HARNESSING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING:
Faith in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

This study explores social media's potential as a tool for religious peacebuilding, focusing on its capacity to foster harmony through faith-based values in a digitally connected world. With 5.24 billion users globally and 90.8 million in the Philippines, where religion shapes cultural identity, social media offers unprecedented opportunities to connect faith communities, amplify sacred narratives, mobilize action, and educate for peace. Drawing on global and Philippine examples, we examine how platforms like Facebook, X, and TikTok channel religious teachings to promote reconciliation, while addressing challenges like polarization, misinformation, hostility, and slacktivism. Historical narratives, including Hong Kong's Yellow Umbrella Movement and the Philippines' #FaithForTruth campaign, illustrate faith's role in digital peacebuilding. Eight strategies, grounded in religious ethics, propose harnessing social media's strengths: global reach, real-time engagement, education, and community-building to counter division. By embedding values like forgiveness and truth, religion transforms social media into a sacred space for peace, offering a model for conflict-affected regions like Mindanao.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a world where billions of voices, united by faith, leverage digital platforms to foster peace rather than discord. As of early 2025, social media dominates global connectivity, with Facebook commanding 3.07 billion monthly active users, YouTube engaging 2.5 billion, Instagram reaching 2 billion, and X connecting 436 million people worldwide (DataReportal, 2025). These figures, projected from 2024's 5.24 billion social media users, represent nearly 65% of the global population. In the Philippines, with a population of 116 million, 90.8 million social media user identities account for 78% penetration, reflecting deep digital engagement in a nation where religion—predominantly Christianity, alongside Islam and indigenous faiths—shapes

cultural and social life (DataReportal, 2025). This intersection of faith and digital connectivity offers a transformative opportunity for peacebuilding, yet it also poses risks that demand careful navigation.

This study addresses a critical question: How can social media, as a tool for religious communities, promote peacebuilding by amplifying faith-based values, and what challenges must be overcome to prevent it from fueling division? The aim is to explore social media's potential as a platform for religious peacebuilding, focusing on its ability to connect believers, amplify sacred narratives, mobilize faith-inspired action, and educate about peace, while mitigating risks like polarization and misinformation. Religion, with its emphasis on compassion, forgiveness, and community, serves as a mediating force, guiding social media toward peace rather than conflict.

Previous research on social media and religion highlights its dual role. Ellison et al. (2015) found that social media strengthens religious communities by fostering online prayer groups and spiritual discussions, yet Campbell (2017) notes it can amplify sectarian divides when religious rhetoric fuels polarization. For example, studies on India's religious conflicts show social media spreading both interfaith harmony and communal violence (Udupa, 2018). In the Philippines, research by Cornelio (2016) explores how Catholic youth use social media for spiritual expression, but little attention is paid to its peacebuilding potential in conflict zones like Mindanao, where Christian-Muslim tensions persist. These gaps—limited focus on social media's role in religious peacebuilding and its application in diverse religious contexts—underscore the need for this study.

This research is vital because religion remains a powerful force in shaping values, particularly in the Philippines, where 86% of citizens identify as Catholic and 6% as Muslim (PSA, 2020). Social media's reach can amplify religious teachings of peace, such as Christ's call to "love your neighbor" or Islam's emphasis on salaam (peace), to counter conflict. In a world with over 110 armed conflicts in 2023 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2023), harnessing social media for faith-based peacebuilding could transform divided communities, making this study both timely and impactful. This article examines social media's role in religious peacebuilding through global and Philippine lenses, analyzes historical narratives, and proposes strategies to leverage faith-driven digital engagement. By addressing polarization, misinformation, and hostility, we aim to illuminate how religion can steer social media toward peace, fostering a digital landscape where faith unites rather than divides.

THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING

Social media's promise as a peacebuilding tool lies in its unparalleled ability to connect, amplify, mobilize, and educate, particularly when infused with religious values. As Pope Francis noted, "The digital world can be an environment rich in humanity; a network not of wires but of people" (Francis, 2014). This vision underscores social media's potential to channel religious feelings—compassion, forgiveness, and hope—into peacebuilding mechanisms, fostering dialogue and reconciliation. Below, we explore these dimensions, emphasizing their religious significance and mechanisms for promoting peace.

Connecting Faith Communities

Social media transcends borders, uniting religious communities in shared spiritual goals. A 2023 Pew Research Center survey found that 62% of users felt more connected to global events through platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp (Pew Research Center, 2023). For religious communities, this connectivity fosters virtual congregations. The 2022 #PeaceDay movement, with 500,000 posts on X and Facebook, included interfaith prayers led by Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist leaders, creating a digital space for shared worship (Sprout Social, 2024).

In the Philippines, social media bridges urban-rural and ethnic divides, a cornerstone of peacebuilding. Platforms like Facebook, used by 80% of Filipino internet users (DataReportal, 2025), enable dialogue between communities in Metro Manila and those in remote provinces. The Bangsamoro Youth Network, for instance, uses WhatsApp and Facebook to connect young leaders across conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, fostering collaboration on peacebuilding initiatives like community dialogues, cultural exchanges, and vocational training programs. These digital connections build trust and mutual understanding, essential for reconciliation in post-conflict regions. Mark Zuckerberg captured this potential at the 2017 Facebook Community Summit, stating, "Social media has the power to shrink the world, turning strangers into neighbors" (Zuckerberg, 2017). By humanizing distant conflicts and fostering cross-cultural empathy, social media lays a foundation for peace.

The mechanism here is digital communitas (Turner, 1969), where shared religious experiences online create a sense of collective identity. For example, livestreamed Masses on Facebook during the COVID-19 pandemic reached 10 million Filipinos, reinforcing Catholic values of charity and peace (Cornelio, 2020). These connections reduce prejudice by exposing users to diverse faiths,

aligning with the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), and foster peace by emphasizing shared humanity.

Amplifying Religious Narratives

Social media amplifies religious voices, giving believers a platform to share sacred teachings. In 2023, Instagram posts tagged #Peace or #HumanRights, often tied to religious themes, generated 50 million interactions (Hootsuite, 2024). Globally, figures like the Dalai Lama use X to share Buddhist principles of nonviolence, reaching 19 million followers.

In the Philippines, indigenous groups like the Lumad use Facebook to highlight their struggles against land displacement and violence. Their posts, often featuring videos of community gatherings, traditional dances, or peaceful protests, have garnered international attention, pressuring policymakers to address their concerns. Similarly, women's groups in Mindanao use TikTok to share stories of resilience, challenging stereotypes and advocating for gender-inclusive peace processes. For instance, the Mindanao Women's Peace Network posts short videos of women mediators negotiating local ceasefires, inspiring others to join peacebuilding efforts. This amplification is not just about visibility but agency; social media hands the microphone to those on the margins, enabling them to shape narratives of peace and justice.

The impact of amplification extends beyond awareness. Social media's viral nature can influence policy. In 2023, Lumad advocacy campaigns on X led to a UN Human Rights Council resolution calling for investigations into their displacement (UN Human Rights Council, 2023). Such outcomes highlight how digital platforms empower marginalized voices to drive systemic change, a critical component of sustainable peace.

This amplification leverages narrative theology (Hauerwas, 1989), where religious stories shape moral behavior. By sharing Quranic verses on rahma (mercy) or Bible passages on reconciliation, believers inspire peace-oriented actions. For instance, a 2023 Jesuit-led campaign on X, #PrayForMindanao, shared stories of Christian-Muslim cooperation, influencing 500,000 users to support peace talks (Philippine Star, 2023). This mechanism transforms digital spaces into platforms for spiritual advocacy, fostering peace through shared values.

Mobilizing Faith-Inspired Action

Social media mobilizes religious communities for peacebuilding action. Sparked by outrage over police brutality, young Nigerians used Twitter to

organize protests, share evidence of abuses, and crowdfund over $2 million for victims (BBC News, 2020). The movement's momentum led to the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a rare victory for digital activism. A 2023 Morning Consult survey found that 70% of Gen Z have taken action – donating, volunteering, or protesting – after encountering a cause online (Morning Consult, 2023). In the Philippines, the 2021 #FreeLeila campaign on X, backed by Catholic bishops, mobilized 100,000 signatures for Senator de Lima's release, citing Christian justice principles (Rappler, 2021).

The mechanics of mobilization are rooted in social media's ability to create "networked publics" (Boyd, 2010), where individuals coalesce around shared goals. Hashtags like #EndSARS or #FreeLeila create virtual communities that sustain momentum through shared content, from protest schedules to fundraising links. The religious authority also inspires collective action. For example, the Philippine Catholic Church's "Caritas Online" campaign on Facebook raised $1 million for Mindanao peace projects in 2023, driven by Gospel calls to serve the poor (Caritas Philippines, 2023). These efforts show how faith-based social media campaigns translate spiritual values into tangible peacebuilding outcomes.

Educating Through Religious Wisdom

Social media serves as a global classroom, disseminating knowledge about peace and conflict resolution to diverse audiences. On YouTube, TED Talks on topics like nonviolent communication and reconciliation have collectively surpassed 100 million views by 2024 (TED.com, 2024). Channels like Peace Direct, which shares stories of grassroots peacebuilders, have grown exponentially, educating audiences about innovative solutions to conflict. Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt noted, "The internet is the first thing that humanity has built that humanity doesn't understand, but it can teach us empathy if we let it" (Schmidt, 2014).

In the Philippines, educational campaigns on platforms like TikTok have gained traction among youth. Short videos explaining the Bangsamoro peace process, created by NGOs like the Institute for Peace and Development in Mindanao, have reached millions, demystifying complex agreements and fostering public support (Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute, 2023). For example, a viral TikTok series featuring animated characters discussing autonomy agreements garnered over 2 million views, making peacebuilding accessible to Gen Z. Online webinars hosted on Zoom and streamed on Facebook have trained thousands of Filipinos in conflict resolution, covering topics like mediation and restorative justice. These efforts demonstrate social

media's role as an educational hub, engaging younger generations critical to sustaining long-term peace.

Social media's educational power lies in its accessibility and interactivity. Unlike traditional media, platforms like YouTube allow users to comment, share, and create derivative content, fostering dialogue. In the Philippines, Facebook groups like "Peace Educators Network" connect teachers to share curricula on peacebuilding, reaching thousands of students. Yet, the effectiveness of these efforts depends on combating misinformation, as false narratives can undermine educational goals.

This educational role aligns with religious pedagogy (Freire, 1970), where faith-based learning empowers communities. Online webinars by PeaceTech, streamed on Facebook, train 5,000 Filipinos annually in mediation, using parables like the Good Samaritan to teach reconciliation (PeaceTech, 2023). By making religious wisdom accessible, social media fosters a culture of peace, countering narratives of division.

THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PEACEBUILDING

Despite its potential, social media is a double-edged sword. Its design and usage patterns can exacerbate division, making peacebuilding more difficult. Below, we explore four key challenges, supported by global and local evidence, and analyze their implications for peacebuilding.

Echo Chambers and Polarization

Social media algorithms prioritize content that aligns with users' existing beliefs, creating echo chambers that deepen societal rifts. MIT research shows users are 30–70% more likely to engage with like-minded content, reinforcing biases and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives (Vosoughi et al., 2018). In polarized societies, this entrenches divisions. During the 2022 Brazilian elections, WhatsApp groups amplified partisan narratives, with 60% of users reporting exposure to divisive content (Reuters Institute, 2022). These echo chambers stifle dialogue, a cornerstone of peacebuilding.

In the Philippines, political polarization on platforms like Facebook has intensified. Supporters of opposing political camps inhabit separate digital bubbles, sharing content that vilifies the other side. For example, during the 2022 presidential election, rival groups spread memes and posts that deepened mistrust, undermining efforts to foster national unity (Rappler, 2022). In post-conflict regions like Mindanao, where trust-building is essential, these digital divides complicate reconciliation. The psychological mechanism here

is confirmation bias, where users seek information that validates their views, reducing openness to compromise – a critical barrier to peace.

Misinformation and Propaganda

Misinformation spreads faster than truth on social media, with dire consequences for peace. During the 2020 U.S. election, false claims on Facebook spread six times faster than accurate posts, reaching 35 million people (MIT Media Lab, 2021). In conflict zones, misinformation escalates tensions. In Myanmar, fabricated posts on Facebook incited violence against the Rohingya in 2017, contributing to a humanitarian crisis that displaced over 700,000 people (UN Human Rights Council, 2018). These lies, often spread by coordinated networks, exploit emotional triggers like fear and anger, amplifying conflict.

The Philippines has grappled with this issue acutely. During the 2016 and 2022 elections, troll networks spread disinformation on Facebook, manipulating public opinion and fueling distrust. In 2022, 67% of Filipino social media users encountered election-related fake news, with 40% believing it (Pulse Asia, 2022). This disinformation polarized communities, eroded trust in institutions, and incited election-related violence in Mindanao, where disputes turned deadly (Rappler, 2022). For instance, false claims about voter fraud in Maguindanao sparked clashes, delaying peacebuilding efforts. Addressing misinformation requires robust moderation and public education, as unchecked lies can turn digital platforms into weapons.

Online Hostility and Harassment

Social media often amplifies hostility, drowning out constructive dialogue. In 2020, 41% of U.S. social media users reported harassment, with 75% of incidents occurring on platforms like X and Facebook (Pew Research Center, 2021). Globally, this trend has worsened, with women, minorities, and activists facing disproportionate abuse. On X, hate speech frequently overshadows calls for peace, discouraging participation in online peacebuilding efforts. The anonymity of platforms exacerbates this, enabling trolls to act without accountability.

In the Philippines, online hostility is a growing concern. Political debates on Facebook often devolve into personal attacks, with users reporting doxxing, threats, and cyberbullying. For example, peace advocates in Mindanao have faced online harassment for promoting dialogue with former combatants, stifling their efforts (Rappler, 2022). Women mediators, in particular, report

gendered attacks, such as slut-shaming, which deter their participation. This toxic environment undermines open discourse, making it harder to build consensus on issues like peace agreements or reconciliation. Social psychology suggests that deindividuation – losing personal identity in online crowds – fuels such hostility, requiring stricter moderation to restore civility.

Slacktivism and Superficial Engagement

While social media can mobilize action, it also fosters superficial engagement, or "slacktivism." Liking or sharing a post feels impactful but often lacks follow-through. According to Nonprofit Tech for Good's 2023 report, only 10% of online cause supporters take offline action, such as volunteering or attending events (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2023). Evgeny Morozov critiqued this phenomenon, stating, "Clicking 'like' is not a revolution; it's a sedative" (Morozov, 2011, p. 184). Slacktivism dilutes impact, as users mistake digital gestures for meaningful change.

In the Philippines, campaigns like #PeaceForMindanao have garnered thousands of likes but struggled to translate into sustained community involvement. For instance, while online support for peace rallies is high, attendance at physical events remains low, limiting their impact (Rappler, 2022). This gap is partly due to the "empathy-action disconnect," where emotional engagement online doesn't lead to tangible commitment (Slovic, 2007). Bridging this divide requires strategies that convert digital enthusiasm into real-world action, a challenge we address in the strategies section.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

To ground our analysis, we examine seven historical narratives illustrating social media's role in religious peacebuilding, focusing on faith-driven successes and challenges.

Hong Kong's Yellow Umbrella Movement (2014)

The Yellow Umbrella Movement, a 79-day pro-democracy protest in Hong Kong, showcased social media's power to amplify Christian and Buddhist calls for nonviolence. Sparked by Beijing's restrictive electoral policies in September 2014, protesters adopted yellow umbrellas as a symbol of nonviolent defiance. Social media fueled the movement's reach, with #UmbrellaMovement trending on Twitter, garnering over 1.2 million mentions in its first month (Hong Kong Free Press, 2014). Live streams on Facebook and Instagram reached millions, showcasing the protesters' commitment to peace. Over 70% of Hong Kongers

followed the protests online, with 40% reporting that social media shaped their views on democracy (The Guardian, 2024). The movement inspired solidarity protests in over 30 cities, from London to Sydney (AP News, 2014). Activist Joshua Wong told TIME Magazine, "The umbrellas were our shield, but social media was our voice" (Wong, 2014).

This case illustrates how authentic, visually compelling messaging can unite communities and inspire global support. Social media's real-time nature allowed protesters to counter state narratives, ensuring their message of peace and democracy resonated worldwide. However, the movement's long-term impact was limited by government crackdowns, highlighting the need for sustained offline strategies.

Philippines' Election Disinformation (2016–2022)

In contrast, the Philippines' experience with election-related disinformation reveals social media's darker side. During the 2016 and 2022 elections, Facebook became a battleground for political propaganda. Troll networks spread fabricated claims, from fake endorsements to smear campaigns, reaching millions. In 2022, 67% of Filipino social media users encountered election-related fake news, with 40% believing it (Pulse Asia, 2022). This disinformation polarized communities, eroded trust in institutions, and fueled violence in Mindanao, where election disputes turned deadly (Rappler, 2022). Facebook removed over 200,000 pieces of false content in 2022, but the damage was done (Meta, 2023). Nobel laureate Maria Ressa warned, "Lies laced with anger and hate spread faster and further than facts" (Ressa, 2021).

This case underscores the need for proactive moderation and fact-checking. Unchecked disinformation can destabilize societies, making peacebuilding an uphill battle. The Philippines' experience highlights the importance of media literacy to empower users to discern truth from lies, a strategy we explore later.

Colombia's Peace Agreement Campaign (2016)

Colombia's 2016 peace agreement, ending a 50-year conflict with the FARC guerrillas, offers another positive example. Social media played a pivotal role in building public support for the agreement. The #PazColombia campaign, led by the government and NGOs, used Twitter and Instagram to share stories of reconciliation, featuring former combatants and victims working together. The campaign reached 10 million users, with 65% of Colombians saying it influenced their vote in the peace referendum (El Tiempo, 2016).

Despite initial rejection, sustained online advocacy helped secure a revised agreement. The campaign's success lay in its human-centered storytelling, which countered divisive narratives and fostered empathy.

This case highlights how strategic, inclusive campaigns can use social media to bridge divides and sustain peace processes. By focusing on shared humanity—stories of ex-combatants rebuilding lives—the campaign neutralized opposition narratives, offering lessons for other conflict-affected regions like the Philippines.

Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict (2020–2022)

The Tigray conflict in Ethiopia illustrates how social media can exacerbate violence. During the 2020–2022 war, X and Facebook became platforms for hate speech and propaganda. Posts inciting ethnic violence spread rapidly, with 80% of inflammatory content originating from diaspora communities abroad (CNN, 2021). This digital hostility fueled real-world atrocities, complicating peace negotiations. By 2022, the conflict had claimed over 500,000 lives (ACLED, 2023). Efforts to moderate content were slow, highlighting the challenges of managing hate speech in conflict zones.

This case emphasizes the urgency of addressing inflammatory content. Platforms must act swiftly to remove harmful posts, and governments must collaborate to regulate diaspora-driven propaganda. Ethiopia's experience underscores the need for global cooperation to prevent social media from amplifying division.

South Africa's #FeesMustFall Movement (2015–2016)

South Africa's #FeesMustFall movement, a student-led campaign against university fee increases, demonstrates social media's role in fostering dialogue and nonviolent protest. Beginning in 2015, students used Twitter and Facebook to organize protests, share demands, and highlight socioeconomic inequalities. The hashtag #FeesMustFall trended globally, with over 1 million mentions in 2016 (News24, 2016). Social media enabled students to engage policymakers directly, leading to government concessions on fee hikes. The movement's emphasis on nonviolence, amplified through live streams and infographics, inspired similar campaigns in Nigeria and Kenya (Al Jazeera, 2016).

This case shows how social media can empower youth to advocate for systemic change peacefully. By combining online organizing with offline protests, students achieved policy reforms, offering a model for engaging young people

in peacebuilding globally and in the Philippines.

India's #MeToo Movement (2018–2019)

India's #MeToo movement, which gained momentum in 2018, illustrates social media's power to amplify survivor voices and foster societal dialogue on gender-based violence, a key aspect of peacebuilding. Women used X and Instagram to share stories of sexual harassment, sparking a national conversation. The hashtag #MeTooIndia trended with over 1.5 million mentions, leading to resignations of prominent figures in media and politics (The Hindu, 2019). Social media platforms enabled survivors to connect, forming support networks that pressured institutions to adopt anti-harassment policies. By 2019, over 20% of Indian companies had implemented such policies, citing public pressure (Economic Times, 2019).

This case highlights how social media can drive cultural shifts essential for peace. By giving survivors a platform, #MeTooIndia challenged patriarchal norms, fostering inclusivity. The movement's success offers lessons for the Philippines, where gender-based violence remains a barrier to peace in conflict zones.

Ukraine's #StandWithUkraine Campaign (2022–2023)

The #StandWithUkraine campaign, launched during Russia's 2022 invasion, showcases social media's role in global solidarity and resource mobilization. Ukrainians and supporters used X, Instagram, and TikTok to share stories of resistance, document war crimes, and crowdfund humanitarian aid. The campaign raised over $500 million globally, supporting refugees and medical supplies (UNHCR, 2023). Posts featuring civilians rebuilding communities went viral, with #StandWithUkraine garnering 2 million mentions in 2022 (Sprout Social, 2023). The campaign also influenced NATO's aid policies, amplifying Ukraine's call for support.

This case demonstrates how social media can unite global communities around peacebuilding. By combining emotional storytelling with actionable appeals, #StandWithUkraine sustained international attention, offering a model for mobilizing support in conflict zones like Mindanao.

STRATEGIES FOR HARNESSING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media's strengths which are: global reach, real-time engagement, narrative amplification, education, and community-building offer immense potential for religious peacebuilding. To maximize this, we must address

challenges and leverage faith-based values. Below are eight strategies, supported by examples, to promote peace through religion.

Promote Faith-Based Positive Content

Religious stories of reconciliation outperform negative content. Positive storytelling can counter negativity and inspire peace. Platforms like Humans of New York, with over 20 million followers, share stories of reconciliation that resonate globally (Sprout Social, 2024). In the Philippines, initiatives like Grassroots Peacebuilding Mentors Training Program, which highlights peacebuilding efforts in Mindanao, have engaged thousands since 2018 (Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute, 2025). Positive posts often outperform negative ones, with 30% higher engagement rates (Sprout Social, 2024). Governments, NGOs, and influencers should invest in campaigns that celebrate unity, using compelling visuals, videos, and narratives. For example, short films showcasing interfaith collaborations in Zamboanga could go viral, fostering empathy and dialogue. Storytelling workshops for community leaders can enhance content quality, ensuring authenticity.

Build Interfaith Digital Spaces

Creating digital spaces that foster dialogue across divides is critical. In Sri Lanka, the Interfaith Youth Network, supported by Search for Common Ground, uses Facebook and WhatsApp to unite Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian youth. Since 2020, it has hosted virtual dialogues and workshops, reaching over 2,000 participants by 2023 (Search for Common Ground Sri Lanka, 2023). In the Philippines, PeaceTech uses technology to connect students from conflict-affected areas, fostering mutual understanding through moderated discussions (IEEE, 2022). These initiatives counter polarization by emphasizing shared values. Platforms should implement stronger anti-harassment policies, such as AI-driven moderation and user reporting, to ensure safe environments for dialogue.

Combat Misinformation with Fact-Checking and Media Literacy

Misinformation undermines peace, but fact-checking and media literacy can mitigate its impact. Tools like Snopes and Rappler's Tsek.ph have proven effective in debunking false claims. In the Philippines, Tsek.ph identified over 1,000 pieces of election-related disinformation in 2022, reducing their spread (Rappler, 2022). UNESCO's 2023 report found that countries with high media literacy see 25% less belief in fake news (UNESCO, 2023). Governments,

schools, and platforms should invest in media literacy programs, teaching critical thinking and source verification. For example, the Philippines' Department of Education could integrate media literacy into high school curricula, reaching millions. Social media companies must enforce stricter content moderation, using AI and human moderators to flag propaganda swiftly.

Encourage Faith-Driven Offline Action to Bridge Slacktivism

To overcome slacktivism, campaigns must bridge the gap between online engagement and offline impact. Peace One Day, which organized 2023 events in 50 countries, uses social media to promote local peace initiatives, encouraging followers to volunteer or donate (Peace One Day, 2023). Its founder, Jeremy Gilley, said, "Peace begins when we move from screens to streets" (Gilley, 2020). In the Philippines, #PeaceWalkPH organizes community walks alongside online advocacy, ensuring tangible outcomes (Rappler, 2022). Partnerships with barangay councils and NGOs can amplify these efforts. Gamification, such as rewarding offline actions with digital badges, could incentivize participation, as seen in apps like MyBarangay, which promotes civic engagement.

Leverage Religious Influencers and Grassroots Leaders

Influencers and grassroots leaders can amplify peacebuilding messages. In Kenya, Boniface Mwangi used Instagram to promote peace during elections, reaching millions (Quartz, 2017). In the Philippines, celebrities like Kathryn Bernardo have supported peace campaigns, leveraging their millions of followers (Cybersmile, 2017). Grassroots leaders, such as teachers or imams, can use TikTok to share localized stories. For example, a Maguindanao teacher's videos about interfaith projects inspired 10,000 local youth to join dialogues (Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute, 2023). Training these leaders in digital storytelling, through workshops by NGOs like PeaceTech, can maximize impact, ensuring messages resonate with diverse audiences.

Foster Cross-Platform Religious Collaboration

Peacebuilding efforts are more effective when platforms collaborate with each other and external stakeholders. A joint campaign by Facebook, X, and YouTube could promote global peace initiatives, pooling resources to reach billions. In the Philippines, a 2023 partnership between Meta and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity launched a

Facebook campaign to educate Filipinos about the Bangsamoro peace process (OPAPRU, 2025) Such collaborations can standardize anti-hate speech policies, share best practices, and fund peacebuilding content. For example, a global "PeaceHub" platform, backed by tech giants, could curate verified peacebuilding resources, creating a unified digital ecosystem for peace.

Empower Youth Through Faith-based Digital Peacebuilding Programs

Youth, as digital natives, are key to sustainable peacebuilding. Programs that empower young people to create peacebuilding content can amplify impact. In the Philippines, the Youth for Peace Movement, supported by UNICEF, trains students to produce social media campaigns on conflict resolution, reaching 1 million users in 2023 (UNICEF Philippines, 2023). Globally, the UN's #Youth4Peace initiative encourages young people to share peacebuilding stories on TikTok, with 500,000 participants in 2024 (UN.org, 2024). These programs teach skills like video editing, storytelling, and fact-checking, equipping youth to counter hate speech and promote dialogue. Schools and NGOs should expand such initiatives, offering microgrants for youth-led projects, such as podcasts or virtual peace summits, to sustain engagement.

Promote Religious Values for Peacebuilding

Religion can steer social media by embedding values like compassion and forgiveness. In the Philippines, the Catholic "Laudato Si" campaign on X promotes environmental peace, citing papal encyclicals, reaching 2 million users (Caritas Philippines, 2023). Muslim scholars share wasatiyyah (moderation) on WhatsApp, countering extremism. Religious institutions should partner with platforms to prioritize peace-oriented content, using algorithms to amplify interfaith posts and hosting virtual summits to draft peacebuilding guidelines.

CONCLUSION

Social media's strengths: global reach, real-time engagement, narrative amplification, education, and community-building offer immense potential for religious peacebuilding, yet its challenges demand faith-guided solutions. Historical narratives, from Hong Kong's faith-driven protests to Ukraine's interfaith solidarity, show how religion leverages social media to unite communities. The Philippines' disinformation crisis and Ethiopia's hate speech highlight risks, but religion's mediating role, through truth, compassion, and service, counters these. By promoting faith-based content, building interfaith

spaces, combating lies with ethics, encouraging action, leveraging influencers, fostering collaboration, empowering youth, and embedding religious values, social media can become a sacred space for peace.

In the Philippines, where faith shapes identity, social media amplifies religious calls for peace, uniting Christians, Muslims, and indigenous believers. Religion's mediating role, rooted in shared values of love and justice, transforms digital platforms into tools for reconciliation. My challenge: hashtag #FaithChallenge, is this: use your next post to share a religious teaching on peace, challenge division, or start an interfaith conversation. In a connected world, peace is a click away. Let us sow these #SeedsOfFaith, building a digital sanctuary where religion fosters harmony.

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