

The Role of Social Media and Digital Platforms in the Formation of Religious Identity Among Young People in Albania

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between religion and digital identity among young Albanian Muslims. The aim of the paper is to understand how social media and digital platforms influence the formation and affirmation of religious identity of Albanians online. Methodologically, the study combines social media monitoring (including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) of online mosque accounts, several religious influencers, and their followers, with a survey of 100 young people aged 15-35. Existing literature, such as Hoover, Clark, Campbell, Lövheim and Tsuria, describe this phenomenon as „digital religion,” emphasizing the ways in which online spaces foster spiritual exploration, community belonging, and the negotiation of religious identity. The findings show that digital platforms offer young people access to diverse religious content, peer support, and participation in virtual faith communities, helping strengthen religious commitment and build a conscious religious identity. However, the modest sample used here provides only an initial indication of current trends. Future research should expand this area with surveys, interviews, and comparative studies at the regional (Balkan) level. This study makes an original contribution to the Albanian context, providing the first empirical analysis of how young Muslims interact with their faith in the digital age.

Key words: social media, digital platforms, influencers, religious identity, religious journey

Introduction

Digital platforms provide access to diverse religious content, enabling young people to explore different faith traditions and practices beyond their family and immediate environment at work or school. The digital sphere, by its very nature, allows and encourages young people to explore and express religious beliefs, contributing to the formation and affirmation of religious identity. During the communist dictatorship in Albania, all forms of religious practice were prohibited. After the 1990s, many families, and particularly young people, returned to religious traditions, as occurred in other former communist countries.¹ The opening of borders created new paths for the entry of different religious beliefs and movements into Albania. With the development of digital platforms and social media in the country, representatives of the Muslim faith have come to dominate the online religious space and are widely followed by young people. Religious influencers, imams, and young believers on social media have a significant impact on the religious practices and beliefs of young Albanians. While international scholars like Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark,² Heidi Campbell,³ and Mia Lövheim⁴ have addressed the impact of the internet on religious experience, the Albanian context remains unexplored. So far, national studies have focused mainly on the general use of social media, without analyzing the religious dimension of young people's identity in digital spaces. The social media monitoring and the survey conducted within the framework of this study show that religious influencers with large followings can shape the thoughts and practices of their audience, including religious views and behaviors. Through the structure of digital media, they enter into a relationship with culture, creating so-called „online religions,” „religion and new media,” and „new religion, new media, and digital cultures.” The purpose of this study is to analyze how social media and digital platforms influence the formation, expression, and strengthening of religious identity among young Albanian Muslims as well as to assess the influence of religious representatives who communicate online with young audiences. Research shows that social media and digital platforms facilitate

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- 1 Gert Pickel and Kornelia Sammet, „Introduction – Transformations of Religiosity in Central and Eastern Europe Twenty Years after the Breakdown of Communism”, in *Transformations of Religiosity: Religion and Religiosity in Eastern Europe 1989-2010*, Gert Pickel and Kornelia Sammet (eds.) (Springer VS, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-93326-9_1.
 - 2 Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark (eds.), *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.7312/hoov12088>.
 - 3 Heidi A. Campbell, „Introduction: The rise of the study of digital religion”, *Digital Religion* (Routledge, 2012), 1-31.
 - 4 Mia Lövheim (ed.), *Media, Religion and Gender: Key Issues and New Challenges*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203521748>

the creation of virtual religious communities, increasing the sense of belonging among young people. Online groups, forums, and accounts dedicated to religious topics allow young people to connect with individuals who share similar perspectives, fostering a sense of community and shared identity.⁵ Young people who spend a lot of time online are more likely to engage in „digital religion” and share their views on faith in these communities. Social media provides platforms for young people to share religious content, participate in religious discussions, and invite others to their religious communities.

Literature

Studies on how social media and digital platforms influence the religious practices of young people, specifically Muslims, integrate multiple theoretical frameworks from sociology, psychology, and media studies. This research explores how online platforms have transformed the way young people interact with religion and spirituality, with both positive and negative outcomes. Scholars in the field of digital religion argue that faith is increasingly being practiced online through digital rituals, virtual worship services, and online religious communities. These practices may be an extension of traditional religious practices or they may offer new forms of expression and identity for young people who may not feel connected to conventional religious institutions.⁶ Referred to as „digital faith,” online religious practices have been explored by several scholars. One of the leading figures in the field is Heidi A. Campbell, whose work examines how technology shapes religious expression and the formation of religious communities online and explains the intersection of religion and digital culture.⁷ Stig Hjarvard theorizes the mediatization of religious practice, demonstrating how religion is being transformed as religious communication and experience are increasingly mediated by media. He argues that media platforms have become de facto religious institutions, influencing how people understand and practice religion.⁸ Moreover, Pauline Cheong illustrates that religious authority is no longer merely hierarchical or institutional; it is reproduced in digital spaces through followers, influence, and interaction. Through what she terms the reconfiguration of

5 Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria (eds.), *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295683>.

6 Stuart M. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203503201>.

7 Heidi A. Campbell, *Digital creatives and the rethinking of religious authority* (Routledge, 2020).

8 Stig Hjarvard, „Mediatization and the changing authority of religion”, *Media, Culture & Society*, 38.1 (2016), pp. 8-17.

religious authority, religious influencers, online imams, and content creators have become new forms of spiritual authority.⁹

Methodology

The methodology used in this study includes two intertwined research components: social media monitoring and survey research. This mixed-methods approach combines the quantitative statistical analysis of questionnaire responses and the qualitative monitoring and thematic analysis of digital content. This dual approach enables a deeper understanding of how young people are informed about Islam through digital media and how religious content is presented on these platforms.

The purpose of the survey was to assess levels of engagement with religious content on social media among young people in Tirana and their preferred sources of information about Islam. The survey was completed by a random sample of 100 Tirana residents between the ages of 15 and 35. The questionnaire was conducted online via Google Forms. It contained closed multiple choice and Likert-scale questions on the frequency of social media use and engagement with religious content, as well as open-ended questions to gauge participants' personal attitudes and thoughts on faith and sources of religious information. The results were processed through descriptive statistics based on percentages and response distribution and then interpreted qualitatively, linking them to information models and social media influences.

The monitoring aimed to analyze how Islamic digital content (e.g., videos, posts, comments) disseminates information and influences the perception of religion among young people. It encompassed the most widely used platforms—Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube—as well as several Islamic websites such as „Islamic Religion” (<https://bislame.net>), „Islamic Knowledge” (<https://www.dituriaislame.info>) and „Islamic Light” (<https://www.dritaislame.al>). The content was coded according to three main criteria: a) type of content: educational, preaching, argumentative, or entertaining; b) level of engagement: likes, shares, comments, retweets; and c) Tone and purpose: informative, motivating, critical, or neutral.

Three research techniques were applied. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to identify the main themes in religious content (e.g., religious education,

9 Pauline Hope Cheong, „The vitality of new media and religion: Communicative perspectives, practices, and changing authority in spiritual organization”, *New Media & Society*, 19:1 (2017), pp. 25-33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816649913>.

morality, Islamic daily life, the role of the community). Quantitative content frequency measured how often different themes were repeated in online posts. Discourse analysis was used to understand the way religious messaging was communicated and the use of language combining tradition with modern reality. The data from the survey and the monitoring were compared to identify general patterns in the relationship between digital information practices and the religious engagement of young people. This allowed for an in-depth analysis of the impact of social media on the formation of religious beliefs and the ways that digital content transforms traditional forms of religious education.

In summary, the methodology used in this study combines descriptive and analytical approaches based on online surveys and media monitoring, with qualitative-thematic and quantitative-frequency analyses for a comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon.

Social Media Monitoring

The number of followers that imams have on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube is an indication of their public influence and their role in shaping opinion within religious communities and beyond. New centers of power and influence are emerging as religions seek to „brand” themselves in the media age.¹⁰ The platforms monitored for this study were accessed in October 2024.

Facebook

With 1.3 million followers, Elvis Naçi is by far the most followed of the four imams included in the study. This following reflects his far-reaching influence not only in the religious sphere but also in the humanitarian and social realms, as he is heavily involved in charity work and providing aid for communities in need. His charity campaigns benefitting the sick and impoverished have extended his audience beyond the Muslim community. His popularity shows that his messages resonate with a large number of Albanians, especially in Albania, Kosovo, and the diaspora.

With over 326,000 followers, Ahmed Kalaja is also an important religious and public figure. He is active in preaching Islam and engaging in social and religious debates. Although he has fewer followers than Naçi, he has considerable

10 Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The Media and Religious Authority* (Penn State University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.5325/j.ctv14gp1zt>.

influence within religious communities through the religious education of believers and especially young people.

Shefket Krasniqi, with over 409,000 followers, is an influential figure in Kosovo and beyond. Many follow him for his religious messages and public stances on various social issues covered in the media.

Enis Rama, with around 237,000 followers, is another Albanian imam from Kosovo with a strong platform and dedicated audience. His popularity is tied to the specific circumstances of the Kosovar religious community he serves. He has a smaller audience than other imams in Albania but is deeply influential within this community.

Table N° 1: *Facebook*

Imam	Followers
Elvis Naçi	1.3m
Ahmed Kalaja	326k
Enis Rama	237k
Shefket Krasniqi	409k

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Instagram

On Instagram, these religious scholars have significantly fewer followers, with the exception of Elvis Naçi. This is largely because Instagram is used more by young people, who prefer short videos and photos. By contrast, Facebook is mainly used by those over the age of 30, who are more inclined to read and listen for longer periods. Instagram's orientation towards images and video clips influences how these imams communicate with their followers.

As on Facebook, Elvis Naçi is clearly the most followed on Instagram. This shows that his influence is consistent across both platforms and that he remains popular even on a visual platform like Instagram. His posts focus on religious, humanitarian, and motivational messages, which attract a wide and diverse audience.

With 248,000 followers, Ahmed Kalaja has a solid Instagram presence, although the number is significantly lower than on Facebook. While his Instagram audience is smaller, it is still active and engaged. Kalaja uses Instagram to share

religious messages, video sermons, and moments from his personal life, all of which resonate with his audience.

With only 25,000 followers, Enis Rama has a much smaller Instagram presence compared to the others. This may be because he uses the platform less often or is less focused on visual content. His Instagram audience seems more specific and confined to the religious sphere.

With 71,300 followers, Shefqet Krasniqi has a significant presence on Instagram, although smaller than on Facebook. As a well-known figure in Kosovo and beyond, he uses Instagram to share his sermons and communicate directly with followers. However, his primary focus appears to be on other platforms, or perhaps his messaging is more oriented toward sermons and events, which do not benefit as much from the visual nature of Instagram.

Table N° 2: *Instagram*

Imams	Followers
Elvis Naçi	1.3m
Ahmed Kalaja	248k
Enis Rama	25k
Shefqet Krasniqi	71.3k

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YouTube

Elvis Naçi also leads on YouTube, with over half a million subscribers, making him the most followed and most viewed of the imams on this platform as well. This reinforces his significant public influence, and his popularity on YouTube positions him as a visible media leader within the religious and social community.

Ahmed Kalaja and Shefqet Krasniqi have strong presences on YouTube, with over 100 thousand subscribers each, demonstrating that they have built stable audiences through video content.

Enis Rama has a smaller following on YouTube, indicating that his activity on this platform is more limited compared to others.

These numbers reflect not only the popularity of these religious figures but also their ability to effectively use a platform dedicated to videos in order to reach their audiences.

Table N° 3: *YouTube*

Imams	Subscribers
Elvis Naçi	537k
Ahmed Kalaja	105k
Enis Rama	8.51k
Shefqet Krasniqi	113k

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Influencers

The Muslim Community of Albania also has young influencers who communicate with their audiences on Instagram and TikTok. Zejbi Bardhoshi tries to connect with followers by sharing messages about Muslim education through humor. This is similar to influencers in other countries like Khalid Al-Ameri, an internationally known influencer with 3.2 million followers who is known for his humorous videos and content that connects cultures.

Table N° 4: *Instagram Influencers*

Influencers	Followers
Zejbi Bardhoshi	54.4k
Khalid Al Ameri	3.2m

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Survey of Albanian Youth

To understand how young people are digitally informed about the Muslim faith, a survey was conducted with a sample of 100 residents of Tirana. Of these, 34.5% were aged 26-30, 36.5% were 21-25, 12.3% were 15-20, and 11.7% were over 30. In terms of gender, 43% of respondents were male and 57% female.

In response to the question „Do you follow influential imams or young believers who explain Islam on social networks or other platforms?” 78.4% answered yes. This shows that social media plays an important role in disseminating

teachings and information about Islam, especially among young people. The large percentage of regular followers demonstrates the impact of influencers on religious education through digital media.

Table N° 5: *Online Engagement with Religious Leaders or Young Believers*

Percentage of Respondents	Answers
78.40%	Yes
5.70%	No
15.50%	Rarely

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Regarding preferred social platforms, TikTok ranked first, with 41.5% of respondents. This platform that has grown rapidly in recent years, especially among young people, who prefer short videos and fast-paced, entertaining content.

Instagram followed with 27.5% of respondents, reflecting its high popularity, likely due to its focus on visual content and interactive features such as „stories” and „reels.”

Facebook placed third with 20.6%, which shows that this platform remains relevant, especially for news sharing, community engagement, and longer content. As one of the oldest platforms, Facebook continues to be a useful tool for many people.

The „Other” option accounted for 9.4% of responses, suggesting that some users are also active on less popular or more specialized social platforms such as Twitter, Snapchat, or LinkedIn.

Table N° 6: *Social Media Platform Preferences*

Platform	Percentage of Respondents
Facebook	20.60%
Instagram	27.50%
TikTok	41.50%
Other	9.40%

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Among the most popular websites related to Islamic content, „Islamic Religion” (<https://bislame.net>) ranked as the most followed, used by 35.7% of respondents. This indicates strong interest in a general and perhaps more centralized source for Islamic teachings and information.

„Islamic Knowledge” (<https://www.dituriaislame.info>) is followed by 26.8% of respondents, which suggests that many users are interested in deepening their religious knowledge through a more structured and educational approach.

„Islamic Light” (<https://www.dritaislame.al>) is the third most followed platform, with 15.3% of respondents, showing that there is also interest in a specialized source on Islam and religious practice.

The „Other” category includes 22.2% of respondents, which suggests that a significant portion of users visit alternative platforms for Islamic content that may be more specialized or less well-known.

This data shows the diversity of preferences among consumers of Islamic content online, with a noticeable tendency toward sources that offer more general and educational information.

Table N° 7: *Most Popular Websites*

Islamic religion https://bislame.net	35.70%
Islamic knowledge https://www.dituriaislame.info	26.80%
Islamic light https://www.dritaislame.al	15.30%
Other	22.20%

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According to the survey, participation in online forums discussing Islamic topics is almost evenly divided:

- 45.5% of respondents participate in forums where they can learn more about Islam. This indicates that a significant percentage of people are engaged in online discussions and exchanges of ideas to deepen their religious knowledge.
- 54.5% of respondents do not participate in these forums, which may point to either a lack of interest in this discussion format or a preference for other information sources, such as videos, articles, or online lectures.

These results suggest that while online forums have a solid base of active users, most still prefer other methods for learning about or discussing Islam.

When asked from whom they prefer to receive information about Islam—imams, influencers, or other young believers—93.3% of respondents chose imams. This shows the dominant role of imams in religious guidance, while influencers and other believers play a more secondary role. Regarding whether they prefer Albanian or foreign influencers, over 50% reported following both.

Table N° 8: *Preferred Sources of Information*

Imams	93.30%
Influencers	3.40%
Other believers	3.30%

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The use of social media and digital platforms can either strengthen or weaken religious engagement among young people, depending on the content they consume and their personal perspectives. Digital media facilitate communication about religious beliefs.¹¹ Research shows that exposure to positive religious content can strengthen faith and commitment, whereas exposure to secular or critical views can lead to questioning or a decline in religious adherence.

From monitoring social media and other online platforms, it appears that the accessibility of digital religious resources is contributing to changes in traditional religious practices among young people. Online sermons, prayer apps, and virtual worship services offer alternative ways to practice faith, potentially reshaping traditional patterns of attendance and participation, or what Campbell describes as the „religious-social shaping of technology.”¹²

11 Mia Lövheim and Heidi Campbell, „Considering critical methods and theoretical lenses in digital religion studies”, *New Media & Society*, 19:1 (2017), pp. 5-14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816649911>.

12 Heidi Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203695371>.

Discussion

The results of the survey and monitoring process clearly show that social media and digital platforms, as well as the religious representatives who communicate through them, play an important role in the formation and development of religious identity among young people. In the increasingly digital environment that young people inhabit, faith is not only a personal or institutional matter but an experience mediated through communication, sharing, and virtual interaction. According to Campbell, religious leaders—including those within the Muslim community—have embraced internet technology as a tool for „meaning making,” bypassing the traditional „gatekeepers” of classic media such as television and print press.¹³ This new approach enables religious messages to be conveyed directly, without intermediaries, expanding audiences and more strongly influencing young people.

While Albanian religious leaders are keeping pace with technological developments, not all religious communities view technology as appropriate for religious preaching. Campbell cites examples of Orthodox Jewish communities that have called for internet bans,¹⁴ and similar concerns have been raised in parts of the Muslim world. A notable case is that of Amr Khaled, a popular preacher who was banned by some Egyptian religious authorities for using modern media and later continued his work in the United Kingdom.¹⁵ This illustrates the ongoing tension between digital modernity and traditional religious authority.

This is not the case in Albania and Kosovo, however, where imams have expansive followings on social media. Elvis Naçi, for example, has 1.3 million followers on Instagram, followed by Ahmed Kalaja (248k), and Shefqet Krasniqi in Kosovo (71.3k). These religious figures wield considerable online influence, bypassing classical media to convey their messages. According to the survey results, 78.4% of young respondents follow religious preachers or influencers online, demonstrating the powerful impact of digital media on religious education and identity formation. Digital content monitoring also reveals that influencers with large followings can shape the opinions, behaviors, and religious practices of their audience. This supports Campbell’s thesis that „digital faith” is a process that builds new social constructs and new forms of religious authority.¹⁶ At the same time, while the internet contributes to the democratization of Islamic

13 Hiedi Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media*.

14 Hiedi Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media*.

15 Encyclopedia Britannica, „Amr Khaled”, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Amr-Khaled>, accessed 17 October 2025.

16 Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media*; Heidi Campbell and Alessandra Vitullo, „Assessing changes in the study of religious communities in digital religion studies”, *Church, Communication and Culture*, 1.1 (2016), pp. 73-89.

traditions,¹⁷ it remains a tool, and thus its influence depends on how it is used. Recent studies warn of the potential dangers associated with excessive social media use. Spending too much time on digital platforms can weaken traditional religious engagement,¹⁸ reducing time devoted to prayer, studying sacred texts, and participating in community life. Furthermore, algorithm-based filtering can create ‘echo chambers’ that foster radicalization or religious polarization.¹⁹ As a report by the Academy of Political Studies on online extremism in Albania notes, „Facebook is most commonly used by users who spread extremist propaganda in the Albanian language. Extremist content also exists on personal and organizational accounts on YouTube, Twitter, Telegram, and Instagram.”²⁰ These extreme forms of Islamism are mediatized across the world.²¹

Despite these risks, the digital environment offers new opportunities for religious expression and involvement. Online platforms enable young people to express their faith through posts, videos, blogs, and virtual discussions. According to Siti Mohamad, „Young people at the heart of these transformations display unique forms of religiosity that differ from that of their parents’ generation,”²² implying that a new model of youth religiosity is emerging through digital media that is more personal, more interactive, and more open to cultural influences. Interaction with peers in these virtual spaces strengthens the sense of belonging and mutual support. Campbell and Tsuria emphasize that digitally mediated communication builds new spiritual and collective bonds, where religious authority is reinterpreted and distributed horizontally among community members.²³ In this sense, social media is not only a means of distribution but a community space,²⁴ where religious identity is forged, challenged, and strengthened through dialogue and shared experiences.

17 Jennifer A. Selby and Rehan Sayeed, „Religious authorities in the digital age: The case of Muslims in Canada”, *Cont Islam*, 17 (2023), pp. 467–488, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-023-00536-7>.

18 Roxanne Ellen Bibizadeh et. al., „Digitally Un/Free: the everyday impact of social media on the lives of young people”, *Learning, Media and Technology* (2023), pp. 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2023.2237883>.

19 Campbell and Tsuria (eds.), *Digital Religion*, p. 21.

20 Edlira Gjollëshi and Eda Buci, *Raport Monitorimi: Mbi elementët e ekstremizmit të dhunshëm që qarkullojnë në platformat online në Shqipëri (Monitoring Report: Elements of Violent Extremism Circulating on Online Platforms in Albania)* (Academy of Political Studies, 2020), https://www.asp.al/pdf/Monitorimi_CVE_ALB_-_Pa_anekse.pdf, accessed 24 Oct. 2025.

21 Mia Lövheim and Linnea Jensdotter, „Contradicting Ideals: Islam on Swedish Public Radio Service”, in *Contesting Religion: The Media Dynamics of Cultural Conflicts in Scandinavia*, Knut Lundby (ed.) (De Gruyter Brill, 2018), p. 135.

22 Siti Mazidah Mohamad, „Youth Religiosity and Social Media in Brunei Darussalam”, in *(Re)presenting Brunei Darussalam: A Sociology of the Everyday*, Lian Kwen Fee, Pail J. Carnegie, and Noor H. Hassan, N.H (eds.), *Asia in Transition*, vol. 20 (Springer Singapore, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-6059-8_4.

23 Campbell and Tsuria (eds.), *Digital Religion*, p. 21.

24 Gjollëshi and Buci, *Raport Monitorimi: Mbi elementët e ekstremizmit të dhunshëm që qarkullojnë në platformat online në Shqipëri*.

As Bielo argues, Christian evangelicals have adapted to modernity and embraced forms of „postmodern Christianity.”²⁵ A similar process can be seen in Albania, where contemporary Islam is experiencing a form of „postmodernization” through digital media. In this context, online religious influencers function as new models of authority and spiritual guidance, offering young people a combination of educational, emotional, and community content that helps shape their digital religious identity. This aligns with Cheong’s observation that „mediated communication brings forth and constitutes the (re)production of spiritual realities and collectivities,”²⁶ making digitally mediated communication a crucial factor in the development of religious authority and contemporary spiritual practices.

Conclusions

This study offers a new contribution to understanding how social media and digital platforms are influencing the formation of religious identity among young people in Albania—an area that has so far received very little attention in local scholarship. By combining monitoring of online content with a survey of 100 young people, the research provides initial insights into how the digital environment is mediating spiritual experiences and forms of religious belonging in the Albanian context.

The data shows that online religious communities play an important role in creating a sense of belonging and support among young people. Participation in these virtual spaces helps strengthen their religious identity and share common spiritual experiences. Digital platforms also provide easy access to educational materials, sermons, podcasts, and religious texts, serving as sources of knowledge and personal reflection. This engagement contributes to building a more conscious and informed religious identity. Additionally, online forums and support groups create opportunities for young people to openly discuss their doubts, challenges, and experiences related to religion. These digital interactions help them resolve uncertainties and strengthen religious commitment in ways that feel more interactive, personal, and contemporary.

Nevertheless, it is important to note the methodological limitations of this study. The survey of 100 young participants provides only a tentative overview of existing trends and cannot be generalized to all Albanian youth. In the future, research should expand the sample size and methodology, potentially including

25 James S. Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals: Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity* (NYU Press, 2011).

26 Cheong, „The vitality of new media and religion”, pp. 25-33.

comparative studies across the Balkan region to better understand how online religious communities interact with local cultural and social contexts. The results of this study demonstrate that social media and digital platforms have become important spaces for the exploration, expression, and affirmation of religious identity among Albanian youth. By offering opportunities for interaction, reflection, and learning, these platforms are helping to shape a form of religious experience that is at once authentic, modern, and globally connected.

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Uloga društvenih mreža i digitalnih platformi u oblikovanju religijskog identiteta među mladima u Albaniji

Sažetak

Ovaj članak ispituje odnos između religije i digitalnog identiteta među mladim albanskim muslimanima. Cilj je objasniti kako društvene mreže i digitalne platforme utječu na oblikovanje i afirmaciju religijskog identiteta Albanaca u online okruženju. Metodološki, istraživanje kombinira praćenje društvenih mreža (Facebook, Instagram i YouTube) *online* računa džamija, nekoliko vjerskih influensera i njihovih pratitelja, s anketom provedenom među 100 mladih u dobi od 15 do 35 godina. Postojeća literatura opisuje ovaj fenomen kao „digitalnu religiju”, naglašavajući načine na koje *online* prostori potiču duhovno propitivanje, osjećaj pripadnosti zajednici i izgradnju vjerskog identiteta.

Rezultati pokazuju da digitalne platforme mladima omogućuju pristup raznolikom religijskom sadržaju, podršku vršnjaka i sudjelovanje u virtualnim vjerskim zajednicama, čime se jača vjerska posvećenost i izgrađuje vjerski identitet. Međutim, skroman uzorak korišten u ovom istraživanju pruža tek početnu indikaciju postojećih trendova. Buduća istraživanja trebala bi proširiti ovo područje anketama, intervjuima i komparativnim studijama na regionalnoj razini. Ova studija daje izvorni doprinos albanskom kontekstu, nudeći prvu empirijsku analizu načina na koji mladi muslimani doživljavaju i prakticiraju svoju vjeru u digitalnom dobu.

Ključne riječi: društvene mreže, digitalne platforme, influenseri, vjerski identitet, lični rast