

The Role of Islamic Education (IE) and Electronic Social Media (ESM) in Promoting Peaceful Coexistence in a Multireligio-Cultural Society

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the role of Islamic education and electronic social media as effective instruments for fostering peaceful coexistence and strengthening national integration within Nigeria's multi-religious and multicultural society. Islam, as a religion, strongly upholds the principles of tolerance, mutual respect, and harmonious living among diverse groups. Against this background, the study explores the concept of Islamic education and its relevance to national integration, alongside an assessment of the influence of electronic social media in promoting peaceful relations among adherents of different faiths. It further investigates how the teachings of Islamic education can be effectively utilized to cultivate a peaceful and cohesive society through the strategic deployment of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook for the dissemination of religious knowledge to a larger society. The paper argues that Islamic education, when properly articulated and communicated through electronic social media, possesses significant potential to advance peace, enhance interreligious tolerance, and reinforce national integration in Nigeria's pluralistic socio-cultural context. Consequently, the study recommends the integration of digital peace education into Islamic learning frameworks, the promotion of structured interfaith dialogue among various religious bodies through electronic social media, and the establishment of adequate regulatory and ethical mechanisms to guide the responsible use of these platforms, among other measures.

Keyword: Islamic Education, Electronic Social Media, Multi-religio-Cultural, Peaceful Co-Existence

Introduction

Contemporary societies are increasingly characterised by religious and cultural diversity which, although enriching, but often poses challenges to peaceful coexistence, social cohesion, and national integration (United Nations, 2021; Carney, 2022). In Nigeria's multi-religio-cultural context, serial degrees of tensions arising from religious intolerance, misinformation, and the misuse of communication platforms have, at various times, undermined harmonious living among the citizens. These challenges highlight the collective responsibility of members of society to strengthen the principles of peaceful coexistence through effective mechanisms, particularly religious education, with special emphasis on Islamic education. In this regard, the Secretary-General called for a comprehensive report with recommendations aimed at advancing the shared global agenda and addressing both present and emerging challenges (UNESCO, 2022). From the inception of Western education in Nigeria, Islamic education has been incorporated into the national educational curriculum with the primary aim of instilling sound religious beliefs, moral values, and culturally acceptable behavior in learners, irrespective of their level of study or ethnic and racial background. Its objectives extend beyond the acquisition of utilitarian knowledge to include spiritual and ethical formation, which has historically played a fundamental role in the development of human civilization and societal integration (Abdullahi, 2010). Islamic education therefore addresses not only factual knowledge about nature and society, but also aspects of life that are not fully understood, especially those relating to moral consciousness and spirituality (Fafunwa, 2004). Consequently, its role in promoting peace, national unity, and integration in Nigeria is directed toward the balanced development of the total personality of the individual, encompassing rational, spiritual, and social dimensions. In this light, Islamic education is conceived as the holistic upbringing of the individual within the content and context of Islam, aimed at nurturing elevated moral and spiritual consciousness that leads to faith, righteous conduct, and communal solidarity (Garba & Abdulmalik, 2017). In the contemporary era, advancements in communication technologies have significantly transformed human social relationships and communication systems, creating new avenues for interaction and information exchange (DeCosta & Roen, 2010). Electronic social media, in particular, has emerged as a powerful tool for generating, disseminating, and sharing information for collective benefit (Bello, 2012).

Against this backdrop, this paper examines the role of Islamic education and electronic social media in promoting peaceful coexistence, national unity, and human integration in Nigeria. Specifically, it explores how Islamic educational values can be effectively communicated through electronic social media platforms as modern instruments for bridging the gap between Islamic educators (*da'i* - Islamic callers) and their target audiences. The rationale for this approach lies in the understanding of Islamic education as a comprehensive system of thought encompassing beliefs, values, and worldviews that define the nature of life in this world and the hereafter, and prescribe the position and responsibilities of humankind within society. When strategically deployed, electronic social media can therefore enhance the dissemination of Islamic teachings that promote tolerance, mutual understanding, and sustainable peace in Nigeria's multireligio-cultural society.

Conceptualizing Islamic Education and Its Operational Objectives

Islamic education has been variously attempted and defined among the scholars within the field of Islamic studies. According to Garba and Abdulmalik (2017) cited in Balogun and Oseni (2023), Islamic education could be referred to as “efforts by the Muslim community to educate its own, to pass along the heritage of Islamic knowledge, first and foremost through its primary sources, i.e. the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This type of education of Muslims might be taken in places like mosques, schools or universities, or other organizations established by Muslims over the centuries, Douglass and Shaikh (n.d). Galadanci (1977) in their professional opinions, discussed in great details, the basic ideas and goals of Islamic education, when describing it as “an education to form person who will be good and worship Allah as He (God) deserved to be worshipped, who will use the knowledge to enjoin people to do good (*Ya'mur-bil Ma'ruf*) on earth and utilize it in accordance with Allah's law in the service of belief and according to its scheme”. Looking at this statement, Islamic education is believed to be a study that is designed to provide man with opportunity of being disciplined on the basis of obedience to Allah, His messenger and the constituted authority which is part and parcel of his life. This is based on the divine command of Allah that says: *يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ* “O' you, who believe, obey Allah and obey His messenger and the constituted authorities among you (Q4:59).

Furthermore, Islamic education is also perceived as a process of physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual training of man. This according to Akanni and Jatau (2012) in a work titled *Relevance of*

Islamic Education to National Integration in Nigeria postulated that Islamic education is to make people establish orderliness, human brotherhood, freedom, equality and social justice. Abdul-Karim (1990) also opined that Islamic education entails the attainment of Islamic virtues through the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, socially, economically, culturally, intellectually, morally, and spiritually, while also developing people's talents and inspiring lofty ethical values in them.

From the foregoing analysis, Islamic education may be appropriately understood as a holistic system of education that inculcates not only discipline but also sound character formation in the minds of Muslims. This enables individuals to identify, understand, and cooperatively address both personal and collective challenges confronting their immediate communities and the global society at large. It is therefore regarded as one of the most comprehensive systems of education, divinely enjoined upon every Muslim (male and female), to acquire and internalize. This understanding serves as rationale for the inclusion of Islamic Education in the Nigerian National Curriculum as developed by the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). Accordingly, the curriculum objectively aimed at producing a balanced Muslim who embodies faith (Allah-consciousness), morality (ethics and justice), intellectual competence (reasoning and knowledge derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah), and social skills (tolerance and commitment to national unity). Through this integrated approach, Islamic education seeks to produce individuals who are useful to themselves and society, firmly grounded in Islamic values yet competent to function effectively in modern life by harmonizing spiritual (Qur'anic) and worldly (scientific) knowledge for holistic development and national cohesion.

Electronic Social Media (ESM) as a Means of Communication: Implications for Religious Education and Peace-building

Electronic social media (ESM) refers to Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-based platforms that transform communication into interactive dialogue among individuals, organizations, and communities. Among the rapidly evolving technological innovations of the twenty-first century, ESM stands out as a transformative phenomenon within the broader domain of information and communication. Its expansion has been facilitated by the exponential growth in internet usage, which

has increased from modest figures in the early stages to billions of users globally in recent times (Shirky, 2011). There is no single, universally accepted definition of electronic social media (ESM) among scholars. Different scholars have proposed multiple conceptualizations, reflecting its multifaceted nature. In general terms, it may be described as a collection of online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content sharing, and collaboration. Kietzmann, Kristopher, and Bruno (2011) define ESM as ICT platforms that enable interactive communication among individuals, organizations, and communities. Similarly, Anderson and Jiang (2018) conceptualize it as social interaction in which people create and share information and ideas within virtual communities and networks. From these perspectives, electronic social media (ESM) can be understood as a modern socio-technological medium that facilitates widespread human communication through internet-based Web 2.0 frameworks.

Web 2.0, in this context, is described by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), and cited in Doris (2012), as a group of internet-based applications built on ideological and technological foundations that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It is also perceived as a new generation of internet media that harnesses collective intelligence and promotes participatory computing (Ganesh & Padmanabhuni, 2007). These characteristics have significantly transformed communication processes, giving rise to collaborative and participatory modes of interaction. As a means of communication, ESM encompasses software-based platforms that enable users to generate, interpret, restructure, and disseminate content electronically, while facilitating social interaction and information exchange among individuals, organizations, and communities via the internet. This technology allows users to create and share experiences and ideas and enhances the dissemination of information through pervasive internet infrastructure. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), the primary objective of ESM is to allow users to integrate existing and emerging technologies in order to create global online environments for interaction of ideas and sharing of knowledge. Popular social networking platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, alongside mobile-based applications such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and BlackBerry Messenger, constitute prominent examples of ESM. These platforms have amplified the voices of individuals and groups who were previously marginalized, enabling them to participate actively in public discourse. ESM integrates technology, telecommunications, and social interaction to facilitate the construction and dissemination of

messages through text, images, and audio (Dabner, 2012). It also generates discussion archives that are valuable for revisiting opinions, preserving collective memory, mobilizing communities, and sustaining engagement (Cohen, 2020).

Beyond its technical, social, and communicative functions, electronic social media (ESM) holds immense potential as a peace-building instrument in multi-religious societies (Campbell, 2013; Cheong et al., 2012). In the Nigerian context, where religious narratives circulating in public discourse can sometimes contribute to social tension, electronic social media (ESM) can serve as a constructive platform for disseminating accurate religious teachings and promoting balanced perspectives that encourage mutual understanding and social harmony if appropriately harnessed (Ibrahim & Adamu, 2020; Ojebode & Adegbola, 2021). When effectively utilized, these platforms enable Islamic educators and religious leaders to promote messages of peace, tolerance, and mutual respect to diverse audiences (Castells, 2015). Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube facilitate the rapid dissemination of sermons, educational content, Qur'anic expositions, and interfaith dialogue materials that emphasize ethical conduct and peaceful coexistence (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kperogi, 2011). Nevertheless, the misuse of ESM, particularly through the spread of fake news, provocative religious messages, and inflammatory rhetoric, poses significant challenges to social harmony (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). This reality underscores the need for ethical regulation, digital literacy, and responsible engagement by religious communicators (UNESCO, 2021). Islamic education, with its emphasis on moral discipline, truthfulness, accountability, and social responsibility, provides a robust framework for guiding the ethical use of electronic social media (ESM).

In conclusion, electronic social media, when examined as a means of communication, extends beyond technical interaction to influence social relations, educational outreach, and ethical engagement (Afolabi, 2020). Its capacity to facilitate dialogue, share knowledge, and mobilize communities makes it a transformative communication medium in contemporary societies (Howard & Hussain, 2013). When guided by Islamic educational principles, ESM can contribute to reducing religious tensions, promoting constructive dialogue, and fostering sustainable peace within Nigeria's multi-religious and multicultural society.

The Concept of Peaceful Co-Existence

We live in an increasingly interconnected world in which people of diverse beliefs, cultures, ethnicities, and national origins are compelled to coexist within a global village characterized by mutual interdependence. While such diversity holds significant potential for social enrichment and collective development, it also poses serious challenges to peaceful living. In this context, peaceful coexistence has become an indispensable condition for human survival. However, the mere desire for peace is insufficient; conscious and sustained efforts are required to cultivate the values, attitudes, and social mechanisms that make harmonious living possible. Furthermore, the term peaceful coexistence primarily focuses on intergroup relations and the capacity of societies to manage diversity constructively. According to Arai and Tadevosyan (2025), coexistence describes a social condition in which diversity is embraced for its positive potential, equality is actively pursued, interdependence among groups is recognized, and peaceful means of resolving differences are preferred. This understanding extends to initiatives aimed at conflict prevention and management, peace-building, reconciliation, and the promotion of multiculturalism and pluralism within societies (Arai and Tadevosyan, 2025). Peaceful coexistence therefore implies living together in harmony rather than in constant hostility.

Conceptually, peaceful coexistence refers to a state in which individuals and groups interact on the basis of mutual respect, tolerance, and cooperation. It entails the recognition of equal rights, mutual understanding, trust, and consideration for the interests of others. In furtherance to this assertion, Yusuf (2013) notes that the principles underlying peaceful coexistence include the renunciation of violence, the adoption of dialogue and negotiation as means of resolving disputes, and respect for the right of individuals and groups to choose their religious, cultural, and social orientations freely. Consequently, peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance imply the capacity of people of diverse backgrounds to live together peacefully without recourse to violence or coercion. Therefore, in ensuring a sustainable peaceful coexistence, education plays a central role in achieving it. Perhaps the reason why Adejobi and Adesina (2009) cited in Yusuf (2016) viewed peace education as a process that inculcates discipline and awareness of the importance of peace-building within society. Similarly, Ajala (2003) defines peace and tolerance education as an educational process that instills in

learners the norms, values, and attitudes necessary for creating a conducive environment for human coexistence. According to him, such education equips individuals with the moral consciousness and social skills required for nonviolent conflict resolution and harmonious social interaction.

In plural societies, peaceful coexistence is closely linked to moral and value-based education that begins with the individuals and extends to the families schools communities and nations. Within the Nigerian context, this is particularly significant due to the country's multireligio-cultural nature and composition. While Nigeria's diversity constitutes a source of national strength, it has also been accompanied by recurring communal, religious, and ethno-political conflicts. These realities underscore the urgent need for educational frameworks capable of shaping attitudes, correcting misconceptions, and promoting mutual understanding among adherents of different faiths and cultural backgrounds. Meaningful national development and social stability cannot be achieved in an environment characterized by intolerance and hostility. Islamic teachings strongly emphasize peaceful coexistence through ethical principles such as justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), respect for the sanctity of human life, and freedom of belief. The Qur'an also affirms peaceful engagement with others when it states: *لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ* “Allah does not forbid you from being kind and just to those who do not fight you because of religion” (Qur'an 60:8). This injunction provides a religious foundation for peaceful and just interaction with people of other faiths and cultures. Accordingly, Islamic education serves as a moral compass that nurtures spiritually conscious, ethically grounded, and socially responsible individuals committed to peaceful living.

Peaceful coexistence therefore requires intentional educational frameworks e.g. religious and secular education that discourage extremism, hatred, and intolerance while promoting dialogue, understanding, and cooperation. The rationale lies on the fact that, in contemporary societies shaped by modern communication technologies, education in all its forms plays a vital role in disseminating these values effectively. Hence, peace and religious tolerance education is not merely desirable but indispensable in a pluralistic and multiethnic society such as Nigeria, where sustainable peace constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for unity, stability, national integration, and overall development.

Integrating Islamic Education and Electronic Social Media for Sustainable Peaceful Coexistence

The tools of electronic social media (ESM), such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, can be used to track, support, create, and mobilize social networks. These tools have significant potential to enhance community engagement efforts (Fine, 2006). Its venues as postulated by Yan, Brooke and Lucinda (2014) have undergone a significant shift to greater multidirectional communication in recent time, and thus these venues represent and give several opportunities for a healthy information that have yet to be fully realized. In addition, they provide new forums to raise issues, facilitate the exchange of ideas, and engage a larger community.

Electronic social media facilities with special reference to the above mentioned, allow impressions on individuals to last longer than in offline modes of conversation, and can enhance the visibility of personal attributes. This technology is perceived as vital tools in extending the goodwill of Islamic awareness and activities. According to Meyer and Moors (2006), the formation of national groups, media of all kinds are fundamental in the creation and consolidation of religious groups and the mobilization of transcendental powers as well. To this end, many Muslims, especially those in the corridor of evangelism are actively making use of electronic social media, such as Facebook, twitter, whatsapp to mention but view to spread the divine messages of Islamic monotheism as a panacea for conflict resolution. This is because the technology itself makes the assessment of information and dissemination not only to friends, groups, and business associates but also the religious organizations alike so easy. It is therefore expedient at this juncture to assert that Islam, being an often widely misconstrued way of life, is a religion that embraces all forms of scientific advancements as long as they do not contradict its basic provisions of *tawhid* (unity of Allah). Scientific inventions are permitted, and in fact encouraged in Islam, as long as they promote the general wellbeing of humanity and Muslims particular. Thus, it is the duty of every Muslim to learn and apply the etiquettes pertaining to these inventions, in order not to stray from the pristine path of Islam ignorantly. Therefore, a critical examination of scholars' perspectives on the concept of electronic social media, as outlined above, reveals that it fundamentally emphasizes interaction among individuals, whereby they create, share, and exchange information and ideas within virtual communities and networks. And again, when gross look is taken also at Islam as a religion, it appreciates and welcomes all forms of

advancement that does not go against the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (*Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam*) and what Allah (*Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala*) has revealed. Muslims are therefore obliged to learn, put into practice and convey the acquired knowledge unto others. In corroboration of this assertion, the Prophet (*Ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), as reported by Abū Hurayrah in the Book of Knowledge (*Kitāb al-'Ilm*) of Imam al-Tirmidhi, said: “*May Allah brighten the face of a person who hears a statement from us and conveys it to others.*” This tradition aligns with his earlier directive emphasizing the obligation of seeking knowledge for all individuals, irrespective of gender. With regard to the means of disseminating such knowledge, it becomes incumbent upon Muslims to utilize all lawful and appropriate channels (including Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), to convey this noble message. In doing so, the universal values of peace and tolerance embedded in Islam can be effectively communicated, enabling humanity at large to experience its profound ethical teachings.

On being a tool for communication and its implication for peaceful coexistence, electronic social media platforms plays a major role on how people of different religio-cultural and ethnic background could peacefully relate and co-exist with one another. It thus provides an avenue for individuals to connect with like-minded people, as users can simply create an account and participate in online interactions through electronic social media platforms. However, in any socio-religious conflict cycle characterized by dynamism with several dimensional strategies which includes; Boko Haram, kidnapping, Armed banditry, political cum religious violence etc., and where efforts to maintain peace by all agencies concerned failed, the peace process that follows a ceasefire approach typically unfolds in sequential phases, including peace negotiations, the signing of treaties and agreements, monitoring and implementation, and ultimately, reconciliation.

Electronic social media innovations should therefore be employed and tailored in accordance with this cycle. This approach not only helps to generate support for peace-building initiatives through Islamic religious education embedded in the Holy Qur'an, but also humanizes those affected by conflict. This is because social media is not just for feel-good conversations but builds the kind of grassroots support that collaborative initiatives need to thrive. Thus, instead of feeling helpless through cycles of primitive peace talks, new and out-of-the-box ideas can be shared with other like-minded individuals through means of virtual community of electronic social media in a matter of

blinking of an eye. These earlier discussed ideas (peace and religious tolerance) processes which may had once been confined to someone's living room are now made available to millions of people via electronic social media (EMS) technological facility. The value of this technology-'electronic social media' (ESM) had been proven and demonstrated in the following expression of Menorah 'we knew that like-minded people with Facebook accounts would find us and hopefully be inspired by what or had to say' (Menorah, 2017). This shows the importance and the essentiality of electronic media as a tool for not only sharing of ideas but inspirational talks also on peaceful coexistence and results with other peace loving individuals within the society and beyond.

Conclusion

Adducing from the foregoing analyses and discussions, it is evident that the use of electronic social media as a medium for Islamic evangelism and education is not only permissible in Islam but also seen highly beneficial in promoting religious awareness and fostering peaceful coexistence among Muslims and adherents of other faiths within a multi-cultural and multi-religious society such as Nigeria. This is because both Islamic education and electronic social media serve as powerful instruments for promoting what may be described as a "dialogue of life," which encourages daily interaction among diverse religious groups and helps to dismantle misconceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices. Consequently, the responsibility of calling people toward righteousness, an endeavor capable of engendering peace, social harmony, and moral sanity while discouraging social vices, should be regarded as a collective obligation upon all Muslims. Allah (SWT) entrusted the *Ummah* with this divine responsibility of Islamic education and propagation, as stated in the Qur'an: يَا أَيُّهَا الرِّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ "O' You Messenger (Muhammad), convey what was revealed from your Lord. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His Message. Allah will protect you from mankind..."Q5:67. Hence, in view of this, the dissemination of Islamic awareness across humanity is held in high esteem in Islam and should be duly recognized as such by the entire Muslim *Ummah*. Similarly, Allah further commands: وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ *Let there be a group of people amongst you inviting to all that is good al-Mar'uf (i.e right), and forbidding what is al-Munkar (i.e. wrong).* (Q3:104).

Recommendation

Thus, this paper argues that achieving effective and sustainable development within a religiously conflict-free society requires a renewed engagement with Islamic teachings as a means of reviving peaceful coexistence, mutual tolerance, and social harmony among Nigerians. In light of the findings and discussions presented in this study, the following recommendations are presented to strengthen the role of Islamic education and electronic social media in fostering peaceful coexistence in Nigeria:

1. Integration of Digital Peace Education:

Islamic education curricula at all levels should incorporate digital literacy and ethical social media engagement, emphasizing peace-building, tolerance, and responsible communication.

2. Capacity Building for Islamic Educators/Propagators (*Du'āt*):

Islamic scholars and educators should be trained on the effective and ethical use of electronic social media as tools for *da'wah*, peace advocacy, and countering religious misinformation.

3. Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue of different Religious Bodies via ESM:

Electronic social media platforms should be strategically utilized to facilitate interreligious dialogue and understanding between Muslims and adherents of other faiths, thereby reducing suspicion and hostility.

4. Adequate Regulation and Ethical Monitoring on the Use of ESM:

Religious bodies, educational institutions, and relevant government agencies should collaborate to monitor and discourage the misuse of electronic social media such as hate speech, incitement, and religious extremism.

5. Frequency in Public Enlightenment and Campaigns:

Sustained online campaigns rooted in Islamic ethical teachings should be launched to promote peaceful coexistence, respect for diversity, and national unity within Nigeria's multireligio-cultural framework.

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