

COORDINATED AGENCY FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN YORUBALAND

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ABSTRACT

Religion is many things, but primarily, a belief system that dictates customs and values that members of a particular social and cultural community live by and relate to, and this includes members not of the community. Digital technologies have an impact on how these different ways of belief are expressed and experienced. On the other hand, kinship networks, community obligations, and interfaith accommodation, which have also been influenced by digital technologies, have enabled Indigenous religion, Islam, and Christianity to coexist in Yorubaland, Southwestern Nigeria. Digital technologies have also made it possible to communicate and participate in different communities. Of major concern, however, is misinformation that circulates in these communities. The focus of this paper is to interrogate how religious acts, as coordinated agency, sustain peaceful coexistence across the dominant three religious traditions in Yorubaland in the digitally mediated era. Utilising descriptive, historical, and thematic content analysis of empirical library resources, archival materials, and the Internet. The finding reveals a departure from the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the old analogue era to a contemporary digital religious space, and this makes the concept of sacredness relative. Also, the paper identifies both continuities and innovations in religion as a process of peacebuilding across different cultural and spiritual communities. In addition, the paper unravelled the importance of digital literacy, religious content, and context sensitivity as strategies for interfaith collaboration in sustaining societal harmony. The paper concludes that digital culture in relation to religious beliefs and traditions has effectively strengthened interfaith relations and the peacebuilding religious ecosystem in Yorubaland.

KEYWORDS: Digital, Culture, Kinship, Peacebuilding, Pluralism, Religion, and Yorubaland.

INTRODUCTION

Like other aspects of life, religion interacts with science and technology (Angrand and Rafii, 2025). Al-Zaman (2022) notes that the evolution of scientific communication and technology has an impact on religious communities and how religious adherents are perceived. This change has been marked by the evolution of communication from mainstream communication to communication with the use of digital media and the internet, which has been an integral part of the activities of

religious communities and the public (Pescatarian, 2024; Unnithan & Naidu, 2025). Not only has the use of technology in religion created new ways for people to connect, but it has also resulted in the spread of unverified information and digital extremism (Al-Zaman, 2022). Among Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria, the relationship among the adherents of the indigenous religion, Islam, and Christianity has traditionally been characterised by religious pluralism, tolerance, and the strengthening of social relationships and community cohesion (Oyeweso & Raheem, 2012; Lateju, 2015).

Traditionally, there are different ways in which conflicts are mediated to ensure the coexistence of various religious communities in Yorubaland. Meanwhile, scholars like Lawal and Orunbon (2019), Ergen (2023), Balogun (2025), and Babalola (2025) have conducted different studies on digital religion and Yoruba ethnic pluralism. However, not much has been done on how religion serves as a coordinated agency in the era of digital culture, which encourages peacebuilding among the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria. This study will strive to answer the question of how the Indigenous religion, Islam, and Christianity in Yoruba land modify and adapt their digital peace ethics and interfaith commitments. The paper examines peacebuilding in religion from both a comparative and an innovative perspective.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopts a qualitative and comparative research design to explore how functional religious traditions act as a coordinated social agency for fostering peaceful coexistence in the digital era within Yorubaland, south-west Nigeria. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study is concerned with reinterpreting meanings, lived religious experiences, and social interactions rather than quantifying measurable variables. Utilising descriptive and historical content analysis allows for a more nuanced engagement with how religious ideas, practices, and identities are expressed and negotiated, particularly within emerging digital environments that increasingly shape interfaith relations and social cohesion. The study employed primarily secondary data sources and library resources. The books, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and credible online publications addressing religion, digital communication, interfaith relations, and Yoruba religious traditions were empirically engaged. Within this framework, relevant literature on Indigenous religion, Islam, and Christianity in the Yoruba sociocultural context was systematically reviewed to capture historical continuities and conceptual patterns of coexistence, tension management, and social negotiation among the three major religious traditions.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A comparative-analytical method was employed to examine both convergences and divergences in the ways these religious traditions promote peace, ethical conduct, and interreligious engagement, especially within digitally mediated spaces, such as social media platforms, livestreamed worship services, and online religious communities. Through thematic analysis of the selected literature, the study identifies recurring patterns, emerging tensions, and new opportunities for interfaith collaboration

in a rapidly digitizing social environment. Overall, this methodological orientation provides a context-sensitive and interpretative framework for understanding how religion continues to operate as a constructive and adaptive social force within both traditional communal settings and digitally connected religious landscapes in Yorubaland, where faith, identity, and communication increasingly intersect in shaping peaceful coexistence.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term *religion* originates etymologically from the Latin *religare*, meaning “to bind,” “to reverence,” “sacred,” and “obligation.” (Durkheim 2015). The linguistic root of the meaning of religion suggests that religion is a binding force that coheres social and spiritual structures of human existence in relation to the sacred (Buongiorno, 2025). Going by this etymological clarity, religion remains a conceptually difficult subject to define with exact precision. Attempts for its strict definition often encounter limitations and ambiguities, which largely come up because religion is deeply interwoven with culture, making any rigid separation between the two phenomena artificial and reductive (Appleby, 2000).

In African contexts, among the Yoruba people in particular, religion is profoundly embedded in ethnic identity, such that both cultural norms and spirituality are often experienced as inseparable realities (Adepoju and Abiodun, 2023). It is functioning as a framework through which identity is formed and sustained, offering ideological orientation, social belonging, and spiritual meaning (Ajibade, Komolafe, and Issah, 2023). In a broader sense, however, religion is understood as an organised system of beliefs, worldviews, and practices that addresses fundamental questions of human existence and situates individuals within an ordered universe (Ahmed and Valeromata, 2023). It is commonly associated with belief in a Supernatural Being or ultimate reality, including Yahweh in Judaism, Jesus Christ in Christianity, Allah in Islam, Brahman in Hinduism, or enlightened figures such as Buddha (Kung, 1993).

Beyond doctrinal belief, religion is also expressed as a set of practices aimed at establishing and maintaining a relationship with a transcendent reality for the purpose of securing well-being or avoiding harm (Esposito, 2011). Forae and Akpomuvie (2024) argue that in many traditional societies, religion functions as a source of meaning and hope in moments of suffering, particularly through beliefs in life beyond death and continued communion with ancestors within the living community (Forae and Akpomuvie, 2024; Mbiti, 1995). Buttressing this claim, Cheong (2023) observes that religion and culture operate as deeply integrated systems that preserve enduring values, norms, customs, and beliefs, transmitted carefully across generations (Cheong, 2023). For instance, during adolescence, human sexuality becomes more pronounced due to biological and hormonal changes, and many societies respond to this developmental stage through structured religious and cultural guidance (Davie, 2025). Casanova (2011) suggests that religious and cultural custodians therefore assume responsibility for shaping moral understanding through teachings, rituals, and initiation practices that guide young people into adulthood. The blend of cultural and religious synthesis often forms a system that reinforces the established grand norms, taboos, prohibitions, and

communal pedagogies that are designed to sustain moral order and social cohesion, rather than leaving such formation to uncontrolled external influences such as mass media (Awofeko & Olusanya, 2023).

According to Fisher and Tafoya (2021), religion is not merely a belief system but a structured social institution that organizes values, relationships, and collective behaviour. Within functionalist theory, Durkheim emphasizes that religion enhances social cohesion by reinforcing shared norms and moral boundaries, thereby contributing to overall societal stability (Durkheim, 1912). In plural societies, religion further functions as a mediating institution that shapes ethical conduct, civic responsibility, and intergroup relations (Casanova, 2011). Contemporary studies also show that religious institutions now play expanding roles in humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding efforts, and digital community formation in response to technological change (Haynes, 2020; Campbell, 2021). Consequently, religion operates as an interconnected system linking moral instruction, social capital, and public engagement, fostering trust, dialogue, and resilience when properly guided, even within digitally complex environments (Gelfgren, 2022).

In plural societies, peaceful coexistence refers to the capacity of diverse cultural, religious, and social groups to live together in mutual respect and stable relations despite differences in belief and identity. It involves more than tolerance, requiring active dialogue, cooperation, and non-violent mechanisms of conflict resolution as essential foundations of social stability (Ishaque and Abuzar, 2023). In African contexts and particularly in Nigerian societies, religious pluralism, when constructively engaged, serves as a vital framework for unity, development, and shared progress (Okpachui, 2019). Similarly, that diversity is harnessed in such a way to promote dialogue, equality, and cooperation rather than division among religious traditions (Haynes 2020; Mujani, 2025). Undoubtedly, peaceful coexistence depends on sustained mutual respect and a shared commitment to collective well-being (Greatness, 1997).

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

In the contemporary digital age, religion has undergone a significant transformation as faith communities increasingly incorporate digital tools and technological innovations into religious life (Jamson, 2021). This emerging reality is described as digital religion, in which religious identity and practices are shaped through both online and offline sacred environments rather than being confined to physical spaces of worship (Cheong, 2023). Digital platforms such as livestreamed services, mobile applications, and social media networks have expanded access to religious participation, particularly among younger digital natives who engage with faith through connected environments (Bingaman, 2023; Ergen, 2023). At the same time, this transformation raises critical concerns regarding authenticity, the decentralisation of religious authority, and the circulation of misinformation within online spaces (Ishaque, 2023). As such, digital religion embodies both opportunities for broader inclusion and challenges to doctrinal stability and communal cohesion.

This study adopts an integrated theoretical framework drawn from sociology of religion, comparative analysis, and media studies to explain the role of religion in promoting

peaceful coexistence in digital societies (Campbell, 2023). Borrowing from the structural functionalism indices of Émile Durkheim (2015), it is pertinent to conceptualise religion as a social institution that fosters cohesion, shared norms, and stability through collective rituals and belief systems (Abusharif, 2023). Durkheim (1915), in his thesis, maintains that religion strengthens collective consciousness and reinforces moral order, both of which are essential for social integration (Durkheim, 1915; Munir, 2023).

Gyekye (1997) contends that the use of gratification theory to explain how individuals actively select media and digital platforms to satisfy specific social and psychological needs, including religious engagement, identity construction, and community connection (Gyekye, 1997). Reflecting on this perspective highlights how human agency in digital religious participation and the ways online environments are utilized to meet spiritual and relational needs. Taken together, these frameworks illuminate religion as both a stabilising social force and an adaptive communicative practice within the contemporary digital landscape and religious ecosystem (Hellard, 2017).

PHENOMENOLOGY OF DIVINITIES IN INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN YORUBALAND

Indigenous religion in Yorubaland is deeply rooted in spiritual cosmology with appreciable ritual performance, which forms the entirety of the indigenous religious ecosystem. This is part of an enduring spiritual system grounded in the cosmological understanding that a Supreme Being, *Olódùmarè*, is the creator of the universe and the ultimate source of divine authority (Babalola, 2013; Ajibade and Komolafe, 2023). Within this religious framework, divine intermediaries known as *Òrìṣà* serve as mediators between the spiritual and human realms, each governing specific dimensions of life and natural divide the universe into sacred and mundane worlds (Elugbaju, 2015). There are numerous deities in the Yoruba indigenous religious tradition, and each deity is assigned a specific function by the Supreme Being *Olódùmarè*. For instance, *Ògún*, a primordial divinity that is associated with iron, labour, and technology, while *Ṣàngó*, another ancient divinity associated with thunder and justice, are not abstract figures but active moral agents within communal existence, shaping ethical conduct and social order (Taylor, 2007). At the centre of the Yoruba indigenous religious system, *Ifá* is a system of divinity endowed with unlimited wisdom and knowledge to benefit other deities and humanity at large. Traditionally, Ifa is the chief custodian of wisdom and guiding spirit for other divinities. That is why Yoruba people referred to the deity as '*Akere fi inu se ogbon, Olumoran, ti imo oyun igbin ninu ikarahun*' meaning 'the small but mighty deity, with omniscient wisdom, who understands the mystery of everything, including the pregnancy of the snail in the shell'. It is a well-trained Priest known as *Babaláwo*, who has the customary right to function as the custodian of Ifa and its sacred wisdom. Most of the social and religious ethics, norms, taboos, prohibition are derived from the sacred and spiritual interpretations of Odu Ifa (Balogun, 2025). Through divination, guidance is offered on issues of destiny, decision-making, and moral responsibility, reinforcing both personal accountability and

communal harmony. The religion, therefore, is not only spiritual but also deeply social, sustained through rituals, festivals, and shared moral expectations that strengthen cohesion and continuity across generations. Even in contemporary times, Yoruba religion continues to shape identity locally and within the global diaspora, remaining a living source of cultural meaning and ethical orientation.

Islam in Yorubaland represents one of the earliest and most established religious traditions in the region. Historical accounts trace its introduction to Yoruba society through Wangara (Malian) traders and itinerant Islamic scholars from around the 14th century, predating colonial contact and the later expansion of Christianity (Imam and Saputra, 2024). By the mid-sixteenth century, Islamic institutions had already begun to take root, with reports of a mosque established in Oyo Ile around 1550, followed by further centres of worship in places such as *Ìwó* and Lagos. Over time, Islam became firmly embedded in Yoruba social structures, influencing education, governance, trade relations, and communal organization (Abusharif, 2023). Within Yoruba society, Islamic traditions have often promoted coexistence and interreligious tolerance, contributing to the region's broader culture of religious plurality. At the same time, the interaction between Islam and indigenous Yoruba cultural practices has produced ongoing processes of adaptation and negotiation (Ismail, 2025). This dynamic has resulted in syncretic expressions in certain contexts, reflecting the lived complexity of identity formation where religious norms and cultural traditions continually interact rather than exist in isolation.

Christianity in Yorubaland emerged prominently in the late nineteenth century following the arrival of European missionaries, alongside the foundational contributions of indigenous figures such as Samuel Ajayi Crowther, whose translation and linguistic work significantly facilitated the indigenization of Christian teaching. Early encounters between Christianity and Yoruba society were marked by a mixture of resistance, accommodation, and selective adaptation, as communities already grounded in indigenous religious worldviews engaged with the new faith in varied ways (Elugbaju, 2025). Over time, Christianity evolved into a major force in education, healthcare, and social development, becoming deeply embedded in both rural and urban Yoruba life. Different denominations, including Anglican and Methodist missions as well as African-initiated churches such as the Aladura movement, developed distinct forms of worship that resonated with Yoruba cultural sensibilities while addressing local spiritual concerns (Balogun, 2025). Today, Christianity continues to play a significant role in shaping civic identity, moral discourse, and peacebuilding efforts, while existing alongside Islam and indigenous religion within a complex and evolving pluralistic landscape.

Patterns of inter-religious relations refer to how different faith communities interact, negotiate difference, and either foster peaceful coexistence or generate tension within plural societies. Positive interaction patterns are often characterized by dialogue, mutual recognition, and respectful communication, all of which help reduce prejudice and strengthen understanding across religious boundaries (Mansur, 2023). Empirical studies further show that reciprocal engagement, where communities actively listen and respond with empathy, significantly enhances peaceful coexistence, particularly in culturally diverse settings where differences in language, belief, and worldview may

otherwise create distance (Ergen, 2023). In many contexts, interreligious councils and structured dialogue platforms have become important instruments for cooperation, conflict mediation, and shared social development, especially in Christian–Muslim relations in Nigeria. However, when interfaith relations are shaped by exclusivist attitudes or persistent misunderstanding, they tend to reinforce division and heighten the risk of conflict. Ultimately, sustained interreligious engagement grounded in dialogue, mutual respect, and shared ethical commitments remains essential for strengthening social cohesion and ensuring resilient coexistence in plural societies (Espito, 2023).

RELIGION AS A COORDINATED AGENCY FOR SUSTENANCE OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN YORUBALAND

The moral and ethical foundations of religion are central to understanding its role in fostering peaceful coexistence. Across different traditions, religious teachings consistently provide normative frameworks that shape ideas of right conduct, social responsibility, and human dignity. In the Yoruba moral universe, for instance, the concept of *iwà pèlẹ́* or *iwà-irèlẹ́*, understood as gentleness, humility, and good character, represents a core ethical ideal embedded within indigenous religious thought and further reinforced through its interaction with Islam and Christianity (Ojelabi & Oladiji, 2024). This moral vision, which emphasizes harmony, restraint, and respect within communal life, is closely linked to the broader philosophical ideal of *Omoluwàbí*, which defines a well-cultivated and socially responsible person (Babalola, 2019). Alongside indigenous ethical systems, major world religions similarly advance universal moral principles such as compassion, justice, and the Golden Rule, all which function as shared ethical reference points that reduce conflict and strengthen prosocial behaviour (Swidler, 2013). In the contemporary digital environment, these moral and ethical frameworks extend into online religious engagement, where they help shape discourse and guide behaviour in increasingly complex virtual spaces. Religious ethics become particularly relevant in addressing challenges such as misinformation, digital incivility, and responsible technological use. In this sense, moral foundations not only regulate individual behaviour but also generate collective norms that sustain peaceful coexistence within interconnected digital communities.

Interfaith dialogue also remains a critical instrument for fostering social integration, especially in contexts marked by religious and cultural diversity. It creates structured spaces where individuals from different faith traditions can encounter one another, exchange perspectives, and build mutual understanding, thereby strengthening social cohesion. Empirical studies in multicultural settings indicate that sustained interfaith engagement contributes to reducing prejudice and increasing trust between religious groups, ultimately promoting tolerance and acceptance within diverse societies (Seran, 2025). Practically, interfaith initiatives often take the form of shared dialogues, cooperative projects, and community-based programmes that emphasise common ethical values rather than doctrinal differences. Such engagements are particularly effective because they move beyond abstract tolerance to lived interaction, allowing participants to hear and appreciate one another's experiences in inclusive environments (Ojelabi & Oladiji, 2024). While challenges such as theological disagreements, unequal

power relations, and institutional constraints may limit their effectiveness, consistent and well-structured interfaith programmes have nonetheless been shown to significantly enhance peaceful coexistence and strengthen collective identity across religious boundaries (Buongiorno & Ali, 2025). Within some Yoruba communities, indigenous conflict-resolution systems have historically functioned as culturally grounded mechanisms for maintaining social harmony. These traditional practices are deeply rooted in communal values that prioritise consensus, moral responsibility, and relational restoration over adversarial confrontation. Rather than relying on formal litigation, these systems emphasise dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation as primary tools for resolving disputes (Lawal and Orunbon, 2019).

Just like other African Societies, Elders, Chiefs, Kings, and *Ifá* priests play essential roles in this process, drawing upon cultural wisdom, spiritual authority, and shared norms to guide disputing parties toward acceptable resolutions (Adepoju & Abiodun, 2023). The common practices, including mediation, negotiation, arbitration, and adjudication, are conducted within family structures or community councils that hold strong social legitimacy (Ojelabi & Oladiji, 2024). The overarching goal is not punishment but the restoration of broken relationships and the re-establishment of communal balance. Ritual elements such as oaths, sacred spaces, and communal rites further reinforce commitments to peace and social order (Forae & Akpomuvie, 2024). Notwithstanding the increasing influence of modern legal systems, these indigenous mechanisms continue to offer valuable, context-sensitive insights for sustainable peacebuilding in contemporary Nigerian society.

RELIGION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN YORUBALAND

The digitalisation of sacred spaces and divinely consecrated sites has profoundly reshaped religious practice, ritual performance, and the operation of taboo systems within Yoruba culture and belief systems. In contemporary settings, what was once firmly rooted in physical sacred spaces is now increasingly extended into digital environments through livestreamed worship services, online prayer gatherings, and faith-based applications (Woodhead, 2016). This development does not merely reproduce traditional rituals in digital form; rather, it actively reconfigures religious authority, participation, and identity within what scholars describe as *networked religion* (Campbell, 2013). Through these platforms, access to religious life becomes broader and more inclusive, especially for diasporic communities and younger adherents, while also encouraging more interactive expressions of devotion and theological engagement (Helland, 2016). At the same time, concerns persist regarding the commodification of faith expressions, the weakening of embodied communal fellowship, and the difficulty of sustaining doctrinal consistency in increasingly decentralised digital spaces (Bingaman, 2023). In this sense, digitalisation is better understood not as a replacement of traditional religious systems but as an ongoing process of adaptation in which continuity and innovation are continuously negotiated within modern spiritual life. Social media has emerged as a major arena for religious communication and identity construction, significantly shaping how believers articulate and experience faith (Campbell, 2013). Empirical studies suggest that platforms such as

Instagram and TikTok function beyond simple channels of religious broadcasting; they also enable users to perform, negotiate, and reconstruct their spiritual identities in public digital spaces through interaction, shared content, and community-driven norms (Angrand & Rafi'i, 2025). The participatory nature of social media allows religious discourse to become both expressive and contested, particularly among young people who draw on digital content to affirm, reinterpret, or critically engage with inherited traditions (Davie 2025). In many cases, religious authority is no longer exclusively centralised within institutional leadership but is increasingly decentralised, with identity formation shaped through peer networks and user-generated content (Haynes, 2020). While this development enhances inclusion and accessibility, it simultaneously raises concerns about authenticity, doctrinal fragmentation, and the proliferation of competing interpretations within the digital religious sphere.

According to Cheong (2023), digital interfaith engagement can either complicate or enrich the formation and negotiation of religious identity in online spaces. Casanova (2011) asserts that online platforms like YouTube, Twitter/X-handle, Instagram, and Facebook can facilitate interfaith encounters that extend beyond information exchange into ethical and relational engagement, where participants publicly articulate values such as tolerance, mutual recognition, and respect while representing their respective faith identities (Appleby, 2000). Guess (1997) adds that digital media environments contribute to the reconfiguration of religious narratives by enabling cross-faith interaction and the formation of virtual communities that transcend geographical and cultural boundaries (Bingaman, 2023). While these interactions often promote understanding and inclusivity, they also introduce tensions, as digital communication norms may reshape traditional expressions of identity and require individuals to carefully balance authentic self-presentation with interreligious sensitivity in online environments (Helland, 2016). In like manner, digital interfaith engagement has become an essential site for examining how religion and identity are continuously reworked in contemporary digital culture.

However, alongside these opportunities, the digital age has also witnessed the rise of online religious tensions and the widespread circulation of misinformation, both of which pose serious challenges to peaceful coexistence. False or misleading religious content spreads rapidly through social media platforms, often intensifying misunderstanding and deepening intergroup hostility. Research shows that misinformation, including fabricated religious claims or manipulated sacred texts, can generate mistrust, reinforce stereotypes, and exacerbate social divisions when users consume and share content without critical evaluation (Guess et al., 2020). In pluralistic societies such as Nigeria and other multi-faith contexts, online rumours and provocative digital content have, at times, contributed to the escalation of offline tensions by polarising communities along religious lines (Fisher & Tafoya, 2021). Furthermore, algorithmic systems and automated accounts (bots) often amplify emotionally charged religious narratives, making constructive and reconciliatory voices less visible in digital discourse (Kung, 1993). Addressing these challenges requires coordinated responses, including strengthened digital literacy, responsible communication by religious leaders, and greater accountability from digital platforms to reduce harm and promote constructive interreligious engagement online.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Convergences in Peace Ethics

Across diverse religious traditions, there exist notable convergences in peace ethics that cut across doctrinal and cultural boundaries. In Christianity, peace is deeply rooted in the ideals of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation, as reflected in teachings such as Matthew 5:9, which blesses the peacemakers. Islam, in a parallel moral direction, emphasizes *salaam*, a concept that encompasses peace, wholeness, and social harmony grounded in justice and submission to the will of God (Esposito, 2011). In much the same way, African Indigenous religious traditions, including Yoruba religious thought, place strong emphasis on communal equilibrium, restorative justice, and harmonious coexistence as guiding moral principles (Gyekye, 1997). A subtle reflection on interreligious ethics further reinforces these shared moral orientations. K  ng's (1993) Global Ethic thesis proposes that despite doctrinal differences, world religions converge on a minimal ethical core including respect for life, non-violence, and mutual responsibility as universal moral imperatives. In a related argument, Appleby (2000) acknowledges that while religion has at times been associated with conflict and violence, it simultaneously contains deep internal resources for peacebuilding, including compassion, moral discipline, and structures of communal accountability that can be mobilized for reconciliation.

Taken together, these religious and scholarly perspectives point toward a shared moral grammar of peace that transcends specific traditions. This includes the inherent dignity of the human person, justice understood as fairness and moral balance, and reconciliation as a necessary pathway toward sustainable social stability. These convergences not only demonstrate ethical continuity across religions but also provide a strong conceptual foundation for interfaith cooperation in plural and diverse societies.

Divergences in Digital Adaptation

In the contemporary digital era, differences in how religious traditions engage with technology have become increasingly visible, shaped by doctrinal emphases, cultural settings, and internal community structures. Scholarship on digital religion consistently shows that religious groups do not adopt digital tools in a uniform manner; rather, each tradition integrates technology in ways that align with its theological outlook and institutional priorities (Abdelly, 2025). Within Christianity, for example, established traditions such as Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy engage digital media in differentiated ways. These variations are closely tied to differences in ecclesiology, worship styles, and theological interpretation, which in turn shape how online platforms are used for worship services, pastoral care, religious education, and community interaction (Gelfgren, 2022). In Islam, digital engagement tends to be more carefully mediated through established intellectual and juristic frameworks, with strong attention to maintaining continuity with authoritative religious interpretation while still engaging the possibilities of digital communication (Abusharif, 2023). This reflects a deliberate effort to balance innovation with the preservation of doctrinal integrity and scholarly authority. At the same time, the digital landscape has also created space for more fluid and less institutionally regulated spiritual expressions. In such contexts,

emerging online spiritualities, such as techno-shamanism, illustrate how digital environments can give rise to new religious identities and practices that diverge significantly from traditional frameworks (Munir, 2023). These developments highlight the fact that digital religion is not simply about the adoption of new technologies, but about how belief systems, authority structures, and communal identities are renegotiated within virtual spaces.

Taken together, these patterns underscore an important point: digital adaptation within religion is not a mechanical or uniform process, but a complex negotiation shaped by doctrine, culture, and community dynamics. Rather than a simple technological shift, it reflects ongoing tensions and accommodations between continuity and change in how religious life is expressed in digitally mediated environments (Munir, 2023). In today's digital public sphere, coordinated religious engagement refers to the intentional and organised efforts by faith communities to communicate, collaborate, and construct shared meanings within online environments that extend beyond conventional offline boundaries. Digital platforms such as social media networks, blogs, and faith-based online communities now function as hybrid spaces where religious actors engage in dialogue, circulate ethical and moral narratives, and cultivate networked communities that often transcend denominational and geographic divisions (Campbell, 2025).

Within these digitally mediated environments, religious engagement is no longer limited to the mere transmission of ritual content or doctrinal messages. Rather, it increasingly involves active participation in the shaping of public discourse, the negotiation of religious authority, and the continuous formation and reformation of religious identities within digitally networked publics (Lawa and Orunbon 2019). In this sense, online religious activity becomes both communicative and constitutive, influencing how belief systems are understood, shared, and lived in contemporary society. This form of coordination is particularly significant when it promotes interfaith collaboration and provides counter-narratives to misinformation, thereby creating inclusive digital spaces that support mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. At the same time, it is important to recognise that digital engagement is not neutral. The underlying architecture of platforms, including algorithms and visibility structures, significantly influences who is seen, who is heard, and how relationships are formed within these spaces (Davie, 2015). These dynamics introduce both possibilities for expanded participation and constraints shaped by technological design and governance. Therefore, effective coordinated religious engagement in the digital age requires a careful balance between strategic communication and ethical sensitivity. It must account for the cultural, social, and moral implications of online interaction while still leveraging the connective potential of digital platforms. In doing so, it contributes meaningfully to pluralistic public life by strengthening dialogue, inclusion, and shared understanding in increasingly complex digital societies.

CHALLENGES AND EMERGING PROSPECTS

According to Campbell (2013), religious extremism and radicalisation have assumed more diffuse and adaptive forms, largely because social media and online

platforms now serve as major spaces for ideological engagement and mobilization of different views. Buttressing this claim, Appleby (2000) suggests that the digital environments often function as “echo chambers,” where algorithm-driven recommendation systems amplify an exposure to similar viewpoints, reinforce existing biases, and can accelerate pathways to self-radicalization, even in the absence of direct interpersonal contact (Casanova, 2011). Within such spaces, extremist actors are not passive; they deliberately exploit platform dynamics to circulate polarising narratives, attract followers, and cultivate tightly knit online communities that reinforce shared ideologies (Imam & Saputra, 2024). As a result, digital platforms have become highly effective channels for extending the reach and influence of extremist thought.

At the same time, the challenge of addressing religious extremism is compounded by the lack of a universally agreed-upon definition. What constitutes extremism is often entangled with broader religious, political, and cultural identities, making both scholarly interpretation and policy intervention more complex (Ismail, 2025). Responding to digital radicalization, therefore, cannot rely solely on technical fixes. It requires a broader approach that includes strengthening digital literacy, promoting credible counter-narratives, and developing collaborative regulatory frameworks that take the role of algorithms seriously in shaping user engagement (Campbell, 2013). Ishaque and Abuzar (2023) offer a multi-layered response that is necessary to reduce both the appeal and the spread of extremist ideologies online. Besides this development, youths' understanding of the culture of tolerance needs to be reshaped by global media flows, consumer culture, and constant digital connectivity, which ought to influence how religion is understood and practiced (Jamson, 2021). Accordingly, Taylor (2007) describes this context as a “secular age,” where belief in God is no longer assumed but exists as one option among many. For many young people, this results in religious identities that are fluid, negotiated, and situational rather than fixed. In a similar vein, Grace Davie (2015) observes a growing pattern of “believing without belonging,” where personal spirituality persists even as institutional religious participation declines.

Youth engagement with music, fashion, and online communities further reflects this shift, often producing hybrid identities that blend religious symbols with values of autonomy and self-expression. As Swidler (2013) notes, religion increasingly operates within a wider “marketplace of meaning,” where it must compete with other sources of identity and purpose. This does not suggest the disappearance of religion among young people, but rather its ongoing transformation. Religious identity is being continually reworked through interaction with secular ideas, digital media, and global cultural exchanges. In this environment, religious communities are challenged to articulate moral visions that remain both credible and relevant.

These changes carry significant policy and community implications. As religious life becomes more digitally mediated, questions of access and participation come to the fore. Ensuring that all members of society can engage meaningfully in digital religious spaces requires deliberate attention to issues of inclusion, particularly for groups who may be excluded by economic, generational, or geographic barriers (Zafarani & Shu, 2023). Without such efforts, the digital divide risks deepening existing inequalities in religious and community life (Munir, 2026). At the community level,

digital platforms present both opportunities and risks for social cohesion. On one hand, they enable continuous interaction and can strengthen communal bonds across distance. On the other hand, they may also encourage fragmentation if engagement becomes confined to closed networks that limit dialogue and diversity of perspective (Woodhead, 2016). For this reason, religious institutions need to be intentional in shaping their digital presence. This includes developing ethical guidelines that balance innovation with the preservation of core values, fostering digital literacy among members, and encouraging respectful interfaith engagement (Campbell, 2013). Finally, thoughtful policy frameworks and responsible community leadership are essential to ensure that the digital transformation of religion contributes positively to social harmony. When carefully managed, digital religion can enhance inclusion, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence rather than undermine them.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been arguing that religion in the digital era should not be understood as a decline of faith or merely a response to technological change. Rather, it reflects a deeper reconfiguration of how religious life is experienced and expressed. As Heidi A. Campbell (2013, 2020) explains, digital religion involves a blending of online and offline practices, where authority, community, and ritual are not discarded but continually reshaped. Through digital platforms, access to worship, teaching, and even interfaith engagement has expanded, allowing believers to maintain spiritual connections across distances that would previously have limited such interaction. Supporting this, findings from the Pew Research Center (2022) show that online religious participation is no longer temporary or incidental; it has become a regular and enduring feature of contemporary religious life, particularly among younger generations. At the same time, this shift is not without its tensions. Christopher Helland (2016) points out that digital mediation can sometimes blur the line between genuine communal participation and a more individualized, consumer-like engagement with religious content. This raises important concerns about depth, accountability, and the loss of embodied fellowship. The task, therefore, is not to resist technological change but to engage it carefully, ensuring that innovation does not come at the expense of authenticity and communal responsibility. In this regard, the digital era presents both an opportunity and a test: an opportunity to use technology for inclusion, dialogue, and peacebuilding, and a test of whether religious traditions can maintain coherence and integrity in increasingly fluid digital spaces. Even within these changes, religion continues to function as a significant moral and social force in shaping values and guiding human interaction.

In terms of recommendations, it becomes evident that religion in Yoruba land cannot afford to respond to the digital age in a passive or fragmented way. A more deliberate and coordinated approach is necessary, especially in fostering peaceful coexistence. Religious leaders across Indigenous traditions, Christianity, and Islam need to take intentional steps to create a structural avenue, both online and offline, for sustained interfaith dialogue. Digital platforms, rather than being left as spaces of

rivalry or misunderstanding, can be redirected into forums for clarification, shared learning, and collective ethical reflection.

Equally important is the need for digital literacy within faith communities. Religious leaders and adherents alike require the skills to engage responsibly in online spaces, communicating thoughtfully, verifying information, and remaining sensitive to diverse perspectives. This is particularly crucial in an environment where misinformation can spread quickly and deepen divisions. Given the strong presence of young people in digital environments, religious communities must also invest in developing content that is not only engaging but also promotes peace, responsibility, and shared values without diluting core beliefs. Finally, stronger collaboration is needed among religious institutions, government bodies, and civil society organizations to address challenges such as digital extremism and irresponsible religious expression. Ongoing research and critical evaluation should accompany these efforts to ensure that religion continues to play a constructive and unifying role. If approached with intention and care, religion can remain a stabilizing force, capable of nurturing dialogue, strengthening social cohesion, and promoting peaceful coexistence within an increasingly digital society.

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