Shaping Identities, Shaping Futures: The Socio-Religious Impact of Digital Culture on Nigerian Youth

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Abstract— In the digital age, social media platforms have revolutionized the way young people form and express their identities. This study examines the complex and multifaceted relationship between digital culture and youth identity formation in Nigeria, a country with a rapidly growing youth population and increasing social media penetration. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research explores how digital platforms shape and reshape youth identities, influencing their self-concept, relationships, and worldviews. The study draws on two theoretical frameworks: technological determinism and social learning theory, providing a rich understanding of the interplay between digital culture and youth identity. The findings of this study reveal a paradoxical impact of digital culture on youth identities in Nigeria. On the one hand, digital platforms offer opportunities for self-expression, activism, entrepreneurship, and innovation. On the other hand, they also pose significant risks, including the erosion of cultural and religious identity, social media pressure, cyber-bullying, and other negative consequences. This study contributes to the growing body of research on digital culture and youth identity, highlighting the need for a much clearer understanding of the complex relationships between digital media, identity formation, and socio-religious contexts. The findings of this study have implications for policymakers, educators, and parents seeking to navigate the challenges and opportunities of digital culture for young people in Nigeria.

I.   INTRODUCTION

The widespread adoption of digital technology has profoundly influenced youth identities globally, including in Nigeria. Digital culture, encompassing collective behaviors, beliefs, and practices emerging from digital technology adoption, has transformed the way young people construct and express their identities. Recent studies have highlighted the significance of digital media arts in promoting Nigerian culture, music, and fashion to a global audience [1], [2]. However, they also note the challenges of cyberbullying, online harassment, and the spread of misinformation [1]. Furthermore, research has shown that digital technology has a significant impact on adolescents' academic performance in Nigeria [3]. The influence of popular culture on Nigerian youth has also been a subject of concern, with studies highlighting the promotion of premarital sex, moral decadence, and substance abuse [4], [5]. As Nigerian youth navigate multiple digital platforms, including social media, messaging apps, online forums, and streaming services, they are exposed to diverse values and worldviews that shape their identities. But what constitutes identity? Identity is a complex concept comprising internal (self-perception) and external (socially constructed) dimensions [6], [7], [8], [9], [10]. Various factors, including globalization, ethnicity, social media, and religious beliefs, interact to shape youth identities.

Nigerian youth navigate multiple digital platforms, including social media, messaging apps, online forums, and streaming services, to express themselves, connect with others, and access information. These platforms have enabled youths to express themselves and engage with diverse identities. For example, online youth communities such as e-commerce, e-learning, e-music, e-religion, e-dating, e-marriage, and others have saturated the digital landscape. However, they also present challenges, such as cyberbullying, cybercrime (locally known as "Yahoo-Yahoo boys"), online harassment, and the spread of misinformation [11]. A study on the impact of social media on cultural identity among urban youth in Kenya highlights concerns about misinformation and the need for digital literacy programs [12], [13], [14]. The proliferation of digital platforms has introduced heterogeneous values, altering traditional norms and enabling youths to adopt multiple identities. In pre-digital Nigeria, youths formed their values and identities within homogeneous communities, influenced by family, traditional society, and cultural norms. However, digital culture has enlarged the cosmos, allowing people to imbibe values and worldviews from around the world. The emergence of digital culture has significant implications for youth identities in Nigeria. Youths are navigating multiple identities, influenced by diverse values and worldviews. This raises important questions about the impact of digital culture on youth identities, including: How do digital platforms shape youth identities in Nigeria? What are the implications of multiple identities for youth development and well-being? How can parents, educators, and policymakers support youths in navigating the complexities of digital culture?

Purpose of the study
The aim of this study is to examine the socio-religious impacts of digital culture on the formation of identities among youths on Nigerian youths. The following are the objectives:

1. Investigate different modes of identity formation among youths in Nigeria.
2. Examine the subversive impact of identity formation among youths in Nigeria.
3. Explore the salutary impact of digital culture on the identity formation of youths in Nigeria.
4. Highlight the socio-religious implications of digital culture on young people's formation of identities.

Relevance of the Study
This study is significant in both theory and practice. Theoretically, this research used technological determinism theory and social learning theory. The theories support the impact of technological advancements that have brought about the digital culture community and have impacted youth identities. Examining social learning theory by Albert Bandura helps us understand that observation and modeling play a primary role in how and why people learn. Humans learn from observing individuals and obtain new knowledge and behavior by viewing a model. Accordingly, consequences indirectly affect learning and behavior. Technological determinism states that media technology shapes how we, as individuals in a society, think, feel, act, and how society operates as we move from one technological age to another. It is also the idea that technology shapes social change; it determines our future [15]. Practically, the findings of this work have made a significant contribution to knowledge. And also, the recommendations from this research can be utilized by policymakers, including local, state, and federal governments, educators, and parents, in many ways. One of such ways includes addressing and setting up safety online measures to help youths harness digital platforms for positive uses and personal development. Also, the family, Yenagoa youths, business people, religious organizations, communities, and non-governmental organizations will all be impacted by this study. They can learn from this research to help youths in Nigeria embrace healthy online behavior and seek positive improvement in a fast-changing technological world.

II. RELATED WORKS

A. Religion and Formation of Identities

Religion remains a multifaceted concept, defying precise definition due to its diverse social, psychological, and cultural functions [16], [17]. This complexity is evident in the numerous definitions of religion that exist, each aligning with particular schools of thought or academic disciplines [18]. Scholars have approached the definition of religion from various perspectives, including theological, philosophical, psychological, and sociological lenses. However, no universally accepted definition exists, highlighting the inherent difficulty of capturing the essence of religion [10], [18].

The complexity of religion is further compounded by its role in identity formation. Religion can play a crucial role in shaping identity, particularly in societies where youth are deeply embedded in religious communities [10], [18]. The influence of religion on identity formation can stem from communal norms, reinforcing religion's role in shaping identity [18]. Historically, religion has been a central force in identity formation, providing a sense of belonging, meaning, and purpose [12]. However, in contemporary society, the role of religion in identity formation has diminished, and youth must navigate constantly shifting social and political landscapes [1]. According to Erikson [6] the search for identity is a critical aspect of adolescent development. Religion can provide a transcendent meaning that is essential for youth identity formation, particularly in times of uncertainty and change (Song, 2021).

In African societies, where youth are deeply embedded in religious communities, religion plays a significant role in shaping identity. The cultural and social norms of these communities are often deeply rooted in religious traditions, which can influence an individual's sense of self and belonging [10]. Furthermore, religion can provide a sense of purpose and meaning, which is essential for identity formation [12]. Thus, religion matters in identity formation, particularly in African societies where youth are deeply

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embedded in religious communities. The essence of this study is to explore the nuances of religion's influence on identity formation in contemporary society. By examining the complex relationships between religion, culture, and identity, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of religion in shaping identity.

B. Digital Culture and Formation of Identities

Digital culture has significantly impacted identity formation, allowing individuals to create and express multiple selves online [19], [20], [21], [22]. According to Suler (2016), the molecular digital "you" refers to the collection of digital "molecules" that constitute one's online self [23]. These digital molecules can be thought of as our digital social selves, which we can take with us wherever we go, regardless of time or location [12]. Suler (2016) identifies several types of online selves, including the willing and doing self, which initiates online action, and the fantasy self, which is expressed through online games and virtual reality [23]. Additionally, there are the real and ideal selves, which are presented through online profiles and interactions [1], [4]. The online self can also be divided into positive and negative aspects, with the positive digital self engaging in altruistic behaviors and the negative digital self exhibiting destructive tendencies. Friedenberg (2020) explores the concept of identity in the digital age, drawing on the philosophical ideas of René Descartes and John Locke. Friedenberg argues that our online experiences are shaping our sense of self and identity, and that we are no longer limited to traditional forms of storytelling and self-expression [24], [25], [26]. The digital world has created new opportunities for self-expression and identity formation, but it also raises questions about the nature of reality and identity. As Friedenberg (2020) notes, our online experiences can be both liberating and limiting, allowing us to explore new identities and connect with others, but also creating new forms of social control and surveillance [26].

Furthermore, the digital world has enabled the creation of multiple identities, which can be both empowering and problematic. On one hand, individuals can experiment with different identities and express themselves in ways that may not be possible in offline contexts [12]. On the other hand, the creation of multiple identities can also lead to confusion, fragmentation, and disintegration of the self [18]. Hence, digital culture has significantly impacted identity formation, enabling individuals to create and express multiple selves online. However, this also raises questions about the nature of reality and identity, and highlights the need for this study into the complex relationships between digital culture, identity, and the self in Nigeria.

C. Socio-Religious Impact of Digital Culture on Youths

The advent of digital culture has profoundly impacted the socio-religious lives of contemporary youth. On one hand, digital platforms have democratized access to religious content, enabling young people to explore various faiths and practices beyond their own [27]. The internet has also facilitated the dissemination of religious messages, fostering a deeper connection with the divine. However, digital culture also poses significant challenges to the religious lives of young people. The proliferation of online content has created a distraction-filled environment, where youth can easily succumb to inappropriate content, social media messages, or other digital distractions [12]. Furthermore, the unfiltered nature of online religious content has raised concerns among religious leaders, who fear that it could lead young people away from their traditional beliefs and practices.

In Nigeria, where the demography of young people is significant, accounting for 70% of the country's population, totaling 1.6 billion young people based on the National Bureau of Statistics in 2023, the impact of digital culture on their socio-religious lives is a pressing concern. This demographic presents a unique opportunity for economic growth and development if properly harnessed. However, it also poses significant challenges, such as addressing the high youth unemployment rate, which increased from 15.5% in Q2 to 17.3% in Q3 2023.

Given the significance of this demographic, it is essential to explore the impact of digital culture on their socio-religious lives. This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between digital culture, religion, and identity among young people in Nigeria. Moreover, the digital space has also enabled young people to engage in religious discussions and debates, which can be both beneficial and challenging. On one hand, online discussions can provide a platform for young people to explore different perspectives and deepen their understanding of their faith. On the other hand, online debates can also lead to the spread of misinformation and the reinforcement of existing biases [12].

In addition, the digital space has also raised questions about the nature of religious authority and leadership. With the proliferation of online content, young people are no longer limited to traditional sources of religious guidance. Instead, they can access a wide range of online resources, from religious websites and blogs to social media platforms and online forums. However, this shift has also raised concerns about the credibility and reliability of online sources. The lack of regulation and oversight in the digital space can make it difficult for young people to distinguish between credible and non-credible sources of religious information.

Thus, the socio-religious impact of digital culture on youths in Nigeria is a pressing concern that requires careful consideration. By acknowledging both the benefits and challenges of digital culture, we can work towards creating a deeper understanding and insight of its impact on the religious lives of young people.

D. Theoretical Framework

Digital platforms like Avatar, electronic games, blog sites, and social media (Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, and WhatsApp) all play significant roles in shaping youth identities. They can also promote both religious tolerance and extremism, depending on the content

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consumed and the groups followed. This article used the technological determinism theory propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1962 and the social learning theory propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977. Both theories showcased the impact of technological advancements. And also evidenced how youths learn and copy behaviors online, which have influenced their identities.

1) Theory of Technological Determinism

The term "technological determinism" was coined by Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), an American economist and sociologist who was better known for conceiving the concepts of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. Veblen believed that technology, or "the machine," would overthrow the businessman or the working man and that a societal change would be created [28], [29]. Technological determinism as a theory was propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1962. He believed that people should observe not only the media itself but "the ways in which each new medium disrupts traditional and reshapes social life". Accordingly, media technology shapes how we, as individuals in a society, think, feel, act, and how society operates as we move from one technological age to another. It is also the idea that technology shapes social change and determines our future. Technological determinism theory was necessary for this study because today's technological determinants see the positive and negative changes and advances that came with the advent of social media. It is pertinent to note that digital culture has made the world flat; there is constant virtual interconnectedness, there are fewer genuine human interactions, and identities are formed constantly.

The developer of this theory suggests that as technology advances further, so do people, who grow gradually according to technological growth. As it moves from one age to another, the operation of society also moves from one age to another. It shows that society can immediately adopt the change, for instance, from typewriter to computer, landline to mobile phone, and letter to chat. All these technologies develop the senses of humans, just like radio developed listening sense. Television developed visual senses, and computers developed interactive senses. Humans use these developed senses in society [30]. The Internet is the present technology that society is adapting to. As it became part of our daily lives, it changed the social patterns of our youth.

2) Theory of Social Learning

This theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977. The theory suggests that observation and modeling play a primary role in how and why people learn. People learn social behavior by observing and imitating the behaviors of others [31], [32]. Examining social learning theory by Albert Bandura helps us understand that observation and modeling play a primary role in how and why people learn. Humans learn from observing individuals and obtain new knowledge and behavior by viewing a model. Accordingly, consequences indirectly affect learning and behavior. This theory was necessary for this work because youth identities are formed by constantly learning from the virtual space. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X, Snapchat, and many others are flooded with images and videos of purported role models that youths emulate to live their lives in contemporary times.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the socio-religious impact of digital culture on identity formation among youths in Nigeria [33]. The narrative analysis was used to accurately interpret human experiences, responses, and identities among youths in Nigeria [3], [4], [34], [35].

A sample of 100 youths was selected from three Nigerian states: Imo, Bayelsa, and Kano, following the National Population Commission's Nigerian population projection in 2022 [35]. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain insights into how and why youths engage with online platforms, as well as the meanings they attach to their experiences of digital culture in identity formation [36].

The survey research method was also adopted to ascertain the relative incidence, distribution, validity, or reliability of information gathered from interviews, questionnaires, and surveys[37], [38], [39], [40]. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the interviewees to share their knowledge and experiences broadly, allowing the researcher to gain a wider range of information concerning social media behavior [36].

Furthermore, a content analysis was conducted to examine the online content created and shared by youths in Nigeria. This involved analyzing social media posts, online forums, and blogs to identify themes, patterns, and trends in the online discourse [39], [40], [41]. The content analysis was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant themes and topics in the online content created and shared by youths in Nigeria?
2. How do youths in Nigeria use online platforms to express their religious identities and beliefs?
3. What are the implications of online content for the socio-religious lives of youths in Nigeria?

The content analysis revealed that the dominant themes in the online content created and shared by youths in Nigeria were related to religion, identity, and social justice. The analysis also showed that youths in Nigeria use online platforms to express their religious identities and beliefs, and to connect with others who share similar interests and values.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Different Modes of Identity among Youths in Nigeria

People form their identities through a combination of cultural influences, personal experiences, relationships, and self-reflection. Cultural background, values, beliefs, and societal norms all play roles in shaping one's identity.

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Personal experiences, including achievements and challenges, contribute to a sense of self. Relationships with family, friends, and communities also impact identity formation. So does introspection and understanding one's own values and priorities. Identity is construed to be who we are; it is a part of ourselves, and several people consider it to be something that is formed over time throughout our lives. According to Montoya, a person's identity is shaped by past experiences and their desires for the future [42]. This indicates that a person's community, family, friends, and actions, past and present, shape that individual's future. These different external and internal factors help to create different aspects of a person's identity. It is pertinent to note that our communities and families have helped to form our personal identities. We are taught to distinguish between right and wrong and to live by certain social customs so that we do not act inappropriately.

This study shows that Nigerian youths are plagued by different modes of identity formation. It is pertinent to note that aside from digital culture, young people in the city have developed their sense of self through gender, migration, globalization, religion, social, family, communal, race/ethnicity identities, and class. Social identity is the perception of oneself as a member of certain social groups. Characters that are associated with the group come to be seen as a part of the self. This influences the individual's sense of identity. The work shows that a lot of youth in Nigeria City developed their identities through communal ties. Communal identity is identified by observing a group's communal activities, rituals, rites, and holiday celebrations [43], [44]. It is evident to note that young people construe their sense of self as a result of communal ties; such affiliations, consciously or unconsciously, form an individual form their identity. Young people observe and learn behaviors from their communities, which in turn have shaped who they are within or outside themselves. In an open group discussion with 10 youths between the ages of 18 and 20 years old (interviewed, December 15, 2023), they all agreed by a higher percentage that aside from digital culture, their identities have been greatly impacted by communal influence. As young people in Nigeria City, their communities' norms and values have greatly impacted their sense of self. This is evident in their greetings, how they associate with people, their ways of dressing, etc.

Another mode of identity among youths in Nigeria is the family. According to Benson & Johnson (2016), during childhood and adolescence, the family is a particularly important context of socialization. The authors went further to say that developmental scholars argue that initial identity content is based on the feedback youths receive from their parents. This was clearly observed in the responses that were obtained from the questionnaire that was sent out. In a face-to-face interview with one Miss Katherine William, who is 20 years old and an undergraduate student (interviewed on November 20, 2023), She elucidated that, aside from digital culture, her family plays a crucial role in molding her into what she is today. Her sense of self and how she sees and carries herself are all reflections of her family upbringing. In

an open group discussion with about five (5) youths between the ages of 19 and 22, interviewed on December 16, 2023, all affirmed that their family's values, disciplines, and instructions have molded them and helped develop their identities to be who they are today (Figure 1). This study rightly acknowledges Friedenburg (2020) when he says that extensive familiarity with others allows us to adopt other people's subjective perspectives and to see the world in the same way they do [26].
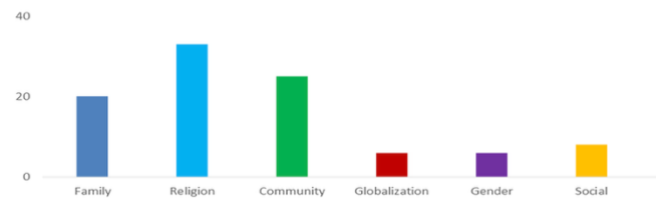

Fig. 1. Responses to different modes of identity formation among youths in Nigeria

B. Subversive impact of digital culture on youth identities in Nigeria

African cosmology sees the world as interwoven between the sacred and the profane. Values are derived from family, communal rules and regulations, religious doctrines, etc. However, with the advent of globalization, which has introduced the digital era, Young people's identities have been greatly impacted by the digital world. By implication and by the use of technological determinism theory, it gives young people clarity to see how technology and digital media disrupt traditional and reshape social life. Media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, and act. And also how society operates as we move from one technological age to another. Drawing from social learning theory by Albert Bandura, we can deduce a lot about online influence on youth identities. It is pertinent to note that the impact of digital culture on youth identity formation in Nigeria can be destructive, corrupting, and at the same time harmful, with negative effects.

Digital culture succinctly informs and influences how young people communicate, associate with friends and family, and behave generally in the community. This explains why young people in particular feel obliged to present more idealized versions of their online selves. Since everyday self-presentations are socially mediated processes that offer social interaction, self-expression, and visibility, young people constantly negotiate their intimate self-presentations in terms of what is made visible for whom and on which platform. This research clearly shows how Nigerian youth delve deep into the media world and its rich environment. Having harnessed its richness, young people here expressed different values, attitudes, norms, and behaviors that have made them different from their peers. Nigeria's youths have employed digital culture tools like the internet, social media, virtual reality, electronic games, etc., to accomplish their goals. The digital culture among youths in Nigeria is profound and glaring. Religious groups, political engagement, educational online platforms, and social platforms all gave young people ample

opportunities to harness digital tools. This work will show how Nigerian youths' usage of digital platforms has, in turn shaped their identities negatively.

The following key points will buttress the disruptive and harmful impact of digital culture on Nigerian youths' identities.

1. The loss of cultural and religious identity: The influx of western digital content can sometimes lead to a mixture of Ijaw culture and religious values. As young people constantly adopt foreign lifestyles and values from online platforms, a new hybrid identity is formed. Beinmo Alagoa, 28, (interviewed 2/11/2023) argues that he cannot really tell if he is solely a Bayelsan or a Western man. He went further to say that his ideologies and perceptions about life are strongly in disconformity with his traditional religious and cultural values. He goes on to say that "usually I don't call my elders by their names, and I prostrate to greet my elders as my Ijaw culture demands, but do you know that today I don't see anything wrong with such an attitude?"

2. Social Media Pressure: Youths are often exposed to idealized online personas, which can lead to social comparison and low self-esteem. This will go a long way toward impacting their sense of self-worth and identity. Nigeria's youths are caught up in this web, and as long as digital culture platforms are harnessed, the subversive impact of their usage is unavoidable. Omiebi Sophia, 20, (interviewed on November 16, 2023) opines that she usually has low self-esteem whenever she sees young people her age dressing in the latest clothes and uploading lovely pictures. She feels she is poor and is unable to afford beautiful clothes. And also, she says, "Whenever I see more "likes" and "comments" on my Facebook friends' posts, I feel bad and unloved. This usually happens when my posts do not generate enough likes and comments". It is evident that digital culture can amplify peer pressure and conformity among Nigerian youths. Young people feel pressured to conform to certain trends or beliefs, even if they conflict with their religious and cultural values.

3. Cyberbullying: Online platforms can also be breeding grounds for cyberbullying, which can negatively affect the mental health and self-image of Nigerian youths. Cyberbullying has led to well-publicized suicides, and cybercrimes and identity theft have become a normalized danger [45], [46], [47]. Furthermore, they argue that there is also a normalized danger in online commerce and communication as more people use the internet for business as well as pleasure. Also, online gaming consumes young users' lives, with some obsessed players purportedly dying in cyberspace as they neglect food and sleep. Nigeria youths use X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, TikTok, and Instagram to set and text, thereby opening up their private lives to public scrutiny and perhaps scandal. Friedenberg (2020), in his research, found that people with greater Facebook usage tended to have more depressive symptoms [26]. He explains further that this is so because of increased

upward comparisons. Belenumo Japhet, 19, (interviewed on November 20, 2023) explains that he has been bullied several times online. He went further to explain that "oftentimes I have had encounters with people who just decide to provoke you at the smallest opportunity they get. I was bullied and trolled at severally times, especially when I spoke and expressed my opinion about the political life in my city. I felt so bad and started thinking less of myself."

C. Salutary Impact of digital culture on youth identities in Nigeria

Digital platforms have greatly engaged Nigerian youths in ways they least expected. It is pertinent to note that a lot of young people are engrossed with their devices, either playing games online, creating avatars, or chatting with family, friends, and new people they meet online. Responses from sixty (60) copies of the questionnaire show that several young people spend considerable time online, both gaming and posting pictures and videos (Figure 2). It is evident that responses from interviews and questionnaires show that such platforms impact their identities in a more positive way. A total of thirty-five (35) youths responded by saying they post hourly and visit more than five social media platforms. A total of fifteen (15) young people who responded to the survey say that they visit online platforms on a daily basis; they don't post daily, but once every day of the week. Another response shows that eight (8) respondents say they visit and post on online platforms once a week. A total of two (2) youths indicated that they post and visit online platforms once a month.

Digital culture has indeed impacted the social lives of Nigerian youths. Social life here is taken to mean participants' relationships with parents, siblings, friends, and society. Drawing from social learning theory by Albert Bandura, we can deduce that learning by observing people's behaviors helps young people mold their new identities. Ninety-eight (98) responses were obtained from a hundred (100) questionnaires, showing that sixty (60) strongly agreed, while fourteen (14) out of ninety-eight (98) agreed that digital culture improves their social life with people (Figure 3). Responses gotten from the questionnaire have also shown that digital culture improves the religious life, political participation, education, work, technical skills, and economic life of Nigerian youths. Responses gotten from ninety-eight (98) out of a hundred (100) respondents showed that a total of fifteen (15) strongly agreed, while a total of fifty-five (55) agreed with the helpful nature of digital culture towards young people.

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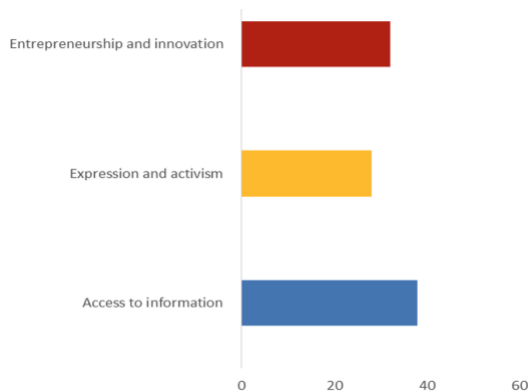Online ISSN: 2987-6060

Fig. 2. Responses to salutary impacts of digital culture on youth identities in Nigeria
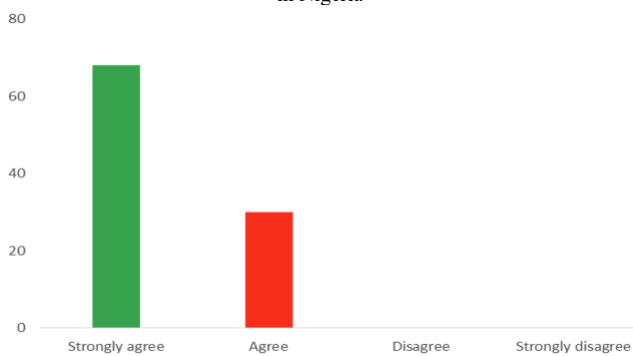

Fig. 3. Responses about digital culture have indeed impacted the social lives of Nigerian youths

D. Intersection of Digital Culture and Youths' Socio-Religious Identities in Nigeria

Religious beliefs, practices, and doctrines have had a profound impact on the formation of Nigerian youth identities. It is important to note that the intersection of social and religious aspects within a society, especially religious elements, has had profound influences on social structures, norms, and behaviors. Digital culture influences cultural values, religious practices, and social interactions. This and more have fostered a globalized identity that blends cultural norms with digital influences. Religion has been the dominant framework for values, social control, and political activism in most of human history. Sustainable development and environmentalism have largely evolved as secular movements in the west but live in a largely religious world [48], [49]. It is estimated that 80% of the global population adheres to varying degrees of a faith tradition. Furthermore, they contend that, given the scale, reach, and importance of religion as a social reality, engagement with and by people in faith communities and institutions is inescapable and vital. They argued that religion will continue to propel sustainable development both now and in the near future, where population growth will be concentrated in countries permeated by faith traditions. Nigeria's youths identities have been greatly impacted by these factors.

1. Sustainable Development: Religious communities in Nigeria have learned to embrace the disruption of electronic multimedia. As a result, a new generation of youths has learned to leverage digital media to find their voices, question cultural taboos, and challenge entrenched political powers. This explains why, year by year (even day by day), increasing numbers of young people operate in the virtual realm, and many of them clearly spend a great deal of time, energy, and resources maintaining active and often elaborate websites and social media platforms. Many other studies suggest that digital platforms can be a powerful tool for advancing sustainability, increasing awareness and understanding of environmental and social issues, facilitating the exchange of information and ideas, and mobilizing communities and organizations towards sustainable practices.

2. Exchange of Religious Perspectives and Community Building: Digital platforms have greatly helped faith communities teach and expose their ideologies to other young people who do not belong to the same religious community. This has led to identities among young people in Nigeria. A religious community called the Baha'i came up with ways to regulate the usage of technology between its members so as not to lose their identities [50], [51]. The authors posit that rather than simply rejecting new technology, religious groups seek to regulate and shape their members' engagement. Furthermore, the authors contend that the study group (Baha'i), because they lacked enough resources to develop media apps, constantly appealed to and referred their members to their core ethics and principles. Also, Durham and Keller (2012) argue that the mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, inform, and in calculate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of larger societies. Oweilayefa Tare (interviewed on 1/12/2023) contends that the exchange of religious perspectives via social media platforms like Facebook, Zoom, WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Telegram has greatly helped him to tolerate and respect other people's religious beliefs and affiliations. This and more have greatly shown that Nigerian youths' identities have been formed by socio-religious perspectives.

3. Formation of identities through religious information: Digital platforms have greatly provided young people in Nigeria youth access to a wealth of religious information that has helped impact their identities. Online sites provide easy access to religious texts, educational resources, and other vital online communities. This and more have helped youths deepen their understanding of their faith and enrich their libraries through these digital resources. By so doing, young people's identities are formed, and they become key players in sustainable development in Nigeria. One Prosper Ebiowei, 25, (interviewed on December 7, 2023) opines that "my church social media apps like the Live TV app, Rapsody of Reality app, Pastor Chris digital library app, and Love TV app) all have a wealth of information

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that have helped enrich my Christian faith. And also, I have learned to be a change actor in my city." Youth's identities are constantly formed by the information they frequently get from platforms and people they trust. It is evident to note that in Nigeria faith based communities or organizations (FBOs) have largely engaged youths to be better political players in the region. The researcher has witnessed a situation in her church WhatsApp group where her pastor was sensitizing youths to participate in politics for sustainable development in the state. It is important to note that faith communities have leveraged social media platforms to enlighten young people in Nigeria and imbibe a peaceful political atmosphere in the state. Youths are advised to desist from selling their votes. And also, young people are encouraged to initiate campaigns to vote for the right candidate during the electoral process.

V. CONCLUSION

This study explored the intersection of digital culture, youth identity, and socio-religious contexts in Nigeria. By examining the experiences of Nigerian youth who have grown up in a rapidly changing digital landscape, this research provided insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of identity formation in the digital age.

The findings of this study highlighted the significance of digital culture in shaping youth identity, particularly in the context of social media. The research revealed that Nigerian youth use digital platforms to express themselves, interact with others, and form connections that transcend geographical boundaries. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that digital culture has both positive and negative impacts on youth identity, influencing their self-concept, relationships, and worldviews.

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomena, providing both breadth and depth of insights.

The study's findings have implications for future research, policy, and practice. The research underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of digital culture's impact on youth identity, recognizing both the benefits and drawbacks of digital engagement. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of considering the socio-religious contexts in which youth identity is formed and negotiated.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made: 1. Limitations: Future studies should investigate the longitudinal effects of digital culture on youth identity, exploring the complex and dynamic relationships between digital media use, self-concept, and socio-religious contexts. 2. Digital Literacy and Education: Educational programs should prioritize digital literacy, equipping youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate digital platforms effectively and responsibly. 3. Parental and Community Involvement: Parents and community leaders should engage with youth in discussions about digital culture, providing guidance and support as they navigate the complexities of online interactions. 4. Contextualized Understanding of Digital Culture: Researchers and policymakers should recognize the importance of contextualizing digital culture within specific socio-religious and cultural frameworks, avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches to understanding and addressing digital culture's impact on youth identity.

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