

## AN ISLAMIC DIAGNOSIS OF CASES OF BLASPHEMY-RELATED MOB JUSTICE IN NIGERIA BETWEEN 1999 AND 2022

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### ABSTRACT

*Blasphemy-related mob justice is an infamous crime in Nigeria -- though not peculiar to it-- that has claimed many lives illegally with huge accompanying economic loss and damages. Outside varying negative social consequences of this menace, its attempt to imprint a barbaric outlook on the unmatched civilization of Islam and its decorous values in social interactions and justice administration is particularly perturbing. Between 1999 and 2022, at least nineteen (19) cases of blasphemy-related mob justice have been unofficially recorded. This paper aims to employ an Islamically oriented tool, the Islamic Evaluation Scale (IES), to holistically diagnose the problem and identify the underlying edu-philosophical factors propelling the crime. The result of the study establishes deficient Islamic Philosophical Productivity (IPP) as the primal aggregate factor that reflects in other detailed underlying five (5) factors. The findings are, thus, expected to contribute to the development of in-depth and effective shari'ah-compliant interventions to address the crime.*

**Keywords:** *Blasphemy-related mob justice, Islamic diagnosis, Islamic Evaluation Scale (IES), Islamic Philosophical Productivity (IPP).*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The immediate extra-judicial arrangements and killings of alleged blasphemers by mobs are not unfamiliar to the Nigerian public. The frequent occurrences and inadequate governmental responses to this issue are concerning, especially due to its religious implications. From the beginning of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999 until 2022, certain states in Northern Nigeria have experienced incidents of mob justice sparked by alleged blasphemy. Notably, the victims of these brutal mob killings include both Muslims and non-Muslims. In some instances, blasphemy allegations have escalated into large-scale riots, resulting in the loss of innocent lives and the destruction of valuable property.

Islamic law is unequivocal about the sanctity of life and strictly prohibits the killing of any individual unless legally convicted by a competent court. This principle emphasizes the importance of justice and due process. However, despite the presence of competent Shari'ah courts in some Northern states, blasphemy-related mob justice remains a persistent socio-religious challenge. This ugly situation prompts questions about the educational and philosophical dynamics that drive the mob to take the law into their own hands.

Although classical and contemporary academic works on fiqh have extensively explored the topics of (1) blasphemy and (2) the administration of justice, the issue of blasphemy-related mob justice and its root causes have not been adequately

addressed. This research aims to fill this academic gap. Therefore, an Islamic diagnostic study of cases of blasphemy-related mob justice in Nigeria from 1999 to 2022 is conducted using the newly introduced Islamic Evaluation Scale (IES), a simple two-step aggregate-to-detail diagnostic tool.

The application of the IES tool not only facilitated a thorough analysis and identification of the root causes of this brutal crime but also yielded findings that are expected to play a crucial role in the development of comprehensive and effective shari'ah-compliant interventions. By systematically exploring the underlying factors contributing to this crime, the research aims to give directions to workable strategies in future research.

Nigeria, while not unique in this regard, is infamous for numerous cases of blasphemy-related mob justice, a form of arbitrary killing, especially within the jurisdictions of the twelve Northern Sharia states<sup>1</sup>. The lynchers' false claim that their un-Islamic actions and senseless destruction of lives are a religious obligation in defence of Islam's honour is deeply troubling and requires an objective Islamic analysis to understand their misguided beliefs.

The current paper answers the following questions:

**RQ1:** What are the fundamental edu-philosophical factors that often propel the mob to perpetrate blasphemy-related mob justice in Nigeria?

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<sup>1</sup>They are, in order of their date of introduction: Zamfara, Niger, Katsina, Sokoto, Jigawa, Yobe, Kano, Kebbi, Borno, Bauchi, Kaduna, and Gombe states.

**RQ2:** Why is the proposed Islamic diagnosis tool considering the most suitable method for identifying the underlying educational factors behind blasphemy-related mob justice?

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 A Brief on Mob Justice in Nigeria**

Mob justice, whether driven by religious or social factors, is defined by Kakumba (2020) as “a form of extrajudicial punishment or retribution in which a person suspected of wrongdoing is typically humiliated, beaten, and often killed by vigilantes or a crowd.” Other synonymous terms, such as mob killing, jungle justice, instant justice, and vigilante killing, have also been adopted. Beyond the notable reported cases of jungle justice in Nigeria, many incidents never make it to the headlines as there are no known official records (Obarisiagbon, 2018). A recent newspaper report (Daily Trust Reporters, 2021) indicates that over 190 people have been summarily and brutally killed under this illegal mechanism in just an average of two years. According to Onwautuegu and Nwagu (2020), mob justice is a clear manifestation of human rights violations, primitiveness, coarseness, and a peak of failed humanity, where perpetrators act with a sense of impunity and pride to fulfil their violent tendencies. In fact, most victims of this barbarism are typically innocent, and it has been exploited by miscreants to settle grievances against their adversaries.

Dysfunctional social values, a lack of faith in the effectiveness of the police and judiciary, and harsh economic challenges are the major factors contributing to mob justice, as highlighted by numerous researchers (Obarisiagbon, 2018; Iwarimie-Jaja & Lasisi, 2019; Onwautuegu & Nwagu, 2020; Ruwan et al., 2020;

Ilori, 2020). Some researchers (Obarisiagbon, 2018; Onwautuegu & Nwagu, 2020) have identified illiteracy as a factor driving mob justice, but I disagree. It is more accurate to say that deficiencies in philosophical values and social education, as noted by Ilori (2020), are fundamental factors rather than literacy itself.

## 2.2 Problem of Blasphemy-Related Mob Justice in Nigeria

Similar to the general mob justice, there is no official statistic of blasphemy-related mob acts of violence and killings in Nigeria after the country's transition to Democracy from 1999 to 2022. However, the earliest recorded case following the start of the Fourth Republic is the gruesome extrajudicial killing of Abdullahi Umaru, a Muslim, in Kebbi State in July 1999. He was murdered by miscreants for allegedly blaspheming the Prophet (ﷺ) (Salifu, 2008). Since then, several additional cases have been recorded.

It is a fact that blasphemy is a crime<sup>2</sup> Islam and its establishment requires a fair criminal conviction from the state authority; it is neither determined by the unsolicited *fatāwā* of the religious charlatans nor in the court of the unrefined mob. The *'uqūbāt*

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<sup>2</sup>There is a complete conflict between the concept of crime in Islamic civilization and other man-made civilizations especially the Western civilization. This is based on many philosophical and fundamental differences. In Islam, a crime is determined by revelation --not rationality-- and it is defined as any behaviour -speech or action-- that violates the rights of the *kulliyāt* and attracts *'uqūbah* (legal punishment), abstract (e.g., sin) or concrete (e.g., physical penalty) (Al-Luwayhiq, 2015). As such, blasphemy is a crime because it violates the right of religious creedal entities.

(legal punishments) in Islam represent the set of revealed penalties for specific stipulated crimes committed. The stipulated condition of executing any legal punishment, in Islam, after judicial proceedings and conviction within the appropriate legal jurisdiction is the authorization of the state leader because *ḥaqq at-tanfīdh* (the right of punishment execution) belongs only to him (Abū Ya'lā, 1421H; *Al-Mawsū'ah Al-Fiqhiyyah Al-Kuwaytiyyah*, Vol. 14, p. 72; Qaḥṭāniy *et al.*, 1433H). This implies that no execution should take place except with his authorization, and any other opinion is deemed atypical and rejected (Al-Ahdal, n.d.).

The above shows that there is no room for arbitrary killings or any form of barbaric approach to justice under any guise, for it is a clear violation of the *sharī'ah* rule of law (Hossain, 2010). In fact, the position of *sharī'ah*, as held by the majority of scholars, is that the perpetrator of arbitrary killing deserves the death penalty by retribution unconditionally, while few scholars conditioned the retribution to his inability to justify his allegation (Ibn Abd Al-Barr, 1387H; Baghawiy, 1403H; Ibn Qayyim, 1406H). By resulting to mob justice, the established legal rights of the accused are clearly denied, unprotected, and abused unlawfully.

In summary, while significant insights have been gained, notable gaps remain, particularly regarding the edu-philosophical underpinnings of blasphemy-related mob justice. This study aims to fill this singular gap. The following section will outline the research methodology employed to investigate these issues.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Considering the sensitivity of blasphemy-related mob justice from both the religious and ethical perspectives, indirect data-gathering methods like *web archives search* stand more applicable. As such, relevant data are gathered from news publications within the temporal scope of this study, from 1999 to 2022. Since the data collection is based on the occurrence of cases, the data are more reliable and largely free from subjectivity and selection bias. While there may be subtle elements of reporting bias, they do not pose a significant threat to the validity and reliability of the collected data.

#### **3.1 Data Analysis Method: Introducing The IES**

The collected qualitative data are analyzed using the newly introduced Islamic Evaluation Scale (IES). It is, thus, necessary to shed more light on its conceptualization and application. The Islamic Evaluative Scale (IES) is a simple two-step aggregate-to-detail diagnostic tool I designed to assess the compliance or noncompliance of an *'amal* (deed/behavior) of a *mukallaf* (a legally responsible individual) in relation to its nurtured cognitive content.

Below are the four (4) components of the Islamic Evaluation Scale (IES) model with brief explanations:

- a) **Output:** In this context, output means any *'amal* done by a *mukallaf*, whether it is sharī'ah-compliant or not. It is the only evaluative particular at the aggregate level<sup>3</sup>.
- b) **Content:** This is a reference to the cultivated cognitive content in the mind, whether it is sound or not, that forms the basis for the output. This is because every *'amal* is a product of whatever is consumed of the cognitive content, the input. It is one of the dual evaluative particulars of the detailed level<sup>4</sup>.
- c) **Process:** It is the nurturing of the cognitive content through internalization and cultivation. It represents the sole driver of the content into the mind, via different ways

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<sup>3</sup>The aggregative diagnosis of the output is substantiated by numerous textual and logical evidence; however, the most relevant and comprehensive textual evidence is the statement of the Prophet (ﷺ): **"Whosoever does an *'amal* (deed/behaviour) not compliant with our injunction (i.e., sharī'ah), it is rejected (i.e., invalid)"** (Ahmad, 1421H, no: 24450, 25128, 25472; Muslim, 1374H, no: 18-(1718)). Relevant commentaries on this aggregative evidence have been provided by many scholars. See Ibn Rajab (1422H), and Şun'āniy (1433H) for benefit.

<sup>4</sup>The fundamental reason for diagnosing the content is because human, naturally, has philosophical hollowness as mentioned by Allah: **﴿And Allāh has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and hearts [i.e., intellect] that perhaps you would be grateful﴾** (Qur'an 16:78). So, the quality of the content the mind is fed with determines the quality of the output. This is substantiated by the statement of the Prophet (ﷺ): **"Take note, there is, indeed, a *mudghah* (i.e., and elastic organ) in the body; if it is sound, the whole body is sound; and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupt. Be informed, it is the heart"** (Ahmad, 1421H, no: 18374, 18412; Bukhāriy, 1422H, no: 52; Muslim, 1374H, no: 107-(1599)). The heart is a reference to the human mind where abstract cognitive contents are deposited.

and methods, before it is translated into the output. It is the second evaluative particulars of the detailed level<sup>5</sup>.

- d) **Islamic Philosophical Productivity (IPP):** It can be defined as the efficiency of the nurtured philosophy<sup>6</sup> that produces a corresponding *'amal*. In other words, the IPP is the product of both the cognitive content and the process of nurturing it. By implication, any *'amal* compliant with the shariah in basis and characterization indicates sound IPP; and conversely, any *sharī'ah*-noncompliant *'amal* is incontestable evidence that the IPP is deficient and corrupt.

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<sup>5</sup>It is both textually and logically established that the depositing of cognitive content/knowledge in the mind is done through a process and further nurtured. This process is done through various learning manners. This fact is expressed in a fairly weak narration ascribed to the Prophet (ﷺ) that: “**Knowledge is [gained] by learning**” (Ibn Shāhīn, 1424H, no: 243). Though the *sanad* (chain of narration) is slightly weak, the statement is authenticated in *mawqūf* form to ‘Abdullah bn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) where he said: “Without doubt, no man is born knowledgeable, knowledge is [gained] through learning” (Ibn Abī Shaybah, 1409H).

<sup>6</sup> Philosophy, in this context, is any consumptive cognitive contents like basic belief or concept regarding any matter. It is the factor that determines the quality of our thoughts and expressions. Islamically, the nature of philosophy is related to the *kulliyāt*; thereby, it can be generically divided into religious, personal, material, or lineal.

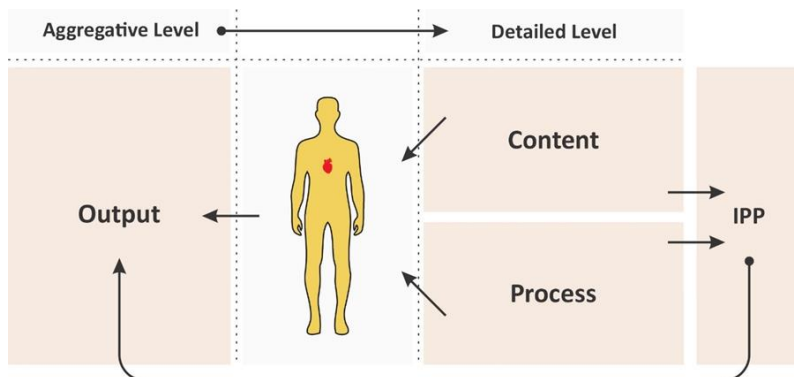


Figure 1. A Diagrammatic Representation of the IES

As for the procedures of the IES application in finding underlying issues of a particular problem related to the shari'ah, it is a two-step sequential evaluation that starts with an *ijmāliyy* (aggregative) evaluation of the output and ends with a *tafṣīliyy* (detailed) evaluation of the cognitive content and the process. See *Figure 1* above.

**Firstly**, the observed output (*'amal*) of a *mukallaf* is assessed for its compliance with the shari'ah or not. It is important to note that the compliance of an *'amal*, Islamically, is measured by two determinants: (1) *tashrī' al- aṣl* (legislation of basis)<sup>7</sup> and (2) *tashrī'*

<sup>7</sup>It involves the mere knowing of legal institution and existence of any subject matter of discourse or not from the evidence –either detailed or aggregative-- of shari'ah primary sources (Qur'an and ḥadīth). For example, the observance of ṣalāh has a legal basis in Islam according to the verse: **﴿and observe the ṣalāh...﴾** (Qur'an 2:43). By principle, any devotional (*ta'abbudiy*) matter, unlike non-devotional, which lacks legal basis is deemed a *bid'ah* (religious innovation) and treated as non-existent prima facie. See *Al-Mawsū'ah Al-Fiqhiyyah Al-*

*al-waṣf* (legislation of characterization)<sup>8</sup>. An *ʿamal* is not regarded sharīʿah-compliant by mere legislation of its basis, it must also comply with the instituted requirements of *tashrīʿ al-waṣf* (legislation of characterization) in the Qurʿan and Sunnah. If the *ʿamal* is found to be sharīʿah-noncompliant, it shows that the IPP is deficient and corrupt. Thus, it is regarded as un-Islamic and invalid; and its invalidity establishes the basis of it being a problem that requires further analysis. This is the aggregative evaluation. **Secondly**, the result of the output assessment, corrupted IPP, indicates that the underlying factors of the un-Islamic *ʿamal* observed in a *mukallaf* reside in the nurtured content. These underlying factors must be data-driven issues that are inferred from the collected data, either through direct or indirect methods<sup>9</sup>. This is the detailed evaluation.

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*Kuwaytiyyah*, 1427H, vol. 29, pp. 257-258; and vol. 37, pp. 317-319. However, this is not enough to establish the compliance of an *ʿamal*, the set requirements of *tashrīʿ al-waṣf* (legislation of characterization) must be fulfilled without any violation.

<sup>8</sup>This is a reference to details of distinctive features and parameters of any subject matter that has a legal basis in sharīʿah. *Tashrīʿ al-waṣf* (legislation of characterization) of any subject matter include the establishment of legally specified *wasāʿil* (means/medium), *aʿyān/mawādd* (items), and textually-deduced *ḍawābiṭ* (limiting parameters): *sabab* (cause), *sharṭ* (condition), *māniʿ/muḍṭil* (inhibitor/invalidator), *kayfiyyah* (mode), *miqdār* (magnitude), *zamān* (time), and *makān* (place). See *As-Saʿīdān* (n.d.). For example, the open observance of ṣalāh based on the verse: ﴿and observe the ṣalāh...﴾ without strict adherence to the requirements of its legal characterization will be graded sharīʿah-noncompliant and, thus, invalid and rejected.

<sup>9</sup>Direct methods involve the gathering of information about a particular problem from the source by directly interacting with the targeted individuals or

#### 4. RESULTS (DATA PRESENTATION & FINDINGS)

##### 4.1 Presentation of Data on Blasphemy-Related Mob Justice (1999 and 2022)

The data presented here, due to a lack of available official government data, only represents the personal effort of the researcher and does not reflect the actual cases that might have occurred. Accordingly, estimations of casualty figures are mostly conflicting based on various sources and reports and cannot be properly measured. Likewise, the data does not include other cases of alleged blasphemy that did not result in mob justice. Between 1999 and 2022, a total of nineteen (19) cases are recorded as follows.

CASE NO.	1	YEAR	1999	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Kebbi (KE)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In July 1999, a rumour was spread between the two neighbouring villages, Randali and Kardi that one Abdullahi Umaru, a Muslim, allegedly blasphemed the Prophet (ﷺ). A group of youth miscreants led by one Musa Yaro, Usman Kaza, Abdullahi Ada, and Abubakar Dan Shalla and three others arbitrarily condemned the accused to death despite being cautioned by the village head and a religious cleric, one Ustadh Mamman.

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groups. It includes, surveys, interviews, observations, and focus groups. Conversely, the indirect methods involve the gathering of information about a problem without direct contact or interaction with the targeted individuals or groups. Examples are analysis of secondary data, documents, case studies, web archives search.

**AFTERMATH:** 1 death. Prosecution was made, and the six miscreants were convicted in Kebbi High Court, the Appeal Court, and finally the Supreme Court where they were condemned to death in 2007 and 2008 (*Dan Shalla v. The State*, 2007; *Kaza v. The State*, 2008; Ige, 2007).

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CASE NO.	2	YEAR	2000	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Jigawa (JI)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In December 2000, an unidentified Igbo Christian shopkeeper in Hadejia old market was alleged to have blasphemed the Prophet ( $\gamma$ ). According to Mallam Muhammad Sani Zaria, the secretary of the ad-hoc committee set up by the Emir of Hadejia, the alleged person did not use abusive language on the Prophet ( $\gamma$ ) as claimed. The rumour went around, and the hooligans and unemployed youth took over. The Igbo traders were protected by the Muslims around. It later became a face-off between the mob and the police.

**AFTERMATH:** 1 death. One Inuwa Tela an asthma patient among the arrested died in hospital due to police maltreatment and negligence. The properties of the Igbo traders were looted and burnt. All the arrested youths were released based on recommendations of the committee to douse the tension. No known prosecution (Weekly Trust, 2000).

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CASE NO.	3	YEAR	2002	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Kaduna (KD)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In November 2002, Isioma Daniel, a Christian and a fashion journalist with ThisDay, a national daily, made an explicit scornful remark about the Prophet (ﷺ).

**AFTERMATH:** Nearly or more than 200 acclaimed deaths (Muslim and Christians), and many were injured. Properties were allegedly destroyed including Churches. No known arrest or prosecution (Issa, 2016). There were also protests in Abuja and Lagos.

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CASE NO.	4	YEAR	2006/1	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Borno (BO) & Katsina (KT)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** Kurt Westergaard, a conservative Danish Christian cartoonist, portrayed contemptuous graphics about the Prophet (ﷺ), and published by Jyllands-Posten newspaper. It was met with riots and protests in many Muslim countries including Nigeria mainly in Borno and partly in Katsina, in February 2006<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup>Note: despite this blasphemy did not occur on Nigerian soil, I included it because it resulted in mob violence in the country. Unlike the case of the 2012 infamous blasphemous movie 'Innocence of Muslims' that caused international protests, including in Nigeria, I did not include it in this list because there was no recorded violence and casualty. In fact, the Christians participated in the protest to disparage the vicious act (Joseph, 2012).

**AFTERMATH:** Nearly 17 acclaimed deaths (mostly Christians). 11 churches were allegedly burnt. 115 people were arrested, but no known prosecution (OCHA, 2006).

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CASE NO.	5	YEAR	2006/2	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Bauchi (BA)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In February 2006, a Christian teacher, Florence Chukwu, in a Government Day Secondary School was accused of allegedly desecrating the Qur'an; thereby, the students rioted.

**AFTERMATH:** Regarding the accused's whereabouts and the casualty figures, it is very shady. It was claimed in a report that 30 people were killed. No known arrest or prosecution (Minchakpu, 2006; IRIN, 2008).

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CASE NO.	6	YEAR	2007/1	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Gombe (GO)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In March 2007, a Christian secondary school teacher, Christiana Oluwatoyin Oluwasesin, was gruesomely murdered and burnt by students and others, for unverified malicious claim that she tore the Qur'an.

**AFTERMATH:** 1 death, 16 arrests. No known prosecution (CSW, 2007).

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CASE NO.	7	YEAR	2007/2	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Kano (KN)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In September 2007, a Muslim mob rioted in Tudun Wadan Dankade over the display of a Christian teacher an acclaimed caricature of Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ) in his classroom. The Christians claimed it was because of their preventing one of them from converting to Islam.

**AFTERMATH:** 9 acclaimed deaths. Churches were allegedly destroyed (U.S. Department of State, 2008). These claims have been refuted Kano Muslim Youth Consultative Forum as baseless and an attempt to incite the public (Karofi, 2007). No known arrest or prosecution.

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CASE NO.	8	YEAR	2008/1	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Bauchi (BA)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In February 2008, in Yana, an unnamed female Christian was accused of allegedly blaspheming the Prophet (ﷺ) and was taken into police custody. In some reports, she was said to have allegedly defamed the Qur'an. The mob insisted on extra-judicial killing, but the policemen refused, they shot into the crowd in self-defense, and thus the clash.

**AFTERMATH:** 1 acclaimed death, 5 injured. Police stations were torched, and houses of policemen and Christians were

allegedly looted according to some accounts. No known arrest or prosecution (IRIN, 2008).

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CASE NO.	9	YEAR	2008/2	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Kano (KN)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In February 2008, in Sumaila, Muslim secondary school students protested that a fellow Christian student made an alleged disparaging remark distributed in the leaflet that was said to have slandered the Prophet (ﷺ). The accused sought refuge at a police station and violence erupted when police refused to hand him over to the angry mob.

**AFTERMATH:** 3 acclaimed deaths including policemen. It was claimed that the police station and vehicles were set on fire. The Divisional Police Officer (DPO) and the school principal were beaten up. 25 persons arrested; but no known prosecution (Karofi, 2008; U.S. Department of State, 2008).

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CASE NO.	10	YEAR	2008/3	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Kano (KN)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In August 2008, an unnamed 50-year-old Muslim man was allegedly accused of blaspheming the Prophet (ﷺ) twice on Friday and Saturday after he was denied by relatives his share of the estate by his deceased father. He was lynched by a mob in his house in Sheka Aci Lafiya's quarters. He was

later rescued by the police and Hisbah officials. He died on the way to the hospital.

**AFTERMATH:** 1 death. According to the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) SP Baba Mohammed, no arrest was made. Consequently, no prosecution (Ibrahim, 2008).

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CASE NO.	11	YEAR	2012	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Kano (KN)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In November 2012, there was a riot in Bichi town. It was alleged that a Christian tailor blasphemed the Prophet ( $\gamma$ ). The state Commissioner of Police Ibrahim K. Idris in his briefing said it was a misinformation staged by miscreants to perpetrate mischief. The local Imams were later mobilized to enlighten the violent youths, and the accused was eventually evacuated safely.

**AFTERMATH:** 4 deaths. Many were injured. A church and dozens of shops were burnt, and vehicles were vandalized. No known arrest or prosecution (Adamu, 2012).

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CASE NO.	12	YEAR	2015	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Kano (KN)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** During a Maulud celebration lecture, a Tijāniyyah preacher, Abdul-Aziz Dauda aka Abdul Nyass made an alleged blasphemous statement regarding the Prophet ( $\gamma$ ).

His statement caused serious unrest and led to his arrest. He was widely condemned, even by the Tijāniyyah figures locally and internationally.

**AFTERMATH:** No death. His house was burnt and razed. The Upper Sharia Court was burnt earlier due to a perceived delay in his arraignment by the angry mob. He was eventually arraigned with other accomplices and 9 of them were convicted with the death penalty according to the Sharia Penal Code 2000 of the state. This is popularly tagged as the first court conviction of the crime of alleged blasphemy in the country. The conviction was supported by the state government. The judgment was later overturned by the Appeal Court in Kaduna which found them not guilty (Mukhtar, 2015).

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CASE NO.	13	YEAR	2016/1	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Niger (NI)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In May 2016, a 24-year-old Christian trader, Methodus Emmanuel, was accused of alleged blasphemy in Padongari, Rafi Local Govt Area.

**AFTERMATH:** 4 deaths including the accused. A religious house --likely a church-- and a house were burnt. 25 shops were looted. The looting continued the next day as well. Some arrests were made (NAN, 2016a). No known prosecution. The state government also set up a panel to probe the unpleasant event; but actions taken are unknown (NAN, 2016b).

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CASE NO.	14	YEAR	2016/2	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Kano (KN)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In early June 2006, a 74-year-old Igbo Christian trader, Madam Bridget Aghahime, was clubbed to death in the presence of her husband over alleged blasphemy, in the Kofar Wambai market. The callous killing by the mob was widely condemned by Nigerians across the religious divide.

**AFTERMATH:** 1 death involving the accused. No other casualty. 5 were arrested but were later acquitted by the court on the ground that they were innocent of the crime. The acquittal was however met with reactions (Muhammed, 2016; Ahmad, 2016; Alabi, 2016).

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CASE NO.	15	YEAR	2016/3	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Zamfara (ZA)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In August 2016, two students --one is a Hausa Muslim and the other Yoruba from Kogi-- of Abdu Gusau Polytechnic, Talata-Marafa fought, and the Hausa student raised a false alarm that the other blasphemed the Prophet (ﷺ). The mob joined the false alarmist and beat the accused to a stupor thinking he was dead. He was rushed by a good Samaritan Muslim from his tribe to the hospital and rescued by the army. The mob was displeased and burnt the man's house with 8 people inside. This is according to the statement of the then Governor Abdul-Aziz Yari.

**AFTERMATH:** 8 deaths. All were Muslims and family of the good Samaritan. The shop of the Good Samaritan was also burnt. The mob made an attempt to burn churches and attack non-Muslims but were stopped by the security agencies in time. 14 people were arrested as the masterminds. It was said by the police that the false alarmist, Bashir Adamu was arrested and charged in court. The outcome of the prosecution is unknown (Daniel, 2016; Lere, 2016).

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CASE NO.	16	YEAR	2021/1	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Bauchi (BA)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In March 2021, a water vendor simply known as Talle was atrociously set ablaze by the mob for allegedly blaspheming the Prophet (ﷺ).

**AFTERMATH:** 1 death. No known arrest or prosecution (Adenuga, 2021).

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CASE NO.	17	YEAR	2021/2	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Lagos (LA)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In May 2021, Alhaji Alidu Mohammed, a Muslim security commander of the Hausa Gengere community in Mile 2 was accused of blaspheming the Prophet (ﷺ) during a crisis between two warring sides.

**AFTERMATH:** 1 death. Two cars of the accused burnt, and his car was vandalized. 45 suspects including 13 warring leaders were arrested. No known prosecution (Agha, 2021; Adediran, 2021).

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CASE NO.	18	YEAR	2022/1	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Sokoto (SO)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In May 2022, one Ms. Deborah Samuel, a Christian college student, was gruesomely murdered and burnt by some students of Sheu Shagari College of Education over alleged case of blasphemy. The fateful incident was widely condemned.

**AFTERMATH:** 1 death involving the accused. Two suspects were apprehended as masterminds and charged to court. They were remanded in prison and charged to court (Suleiman, 2022; Babangida, 2022). They were later freed in January 2023 due to absence of police prosecution during series of hearing.

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CASE NO.	19	YEAR	2022/2	STATE OF OCCURRENCE	Abuja (FCT)
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**CASE SUMMARY:** In June 2022, a 30-year-old Muslim vigilante, Ahmad Usman aka Small Hundaru at Timber Shed market, Lugbe was killed by a mob for alleged blasphemy by burning.

**AFTERMATH:** 1 death. 15 people were arrested. No known prosecution (Vanguard, 2022).

\* \* \*

## 4.2 FINDINGS

By employing the IES, as discussed in section 3.2 above, it is discovered that blasphemy-related mob justice is a socio-religious problem with edu-philosophical secondary factors that are characterized by deficient IPP. As such, the discovered issues are carefully and objectively synthesized under five (5) themes below (*Figure 2*). These findings will not only be crucial in advancing the understanding of this problem, but they will also serve as catalysts in solution-finding.

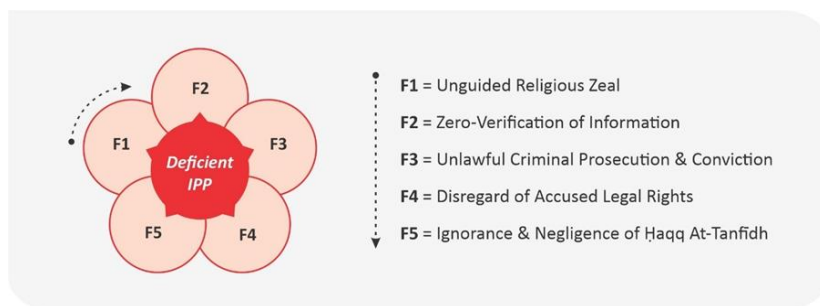


Figure 2. Showing deficient IPP as a common factor in all the five (5) underlying findings (F1-F5) that characterized blasphemy-related mob justice

#### **4.2.1 Unguided Religious Zeal**

The analysis of all the recorded cases (Cases 1- 19) identified the presence of unbounded zeal of the mob towards protecting the personality of their Prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ), their religious scripture, the Qur'an, and their religion in general. This unbounded zeal, in the name of Islam, spontaneously generated illegal responses and communicated through extra-judicial killings, acts of violence, and destruction. Considering that blasphemy of religious creedal entities, in Islam, is one of the redlines that should never be crossed, the demagogues and the mischief-makers who posed as God's avengers are swift in maliciously igniting the naked wire of unguided religious zeal of the mob and unsuspecting Muslim populace. The perpetuation of blasphemy-related mob justice and its accompanying illegalities propelled by unguided religious zeal is indeed un-Islamic and damaging to the overall image of Islam. By this, the researcher discovered from the data that unguided religious zeal is one of the underlying fundamental findings that contributed to mob justice fuelled by alleged blasphemy due to its deficient IPP.

#### **4.2.2 Zero-Verification of Information**

Out of the nineteen (19) cases of blasphemy-related mob justice, about sixteen (16) cases were maliciously and irresponsibly built on false alarms, rumors, and unfounded accusations. Case 15, particularly, after careful investigation, was tagged a product of false alarm by the then Governor of Zamfara State, Abdul-Aziz Yari. Though poor verification and ill-handling of information –on the ground or online-- are dangerous global societal challenges, the analysis of the

recorded cases proved clearly that the mob and the uninformed populace in the study area are equally lacking with respect to the verification of the information and its handling in respect to the sensitive issue of blasphemy. This further affirmed that zero-verification of information and its ill-handling is a fundamental philosophical deficiency that constitutes an integral of the findings that propelled by alleged blasphemy due to deficient IPP.

#### **4.2.3 Unlawful Criminal Prosecution & Conviction**

Out of all the tabulated nineteen (19) cases, only three (3) cases, cases 3, 4, and 12, are evidently contemptuous in nature and form the basis for the charge of blasphemy<sup>11</sup>. The rest are likely to be thrown out of Shari'ah courts as baseless claims due to lack of evidence and the presence of legal *shubuhāt* (considerable legal excuses and uncertainties). By the accompanying expressions created by this philosophical gap, the researcher established from the detailed analysis of the recorded cases that unlawful criminal conviction in cases of alleged blasphemy in the court of the mob is another underlying fundamental issue sequential to zero-information verification, and it constitutes part of the five (5) underlying interrelated findings, created by deficient IPP, that fuels blasphemy-related mob justice.

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<sup>11</sup> Though there are many similar scholarly submissions on what constitute the crime of blasphemy. However, the common *'illah* (intrinsic factor/functional quality), which is violation of sacrosanct rights and assassination of personality, in any adopted conception must be featured. From the judicial perspective, the most relevant conception will be according to the Islamic penal codes of the jurisdiction where the crime might have been committed.

#### **4.2.4 Disregard of The Accused's Legal Rights**

In the recorded nineteen (19) cases of blasphemy-related mob justice, it is glaring that the victims of alleged blasphemy were unjustly and completely denied the enjoyment of their legal rights from the points of *istifā'* (full possession), *himāyah* (protection from any form of violation), and *isti'māl/intifā'* (utilization) (Zuhayliy, n.d.). Thus, the analysis of the data convincingly depicted that absolute disregard of instituted legal rights of alleged blasphemers, stimulated by deficient IPP, is another integral component of the key five (5) findings that holistically precipitated blasphemy-related mob justice.

#### **4.2.5 Ignorance & Negligence of Ḥaqq At-Tanfīdh**

It is apparent from the analysis of the recorded nineteen (19) cases that the uncouth monstrous action of the mob, under the pretense of defending Islam, portrayed the presence of their ignorance of *ḥaqq at-tanfīdh* (right of punishment execution) and its negligence. This blatant violation is no doubt a product of deficient IPP because of its noncompliance with the actual *ḥaqq at-tanfīdh* enshrined in Islamic legal values (Al-Ahdal, n.d.).

### **5. DISCUSSION**

The arbitrary killing of alleged persons accused of blasphemy by the mob in Nigeria is almost peculiar to the Muslims from the Northern part of the country, especially within the twelve Sharia states. Without a doubt, there is a need to tame this violation and illegal brazenness of the mob with the same religious values they claim to defend and protect. The conceptualization of an Islamic-oriented diagnostic tool is, thus,

crucial in analysing the underlying factors contributing to the crime of blasphemy-related mob justice in Nigeria.

The careful employment of the Islamic Evaluation Scale (IES) in diagnosing the crime from aggregate to detail identified five (5) data-driven underlying philosophical themes with respect to blasphemy-related mob justice cases. They are (1) Unguided religious zeal, (2) Zero-verification of information, (3) Unlawful criminal prosecution and conviction, (4) Disregard of instituted legal rights, and (5) Ignorance and negligence of *ḥaqq at-tanfidh*. These findings are unarguably characterized by a common philosophical factor: deficient IPP. Consequently, this generic causative commonality in all the underlying findings is, thus, the primal factor that must be addressed in all five (5) resultant findings in an attempt to proffer solutions to curb the cases of blasphemy-related mob justice within the area of this study.

## **6. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, this introductory study represents an attempt to provide an Islamic diagnosis of the problem and indicate its entanglement with edu-philosophical issues. It has provided a strong basis for further research that may be targeted at proffering holistic analysis-driven interventions. The importance of the findings lies in their potential to inform effective solutions to blasphemy-related mob justice. By understanding the underlying edu-philosophical factors that drive such behavior, stakeholders can develop relevant interventions that address these root causes. This analysis can guide religious and political representatives in developing programs that promote public-mindedness, the sound culture of information verification and handling, and the deepening of

Islamic legal education on justice administration. Ultimately, these findings can contribute to a safer and calmer society where barbarism is philosophically tamed. Though educational factors might be more fundamental, as shown in the analysis, it might not be a futile attempt for researchers to look into the socio-economic factors behind this menace.

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