



## Students' Performance Comparison in Senior School Certificate Examination Arabic and Islamic Studies in Kwara State Nigeria

Musa Siddiq Abdullahi

University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria  
E-mail: [abdullahi.ma@unilorin.edu.ng](mailto:abdullahi.ma@unilorin.edu.ng)

### Abstract:

Arabic and Islamic education are inseparable as the knowledge of Arabic Language significantly complements that of Islamic Studies. The population of this study comprised all the senior secondary students offering Arabic and Islamic studies in Kwara State. To get the respondents, we used purposive sampling techniques with a population of students who sit in public and private high schools and have a record of studying Arabic and Islamic studies at West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council Senior School Certificate Examination (NECO SSCE). Research questions were answered with the percentage, mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested with the Person's Chi-square at 0.05 alpha level, and the symmetric measure of Crammer's V was used to determine the degree of relationship between the variables. Findings revealed that majority of students performed at the credit level (A1 to C6) in Arabic and Islamic Studies, Also, a significant correlation occurred between students' performance in Arabic and Islamic Studies SSCE.

### Keywords:

Arabic Language; Islamic studies; Kwara State Students

## INTRODUCTION

Education has been seen as a momentous means of human learning and through which knowledge and skills are cultivated and developed. Presently, the education sector in Nigeria is one of the fastest growing industries for social and political mobilization and the acquisition of important technical skills. For these reasons, a substantial share of the nation's resources is invested in education. Meanwhile, secondary schools occupy a strategic place in the Nigerian educational system. Given the series of school related problems of enormous magnitudes which were reported to exist among students at all levels especially in Nigerian secondary schools in 1980s and observed to emanate majorly from the loss of values, the need for the introduction of value and religious education curriculum was viewed as a means through which these incivilities among adolescents could be curbed (Abdullahi, 2020). Thus, Christianity Religious Studies (CRS) and Islamic Religious Studies (IRS) were incorporated into primary and secondary education curriculums in Nigeria (FRN, 2013). Invariably, these two subjects are taught at the same period and hence, the Muslims take Islamic Studies while the Christians offer Christian Religion Studies.

The Islamic Studies curriculum is prepared to produce cultured, well-behaved and God-fearing individuals. Islamic Studies as an aspect of religious education is based on the teachings

of Islam apart from being introduced to inculcate and promote moral education in students as an academic subject. Islamic Studies features prominently on the current National Curriculum for the Senior Secondary School (Oladosu, 2003) and the objective is to enable students to recognise Allah as the Creator, thereby submitting to Him, worshipping Him and showing gratitude to Him. Another objective is to enlighten students to reason in the light of *Qur'ānic* injunctions and to develop individuals physically, socially, intellectually, morally and spiritually. Islamic Studies attempts to train the sensibility of students in such a way that their dispositions to life, actions, decisions and approaches to all kinds of knowledge are guided and governed by the spiritual and deeply felt ethical values of Islam (Amaele, 2007). Oloyede (2012) observed that Islamic Studies deals with teaching, learning, training, drills and research about Islam (Islamic education). Islamic Studies and Islamic education are occasionally used interchangeably, though the two terms are not all that same. The former refers to an academic discipline offered in the school and the latter refers to the totality of the upbringing of an individual within the tenets of Islam (Ajidagba, 2005).

However, Islamic Studies could not be taught and learnt in isolation of the Arabic Language especially in Nigeria, though Arabic is not a strange language in Nigeria as its teaching and learning has a long history in Nigeria even before the advent of British colonization and has contributed immensely to the proper understanding of Islam in the country. No wonder its teachings and learnings were introduced to secondary education and treated as an independent course of study at the higher institution of learning in Nigeria today (Abdullahi, 2020). Given that Quran and Hadith are not only Holy books and guidelines of Islamic doctrines alone but also originally written in Arabic Language; hence, the learning of Arabic (also known as Arabic education) is necessary. As a result, greater recognition has been accorded to Arabic Language in Nigeria at local, national and international levels and its relevance justifies its inclusion in the then 6-3-3-4 and the present 9-3-4 systems of education in Nigeria (Abdullahi, 2020).

Therefore, Arabic language has become a subject of learning in many of Nigerian schools. It is the study of the language of Arab that belongs to Semitic group of languages. Arabic is the second largest most widely used alphabetic writing system in the world (while the Latin alphabet is the most widespread). The Arabic script has been adapted to such diverse languages as Persian, Turkish, Spanish and Swahili (Oladosu, 2003). In Africa, it is spoken as a native language in Algeria, Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, and Tunisia. In the Middle East, Arabic is spoken as a mother tongue in

countries such as Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen (Oseni, 2004). Today Arabic is a universally recognised language occupying a position, which is not less in status and rank than such International Language as English, French or Germany (Onisabi, Adamu & Jami'u, 2007).

The objectives and content of the Senior Secondary Arabic curriculum are also clearly spelt out in the National Curriculum. The objectives are to sustain learners' interest in Arabic education already stimulated at the basic education level, improve learners' Arabic language skills based on the foundation already laid at the basic education level, give learners adequate opportunities of using standard Arabic in speech and writing in a real life situation, enable learners to use standard Arabic as a vehicle for self-improvement, and motivate the learners to continue with Arabic studies both formally and informally within and outside the country (NERDC, 2008).

Consequently, both Islamic and Arabic education are inseparable as the knowledge of Arabic Language significantly complements that of Islamic Studies. Thus, the relationship between Arabic and Islamic Studies cannot be overstressed. The Holy Quran, which is the first source of Islamic law was revealed in the Arabic Language. Secondly, the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad was also handed down in Arabic. Therefore, to understand what Islam is all about through Islamic Studies, the knowledge of Arabic is paramount to avoid the misinterpretation of the Holy Quran and Hadith. Abdullahi (2005) affirmed that Arabic and Islamic Studies are two indispensable subjects just as blood and water are indispensable to the body. The National Policy on Education (2013) categorised both Arabic and Islamic Studies under humanities as a fields of study.

Thus, Arabic and Islamic Studies are integral parts of the senior secondary curriculum. The researcher observed that students enroll for the two subjects by combining Arabic and Islamic Studies or by registering for either Arabic or Islamic Studies in SSCE. As for Arabic, students are to take oral test, answer essay (comprising composition, grammar, comprehension, literature & translation) and objective questions. All these are awarded 100 marks altogether. On the other hand, Islamic Studies, which consists of objective and essay questions only, is awarded 100 marks altogether. Within the Nigerian formal school system, Arabic is offered as an elective subject at both the upper basic and senior secondary school levels, while Islamic Studies is offered as a core subject at the upper basic and an elective at the senior secondary levels (FRN, 2007).

Academic performance or achievement is a pedagogical term used to determine students' success in a formal school setting. It provides information about the learning abilities and capabilities of the learners. The performance of candidates in their SSCE examinations has long been a matter of concern to many well-meaning individuals, institutions, government and other stakeholders in education (Ololube, 2011a, b). The public disparages the falling standard of education as evidenced by the lack of skills and personal integrity of many secondary school leavers (Ololube, 2008a) given their performance in Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE). SSCE examinations such as WAEC, NECO, NABTEB, etc. are typically formal and summative by nature, and conducted by agencies that are external to the school environment.

## **METHOD**

This study was a descriptive study of the correlational type. Correlational descriptive research is research that leads to an explanation of the relationship between two free variables with variables bound to a cross-sectional research design, with the intention that data involving free variables and bound variables can be collected at the same time (Notoatmodjo, 2010). The population for the study comprised all the senior secondary school students offering Arabic and Islamic Studies in Kwara State, Nigeria. There are 16 Local Government Areas in Kwara States, one hundred fifty-six (156) students were sampled for the study using a purposive sampling technique to pick to all public and private senior schools that have records of students who registered for both Arabic and Islamic Studies in SSCE WAEC and NECO. Therefore, only the results of candidates that sat for WAEC and NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations were logically selected in all the selected schools across all the Local Government Areas of Kwara State for this study. Thus, the researchers and research assistants were able to collate students results who sat for 2020 SSCE WAEC and NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations. A researchers'-designed proforma was used to collect results of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the schools sampled. Both the results of the SSCE WAEC and NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies were the products of standardised, norm-referenced examinations and thus considered to be valid and reliable. Data collected were analysed using the percentage to answer the research questions. Hypotheses were tested using the Pearson's chi-square at 0.05 alpha level.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Out of 156 students who sat for both 2020 SSCE WAEC and NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations in Kwara State, 122 were males while 34 were females.

### Answering of Research Questions

Students' grades (i.e. A1 to F9) in WAEC and NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies were obtained and transformed into the stanine. Thus, A1, B2, B3, C4, C5, C6, D7, E8 and F9 were coded as 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

**Question One:** What is the students' performance in 2020 SSCE WAEC and NECO Arabic Language in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Students' performance (grades) in 2020 WAEC and NECO Arabic Language examination were collated and subjected to descriptive statistics of percentage, mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Students' Performance in 2020 SSCE WAEC and NECO Arabic in Kwara State Nigeria

SSCE Arabi c	Students' Grades in 2020 SSCE WAEC								Total (%)	Mea n	S.D.
	A1 (%)	B2 (%)	B3 (%)	C4 (%)	C5(% )	C6 (%)	D7 (%)	F9 (%)			
WAEC	16 (5.3% )	23 (5.5% )	19 (5.1% )	17 (4.0% )	48 (1.7% )	25 (0.2% )	8 (0.4% )	0 (0.0% )	156 (100% )	4.94	1.7 5
NECO	21 (2.7% )	26 (5.3% )	27 (4.0% )	13 (3.4% )	36 (2.9% )	29 (1.9% )	3 (0.0% )	2 (0.0% )	156 (100% )	5.21	1.8 4

As revealed in Table 1, the majority (96%) of the students performed at the credit level (A1 to C6) in WAEC Arabic. However, the performance of students in NECO Arabic was slightly higher with the mean score 5.21 than their performance in WAEC Arabic Language (4.94).

**Question Two:** What is the students' performance in 2020 SSCE WAEC and NECO Islamic Studies in Kwara State, Nigeria?

**Table 2:** Students' Performance in 2020 SSCE WAEC and NECO Islamic Studies in Kwara State Nigeria

SSCE Islami c Studie s	Students' Grades in 2020 SSCE NECO								Total (%)	Mea n	S.D.
	A1 (%)	B2 (%)	B3 (%)	C4 (%)	C5(% )	C6 (%)	D7 (%)	F9 (%)			

WAEC	9 (5.3%) )	21 (5.5%) )	13 (5.1%) )	32 (4.0%) )	43 (1.7%) )	30(0.2% )	8 (0.4%) )	0 (0.0%) )	156 (100% )	4.71	1.6 1
NECO	17 (2.7%) )	16 (5.3%) )	38 (4.0%) )	29 (3.4%) )	36 (2.9%) )	18 (1.9%)	2 (0.0%) )	0 (0.0%) )	156 (100% )	5.28	1.5 4

As shown in Table 2, almost all the students who sat for 2020 SSCE AEC and NECO Islamic Studies passed at the credit level (A1 to C6). Meanwhile, students' performance (5.28) in SSCE NECO Islamic Studies was a little greater than their performance (4.71) in SSCE AEC Islamic Studies.

### Hypotheses Testing

Given that the data collected were categorical in nature, hypotheses postulated were tested using the Pearson's chi-square at 0.05 alpha level while the symmetric measure of Cramer's V was used to determine the degree of correlation between the variables.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant correlation between students' performance in SSCE WAEC Arabic and Islamic Studies in Kwara State.

**Table 3:** Correlation between Students' Performance in SSCE WAEC Arabic and Islamic Studies in Kwara State

		Value	df	Sig.
<b>Chi-square Tests</b>	Pearson Chi-Square	588.068 <sup>a</sup>	42	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	442.065	42	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	144.299	1	.000
<b>Symmetric Measure</b>	Cramer's V	.793		.000
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>		<b>156</b>		

a. 49 cells (87.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10

Table 3 shows the statistical association of students' performance in SSCE WAEC Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations. As revealed in Table 3, the Pearson's Chi-square value 588.068 with a p-value 0.00 at the degree of freedom 42 was obtained ( $\chi^2_{(42)} = 588.068$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Since the p-value 0.00 is less than 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis one was rejected and thus, a significant correlation occurred between students' performance in WAEC Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations in Kwara State, Nigeria. This shows that students equally performed better in WAEC Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations while the strength of correlation between students' performance in WAEC Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations was positively strong as indicated by Cramer's V value 0.793.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant correlation between students' performance in SSCE NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies in Kwara State.

**Table 4:** Correlation between Students' Performance in SSCE NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies in Kwara State

		Value	df	Sig.
<b>Chi-square Tests</b>	Pearson Chi-Square	451.855 <sup>a</sup>	36	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	379.991	36	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	140.151	1	.000
<b>Symmetric Measure</b>	Cramer's V	.695		.000
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>		<b>156</b>		

a. 39 cells (79.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10

Table 4 shows the statistical association of students' learning outcome in senior school NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations. As revealed in Table 3, the Pearson's Chi-square value 451.855 with a p-value 0.00 at the degree of freedom 36 was obtained ( $\chi^2_{(36)} = 451.855$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Since the p-value 0.00 is less than 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis two was rejected and thus, a significant correlation occurred between students' performance in NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations in Kwara State, Nigeria. It could be observed that students performed better in NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations while the strength of correlation between students' performance in NECO Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations was positively strong as indicated by Cramer's V value 0.695.

The study revealed that a majority of the students performed at the credit level (A1 to C6) in SSCE Arabic and Islamic Studies. This shows that Muslim students are doing well in both Arabic and Islamic Studies academic exercises. This finding corroborates those of researchers such as Salisu and Abdullahi (2018), Saadu (2017) and Yahya (2018) who submitted in their various studies that students' performance in Arabic Language was generally good. However, a study conducted by Bamidele (2014) indicated that that students' overall academic performance in Islamic Studies was poor in Isolo, Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings of Al-Marouf (2015) and Yahya (2018) showed that the overall performance of students in SSCE Islamic Studies in Oyun L.G.A., Kwara State, Nigeria was fair (average). Though students performed well in both WAEC Arabic and Islamic Studies as found from this study, their performance in SSCE Islamic Studies was slightly higher than in Arabic Language. This might be attributed to the fact that the Arabic Language was not frequently spoken amidst students in Kwara State.

However, the finding of the study negates Adewole (1990) and Raji (2000) who found that students' performance in Islamic Studies was not encouraging; they identified the following as the problems which led to the poor performance: inadequate professional teachers, insufficient

teaching materials, negative attitude of parents and the general public towards the subject, the elective status of the subject, and scarcity of standard Islamic Studies textbooks. The finding indicates that the identified problems might have been properly handled. This perchance must have resulted to the significant improvement in the students' performance in Islamic Studies.

The finding also indicated that a significant correlation occurred between students' performance in SSCE Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations in Kwara State, Nigeria. This shows that students equally performed better in SSCE Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations while the strength of correlation between students' performance in WAEC Arabic and Islamic Studies examinations was positively strong. This finding is in line with Yahya's (2018) outcome that there was a statistically significant relationship between students' performance in Arabic and Islamic Studies in SSCE, although the direction of the relationship did not indicate either positive or negative, either high, moderate or low in the study. In line with this, Abdullahi (2005) affirmed that Arabic and Islamic Studies are two indispensable subjects just as blood and water are indispensable to the body and Ajidagba (2002) indicated that there was a high relationship between the students' scores in Arabic and their scores in Islamic Studies. This implies that students' background knowledge in Arabic studies aids their performance in Islamic Studies. However, this finding is contrary to that of Shuaib (2014) who found that there was no significant relationship between students' academic performance in Arabic and Islamic Studies in Ilorin West Local Government Area. The correlation might be as a result of Arabic components included in the senior secondary school Islamic Studies Curriculum and materials on Islamic Studies written in Arabic. This indicates that students' performance in Arabic could be a good predictor of students' performance in Islamic Studies. The improvement in the students' performance in both Arabic and Islamic Studies based on the researcher's informal interaction with the teachers and students could be attributed to the improvement in the teachers' commitment, positive attitude both from parents and students, teaching method, and more qualified and experienced teachers teaching the subjects.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings obtained from this study, it could be concluded that Muslim students need the knowledge of Arabic Language to perform excellently in Islamic Studies. This is because the Arabic language is a vehicle for Islamic religious discourse given that the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet which are the primary sources of Islamic law are originally documented in Arabic.

With respect to this, the following recommendations are proffered; 1) Muslims students should be equipped with the basic working knowledge of Arabic Language to improve their performance not only in the language but also in Islamic Studies. This could also enable students read and write sentences, essays or articles in an Arabic text alongside the transliteration and translation without stress. 2) Both the teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies should work together to sustain their students' performance in the two related subjects. 3) Teachers of Islamic Studies should improve on their Arabic knowledge to be able to teach the Arabic texts embedded in the Islamic Studies curriculum instead of using only transliteration during the teaching and learning processes. 4) Islamic Studies students should see Arabic and Islamic Studies as intertwined subjects, and therefore see how knowledge of Arabic can be used to improve their performance in Islamic Studies. 5) Examination bodies such as WAEC and NECO should increase the number of Arabic items in the objective and essay questions to sensitise the Islamic Studies students on the inter-relationship between Arabic and Islamic Studies, thereby motivating them to learn Arabic alongside Islamic Studies.

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