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Islamic Law and English Law as Sources of Nigerian Law: An Analytical and Comparative Study

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Abstract

Objective: This study critically and comparatively analyzes Islamic law and English law as sources of Nigerian law within a plural legal system. It aims to explain their origins, principles, and modes of operation, dispel misconceptions about religious and secular laws, and assess their effects on justice, social order, and peace in Nigeria. **Theoretical framework:** The research is based on legal pluralism theory and comparative legal theory, which explain the coexistence of multiple legal systems within one state and provide tools for comparing religious and secular legal traditions operating side by side. **Literature review:** The study reviews classical Islamic legal texts, English common law authorities, Nigerian constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, and academic literature on Nigerian jurisprudence. These sources highlight the historical reception, constitutional recognition, and practical application of both legal systems in Nigeria. **Methods:** A qualitative, descriptive, and analytical methodology is adopted, relying on doctrinal and documentary analysis of statutes, case law, textbooks, and scholarly articles. **Results:** The findings show that Islamic law and English law are both significant sources of Nigerian law, functioning within specific jurisdictions. English law provides a secular framework marked by uniformity, procedural certainty, and institutional control, while Islamic law emphasizes moral reform and social discipline, particularly in personal law. **Implications:** The study underscores the need for balanced application, tolerance, and legal education to promote justice, peace, and social stability in Nigeria. **Novelty:** It offers a constructive comparative perspective, showing how both systems can coexist as complementary components of a plural legal order.

Keywords: islamic law, english law, nigerian legal system, legal pluralism, comparative law.

INTRODUCTION

Lawlessness has become increasingly pervasive in many parts of the world, manifesting in rising cases of indiscipline, corruption, violence, and organized crime. Acts such as killing, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, terrorism, and other heinous offences have

gradually shifted from being exceptional occurrences to daily realities, particularly in Nigeria [1]. The frequency and brutality of these crimes have created a climate of fear and insecurity in which citizens and foreigners alike live with constant anxiety, often feeling unsafe even within their homes. This situation raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks in deterring crime and maintaining social order [2].

In Nigeria, it has been widely observed that constitutional and statutory punishments prescribed for grave criminal offences often appear disproportionate to the severity of the crimes committed [3]. In many cases, offenders are arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced, yet they soon return to society after serving relatively short prison terms or benefiting from procedural loopholes. Such outcomes tend to embolden criminals, reinforce antisocial behavior, and weaken public confidence in the justice system. The perception that serious crimes are met with lenient consequences has contributed to the persistence and, in some cases, escalation of violent criminal activities across the country [4].

This persistent insecurity has renewed scholarly and public debates on the sources of Nigerian law and their capacity to address moral decay and criminal behavior. Nigeria operates a plural legal system shaped by multiple influences, most notably Islamic law and English law. English law, introduced during British colonial rule, forms the backbone of Nigeria's modern legal system. Its foundations lie in English common law, doctrines of equity, and statutes of general application [5]. Historically, English law developed within a society influenced by Christian moral values, and many early jurists drew heavily on Christian ethics when formulating legal doctrines. Over time, however, English law evolved into a largely secular system, emphasizing procedural fairness, judicial precedent, and institutional governance [6].

Islamic law, on the other hand, predates colonialism in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions where it was firmly established long before British rule. Rooted in divine revelation and moral accountability, Islamic law regulates both private and public conduct, addressing personal status, social relations, and criminal behavior. Its penal provisions are often characterized by their deterrent and corrective objectives, aimed not only at punishment but also at preserving moral order and social stability. Despite this, Islamic law is frequently portrayed in negative terms, described as harsh, archaic, or incompatible with modern human rights standards. Such portrayals often overlook its ethical foundations, procedural safeguards, and historical effectiveness in maintaining public order [7].

The coexistence of English law and Islamic law within Nigeria's legal system illustrates the reality of legal pluralism, where different legal traditions operate within defined jurisdictions. However, this coexistence has not been without tension. Debates surrounding criminal justice, capital punishment, human rights, and national unity often reflect deeper misunderstandings and ideological divisions between secular and religious legal perspectives. While English law emphasizes uniformity and procedural clarity, critics argue that it has not significantly curbed the rising tide of violent crime. Conversely, proponents of Islamic law contend that its firm stance on serious offences serves as a stronger deterrent and promotes moral discipline within society [8].

Against this background, a comparative examination of Islamic law and English law as sources of Nigerian law becomes both timely and necessary. Such an analysis allows for a balanced assessment of their origins, principles, and methods of operation, as well as their respective strengths and limitations in addressing crime and social disorder. Rather than framing the discussion in terms of religious rivalry or hostility, a scholarly comparative approach makes it possible to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and potential complementarity between the two systems [9].

This study, therefore, seeks to analyze Islamic law and English law as sources of Nigerian law within the context of rising lawlessness and insecurity. By examining their historical development, philosophical foundations, and approaches to criminal justice, the study aims to contribute to ongoing discussions on legal reform, justice, and peace in Nigeria. Ultimately, it argues that a deeper understanding and balanced application of Nigeria's plural legal heritage are essential for restoring public confidence in the legal system, strengthening social security, and promoting lasting peace in a diverse and multi-religious society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigeria's complicated historical, theological, and socio-legal evolution is reflected in the vast body of literature on Islamic law and English law as sources of Nigerian law. Most academics concur that Nigeria has a multifarious legal system, with several legal traditions coexisting and each having an impact on particular areas and topics. Legal plurality in Nigeria, the historical reception of English law, the nature and extent of Islamic law in Nigeria, comparative assessments of the two systems, and discussions of criminal justice, punishment, and social order are the themes under which this review looks at extant scholarly publications [10].

Many people have argued that the best foundation for comprehending Nigeria's legal system is legal pluralism. According to academics, Nigeria is a legally plural country where Islamic law, English common law, statutory law, and customary law all coexist. The way different systems coexist without one completely replacing the others is explained by legal pluralism theory. Scholarly works highlight that pluralism is a social reality that reflects Nigeria's ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity rather than only a colonial legacy. The authors contend that, especially in strongly religious societies where Islamic law is an essential component of social life, neglecting this plurality in favor of a rigidly homogeneous legal system jeopardizes justice and social harmony [11].

Additionally, some academics point out that Nigeria's constitution recognizes legal pluralism, particularly with regard to issues of personal status and, in certain states, criminal law. But when different legal systems coexist, conflicts can occur, especially when Islamic criminal law seems to be at odds with international human rights standards or constitutional laws. A wealth of literature discussing harmonization, reform, and accommodation has been produced as a result of this conflict [12].

Legal and historical academics have written a great deal on how English law was received in Nigeria. Studies show that English common law, equity theories, and general statutes were gradually imposed during the colonial era, starting with the installation of British rule. Scholars stress that rather than reflecting indigenous beliefs, English law was first established to help colonial administration, trade, and rule [13].

Legal historians point out that English law was imported into Nigeria mostly as a prefabricated system, frequently with little consideration for preexisting indigenous legal standards. English law established itself as the preeminent foundation for legislation, courts, and legal education over time. Numerous authors recognize its benefits to institutional stability, judicial precedent, and procedural clarity. However, detractors contend that English law's inability to effectively combat moral decline, corruption, and violent crime in Nigerian culture is due to its secular orientation and procedural complexity [14].

Some academics also examine the Christian moral foundations of early English common law, pointing out that despite the system's current secular nature, Christian ethics had a significant impact on its historical foundations. The idea that English law is completely neutral or value-free has been contested by this observation, especially when contrasted with Islamic law [15]. Islamic law has garnered significant scholarly interest, particularly

with reference to its historical existence in Northern Nigeria and its current implementation. Islamic law predates colonialism and was well-established through Islamic emirates long before British dominion, as is frequently noted in literature. Islamic law, according to scholars, is all-encompassing and derives from divine origins, regulating social, moral, religious, and legal behavior.

Scholarly articles make a distinction between the various facets of Islamic law that are implemented in Nigeria, such as portions of criminal law in certain states and personal status law (such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance) [16]. The goal of Islamic law, according to its supporters, is not simply punishment but also social justice, moral reform, and criminal prevention. They contend that it is frequently misinterpreted or distorted because of its stringent proof requirements and emphasis on repentance and reparation.

Critical literature, on the other hand, concentrates on the perceived severity of Islamic criminal penalties and how well they align with international human rights norms and constitutional safeguards. These criticisms frequently come up in larger discussions about modernity, secularism, and the place of religion in politics. Some academics contend that these objections are often predicated on selective interpretations of Islamic law or a lack of contextual knowledge of its goals and protections [17].

Comparative legal scholarship is really important for this study. It looks at the differences in where the laws come from, what they are based on, and how they handle justice and punishment. English law is usually seen as a system that follows rules and past decisions. On the other hand, Islamic law is seen as a system that is based on values and morals, and it comes from a higher power [18]. Comparative legal scholarship helps us understand these differences in law and Islamic law. English law and Islamic law are two different systems, and comparative legal scholarship helps us see how they work.

Many people who study this subject say that Islamic law and English law are not so different after all. They both want to do things like keep people safe, protect what belongs to them, and make sure everyone follows the rules. When you look at them side by side, you can see that Islamic law and English law share some ideas, like being fair and responsible and taking care of people who need help. Law and English law may have different ways of doing things, but they have the same goals in mind. Some people think it is not a good idea to say that Islamic law and English law are opposite, especially in countries like Nigeria, where many different people live together. Islamic law and English law should not be seen as exclusive because this can cause problems [19].

Other comparative works focus specifically on criminal law, examining deterrence, punishment, and rehabilitation. These studies often contrast the perceived leniency of modern penal systems under English law with the deterrent orientation of Islamic criminal law. While opinions differ, there is broad agreement that crime control cannot be effectively understood without considering social, moral, and cultural contexts [20]. The legal system is really important for keeping crime under control and making sure people are safe. When people study the criminal justice system in Nigeria, they often talk about the problems it has. These problems include corruption, trials that take too long, prisons that are too full, and laws that are not enforced well. People say that these problems are why bad crimes keep happening in Nigeria, even though there are laws against them. The criminal justice system in Nigeria has a lot of issues that need to be fixed [21].

In this context, some writers argue that Islamic criminal law offers lessons in deterrence and moral accountability, particularly within Muslim communities. Others caution that punishment alone cannot solve crime without addressing the underlying socio-economic factors. The literature thus reflects a wide spectrum of views, ranging from strong advocacy for expanded application of Islamic law to calls for reform and strengthening of existing statutory frameworks [22].

There are a lot of books and papers about this topic. We still do not have a clear and fair comparison of the two systems. A lot of what has been written is. Trying to protect Islamic law or criticize it, and this is often because of religious or ideological beliefs. The same thing happens with law; it is often seen as the best system without really looking at its limitations, in Nigeria [23]. We need to have studies that look at how both Islamic law and English law work to make Nigerian law, and how they can work together in a positive way. Nigerian law is made up of both law and English law, and we should be looking at how both systems can coexist and function well in the Nigerian context.

This study addresses this gap by offering a critical and comparative analysis grounded in legal pluralism, focusing on understanding rather than confrontation. By situating Islamic law and English law within Nigeria's constitutional and social framework, the study contributes to a more nuanced and constructive discourse on justice, peace, and legal development in Nigeria.

Table 1. Contemporary Literature (2020–2025) on Islamic Law and English Law as Sources of Nigerian Law

Author(s) / Year	Focus of Study	Legal System Examined	Key Arguments / Findings	Relevance to Current Study
Ostien & Dekker (2020)	Legal pluralism in Nigeria	Islamic & English Law	Nigeria operates a constitutionally recognized plural legal system, though politically sensitive.	Provides a modern legal pluralism framework
AbdulQadir Hashim (2021)	Sharia and Nigerian constitutionalism	Islamic Law	Sharia implementation is consistent with Nigeria's federal constitutional order.	Confirms constitutional legitimacy of Islamic law
Nmehielle (2022)	Human rights in plural legal systems	Islamic & English Law	Legal conflicts arise from misapplication rather than incompatibility of systems.	Supports balanced coexistence argument
Mustapha & Ehrhardt (2023)	Religion, law, and conflict in Nigeria	Islamic & English Law	Social tension stems from legal misunderstanding, not from religious law itself.	Reinforces need for legal education and tolerance
International IDEA (2024)	Law, diversity, and peacebuilding	Plural Legal Systems	Inclusive legal pluralism contributes to peace and social stability.	Links Nigerian experience to global best practices
Oraegbunam (2024)	Religion and constitutional law in Africa	Islamic & English Law	Proper accommodation of religious law	Offers comparative African

			strengthens justice and constitutionalism.	perspective
Oraegbunam & Okafor (2025)	Religious law and legal integration	Islamic & English Law	Harmonization of religious and secular law enhances legal certainty.	Most recent academic support for coexistence thesis
Akinseye-George (2025)	Criminal justice reform in Nigeria	English Law	English-based criminal justice requires reform to address insecurity.	Critically assesses effectiveness of English law

METHODOLOGY

This study looks at law and English law as sources of Nigerian law. It uses a method that's good for understanding the rules and ideas of the law. Because the subject is about what the law says, how it came to be, and what it means, this approach is the way to learn about the principles of Islamic law and English law and how they are used in Nigeria. The law in Nigeria is made up of different parts, so it is useful to look at it in this way to see how Islamic law and English law fit in.

This research is about looking at law and English law. It talks about how these laws came to be what they are, based on and how they work. The research also compares how Islamic law and English law are used in Nigeria and how they affect the country. It looks at how both Islamic law and English law deal with things like justice, keeping people in line, and stopping crime [24]. The study of law and English law is important to understand how they work together in Nigeria.

This study adopts a qualitative, doctrinal, and comparative legal approach to examine Nigerian law through an analysis of statutory provisions and judicial decisions, with a focus on how Islamic law and English law operate as sources of Nigerian law. By systematically comparing the two legal systems, the study identifies points of convergence and divergence, particularly regarding sources of law, criminal justice, moral values, and mechanisms of social control.

The comparative analysis is grounded in Islamic law and English law as parallel legal traditions. It examines their respective sources, underlying principles, and modes of application, and evaluates their impact on Nigerian society. This approach enables a balanced assessment of how both legal systems contribute—individually and collectively—to the development of Nigerian law.

The research relies exclusively on existing materials. These include primary legal sources, such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, statutes, judicial decisions, law reports, and colonial legal instruments. It also draws on classical Islamic legal texts, including the Qur'an, Sunnah, and authoritative juristic writings, as well as English common law sources, such as legal doctrines, statutes of general application, and authoritative commentaries. In addition, the study uses secondary sources, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, conference papers, and academic commentaries relevant to Islamic law, English law, and Nigerian jurisprudence.

Data are collected through documentary analysis and library-based research. Relevant texts are carefully selected, reviewed, and analyzed to extract legal principles, arguments,

and judicial interpretations. These findings are then categorized thematically, including sources of law, scope of application, criminal justice implications, and social impact.

To enhance reliability and credibility, the study employs source triangulation, combining statutory provisions, judicial decisions, and scholarly opinions. This methodological rigor ensures that the findings are balanced, well-substantiated, and academically sound.

This study is based on things we can find in a library. It does not need people to be a part of it. We make sure to do things by citing the sources we use, being honest about what we find, and showing all the different legal opinions in a fair way. We do this to uphold standards in our research, on legal viewpoints, and the way we cite sources and show intellectual honesty [25].

The study is limited to the examination of Islamic law and English law as sources of Nigerian law, with particular attention to their historical development and contemporary application. It does not include empirical fieldwork or statistical analysis. While the study provides strong theoretical and legal insights, further empirical research is recommended to assess public perception and practical outcomes of legal pluralism in Nigeria.

Research Methodology Framework

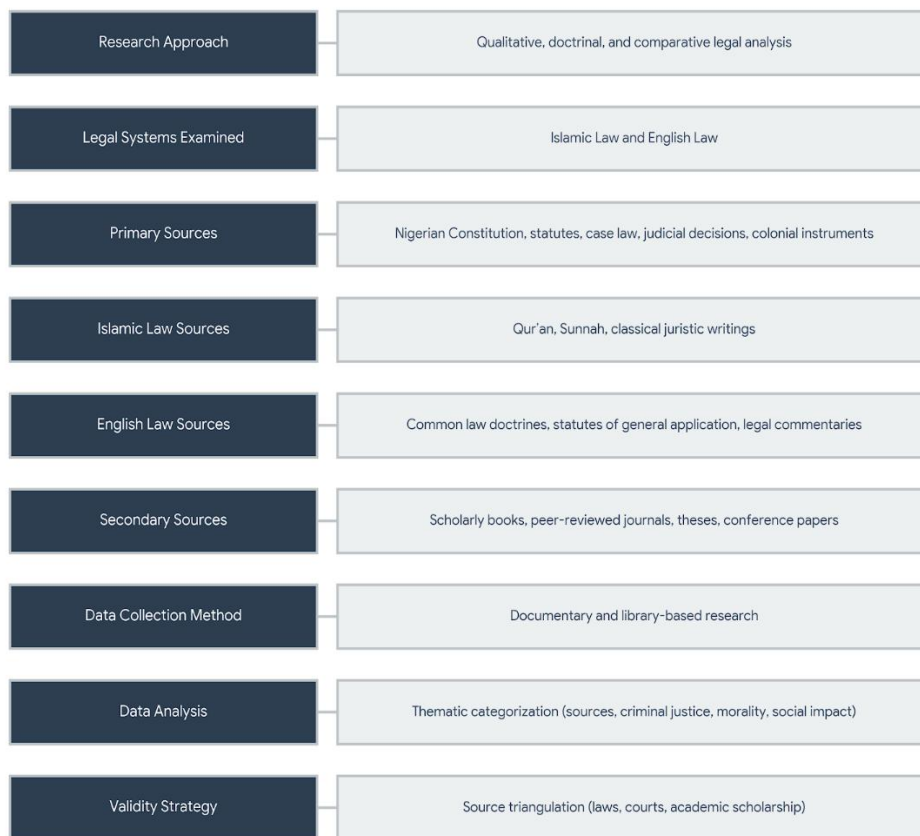


Figure 1: Methodological Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Islamic and English Legal Systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study based on the doctrinal and comparative analysis of Islamic law and English law as sources of Nigerian law. The

discussion is organized thematically to reflect the major issues raised by the research objectives, namely legal origin, constitutional recognition, scope of application, criminal justice, and implications for social order and peace in Nigeria.

Islamic Law and English Law as Recognized Sources of Nigerian Law

The results show that English law and Islamic law are acknowledged as legitimate origins of Nigerian law both historically and constitutionally. The foundation of Nigeria's legal system is still English law, which was formally established during colonial rule. This is especially true in areas like administrative governance, criminal process, constitutional law, and commercial law. On the other hand, Islamic law predates colonial authority and is still in use, particularly in Northern Nigeria. It mostly deals with issues of personal status and, in certain states, penal law. Nigeria's commitment to legal diversity is evident in this dual recognition, which allows for the coexistence of multiple legal systems within a single national framework [26].

The organization of Nigeria's judiciary demonstrates the constitutional acknowledgment of both legal systems. The formal recognition of Islamic law within the national legal system is demonstrated by the creation of Sharia Courts of Appeal at the state and federal levels, in addition to customary and common law courts. These courts institutionalize Islamic law as a live source of law rather than merely a historical remnant by having jurisdiction over Islamic personal law issues like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and waqf [27].

Islamic law was deeply accepted by Muslim communities in Nigeria even before colonial interference, which is why it is still relevant today. In many areas of Northern Nigeria before British administration, Islamic law served as the main legal framework for both civil and criminal cases. Islamic law was not entirely replaced by English law; rather, its applicability was altered and placed within statutory and constitutional bounds. The legitimacy of Islamic law as an indigenous and community-based legal system is strengthened by this historical continuity [28].

Additionally, the adoption of English law through colonial tools was primarily pragmatic, with an emphasis on economic control and administrative ease rather than cultural assimilation. Although written legislation, judicial precedent, and consistent procedures were introduced by English law, its application frequently coexisted with pre-existing religious and customary laws [29]. This multi-layered legal framework resulted in a poly legal system where Islamic law, especially among Muslims, maintained power in the personal and moral spheres while English law grew dominant in public law.

The combination of English and Islamic law highlights how Nigeria's legal system is dynamic, with public acceptance, historical usage, and constitutional acknowledgment all influencing legal validity. This multiple approach provides flexibility in addressing Nigeria's religious and cultural diversity rather than causing legal instability. To avoid jurisdictional disputes and guarantee that both legal systems work together to promote justice, social order, and national cohesion, it also necessitates cautious judicial interpretation and legislative clarity [30].

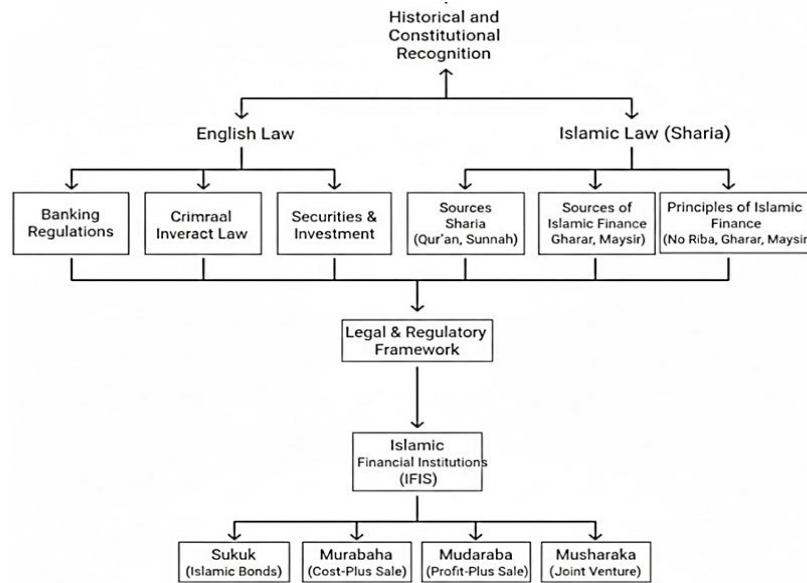


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of the Legal and Sharia Foundations Governing Islamic Financial Institutions

Philosophical Foundations and Objectives of the Two Legal Systems

The study demonstrates that the conceptual underpinnings of English and Islamic law are distinct. Islamic law, which aims to protect faith, life, intellect, ancestry, and property, is inspired by God and combines moral, spiritual, and legal duties. Despite being historically impacted by Christian ethics, English law has developed into a predominantly secular system that prioritizes institutional order, individual rights, and procedural fairness. Despite these distinctions, the goals of all legal systems are similar and include upholding social order, safeguarding life and property, and advancing justice. The idea that secular and religious rules are fundamentally incompatible is called into question by this convergence [31].

Islamic law is developed by juristic reasoning (ijtihād) and is derived from divine revelation, mainly the Qur'an and Sunnah. Its intellectual basis is the idea of obedience to divine will, in which the law serves as both a legal directive and a moral compass. As a result, following the law is seen as an act of worship as well as a civic obligation, strengthening both internal moral restraint and external legal enforcement. Islamic law's comprehensive character aims to uphold social order while fostering ethical consciousness [32].

English law, on the other hand, did not develop by divine decree but rather by legislative action, judicial precedent, and historical experience. Its conceptual foundation is found in natural law traditions and legal positivism, with a focus on procedural justice, predictability, and reason. Particularly following the Enlightenment, English law gradually moved away from overtly religious underpinnings and toward secular administration, emphasizing individual liberty, the rule of law, and institutional responsibility. English law may now flexibly adjust to shifting social and political situations because of this progress [33].

The pursuit of justice as a primary legal goal unites both systems despite their different roots. According to Islamic law, justice (‘adl) is putting everything in its right place and making sure that rights and obligations are balanced. In a similar vein, English law pursues justice via due process, equality before the law, and unbiased adjudication. The underlying dedication to justice, social stability, and the defense of core interests is nevertheless a common ideal despite the differences in the procedures [34].

The potential for positive interaction between religious and secular legal traditions within a plural legal system is highlighted by this confluence. The study shows that Islamic law and English law provide complementary methods to legal control, with one emphasizing moral accountability and deterrence and the other emphasizing procedural safeguards and institutional order, rather than being seen as competing or incompatible [35]. In Nigeria's multireligious culture, acknowledging these common goals lays the groundwork for legal concord and educated policy conversation.

Table 2. Key Differences and Convergences between Islamic Law and English Law

Aspect	Islamic Law	English Law
Source of Authority	Divine revelation (Qur'an and Sunnah), supplemented by juristic reasoning (ijtihād)	Human reason, judicial precedent, legislation, and historical development
Philosophical Foundation	Submission to divine will; law as a moral, spiritual, and legal system	Legal positivism and natural law traditions emphasize rationality and order
Nature of Law	Integrative—combines moral, spiritual, and legal obligations	Predominantly secular, focusing on legal rules and institutional processes
Concept of Justice	Justice ('adl) is placing everything in its proper position and balancing rights and duties.	Justice is achieved through due process, equality before the law, and impartial adjudication.
Objective of Law	Preservation of faith, life, intellect, lineage, and property (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah)	Protection of individual rights, maintenance of order, and legal certainty
Role of Obedience	Compliance is both a civic duty and an act of worship	Compliance is a legal obligation enforced by state institutions
Approach to Social Order	Emphasizes moral accountability, deterrence, and ethical conduct	Emphasizes procedural fairness, predictability, and institutional authority
Adaptability	Flexible through ijtihād within divine limits	Highly adaptable through legislation and judicial interpretation
Relevance in Nigeria	Governs personal and moral aspects of life among Muslims	Provides a national legal framework and institutional governance
Shared Objectives	Justice, protection of life and property, and social stability	Justice, protection of life and property, and social stability

Application in Criminal Justice and Social Control

The study's key finding is how English law and Islamic law view criminal justice differently. Although incarceration and rehabilitation are major components of English law in Nigeria, the survey shows that the public is generally concerned about inefficiencies, delayed trials, and perceived leniency toward offenders. In contrast, Islamic criminal law places a strong emphasis on moral responsibility, deterrence, and prompt justice, especially when it comes to serious crimes [36]. The study concludes that Islamic law's stringent evidentiary requirements and emphasis on justice act as barriers against abuse, even though it is frequently accused of being severe. Discussions over the efficacy of Nigeria's current criminal justice system have been sparked by this disparity.

Nigerian criminal justice administration under English law is heavily influenced by colonial traditions that were passed down through the generations and places a high value

on procedural formalism and jail sentencing. Although these procedures are intended to preserve due process and safeguard individual rights, systemic issues, including overcrowding in jails, protracted pre-trial detention, corruption, and insufficient investigative capacity, frequently make it difficult to put them into practice. The public's trust in the criminal justice system has been damaged by these flaws, which have also cast doubt on the system's ability to discourage crime and maintain social order [37].

In contrast, Islamic criminal law is based on the idea that punishment has both deterrent and corrective effects on society. Sanctions are meant to deter future transgressions and reestablish moral order in addition to punishing misbehavior. Crucially, the paper emphasizes how Islamic law imposes very high standards of proof, especially in hudūd violations, making incorrect conviction challenging. Contrary to popular belief that Islamic criminal law is capricious or unduly harsh, this evidential rigor demonstrates a genuine commitment to justice and the protection of the accused [38].

According to the comparative research, neither method provides a comprehensive answer to Nigeria's crime problems when used separately. Although English law protects human rights and offers procedural safeguards, its enforcement is inefficient. Despite its great moral discipline and deterrence, Islamic law necessitates strict institutional and constitutional alignment to avoid abuse [39]. In order to improve accountability, public trust, and social stability within Nigeria's multiple legal environment, the findings thus support recommendations for well-informed legal reform that builds on the advantages of both systems.

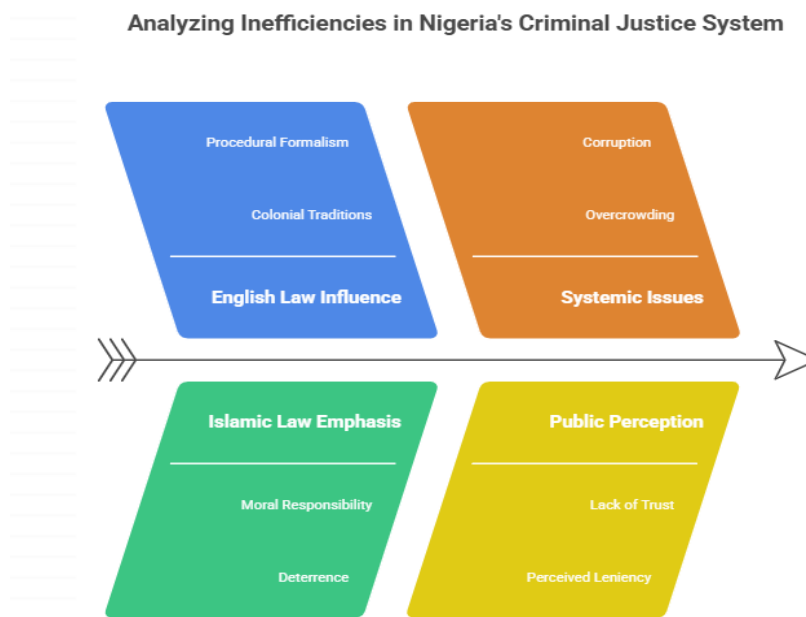


Figure 3. Analysis of Inefficiencies and Influencing Factors in Nigeria's Criminal Justice System

Constitutional Limits and Jurisdictional Boundaries

The results also show that both legal systems function within bounds established by the constitution. While Islamic law is limited to certain jurisdictions and mostly applies to Muslims, English law is applied consistently throughout Nigeria. This jurisdictional distinction guarantees that non-Muslims' rights are not violated when Islamic law is applied. The study emphasizes the significance of legal clarity and judicial scrutiny in a multiple legal environment by highlighting the critical role constitutional safeguards play in controlling any conflicts between the two systems [40].

The Nigerian Constitution, which provides the framework for both Islamic and English law to function within, is the ultimate legal authority. The preservation of fundamental human rights, equality before the law, and freedom of religion are all guaranteed by constitutional provisions, which establish bounds for the implementation of religious laws. When Islamic law is implemented, it must adhere to certain constitutional norms to prevent it from undermining constitutional supremacy or clashing with nationally recognized rights.

Through the framework of the legal system, jurisdictional boundaries further restrict the application of Islamic law. In jurisdictions that have enacted Sharia-based criminal law, jurisdiction is strictly limited to Muslims who provide their approval. Sharia Courts of Appeal primarily handle cases about Islamic personal law. This approach protects non-Muslims' right to be ruled by secular law while reducing legal disputes. The higher courts' judicial review process is still a vital tool for settling conflicts resulting from jurisdictional overlap.

According to the study, maintaining peace within Nigeria's multiple legal system requires efficient judicial oversight. In interpreting constitutional laws, settling disputes between legal standards, and avoiding the politicization or improper application of religious law, courts are essential. Islamic law and English law can coexist without endangering national unity as long as judicial independence and constitutional clarity are preserved. The significance of the rule of law in handling legal diversity in a multireligious society is shown by this equilibrium.

Coexistence, Complementarity, and Challenges

According to the study, English and Islamic law can coexist in Nigeria's legal system and are not mutually exclusive. Islamic law adds moral discipline and community-based justice, whereas English law offers administrative structure and national cohesiveness. But there are still issues, such as misreading Islamic law, political manipulation, public misunderstandings, and human rights concerns. These difficulties highlight the necessity of objective research, tolerance, and legal education in order to foster harmonious coexistence and the efficient use of both systems.

The different strengths of the two legal systems are one important area of complementarity. In terms of institutional governance, procedural protections, and consistent application across many populations, all crucial for both domestic administration and international engagement, English law shines. In contrast, Islamic law addresses ethical aspects of behavior that are frequently outside the purview of official legal penalties by emphasizing moral responsibility, deterrence, and collective accountability. When combined, these advantages provide a more comprehensive approach to social regulation and justice.

The study finds important obstacles to successful coexistence despite this potential synergy. Fear and misunderstanding among the public have been exacerbated by misinterpretations of Islamic law, which frequently result from insufficient legal education or selective application. Furthermore, religious law's validity is occasionally undermined, and social conflict is increased when political actors use it for ideological or electoral ends. These behaviors contradict the basic purposes of Islamic law, which promote justice, mercy, and public benefit [41].

The results also imply that interfaith communication and ongoing legal education are essential for resolving these issues. Reducing prejudice and fostering mutual respect can be achieved by encouraging legal professionals, legislators, and the general public to have accurate knowledge of both legal systems. In order to ensure that Islamic and English law serve as complementary tools for attaining justice, peace, and social stability in Nigeria

rather than as sources of division, objective research and constitutional literacy can also direct legal reform and judicial practice.



Figure 4. Interaction between Legal Complementarity and Systemic Challenges in Nigeria

Implications for Justice, Peace, and Legal Reform in Nigeria

The conversation shows that the successful coexistence of English and Islamic law has important ramifications for societal stability and justice in Nigeria. According to the study, when it is constitutionally possible, Nigeria's criminal justice system might be strengthened by the selective application of Islamic law concepts, especially those that emphasize deterrence, accountability, and moral responsibility. However, maintaining peace in a multireligious community still requires respect for human rights, constitutional supremacy, and religious diversity.

The confluence of English and Islamic law has wider ramifications for public trust and legal legitimacy outside of criminal justice. Law compliance rises when people believe the legal system is just, ethically sound, and efficient. English law's procedural safeguards guarantee transparency and uniformity, but Islamic law's emphasis on moral behavior and accountability might strengthen internal moral constraint [42]. When combined, these factors can boost trust in the legal system and lessen inclinations toward self-help and vigilantism.

The study also suggests that Nigerian legal reform should be implemented gradually and culturally. Reform initiatives should concentrate on harmonization rather than the complete adoption of any one legal tradition, drawing from English law where institutional governance and procedural rigor are necessary and from Islamic law where it is consistent with constitutional principles and international human rights standards. Nigeria's religious and cultural diversity can be respected while avoiding legal fragmentation with such a balanced approach.

Lastly, inclusive legal discourse and policy-making are critical to fostering peace in Nigeria. Religious conflict and sentiments of marginalization can be lessened by acknowledging Islamic law as a valid source of law for Muslims while defending the rights of non-Muslims. In order to ensure that legal pluralism is a weapon for unity rather than

division, the study highlights the importance of constitutional literacy, legal education, and continuous judicial independence. Nigeria's plural legal system has the potential to serve as an example for harmonious coexistence in multireligious countries if it is administered appropriately.

CONCLUSION

In light of Nigeria's diverse legal legacy and socio-religious diversity, this study concludes that both Islamic law and English law are acceptable and constitutionally recognized sources of Nigerian law. Islamic law, especially in Muslim jurisdictions, adds moral accountability, deterrence, and community-based justice, whereas English law offers procedural structure, institutional stability, and national cohesiveness. Both systems strive for the same goals of justice, social order, and the defense of life and property despite having differing philosophical underpinnings. Their coexistence enhances rather than weakens national unity when they are implemented within constitutional bounds and backed by judicial supervision, legal education, and tolerance. Therefore, the study confirms that Nigeria's legal pluralism provides a useful foundation for advancing justice, peace, and long-term legal change in a multireligious community when it is handled well.

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Author Contribution

Maisuna Mustapha Yahya conceptualized the study, conducted the legal analysis, and drafted the manuscript. Alwy Ahmed Mohamed contributed to the literature review and comparative framework. Farah Saed Dheere assisted with methodology design, data organization, and critical revision of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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