



Upper Basic Islamic Studies Teachers' Perceptions of Incorporating an Inclusive System of Education in Kwara State, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47453/permata>

Submitted: 2025-11-10; Accepted: 2025-12-18; Published: 2025-12-21

Abstrak

Inclusive education has become a central focus of global educational reforms aimed at ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities. In Nigeria, efforts to integrate inclusive practices into basic education continue to face implementation challenges; therefore, understanding teachers' perceptions is essential for effective policy execution. This study investigated upper basic Islamic Studies teachers' perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes toward the incorporation of an inclusive education system in Kwara State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, and 200 Islamic Studies teachers were selected through multi-stage, stratified, cluster, and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using an adapted questionnaire titled Islamic Studies Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education (ISTPIE). The instrument's reliability was confirmed through a test-retest procedure, yielding a coefficient of 0.86. Descriptive statistics (percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while independent t-test and ANOVA were applied to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level. Findings indicated that teachers exhibited moderate levels of perception, knowledge, and attitude toward inclusive education. Results further showed no significant differences in teachers' perceptions based on gender or educational qualification. The study concludes that although Islamic Studies teachers possess basic awareness of inclusive education, concerns persist regarding its feasibility due to systemic constraints. This research contributes empirical evidence to support policy dialogue on teacher preparedness and highlights the need for targeted professional development to enhance teachers' capacity for effective, inclusive classroom practices.

Keywords: *Islamic Studies Teachers; Inclusive Education; Upper Basic Schools; Teacher Attitude*

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INTRODUCTION

The process of giving equal educational opportunity to all children, regardless of physical and psychological challenges, is encouraged in the religion of Islam. The system of eliminating segregated special classrooms and adopting the system of integrating all children by giving extra assistance to those who need significant intellectual and behavioural supports and resources in order to succeed in their educational pursuits is known as inclusive education (Olufunke et al. 2014). This new system of educating the children was employed in Nigeria to solve the academic problems of all learners, including those children and students who have visual, auditory, and hearing impairments, mental retardation, emotional disorders, physical and mental health impairments, and learning difficulties (Bocharova, 2020). Islam is a religion that supports inclusive education and encourages Muslims to practice it. According to Akrim (2021), Islam views education as an important vehicle and an effective medium for teaching norms, disseminating religious values, and instilling a work ethic among the citizens.

Yusuf (2012) added that education is generally viewed as an instrument to cultivate national personality and strengthen national identity. With these, education can be a strategic vehicle for building collective awareness among the citizens by strengthening social ties, while maintaining cultural, racial, ethnic and ideological diversity, so as to strengthen religious and national integrity and development. As a matter of fact, the implementation of education cannot be separated from the Muslim community because, without education, religious values cannot be transmitted from the older generation down to the young ones and being biased in the implementation and dissemination of religious values might render some valueless in society. This statement was corroborated by the submission of Nur (2019) that Islamic society prioritises inclusive education, as it was demonstrated by the Prophet of Allah (PBUH), while Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktuum (a blind man) was not treated separately when the Prophet was enlightening the Sahabah. Allah says concerning Abdullah ibn Umm Maktūm: “He frowned and turned away. When a blind man approached him. But how do you know? Perhaps he was seeking to purify himself. Or be reminded, and the message would benefit him. But as for him who was indifferent. You gave him your attention. Though you are not liable if he does not purify himself. But as for him who came to you seeking. In awe. To him, you were inattentive. Do not, this is a lesson” (80:1-11). The above verses are about the story of how Allah endorsed inclusive education for the Prophet (PBUH). The verses showed how education is highly significant in the life of human beings, regardless of their difficulties or challenges.

Human beings perceive things differently due to differences in the ability to ponder, reflect and think over circumstances. Therefore, the implementation of inclusive education into the system of education in Nigeria underwent a series of divergent discussions and dialogue among stakeholders till the present time. According to Orlunga and Alikor (2023), it is pertinent that an inclusive system of education is a new system aimed to be implemented in Nigeria, and therefore, it is impossible to have a uniform perception over the implementation and adoption. Bunza (2020) stated that the implication is that teachers and trainers should bear it in mind that learners with disabilities and those without any form of disabilities are expected to be trained and guided to perform equally under the same roof, with the same teacher and the same pedagogy. Due to the increase in the percentage of children with disabilities who are either at home or rejected from schools, a new policy on education was signed (Aron & Loprest, 2012). The policy was to address discrimination among the children. Teachers’ knowledge of inclusive education contributes a large percentage to the successful implementation of the policy in Nigeria. Akrim (2021) stated that teachers’ knowledge of the components, stages and structures

of inclusive education is among teachers' experiences. The policy of inclusive education in Nigeria has been practised for a long time in many developed countries in the world. However, the new policy on education is suffering due to many factors, including poor planning, lack of funds, and lack of adequate professional teachers in the field to handle inclusive education, among others. This created wider gaps for researchers from different angles to address stakeholders' feelings towards the adoption of this new policy.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate upper basic Islamic Studies teachers' perceptions of incorporating an inclusive system of education in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study:

1. Assessed the upper basic Islamic Studies teacher's level of knowledge of inclusive education in Kwara State
2. Examined the upper basic Islamic Studies teachers' attitude towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kwara State

Research Questions

The following questions were answered during this study:

1. What is the level of upper basic Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State?
2. What is the upper basic Islamic Studies teacher's level of knowledge of inclusive education in Kwara State?
3. What type of attitude do upper basic Islamic Studies teachers have towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant difference in upper basic Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State based on gender

H0₂: There is no significant difference in upper basic Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State based on teachers' educational qualification

Empirical Review

There are numerous problems and challenges nowadays in the field of education, including neglecting some children and abandoning them due to their inability to cope, behave and react effectively and efficiently like other children. Akrim (2020) explained that this group of children is neglected because they are either poor or have certain mental, physical and hearing disability. Akrim and Harfiani (2019) noted that the system of ensuring equal and quality education for all is among the challenges facing education globally because it requires total restructuring and transformation of the system. Oluwawumi and Akinbile (2024) submitted that despite the recommendation given by the National Policy on Education in Nigeria concerning the implementation of inclusive education to allow children, irrespective of their emotional, physical and psychological challenges acquire the same education, the system is facing internal and external challenges. In addition, Awajiokinor et al. (2024) explained that the introduction of inclusive education in Nigeria will allow children with special needs to learn in regular classrooms to detect their confidence and intellect, and at the same time, children in regular classrooms will learn tolerance, patience and humanity from their interaction with children with special needs in the school environment.

Musyoka and Clark (2017) found a contradiction between the children's needs and the service provided by the teachers in inclusive classrooms. This implies that the amount of services provided by the teachers does not match what the children need in order to have sufficient achievement. Cornelius-Ukpepi and Opuwari (2019) concluded that inclusive education is facing the problem of inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, poor monitoring, and a lack of qualified teachers in the field to manage the system. Inclusive education, aiming to integrate learners' special needs with those without impairment to learn under the same environment, has failed at the implementation stage in Nigeria due to many factors, including poor funding, low interest and an inadequate number of trained and qualified teachers in the field (Orlunga & Alikor, 2023). The perception of teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education will contribute to the nature of success recorded for the programme in the country. Musyoka and Clark (2017) submitted that teachers' perceptions about inclusive education contributed to the failure of that programme in this country. This might be a result of inadequate, unqualified teachers who can handle inclusive education in the schools in Nigeria. Tod et al. (2013) submitted that teachers perceive inclusive education as an additional burden, not a new system to achieve robust educational objectives, although the perception may differ from person to another, tribe to tribe and even country to country.

Records show that there was a favourable, optimistic perception among the teachers in many developed countries like the UK, India, Japan and the USA, among others, in the implementation of inclusive education. For instance, Singh et al. (2020) submitted that a considerable percentage of teachers in Serbia and Norway had positive feelings towards inclusive education. Similarly, Rose et al. (2021) found that the attitude of teachers in India and New Delhi towards inclusive education was high. In contrast, Nigerian teachers do not show positive and optimistic feelings towards inclusive education (Oluwawumi & Akinbile, 2024). Teachers' attitude towards the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria is influenced by their perception. It showed from the findings that teachers' attitude towards the implementation of this programme in Nigeria takes different dimensions. According to Oluwawumi and Akinbile (2024), teachers' attitude varies due to their differences in reasoning, perception, knowledge, feelings and humanity. Some teachers were highly motivated to have such development in the field of education in Nigeria, but the percentage was low, while others do not see any development in the introduction of such a programme. Lawal et al. (2025) reported that teachers possess knowledge of inclusive education and how it could be practised in the field, but the lack of qualified teachers in teaching remained unsolved. In the same vein, Kwon and Park (2011) argued that teachers' knowledge of inclusive education is a determinant of their acceptance of the programme and development of a curriculum that will enhance the pedagogical values of the programme. This implies that teachers' attitude towards the implementation of the programme is not poor, but it needs certain enhancement.

However, there are numerous factors that contributed to Nigerian teachers' poor attitudes towards inclusive education, which include, among others lack of trained teachers, poor funding, a lack of adequate knowledge and experience from the teachers. Single et al. (2020) opined that a lack of sufficient knowledge of inclusion might be a factor for teachers' poor attitude. Dapudong (2014) concluded that teachers with low knowledge and experience of inclusion always develop a poor attitude towards it. It shows that lack of adequate knowledge and experience is among the factors responsible for teachers' negative attitude towards inclusion in Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examined upper basic Islamic Studies teachers' perceptions of incorporating an inclusive system of education in Kwara State, Nigeria. The research design adopted in this study was a descriptive survey. The population of this study was all upper basic school teachers in Kwara State. The target population was all upper basic Islamic Studies teachers in Kwara State. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in the study to sample the respondents. The stratified sampling technique was used to stratify Kwara State based on senatorial districts, and thus Kwara Central, Kwara North and Kwara South were formed. Cluster sampling technique was also used to sample 2 local government areas from each senatorial district in the state; therefore, Ilorin West and Ilorin East were sampled from Kwara Central, Moro and Patigi from Kwara North, while Offa and Ifelodun from Kwara South.

According to the Ministry of Education and Human Capital (2020), there were 314 public upper basic schools in Kwara State, and 168 were sampled using the Advisory sample table. Furthermore, a simple random sampling technique was used to sample 28 public upper basic schools from each local government area sampled in the study. In addition, the purposive sampling technique was used to sample 2 Islamic Studies teachers from all sampled upper basic schools in Kwara State, and 336 Islamic Studies teachers were the respondents in this study. The instrument used in this study was an adapted questionnaire from Oluwawumi and Akinbile (2024) titled "Islamic Studies teachers' perceptions of inclusive education (ISTPIE)".

The instrument was divided into sections A & B. Section A contained demographic representation of the respondents, while Section B contained the other four sub-sections 1, 2, 3, & 4. Each sub-section has five items on teachers' perceptions, knowledge, attitude towards inclusive education, benefits and challenges facing implementation of inclusion were also among. Five Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used in the study. The statistical tools used in the study were both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Percentage, mean and standard deviation were the descriptive statistical tools used in the study, while the independent sample t-test and ANOVA were inferential statistical tools. Percentage was used to describe the demographic representation of respondents, while mean and standard deviation were used to answer all research questions raised in the study. Hypothesis one was tested using an independent sample t-test, while hypothesis two was tested using ANOVA at 0.05 alpha level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic Representation of the Respondents

Demographic data of the Respondents on the investigation of Islamic Studies teachers' perceptions of incorporating an inclusive system of education in Kwara State, and it was done with the aid of frequency and percentage.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	117	58.5
Female	83	41.5
Total	200	100.0
Teaching Qualification		
NCE	98	49.0

B.A (Islamic Studies)	06	3.0
B.A Ed. (Islamic Studies)	91	45.5
M. A (Islamic Studies)	02	1.0
M. A. Ed. (Islamic Studies)	03	1.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 showed that out of 336 teachers proposed to use in this study, only 200 teachers of Islamic Studies from upper basic secondary schools in Kwara State, which represented 59.5%. Therefore, 200 upper basic teachers of Islamic Studies were the respondents. Out of 200 respondents in the study, 117, which represented 58.5% were male teachers, while 83, which represented 41.5% were female teachers. This indicates that the percentage of male teachers of Islamic Studies in Kwara State is higher than the percentage of female teachers of Islamic Studies. Similarly, it was evident from the table that teachers of Islamic Studies with an NCE certificate have a higher percentage with 49% followed by those with B. A. Ed. (Islamic Studies) which have 45.5% while those with M.A. (Islamic Studies) and M.A. (Ed.) certificates were 2 (1%) and 3 (1.5%) respectively in all selected schools in Kwara State.

Research question 1: *What is the level of Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State?*

Table 2: Islamic Studies Teachers' Perception Toward Inclusive Education in Kwara State (N = 200)

ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD	Remark
1. Teacher should be able to teach in any type of classroom setting.	14	63	42	81	2.05	1.00	Moderate
2. Students with disabilities can also perform in inclusive classrooms.	52	23	83	42	2.43	1.09	Moderate
3. Teachers should expect all students to succeed irrespective of their status in inclusive classrooms.	63	54	18	65	2.73	1.22	Moderate
4. The introduction of inclusive education will promote students' social interaction.	39	160	1	0	3.19	0.41	High
5. The introduction of inclusive education will eradicate differences among students regardless of their status.	17	36	83	64	2.04	0.92	Moderate

Note. Response scale: 0–1.9 = Low, 2.0–2.9 = Moderate, 3.0–4.0 = High.

Average mean = 2.49 (Moderate).

Table 2 showed that the average mean score of 2.49 was recorded, which indicates that Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards the incorporation of inclusive education in Kwara State is moderate, with an average mean score of 2.49. This is as a result that upper basic school teachers of Islamic Studies in Kwara State are aware of the importance associated with this move, but they are still considering the system of government operated in the country. It is also indicated that there are heterogeneous responses from the teachers regarding their perception of the introduction, inclusion and implementation of inclusive education in Kwara State.

Research Question 2: *What is the Islamic Studies teacher's level of knowledge of inclusive education in Kwara State?*

Table 3: The Islamic Studies teacher's level of knowledge of inclusive education in Kwara State

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Inclusive education is bringing together in a single classroom all students regardless of their colour, language and culture	12	39	79	70	2.02	0.84	Moderate
2	Joining students with disabilities and normal students in a classroom for teaching and learning	77	93	30	0	3.31	0.67	High
3	Allowing students with disabilities to learn in the mainstream system of education together with their able counterparts	103	60	19	18	3.24	0.96	High
4	Teaching and learning activities that require giving closer attention to students with disabilities than their counterparts in the same learning environment	21	53	90	36	2.07	0.80	Moderate
5	Mixing students with disabilities and normal students in a single classroom and giving them equal attention	66	61	49	24	2.53	0.99	Moderate

Average Mean Score: 2.63 (Moderate Knowledge Level)

It is shown from Table 3 that the average mean score recorded was 2.63, which indicates a moderate level of measurement. It showed that upper basic school Islamic Studies teachers' knowledge of inclusive education was moderate. This indicated that Islamic Studies teachers in Kwara State have moderate knowledge surrounding inclusive education.

Research Question 3: *What type of attitude do Islamic Studies teachers have toward the implementation of inclusive education in Kwara State?*

Table 4: Islamic Studies teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kwara State

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Inclusiveness of education, if it is introduced into our system of education in Nigeria	6	12	142	40	1.92	0.61	Low

2	The introduction of inclusive education in Nigeria	7	48	121	24	2.19	0.68	Moderate
3	Students with disabilities would be better handled by teachers with special education than by general teachers	68	39	75	18	2.79	1.02	Moderate
4	Inclusive education will work in Nigeria due to certain technical challenges	106	12	82	0	3.12	0.96	High
5	Mixed feelings about the introduction of inclusive education in Nigeria	56	40	80	24	2.64	1.02	Moderate

Average Mean Score: 2.53 — Moderate attitude

Interpretation Scale: 0–1.9 = Low 2.0–2.9 = Moderate 3.0–4.0 = High

The table above shows that the attitude of teachers of Islamic Studies in upper basic schools in Kwara State towards the incorporation of inclusive education was moderate, with a 2.53 average mean score. This implies that Islamic Studies teachers' attitude towards this programme in Kwara State is fair because students with special needs might gain improvement and proper attention.

Testing Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the level of Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State based on gender

Table 5: Independent sample t-test showing a significant difference in the level of Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-value	p-value
Male	117	11.12	1.92			
Female	83	10.34	1.98	198	2.79	0.725

Given that the t-value of 2.79, df=198 and p-value 0.725>0.05, therefore the result of the independent sample t-test showed that there was no significant difference between male and female Islamic Studies teachers' perception in the incorporation of inclusive education in Kwara State. This implied that both male and female teachers of Islamic Studies in Kwara State considered the implementation of the programme as part of progress. It also showed the mean scores of 11.12, which male teachers of Islamic Studies have indicated a high perception of the incorporation of the programme.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in the level of Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State based on teachers' educational qualification

Table 6: ANOVA showing a significant difference in the level of Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State based on teachers' qualifications

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	22.428	3	7.476	1.935	0.125
Within Groups	757.411	196	3.864	—	—
Total	779.839	199	—	—	—

The table above showed that there was no significant difference in the level of Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State based on teachers' qualifications. The calculated F-statistical value was 1.935 with a p-value of 0.125 at a 0.05 significance level. As the p-value is greater than 0.05 therefore the null hypothesis was accepted that there was no significant difference in the level of Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State based on teachers' qualification.

Discussion

The incorporation and implementation of inclusive education in Kwara State, Nigeria, was perceived by upper basic school Islamic Studies teachers differently. The results of the findings made us realise that the percentage of teachers of Islamic Studies in upper basic schools in Kwara State who wish to give support to the incorporation and introduction of this programme was average. The average level of perception recorded was influenced by the government's non-challant attitudes towards any programme that can aid the lives of the masses. Thereafter, the perception of teachers of Islamic Studies tends to have mixed feelings about the success of the programme in Kwara State. This assertion is in line with the findings of Omede and Momoh (2016), Buford and Casey (2012), and Amaireh (2017) that teachers' perception and attitudes towards the programme were moderately favourable. Another aspect of finding of this study was the level of Islamic Studies teachers' knowledge of the programme and the contents of its curriculum.

Islamic Studies teachers' knowledge of the programme was moderate based on the findings in this study. This agrees with the finding of Buford and Casey (2012) that teachers raise alarms on the incorporation of the programme because the needed human and material resources are not provided. From the study, it was shown that if the government can put in place the needed resources for the programme, it will bring huge benefits in the field of education in the country. The study discovered that there was no significant difference between male and female Islamic Studies teachers' perceptions of the incorporation of inclusive education in Kwara State.

This finding agrees with the finding of Tomori (2020) that both male and female teachers showcased similar perceptions towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kwara State. The study also indicated that there was no significant difference in the level of Islamic Studies teachers' perception towards inclusive education in Kwara State based on teachers' qualifications. This was in agreement with the conclusion of Lawal et al. (2025) that there are serious challenges in implementing inclusive education in Nigeria, which include inadequate availability of resources, teachers' training and assistive technologies.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated upper basic Islamic Studies teachers' perceptions of incorporating an inclusive system of education in Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrated that teachers generally hold moderate perceptions, moderate knowledge, and moderate attitudes toward inclusive education. While teachers understood the basic principles of inclusion, many remained uncertain about the programme's feasibility due to persistent systemic challenges such as inadequate resources, insufficient government support, and a lack of specialised training.

The study further established that gender and educational qualification did not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. This suggests a relatively uniform viewpoint across teacher categories, indicating that concerns about the practical implementation of inclusive education cut across demographic and professional boundaries. Overall, the findings point to a teaching workforce that recognises the value of inclusive education but remains cautious about its successful implementation in the current educational context of Kwara State. Strengthening institutional support, improving teacher training, and ensuring adequate resources will be essential for fostering more positive and confident perceptions among Islamic Studies teachers toward inclusive education.

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