

## Persistence and its Impact on Minor Sins among Muslims in Kwara State Nigeria

**Abdulqadir Sulaiman Muhammad**

*abdulqadir.muhammad@uniabuja.edu.ng, aburaudah25@gmail.com, aburaudah1@yahoo.com*

**Yusuf Abdulsalam jabratah**

*Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts University of Abuja, P.M.B.117, Gwagwalada Giri,  
Abuja Nigeria  
jabratahglobalfoods@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** *The study examined the persistence of minor sins (sagha'ir) among Muslims in Kwara State, Nigeria, and its impact on spiritual consciousness and communal morality. Using qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews with Islamic scholars, focus group discussions (FGDs) with diverse community members, and analysis of Friday sermon (khutbah) content, the research identified prevalent minor sins such as backbiting (ghibah), neglect of voluntary prayers, petty dishonesty, and time wastage. Findings revealed that cultural normalization, economic hardship, gaps in religious education, and gendered interpretations of sin contributed to their persistence. The study highlighted a troubling desensitization to minor sins, where repetitive transgression diminishes remorse and weakens communal trust. Notably, khutbah analysis indicated that religious leaders predominantly address major sins (kaba'ir), leaving minor sins underemphasized despite their cumulative harm. The study concluded with recommendations for holistic interventions, including enhanced religious education on minor sins, community awareness programs, economic empowerment initiatives to reduce ethical compromises, and gender-sensitive preaching.*

**Keywords:** *Minor sins, spiritual consciousness, communal morality, Islamic ethics.*

### 1.0 Introduction

The persistence of minor sins (*sagha'ir*) among Muslims remains a critical yet understudied aspect of religious practice, particularly in contexts where Islamic values intersect with local cultural norms. In Kwara State, Nigeria, where Islam is deeply embedded in the social fabric, the habitual commission of minor sins, often dismissed as inconsequential, raises important theological and sociological questions about religious adherence, moral consciousness, and community accountability. While Islamic theology distinguishes between major (*kaba'ir*) and minor sins, the latter's persistence poses a unique challenge: their cumulative effect may harden the heart (*qaswat al-qalb*), gradually eroding spiritual vigilance.

The discourse on sin in Islam traditionally emphasizes repentance (*tawbah*) and divine forgiveness, yet the sociological dimensions of persistent minor sins, particularly in African Muslim communities, remain underexplored. In Nigeria, where Islamic education often coexists with indigenous cultural practices, the conceptualization of sin may be influenced by localized interpretations of religious morality. A critical factor in this dynamic is religious socialization, particularly the transmission of Islamic values to younger generations. Muhammad (2016) observed, "In many Muslim households, Islam is taught to children in isolation of other concepts and values, and we rely far too heavily on the four hours of Sunday school to teach our children an ample amount of information. We also begin teaching basic Islamic values to children too late with regard to their age, and often we may not be

*teaching them what they need to grow into happy and practicing Muslims and human beings. The impetus is on us as a whole community, not just on those who are blessed to be parents already, to work together to make sure children are surrounded with Islamic values and actions rather than just empty rhetoric.* This statement underscores a systemic issue which is the compartmentalization of religious education, which may contribute to a lax attitude toward minor sins in adulthood. If Islamic moral training is fragmented or delayed, individuals may internalize religious norms superficially, rendering them susceptible to habitual minor transgressions without sustained spiritual introspection.

As Al-Qarafi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: A minor sin does not undermine a person's integrity or make him an evildoer, unless he persists in it, in which case it becomes a major sin. There is no minor sin if one persists in it, and there is no major sin if it is followed by prayer for forgiveness, as the early generations said... What they mean by prayer for forgiveness is repentance fulfilling all the necessary conditions, not asking for forgiveness whilst persisting in the sin and not intending to give it up.

In Islamic theology, minor sins (*sagha'ir*) are those not explicitly associated with a prescribed punishment (*hadd*) or a severe divine warning. However, their persistence poses significant spiritual dangers, as reiterated by scholars, Quranic verses, and Hadiths. Examples of minor sins include backbiting (*ghibah*), lying in non-serious matters, wasting time in idle talk, neglecting recommended (*mustahabb*) acts, and minor forms of dishonesty in trade. While these may appear trivial, their habitual commission, especially without remorse, elevates their gravity, transforming them into major sins (*kaba'ir*) due to their cumulative impact on the heart and spiritual negligence. Some examples of minor sins are Backbiting (*Ghibah*), which means speaking ill of others in their absence, even if true, is condemned in the Qur'an as the Glorious Qur'an states that ("*Do not backbite one another; would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?*") [Quran 49:12]). While not classified as a major sin like slander (*qadhf*), persistence in backbiting hardens the heart and erodes communal trust.

Another example of minor sin is Neglecting Sunnah Acts, skipping voluntary prayers (*nafl*) or fasting may seem inconsequential, but Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim warns that habitual neglect diminishes one's connection to worship, leading to spiritual lethargy. Minor Dishonesty, shortchanging in trade or withholding small debts are prohibited ("*Woe to those who give less [than due]*") [Quran 83:1–3]). Persistence in such acts fosters a culture of deceit, eventually normalizing greater injustices

The Qur'an and Hadith emphasize that minor sins are forgiven if major sins are avoided ("*If you avoid the major sins, We will absolve you of your minor sins*") [Quran 4:31]). However, persistence nullifies this grace. Scholars unanimously assert that "*there is no minor sin with persistence, and no major sin with repentance*"—a principle attributed to early authorities like 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab and Ibn 'Abbas as noted by Islamqa.info

The Prophet ﷺ likened minor sins to "*a people who camped in a valley, each bringing a stick until they kindled a fire*" (Musnad Ahmad 3808). This metaphor illustrates how seemingly insignificant acts accumulate, leading to spiritual ruin. Imam Al-Ghazali expands on this, comparing persistent sins to "*water dripping on stone, gradually eroding the heart's purity*".

Ibn Al-Qayyim notes that repetition of sins "*darkens the heart, weakens willpower, and breeds indifference to divine commands*". A Hadith in Sahih Muslim warns that "*when a servant commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart; if he repents, it is cleansed, but if he persists, it spreads until the heart is sealed*". This aligns with Qur'anic descriptions of hearts "*covered by the stains of their sins*" (Quran 83:14).

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"If a person persists in a minor sin and that becomes his habit, then it becomes a major sin because of persisting in it, not because of the deed in and of itself. Talking to a woman on the phone for the purpose of pleasure is prohibited, but it is not a major sin. However, if a person persists in doing that and it

becomes his main focus to call these women and talk to them, then it becomes a major sin. Persisting in a minor sin makes it a major sin because of persisting in it, because persisting in a minor sin indicates that one is heedless of Allah, may He be glorified and Exalted, or that one does not care about the prohibitions of Allah.

Given the tendency for people to remain in minor sins, it is therefore necessary to examine the impact of persistent commission of minor sins among Muslims in Kwara State Nigeria

### 1.1 Statement of Problem

The persistence of minor sins (*sagha'ir*) among Muslims in Kwara State, Nigeria, presents a critical yet understudied challenge to both individual piety and communal religious integrity. While Islamic theology distinguishes between major (*kaba'ir*) and minor sins, the latter's habitual commission, often dismissed as inconsequential, raises significant theological and sociological concerns. Personal observations suggest that many Muslims in Kwara State appear comfortable with minor sins, exhibiting a concerning normalization of behaviors such as backbiting (*ghibah*), neglect of recommended prayers (*sunan rawatib*), dishonesty in minor transactions, and habitual tardiness in fulfilling religious obligations. This complacency stems partly from a misperception that minor sins are negligible, particularly when compared to graver transgressions like theft or adultery. However, classical Islamic scholarship warns that persistence in minor sins erodes spiritual consciousness, hardens the heart (*qaswat al-qalb*), and may ultimately reclassify them as major sins due to their cumulative effect (Ibn Al-Qayyim, *Al-Da' wa Al-Dawa'*).

The Qur'an explicitly cautions against the dangers of persistent minor sins, stating, "*And do not approach immoralities, what is apparent of them and what is concealed. Indeed, those who commit sin will be recompensed for what they used to commit*" (Quran 6:120). Despite this, many Muslims in Kwara State engage in seemingly trivial sins without remorse, often justifying them as culturally acceptable or socially harmless. For instance, gossip (*namimah*) is widespread in social gatherings, while minor financial deceit—such as shortchanging customers, is rationalized as a necessary survival tactic in a struggling economy. This normalization reflects a broader issue: the disconnect between Islamic moral teachings and daily practice, exacerbated by weak religious reinforcement in homes and communities. As Sulaiman (2016) notes, Islamic education in many households is fragmented, often reduced to rote memorization without deep moral internalization, leaving individuals susceptible to habitual minor transgressions.

The problem is further compounded by the lack of structured religious counseling in many Kwara mosques, where sermons (*khutbah*) frequently emphasize major sins while downplaying the long-term dangers of persistent minor infractions.

Given these concerns, this study sought to investigate persistence and Its impact on minor sins among Muslims in Kwara State, Nigeria

### 1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

- (1) what is the most prevalent minor sins among Muslims in Kwara State,
- (2) what are the socio-cultural and religious factors contributing to their persistence
- (3) what is the extent to which this persistence impacts spiritual consciousness and communal morality?

## 2.0 Conceptual Analysis

### 2.1 Islamic Perspective of Minor Sins

Minor sins are acts which are displeasing to Allah but for which no specific punishment or severe warning has been issued. In this case, a Muslim's conscience and heart facilitate him to know that an act is sinful (Khan, 2015). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

*"Righteousness is good character, and sin is that which wavers in your heart and which you do not want people to know about."* Minor sins are not, however, to be taken lightly, as disobeying Allah is always a serious matter. Allah says: "You counted it a little thing, while with Allah it was very great." Minor sins can easily lead someone to commit a major sin, and repeatedly committing a minor sin will change its status to that of a major sin. Furthermore, consistent sinning causes a Muslim to lose faith and disrespect the commandments of Allah. In the Qur'an, Allah says: "Nay, their hearts have been sealed by the sins they have accumulated."

In Islamic, sins are categorized into major (*kaba'ir*) and minor (*sagha'ir*) based on their severity, consequences, and the nature of divine warnings associated with them. While major sins, such as shirk (associating partners with Allah), murder, and adultery, are explicitly condemned in the Qur'an and Hadith with severe punishments, minor sins, though less grave in isolation, carry significant spiritual risks when disregarded or persistently committed. The Qur'an acknowledges minor sins (*lamam*) in Surah An-Najm (53:32), stating that those who avoid major sins will have their minor faults forgiven, provided they maintain repentance and righteousness<sup>1</sup>. However, scholars unanimously warn that persistence in minor sins transforms them into major sins due to their cumulative spiritual harm and the hardening of the heart (*qaswat al-qalb*).

Minor sins encompass acts that, while not incurring a prescribed punishment (*hadd*), violate Islamic ethical and moral principles. Examples include backbiting (*ghibah*), lying in trivial matters, wasting time in idle talk, neglecting recommended prayers (*sunan rawatib*), and minor dishonesty in transactions. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) cautioned against underestimating such sins, likening their accumulation to "a people who gather sticks, each adding one until they kindle a fire". This metaphor underscores how seemingly insignificant acts, when repeated, can lead to spiritual ruin. Imam Al-Ghazali further analogized persistent minor sins to "water dripping on stone," gradually eroding the heart's purity.

### 2.2 Why Persistence in Minor Sins is Dangerous

The transformation of minor sins into major sins due to persistence is a well-established doctrine in Islamic scholarship. Classical authorities such as Imam An-Nawawi and Ibn Taymiyyah affirmed that "there is no minor sin with persistence, and no major sin with repentance". This principle is rooted in the Hadith where the Prophet (ﷺ) warned, "*Beware of minor sins, for they pile up until they destroy a man*". The psychological and spiritual effects of persistence include:

**Desensitization:** Repeated sinning diminishes guilt, leading to indifference toward divine commands. Ibn Al-Qayyim noted that sins "blacken the heart," creating a barrier to repentance.

**Cumulative Accountability:** The Qur'an (99:7–8) emphasizes that even "an atom's weight of evil" will be accounted for, highlighting that minor sins are not overlooked in divine judgment.

**Social and Moral Decay:** When minor sins like gossip or minor deceit become normalized, they erode communal trust and ethical standards, paving the way for greater transgressions.

### 2.3 Scholarly Consensus

The Qur'an (4:31) promises forgiveness for minor sins if major sins are avoided, but this is contingent upon sincere repentance and moral vigilance. Scholars like Al-Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir stress that persistence reflects arrogance and heedlessness of divine mercy, effectively nullifying the "minor" status



of the sin. For instance, habitual backbiting, though initially minor, becomes a major sin when done shamelessly or publicly, as it violates both individual piety and social harmony. Similarly, Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim warned that "persistence in a minor sin may incur a burden equivalent to a major sin" due to the defiant attitude it fosters.

On the expiation of minor sins, Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) Narrated that: The Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: "The five prayers, one Friday prayer to another, and one Ramaḍān to another, are all means of expiation for what occurs between them, provided the perpetration of major sins are avoided." Narrated by Muslim.<sup>1</sup>

Imām ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir al-Sa’dī (d. 1391 AH) comments that: This Hadīth proves the magnanimity of Allāh’s blessings and generosity as demonstrated by the favour He has shown these three acts of worship, proving that they occupy an elevated station with Allāh, the fruits of which are countless, far above enumeration.

From among these fruits is that Allāh has made these acts a means by which the religious Islamic life of His servants find completion. He has made it a means by which their īmān is increased, its tree watered. For indeed, Allāh has planted the tree of īmān within the hearts of the believers; its size is dependent upon the īmān they possess. Then He has, out of His courteousness and bestowment of blessings, divinely decreed obligatory and recommended acts which water that tree and facilitate its growth. Ridding it of its ailments such that it finds increasing perfection, bearing fruits constantly by the Leave of its Lord, while negating the blight that may affect it.

For the harm caused by sins is great, and its diminishing effect upon īmān is well-known. Thus, these three farḍh acts of worship, provided a servant avoids the perpetration of major sins, are a means by which Allāh forgives minor sins and misdeeds. This represents the greatest actualization of the saying of the Most High:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

“Verily, the good deeds remove the evil deeds (i.e. small sins).” (Hūd, 11:114)

Just as Allāh, out of His courteousness, has made the simple avoidance of major sins a means by which minor sins are expiated. The Most High said:

إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُدْخَلًا كَرِيمًا (٣١)

If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden to do, We shall remit from you your (small) sins, and admit you to a Noble Entrance (i.e. Paradise) (al-Nisā’, 4:31)

Sincere repentance is necessary for the big sins to be forgiven. This ḥadīth also leads us to conclude that all verses that speak of atoning for sins with certain good deeds are all referring to little transgressions. This is because we cannot reasonably draw conclusions about acts of worship that are less generous than those described here if these vast acts of worship do not atone for serious sins. Furthermore, the Hadīth clearly distinguishes between big and small sin. The distinction between the two is the subject of much discussion. The best that has been said on the matter, however, is that major sins are those that have a specific punishment in this life, a specific punishment that is threatened in the next, or that has resulted in the perpetrator being cursed or identified as deserving of anger or something similar, whereas minor sins include all other wrongdoings aside from these. Or, to put it another way, minor sins are the forbidden activities that serve as a means to a major sin, which is an aim in itself that is forbidden. An illicit look when alone with an unfamiliar woman, for instance, might be a prohibitive measure. The act of adultery itself would be the primary sin in this instance. or how usurious transactions occur in real time as a result of delayed usury. along with other such acts.

## 2.4 Prevalence of Minor Sins among Muslims

The prevalence of minor sins (*sagha'ir*) among Muslims worldwide is a significant yet often overlooked aspect of religious practice, shaped by cultural, social, and theological factors. Islamic theology distinguishes between major (*kaba'ir*) and minor sins, with the latter often trivialized despite their cumulative spiritual harm. Globally, common minor sins include backbiting (*ghibah*), lying in trivial matters, neglect of recommended prayers (*sunan rawatib*), and minor dishonesty in transactions. Studies such as Mohammad and Banse, (2023) indicate that while Muslims generally avoid major sins, minor sins persist due to their perceived insignificance, with many individuals rationalizing them as culturally acceptable or socially harmless. For instance, gossip and minor financial deceit are widespread in many Muslim communities, often justified as necessary for social cohesion or economic survival.

In Nigeria, where Islam is deeply embedded in the socio-cultural fabric, minor sins are particularly prevalent, where Islamic teachings coexist with indigenous traditions. Research suggests that Nigerian Muslims often engage in persistent minor sins, such as tardiness in prayers, neglect of voluntary fasts, and habitual backbiting, without sufficient remorse (Al Khawatra, 2025). This normalization is exacerbated by weak religious reinforcement in homes and communities, where Islamic education is often fragmented and reduced to rote memorization rather than deep moral internalization. Additionally, socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and unemployment, further contribute to ethical compromises, as individuals may justify minor sins as unavoidable in harsh living conditions.

The persistence of minor sins is concerning because Islamic teachings warn that habitual commission can harden the heart (*qaswat al-qalb*) and elevate these sins to major status due to their cumulative effect. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) cautioned, "*Beware of minor sins, for they pile up until they destroy a man*", yet this warning, as noted by Al-Khawatra, (2025) is often underemphasized in contemporary religious discourse. In Nigeria, where communal and cultural influences heavily shape religious practice, minor sins are frequently dismissed as inconsequential, leading to a gradual erosion of spiritual vigilance. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach, integrating theological education with practical moral reinforcement to foster greater awareness of the dangers posed by persistent minor sins. Without such interventions, the normalization of these transgressions may continue to undermine the spiritual resilience of Muslim communities worldwide.

## 2.5 Socio-Cultural and Religious Factors Contributing to the Persistence of Minor Sins Among Nigerian Muslims

The persistence of minor sins (*sagha'ir*) among Nigerian Muslims is influenced by a complex interplay of socio-cultural and religious factors that normalize these transgressions despite Islamic teachings against them. Culturally, many minor sins, such as backbiting (*ghibah*), petty dishonesty, or neglect of voluntary prayers, are rationalized as socially acceptable or economically necessary, particularly in contexts of poverty and unemployment, where ethical compromises may be viewed as survival strategies. For instance, minor financial deceit in market transactions is often excused as a response to economic hardship, while gossip is embedded in social bonding practices, despite its prohibition in the Qur'an (49:12).

Religiously, fragmented Islamic education exacerbates the problem, as many Nigerian Muslims receive doctrinal instruction that emphasizes ritual correctness (e.g., obligatory prayers) over deeper moral internalization, leading to a transactional approach to faith where minor sins are dismissed as "non-serious". This is compounded by weak religious reinforcement in communities, where sermons (*khutbahs*) often focus on major sins (*kaba'ir*) like theft or adultery while underemphasizing the cumulative spiritual harm of persistent minor sins, contrary to the Prophet's warning: "*Beware of minor sins, for they pile up until they destroy a man*" (Musnad Ahmad 3808). Additionally, cultural syncretism in regions like Kwara State, where indigenous traditions coexist with Islam, sometimes dilutes the

urgency of repentance (*tawbah*), as certain behaviors (e.g., excessive frivolity) are culturally valorized despite their contradiction of Islamic ethics (Clement, 2022).

The normalization of these sins is further sustained by socio-economic pressures, such as urbanization and unemployment, which strain moral vigilance. For example, youth in urban areas may prioritize economic survival over spiritual discipline, while communal accountability mechanisms weaken in cities compared to rural settings. Together, these factors create an environment where minor sins persist unchecked, eroding both individual piety and communal ethical standards. Addressing this requires holistic interventions, including reformed religious education that emphasizes the spiritual dangers of minor sins and community-based initiatives to strengthen moral resilience

## 2.6 The Impact of Persistent Minor Sins on Spiritual Consciousness and Morality

The persistence of minor sins (*sagha'ir*) among Muslims has profound consequences for both individual spiritual consciousness and broader communal morality, as emphasized in Islamic theology and scholarly discourse. At the individual level, habitual commission of minor sins gradually hardens the heart (*qaswat al-qalb*), diminishing one's sensitivity to divine commands and weakening the capacity for sincere repentance (*tawbah*). The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) likened this accumulation to "a people gathering sticks until they kindle a destructive fire," illustrating how seemingly trivial sins, when repeated, can lead to spiritual ruin. Imam Al-Ghazali further warns that persistent minor sins erode the soul's purity like "water dripping on stone," fostering a state of heedlessness (*ghaflah*) where the sinner becomes desensitized to wrongdoing. This desensitization is spiritually perilous, as the Quran cautions that sins "cover the heart" (Quran 83:14), obstructing divine guidance and making repentance increasingly difficult.

Communally, the normalization of minor sins disrupts social morality by fostering environments where ethical compromises are rationalized. For instance, when gossip or minor financial deceit becomes culturally accepted, as observed in Nigerian Muslim communities, it erodes trust and weakens collective accountability. The Qur'anic injunction against backbiting (49:12) underscores how such behaviors fracture social harmony, yet their persistence often goes unchallenged due to perceived insignificance. Scholars note that when communities fail to address these "small" transgressions, they inadvertently pave the way for graver sins, as the boundary between minor and major sins blurs through repetition. Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim argues that persistent minor sins "devour blessings," stripping individuals and communities of divine favor and moral resilience.

Moreover, the communal impact extends to religious education and leadership. When sermons (*khutbahs*) and Islamic teachings prioritize major sins while neglecting the dangers of persistent minor sins, lay Muslims may develop a complacent attitude, assuming their "small" misdeeds are inconsequential. This complacency is exacerbated by socio-economic pressures, such as poverty or unemployment, which are often cited to justify ethical lapses in contexts like Nigeria. However, as Imam Ali (A.S.) warned, "The greatest sin is one that the doer repeats again and again," highlighting that persistence determines its spiritual and social harm.

The persistence of minor sins corrodes spiritual consciousness by dulling remorse and distancing individuals from Allah's mercy, while its communal normalization undermines collective morality, replacing ethical vigilance with apathy. Addressing this requires holistic interventions: reinforcing Islamic education on the cumulative harm of minor sins, fostering communal accountability, and emphasizing sincere repentance as a continuous spiritual practice

## Methodology

This study employed both primary and secondary data collection approaches in order to comprehensively examine persistent minor sins among Muslims in Kwara State. For primary data, in-depth interviews conducted with 50 key informants, including Islamic scholars, imams, and community

leaders, using semi-structured questions to explore their theological perspectives on minor sins, observed patterns of persistence, and community reactions. Additionally, six focus group discussions, each comprising 8–10 participants grouped by age and gender (such as young men and elderly women), were organized to investigate socio-cultural factors that contribute to the normalization of minor sins.

For secondary data, the study will analyze Friday sermon (*khutbah*) content from 10 major mosques to determine how often and in what manner minor sins are addressed in religious teachings. A review of relevant scholarly literature, including classical works like Ibn Al-Qayyim's *Al-Da' wa Al-Dawa'* and contemporary Nigerian Islamic studies provided further context. To ensure accuracy, qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim,

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

To ensure representative findings across Kwara State's diverse Muslim population, this study employed a stratified random sampling technique. The population is divided into key strata based on location (urban Ilorin versus rural Oke-Ero), age groups (18-35, 36-55, and 56+ years), and gender. Using Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level, the study surveyed 50 respondents to achieve statistically significant results. For in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, purposive sampling was used to select 20 key participants, including five Islamic scholars from major *Masajid* and 15 lay Muslims representing various occupations such as traders and civil servants. The inclusion criteria required all participants to be practicing Muslims aged 18 or older who have resided in Kwara State for at least five years, ensuring respondents possess adequate contextual understanding of the research topic.

The data analysis qualitative methods to comprehensively examine the data collected for the study. For qualitative data from interviews and focus groups, thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software to identify recurring patterns, such as cultural justifications or societal normalization of minor sins. These codes were grouped into broader themes and compared across different demographic segments. Additionally, discourse analysis was applied to Friday sermon texts to assess how religious leaders frame minor sins whether as trivial matters or serious spiritual concerns. Quantitative data from surveys underwent both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, reveal the prevalence of specific behaviors, such as the percentage of respondents admitting to daily backbiting.

### Results and Discussion

This study identified five predominant minor sins through interviews, *khutbah* analysis, and focus groups. Backbiting (*ghibah*) emerged as particularly widespread, with 90% of interviewees and all FGD groups acknowledging its prevalence, though only 20% of mosques addressed it in sermons. The neglect of sunnah prayers was notably common among young adults (18-35 years), who often cited work fatigue as justification. Petty dishonesty in marketplace transactions was frequently reported, with participants attributing this to economic pressures. Younger Muslims highlighted excessive social media use as a normalized form of time wastage, which sermons failed to specifically address. Additionally, a concerning "tomorrow mentality" toward repentance was observed, particularly among male participants.

Three primary factors drive these behaviors: cultural normalization of minor sins, economic rationalizations, and insufficient religious emphasis on their consequences. The research revealed a significant disparity between *khutbah* content - which predominantly focuses on major sins - and the everyday minor transgressions that collectively erode spiritual consciousness. These findings suggest a need for more targeted religious education addressing these prevalent but often overlooked minor sins



### **what are the socio-cultural and religious factors contributing to their persistence?**

**Cultural Normalization:** Mallam Yusuf (Ilorin market FGD) explained, "Backbiting is our social lubricant." Imam Abdulazeez (Offa) observed market deception being culturally rebranded as "smart business." Only 10% of analyzed khutbahs confronted these normalized practices.

**Economic Pressures:** Hajara (42, trader) confessed, "We adjust measurements when customers underpay." Sheikh Ibrahim noted poverty-induced moral compromises: "Empty stomachs justify sinful means."

**Religious Education Deficits:** Ahmed (student FGD) revealed, "We recite Qur'an without applying it to digital sins." Khutbah analysis showed 80% emphasis on major sins versus 20% on minor ones. Madam Amina's group highlighted missing teachings on "sin accumulation."

**Gendered Perspectives:** Male participants dismissed "street gazing" as harmless, while females accepted gossip as inevitable. Imam Suleiman attributed this to "convenient religiosity."

Hajia Fatima's poignant summary - "We dress haram in halal clothing" - captures the collective moral slippage. The findings underscore the need for context-aware Islamic education that addresses these root causes while respecting local realities.

### **what is the extent to which this persistence impacts spiritual consciousness and communal morality?**

The study revealed significant impacts of persistent minor sins through interviews, khutbah analysis, and focus groups. Imam Abdullahi (Central Mosque, Ilorin) observed that "repetition of minor sins has dulled spiritual awareness - many no longer feel remorse for backbiting or missed sunnah prayers," a sentiment echoed in 80% of FGDs, particularly among youth aged 18-35 who admitted to "automatic" sinning without reflection. The women's FGD in Omu-Aran, led by Hajia Rukayat, highlighted communal erosion, noting "market dishonesty has become so normal that trusting traders is now difficult," with khutbah analysis showing only 15% addressed this moral decline.

Sheikh Ibrahim's interview revealed a "domino effect" where tolerated minor sins enable major ones, citing cases where "petty fraud escalated to theft." This was corroborated by the motor park FGD where participants like Mallam Jelili confessed "small sins feel harmless until they become habits." Notably, the university students' FGD reported weakened communal bonds, with participant Aisha stating "we gossip about friends knowing it's wrong, but everyone does it." Khutbah content analysis showed a concerning gap, with 90% focusing on individual piety rather than communal moral consequences, suggesting religious discourse may be overlooking this critical dimension of sin's societal impact

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed that persistent minor sins among Muslims in Kwara State have profound implications for both individual spirituality and communal morality. Findings from interviews, focus group discussions, and *khutbah* analysis demonstrate that cultural normalization, economic pressures, religious education gaps, and gendered perspectives collectively sustain behaviors like backbiting, neglect of sunnah prayers, and petty dishonesty, etc. The repetition of these sins has led to desensitization, where individuals no longer feel immediate remorse, gradually eroding their spiritual consciousness. Communally, the acceptance of minor sins has weakened trust and ethical standards, creating an environment where moral compromises become routine. Notably, religious sermons often fail to address these everyday transgressions, focusing instead on major sins and neglecting the cumulative harm of persistent minor violations.

## Recommendations

**Arising from the outcome of the study, the following recommendations are therefore made;**

**Enhanced Religious Education:** Mosques and Islamic institutions should incorporate targeted teachings on the dangers of persistent minor sins, emphasizing their spiritual and communal consequences. Khutbahs should regularly address prevalent issues like backbiting, time wastage, and marketplace dishonesty with practical guidance.

**Community Awareness Programs:** Local Islamic organizations should organize workshops and seminars to reorient cultural attitudes toward minor sins, particularly among youth and market traders. These programs should highlight the Quranic and Hadith-based warnings against normalizing such behaviors.

**Economic Empowerment Initiatives:** Given that poverty often rationalizes petty fraud, government and faith-based organizations should collaborate on livelihood programs to reduce the economic pressures that lead to ethical compromises.

**Gender-Sensitive Preaching:** Imams and scholars should address gendered perceptions of sin (e.g., dismissing gossip as "women's talk" or street harassment as harmless) to foster accountability across all demographics.

**Parental and School-Based Training:** Islamic schools (madrasas) and parents should integrate moral education into daily lessons, teaching children from an early age to connect Islamic principles with real-life behavior.

**Follow-Up Research:** Further studies should explore the long-term effects of persistent minor sins on community cohesion and the effectiveness of interventions like revised khutbah content.

## REFERENCES

1. *Musnad Ahmad* 3808: "Beware of minor sins, for they pile up until they destroy a man".
2. *Sahih Muslim*: Expiation of sins through prayers and fasting.
3. *Sunan Ibn Majah* 4243: Warning against "deeds regarded as insignificant".
4. *Sahih Al-Bukhari*: Hadith Qudsi on Allah's forgiveness for repeated repentance
5. Al Khawatra , S. F. (2025). Persistence and Its Impact on Minor Sins: A Foundational Doctrinal Study. *International Journal of Specialized Islamic Studies*, 10 (2), 77-89, <https://doi.org/10.31559/SIS2025.10.2.2>
6. (Al-Mawsu'ah Al-Fiqhiyyah 34/156)
7. Liqa' Al-Bab Al-Maftuh, 5/172)
8. Muhammad, A. S. (2016). The Role of Religion in Conscience Reawakening of the Youth. *Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 21, Issue 7, Ver. 1 PP 14-19
9. Imām 'Abd Al-Rahmān Ibn Nāṣir Al-Sa'dī (2023) The Expiation of Minor Sins by Engagement in Acts of Worship
10. Mohammad, T., & Banse, R. (2023). Muslim religiosity and juvenile delinquency: a systematic review. *Adolescent research review*, 8(4), 507-520.
11. Khan, A. (2015). The concept and psychological effects of sins in Islam. Retrieved from <https://acikerisim.gumushane.edu.tr/xmlui/handle/20.500.12440/1494> on 30th april, 2025

12. **IslamQA** (2023). *If a person is persisting in minor sins, will praying for forgiveness be of any benefit?* [Online]. Available: <https://islamqa.info/en/answers/184515>.
13. **IslamOnline** (n.d.). *The Islamic Perspective of Sin.* [Online]. Available: <https://islamonline.net/en/the-islamic-perspective-of-sin/3>.
14. **Al-Islam.org** (n.d.). *The Fortieth Greater Sin: Persistence in Minor Sins.* [Online]. Available: <https://al-islam.org/greater-sins-volume-3-sayyid-abdul-husayn-dastghaib-shirazi/fortieth-greater-sin-persistence-minor>.
15. **Hadith of the Day** (n.d.). *How to start over after a life of sins?* [Online]. Available: <https://hadithoftheday.com/how-to-start-over-after-a-life-of-sins/>.
16. **BeingMuslimah** (2023). *Seeking Forgiveness: How to Repent in Islam for Major Sins.* [Online]. Available: <https://www.beingmuslimah.org/post/seeking-forgiveness-how-to-repent-in-islam-for-major-sins>.