International Journal of Political Dynamics and Diplomatic Studies

ISLAM AS A RELIGIOUS HERITAGE OF PART OF WESTERN NIGERIA AND THE IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION ON ITS MISSION OUTREACH AMONG ISLAMIC FAMILIES

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Abstract

The intricate cultural and religious fabric of Western Nigeria is closely interwoven with Islam, serving as significant legacy for its inhabitants. This research delves into the impact of digitalization on mission outreach among Islamic families in the region. As technology continues to proliferate, its influence permeates society and shaping religious practices.In Western Nigeria, where Islam has deep roots, the advent of digitalization has sparked a profound revolution in how Islamic teachings permeate households. The emergence of platforms like social media, websites, and mobile applications has not only revolutionized access to Islamic resources but has also facilitated dynamic pathways for the dissemination of religious materials and avenues for community engagement among Islamic families.This digital shift has enabled Islamic entities and communities in Western Nigeria to broaden their global mission outreach. Through online platforms, they deliver sermons, host virtual classes, share Islamic literature, and organize communal events, fostering a robust religious identity and a sense of belonging among families. Despite its advantages, digitalization presents challenges like verifying the authenticity of online content. By adeptly utilising digital resources, Islamic communities in Western Nigeria can safeguard their heritage amid technological progress, ensuring their cultural continuity and relevance in the modern digital landscape.

Key words: Islam, Digitization, Family, Mission, Religious Heritage.

Introduction

Western Nigeria stands as a region rich in cultural diversity, with Islam serving as a prominent religious heritage deeply ingrained within its societal framework. The intricate relationships among culture, religion and technology have attracted increasing attention from scholars, particularly in the context of Islam's influence and the transformative effects of digitalization. As technology becomes increasingly pervasive, its impact on religious practices, beliefs and community engagement cannot be overstated. This paper aims to explore the connection between Islam as a religious heritage of Western Nigeria and the evolving dynamics of mission outreach within Islamic families, propelled by the advent of digitalization.

Mission outreach, in the context of this paper, refers to the concerted effort by Islamic institutions and individuals to propagate the teachings and values of Islam to broader audiences, both within and outside the Muslim community (Ali, 2021). This encompasses various forms of communication, education and engagement aimed at fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Islamic principles among diverse demographic groups. As noted by Ali (2021), mission outreach serves as a fundamental aspect of religious heritage preservation and transmission, particularly in regions where Islam has historically been entrenched, such as Western Nigeria. With the advent of digitalization, mission outreach has undergone significant transformations, adapting to the opportunities and challenges presented by digital platforms and technologies.

The fusion of Islam with the cultural landscape of Western Nigeria has historically shaped the region's identity and social fabric. With a substantial Muslim population, the practice of Islam transcends mere religious observance to become a cornerstone of community cohesion, ethical principles and familial bonds. As such, understanding the evolving nature of Islamic practices in this region necessitates an exploration of how digitalization has influenced the dissemination of religious teachings and the maintenance of cultural heritage within Islamic households.

Digitalization, within the context of this study, refers to the pervasive integration of digital technologies, such as the internet, social media platforms, mobile applications and digital communication tools, into various aspects of societal functions, including religious practices and outreach efforts (Jones, 2020). In recent years, digitalization has emerged as a transformative force, reshaping the landscape of religious engagement and outreach worldwide. With the advent of

digital platforms and communication technologies, religious communities, including Islamic ones, have found new avenues for disseminating religious teachings, fostering community cohesion, and reaching out to broader audiences beyond traditional physical boundaries (Ahmed & Rahman, 2021). In the case of Islamic heritage in Western Nigeria, digitalization has introduced novel opportunities and challenges for mission outreach efforts among Islamic families, influencing the ways in which religious knowledge is transmitted, community ties are strengthened, and religious identity is shaped in the digital age (Yusuf & Adedokun, 2020).

The emergence of digital platforms has significantly altered the dynamics of how religious institutions engage with their followers and propagate their messages. This shift is particularly evident in the context of Islam, which holds a significant place as a religious heritage among the populace of Western Nigeria. As scholars such as Khan (2021) have noted, the impact of digitalization on religious practices and outreach strategies cannot be overstated, presenting both challenges and opportunities for Islamic mission endeavors.

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has revolutionized various aspects of human interaction, including religious expression and outreach. The proliferation of internet-enabled devices, social media platforms and digital applications has created unprecedented opportunities for the dissemination of religious content and the facilitation of community engagement. In Western Nigeria, where traditional modes of religious instruction and community interaction have long prevailed, the integration of digital tools into Islamic practices has sparked a profound transformation in how religious teachings are accessed, interpreted and shared among Islamic families (Abubakar, 2022; Oyeniyi, 2019).

This paper therefore seeks to elucidate the multifaceted impact of digitalization on mission outreach within Islamic families in Western Nigeria. By examining the ways in which digital platforms have reshaped the dissemination of Islamic teachings, the paper aims to shed light on the opportunities and challenges inherent in this digital paradigm shift. Moreover, the research endeavors to explore how Islamic communities in Western Nigeria navigate the complexities of digitalization to preserve their religious heritage, foster community cohesion and extend their mission outreach in an increasingly interconnected world (Ali & Yusuf, 2021). This paper aims to provide a deep understanding of the intersection between Islam, digitalization and mission outreach within the context of Western Nigeria. By elucidating the evolving dynamics of religious

engagement in the digital age, the research seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions surrounding the role of technology in shaping religious practices, cultural identity and community dynamics within diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the influence of digitalization on the dissemination of Islamic teachings and mission outreach among Islamic families in Western Nigeria.
2. To examine the role of digital platforms, including social media, websites, and mobile applications, in facilitating community engagement and religious practices within Islamic households.
3. To assess the impact of digitalization on the preservation of Islamic cultural heritage among Islamic families in Western Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. How has the advent of digitalization transformed the dissemination of Islamic teachings among Islamic families in Western Nigeria?
2. What role do digital platforms, such as social media, websites, and mobile applications, play in facilitating mission outreach within Islamic households?
3. How does digitalization impact the preservation of Islamic cultural heritage among families in Western Nigeria?

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the influence of digitalization on the dissemination of Islamic teachings and mission outreach among Islamic families in Western Nigeria, as well as its impact on the preservation of Islamic cultural heritage within these families. The mixed-methods design incorporates both quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives. Specifically, this research adopts an exploratory sequential design, commencing with quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis to further explore and explain the quantitative findings.

Participants

A sample of 312 participants from various Islamic communities in Western Nigeria was used. Every participant was an adult (not less than 18 years old). The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula to ensure adequate representation of the target population. A stratified random sampling technique, based on geographical location was utilized to select the sample.

Instruments

A structured questionnaire will be administered to participants to gather quantitative data on their usage of digital platforms for religious purposes, perceptions of digitalization's impact on Islamic teachings, mission outreach and cultural heritage preservation. The questionnaire consists of 5-point 50 Likert-type items with responses ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Sample items on the instrument included:

- *Islamic religious teachings are given on different websites*
- *Islamic institutions and individuals make efforts to propagate the teachings and values of Islam to broader audiences.*

A pilot study was conducted on a sample of 40 active Muslims on two separate occasions with an interval of two weeks between the two administrations. An analysis of the two sets of scores obtained yielded a test-retest reliability coefficient of .78, which indicates that the instrument is stable over time, and therefore reliable. Opinions of three experts in Islamic religious studies and measurement were relied upon to determine the validity of the instrument.

Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining ethical approval for the study, data collection commenced. The survey questionnaires were distributed manually while adhering to the ethical issues of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Interested participants were at liberty to complete the survey or refuse to complete it. Of the 312 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 298 were returned. This gave an attrition rate of 4.5%.

Method of Data Analysis

The research questions were answered using simple linear regression analysis. This was carried out at the .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1

How has the advent of digitalization transformed the dissemination of Islamic teachings among Islamic families in Western Nigeria?

Table 1: Coefficients of the Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the Impact of Advent of Digitalizationon Dissemination of Islamic Teachings

	B	Std Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	6.215	2.658		10.205	.000
Advent of Digitalization	.103	.023	.218	12.706	.000

Dependent Variable: Dissemination of Islamic Teachings

Table 1 revealed significant results (β = .218, t = 12.706, $p < .0005$). It is subsequently concluded that the advent of digitalization significantly transformed the dissemination of Islamic teachings among Islamic families in Western Nigeria. Table 1 further showed that the advent of digitalization is positively associated with the dissemination of Islamic teachings (β = .218) and that the latter can be predicted from the former by means of the regression equation: Dissemination of Islamic Teachings = 6.215 + (0.103 x Advent of Digitalization).

Research Question 2

What role do digital platforms, such as social media, websites, and mobile applications, play in facilitating mission outreach within Islamic households?

Table 2: Coefficients of the Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the Impact of Digital Platforms on Mission Outreach

	B	Std Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.006	5.739		15.052	.000

Digital Platforms	.118	.031	.193	10.633	.000

Dependent Variable: Mission Outreach

Table 1 revealed significant results (β = .193 t = 10.633, $p < .0005$). It is subsequently concluded that digital platforms played a significant role in facilitating mission outreach within Islamic households. Table 2 further showed that digital platform is positively associated with mission outreach (β = .193) and that the latter can be predicted from the former by means of the regression equation: Mission Outreach = 4.006 + (0.118 x Digital Platforms).

Research Question 3

How does digitalization impact the preservation of Islamic cultural heritage among families in Western Nigeria?

Table 3: Coefficients of the Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the Impact of Digitalization on Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage

	B	Std Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.924	8.208		9.931	.000
Digitalization	.098	.119	.160	7.904	.000

Dependent Variable: Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage

Table 3 revealed significant results (β = .160 t = 7.904, $p < .0005$). It is subsequently concluded that digitalizationhad a significant impact on the preservation of Islamic cultural heritage among families in Western Nigeria. Table 3 further showedthat digitalization is positively associated with the preservation of Islamic cultural heritage (β = .160) and that the latter can be predicted from the former by means of the regression equation: Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage = 4.924 + (0.098 x Digitalization).

Discussion

The findings of this study on *Islam as a Religious Heritage of Part of Western Nigeria and the Impact of Digitalization on Its Mission Outreach among Islamic Family* offer valuable insights into the intersection of digitalization and Islamic practices within the context of Western Nigeria. Firstly, the study's results indicate a significant transformation in the dissemination of Islamic teachings among Islamic families in Western Nigeria due to digitalization. This suggests that digital platforms have become instrumental in spreading religious knowledge and enhancing access to Islamic teachings. With the advent of digitalization, traditional barriers to accessing religious education, such as geographical distance and limited resources, are being overcome. Digital tools like online courses, podcasts and social media platforms provide avenues for individuals to engage with Islamic teachings irrespective of their physical location. This transformation signifies a shift towards a more interconnected and accessible approach to religious education within the Islamic community.

Secondly, the findings highlight the crucial role played by digital platforms, including social media, websites and mobile applications, in facilitating mission outreach within Islamic households. This underscores the evolving nature of religious outreach strategies, where digital platforms serve as dynamic tools for engaging with and mobilizing communities. Social media platforms, in particular, offer opportunities for Islamic organizations and individuals to disseminate religious messages, organize events and foster community interaction. The ability to reach a wide audience instantaneously through digital platforms enhances the effectiveness of mission outreach efforts, contributing to the growth and cohesion of Islamic communities in Western Nigeria.

Finally, digitalization is found to have a significant impact on the preservation of Islamic cultural heritage among families in Western Nigeria. This suggests that digital platforms are not only influencing the dissemination of religious knowledge but also contributing to the preservation and transmission of cultural practices and values within the Islamic community. Through digital mediums, cultural artifacts, rituals and traditions can be documented, shared and passed down to future generations. Additionally, digitalization provides a platform for cultural exchange and dialogue, enabling individuals to connect with their cultural heritage regardless of geographical

boundaries. Thus, digitalization serves as a catalyst for cultural preservation and revitalization within the Islamic community, fostering a sense of identity and continuity across generations.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Islamic religious authorities should prioritize initiatives that enhance digital literacy and access to technology within Islamic communities in Western Nigeria. Providing training programs on how to effectively use digital tools for religious education and outreach can empower individuals and organizations to utilize digital platforms more efficiently. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure equitable access to technology, particularly in rural or underserved areas, to bridge the digital divide and maximize the benefits of digitalization for all members of the community.
2. Islamic religious authorities should develop digital outreach strategies that align with the cultural and religious values of the community. Islamic organizations and religious leaders should collaborate to create engaging and culturally relevant content for dissemination through social media, websites and mobile applications. By understanding the preferences and needs of their target audience, they can craft messages and initiatives that effectively convey Islamic teachings and foster community engagement. Moreover, incorporating interactive elements such as live streams, online forums and virtual events can further enhance the impact of digital outreach efforts.
3. Islamic organizations and religious leaders should make efforts to promote digital archiving and documentation of cultural artifacts, rituals and traditions. Islamic institutions, cultural organizations and community members can collaborate to digitize historical documents, oral histories and tangible heritage objects, making them accessible online for future generations. Establishing digital repositories and databases dedicated to Islamic cultural heritage can serve as valuable resources for research, education and cultural preservation initiatives. Additionally, initiatives to crowdsource and crowdmap cultural heritage data can engage the community in documenting and safeguarding their shared heritage in the digital realm.

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