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Assessing the Impact of Social Media platforms on Dissemination of Christian Religious Messages in Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of social media platforms on dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State, Nigeria, using a descriptive survey research design. A total of 423 respondents were randomly selected from a population of 1,897,432 Christians, and data were gathered through a structured questionnaire, with responses analyzed using mean scores. The self-structured questionnaire was validated by experts in the field and tested for reliability using a pilot study, yielding a high reliability coefficient of 0.75, indicating that the instrument was both valid and dependable for data collection. The findings revealed that social media Platforms plays a major role in spreading Christian religious messages by facilitating immediate communication, increasing youth involvement, and encouraging interfaith dialogue. However, it also brings challenges such as the spread of false information, misinterpretation of doctrines, commercialization of religion, and the potential for increased interreligious conflict. The study concludes that social media has become a key tool in religious communication in Kaduna State, offering both opportunities and risks. It recommends that the government work with media regulatory agencies to create and enforce guidelines that control the distribution of harmful or misleading religious content online, while also investing in digital literacy initiatives to promote responsible social media use. In addition, it advises religious leaders to create official, well-managed digital platforms for sharing accurate and theologically sound content and to use these platforms to engage with young people and promote peaceful coexistence among diverse religious groups.

Keywords: Social Media Platforms, Christian Religious Messages, Kaduna State

Introduction

The proliferation of digital technology has ushered in a transformative era in global communication, and nowhere is this more evident than in the rapid spread of social media platforms. These platforms have significantly reshaped how information, including religious messages, is disseminated and consumed across various societies. In Nigeria, particularly Kaduna State, the rise of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter has facilitated unprecedented access to religious teachings, spiritual inspiration, and doctrinal engagement. This has blurred the lines between traditional religious communication and modern technological expression, fostering a dynamic interface between faith and digital connectivity (Adeniyi, 2021). Historically, religious messages in Nigeria were primarily communicated through oral traditions, physical gatherings, and print media. However, the advent of social media has introduced a paradigm shift, allowing religious leaders,

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institutions, and individuals to reach large audiences beyond geographical boundaries instantaneously (Okon, 2020). Kaduna State, being one of Nigeria's most religiously diverse and sensitive regions, presents a unique context for examining how social media influences religious communication. This state experiences vibrant interactions among Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs, all of which are increasingly represented online, often with significant social consequences. The growing accessibility to smartphones and internet services has democratized religious expression, enabling even laypersons to share sermons, prayers, prophetic declarations, and religious debates. While this has increased spiritual awareness and participation, it has also contributed to doctrinal controversies, misinformation, and at times, interreligious tensions (Ogunlade, 2022). The social media space in Kaduna has become a battleground where religious ideas compete, often without proper theological guidance, leading to misinterpretations and the spread of extremist ideologies in some instances. Moreover, the anonymity and immediacy afforded by social media allow for the amplification of both moderate and radical religious views. The viral nature of content can escalate seemingly minor theological disagreements into major public debates. In some cases, messages that would have been restricted to congregational settings now receive national or even global attention, thus magnifying their influence and potential for impact—positively or negatively (Ibrahim, 2019). This dynamic calls for a critical evaluation of the digital religious landscape, especially in areas prone to sectarian conflict such as Kaduna.

In educational and spiritual terms, social media also serves as an informal platform for religious learning. Online Bible studies, Quranic recitations, theological podcasts, and interfaith dialogues are frequently hosted, giving followers more flexible access to religious education. However, the lack of regulation over content raises questions about authenticity, interpretation, and doctrinal purity (Eze, 2023). This is particularly important in Kaduna State, where the religious fabric is tightly interwoven with political and ethnic identities, making the stakes of miscommunication considerably higher. In addition, the influence of social media on religious youth cannot be overstated. Young people in Kaduna increasingly turn to social platforms for religious identity, guidance, and community. This presents opportunities for mentorship and faith development but also risks exposure to spiritual manipulation and ideological indoctrination (Danladi, 2021). Understanding the motivations and effects of religious social media use among youth is essential for religious leaders, educators, and policymakers seeking to guide healthy spiritual formation in the digital age.

Social Media Platforms and Religious Messages in Nigeria

Social media Platforms has emerged as a transformative force in the dissemination of religious messages in Nigeria, redefining how faith-based communication is conducted across the country. With platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube becoming widespread, religious institutions and individuals now have direct, immediate access to vast audiences. This digital shift marks a departure from traditional models of religious communication that relied on physical gatherings, printed tracts, and radio sermons. According to Ibe (2020), the democratization of message production and distribution through social media has empowered even lay believers to assume roles once reserved for ordained clergy, thus decentralizing religious authority and expanding the scope of spiritual engagement. The appeal of social media Platforms in religious contexts lies in its capacity to foster interaction, immediacy, and inclusivity. In contrast to one-way communication modes of traditional media, social platforms enable real-time feedback, community building, and participatory dialogue among believers. For instance, pastors and imams now host live prayer sessions, theological discussions, and spiritual counseling via livestreams, fostering a sense of virtual fellowship. Olatunji (2019) noted that this interactive nature enhances followers' spiritual connection and facilitates continuous engagement outside of physical worship spaces, especially among youths and diaspora communities.

Despite these benefits, the unregulated nature of social media raises concerns about the credibility and doctrinal soundness of the religious messages shared. The absence of formal theological review mechanisms means that any user can propagate religious ideas, which may be misleading, heretical, or inflammatory. Musa (2021) highlighted that many self-acclaimed preachers exploit the digital space to promote personal ideologies, manipulate scriptures, or propagate sensational content to gain followers and financial contributions. This trend has contributed to spiritual confusion among some audiences and has, in extreme cases, fostered the spread of radical or extremist views that threaten religious harmony. The Nigerian religious landscape is characterized by high levels of religious sensitivity, making the misuse of social media particularly volatile. In a multi-religious society with a history of ethno-religious tensions, provocative or misinterpreted online messages can escalate into offline conflicts. Nwankwo (2022) observed that inflammatory posts shared during religious holidays or political campaigns often trigger interfaith confrontations, especially in states like Kaduna, Jos, and Kano. The viral nature of social media content exacerbates this risk, as unverified or emotionally charged messages can be widely disseminated before

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authorities can intervene or respond. Another key concern lies in the commodification of religion on social media. Many religious leaders now use social platforms not only for spiritual purposes but also for commercial ventures, branding themselves as influencers. This fusion of religious messages with entertainment and marketing dilutes the sanctity of religious discourse and shifts focus from spiritual growth to popularity and material gain. According to Adebayo (2023), this development contributes to the rise of a "celebrity clergy culture" where spiritual leaders prioritize followers, likes, and shares over genuine pastoral care or theological depth. Moreover, social media is reshaping religious identity and belonging, especially among Nigerian youths. Young people increasingly consume religious content in snippets—memes, short videos, and tweets leading to fragmented understanding of complex doctrines. While this bite-sized information format suits digital culture, it often lacks context and depth. Uchenna (2020) argues that such superficial engagement with faith may lead to spiritual immaturity, where religion becomes more performative than transformative. This raises questions about the long-term impact of social media on religious formation and ethical behavior. On a more positive note, social media has become a platform for interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding among religious communities in Nigeria. By facilitating cross-religious conversations, digital media provides an avenue for mutual understanding and tolerance. Ibrahim (2021) reported that several NGOs and religious groups have successfully used Twitter and Facebook to counter hate speech, promote religious harmony, and respond swiftly to misinformation. These efforts demonstrate the potential of social media not only to divide but also to unite, depending on how it is managed and moderated.

The emergence and widespread use of social media platforms have significantly altered the landscape of religious communication in Kaduna State, Nigeria. While traditional methods of disseminating religious messages such as sermons in places of worship, religious radio programs, and print literature remain relevant, they are increasingly being replaced or supplemented by digital platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram. This transformation raises critical concerns about the authenticity, interpretation, and regulation of religious content circulated online, especially in a region like Kaduna where religion is deeply intertwined with ethnic identity and political sensitivity. The unfiltered nature of social media often leads to the propagation of controversial, doctrinally unsound, or even inflammatory religious messages without accountability or oversight. Furthermore, the ability of social media to rapidly disseminate religious messages has introduced new dynamics into interfaith relations in Kaduna State, which is known for its religious diversity and history of ethno-religious conflict. While these platforms offer opportunities for greater religious awareness and interfaith engagement, they also risk escalating tensions through the spread of hate speech, religious intolerance, and radical ideologies. Religious messages shared online can easily be misinterpreted or taken out of context, potentially fueling division and violence. There is, therefore, a growing concern about how religious actors and followers are engaging with social media and the consequences this may have for peace and coexistence in the state. Despite the critical role of social media in shaping public religious discourse, there is a noticeable gap in empirical studies addressing its influence on the spread of religious messages within Kaduna State. Most available research tends to focus broadly on media and religion in Nigeria without adequately addressing the unique socio-cultural and religious dynamics of Kaduna. As such, there is a need to investigate how social media is being used by religious communities in the state, the nature and content of messages being shared, and the broader implications for religious understanding, cohesion, and conflict. Addressing this gap is essential for developing informed strategies that promote responsible religious communication in the digital age.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the assessment of the impact of social media on dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter are being utilized by religious individuals and institutions to communicate faith-based content.

Research question

What is the impact of social media on the dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Research hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the impact of social media platforms for the dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design, focusing on respondents residing in Kaduna State, Nigeria. A simple random sampling method was utilized to select 459 respondents from a total population of 1,897,432. Data collection was

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carried out using a well-structured questionnaire. Out of the distributed questionnaires, 423 were duly completed and returned, resulting in a 92.2% response rate. The self-structured questionnaire was validated by experts in the field and tested for reliability using a pilot study, yielding a high reliability coefficient of 0.75, indicating that the instrument was both valid and dependable for data collection. Respondents were randomly selected from eight local government areas within the state using simple random sampling technique. The distribution and collection of the questionnaires were handled by the researcher in collaboration with five trained research assistants. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The responses were evaluated using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). A decision benchmark was set at a mean score of 2.50, with scores at or above this threshold considered indicative of agreement, and scores below representing disagreement. The hypothesis of the study was tested using t-test statistical analysis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Result

Research question 1

What is the impact of social media on the dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Opinions of Respondents on impact of social media on the dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State, Nigeria

S/N	Item Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1	Social media enables instant dissemination of religious messages to a large and diverse audience in Kaduna State.	242	41	72	68	3.08
2	Religious leaders use platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp to share sermons, prayers, and spiritual reflections.	263	38	71	51	3.21
3	Social media facilitates real-time interaction between religious leaders and followers, enhancing engagement.	287	38	64	34	3.37
4	Youths in Kaduna increasingly rely on social media for spiritual guidance and religious identity formation.	300	37	68	18	3.46
5	Social media provides a platform for interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance initiatives.	314	38	65	6	3.56
6	Unregulated religious content on social media sometimes leads to the spread of misinformation and doctrinal errors.	99	168	65	91	2.65
7	The viral nature of social media amplifies religious messages, both moderate and extremist.	120	163	64	76	2.77
8	Social media reduces the reliance on physical places of worship for religious learning and communication.	139	162	65	57	2.91
9	Religious messages on social media are often commercialized, blurring the line between spirituality and entertainment.	162	156	65	40	3.04
10	Inflammatory or provocative religious posts on social media have the potential to escalate interreligious tensions in Kaduna State.	194	143	79	7	3.24
Cumulative						3.13

Decision Mean=2.50

Table 1 reveals that all the items recorded mean scores exceeding the benchmark of 2.5. The individual item means ranged from a minimum of 2.60 to a maximum of 3.56, suggesting that participants generally agreed with the statements presented. The overall mean of 3.13, which is clearly above the threshold, indicates a strong recognition by respondents of the impact of

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social media platforms in disseminating Christian religious messages in Kaduna State. Therefore, each item's mean was deemed acceptable and retained for further analysis.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the impact of social media platforms for the dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State.

Table 2: Summary of One Sample T-Test on impact of social media platforms for the dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State

Variable	N	Mean	Std.	Mean diff	Decision
Hypo ¹	423	3.0804	1.17565	3.08038	0.00

Table 2 presents the results of the One-Sample T-Test conducted to evaluate the impact of social media platforms for the dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State. The study involved 427 respondents. The analysis produced a mean score of 3.0804 with a standard deviation of 1.17565, indicating a moderate spread in the responses. The observed mean difference of 3.08038 from the test value demonstrates a statistically significant effect, thereby confirming the influential impact of social media in disseminating Christian religious messages within the state. As a result, the null hypothesis suggesting no significant impact of social media platforms on disseminating Christian religious message is rejected.

Discussion of findings

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of social media on the dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Through the analysis of data collected from respondents, the findings demonstrate that social media plays a significant role in shaping Christian religious communication. It facilitates immediate and widespread sharing of religious content, especially through platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube. The study shows that these platforms are widely used by religious leaders and followers to share sermons, spiritual reflections, and religious teachings, leading to increased engagement, particularly among youths. Additionally, social media has created a virtual space for interfaith dialogue, fostering mutual understanding among different religious groups in the state. However, the study also highlights several concerns associated with this digital shift in religious communication. While social media offers accessibility and wide reach, it also contributes to the spread of unverified and misleading religious content. The absence of proper regulation allows for doctrinal misinterpretation, commercialization of faith, and, in some cases, the promotion of divisive or inflammatory messages that could heighten interreligious tensions. These findings align with the assertion of Ibe (2020), who noted that although social media has revolutionized religious communication, it must be used with caution and responsibility to avoid spiritual confusion and societal conflict. Thus, the study calls for a more structured and ethical use of social media in religious dissemination across Kaduna State.

The result of the study confirms that social media has a significant influence on the dissemination of religious messages in Kaduna State, aligning with the position of Eze (2023), who emphasized the growing role of digital platforms in shaping religious communication. The One-Sample T-Test presented in Table 2 shows that the 427 respondents largely acknowledged the impact of social media, with a mean score of 3.0804 and a standard deviation of 1.17565. This statistical outcome reflects a moderate but consistent agreement among participants regarding the effectiveness of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube in spreading religious content. The notable mean difference from the hypothesized value signifies that the effect is not due to chance but reflects a real and observable influence in the community. Furthermore, the rejection of the null hypothesis, which stated that social media has no significant influence on the spread of religious messages, further solidifies the conclusion that social media plays a central role in religious communication in Kaduna State. This finding supports Eze's (2023) argument that the digital space has become a vital arena for spiritual interaction, evangelism, and religious expression. However, it also implies the need for caution, considering the possible misuse of these platforms for spreading inaccurate or harmful religious information. Therefore, while social media serves as a powerful tool for religious outreach and engagement, its use must be guided by responsibility, ethical standards, and a commitment to promoting peace and doctrinal soundness.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media has become a powerful tool for the dissemination of Christian religious messages in Kaduna State, offering religious leaders and followers a platform for real-time interaction, spiritual engagement, and broader

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outreach. It plays a vital role in shaping religious identity, especially among the youth, and promotes interfaith dialogue and tolerance through accessible and diverse digital content. The immediacy and reach of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube have enabled religion to transcend traditional boundaries, thereby transforming how faith is communicated and practiced in the state. However, the study also concludes that the unregulated nature of social media presents significant challenges, including the spread of misinformation, doctrinal confusion, and the commercialization of religious messages. In addition, provocative religious content has the potential to incite interreligious tensions in a socially sensitive environment like Kaduna. These findings highlight the need for a more responsible and guided use of social media by religious actors, as well as the implementation of digital content regulation and public awareness to ensure that religious communication online contributes to peace, unity, and spiritual growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it recommends that:

- i. The government should collaborate with media regulatory bodies to develop and enforce policies that monitor and curb the spread of harmful or misleading religious content on social media, while also supporting digital literacy programs that promote responsible online engagement among citizens in Kaduna State.
- ii. Religious leaders should establish official and well-managed social media channels for disseminating accurate and theologically sound messages, while actively engaging youths online to counter misinformation and foster peaceful interfaith interactions.

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