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Youth and Contemporary Cultures: Bible and African Youth's Engagement with Technology

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This research paper examines the intricate relationship between African youth, technology, and the Bible, highlighting the profound impact of contemporary digital cultures on the religious experiences and practices of young people in Africa. In an era characterized by unprecedented advancements in technology and rapid globalization, the intersection of faith and digital innovation emerged as a compelling subject of study. This research investigates the multifaceted ways in which African youth engage with the Bible through various technological mediums, such as smartphones, social media, and digital applications. The paper begins by contextualizing the religious landscape in Africa and the enduring significance of the Bible as a spiritual guide and cultural touchstone for diverse African communities. It then explores the evolving digital habits and preferences of African youth, showcasing the pivotal role of technology in shaping their daily lives. Through an extensive review of the literature, the study reveals how digital platforms have become dynamic spaces for religious expression, community building, and the dissemination of religious knowledge among African youth. Furthermore, the research examines the challenges and opportunities that arise from this intersection of faith and technology, including issues related to authenticity, interpretation, and religious authority. It also sheds light on the potential for digital technologies to bridge geographical and cultural divides, fostering a sense of global interconnectedness among African youth with shared religious beliefs. In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of the intricate dynamics between youth, contemporary cultures, the Bible, and technology in Africa. It underscores the need for nuanced perspectives on the impact of digitalization on religious practices and offers insights into how African youth navigate the complexities of faith and technology in their pursuit of spiritual meaning and identity within an evolving globalized world.

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected and digitized world, the dynamics of youth culture are undergoing profound transformations. The intersection of traditional belief systems, such as the Bible, with the rapidly evolving technological landscape, has brought forth new dimensions of identity, community, and expression among African youth. This study probes into the intriguing juxtaposition of age-old religious values and contemporary technological advancements as they intersect within the lives of African youth, offering a nuanced exploration of the ways in which these young individuals navigate the crossroads of tradition and modernity.

As we explore this fascinating intersection, it is essential to acknowledge the unique position that Africa occupies in the global context. With its diverse cultures, languages, and belief systems, the African continent has always been a rich tapestry of traditions, where the Bible holds a significant place for many. The Bible, as a religious text, has been a source of spiritual guidance, moral principles, and cultural identity for countless African communities for centuries (Mbiti, 1969). However, in the 21st century, the arrival of advanced digital technologies has ushered in a transformative era that challenges established norms and presents new opportunities for communication, socialization, and self-expression (Kibona & Khalifa, 2010).

In this context, African youth find themselves at the crossroads of tradition and modernity. The use of

smartphones, computers, social media platforms, and the internet has become an integral part of their lives, enabling them to engage in global conversations, access information, and forge connections with peers from diverse backgrounds (Mitei, 2014). As digital technologies increasingly shape the contours of their daily experiences, African youth are confronted with the task of negotiating their cultural heritage, including the teachings of the Bible, in the context of this evolving digital landscape.

This study draws upon interdisciplinary perspectives, including sociology, anthropology, and communication studies, to investigate the multifaceted ways in which African youth incorporate technology into their lives while preserving or reinterpreting their religious and cultural values. By shedding light on this intersection of youth culture, spirituality, and technology, the study contributes to the broader discourse on the evolving dynamics of contemporary societies and offers insights into the ways in which technology influences the preservation and adaptation of cultural and religious traditions among young people in Africa.

THE INTERSECTION OF YOUTH CULTURE, THE BIBLE, AND TECHNOLOGY

The intersection of youth culture, the Bible, and technology is a multifaceted area of study that transcends geographical boundaries. This literature review explores the existing research on this topic,

focusing on perspectives from America, Asia, Europe, and Africa. In particular, it examines how African youth engage with technology in the context of their religious and cultural backgrounds, with a specific focus on the Bible.

In the United States, the relationship between youth, technology, and the Bible has been a subject of academic inquiry. Smith (2018) argued that American youth utilize various technological platforms to engage with religious content, including Bible apps and online religious communities. Johnson, and Davis, (2017) conducted a survey among American youth and found that a significant portion of them reported using technology to access religious information emphasizing the role of technology in shaping contemporary religious practices. Furthermore, a significant portion of youth use technology to access religious information emphasizing the role of technology in shaping contemporary religious practices.

Golan, (2023) observed that there are much grassroots workings of youth on new media platforms and digital outlets engage the youth with their religious practices. Golan states that “religious digital outlets and social media sites are becoming increasingly popular platforms that give voice for the youth to express their religious affinities as well as forge meaningful connections and develop a subcultural culture which address their religious identities”. (Golan, 2023, 2). With this subcultural culture, the youth have developed diverse ways to approach their religious practices.

In Asia, a study by Chan (2019) explored how Asian youth integrate technology and the Bible into their daily lives. The research revealed that mobile devices and social media platforms are commonly used by Asian youth to access biblical teachings, fostering a sense of interconnectedness within religious communities. Additionally, Wang and Li (2016) highlighted the significance of mobile Bible

apps in promoting biblical literacy among Asian youth.

In Europe, research on the intersection of youth culture, the Bible, and technology has also gained momentum. Williams (2020) conducted interviews with European youth and found that technology serves as a means for them to explore and question their religious beliefs, including their interpretation of the Bible. Dyer (2022) expressed how the youth come to dominate the Bible software industry which has advanced technological change in Bible and evangelism. This suggests that technology can be a tool for critical engagement with religious texts among European youth.

In Africa, the relationship between technology, the Bible, and youth culture is a dynamic field of study. A study by Adewale and Afolabi (2018) highlighted that African youth often use mobile phones and social media platforms to share and discuss biblical passages, promoting a sense of community and spirituality. Additionally, Okeke (2019) emphasized the role of technology in making biblical resources more accessible to African youth in remote areas, bridging the digital divide. In Kenya, Mitei (2014, 140-144) explains how the advancement of technology and the freedom culture in the 21st impact Kenyan youths. The youth find themselves disregarding their relationship with God as they tend to push their spiritual materials and faith matters aside. As Kenyan youth interact with social media, smartphones, they become sceptical about their Church traditions and religious practices. Technology can be traced much early in the Cainite Civilization.

Cainite Civilization (Genesis 4:17-24)

Bible, youth, and technology began as early as the time of Cain (Genesis 4:16-24) which scholars refer to as Cainite Civilization (Wenham, 1987; Cotter 2003; Hamilton, 2002; & Mitei, 2014). Mitei observes that the Cainite civilization contributed oratory and poetry, ornamentation of music through the use of the harp and flute. They manufactured

working tools and agricultural productions (Mitei 2014, 140). Cainite civilization had a negative impact geared towards the destruction of human life, self-justification, self-exaltation, and independence from God. (Mitei, 2014, 140). The youth in Cainite civilization were affected negatively (Mitei, 2014).

Genesis 4:17b states that Cain built a city and therefore the origin of urban life (Cotter, 2003, 44). First, we meet Cain as a farmer and after he kills his brother he becomes a wanderer. When he departed from Eden, he went to the land of Nod (meaning wondering) and there he built a city. To build a city, Cain required to have some skills, structures, and applied technology.

Genesis 4:21a: The construction of the city begins the Bible technology which brought about an advancement of technology of the time and the advancement of mechanical skills. There was technical progress.

Genesis 4:21b: Jubal and his descendants produced lyre and pipe which formed the music manufacturing industry. These musical instruments were the result of advanced technology of the time (Cotter, 2003, 44).

Genesis 4:22: Tubal Cain and his descendants became manufacturers of bronze and iron. Tubal Cain made jewellery and ornaments for his sister Naamah. These products provided comfort and luxuries (Mitei, 2014). However, metallurgy and its branches became instruments of human ferocity and murder, therefore the shading of the human blood (Cotter 2003, 44) as attested by Lamech's poem (Genesis 4:23-24) which he sang to his wives Adah and Zillah.

Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice: wives of Lamech, listen to my utterance: I have killed a man for wounding me, a boy for bruising me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold (Genesis 4:23-24).

Lamech compares himself with Cain for murder. Lamech's poem to his wives indicates how technology was used to increase evil, violence, and murder. In this poem, Lamech boasts of his heroic achievement which had a negative contribution. Any human activities or artistic works that destroy human life, self-justification, exaltation, and independence from God are negative (Mitei, 2014). Although the Cainite technological development had some negative impacts like the destruction of human life, it also provided some positive elements such as development, advancements in the society in urban settlement as well as the use of bronze and iron. Likewise, today's technology impacts are realistic, and its use has increased by far in mobile telephones, modern airplanes, social media, household investments, and all kinds of informational communication technology (ICT). The youth are seriously engaged with digital technology even in Africa.

YOUTH, RELIGION, AND TECHNOLOGY IN AFRICAN CONTEXT

The intersection of youth, religion, and technology is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon in the African context. Africa, often described as a continent of remarkable diversity, is home to a multitude of religious traditions and cultural practices. One of the most influential forces shaping the lives of African youths is Christianity, with the Bible at its core. At the same time, the rapid proliferation of technology, including smartphones, computers, and social media platforms, has drastically transformed the everyday experiences of young Africans.

Christianity and the Bible

Religion has historically held a central position in the lives of Africans. In Africa, Christianity has emerged as one of the most influential religions, with its roots tracing back to the early colonial period when European missionaries spread the faith across the continent (Hastings, 1997). Today, Africa stands as one of the most Christianized regions

globally, with a diverse range of Christian denominations and traditions coexisting (Johnson, 2016).

Christianity, particularly the Bible, has played a pivotal role in shaping the moral and ethical values of African youths. The Bible provides a framework for understanding life's purpose, ethics, and spirituality. African youth often engage in religious practices such as attending church services, participating in prayer groups, and studying the Bible to gain spiritual guidance and a sense of community (Rakodi, 2018).

The role of Christianity and the Bible extends beyond spiritual guidance; they also influence various aspects of African youths' lives, including education, family dynamics, and social interactions. For many, Christianity provides a moral compass that guides their behaviour and decisions in a rapidly changing world.

Youth and Technology

In recent decades, technology has permeated all aspects of African society, with smartphones, computers, and social media becoming indispensable tools for communication, education, and entertainment. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Africa has witnessed a surge in mobile phone penetration, making it one of the fastest-growing regions for mobile technology adoption (ITU, 2019).

Smartphones, in particular, have become ubiquitous among African youth, transforming the way they access information, connect with peers, and engage with the world. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become integral to their social lives, allowing them to communicate with friends, share experiences, and participate in global conversations (Chisango, 2020).

Education is another domain where technology has made significant inroads. E-learning platforms, online courses, and educational apps have expanded

access to education, particularly for those in remote or underserved areas (UNESCO, 2020). This integration of technology in education empowers African youth to acquire knowledge and skills critical for their future.

The Intersection of Religion and Technology

Interestingly, religion and technology are not mutually exclusive in the lives of African youths. Many young Africans use technology to enhance their religious experiences. For instance, they access digital versions of the Bible or use religious apps to read scriptures and receive daily devotionals. Additionally, social media platforms are used to share religious messages and connect with like-minded individuals, fostering a sense of virtual religious community (Aluede & Edugie, 2019). Moreover, technology has facilitated the spread of religious content and evangelism. Christian ministries, for example, leverage the internet and social media to reach wider audiences and spread their messages globally (Bunt, 2019). African youth often play active roles in these online religious communities, sharing testimonies and engaging in discussions on matters of faith.

BIBLE, YOUTH AND TECHNOLOGY

Role of Religion, Particularly Christianity, and the Bible in African Societies

According to the Pew Research Center (2010), on the role of Christianity, and the Bible in African Societies, found that religion, particularly Christianity, plays a significant role in the lives of African youth. The prevalence of Christianity in Africa has resulted in the Bible becoming a central aspect of their lives. Christianity is the most widely practiced religion in Africa, with a substantial portion of the population identifying as Christian. The Bible serves as a source of guidance, moral values, and a sense of identity for African youth. Many participants in the study reported that their religious beliefs, rooted in Christianity and the

Bible, shape their worldviews and influence their decisions.

Furthermore, religious institutions, such as churches and religious leaders, have a profound influence on African youth (Mitei, 2014). These institutions provide a sense of community and support, contributing to the social and emotional well-being of young people. The Bible, often interpreted in the context of African culture, helps reinforce positive values and norms within the youth community. In summary, the role of Christianity and the Bible in African societies is substantial, serving as not only a source of spirituality but also a key factor in shaping the cultural and moral landscape for African youth.

Integration of Technology, Including Smartphones, Computers, and Social Media, in the Lives of African Youths

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2021), revealed that technology, particularly smartphones, computers, and social media, has become an integral part of the lives of African youth. Access to these technologies has grown rapidly in recent years, largely driven by increased internet penetration and affordability. ITU maintains that internet access in Africa has expanded significantly, with a growing number of young Africans gaining access to digital devices.

Smartphones are ubiquitous among African youth, and they serve as multipurpose tools for communication, information access, and entertainment. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are widely used for connecting with peers, sharing experiences, and staying informed about current events. Social media like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube have intensified youth engagement with new media platforms (Golan, 2023). This integration of technology has created new channels for social interaction, education, and economic opportunities. Technology has played a role in transforming religious practices among African youth. Many

young people use digital platforms to access religious content, connect with religious communities online, and engage in religious discussions. The Bible, too, is available in digital formats, making it easily accessible for reading and study on smartphones and computers. Therefore, technology has become an inseparable part of the lives of African youth, offering opportunities for communication, education, and religious engagement (Mitei, 2014). Smartphones, computers, and social media have transformed the way African youth interact with both their peers and their religious beliefs.

Youth and Contemporary Cultures: Bible and African Youth and Technology

There is a dynamic interplay between African youth, their cultural context, religion, and technology. It is evident that African youth are actively engaged in creating contemporary cultures that integrate elements of their religious beliefs with modern technological advancements.

African youth are using technology to express their faith, whether through sharing religious content on social media, participating in virtual religious gatherings, or accessing digital versions of religious texts like the Bible. This integration of technology with religious practices allows them to connect with their faith on their own terms while staying connected to their peers and broader global communities.

Moreover, the use of technology has not displaced traditional religious practices but has complemented them. African youth continue to attend church services and participate in religious rituals while simultaneously incorporating digital tools into their religious experiences.

Overall, it demonstrates that African youth are navigating the complexities of contemporary culture by embracing both their religious traditions, particularly Christianity and the Bible, and the opportunities presented by technology, including

smartphones, computers, and social media. This dual integration enriches their lives and helps shape the unique cultural landscape of African youth in the digital age. These technological advancements have not only connected African youth with their global peers but have also provided opportunities for sharing the bible and strengthening their faith. Social media platforms serve as spaces for sharing religious content, participating in virtual religious gatherings, and engaging in discussions about their beliefs. Additionally, the availability of digital versions of the Bible makes religious texts easily accessible for study and reflection. This demonstrates that African youth are not only embracing technology for secular purposes but also for religious enrichment.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the integration of technology has not replaced traditional religious practices but has complemented them. African youth continue to participate in church services and engage in religious rituals while also incorporating digital tools into their religious experiences. This coexistence reflects the adaptability of African youth, who have found ways to blend tradition and modernity to create a unique cultural landscape.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study illuminates the intricate relationship between religion, particularly Christianity and the Bible, and technology among African youth. It displays how young Africans are actively shaping contemporary cultures that embrace both their religious traditions and the opportunities presented by technology. This dual integration enriches their lives and highlights the resilience and adaptability of African youth in navigating the complexities of the digital age. As technology continues to evolve, it will be fascinating to observe how African youth further incorporate it into their religious and cultural practices, shaping the future of both their societies and their faith.

Simultaneously, technology, including smartphones, computers, and social media, has become an integral and transformative aspect of the lives of African youth. The widespread adoption of these digital tools has opened up new avenues for communication, education, and religious engagement, blurring the boundaries between traditional and modern practices.

Religion, particularly Christianity and the Bible, continues to hold a significant place in the lives of African youth, guiding their moral compass and providing a sense of community. Simultaneously, technology, including smartphones, computers, and social media, has become an integral part of their daily existence, shaping the way they communicate, access education, and engage with the world. The intersection of the Bible, religion and technology in the lives of African youth highlights their adaptability and resourcefulness in navigating the complex challenges of contemporary cultures.

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