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New media and pentecostal pastors' messages in promoting peace and security in Nigeria

Afatakpa, Onoseme Fortune

Abstract

In its quest for sustainable peace and security, Nigeria has often relied on conventional methods, while unconventional approaches, such as the role of Pentecostal pastors' messages disseminated via new media, remain underexplored. This article examines the content of these messages and their implications for peace and security in Nigeria. Using a case study research design, primary data were collected through surveys, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions involving respondents from diverse religious backgrounds across six zones. Grounded in structural functionalism, the findings reveal that over 5 million people engage with Pentecostal pastors on new media platforms, with TikTok drawing the highest engagement (66%), followed by Instagram (19%). Ten thematic areas dominate these sermons: holiness and righteous living, prosperity messages, ethical and moral guidance, youth and entrepreneurship, messages of hope, good governance, criticism of government, crime prevention, marriage and family life, and prayers for the nation. These themes significantly influence peacebuilding and conflict prevention by shaping values, fostering ethical conduct, and encouraging social responsibility. This study recommends that religious organisations and citizens leverage new media to amplify peacebuilding efforts, recognising its transformative impact in shaping societal dynamics and enhancing national security in the digital age.

Introduction

Nigeria, with over 380 ethnic groups and a population exceeding two hundred million, is a prominent African nation. Despite its secular status, religion wields significant influence and plays a central role in shaping the country's identity. Christianity and Islam stand out as the primary faith traditions in Nigeria, while adherents of traditional religions form a minority. Research by Jatau and Maza (2023) illuminates the intricate and often tense

interfaith dynamics that have marked Nigeria's religious landscape since independence. Ossai (2024) argues that these strained relationships have contributed to challenges in maintaining peace and security within the nation. Within Nigeria's diverse socio-religious milieu, managing the complexities and tensions between Christianity, Islam, and traditional belief systems is essential for fostering cohesion, mutual respect, and stability. The interfaith engagements in Nigeria mirror deep-rooted historical, cultural, and political factors that continue to influence the nation's religious composition, impacting its societal fabric and raising significant concerns around peace and security.

Christianity exhibits diverse denominational variations, among which is Pentecostalism in Nigeria. According to Miller, Sargeant & Flory (2013), Pentecostalism is regarded as the fastest-growing arm of Christianity globally. Jegede (2022:1) further asserts that it is the 'fastest growing Church not only in Nigeria but in Africa as a whole'. The rise of Pentecostalism as a dominant religious force in Nigeria is influencing the customs, beliefs, and traditions of a substantial portion of the population. One significant realm through which Pentecostalism has shaped the mindset of Nigerians is the new media. This article delves into the convergence of new media and Pentecostalism in Nigeria, recognising it as a remarkable phenomenon with profound implications for peace and security. The article aims to establish that Nigeria's Pentecostal pastors have a large following across various new media platforms. It also seeks to determine the average views Pentecostal pastors receive on their new media channels per day. Additionally, the study will analyse the content of Pentecostal pastors' sermons on these platforms and ascertain their implications for the peace and security of Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

New Media

The Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary defines 'New Media' as a platform for products and services that provide information or entertainment through the engagement of computers or internet facilities, bypassing conventional methods such as television, radio, videos, and newspapers. New Media evolved from Old Media such as television, radio, and print media (Mittal and Mittal, 2013). Communication and media scholars are averse to strict differences based on oldness and novelty. The new media do not include analogue broadcast television programmes, feature films, magazines, or books. It must have technologies that facilitate digital reproductive or

interactive processes to be recognised as new media (Mittal and Mittal, 2013). In this article, New-Media is conceptualised as deploying computer technology for producing, transmitting, and diffusing information through digital outlets such as websites, multimedia, computer animation, and digital video to reach a target audience or market. It includes YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, online television stations, online broadcast radio stations, podcasts, Gmail, Yahoo, and Messenger.

Pentecostalism

Pentecostal and Pentecostalism are used interchangeably in Nigeria. It is a brand of Christian practice, which includes the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Pentecostals are born-again Christians and adjudged to have personal salvation encounters with Jesus Christ. Tracing the origin of Pentecostalism can be challenging. Encyclopaedia Britannica (2023) believes it originated from the United States of America in the 19th to 20thcentury. Ojo (2018) contends that Pentecostalism was an old sectarian movement that has transitioned into the public domain. Today, it is a global religious force gaining media traction and visibility because it is known for aggressive evangelism, exorcism, and firebrand prayers, especially in Nigeria (Ojo, 2018). It is also worth mentioning that Pentecostalism is associated with messages around divine healing, miracles, signs and wonders, and prosperity. Practitioners of Pentecostalism can be identified by using phrases such as 'blood of Jesus', 'Holy Ghost fire', 'back to the sender', 'anointing oil', 'touch not my anointed', 'I reject it', or 'it is not my portion'. Pentecostal churches have vibrant, charismatic assemblies with energetic preachers. One of the prominent features of Pentecostalism is spirited prayer. Besides, Pentecostals believe in divine healing and miracles.

Peace

Khemanando (1995) proposes that peace, originating from the Latin term *pax*, denotes an agreement towards resolving conflicts among contentious parties. The American Military History views peace as the absence of war, but scholars argue that it should include justice, law, and order. Vesilind (2005) asserts that peace should not just be the absence of war but also the presence of justice and order. Kin (2008) echoes this, emphasising that peace is synonymous with justice. Gultung (1995) differentiates negative peace (absence of personal violence) from positive peace (absence of structural, cultural, psychological, and physical violence). Thus, true peace entails resolving conflicts swiftly, eradicating tension, and establishing justice

and order while eliminating all forms of violence.

Security

Security is a multi-dimensional concept encompassing the protection and stability of individuals, communities, and nations across various domains. It involves personal safety, national defence, economic stability, cybersecurity, environmental sustainability, social welfare, food availability, and community well-being. Security is achieved through proactive measures, policies, and systems that address potential threats and vulnerabilities, ensuring that all members of society can live in peace, stability, and resilience. In essence, security is an ongoing process requiring a holistic approach, which recognises human life and the environment. It aims to create conditions where individuals and communities can thrive free from fear and deprivation, and the integrity of natural and human-made systems. Security is integral to the sustainable development and prosperity of societies. It fosters an environment where everyone can pursue their potentials in safety and dignity (Galtung, 1995).

Literature Review

This literature review examines the significant role of new media as employed by Pentecostal pastors in addressing issues of peace and security in Nigeria. The integration of digital platforms into evangelism, moral teachings, and community empowerment reflects a multifaceted approach to enhancing societal stability.

Oguntola (2017) emphasises the critical role Pentecostal pastors play in utilising platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram for evangelism, extending their influence beyond traditional congregations. This digital presence significantly shapes public perception and societal values, underscoring the need for careful digital engagement to foster positive societal outcomes. Hover (2020) posits that teachings on holiness and righteous living cultivate a mindset that decreases disobedience and civil unrest. By internalising these messages, individuals may adhere to moral standards, promoting peace and reducing violent tendencies.

Pentecostal pastors increasingly disseminate prosperity messages through new media, though opinions on their impact are divided. Supporters view pastoral wealth as a divine blessing tied to faith, while critics argue these messages promote greed and exacerbate social inequalities (Smith, 2021). The relationship between prosperity messages and societal peace highlights the need for balanced communication that accentuates spiritual well-being alongside material success. Dasaolu (2011) asserts that societal development

depends on peace supported by moral values. Ajayi (2017) emphasises the importance of ethical messages in Christianity that advocate for obedience to governmental authority when not in conflict with divine laws. Ethical teachings serve as a moral compass, promoting compliance with laws and encouraging critical evaluation of moral dilemmas. Akerele (2011) adds that ethical messages discourage vices, fostering national development through integrity and accountability.

Lancey (2023) discusses the threat of youth unemployment to national peace and security, highlighting how Pentecostal pastors promote entrepreneurial values through new media. By encouraging self-sufficiency, these pastors empower youth as agents of sustainable peace (Kabore, 2016; Conciliation Resources, 2018). This approach mitigates the risk of youth engagement in criminal activities and enhances social mobility and national stability. Hope is vital for nurturing purpose and resilience in challenging circumstances (Kendall *et al.,* 2009; Snyder, 2020). By promoting hope, pastors can motivate individuals to pursue peaceful solutions and foster a sense of community.

Cilliers (2003) argues that good governance is essential for peace. Pentecostal pastors advocate for democratic principles and active citizen participation through new media (Oluwanifise, 2023). Messages promoting accountability and transparency can foster national security, suggesting that collaboration among religious leaders, governments, and civil society is crucial for achieving these objectives. Constructive criticism is vital for improving governance (Iredia, 2022). Pentecostal pastors must balance criticism to avoid polarising the nation and undermining public trust. Engaging in respectful dialogue can positively influence national development and stability (Agama *et al.*, 2022).

Adigun *et al.* (2016) state that Pentecostal pastors emphasise moral values in their sermons as a complementary approach to crime prevention. A survey indicates that 75% of respondents believe pastors effectively utilise new media to reform criminals, emphasising the significant role religion plays in reducing crime in Nigeria. This suggests that online messages from pastors can positively influence national peace and security. The family unit is critical in socialisation, with dysfunctional marriages leading to societal instability (Amadi & Amadi, 2014). Healthy marriages contribute to peaceful homes and national stability (Okon, 2010). New media offers opportunities for pastors to address marital challenges, enhancing family health and societal well-being.

The Christian Science Monitor (1984) highlights that nations committed to prayer can foster peace and security. Pastors play a vital role in seeking divine guidance for leaders and governance, instilling hope through prayers

for economic stability and moral accountability. New media facilitates widespread engagement in prayer, reinforcing collective responsibility for national peace and security.

Methodology

The article employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. It utilised a case study research design. Quantitative data was gathered through an online survey of respondents, aged between 18 and 60. Additionally, 5 Pentecostal pastors with new media were purposively selected for the study. The selection criteria were based on several factors, includingmembership strength, presence and activity on new media platforms, and consistency with new media tools. This ensured the inclusion of influential churches and pastors from the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The media platforms considered in this study were Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, YouTube, and LinkedIn. Furthermore, key informant interviews were conducted with 3 businesswomen, 3 businessmen, 3 politicians, 3 conservative Christians, 2 Muslims, 4 students, 5 pastors, 5 academics, and 2 free thinkers. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) comprising 8 Pentecostal Christians was purposively selected from the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The data collected were content analysed using the narrative style.

Presentation of Data and Analysis of Findings

Pentecostal Pastors' Presence and Influence on New Media in Nigeria:

SELECTED PENTECOSTAL PASTORS'NEW MEDIA HANDLE FOLLOWERS		
INSTAGRAM	9,783,719	25%
Facebook	19,034,790	49%
YOUTUBE	1,527,054	4%
X	7,222,692	19%
TIKTOK	1,339,630	3%
LINKEDIN	53,607	0%
TOTAL	**38,961,492**	**100%**

Table I

The findings showed that the Churches and their pastors' new media handles have 38,961,492 followers. The Table I above shows that Facebook has more followers, with 19,034,790 (49%) of the total New Media followers. Instagram has 9,783,719 (25%), X formerly known as Twitter has 7,222,692 (19%), YouTube has 1,527,054 (4%), TikTok has 1,339,630 (3%), while LinkedIn has insignificant followers of 53,607 (0%). The findings are presented in the chart below.
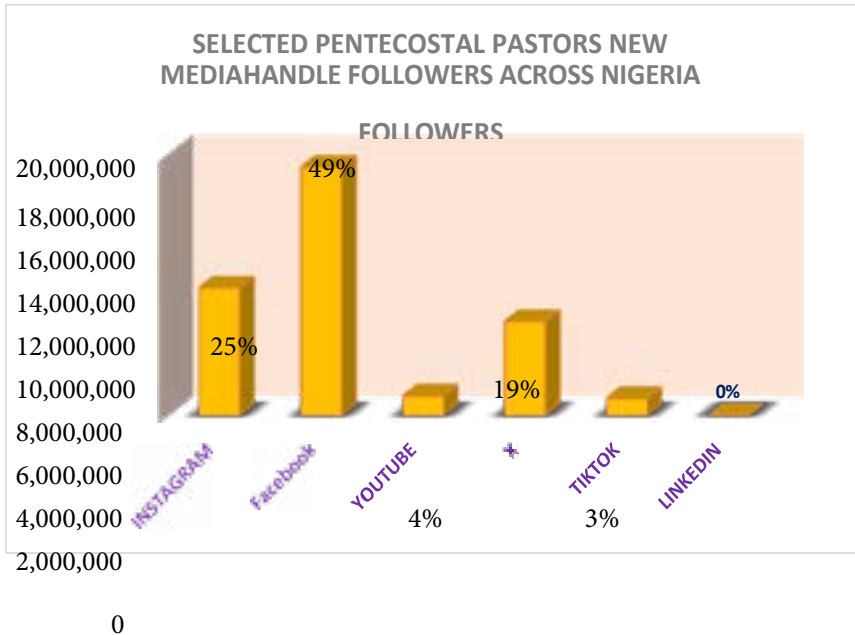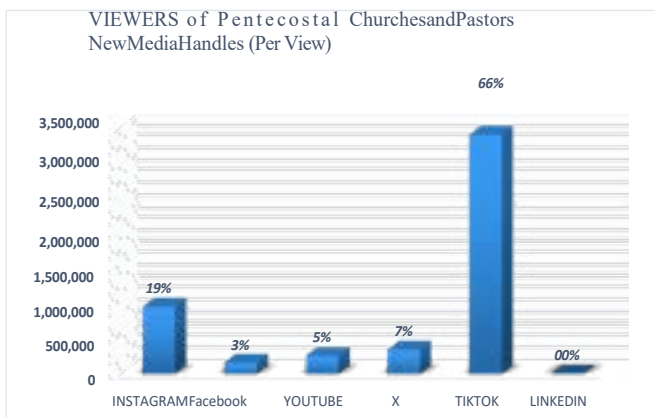

Figure I

This finding aligns with Oguntola (2017), who observed that Pentecostal pastors and leaders deployed new media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to evangelise and reach millions beyond their congregations. This growing digital presence holds important implications for peace and security as it influences public perception, shapes societal values, and has the potential to affect national stability.

Viewership Trends of Pentecostal Pastors' Sermons on Nigerian New Media

VIEWERS on Pentecostal Churches and Pastors' New Media Handles		
INSTAGRAM	976,131	19%
Facebook	157,099	3%
YOUTUBE	265,714	5%
X	354,738	7%
TIKTOK	3,464,643	66%
LINKEDIN	0	0%
TOTAL	**5,218,325**	**100%**

TableII

Table II shows the number of viewers on some Pentecostal Churches and Pastors' New Media Handles. The findings show that about **5,218,325** people visit the new media handles of some Pentecostal Churches and Pastors at a time. The findings further show that TikTok has more viewers, with 3,464,643 (66%) total viewers at a time. Instagramhas976,131(19%) viewers,followedbyXformerlyknownasTwitterwith265,714 (7%)viewers,YouTubehas265,714(5%)viewers,Facebookhas 157,099(3%),whileLinkedIn has zero viewers 0 (0%). The findings are presented in the chart below

Figure I1

Content and Thematic Analysis of Nigerian Pentecostal Pastors' New Media Sermons: Effects on Peace and Security.

1. Communication of Holiness and Righteous Living:

Outside their primary pulpit platforms, pastors of the Pentecostal churches under survey use their new media platforms to communicate holiness and righteous living, through which they can reach millions of persons within and beyond Nigeria. Respondent 1 stated:

> I am a businesswoman. I am not a member of Dunamis and do not reside in Abuja (the church of Pastor Paul Enenche) but I watch him on YouTube and follow him on X. Like other frontline Pentecostal ministers, he communicates messages on holiness through his new media platforms, and appropriating such teachings has the potential for crime reduction as well as reducing violent conflicts in Nigeria. [1]

This statement aligns with Hover (2020), who posits that holiness and righteous living empower people with a heavenly mindset. When people adopt this mindset, they are less likely to engage in actions detrimental to the peace and security of a nation. The respondent further mentioned that disobedience, rebellion, and civil unrest will decrease as people conform to teachings on holiness, thereby contributing to peace and national security. According to Hover (2020), when people attune to messages of holiness, the peace of Christ will rule their hearts, helping to restrain them from violent actions. The survey strongly agrees that sermons on holiness from the new media platforms of Pentecostal pastors have significantly promoted peace and security. These sermons foster morals, encourage good citizenship, and stimulate social cohesion in Nigeria.

2. Prosperity Messages

The study found that Pentecostal pastors use new media to spread prosperity messages. However, not everyone agrees that the messages promote peace and security. Smith (2021) highlights the controversy of Pentecostal Christianity due to these messages. Supporters, mainly from the preachers' denominations and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians, view their pastors' wealth as a divine blessing and believe their faith leads to material prosperity, even if they are not financially successful (Smith, 2021). According

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[1]Mrs Labake Osundele, Personal Communication, 10 June, 2023, Lagos

to Respondent 2, a conservative Christian, "prosperity messages commodify divine blessings, promote consumerism, and economic inequality"[2]. In the submission of Respondent 3, an academic, "prosperity messages foster greed and corruption, even though I selectively engage with them"[3]. Conversely, FGD Respondent 1 for Pentecostal Christians attributed class inequalities to corrupt politicians, viewing pastoral prosperity as divine faithfulness[4]. Respondent 4,[5] a pastor, emphasised the biblical support for prosperity, cautioning against neglecting spiritual well-being, which is in tandem with Mumford (2012) and Swoboda (2015). Respondent 5,[6] an academic, highlighted the dual impact of prosperity preaching, urging a balance with social responsibility, empathy, and justice to promote national peace and security.

3. Ethical and Moral Messages

Respondents generally support Pentecostal pastors using new media to promote moral values. Respondent 6, a university student, stated that "a nation without ethical standards is doomed to chaos, as ethical messages promote virtues like respect, honesty, and integrity"[7]. Respondent 7, a pastor, mentioned that "new media helps teach morality, contributing to a more peaceful society by reducing conflict and violence"[8]. These views align with Dasaolu (2011), who argues that societal development relies on peace, fostered by moral uprightness. Respondents 8[9] and 9[10], who are Free Thinkers but follow pastors on new media, noted that these platforms convey morally based messages that encourage social cohesion and security. Identified moral themes include empathy, kindness, tolerance, integrity, compassion, love, patience, and the fear of God. They agreed that promoting reconciliation and understanding through these messages helps maintain peace. Respondent 10, an academic, affirmed that "Pentecostal pastors use new media to spread principles guiding peaceful conflict resolution"[11]. The view of Respondent 10 resonates with Ajayi (2017) that ethical messages encourage Christians to obey government authority unless it contradicts divine laws, suggesting

[2]Mr Chilaka Chibuzor, Personal Communication, 10 June, 2023, Lagos

[3]Dr Oluseyi Agbabiaka, Personal Communication, 15 June, 2023, Ibadan

[4]Focus Group Discussion Conducted for Pentecostal Christians in Abuja, 20 August, 2023

[5]Theophilous Chukwuemeka, Personal Communication, 7 October, 2023, Port Harcourt.

[6]Dr Anslem Ugochukwu, Personal Communication, University of Port Harcourt, 7 October, 2023.

[7]Mr Micheal Chimgozirim, Personal Communication, University of Port Harcourt, 7 October 2023

[8]Pastor Josiah Isiaku, Personal Communication, Kaduna, 3 December, 2023

[9]Mr Alhassan Mudashiru, Personal Communication, 10 June, 2023, Lagos

[10]Mrs Laraba Mohammed, Personal Communication, Kaduna, 3 December, 2023

[11]Mr Dr Saidu Owonokoko, Personal Communication, University Maiduguri, 10 March, 2023

that these messages transcend religious boundaries and positively influence believers and non-believers. Ethical messages discourage vices and promote virtues, leading to national development (Akerele, 2011).

4. Youth and Entrepreneurship

Nigeria and other Global South countries have focused on youth and entrepreneurship in religious and social spheres, aiming to equip young people with business skills amidst rising unemployment rates. Lancey (2023) notes that a large unemployed youth population threatens national peace and security. The study found that Pentecostal pastors use new media to promote entrepreneurial values, encouraging self-sufficiency among youth.

Respondents unanimously agreed that messages on entrepreneurship via new media would enable youths to become self-reliant, fostering peace and security. Respondent 11, a Muslim, noted that "motivational messages on these platforms encourage youth to pursue entrepreneurship rather than white-collar jobs, promoting innovation and resilience"[12]. Lancey (2023) argues that entrepreneurship can interconnect with peacebuilding, mitigating violence and positioning youth as a force for sustainable peace. Participants in FGD for Pentecostal Christians reveal that many businesses have evolved based on inspiring messages by Pentecostal pastors on new media. FGD Respondent 2 started a laundry business after watching a YouTube message by Bishop Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church, aka Winners Chapel, Ota. This demonstrates the impact of these messages on reducing youth crime. It equally aligns with Kabore's (2016) assertion that youth unemployment threatens national security, and addressing it through entrepreneurship can prevent involvement in criminal activities.

Respondent 12,[13] a politician, highlighted the latent benefits of Pentecostal pastors' new media presence, especially in youth ministry, as it inspires youth to start small businesses. Respondent 13, a businessman, said, "I was inspired by a message from David Ibiyeomi, of the Salvation Ministries, Port Harcourt and started a snack supply business, indicating the positive impact on crime reduction[14]. Conciliation Resources (2018) supports this, emphasising that dignified livelihoods can motivate youth to avoid crime and seek productive paths. It is also concluded that promoting youth entrepreneurship through new media empowers young people, fostering social mobility, reducing dependency, and enhancing national stability (Akerele, 2019; Conciliation Resources, 2018). Religious and community leaders should use new media

[12]Usman Abdul-Rahman, Personal Communication, Sokoto, 17 January, 2024

[13]Alhaji Ajadi Sangotokun, Personal Communication, 13 June, 2023 Ibadan

[14]Mr Alize Ogbonna, Personal Communication, Awka, 16 October, 2023

to emphasise ethical messages, contributing to a more peaceful and secure society.

5. Messages of Hope on New Media Platforms

Nigeria and other Global South countries are confronted with prolonged conflict, political exclusion, and economic hardship, creating hopelessness (Conciliation Resources, 2018). Thus, messages of hope from Pentecostal pastors' new media platforms are crucial. Respondent 14, a conservative Christian, noted that "these messages help generate a sense of purpose, reaching wider audiences"[15]. Equally, Respondent 15, a businesswoman, emphasised that "messages from pastors like David Oyedepo and Apostle Johnson Suleiman of Omega Power Ministries convey assurances of hope more than politicians' promises"[16]. Respondent 16, a university student, stated that "digital sermons and posts promoting hope play a crucial role in fostering peace and security by advocating unity, compassion, and resilience". These views align with Kendall *et al.* (2009), Shek (1993), and Kish & Moody (1989), who note that hope enables people to find purpose and live healthier lives. FGD Respondent 3[17] for Pentecostal Christians explained that "listening to pastors like Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy Church, Lagos and Pastor Daniel Olukoya of Mountain of Fire Church, Mowe, Ogun State, helps build resilience and resist crime". Respondents 17[18], 18[19] and 19,[20] who are academics, agree that messages of hope foster unity and social cohesion, enhancing neighbourhood peace and security. The online survey participants also agree that the messages of Pentecostal pastors across Nigeria convey hope and encourage people not to give up. Kendall *et al.* (2009) highlight that hope involves the will to pursue a mission and the pathways to achieve it, empowering listeners to promote peace.

Survey respondents identified resilience, optimism, perseverance, and positive attitudes as key outcomes of these messages. Snyder (2020) affirms that hope enhances performance in all endeavours. Respondent 20, a university student, mentioned that "the messages of faith from Pentecostal pastors inspire people to achieve their goals and avoid actions detrimental to peace"[21]. Averill *et al.* (1990) support this, noting that people flourish in

[15]Mrs. Justina Dolly, Personal Communication, Jos, September 8, 2023

[16]Mrs Alonge Mohammed, Personal Communication, Jos, September 8, 2023

[17]ocus Group Discussion Conducted for Pentecostal Christians in Abuja, 20 August, 2023

[18]Dr Wealth Tewase, Personal Communication, Joseph Tarka University, Makurdi, 30 August, 2023

[19]Dr Joseph Iorliam, Personal Communication, Joseph Tarka University, Makurdi, 30 August, 2023

[20]Dr Emuejevoke Akporveta, Personal Communication, Abraka, Delta State, 10 February, 2024

[21]Job Emmanuel, Personal Communication, Awka, 16 October, 2023

hope when assured their goals can be attained. Overall, the consensus among respondents shows that messages of hope from Pentecostal pastors' new media platforms can transform society by reducing crime and advancing peace and security. These messages inspire positive behaviour, build resilience, strengthen community bonds, encourage conflict resolution, and empower youth. Leaders, influencers, and communities should promote messages of hope to instil optimism, unity, and agency, creating a more peaceful and secure society through new media (Akerele, 2011; Conciliation Resources, 2018).

6. Good and Responsible Governance

Good and responsible governance fosters peace and security by ensuring transparency, accountability, and equitable resource distribution, thus preventing conflict and corruption. Survey responses revealed that Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria use new media platforms to advocate for ethical leadership, social justice, and community harmony. FGD Participant 4 for Pentecostal Christians opines that "these pastors encourage civic engagement and mobilise communities, contributing to a more peaceful Nigeria"[22]. This aligns with Cilliers (2003), who argues that good governance has the potential to establish peace and security. Bad governance and political accountability issues hinder Africa's development.

According to Respondent 21, a Politician, "pastors like Bishop David Oyedepo, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, and Bishop Taiwo Adelakun use their platforms to hold the government accountable, addressing issues like transparency, rule of law, and active citizenship"[23]. Cilliers (2003) emphasises that corporate and economic governance looks to political governance as a role model, and without reform, good governance will remain elusive in Nigeria. Respondent 22, a Muslim, highlighted that "Pentecostal pastors promote democratic culture through new media, encouraging participation in elections and advocating for strong democratic principles"[24]. Oluwanifise, (2023) notes that messages promoting good governance can profoundly impact a country's peace and security by encouraging accountability, transparency, the rule of law, and citizen participation. Religious clerics, governments, civil society organisations, and citizens must collaborate to promote national security. Pentecostal pastors' use of new media to advocate for good governance and democratic practices is a significant step towards

[22]Focus Group Discussion Conducted for Pentecostal Christians in Abuja, 20 August, 2023

[23]Mr Kenneth Ologbenla, Personal Communication, Abuja, 20 August, 2023.

[24]Moshood Sheriffdeen, Personal Communication, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna, 3 December, 2023

this goal (Akerele, 2011; Conciliation Resources, 2018).

7. Criticisms Against Government

Criticism acts as a catalyst for improvement, impacting national peace and security. Respondent 23, a university student, noted that "Pentecostal pastors' criticism of the government via new media is constructive and factual, without malice". This view agrees with Iredia (2022), who contends that constructive criticism is crucial for governmental improvement. Respondent 24, a businessman, emphasised that "ignoring criticisms can threaten peace and security, because Pentecostal pastors through their messages highlight the shortcomings of government"[25]. It affirms Iredia (2022) and Agama *et al.'s* (2022) position that constructive criticisms offer essential solutions for good governance. Suppressing criticism may lead to dictatorship. Some respondents expressed concerns that negative criticisms from new media can polarise the nation and lead to unrest. Unbalanced criticism erodes public trust and compromises national security. Given Pentecostal pastors' significant followings, spreading discontent can have serious implications. Therefore, balanced and constructive criticism is crucial for promoting good governance and stability (Agama *et al.,* 2022). Government and Pentecostal pastors must foster dialogue, tolerance, and respect for differing viewpoints to ensure criticism contributes positively to national development and stability.

8. Crime and Criminality

Crime in Nigeria, including rape, ritual killings, cyber-crimes, armed robbery, kidnapping, and more, severely compromises citizens' peace and security. While the government addresses these issues through law enforcement (Adigun *et al.*, 2016), Pentecostal pastors approach them by emphasising moral values in their sermons. Seventy-five percent (75%) of survey respondents agree that Pentecostal pastors effectively use new media platforms to reform criminals. Respondent 25, a Pastor, noted that "TikTok ministrations led some church members to repent from criminal activities"[26]. All respondents concur that these pastors significantly contribute to national peace and security by preaching against crime through new media. Ninety percent (90%) believe these platforms curb criminal activities by appealing to millions of consciences, positively impacting national peace and security. This aligns with Adigun *et al.* (2016), who note that religion has helped reduce crime in Nigeria. Furthermore, Shaftoe (2002) affirms that crime

[25]Festus Guobadia, Personal Communication, Abraka, Delta State, 10 February, 2024

[26]Pastor Olalekan Bamisaye, Personal Communication, Makurdi, 30 August, 2023

prevention cannot rely solely on conventional justice systems, strengthening the argument of Aguda (1994) for the need to institute social crime prevention approaches or traditional African methods (Agbola, 1997). Thus, Pentecostal pastors' online messages can positively influence national peace and security by reaching broader audiences and dissuading criminal activities.

9. Marriages and Homes, Families

The family is the primary agent of socialisation, and dysfunctional marriages often lead to dysfunctional homes, breeding deviant children who pose threats to society. Pentecostal pastors use new media platforms to address marital challenges and promote responsible homes, upholding that marriages, homes, and families are the underpinnings of a healthy society (Amadi and Amadi, 2014). Respondent 26, a businesswoman, said, "Some of my friends with marital challenges received solutions through the new media messages of some Pentecostal Pastors"[27]. The submission of Respondent 26 is corroborated by the online survey that a number of marriages on the brink of collapse have received valuable marital advice from pastors via new media. The consensus is that these platforms help reconstruct damaged relationships and restore homes. Okon (2010) contends that a good number of criminals come from broken homes, whereas well-adjusted children come from loving environments. He further states that healthy marriages create peaceful homes. It helps to raise balanced and happy children. It translates to national peace and security. Respondent 27[28], a conservative Christian, noted that new media messages improved their marital sex life, resonating with findings that 80% of marital crises stem from unsatisfactory sex (Amadi and Amadi, 2014). Respondent 28, a Pastor, stated that "many have gained wisdom on finances, trust, children, and for their businesses from Pentecostal pastors on Instagram and TikTok. These are areas less emphasised in many conservative Churches"[29]. All survey respondents agree that new media messages on marital concerns have significantly reshaped homes, improving mental health and contributing to a healthier society. Pentecostal pastors addressing marital and home issues via new media positively impact the nation's security architecture, overtly and covertly.

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[27]Solape Shobayo, Personal Communication, Sokoto, 17 January, 2024

[28]Helen Wende, Personal Communication, University Maiduguri, 10 March, 2023

[29]Pastor Imogieme Ikanoba, Personal Communication, 10 June, 2023, Lagos

10. Prayers for the Nation

Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria have increasingly used new media platforms to pray for the nation's wellness and well-being. Respondents unanimously agree that these prayers are beneficial, believing in the power of prayer to effect positive change. They showcase the importance of praying for political leaders, the economy, wisdom, and against crime to build national peace and security. Respondent 29[30], a politician, noted the convenience of participating in prayer sessions via new media. Respondent 30, a businessman, emphasised that "spiritual efforts can bring tangible improvements in national affairs"[31]. This view is in tandem with the Christian Science Monitor (1984) view that consistently praying nations hold great potential for peace and ultimately the security of citizens. These pastors seek divine direction and wisdom by praying for those in authority and governance. Praying for the economy can inspire hope and resilience, encouraging efforts towards economic stability. Additionally, prayers against crime foster moral accountability and discourage criminal behaviour, enhancing social coherence. Using new media for prayer enables extensive involvement in spiritual activities, strengthening collective responsibility for national peace and security.

New Media and Pentecostalism in Nigeria: Implications for Peace and Security Through the Lens of Structural Functionalism

The structural-functional approach is a perspective in sociology that views society as a system with parts that work together to promote stability. It asserts that our lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behaviour. These structures shape our lives in various contexts, such as within families, communities, and religious organisations. Each social structure has social functions, or consequences, that contribute to the operation of society as a whole. It posits that society operates like an organism, composed of different parts that work together harmoniously. Abdulrahman (2021) affirms that structural functionalism encompasses any group large enough to be considered a social institution, ranging from religious values to sports clubs and everything in between. It explains that the organisation of society is the most natural and efficient way for it to function. The findings of this study include themes such as holiness and righteous living, prosperity messages, ethical and moral messages, youth and entrepreneurship, and messages of hope on new media platforms.

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[30]Mr Iwasokun Agbalajobi, Personal Communication, 13 June, 2023 Ibadan

[31]Eromosele Inegbenose, Personal Communication, Makurdi, 30 August, 2023

It also uncovers good and responsible governance, criticisms against the government, crime and criminality, marriages and homes, families, and prayers for the nation. These themes can be analysed through the lens of the structural functionalism theory.

Firstly, communicating holiness and righteous living through new media platforms serves an essential social function by buttressing moral norms and values. By advocating for ethical behaviour and spiritual discipline, these messages help maintain social order and cohesion. Prosperity messages, another significant theme, encourage economic activity and entrepreneurial spirit among followers. From a structural-functionalist perspective, these messages support the economic subsystem of society by motivating individuals to engage in productive and entrepreneurial activities, thereby contributing to overall economic growth and stability. Prosperity theology promotes personal aspirations with broader societal economic goals, functioning as a mechanism that promotes individual and collective economic well-being. Ethical and moral messages propagated through new media uphold societal norms and ethical standards. These messages play a regulatory role, promoting conformity to societal values and plummeting aberrant behaviour, which is crucial for maintaining social order and guaranteeing peace and security.

The focus on youth and entrepreneurship addresses the needs of an important population within Nigerian society. By encouraging young people to develop entrepreneurial skills and pursue economic opportunities, pastors' messages through the new media help integrate them into the economic fabric of society. This integration supports social stability by providing paths for industrious engagement and reducing the likelihood of youth-related social unrest. Messages of hope disseminated through new media platforms offer psychological and emotional sustenance to individuals, which is dynamic for maintaining social stability. In times of economic hardship or social uncertainty, these messages reassure people with a sense of purpose, helping to mitigate feelings of despair, preventing social disintegration, and ultimately guaranteeing peace.

Promoting good and responsible governance agrees with the structural functionalist view that social institutions must function efficiently to uphold social stability. Through messages in the new media, Pentecostal pastors support the political ecosystem and the proper functioning of other social institutions. While criticisms against the government might seem destabilising, they function as a means of social regulation by holding public officials accountable. Structural functionalism acknowledges that corrections are essential for the health of society. Feedback mechanisms are crucial for peace and security.

Addressing crime and criminality through religious messages disseminated from new media reinforces moral norms within society. By condemning criminal behaviour and promoting lawful conduct through messages on new media, Pentecostal pastors help reduce crime rates and support the functioning of the social order, which is vital for peace and security. Messages focused on marriages and homes contribute to the stability of the family unit, a fundamental social structure. By promoting strong family values and relationships, Pentecostal pastors, through their new media podia, help preserve the integrity of this prime social institution, which in turn supports the stability of the larger social system with strong implications for peace and security. The emphasis on family values reinforces it as a central social institution. Strong family units provide emotional support, socialisation, and economic stability.

Prayers for the nation can be seen as a collective ritual for national unity and shared purpose. From a structural-functionalist perspective, such collective religious activities promote social cohesion and solidarity, crucial for maintaining societal stability, especially in a diverse and potentially divided society like Nigeria. So, when viewed through the lens of structural functionalism, the messages of Pentecostal pastors through their new media platforms contribute to the cohesion of Nigerian society and ultimately promote peace and security.

Conclusion

This paper examined the implications of the messages of Pentecostal pastors disseminated through new media on the peace and security of Nigeria. Findings revealed that Pentecostal Pastors in Nigeria have a huge followership on Facebook and TikTok. Also, a good number of them have huge followership on Instagram. The messages of Pentecostal pastors command huge listenership and traffic in the new media space. The paper uncovered that the followership and viewership of the new media handles of Pentecostal Pastors in Nigeria cut across religious, cultural, demographical, geographical, and ethnic divides. Respondents were more particular about the motivations behind the messages for their well-being. Respondents believe that, despite some excesses, the messages by Pentecostal Pastors in Nigeria on new media contribute to peace and security. Through the lens of the theory of Structural Functionalism, it was revealed that Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria are part of the organic structure in Nigeria and should be given all the needed support to continue engaging the new media in appealing to the conscience of Nigerians through their messages. This paper concludes that new media platforms of Pentecostal pastors can play a critical role in enhancing peace and security

by enabling information sharing, promoting dialogue, countering extremist narratives, and empowering individuals to be agents of positive change. Leveraging the potential of new media for peacebuilding and conflict prevention is essential in the digital age, where communication technologies have a profound impact on shaping the dynamics of society and influencing the security landscape.

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