/societies**

The situation of women in other societies was not admirable, they have no regard and respect and were not considered as a complete human being, at the same time women were maltreated by some societies badly. Therefore in support of this statement, some scholars stated that in some civilization women were not recognized and respected, for instance among the Greco-Roman culture, "the dying of women husband could leave her by will to a friend, with his goods and by the same title." Similarly regarding the pagan Arabs themselves who were the first addresses of the holy Qur'an: "The widows...were regarded as part of the estate, and as such passed ordinarily into the hands of their husbands heirs." (Ansari 2001). Equally, the Encyclopaedia of women and world religion (1999) claimed that women have made substantial contributions to Christian religious and literatures, especially during the middle Ages.

According to the Encyclopaedia of Islam (2005) during the period of *Jahiliyyah* women throughout the world were subjected to great indignities. No religion had allowed them equality none gave them a share in the property of their parents or husbands. Women

were look upon as a source of shame and disgrace to the family. No restriction on the number of wives that man could hold. Likewise a son inherited his deceased father's wives. Female infanticide was common, women had no social status and no rights and were treated more or less a personal slaves. But with the coming of Islam, the situation of women was raised to a respectable and honourable one in society. Hence Islam came as the rescuer and promoter of women. In another literature Encyclopaedia of Islam (2005) explained the true position of women from the point of view of faith has been made clear through the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an as well as the practice of the last Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

This is a great honour and support women obtained from the religion of Islam. In several traditions the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) regarded and respected women in similar sayings the Prophet (SAW) traditions and said: "Whosoever has a daughter and he does not bury her alive, does not insult her, does not favour his son over her, Allah will enter him into Paradise." (Hadith). In another sayings Prophet (SAW) mentioned; "Whosoever supports two daughters till they mature, he and I will come in the Day of Judgement as this (and he pointed with his two fingers held together)." (Hadith).

Nowadays in some communities in Nigeria regarded female as consumers who only absorbed but unproductive to the family. The only useful and beneficiaries to her is her children and sometimes her parents especially mothers. This is due to insufficient Islamic knowledge and poor understanding of religion challenges socially and morally. In concurring with this, Dauda (2008) stated that some morally watching Television, Satellite, You tube bad stations contributed to the immoral attitude of some contemporary Muslims especially females. The female suppose to be taken care properly. In this respect, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) encourages Muslim to show and respect as well as maintain women perfectly. Abu Hurairah (RA) reported Allah's Apostle (SAW) as saying: He who believes in Allah and the Hereafter if he witnesses any matter he should talk in good terms about it or keep quiet. Act kindly towards woman, for woman is created from a rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is its top. If you attempt to straighten it, you will break it, and if you leave it, its crookedness will remain there. So act kindly towards women."(Sahih Muslim). In another hadith says; "The best of you is the best to his family and I am the best among you to my family." Prophet (SAW) additional added that; the most perfect believers are the best in conduct and best of you are those who are best to their wives." (Hadith). In another confirmation Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said; "Any man who has a slave girl whom he educates properly, teaches

good manners, frees her and marries her will get good double rewards.” (Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah).

However, from the above mentioned statements, it is an instructions and guide that a Muslim support and treat females as well as honouring them with respect. Likewise an individual's was commanded to value and regard women generally. Indeed it is mandated for every Muslims because in (Q4:34) had showed that male inherited more than female but male are financially to look after their daughters, sisters, wives and mothers.

Therefore in this respect Islam instructed mankind, husbands, fathers as well as the local community to show kindness and respect to women, both the married and the unmarried one. This would bring sanity and stability in the society as well. Presently because of the abject poverty as well as environmental or peer group influence lead many female girl's to involved into different bad institutions such as prostitutions, entertainment. Some were being used as a tool to win and sell incredible in the Medias or public, some were used as an instrument directly or indirectly. Some studies such as (Dauda; 2008) and Dauda; 2002) confirms several of these challenging factors. Dauda (2002) stressed that in our global world today some people see nothing wrong on women to be prostitute or things similar to this. The author further mentioned that, those who do not see anything wrong in pregnancy without marriage are gradually seeing such an animalistic ideas to our Muslim girls and women, those for whom lesbianism is nothing wrong are teaching that very terrible crime to our sisters and daughters in some schools. Those who sees nothing wrong in the women married or not married, spending her life in the market or in the streets are influencing our Muslim women to accept such dishonourable and bad practice as a sign of 'freedom' and 'liberation' they are pulling out the Muslim women from their majestic and honourable married life in their enviable homes to the morally corrupt and corrupting political added by the researcher. Moreover, Dauda (2008) in his Book title; "Islam and society, A sociological and political analysis" highlighted with the advent of western system of education northern Nigerians exhibits some fundamentally contradictory behaviours i.e. negative attitudinal behavioural changes within their personality these were painfully eroded, infected and bastardised morally, educationally, economically, also these are just a few of the cancerous diseases which afflicted majority of the western educated northern elites especially the female one's. Equally in another work conducted by Rechard (2007) claimed that female were the most likely victims of family violence, with as many as one in three adult women suffering abuse by an intimate partner during her life time. This increases to two in every three adult women on welfare said by the researcher.

These are some of the majors' negative challenges facing our Muslim youth today especially female students, likewise due to the poor good understanding of the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an as well as inadequate recitation of it from some Muslim communities lead to such occurrences of the above mentioned attitudes.

### **Recitation and Memorisation of the Holy Qur'an**

The word *Tahfiz* was derived from the root *Hafaza* which means 'to preserve something, to protect, to retain in one's memory. Memorization of the Holy Qur'an started from the time of prophet (SAW) whenever he receives a revelation, he first of all tried to commit it to memory and then later urged his companions to do the same (Kasimu 2008). It was reported by Uthman bin Affan (RA), the Prophet (SAW) said: "The most superior amongst you Muslims are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it." (Bukhari). The Holy Qur'an has differentiate between mankind (*Al-Zumar: 9*). In the same way the human knowledge mentality and considers analysis as an obligation and thinking as Ibadah and equally the hadith of Prophet (SAW) explained and interpret the meaning of the Glorious Qur'an (Ismail 2005). The first revelation was instructing Muslim to learn and understand the way to read and write in (Q96:1-5). The Prophet (SAW) commanded the Muslim to learn and recite the Qur'an correctly. Narrated Ibn `Abbas (RA): `Umar (RA) said, Ubai was the best of us in the recitation (of the Qur'an) yet we leave some of what he recites.' Ubai (RA) says, 'I have taken it from the mouth of Allah's Apostle and will not leave for anything whatever....' (Bukhari).

The preservation of the verses and Surahs of the Glorious Qur'an was made through *Hifz* (memorization) and oral transmission by the Prophet (SAW) he committed it to memory and later passed it to his companions and they committed it to memory, some of the companions known for memorization and recitation of the Glorious Qur'an includes; Abubakar Ibn Abi Quhafa, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, Ali ibn Abi talib, Aisha bint Abubakar, Hafsat bint Umar, Umm Salama and among others. The revealed verses and chapters were recorded in addition to memorization (Kasimu 2008). Similarly during the life time of Prophet (SAW) he encourages companions to learn Qur'an among themselves. Narrated Masriq: Abdullah bin `Amr mentioned `Abdullah bin Masud and said, "I shall ever love that man, for I heard the Prophet saying; 'Take (learn) the Qur'an from four: `Abdullah bin Masud, Salim, Mu`adh and Ubai bin Ka`b.'" (Bukhari). Likewise, it was also narrated

from Anas bin Malik: Hudhaifa bin Al-Yaman came to `Uthman at the time when the people of Sham and the people of Iraq were Waging war to conquer Arminya and Adharbijan. Hudhaifa was afraid of their (the people of Sham and Iraq) differences in the recitation of the Qur'an, so he said to `Uthman, "O chief of the Believers! Save this nation before they differ about the Book (Qur'an) as Jews and the Christians did before." So `Uthman (RA) sent a message to Hafsa saying, "Send us the manuscripts of the Qur'an so that we may compile the Qur'anic materials in perfect copies and return the manuscripts to you." Hafsa (RA) sent it to `Uthman. `Uthman then ordered Zaid bin Thabit, `Abdullah bin AzZubair, Sa`id bin Al-As and `AbdurRahman bin Harith bin Hisham to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies...." (Bukhari).

It is also mentioned in another Hadith, Narrated Zaid bin Thabit: Abu Bakr (RA) sent for me and said, "You used to write the Divine Revelations for Allah's Apostle, so you should search for (the Qur'an and collect) it." I started searching for the Qur'an till I found the last two Verses of Surat at-Tauba with Abi Khuza`ima Al-Ansari and I could not find these Verses with anybody other than him..." (Bukhari).

### **The Importance of Qur'an to humanity**

Some scholars discussed on the importance of memorisers of the Holy Qur'an both male and female in this world and the hereafter as follows; "respect from the members of the society or community, raising the image or status of a hafiz, inculcation of the spirit of hard work, material benefits like gift of money, scholarship etc. These are the benefits in the world, while equally that of the Hereafter includes; bounties reward, hafiz will be raised high in paradise based on his recitation, special reward for the parents of Hafiz, Hafiz will not be punished with hell fire, intercession on behalf of 10 relatives and *Huffaz* are members of Allah's household (Kasimu 2008). In supporting this, Narrated by "Uthman bin `Affan (RA) reported that: The Prophet (SAW) said, "The most superior among you (Muslims) are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it."(Bukhari). Similarly in another sayings, Narrated by `Uthman (RA) who reported that: The Prophet (SAW) said, "The best among you (Muslims) are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it."(Bukhari).

The mentioned conditions could only be obtained to someone who memorised the Glorious Qur'an either male or female and abide by its teachings accordingly. Studies conducted by the researchers reported and support the importance and the need for the

individuals to understand and follow the Qur'anic teachings. However, their literatures had shown and confirm the importance of the Glorious Qur'an to humanities and solutions to contemporary challenges to both male and female.

Some scholars such as Kamar (2003) noted that the Holy Qur'an as a sacred scripture is unique in providing substantial references and information concerning religions and religious beliefs outside its own fold. The researcher further mentioned that no scripture in the world teaches such a 'comparative religion' as the Qur'an. Also Nor (2005) in his words enumerated that the Qur'an urges mankind to use his faculty of understanding in facing life and reality. However, it is a truism to assume that learning, reasoning, contemplation, research and consultation are central themes of the Qur'an revelation. Therefore its knowledge is fundamentally important for mankind. Also when Allah (SWT) created Adam (AS), He bestowed him with the ability to know, so in the case of man, knowledge is as important as existence. Evenly, the author highlighted that in order to enhance knowledge, the spiritual-moral values must to be considered such as religious consciousness from the family, sound religious and moral education, parental love, guidance and counselling etc these has contributed seriously in the development and participation of students especially female students to the enrolment of education effectively Nor (2005).

Anzaruddin (2005) claimed that Abu Zayd desires the Muslim intellectuals to derive Islamic teachings from the Qur'an through the hermeneutical principles borrowed from the liberal judaeo-christian and western Orientalists. This is another relevancy of al-Quran to the humanities especially in the current contemporaries. Solihin (2005) explained that the burden or (load being social practised of the Arabs) was removed simply because of the arrival of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) who taught about the divine guidance from the Qur'an and as a result of that many of non-muslims converted into Islam.

Another significant of the Holy Qur'an it has proves these improvement and progress being obtained by the Arab condition because of the preaching of Prophet (SAW) to humanities through the Glorious Qur'an. It is also confirms that the teaching of the Qur'an provides perfect guidance for physical, mental, moral and spiritual development of a person or society generally. In addition, the teaching of the Qur'an helps effectively in 'Healing the world highlighted by (Raus 2005).

### **Individual's respondents on Qur'anic recitation competition**

Some of the interviewees indicated the importance of Qur'anic Recitation Competition to both male and female and the nation in general. According to *Hafiz* Abubakar Sani Husain one of the participant and winner of the National Qur'anic recitation competition in 1999 and equally represented Nigeria at International recitation competition held in Saudi Arabia and obtained 6<sup>th</sup> position. He stated that before the coming of Qur'anic Recitation Competition female were not permitted to learn or participated in western school but they were allowed to learn Suratul-Fatihah and some few Surahs from the Holy Qur'an for their five daily prayers only, some Ulama do not see it as necessary for the female to recite, memorize or even understand the Glorious Qur'an. Presently because of the introduction of Qur'anic Recitation Competition it helps and encourages people in northern Nigeria to participate in the competitions. There are a lot of female student's memorisers of the Holy Qur'an. The interviewee further added that apart from the National Qur'anic Recitation competition organized by Centre for Islamic Studies Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto annually, there others like Dubai International Qur'anic Recitation Competition. One of his female students named *Hafiza* Sahura Adam from Sheik Abdullahi Gwandu College, Tahfiz section, became the winner of the Kaduna state Qur'anic Recitation Competition 2005 at female category i.e. complete memorisation of the Holy Qur'anic with Tafsir she qualified and represents the state for the National Qur'anic Recitation Competition and won first position at Yobe state, Nigeria in 2005. At the same time she was one of the teachers of the above mentioned college tahfiz section. Presently she is married with children and still contributing and teaching in *Tahfiz* section in the school mentioned by the interviewee. Moreover *Hafiz* Abubakar Sani highlighted that some of these female teachers of Tajweed, Tahfiz section in Sheik Abdullahi Gwandu College Kaduna state Nigeria. It was the first Islamic school established in Kaduna state by the Sir Ahmadu Bello (Sardauna) Premier of northern Nigeria lamented by the interviewee.

In addition *Hafiz* Abubakar explained in regarding two of his female students who memorized the Holy Qur'an under his custody Hawa'u Aminu and Aminatu Yusuf and both of them graduated from the Islamic school called Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari in Kaduna state Nigeria. The Interviewee claimed that Hawau Aminu graduated from Tahfiz section 2004. Out of (9) male and female memorisers, Female students were (3) and she happened to be one of them. She is married with one child. Similarly Aminatu Yusuf graduated 2001 from

tahfiz department. Out of (8) male and female memorizers, (3) out of which were female students and Aminatu happened to be among. She is married with two children. Both two of these female students *hafizun* were still teaching in *tahfiz* classes in Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari Islamic School and were still contributing to knowledge of the Holy Qur’an.

The interviewee *Hafiz* Abubakar indicated that they established school called Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari Islamic School for Memorisation of the Holy Qur’an in the year 2000 and he was the Director of the school and graduated more than 200 students out of which female were 80. Initially the school graduated 8 memorisers of the Holy Qur’an out of which female were 3 only in 2001 and in 2004 about 9 memorisers of the Holy Qur’an graduated 3 were female. With the new development and progress as well as the impact of the Qur’anic recitation competition in the society especially in the northern region people benefited positively. The school graduated more students annually. For example; (26) *hafizun* out of which female were (9) and graduated April,2010. Equally (23) out of which were (8) and graduated February, 2011 respectively this is highlighted by *Hafiz* Abubakar Director of the school. The interviewee mentioned that graduated students of this school were still contributing and teaching Tahfiz student particularly female teachers.

**Table 2: Memorisers of the Glorious Qur’an**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
2001	5	3
2004	6	3
2010	17	9
2011	15	8
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>43(65.2%)</b>	<b>23(34.8%)</b>

**Source:** Office of the Director of Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari Islamic school Kaduna state Nigeria.

2011 session

The general presentation of male (65.2%) and female (34.8%) memorisers of the Holy Qur’an from the above mentioned table had shows that it is an interesting and impressive. This is an indication that there were positive turns out. The parents, teachers were encouraging their children in memorisation of the Holy Qur’an in the northern region of Nigeria.

Another interviewee Qur'anic teacher Malam Ibrahim Fagge from Kano state, Nigeria confirms that in some places female were not encouraged and supported to be involve in modern Islamiyyah schools where Tajweed i.e. way of reading Qur'an with its regulations is taught. Instead they limited to learning of *Taharah* (purity) and *Salat* (prayer) only. Due to traditional believes or personal reasons based known to them, people in the local community refused to send their children especially female to such Qur'anic schools. Some individuals consider those graduates of Islamiyyah or Qur'anic schools could not have certificate to work, therefore could not support their children to such education said by the interviewee. In line with this, Normazla et al. (2005) highlighted that Muslim women were prevented from seeking and acquiring knowledge and but are restricted to family tasks. They were neglected thinking that seeking knowledge would create immorality through corrupting their thinking and diverting their attention away from their essential role as good wives and mothers. Hence, the outcome would result in the discontent and instability both in the home and the society. Also the interviewee stated that some people from northern Nigeria and Kano in particular sees those memorisers of the Holy Qur'an could train their children at home on how to read and write and memorise as well as understand the Holy Qur'an. Due to this fact people feel interested to marry the one who memorise the Holy Qur'an so that they could teach and train their children recitation and memorization of the Qur'an properly added by the interviewee.

Other interviewees from Zamfara state north western Nigeria stressed that with the help of their husbands as well as their Qur'anic teachers gained a lot and were still contributing to the state in the area of Qur'anic Recitation competition in the nation. According to *Hafiza* Amma Muhammad and *Hafiza* Hajiya Fatima Rabi'u were all married with six children each. Hafiza Amma has been participating at the local, state and national levels and represented the state in different female categories for many years. She represented the state in the six female category (Memorization of the holy Qur'an with Tafsir) 2006 at Bauchi state National Qur'anic Recitation Competition organized by the Centre for Islamic Studies Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto Nigeria and won 4<sup>th</sup> position and received a significant prizes from the organizers of the competition at the same year in male category *Hafiz* Murtala Aliyu Dabbagi won 1<sup>st</sup> prize six male category (Memorisation of the Holy Qur'an with Tafsir) with huge amount of money and also received (2) new Kia motor cars from the organizers of the competition that qualified him to represents the country at International Qur'anic Recitation Competitions male category at Saudi Arabia and won 3<sup>rd</sup> position said by the interviewee.

Likewise the two of them came from the same region Zamfara state were also awarded with hajj seats with their parents and teachers as well, presented by the governor of state in the year 2006 state Qur'anic Recitation Competition. In addition, the interviewee added that most of the participants represented the state in the female categories were married females this is because of the encouragement received from the state government by giving incentives and their husband's efforts as well. In supporting this Mafara (2004) revealed that the Agency for the memorization of the holy Qur'an expressed their gratitude to the Zamfara state government for the necessary financial and material support obtained for the realization of this great achievement in the process of uplifting the Qur'anic recitation competition. *Hafiza* Amma includes that the parents, husbands and individuals should improve the recitation and memorization of the holy Qur'an by allowing their daughters and wives to be involved in disseminating and seeking Qur'anic education in accordance with the teachings of the sharia. The *hafiza* Amma obtained National certificate in education (NCE) certificates and was still teaching both children and married women way of recitation and memorization of the Glorious Al-Qur'an in the local Islamic school in the state.

Similarly in her opinions *Hafiza* Hajiya Fadimatu Rabi'u highlighted that she memorized Qur'an for more than 10 years with the help and efforts of her husband who also participate fully in teaching her. She has been participating and representing the state since 1997 to 2010 at different female categories such as 20 *hizib*, 40 *hizib*, 60 *hizib* and 60 *hizib* with Tafsir at local, state and national levels and she received different prizes with hajj seats respectively. The interviewee further mentioned that she also received scholarship from Centre for Islamic Studies Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto for her Bachelor degree programme 2004 session. She noted that there is need for the local and state governments to enhance the Qur'anic Recitation Competition by giving more training and time to the participants especially female. Correspondingly she turns to the participant by calling on them to have fear of Allah (SWT) and used the Qur'an in seeking this world and the Hereafter in the right way i.e in accordance with the teachings of Islam. She also obtained Bachelor degree in Arabic language and was teaching both Arabic and Qur'anic studies in female secondary school in the state. The *hafiza* is also training her children as well as teaching married female recitation and memorization of the holy Qur'an in her locality. One of the interviewee *Hafiza* Fadimatu Shehu stated that she has attended Qur'anic Recitation Competition at local, state and national levels for about 2 occasions 30 *hizib*, 40 *hizib* and won some prizes and proposing to participate in the 5<sup>th</sup> category 60 *hizib* *Insha*

Allah. She added that this is part of the blessings of Qur'anic Recitation Competition and gift from almighty Allah (SWT). The Qur'anic Recitation Competition is improving and encouraging and reminding one's to always recite, read and memorize the holy Qur'an. *Hafiza* in this regard is reminding participant male and female to always have fear of Allah (SWT) and should not consider the gift or prizes they received from the competition and remember that no one could pay the memorisers of the Holy Qur'an except the creator Allah (SWT).

In view of the above mentioned statements of the interviewees had shown the advantage and efforts made by the teachers, parents, husbands, individuals and the organisers as well as the mentioned states governments in improving the participants at local, state, national and international levels in the Qur'anic recitation competition in Nigeria. These have also contributed seriously in motivating and encouraging the male and female participants in the competition effectively. Normazla et al. (2005) studied that to seek knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim with no exception weather male or female, equally knowledge and education are highly emphasized in Islam.

### **Importance of Reading and Memorization of the Glorious Qur'an**

With regard to the reading, writing and memorisation of the Holy Qur'an Muslim are commanded to do so. This is mentioned in (Q96:1-5). Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also encourages and supports Muslim to gain knowledge and understand Qur'an. The way Muslim could learn and understand is through seeking knowledge in this regard Prophet (SAW) proves that in his traditions. On the authority of Mua'awiyah (RA) who reported that Allah's messenger (SAW) had said: 'When Allah wishes good for anyone, he instructs him in the understanding of religion.' (Agreed upon). Similarly, in another tradition which says; on the authority of Abu Hurairah (RA) who reported that the messenger of Allah (SAW) had said: "Allah makes the way to paradise easy for that who facilitates the path in search of knowledge." (Muslim). Knowledge elevated individuals who seeks understanding in high esteem and has exalted his position in the society this is stated in the followings verses (Q39:9) and Q58:11). In addition Prophet encourages Muslim to learn and teaches Qur'an. Uthman Ibn Affan (RA) narrates that Prophet (SAW) said: "The best among you is he who learn the Qur'an and teaches it." (Tirmidhi).

Furthermore, part of the importance of the Qur'anic recitation competition was introduced and has encouraged Muslim youths in the recitation and memorisation of the Glorious Qur'an, see (Q73:3). This has also created Unity and Islamic Brotherhood among the Muslim male and female in general. It made Muslims to increase the correct recitation of the Holy Qur'an in all its science in the way it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) accordingly and the Qur'anic recitation competition has improved the quality of learning Tajweed and sciences of the Qur'an in schools and colleges throughout the country, 24<sup>th</sup> National Qur'anic Recitation Competition (2010).

### **The Impact of Qur'anic recitation competition**

Muslims are encouraged to read Al-Qur'an daily at the same time and understand its meaning. Allah (SWT) commands in the followings Qur'anic quotation: (Q73:3). Since from the time of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) Muslims involved themselves not only in the memorization of the Holy Qur'an but also rendering it in its poetic beauty with expressiveness and unique characteristic of interpretation. This comes through intensive studies in the science of the recitation known as 'Tajweed' and in the extensive and constant practice in the 'tartil' that is recitation, 24<sup>th</sup> National Qur'anic Recitation Competition (2007). Similarly the Center for Islamic studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, Nigeria has listed the followings among the Impact of the Qur'anic Recitation Competition to the Muslim especially the Muslim male and female youths;

1. In 1986 when the national competition began in Sokoto to test run the programme, very few states participated due to the absence of qualified participants and low level of awareness.
2. The Islamic schools in the nation increase their interest and genuine effort to train students in this important field of Qur'anic studies, as a result many Qur'anic schools and colleges were opened to pursue general studies in the science of the Quran.
3. Twenty years after today the National recitation competition programme, it has also successfully put the country on the map of high profile Islamic countries known for their great performance in Qur'anic memorization, recitation and studies.
4. Over the years, products of this competition have been representing Nigeria at International level in various competitions hosted in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Iran, Egypt and such other countries.

5. It is also in recognition of the country's performance that judges of the competition at the national level have at various times been invited to sit on the panel of International judges of the competition in Saudi Arabia.
6. The great impact of the Qur'anic recitation competition lies in the wide acceptance it receives within the entire Islamic community in the country and in the establishments of the more colleges and institutions for the studies of Qur'anic sciences.
7. Many state governments in the federation, especially Sokoto, Zamfara, Bauchi, Yobe, Kano and Borno have continued to give priority attention in the establishment of institutions for Qur'anic studies and in making funds available for the improvement of facilities necessary for conducive learning environment as well as the welfare of the scholars.
8. On annual basis when this competition holds at the national level, individuals and private establishments extend their contributions either through the center for Islamic studies or the various states governments hosting the competition in their states for its success, 24<sup>th</sup> National Qur'anic Recitation Competition (2010).

In line with the above mentioned achievements one of the interviewees *Hafiz* Abubakar Sani Husain proved this and was one of the candidates who represented the country in the International Qur'anic recitation competition held in Saudi Arabia 1999 and won 6<sup>th</sup> position. Equally Mafara (2004) shows in his work Title: "Achievement of Zamfara state in the National and International Qur'an recitation competition" tremendous and incredible performance was obtained in different categories by their participant particularly female. Some of their participants *Hafiz* Mansur and *Hafiz* Murtala Aliyu Dabbagi from Zamfara state had represented the country in the International Qur'anic recitation competition held in 2002 and 2006 in Saudi Arabia respectively. *Hafiza* Fadimatu Rabi'u and *Hafiza* Amina Muhammad among the interviewees from Zamfara state attended and won prizes in both State and National Qur'anic recitation competition in Nigeria. They further added that the Agency for the Memorization of the Glorious Qur'an through the State Ministry for Religious Affairs gave an official offer appointment to the memorisers of the Holy Qur'an and posted them to teach Tajweed and Recitation of the Glorious Qur'an to the various high and Islamiyyah schools in the state and *Hafiza* Amina Muhammad happened to be among the beneficiaries. In addition, one of the research title; 'The journey to our greatness female education board in Zamfara state (2006) confirms that the Board elevated the status of female students in the area through proper acquisition of adequate and good education and skills, it

also encourage greater enrolment of female in both the Western and Islamic education accordingly.

### **Impact of Islamic Shariah and Qur'anic recitation**

Some scholars have indicated the positive changes brought in some states in northern Nigeria and development of Qur'anic recitation competition was increasing due to the implementation of Shariah legal system. In supporting this Hussaini (2003) has shown that the reinstatement of civil rule in Nigeria in 1999 and the consequent liberalization of the political atmosphere provided an opportunity for the re-introduction of Shariah legal system first in Zamfara state, and later many others mainly Muslim states in northern Nigeria. In concurring this statements (Bawa: 2003 and Gusau: 2009) works have reported the impact and transformation gained in the regions. Bawa (2003) stated that due to the Impact of Shariah introduced in Zamfara state people were transformed by shunning away some innovations introduced in marriage, naming ceremonies, mingling between male and female were gradually avoided and people engage themselves more in reading and seeking knowledge of the Holy Qur'an. Gusau (2009) considered the impact and transformation brought by Sheikh Uthman bin Fodiyo in Hausaland, Individual's lives were transformed morally, socially, economically, educationally, and religiously. Likewise Nana Asma'u the daughter of the Revivalist contributed accordingly. Kamala (2009) painted in his article that available case studies demonstrate the challenges women today face within families and societies and show how women and whole nations have come together to overcome these challenges by making legal and policy step forward to better security justice and equality for all.

Presently, due to the introduction of Qur'anic Recitation Competition by the Centre for Islamic-studies Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto Nigeria, today male and female youth participated sincerely in reciting Qur'an and some even involved and contested for the Qur'anic Recitation Competition from the local, National and international levels and won prizes even at International levels. Malaysia 2009/2010 and 2011 sessions many of the participants came all over the world from Muslim countries including the female participants from Nigeria, 22<sup>nd</sup> National Qur'anic Recitation Competition (2007).

These has increased morality as well as the interest to some Muslim states to improve their government and public sectors especially in the northern part of Nigeria, concerning positive life of the people and enhancing and supporting way of Recitation of the Glorious Qur'an

accordingly. In supporting this Mafara (2004) in his comments proves that remarkable progress and achievement in this direction was indeed recorded and has become more pronounced from the year 2000 to date, an indication of the positive effect of sharia implementation in the state, this has also improve the participation and achievement of the state competitors at the local, national and international Qur'anic recitation competition perfectly, see table below.

**Table 1: Categories of participant and memorisers in Qur'anic recitation competition**

Category	Year	Male	Position	Female	Position
National QRC	1997	60Hizib	1 <sup>st</sup>	20Hizib	1 <sup>st</sup>
-----	-----	20Hizib	5 <sup>th</sup>	-----	----
National QRC	1999	40Hizib	3 <sup>rd</sup>	40Hizib	1 <sup>st</sup>
National QRC	2000	60Hizib	2 <sup>nd</sup>	10Hizib	1 <sup>st</sup>
-----	-----	40Hizib	3 <sup>rd</sup>	40Hizib	4 <sup>th</sup>
Int. QRC	2001	10Hizib	1 <sup>st</sup>	-----	---
National QRC	-----	10Hizib	5 <sup>th</sup>	20Hizib	2 <sup>nd</sup>
National QRC	2002	10Hizib	1 <sup>st</sup>	20Hizib	1 <sup>st</sup>
National QRC	-----	40Hizib	4 <sup>th</sup>	-----	----
National QRC	-----	60Hizib	4 <sup>th</sup>	60Hizib	5 <sup>th</sup>
National QRC	2003	20Hizib	2 <sup>nd</sup>	10Hizib	3 <sup>rd</sup>
National QRC	-----	40Hizib	4 <sup>th</sup>	40Hiib	3 <sup>rd</sup>
National QRC	-----	60Hizib	5 <sup>th</sup>	-----	----
<b>Overall-</b>			<b>13(59.1)</b>		<b>9(40.9)</b>

<b>Total</b>					
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**Source:** Achievements of Zamfara state in the National and International Qur'anic recitation competition. (1997-2003). Office of the Executive secretary, Agency for Memorisation of the Holy Qur'an, Zamfara state, Nigeria

Therefore the presentation from 1997-2003 of male (59%) and female (41%) memorisers of the Holy Qur'an was good and increasing especially in 2003 is high compared to previous years. But the general performance of male was more than that of female memorisers even though the positions were almost the same. This is an interesting and a great accomplishment in the state and general public.

Another important development in this context Kagara (2009) noted that social activities practiced before and after the re-implementation of Shariah improves the situation of both male and female in the states. The researcher further added that a number of measures aimed at reducing social vices such as; the banning of selling of alcohol, transformation of prostitutes and cinema houses to Islamic centres. Formation of Ministry for religious affairs and its agencies and commission's activities brought a lot of benefits in the state. Likewise Ministry for Women affairs and Ministry of education promote education development and welfare of women and children. Equally Mafara (2004) claimed the state has extended the necessary financial and material support for the realization and participation in the Qur'anic recitation competition at local, state, national and international Qur'anic recitation competitions. Also in the Journey to our greatness Female education in Zamfara state (2006), stated that due the Sharia impact, the state government established Female education board. As a result the board elevated the status of female students in the society through proper acquisition of adequate and good education and skills encourage greater enrolment of female in both the Western and Islamic education.

However, one of the interviewee *Hafiz* Lawal Sa'ad was among the *Ramadhan Tarawiy and Tahajjud* Imams and was Qur'anic teacher in female school for many years in the state, emphasized that the importance of Qur'anic recitation competition among Zamfara State Muslim women cannot be over emphasize in that, it help in the Islamic transformation, especially knowing that Zamfara is one of the Shariah states compliant. A good reciter of Al Quran will surely be able to exhibit some Islamic moral values and norms accordingly.

Motivational factors the incentives giving to the winners of Qur'anic recitation encourage others from trying to be part of it in due course lamented by the interviewee.

Muslihah. et al.(2009) indicated in their research conducted in Malaysia that the assessment of a reasonable sum of financial supports and the effective enforcement of court order were significant factors that enhance the welfare of women. The researchers further said that, remedies should be more comprehensive in terms of providing for a life-long education for Muslim women and men with regards to their rights and responsibilities.

### **Scholars opinions on Qur'anic Recitation Competitions**

As already mentioned on the benefits and advantage of the memorisers of the Glorious Qur'an at the same time there are severe consequences of forgetting the Qur'an or using it for achieving worldly benefit. Using the Qur'an for obtaining worldly benefit only will make one to appear on the day of judgement without flesh on one's face (Kasimu 2008). Narrated by Buraidah (RA) that the prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: "he who reads the Qur'an so that he might thereby get something to eat from the people shall so appear on the Day of Judgement that his face will only be a bone on which there will be no flesh." (Hadith). This is why some interviewees stated that some scholars were on the opinions that Qur'anic recitation competition is not recommendable, some of the factor includes; according to them it is show up i.e (*Riya*), that is if someone done it just to express or acknowledge the recitation in the presence of people not because of God. Another points is mixing of male and female students or adults, some said it is a sort of gambling because the winners would be happy while the losers would feel unhappy and it created (*Hassada*) i.e misunderstanding and heatedness among the participants and their teachers, this was highlighted by the respondents. In conclusion the state governments, wealthy individuals, Muslims communities and Non-governmental organisation should also participate in encouraging more participation of male and female especially female in the reading, memorisation of the Qur'an as well as education in general. This is similar with the objectives of the international forum on Women in science and technology in Muslim countries (2011) which stated as one of its objectives that to address the issues and challenges related to the advancement of women in Muslim countries. However, more Islamic schools need to be established and supported. In both private and public schools *Tajweed* course and *Tahfiz* (memorisation of the Holy Qur'an) need to be encourage and Muslims memorisers and expert in the recitation of the Holy Qur'an should be made to offer the course regularly. In line with this Kasimu (2008) accepted this position, *Huffaz* are members of Allah's household (Kasimu 2008).While One of the interviewees

*Hafiz* Idris Ahmad explained that it is an axiom that anyone who memorized the Qur'an is a close friend of Allah. Similarly female students who memorized the Holy Qur'an have to be giving special consideration, good example should be cited by some northern states who gave automatic offer to these female students' memorisers of the Holy Qur'an, and this is an encouraging. In real meaning, encouraging women to participate using a form of motivation like competition, will not only give them the sense of security and belonging, but will transform and positively made them to be virtues. Manifestation of Muslim women reflects their religious commitments, as a result of recitation of the Holy Qur'an and following its teaching that you observe Muslim women way of dress code, dealings with people of different sex differently from other people in the society.

In supporting these ideas other works written by some researchers from Malaysia indicated that there is need to improve women especially in learning environment. Muslihah et al. (2009) highlighted in their research that, remedies should be more comprehensive in terms of providing for a life-long education for Muslim women and men accordingly. More male and female youths need to be promoted and maintain in reading and memorisation of the Glorious Qur'an and fear of Allah need to be inculcated into their mind and life entirely. This could improve as well enhance in transformation of the life of our youths especially female globally.

Therefore the above mentioned recommendation could be achieve easily through the use of reading and memorisation of the Glorious Qur'an and putting it into practise according to the teaching of sharia. Muslim men and women were reminded for the importance and benefits of recitation and memorisation of the holy Qur'an in the following hadith. Narrated Abu Musa: The Prophet said, "Keep on reciting the Qur'an, for, by Him in Whose Hand my life is, Qur'an runs away (is forgotten) faster than camels that are released from their tying ropes." (Bukhari)

Muslim should try as much as possible to understand and recite the Holy Qur'an frequently especially in the night. Narrated by Aisha (RA): Allah's Apostle heard a man reciting the Qur'an at night, and said, "May Allah bestows His Mercy on him, as he has reminded me of such-and-such Verses of such-and-such Suras, which I was caused to forget." (Bukhari)

The Holy Qur'an could be recited looking for protection especially before going sleep in the night. Narrated Abu Mas'ud Al-Ansari: The Prophet said, "If one recites the last two Verses of Surat-al-Baqara at night, it is sufficient for him (for that night). (Bukhari)

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**List of Interviewees:**

*Hafiz* Abubakar Sani Husain, 33years, Director Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari Islamic School Kaduna state, Nigeria. 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2011.

*Hafiz* Ahmad Idris 35years Postgraduate student Faculty of Engineering International Islamic University Malaysia. 16<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2011

*Hafiza* Amina Muhammad 31 years, housewife and Islamic teacher Gida-dari Gusau Zamfara state Nigeria. 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov, 2010.

*Hafiza* Fadimatu Shehu 25years housewife Zamfara state Nigeria. 4<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2010

*Hafiza* Fadimatu Rabi'u 31years, housewife and Staff female education board Zamfara state, Nigeria. 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov, 2010.

*Hafiz* Lawal Sa'ad 35years Postgraduate student Faculty of sciences University Science Islam Malaysia, Nilai Malaysia. 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2011.

Malam Ibrahim Fagge 31 years Postgraduate student Faculty of sciences University of Malaya Kuala Lumpur Malaysia 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011.