

Narrowing Gaps in Islamic Propagation: NASFAT's Educational and Socioeconomic Strategies

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to highlight the efforts that NASFAT has made in the promotion of Islamic religious knowledge through da'wah training sessions, the dissemination of Islamic messages, and the establishment of agencies for socioeconomic impacts in the last four years, mostly in Nigeria and some other countries of the world. The paper uses a qualitative case study approach, employing data from da'wah training records, relevant literature, and the websites and social media handles of the society and its agencies. The result reveals the society's impacts on Islamic religious propagation, as evidenced by the significant number of participants from both within and outside the society, who have participated in the society's various training programmes. They have had access to authentic Islamic teachings and exposure to steps in da'wah and dialogue that help correct misconceptions about Islam and its teachings. It has trained 5665 participants in da'wah, Islam and dialogue from 2012 to date, sourced from personal interview with the author. Beyond religious education, the impacts are also evident in economic empowerment and job creation through various socio-economic activities. The paper espouses how religion is used to engender socioeconomic development and promote religious teaching that fosters peaceful co-existence, while recommending further studies on similar initiatives by other Islamic organisations.

Keywords

NASFAT, Islamic propagation, educational, socioeconomic strategies

Introduction

According to a popular word of wisdom, "Starve Your Distractions, Feed Your Focus" (Anonymous as cited by Emejuiwe, 2024), it is an essential ingredient that individuals and organisations need to succeed, little wonders therefore the success recorded so far by remaining focused, and arguably became one of the fastest growing societies in Nigeria (Abbas, 2020).

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According to Tella (2025), Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatih society (NASFAT) is an Islamic society formed on March 5, 1995, with just about 10 families in the sitting of Alhaji Abdul-Lateef Wale Olasupo, who according to NASFAT Prayer Book (2020), eventually became, the Pioneer President and chairman of the Board of Trustees society NASFAT has since grown to be a formidable and consistent Islamic community, according to Tella (2025), with about 350 branches on three continents, i.e., Africa, North America, and Europe.

As mentioned in the NASFAT prayer book (ibid), the key motivations for the establishment of society, among others are to create a platform for interaction between western educated Muslim elites and Islamic scholars, in response to Allah's call in the Qur'an, chapter 3:104:

"And from among you there should be a PARTY who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful."

Therefore, based on my own experience as someone who has risen through the ranks of being a floor member, Missioner, Deputy Chief Missioner, and Chief Missioner of NASFAT by God's Grace, I can attest to the fact that, the above quoted ayah underscores the fact that NASFAT is not a sect, but an Islamic society that strictly follows the aqeedah as enshrined in quran and sunnah (Abdul-Azeez, Personal Interview, August 2024).

The major programmes and activities of the society according to Tanimu (2024), are summed up with the acronym, LEAD:

- Livelihood (Empowerment)
- Education
- Agent of Change
- Da'wah

Literature Review

The discourses on economic development are mostly focused on the role of natural resources, human resources, etc in predicting the growth pattern. The noneconomic factors like religion have been considered as having an indirect role in determining economic development (Singh, 2017). However, scholars like Abdullah (2021) argue that there is scope for the assumption that religion is at odds with modern development, in view of the general perception that the framework of modern development is premised on a secular paradigm,

Similarly, Singh (2017) reported that religion has a negative impact on the economic development of a country because religious practices act as a hindrance in promoting economic activity, while Basedau *et al.* (2018) observed that religion exhibits ambivalence regarding development: fostering certain forms of human capital acquisition and labor market participation, while having

a negative relationship with both income and gender equality as well as innovation activities.

However, religion can also positively support development. The Islamic tradition, for instance, offers an unambiguous developmental vision through the *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (Objectives of Shari'ah). As Ibn al-Qayyim (cited in Elias, 2012) states: "Verily, the shari'ah is founded upon wisdom and welfare for the servants in this life and the afterlife. In its entirety, it is justice, mercy, benefit, and wisdom. Every matter which abandons justice for tyranny, mercy for cruelty, benefit for corruption, and wisdom for foolishness is not a part of the Sharia even if it was introduced therein by an interpretation." This infers that religion, particularly Islam, when properly understood, could contribute meaningfully to both economic and human development.

This is corroborated by Unbreen *et al.* (2020) who affirm that religion is considered as the most important non-economic factor that constructs the basic institutional infrastructure of a society. Their research report that religion has a positive and statistically significant direct effect on economic development and the shadow economy- the concept used to describe economic activities that are undeclared, nonmarket activities, transactions that are non-measured and under-registered to avoid tax or circumvent regulations, including transactions that are illegal and associated with crimes and corruption (Karimo *et al.*, 2022)

One religious organisation that exemplifies the positive role of religion in development is NASFAT (Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatih Society). Scholars have written and commented glowingly on the impact of NASFAT as a religious organisation in facilitating educational and socioeconomic development, fostering unity, promoting Islamic knowledge, and making Islam attractive to Muslims, most especially the youth.

The word NASFAT is an acronym for an abridged verse of the Qur'an, which goes thus: "...Nasrun minal-Lahi wa Fathun Qarib..." (Q. 61:13), meaning: "...With (strong) help from Allah, victory is surely attainable." From that Qur'anic verse, the name of the organisation was formed as 'NASRUL-LAHI-AL-FATI'H' Society and shortened to NASFAT for easy pronunciation (Abbas, *ibid*). Today, NASFAT is, arguably, one of the fastest-growing religious organisations in the world, with about three million members (Abbas, 2020). Never in the history of Islam in Nigeria has a Muslim organisation with such a fragile background and so mean provision risen so astronomically within such a short time. It is unprecedented.

According to Adetona (2012), NASFAT's success is primarily based on the availability of its liturgy in such a manner that clergies are really not required to embark on its usual prayer, as well as the seemingly miraculous efficacy of the prayers offered by the group.

NASFAT came into existence in the closing decade of the twentieth century, when the economic downturn had diminished concern about the practice of Islam and people were making frantic efforts to ensure that their basic needs were met. NASFAT as a religious cum social movement can be seen as a device by a group of Muslims in Nigeria who perceived the need to expand the frontier of Islam through the organisation of Sunday prayer service as a counter-action against the growing influence of pentecostalism, even among Muslims in Nigeria, as observed by Soares, B. F. (2009 and cited by Adeniyi 2013).

Methodology

The paper uses a qualitative case study approach, using data from da'wah training records, relevant literature, and the websites and social media handles of the society and its agencies. It also benefited from the insider's information, provided by the author. The need to get data and other information from the main sources justifies the choice of the method as the primary source

Findings

After careful examination of some of the literature released by the society's Da'wah office, some online resource material and the personal information from the author, valuable insights on the impacts and some of the society's programmes were obtained.

The findings highlight the vital role of NASFAT in promoting religious education and community development, filling a crucial gap in contemporary Islamic propagation (da'wah) efforts by establishing a university, 25 primary schools, 8 secondary schools, 5 clinics and hospitals, 10 agencies that render socioeconomic and welfare services as contained in the speech by NASFAT President Alhaji Ayodeji Abdul Wahid Abdulrauf FCS at the 30th Anniversary Celebration Flag-off on Sunday, 2nd of February 2025, available on the society's website.

This inter alia are as follows:

Socioeconomic and Educational Impacts

NASFAT established the following agencies:

1. Fountain University (a trail-blazing faith-based Islamic university located in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria).
2. TAFSAN Travels and Tours Ltd. (one of the most reliable private Hajj and Umrah operators in Nigeria).
3. TAFSAN Investments Ltd. (a thriving business unit that produces and markets all NASFAT souvenirs and renders business services to NASFAT members and non-members).

4. NASFAT Zakat and Sadaqat Agency, NAZAS (a Zakat and Sadaqat agency trusted by Zakat and Sadaqat payers) It has disbursed over N700 million since its establishment in 2014.
5. Kiin Media is a communications unit that currently renders online radio and TV services. (It recently obtained a license to go terrestrial).
6. NASFAT Relief Initiative (a unit that provides humanitarian services and support to disaster-stricken communities, among other services).
7. NASFAT Legal Aid Council, NASLAC (an agency with a team of seasoned lawyers who provide pro bono legal services to downtrodden and oppressed people).
8. NASFAT Missionary Institute, NMI (a Da'wah institute that turns professionals and artisans to effective propagators of Islam).
9. NASFAT Health Initiative, NHI (an agency established to actualize the dream of setting up NASFAT hospitals and clinics) Today, NASFAT has 5 functional healthcare centers and 2 more under construction in and outside Nigeria.
10. Havek Leadership Academy (an academy that trains existing and aspiring leaders) (Raji 2024).

Islamic Propagation through Da'wah Training

Buoyed by its desire to achieve its mission: “To develop an enlightened Muslim society nurtured by a true understanding of Islam for the spiritual upliftment and welfare of mankind” (NASFAT n.d.). NASFAT organises various da'wah training sessions titled: “Train-the-Trainers’ Course in Islam, Da'wah, and Dialogue (TTC) for its members and non-members.

According to Raji (2024), it is a modular Da'wah programme through which NASFAT trains its members and non-members to handle contemporary and emerging faith-shaking questions in Islam. The Da'wah programme is held on a zonal basis. The international edition of the programme, which comes up once a year, often has participants from the various branches of NASFAT and from outside of NASFAT in attendance. Participants gain through this Da'wah program knowledge and ideas that are rarely taught in many Islamic institutions. There is no NASFAT member or non-NASFAT member who attends the programme who does not have his or her understanding of Islam greatly enhanced. The materials used at this training are produced by highly experienced researchers at the Islamic Education Trust, a leading global Da'wah training institute whose headquarters are located in Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

It has at present no less than 12 modules, starting with module 101. This module according to Lemu (n.d.) discusses the causes of misconceptions, and the basic ethics of disagreement in Islam. It covers the historical authenticity and

source of the Qur'an while responding to common Orientalist criticisms. It also examines the relationship between Islam and non-Arab cultures, and whether or not it is appropriate to use the term "islamic" or "unislamic" to describe the names, dresses, and other aspects of different cultures.

Module 101 also discusses the Islamic teachings regarding friendship with peaceful non-Muslims, the concept of jihad, the spread of Islam, the role of conquests, and the place of justice and mercy in interfaith relations.

On gender-related issues, the course discusses misconceptions held by some Muslims that the voice of a woman is 'awrah, guidelines on gender interactions in public spaces, the appreciation of the Islamic dress code for men and especially for women, common questions related to a Muslim woman's attire, and the plurality of spouses for either a woman (polyandry) or man (polygyny) from the Islamic perspective.

The course also presents a simple and practical guide to da'wah methodology, "Steps in Da'wah and Dialogue."

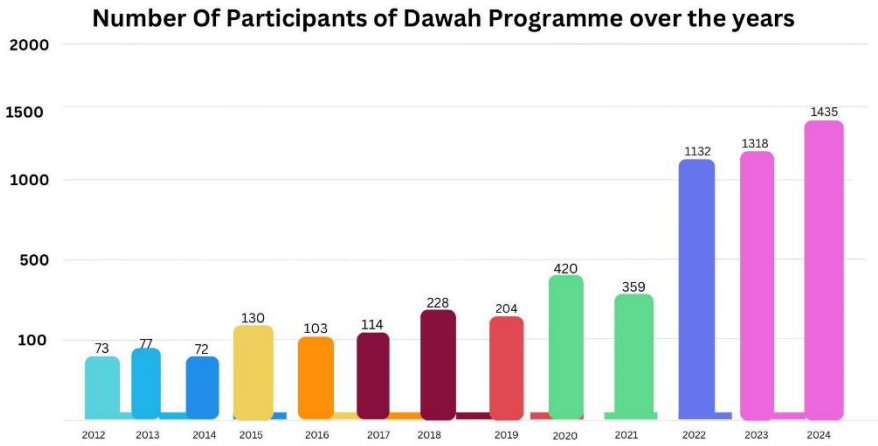
Expected Learning outcomes

At the end of the training, in sha'a Allah, participants would be able to:

- (1) Provide thought provoking answers to the above questions among others without being provocative.
- (2) Develop more confidence about your religion of Islam and be looking forward to the opportunity to discuss its concept and do evangelism to non-Muslims.
- (3) Transform his inferiority complex to superiority complex.
- (4) It is a journey that would in sha'a Allah, transform participants from being "A Muslim by chance to a Muslim by Choice".

TTC participants so far:

- Year 2012: 73
- Year 2013: 77
- Year 201: 72
- Year 2015: 130
- Year 2016.: 103
- Year 2017: 114
- Year 2018: 228
- Year 2019: 204
- Year 2020: 420
- Year 2021: 359
- Year 2022: 1132
- Year 2023: 1318
- Year 2024: 1435 (as at 31 December, 2024) (Oladoja, 2024)



The diagram above highlights the rising trend in da'wah training efforts of NASFAT as shown in 2022, 2023 and 2024

Promotion and Facilitation of Islamic Religious Knowledge

(i) NASFAT Online Qur'ān and Fiqh Institute

It is a virtual class through which students learn the Qur'ān and Fiqh. Many adult students of the institute who could not read the Qur'an at the point of admission can now read the Qur'an with confidence. The Walīmatul-Qur'ān programme of the Institute, which is held annually, always features adult students. The institute whose admission policy is open to anyone now has a physical arm which is located at Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos.

(ii) NASFAT Qur'an Memorisation Institute

NASFAT members and non-members can now enroll in the NASFAT Tahfīz School to memorise the Qur'ān under the guidance and tutelage of experienced tutors. The institute offers both on-site and online services.

(iii) NASFAT as a registered examination center for NBAIS

NBAIS, which stands for National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies, is a Nigerian body that organises a national examination that enables graduates of conventional Arabic schools and other lovers of Arabic to be certificated and pursue further studies in tertiary institutions.

Fostering Unity and Serving Humanity through Collaboration

List of local and international organisations with which NASFAT has collaborated and is still collaborating on projects that have brought and are still bringing value to humanity.

1. Islamic Education Trust (IET), Minna, Niger State

NASFAT has teamed up with this organisation on Da'wah activities. Aside from using the materials produced by the highly skilled researchers of this organisation at some of its Da'wah programmes, NASFAT teams up with this organisation in the production and review of its training kit. Personnel of this organisation are also featured as facilitators at some of the training programmes of NASFAT.

2. Discover Islam

Discover Islam is a Bahrain-based Da'wah organisation that uses a mosque tour as an instrument for tacitly inviting non-Muslims to Islam. NASFAT Imams have collaborated with this organisation on training programmes in Bahrain and Nigeria.

3. Carter Foundation (Carter Center)

NASFAT has collaborated with this highly respected organisation on many editions of the Community Well-Being Training in Senegal. Many Imams and members of the Society have participated in this training.

4. Roxbourg Institute of Social Enterprise (RISE), Switzerland

NASFAT has facilitated an opportunity for some of its imams and members to obtain an MBA at this Switzerland-based institute.

5. UNICEF

NASFAT has collaborated with UNICEF on the project titled Ending Violence Against Children (ENDVAC), among other collaborative projects.

6. United Nations Women

NASFAT will be partnering with the United Nations Women (UNWomen) to train about 300 of its Imams on Ending Violence Against Women, in Osogbo on August 24, 2024. More collaborative projects are underway.

7. European Union

NASFAT has been involved in a training programme organised by the European Union on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

8. Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF)*

This is another reputable organisation with which NASFAT has collaborated on training. The training projects that have brought NASFAT and WARIF together include training on Ending Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

9. The Alternative Bank

NASFAT has a strong partnership deal with the Alternative Bank, an Islamic bank that NASFAT takes pride in promoting. The benefits of this partnership include the provision of economic empowerment opportunities for NASFAT members and funding opportunities (Raji, 2024b).

Discussion

The role of focus and being consistently mission driven is seen in great achievements recorded by NASFAT in various aspects of life: religious knowledge dissemination, educational and socioeconomic.

NASFAT's level of acceptance within its short period of coming into existence, as attested to by the large attendance of its annual laylatul qadr programme at its Islamic center, located at Aseese, Lagos/Ibadan Expressway, Aseese, Ogun State, Nigeria, (Lens Africa TV, 2025). This coupled with the impacts she made in the advancement of humanity shows that there was a gap crying for attention before the advent of NASFAT.

In terms of Islamic propagation impacts, with the exposure of members to the da'wah training, the society can now boast of its own internal group of Train-the-Trainers' Course facilitators, who hitherto knew next to nothing about da'wah activities.

With the establishment of a university, there are now numerous products of the institution scattered across the globe, making waves. Through the NASFAT Health Initiative (NASHIN), these hospitals provide medical services to members and the general public. Additionally, NASFAT has launched skill acquisition programmes that have trained hundreds of people in various trades, equipping them with the knowledge to become self-sufficient (Tella, 2025).

The teeming members especially of Akasolori and its environs in Ikorodu, Lagos state, Nigeria, where NASFAT cited a clinic can now enjoy primary health care. However, the society would need to contend with challenges of attracting the gen z, whose needs and requirements differ greatly from those of their parent members. Also, there is a challenge of global economic recess that the society is not insulated from as a member of the global community.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is no gainsaying the fact that religion could be used to foster unity, cooperation and collaboration, this is evident from the ways NASFAT is collaborating with groups and organisations that share similar vision and values with her. The paper also reveals the people's thirst for correct teachings of religion as shown by the rising trend of the number of participants in the da'wah training of NASFAT. The paper highlights how religion is used to engender socioeconomic development and promote correct religious teaching that foster peaceful co-existence, while recommending that efforts should be made to study and beam a searchlight on similar efforts by other Islamic organisations.

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