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# RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AMONG YOUTH

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**Abstract**

*This study examines the growing reliance on social media and the increasing exposure to religious narratives to assess their psychological impact, measure cognitive dissonance, and explore the reactions and resolution strategies employed by youth. A structured questionnaire and a quantitative research design were used, with data collected through convenience and purposive sampling methods. The data were analyzed using SPSS to account for the quantitative nature of the study. Young people, frequently exposed to unverified religious content on digital platforms, remain the focus, making them vulnerable to internal psychological conflict. Findings reveal that older youth, compared to younger groups, are more likely to experience anger when encountering religious information or narratives that contradict their beliefs. Respondents from rural areas expressed stronger emotional reactions such as anger and discomfort, while urban youth reported higher levels of anxiety in similar situations. Overall, the analysis shows that regardless of gender, background, or education, youngest people experience cognitive dissonance due to the constant bombardment of conflicting religious content on social media. The results further indicate that exposure to such content triggers unease, rage, tension, and anxiety, highlighting the significant role of digital religious material in shaping psychological distress and dissonance among youth. The study contributes to understanding the intersection of media consumption, religious narratives, and psychological well-being, and it underscores the need for media literacy and critical digital engagement to mitigate the adverse effects of unverified religious content.*

## INTRODUCTION

In an era dominated by technology, social media platforms have emerged as a crucial tool for exchanging details and shaping opinions. Adults have been greatly influenced by this paradigm change in communication, which has exposed them to a wide range of opposing viewpoints, especially with regard to their religious beliefs (Jeong, Myeongki, et al. 2019). Social media platforms have made conflicting viewpoints more common, which has caused young people to experience cognitive dissonance as they struggle with the unpleasantness of having their beliefs conflicted with new facts (Vico, S. 2022).

Youth, particularly young adults, represent a highly active demographic on social media, where they encounter diverse perspectives, including religious content. This exposure often occurs during cognitive

and emotional development, when identity formation, moral reasoning, and value systems are still evolving. As these young individuals navigate through many online religious narratives, some of which may conflict with one another or with secular viewpoints, they face the challenges of integrating or reconciling these differing ideologies. These circumstances may lead to the experience of cognitive dissonance, a psychological phenomenon where individuals experience discomfort due to holding contradictory beliefs, values, or attitudes (Ehlebracht, 2022).

We live in a disruptive age where technology has allowed us to manage work and family from a distance, replace cash with cryptocurrencies and phone wallets, and replace human contact centers with automated help. Disruptions from technology are effecting social and spiritual interactions. As a result, virtual religious and spiritual groups are emerging, reducing the boundaries that formerly separated people (Rashid, 2019). Religious content on social media is often simplified or sensationalized, packed for being viral rather than deep. This can create tension when young people attempt to align these narratives with their personal experiences, pre-existing beliefs, or the broader societal context. At the heart of this study is an investigation into how young people engage with religious narratives on social media and how this engagement might contribute to or mitigate cognitive dissonance (Biberman et al., 2016).

**Literature Review**

This research explores the religious narratives on social media and cognitive dissonance among youth. This literature review includes sections on the introduction, the influence of social media on youth, religious narratives shared on social media, the conceptual framework of cognitive dissonance, how media influences religious perspectives, technology-induced cultural shifts, and concludes with a summary.

**Social media and its influence on youth**

Using social media, web browsing has become among the most common pastimes for youngsters & teens these days. Every website that promotes social engagement is considered a social network. Along with blog posts, the virtual world of Second Life, and the Sims, these websites also feature social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and Club Penguin. These online spaces, which have grown exponentially in the last several years, provide today's youth a platform for enjoyment and interaction. Parents must comprehend the characteristics of social media networks since not all of them are secure spaces for children and teens (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Various research has shown that children and teenagers who regularly use different forms of social media have advantages since it enhances their social interaction and even their technical abilities. Over the last five years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of teenagers and adolescents visiting these websites. A new study found that over half of adolescents' log on to a social media site more than daily, and 22% of kids use their favorite site over ten times a day.75 percent of teenagers own a mobile phone these days, and 25 percent of those are utilized for social networking, 54 percent for texting, and 24 percent for instant messaging. As a result, a significant portion of the social and emotional growth of this age happens on the internet and on mobile phones and tablets (Hinduja and Patchin, 2007). Given that teens have so many chances to partake in dangerous activities, associate with questionable groups, and socialize with people without parental supervision, Given the presence of parental monitoring, it is understandable that parents, legislators, and researchers would want to find out more about how kids' extensive internet use affects their psychological well-being (Valkenburg et al., 2021). The results of this research have often been inconsistent, suggesting that online social networking use either has no effect at all or a little positive influence on various well-being indices, including happiness with life and symptoms of depression. Most of this research has focused on interpersonal relationships, e.g., whether teens who use the internet more or less than their peers are happier. While these in-person studies are valuable on their own, some scholars have raised concerns about their limitations (Beyens et al., 2020).

**Religious Narrative on Social Media**

Campbell claims that religious narratives convey the goals and viewpoints of the religious community about the appropriate application of technology to spiritual endeavors. They also highlight the framing

and negotiating process often employed by religious users to justify their Internet use. In his introduction to Katz and Aakhus's "Apparatgeist theory of the social usage of mobile technology," Campbell offers a starting point for talking about this process of religious apologetics associated with the Internet. She believes that revealing the connections between technical selection and the spiritual worldviews that people and communities adhere to is also beneficial (Campbell, 2005). Internet platforms and technologies have made it possible for social networking celebrities as well as other users to produce, consume, and share religious content with a range of online groups. Millions of Muslim millennials living in the Gulf, the Arab world, and other parts of the world have become accustomed to using social media platforms. Most Muslim millennials are tech-savvy, educated, multicultural, and live in cities. These Global Urban Muslims, or GUMmies, are particularly prevalent in the Gulf area. They utilize social media extensively and live in environments that allow them to participate, express themselves, and consume outside of the limiting confines of their cultural habitus. GUMmies have taken over social media as forums for engagement, production, questioning, and contesting new kinds of cultural positioning as well as alternative ways of being and perceiving throughout the Gulf area and the Arab globe (Zaid et al., 2022).1.3 Cognitive Dissonance Theory Among the most effective social psychology theories is currently being embraced: the notion of cognitive dissonance (Aronson, 1992). First, it is grounded on common sense. It is the idea of consistency between thought processes and actions. This idea functions in two ways. First, and primarily for Bem (1972), it functions by enabling people to draw conclusions about their self-perception that are of the form "behaviors + internal states": if my behavior is consistent and nothing in the environment can explain it, then I cannot be anything other than consistent, and my attitude flows from my actions. According to some scholars, the widely accepted yet implicit idea that moral coherence in actions and attitudes is a societal standard serves as another way that the consistency principle functions to provide information about people's values (Cialdini, 1984).

**Media Influence on Religious Perspective**

Religion is an individual's way of looking for purpose in life and the cosmos. Institutional religion is often where religion is expressed, although the individual's experience of religion is not limited to the formal doctrine, rituals, devotions, and moral precepts (White, 2007). The study primarily focuses on two interconnected issues: religion and media, particularly in the modern world. Religion has been using the media to spread its word to a sizable gathering and viewership recently. Given the speed at which media has developed, particularly in the 20th century, religion is now represented via various mediums (Yasin et al., 2023). The study of digital religion had its start around the close of the 20th century, coinciding with the emergence and popular acceptance of internet technology. The study of religion with an emphasis on the interactions between changing manifestations and the comparison between the religious views, practices, and beliefs of well-established offline organizations and groups with those of religiosity and spirituality seen online or in other forms of transmitted situations is known as "digital religion studies" (Campbell, 2023). However, increasing political communication complexity challenges the elite agenda-setting class's enduring hegemony. Because of all these, nations have seen an increase in the availability of popular culture and a closer bond among individuals. Thus, new divisions between media usage that is more varied and active and that which is more passive and constrained are starting to appear (Schroeder, 2018).

**Technology-Induced Cultural Shifts**

The term "technology-induced cultural shifts" describes how the broad use and integration of technology into many facets of everyday life has resulted in profound changes in social norms, beliefs, and behaviors. This phenomenon includes the significant influence that technology has on people's interactions, communication, and perception of their surroundings. The speed at which technology is developing is one of the main characteristics of these transformations; it affects not just communication and information sharing but also larger cultural and social systems. The growing interconnection of varied international groups is a result of the mixing of eras in cultural sports. The sharing of ideas, reviews, and

cultural expressions has ended up being feasible through virtual areas and online structures, bypassing geographical barriers. As an end result, human beings with various cultural origins engage with one another in a dynamic and ongoing way, making society extra aware and incorporated across the world (Kolodny et al., 2016b). Virtual spiritual communities have emerged in the realm of spirituality due to cultural changes brought about by technology. People can now participate in spiritual rites, practices, and discussions online, replacing traditional, physically constrained religious environments. Technology's ability to facilitate the formation of groups based on shared beliefs rather than physical proximity has transformed spiritual relationships and diminished religious barriers (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

**Problem Statement:**

The youth of today live in an information-rich world where a variety of religious narratives coexist in the modern social media landscape. The proliferation of divergent viewpoints on social media platforms has led to an urgent issue: the cognitive dissonance that young people feel when their fervently held religious convictions collide with contradicting facts. Adolescents are experiencing increased intellectual discomfort due to the widespread dissemination of contradictory religious information in virtual environments. Despite the increasing interest in the intersection of social media and religion, there is a notable gap in understanding how exposure to diverse religious narratives on social media impacts cognitive dissonance among youth. The problem is twofold: first, how do conflicting religious messages encountered online influence the cognitive and emotional state of young people? Second, how do these experiences affect their attitude and behavior, and how do they try to create consonance? Research indicates that social media can both amplify and mitigate cognitive dissonance depending on how individuals process and respond to conflicting information. However, specific studies focusing on religious narratives and their role in fostering dissonance among youth remained limited. Addressing this gap is crucial and it is the main focus of this research study as well.

**Research Objective**

To explore the extent of cognitive dissonance's existence among youth because of social media and its posts related to religion.

**Research Hypotheses**

It seems that whenever young people encounter such religious views on social media which are against their belief they experience cognitive dissonance.

**Research Methodology**

This study used a quantitative research approach to examine the religious narratives encountered by the university students on social media and their resulting cognitive dissonance. The primary data collection tool is a structured questionnaire, comprising closed-ended questions. The first section collects demographic details, while the second focuses on cognitive dissonance and exposure to religious content on various social media platforms. For sampling, both purposive and convenience sampling techniques are employed. Purposive sampling is used to select the students from all departments of the University of Sargodha, based on three age categories and four educational levels that meet the study criteria. Meanwhile, convenience sampling assists in identifying participants who actively engage with religious narratives on social media. A total sample of 300 students from the University of Sargodha has been selected, with equal representation of gender, 150 males and 150 females. To ensure a balanced perspective, the sample is equally divided between urban and rural backgrounds. Among the male respondents, 75 belong to rural areas and 75 to urban areas. Similarly, 75 female participants are from rural settings, and 75 are from urban localities. This balanced distribution helps reduce bias and enhances the reliability and validity of the study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) analyzes the efficient data collected through the survey method. SPSS is selected due to its suitability for processing quantitative data and providing accurate statistical results. It enables the researcher to produce scientifically sound and reliable outcomes. This methodological approach ensures that the data collected aligns with the study objectives and supports meaningful analysis of the impact of social media religious content on students' cognitive dissonance.

**Results**

**1 Frequency of Anger Reaction towards Conflicting Religious Content on Social Media**

| Variable | Scale | Overall | Gender | | Age | | Education | | Background | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Male | Female | 20-25 | 26-30 | BS/MA | M.PHIL/PHD | Urban | Rural |
| To what extent do you feel anger when you encounter religious views on social media which are against your belief? | Never | 3.3 | 2.0 | 4.7 | 2.6 | 5.5 | 3.8 | 1.5 | 4.0 | 2.7 |
| | Rarely | 1.0 | 0.7 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 0.7 |
| | Sometimes | 16.3 | 6.7 | 26.0 | 19.4 | 6.8 | 17.9 | 10.8 | 20.7 | 12.0 |
| | Often | 47.7 | 52.0 | 43.3 | 48.9 | 43.8 | 46.8 | 50.8 | 45.3 | 50.0 |
| | Very Often | 31.7 | 38.7 | 24.7 | 28.2 | 42.5 | 30.6 | 35.4 | 28.7 | 34.7 |

The analytical review of the above variable reveals a significant tendency among youth to feel anger when exposed to religious content on social media that contradicts their beliefs, with 47.7% reporting feeling angry often and 31.7% very often.

The gender analysis shows that males felt angered 52.0% often and 38.7% very often, while females stood at 43.3% often and 24.7% very often feeling anger among themselves. The lower age group, 20-25, showed expression of anger often with 48.9% and very often with 28.2%, while the higher age group, 26-30, stood at 43.8% often and 42.5% very often. The educational analysis indicates that people with higher degrees (MPhil/PhD) felt more of this expression of anger, with 50.8% often and 35.4% very often, than those in the other category (BS/MA), with 46.8% often and 30.6% very often. The background analysis reveals that youth from rural areas are more prone to feeling anger while encountering online views against their religious beliefs, with a ratio of 50.0 often and 34.7% very often, than the youth from urban areas, with a ratio of feeling anger of 45.3% often and 28.7% very often.

The exclusive analysis of the data for the above variable signifies that more males (90.7%) feel an expression of anger than females (68%) while encountering conflicting religious views. The same goes for the higher age group, 26-30, with a high ratio of anger expression (86.3%) as compared to the lower age group, 20-25 (77.1%). Youth with a higher degree (MPhil/PhD) are more prone to feeling anger within themselves (86.2%) as compared to youth with a BS/MA degree (77.4%), while this ratio in background was higher in youth from rural areas (84.7%) as compared to youth from urban areas (74%).

**8.2 Frequency of Anxiety Reaction towards Conflicting Religious Content on Social Media**

| Variable | Scale | Overall | Gender | Age | Education | Background |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | Male | Female | 20-25 | 26-30 | BS/MA | M.PHIL/PHD | Urban | Rural |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To what extent do you feel anxiety when you encounter religious views on social media which are against your belief? | Never | 2.7 | 2.0 | 3.3 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 3.0 | 1.5 | 3.3 | 2.0 |
| | Rarely | 0.7 | 0.0 | 1.3 | 0.4 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 0.0 | 0.7 | 0.7 |
| | Sometimes | 8.7 | 4.0 | 13.3 | 9.7 | 5.5 | 9.4 | 6.2 | 8.7 | 8.7 |
| | Often | 46.3 | 44.7 | 48.0 | 46.3 | 46.6 | 46.8 | 44.6 | 49.3 | 43.3 |
| | Very Often | 41.7 | 49.3 | 34.0 | 41.0 | 43.8 | 40.0 | 47.7 | 38.0 | 45.3 |

The analytical review of the above variable shows that more people feel anxiety when they encounter such religious views on social media that are against their belief, with 46.3% often feeling this expression and 41.7% very often feeling it.

The gender analysis reveals that 44.7% of males often and 49.3% very often feel anxiety, while 48% of females often and 34% very often feel it. In the 20-25 age group, anxiety is felt by 46.3% of individuals often and by 41.0% very often, while in the 26-30 age group, these figures are 46.6% often and 43.8% very often. Youth with a BS/MA degree report feeling anxiety at rates of 46.8% often and 40.0% very often, while those with an MPhil/PhD degree report feeling anxiety at rates of 44.6% often and 47.7% very often. The background analysis shows that youth from rural areas feel anxiety 43.3% often and 45.3% very often, and youth from urban areas feel it 49.3% often and 38.0% very often.

The exclusive analysis of the above variable signifies that more males (94%) feel anxiety than females (82%) when they encounter conflicting religious views on social media. This ratio is high in the higher age group 26-30 (90.4%) as compared to the lower age group 20-25 (87.3%). Youth with a higher degree (MPhil/PhD) are more prone to feeling anxiety in such a situation (92.3%) as compared to youth with a BS/MA degree (86.8%). Youth from rural backgrounds are slightly more likely to feel anxiety (88.6%) in such situations as compared to youth from urban areas (87.3%).

**8.3 Frequency of Feeling Stress towards Conflicting Religious Content to Social Media**

| Variable | Scale | Overall | Gender | | Age | | Education | | Background | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Male | Female | 20-25 | 26-30 | BS/MA | M.PHIL/PHD | Urban | Rural |
| To what extent do you feel stress when you encounter religious views on | Never | 2.3 | 1.3 | 3.3 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 1.5 | 2.0 | 2.7 |
| | Rarely | 1.7 | 1.3 | 2.0 | 0.9 | 4.1 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 3.3 | 0.0 |
| | Sometimes | 7.7 | 4.7 | 10.7 | 8.8 | 4.1 | 8.5 | 4.6 | 7.3 | 8.0 |
| | Often | 51.7 | 50.0 | 53.3 | 55.1 | 41.1 | 51.9 | 50.8 | 48.0 | 55.3 |
| | Very Often | 36.7 | 42.7 | 30.7 | 33.0 | 47.9 | 34.9 | 43.1 | 39.3 | 34.0 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| social media which are against your belief/sect/ religion? | | | | | | | | | | |

The analytical review of the above variable indicates that a higher number of people experience stress when they encounter religious views on social media that contradict their beliefs, with 51.7% reporting feeling this way often and 36.7% very often.

The gender analysis reveals that 50.0% of males often and 42.7% very often feel stress, while 53.3% of females often and 30.7% very often feel it. This expression exists in the 20-25 age group at 55.1% often and 33.0% very often, while in the 26-30 age group, it exists 41.1% often and 47.9% very often. Youth with a BS/MA degree experience stress at rates of 51.9% often and 34.9% very often, while those with an MPhil/PhD degree report experiencing stress at rates of 50.8% often and 43.1% very often. The background analysis shows that youth from rural areas feel stress 55.3% often and 34.0% very often, and youth from urban areas feel it 48.0% often and 39.3% very often.

The exclusive analysis of the above variable signifies that more males (92.7%) feel stress than females (84%) when they encounter conflicting religious views on social media. This ratio is slightly higher in the higher age group, 26-30 (89%), as compared to the lower age group, 20-25 (88.1%). Youth with a higher degree (MPhil/PhD) are more prone to feeling stress in such a situation (93.9%) as compared to youth with a BS/MA degree (86.8%). Youth from rural backgrounds are more likely to feel stressed (89.3%) in such situations as compared to youth from urban areas (87.3%).

**8.4 Frequency of Feeling Discomfort over Exposure to Conflicting Religious Views on Social Media**

| | | | Gender | | Age | | Education | | Background | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **Scale** | **Overall** | **Male** | **Female** | **20-25** | **26-30** | **BS/MA** | **M.PHIL/PHD** | **Urban** | **Rural** |
| How often do you feel discomfort when encounter conflicting religious views on social media? | Never | 2.3 | 1.3 | 3.3 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 1.5 | 2.0 | 2.7 |
| | Rarely | 1.7 | 1.3 | 2.0 | 0.9 | 4.1 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 3.3 | 0.0 |
| | Sometimes | 7.7 | 4.7 | 10.7 | 8.8 | 4.1 | 8.5 | 4.6 | 7.3 | 8.0 |
| | Often | 52.0 | 50.0 | 54.0 | 55.5 | 41.1 | 51.9 | 52.3 | 48.7 | 55.3 |
| | Very Often | 36.3 | 42.7 | 30.0 | 32.6 | 47.9 | 34.9 | 41.5 | 38.7 | 34.0 |

The analytical review of the above variable indicates that more people experience discomfort when encountering religious views on social media that contradict their beliefs, with 52.0% reporting they often feel this way and 36.3% stating they feel it very often. The gender analysis reveals that 50.0% of males and 42.7% of females very often feel stress, while 54.0% of females and 30.0% of males very often feel it. This expression exists in the 20-25 age group at 55.5% often and 32.6% very often, while in the 26-30 age group, it exists 41.1% often and 47.9% very often. This feeling of discomfort exists in youth with a BS/MA degree with a ratio of 51.9% often and 34.9% very often, while in youth with an MPhil/PhD degree, this ratio stands at feeling discomfort 52.3% often and 41.5% very often. The background analysis shows that youth from rural areas feel discomfort 55.3% often and 34.0% very often, and youth from urban areas feel it 48.7% often and 38.7% very often. The exclusive analysis of the above variable signifies that more males (92.7%) feel discomfort as compared to females (84%) when they encounter conflicting religious views on social media. This ratio is slightly higher in the higher age group, 26-30 (89%), as compared to the lower age group, 20-25 (88.1%). Youth with a higher degree (MPhil/PhD) are more prone to feeling discomfort in such situations (93.8%) as compared to youth with a BS/MA degree (86.8%). Youth from rural backgrounds are more likely to feel discomfort (89.3%) in such situations as compared to youth from urban areas (87.4%).

**Discussions**

The exclusive analysis of the study revealed that a significant number of youth rely on finding religious information over social media, and among them, the ratio of male respondents was a bit high, which determined that more males than females use social media for finding news and content related to religion. It was also revealed that users of social media are exposed to a high amount of content that is related to religion through their news feed sections. This indicates that social media significantly contributes to the sharing of news and information about people's religions, raising concerns regarding authenticity and credibility since anyone can share or upload content on the internet without verification. This has caused social networking sites to become significant sources of misinformation and disinformation, which can trigger chaos in various instances and lead to violence over religious issues. The data suggests that 90.7% of male respondents and 68% of female respondents experienced anger due to conflicting religious views, emphasizing the gender gap in psychological impact. Such an observation is very important, as religion is the most important part of one's life, and our whole life revolves around the religious beliefs we follow. If youth are heavily receiving religious information from social media without verifying its authenticity, they may believe everything shared there, which can lead to severe problems due to the spread of false news and misinformation on the internet. Such behavior is also a major cause of increased cognitive dissonance among the users. The study also showed results related to the cognitive dissonance among youth who are heavy users of social media for religious information. It revealed that a significant number of respondents felt cognitive dissonance when they were exposed to such religious information over social media, which was against their own religious beliefs and practices. They felt discomfort, anger, anxiety, and stress whenever they saw any such content. This emotional response pattern highlights the internal psychological conflict triggered by incompatible religious content. These psychological responses were not only widespread but also consistent across different emotional categories, suggesting that exposure to religious disagreement online is processed by significant youth as a deeply personal threat rather than neutral information.

According to the results, it was found that social media is the biggest source of religious information in the life of youth. They heavily rely on it and believe anything without checking its authenticity. Due to exposure to conflicting religious views and narratives spreading over social networking websites on a daily basis, youth in Pakistan are facing cognitive dissonance, and to resolve it, they respond in various ways. But this remains a huge problem, as it's becoming a main reason for the conflict between their attitude and behavior in real life. These findings raise important implications for media consumption behaviors, emotional well-being, and intergroup harmony.

**Conclusion**

Today is the era of technology, and Generation Z, which often refers to the youth of this new technological era, has become heavily dependent upon the technology for every little work of life. Use of social media has become a new natural, and youth today try to get as much information as they want from social media and other internet websites. The concept of social community has become stronger than the actual community in the physical world. Youth of today are more connected with the social community and get influenced by the peer groups, friends, and community circle available on social media. Due to all this, they believe maximum communication and information shared on social networking websites are true and act accordingly in real life as well. All this has given rise to the misinformation, fake news, and deliberate sharing of wrong information over social media for various purposes by various people, but this has resulted in increased psychological problems among the users. Religion is a very sensitive aspect of one's life, and when any such thing that is contradictory to our belief is shared with us or discussed in front of us, it creates cognitive dissonance. The findings of this study indicate that such dissonance is not limited to abstract thought; it is accompanied by strong emotional reactions such as anger, stress, anxiety, and discomfort. These emotional reactions are a reflection of the internal psychological turmoil youth face when they encounter content that challenges or contradicts their religious values. This psychological discomfort can result in various ways. People may either try to ignore their discomfort, selectively choose information that aligns with their religious beliefs, or engage in discussions to express their discomfort, anger, and anxiety. This engagement can lead to chaos within the community, changes in relationships and social interactions due to heated debates over contradictory beliefs, or negatively impact real-life behavior. The tendency of youth to react emotionally rather than rationally to such an extent demonstrates the pressing need for digital literacy, particularly in the realm of religious content. Without proper tools to critically evaluate what they see online, young people remain vulnerable to manipulation, emotional strain, and social division. Social media platforms, in this context, play a critical role not only as carriers of information but also as amplifiers of polarizing over religious sentiments due to their algorithms and lack of content regulations. Their limited oversight often allows emotionally charged and divisive narratives to spread rapidly. Therefore, it is essential to address these challenges through educational, psychological, and policy-level interventions that aim to build resilience, promote critical thinking, and encourage respectful dialogue across religious perspectives. Students and youth represent the future of any nation, and while technology is essential for everyone, it must be used with care and responsibility; therefore, digital literacy is crucial for all social media users.

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