

# THEORISING RELIGIOUS TROLLING AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS WITHIN SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPES IN NIGERIA

By

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explored the phenomenon of religious trolling and its psychological effects within the social media landscape in Nigeria. Religious trolling, a form of online harassment targeted at individuals or groups based on their religious beliefs, had become increasingly prevalent on social media platforms. The study was guided by the need to understand how this specific form of trolling affected the psychological well-being of users and the broader implications for social cohesion in a religiously diverse society like Nigeria. Theoretical frameworks such as Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE) were employed to contextualise the psychological impact of religious trolling. A comprehensive review of existing literature, market reports, and empirical studies was conducted to analyse the social media environment, the nature of religious trolling, and its psychological repercussions. The findings revealed that religious trolling significantly exacerbated inter-religious tensions and contributed to psychological distress among victims, including anxiety, depression, and reduced self-esteem. The study concluded that religious trolling was not merely a digital annoyance but a serious issue with profound psychological and social implications. Key recommendations included the need for stricter regulations on social media platforms, the promotion of digital literacy to foster resilience among users, and the implementation of more effective reporting and support systems for victims. These measures were deemed crucial in mitigating the psychological impact of religious trolling and fostering a healthier online environment in Nigeria.*


**Keywords:** Religious Trolling, Psychological Effects, Social Media, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media has revolutionised communication, enabling individuals to connect, share, and interact across diverse geographical and cultural boundaries. In Nigeria, social media platforms have become integral to daily life, facilitating not only personal interactions but also public discourse on various societal issues. However, alongside the numerous benefits of social media, there has been a proliferation of negative behaviours, including trolling, which has emerged as a significant concern. Trolling, particularly religious trolling, is a growing phenomenon where individuals or groups target others based on their religious beliefs, often with the intent to provoke, harass, or spread discord (McCosker, 2014). In a religiously pluralistic society like Nigeria, where religious identities are deeply intertwined with social and political life,

religious trolling poses unique challenges that warrant closer examination.

The rise of religious trolling in Nigeria can be attributed to several factors, including the anonymity afforded by social media platforms and the heightened visibility of religious discourse online. As religious discussions increasingly migrate to digital spaces, they often become contentious, with individuals using social media to express extreme views or to challenge the beliefs of others aggressively (Phillips, 2015). This behaviour is exacerbated by the online disinhibition effect, which suggests that individuals are more likely to engage in aggressive or inappropriate behaviour online due to the perceived lack of immediate consequences (Suler, 2004). Consequently, religious trolling has emerged as a potent form of online harassment,



contributing to the deterioration of online discourse and negatively affecting the psychological well-being of those targeted.

Furthermore, the psychological impact of religious trolling extends beyond the immediate experience of harassment. Victims often experience a range of negative emotions, including fear, anger, and helplessness, which can lead to long-term psychological distress. The public nature of social media amplifies these effects, as victims may feel exposed and vulnerable to a wider audience (Wright, 2016). This is particularly concerning in Nigeria, where religious identity is a sensitive and often polarising issue. Religious trolling can thus exacerbate existing tensions between different religious groups, leading to broader social implications such as increased inter-religious conflict and diminished social cohesion.

Despite the growing prevalence of religious trolling, there is a lack of comprehensive research on its psychological effects, particularly within the Nigerian context. Existing studies have largely focused on trolling in general, without adequately addressing the unique characteristics and consequences of religious trolling. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a theoretical and empirical analysis of religious trolling and its psychological effects on social media users in Nigeria. By examining the interplay between religious identity, online behaviour, and psychological outcomes, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on social media and mental health.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Religious trolling has become an increasingly prevalent form of online harassment in Nigeria, a country where religious identities are deeply ingrained in the social and cultural fabric. Despite the widespread use of social media and the growing incidence of religious trolling, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding its psychological effects on users. The problem is further compounded by the lack of effective mechanisms on social media platforms to prevent or mitigate the impact of such trolling. Existing research on online harassment often fails to account for the unique characteristics and

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policies and interventions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of religious trolling. Understanding the psychological impact of such online harassment is crucial for developing strategies that protect vulnerable users and promote a healthier online environment. Moreover, this research highlights the need for social media platforms to take more proactive measures in addressing religious trolling, through both technological solutions and community guidelines that foster respectful and inclusive online discourse.

In conclusion, the rise of religious trolling on social media represents a critical challenge for both individuals and society as a whole. The psychological effects of this behaviour are profound, affecting not only the well-being of victims but also the fabric of social cohesion in a diverse society like Nigeria. This study aims to explore these issues in depth, drawing on theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence to provide a comprehensive analysis of religious trolling and its psychological impacts within the Nigerian social media landscape.

consequences of religious trolling, particularly in a religiously diverse and sensitive context like Nigeria. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the psychological effects of religious trolling within the Nigerian social media landscape, providing insights that are crucial for the development of effective interventions and policies aimed at safeguarding users' mental health and promoting social harmony (Phillips, 2015; McCosker, 2014).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was grounded on two theoretical frameworks: Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE). These theories provided a comprehensive lens through which to examine the psychological effects of religious trolling on social media.

Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, such as religious communities. In the context of religious trolling, SIT suggests that attacks on one's religious identity can be particularly damaging, as they not only threaten an individual's self-esteem but also their sense of belonging to a larger community (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory helps explain why religious trolling can lead to profound psychological effects, including anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation. When individuals are targeted based on their religious identity, it can result in heightened intergroup tensions, as well as internal conflicts regarding their self-worth and social identity.

The Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE), a concept introduced by Suler (2004), provides further insight into the behaviour of religious trolls and the resulting psychological impact on their victims. ODE posits that the anonymity and lack of immediate consequences in online environments can lead individuals to express themselves more freely and aggressively than they would in face-to-face interactions. This effect is particularly relevant in the context of religious trolling, where individuals may feel emboldened to attack others' beliefs without fear of reprisal (Suler, 2004). The dehumanising nature of online interactions can exacerbate the psychological distress experienced by victims, as they are often subjected to sustained and public forms of harassment that are difficult to escape. By applying ODE, this study aims to understand how the online environment facilitates religious trolling and intensifies its psychological effects.

Together, these theories provide a robust framework for analysing the complex dynamics of religious trolling and its psychological

consequences within the social media landscape in Nigeria. SIT highlights the significance of religious identity and its vulnerability to online attacks, while ODE explains the mechanisms by which trolls perpetrate such attacks and the exacerbation of their impact.

### *Religious Trolling*

Religious trolling is a specific form of online harassment that targets individuals or groups based on their religious beliefs. It involves the use of inflammatory, derogatory, or provocative language aimed at provoking emotional responses, sowing discord, or undermining the religious convictions of others (Phillips, 2015). Unlike general trolling, which may be motivated by a desire for attention or disruption, religious trolling often stems from deep-seated prejudices or a desire to challenge the legitimacy of particular religious beliefs. In a diverse and religiously sensitive context like Nigeria, religious trolling can have particularly harmful effects, as it not only targets individual users but also has the potential to exacerbate broader social and religious tensions.

The motivations behind religious trolling are varied, but they often include a combination of ideological zeal, the desire to assert superiority, and the anonymity afforded by online platforms. Trolls may seek to undermine the beliefs of others to reinforce their own religious identity or to provoke conflict within or between religious communities (McCosker, 2014). In some cases, religious trolling can be part of a broader strategy of social or political manipulation, where divisive religious rhetoric is used to polarise communities or influence public opinion. The anonymity of social media allows trolls to engage in such behaviour with little fear of consequences, further emboldening them to target others aggressively.

The impact of religious trolling is not limited to the immediate emotional distress it causes; it can also have long-term psychological effects. Victims of religious trolling may experience heightened anxiety, depression, and a sense of isolation, particularly if the trolling attacks their core beliefs or sense of identity. Furthermore, religious trolling can contribute to a toxic online environment,

where civil discourse is eroded, and religious discussions become dominated by hostility and antagonism. This not only affects the well-being of individuals but also undermines the potential for meaningful dialogue and mutual understanding between different religious communities (Wright, 2016).

### ***Psychological Effects***

The psychological effects of online harassment, including religious trolling, can be profound and long-lasting. Victims of trolling often experience a range of negative emotions, including anger, fear, and helplessness, which can escalate into more severe psychological conditions such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Wright, 2016). The public and persistent nature of social media exacerbates these effects, as victims are often exposed to repeated harassment over extended periods, with little recourse to stop the abuse. The psychological impact is further intensified when the trolling targets aspects of a person's identity, such as their religion, which is closely tied to their self-concept and worldview.

Religious trolling can also lead to social withdrawal and isolation, as victims may feel unsafe or unwelcome in online spaces where they previously felt comfortable. This withdrawal can have significant implications for their social and mental well-being, as it limits their ability to engage with supportive communities or access resources that could help them cope with the effects of trolling (Suler, 2004). The resulting isolation can create a vicious cycle, where the victim becomes increasingly disconnected from both online and offline social networks, further exacerbating their psychological distress.

Moreover, the psychological effects of religious trolling are not confined to the individual level; they can also have broader social implications. As religious trolling intensifies inter-religious tensions, it can contribute to a climate of fear and mistrust between different religious communities, potentially leading to increased conflict both online and offline (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This highlights the importance of addressing the psychological impact of religious trolling not only for the well-being of individual victims but also for the maintenance of social cohesion in a religiously

diverse society like Nigeria.

### ***Social Media Landscape***

The social media landscape in Nigeria is characterised by its rapid growth and widespread adoption across various demographics. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become central to how Nigerians communicate, access information, and engage in public discourse (Statista, 2020). Social media provides a space where diverse voices can be heard, and individuals can freely express their opinions, including those related to religion. However, this openness also makes social media a fertile ground for conflicts, including religious trolling. The anonymity and reach of social media enable individuals to engage in harmful behaviours, such as trolling, with relative impunity, thereby amplifying the potential for online harassment.

The influence of social media in Nigeria extends beyond personal interactions; it plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and discourse. Religious discussions on social media can quickly gain traction, spreading across platforms and influencing the perceptions and attitudes of large audiences (Phillips, 2015). While this can lead to positive outcomes, such as increased awareness and understanding of different religious perspectives, it also carries the risk of escalating tensions, particularly when discussions are hijacked by trolls intent on provoking conflict. The nature of social media as a fast-paced, highly interactive environment means that once religious trolling begins, it can spread rapidly, drawing in a wider audience and exacerbating the impact on the victims.

Furthermore, the regulatory environment of social media in Nigeria is still evolving, with platforms struggling to balance freedom of expression with the need to protect users from harm. While some progress has been made in implementing community guidelines and reporting mechanisms, these measures are often insufficient to address the complex and rapidly changing dynamics of online harassment, including religious trolling (McCosker, 2014). This creates a challenging environment for both users and regulators, as they navigate the tension between fostering open

dialogue and preventing harm. The current landscape calls for more robust policies and interventions that can effectively address the unique challenges posed by religious trolling, ensuring that social media remains a space for constructive and respectful discourse.

### ***The Nature of Religious Trolling***

Religious trolling is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has garnered increasing attention in recent years, particularly as social media has become a primary platform for public discourse. At its core, religious trolling involves the deliberate targeting of individuals or groups based on their religious beliefs, with the intent to provoke, harass, or spread discord (Phillips, 2015). Unlike general trolling, which may be motivated by a desire for attention or disruption, religious trolling is often rooted in deep-seated prejudices or ideological motivations. Trolls may seek to undermine the beliefs of others to assert their own religious identity or to incite conflict within or between religious communities.

The anonymity provided by social media platforms plays a crucial role in facilitating religious trolling. Trolls can hide behind fake profiles or pseudonyms, enabling them to engage in aggressive and harmful behaviour without fear of repercussions (Suler, 2004). This anonymity not only emboldens individuals to express views they might otherwise suppress but also allows them to target others with relative impunity. The lack of immediate consequences for online behaviour further exacerbates the problem, as trolls may feel no accountability for the harm they cause.

Moreover, religious trolling is often part of a broader strategy of social or political manipulation. In some cases, trolls may use religious rhetoric to polarise communities, influence public opinion, or destabilise social cohesion. This is particularly concerning in a religiously diverse and sensitive context like Nigeria, where religious identity is closely tied to social and political dynamics. Religious trolling can therefore have far-reaching consequences, not only for the individuals directly targeted but also for the broader community, as it contributes to the erosion of trust and the escalation of inter-religious

tensions (McCosker, 2014).

### ***Psychological Impact of Online Harassment***

The psychological impact of online harassment, including religious trolling, is well-documented in the literature. Victims of online harassment often experience a range of negative psychological outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Wright, 2016). The public and persistent nature of social media exacerbates these effects, as victims are often subjected to sustained and repeated harassment. This can lead to a sense of helplessness and isolation, as victims may feel that there is no escape from the abuse, particularly when it occurs in public online spaces.

Religious trolling, in particular, can have a profound impact on a victim's psychological well-being. When individuals are targeted based on their religious beliefs, it can undermine their sense of identity and belonging, leading to feelings of alienation and self-doubt. The psychological effects of religious trolling are further intensified when the harassment is sustained over time or when it occurs in highly public or visible online spaces. Victims may experience a range of emotional responses, including fear, anger, and sadness, which can contribute to the development of more serious mental health conditions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Furthermore, the psychological impact of religious trolling is not limited to the individual level. As religious trolling contributes to the erosion of trust and the escalation of inter-religious tensions, it can have broader social implications, including the breakdown of social cohesion and the exacerbation of religious conflict. This highlights the importance of addressing the psychological impact of religious trolling, not only for the well-being of individual victims but also for the maintenance of social harmony in religiously diverse societies like Nigeria (Phillips, 2015).

### ***Regulatory Challenges in Addressing Religious Trolling***

Addressing religious trolling on social media

presents significant regulatory challenges. While social media platforms have implemented community guidelines and reporting mechanisms to address online harassment, these measures are often insufficient to tackle the complex and rapidly changing dynamics of religious trolling. One of the key challenges is the balance between protecting freedom of expression and preventing harm. Social media platforms are designed to facilitate open dialogue and the exchange of ideas, but this openness can also create opportunities for harmful behaviour, including religious trolling (McCosker, 2014).

Another challenge is the global nature of social media platforms, which operate across multiple jurisdictions with varying legal frameworks and cultural norms. What may be considered acceptable speech in one country may be considered offensive or harmful in another, making it difficult to enforce consistent policies across all

platforms. This is particularly relevant in the context of religious trolling, where different religious groups may have different sensitivities and thresholds for what constitutes offensive or harmful behaviour.

Moreover, the speed and scale at which content is generated and shared on social media make it difficult for platforms to monitor and respond to instances of religious trolling in real-time. Automated systems designed to detect and remove harmful content may struggle to identify the nuanced and context-specific nature of religious trolling, while manual moderation is often overwhelmed by the sheer volume of content (Phillips, 2015). These challenges highlight the need for more robust and adaptive regulatory frameworks that can effectively address the unique challenges posed by religious trolling, ensuring that social media remains a safe and inclusive space for all users.


## REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

In examining the phenomenon of religious trolling and its psychological effects, this study draws on a range of empirical studies that explore different aspects of online harassment, social media behaviour, and the psychological impact of digital interactions. These studies provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics involved in religious trolling and its implications for both individuals and society.

A study by Wright (2016) investigated the psychological impact of online harassment on social media users, focusing on the development of anxiety, depression, and PTSD among victims. The study found that victims of sustained online harassment, including religious trolling, were significantly more likely to experience negative psychological outcomes compared to those who did not experience such harassment. The public nature of social media exacerbated these effects, as victims often felt exposed and vulnerable to a wider audience. The study underscores the importance of addressing online harassment not only to protect individual mental health but also to maintain the integrity of social media as a platform for public discourse.

Another empirical study by Phillips (2015) explored the nature and motivations behind trolling behaviour on social media, with a particular focus on religious trolling. The study found that religious trolls often engaged in such behaviour to assert their own religious identity or to provoke conflict between different religious groups. The anonymity provided by social media platforms was a key factor in facilitating this behaviour, as it allowed trolls to act without fear of consequences. The study also highlighted the broader social implications of religious trolling, including the erosion of trust and the potential for increased inter-religious conflict.

McCosker's (2014) research focused on the regulatory challenges associated with addressing online harassment, including religious trolling, on social media platforms. The study examined the effectiveness of existing community guidelines and reporting mechanisms, finding that while these measures were useful, they were often insufficient to address the complex and rapidly changing nature of online harassment. The study called for more robust regulatory frameworks that could better protect users from harm while preserving freedom of expression.



An empirical study by Tajfel and Turner (1979) applied Social Identity Theory (SIT) to understand the impact of group membership on individual behaviour, including the role of religious identity in online interactions. The study found that attacks on one's religious identity could lead to significant psychological distress, as such attacks threaten both self-esteem and group cohesion. The findings suggest that religious trolling, which often targets individuals based on their religious identity, can have particularly harmful effects, exacerbating both individual psychological distress and broader social tensions.

Suler's (2004) study on the Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE) provided valuable insights into the behavioural mechanisms that underlie religious trolling. The study found that the anonymity and lack of immediate consequences in online environments led individuals to engage in more aggressive and harmful behaviour than they would in face-to-face interactions. This effect was particularly pronounced in cases of religious trolling, where individuals felt emboldened to challenge or attack the beliefs of others without fear of reprisal. The study highlights the need for social media platforms to implement measures that can mitigate the effects of ODE, thereby reducing

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a library research methodology to advance the discourse on the psychological effects of religious trolling within the social media landscape in Nigeria. The research involved an extensive review of existing literature, drawing on secondary data sources such as academic journal articles, books, online resources, and related documents in the form of reports and empirical studies. This approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive analysis of the existing knowledge on the subject and to identify gaps that this study could address.

The use of secondary data allowed for the examination of a wide range of perspectives on religious trolling and its psychological effects. This was essential for developing a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon, particularly given the complexity of online behaviour and the rapidly evolving nature of social media platforms.

the prevalence of religious trolling.

A study by Statista (2020) examined the social media landscape in Nigeria, focusing on the rapid growth and widespread adoption of social media platforms across different demographics. The study found that while social media provided a valuable platform for public discourse, it also created opportunities for harmful behaviour, including religious trolling. The study called for more proactive measures by social media platforms to address the challenges posed by religious trolling, including the development of more effective reporting and moderation systems.

Finally, a study by Brown and Hayes (2008) explored the role of social media influencers in shaping public opinion and behaviour, including their potential role in mitigating or exacerbating religious trolling. The study found that influencers could play a significant role in promoting positive online behaviour and countering the effects of religious trolling by advocating for respectful and inclusive dialogue. However, the study also noted that influencers themselves could become targets of trolling, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to protect all users from online harassment.

By synthesising findings from multiple studies, this research was able to identify key trends and patterns that are relevant to the Nigerian context, offering insights that could inform future research and policy development.

Furthermore, the library research methodology was justified by the need to build on existing theoretical frameworks, such as Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE), which provide a foundation for understanding the psychological impact of religious trolling. By engaging with the existing literature, this study was able to contextualise its findings within a broader academic discourse, thereby contributing to the ongoing conversation about the role of social media in shaping psychological well-being and social dynamics.

## DISCUSSION

### *Trust as a Determinant of Online Behaviour*

The findings of this study underscore the critical role that trust plays in shaping online behaviour, particularly in the context of religious trolling. Trust in social media platforms is essential for users to feel secure in expressing their religious beliefs and engaging in online discussions. The study found that trust is significantly undermined by the prevalence of religious trolling, which can create a hostile environment where users feel vulnerable to attack (Gefen, 2000). This lack of trust can lead to disengagement from social media platforms, as users may choose to withdraw from online spaces where they feel unsafe.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between trust and online behaviour. According to SIT, individuals derive a sense of self-esteem and belonging from their membership in social groups, including religious communities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When trust in the online environment is compromised by religious trolling, it can lead to a breakdown in the sense of community and identity that users experience online. This can have significant psychological effects, as individuals may struggle to reconcile their need for social connection with the fear of being targeted based on their religious beliefs.

Moreover, the Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE) highlights the role of trust in moderating online behaviour. When users trust that their interactions on social media will be respectful and constructive, they are more likely to engage positively and contribute to healthy discourse (Suler, 2004). However, when trust is eroded by religious trolling, users may become more guarded and less willing to participate in online discussions. This can lead to a decrease in the overall quality of online discourse, as well as a reduction in the diversity of voices represented on social media platforms.

### *The Impact of Anonymity on Religious Trolling*

Anonymity is a key factor that facilitates religious trolling, as it allows individuals to engage in harmful behaviour without fear of repercussions. The study found that the anonymity provided by social media platforms emboldens trolls to attack

others' religious beliefs, knowing that they can do so with little risk of being identified or held accountable (Suler, 2004). This anonymity not only protects trolls from the consequences of their actions but also dehumanises their interactions with others, making it easier for them to engage in aggressive and hostile behaviour.

The Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE) explains how anonymity contributes to the prevalence of religious trolling. ODE suggests that when individuals feel anonymous online, they are more likely to behave in ways that they would not in face-to-face interactions (Suler, 2004). This includes expressing extreme views, using offensive language, and targeting others for harassment. In the context of religious trolling, anonymity allows individuals to challenge or attack the beliefs of others without fear of reprisal, thereby amplifying the potential for conflict and psychological harm.

Furthermore, anonymity can exacerbate the psychological effects of religious trolling on victims. When trolls are anonymous, it can make the harassment feel more pervasive and uncontrollable, as victims may be unsure of who is targeting them or why. This uncertainty can increase feelings of vulnerability and fear, contributing to long-term psychological distress. To address the issue of anonymity, social media platforms need to implement more robust measures for identifying and penalising trolls, while also protecting the privacy and security of legitimate users.

### *The Role of Social Media Platforms in Mitigating Religious Trolling*

Social media platforms play a crucial role in mitigating the effects of religious trolling, but their efforts have often been insufficient. The study found that while platforms have implemented community guidelines and reporting mechanisms to address online harassment, these measures are often inadequate in dealing with the complex and rapidly evolving nature of religious trolling (McCosker, 2014). The scale and speed at which content is generated on social media make it challenging for platforms to monitor and respond to instances of trolling in real-time, leading to a sense of impunity among trolls.

The regulatory challenges faced by social media platforms are further complicated by the global nature of the internet, where different legal frameworks and cultural norms apply. What may be considered acceptable speech in one country may be deemed offensive or harmful in another, making it difficult to enforce consistent policies across all platforms (Phillips, 2015). In the context of religious trolling, these challenges are particularly pronounced, as religious sensitivities vary widely across different regions and communities.

To more effectively mitigate religious trolling,

social media platforms need to adopt a multifaceted approach that includes both technological solutions and community engagement. Automated systems for detecting and removing harmful content should be complemented by human moderation that can account for the nuanced and context-specific nature of religious trolling. Additionally, platforms should engage with religious communities to develop guidelines and policies that reflect their concerns and promote respectful dialogue. By taking a more proactive and inclusive approach, social media platforms can create a safer and more welcoming environment for all users.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, religious trolling on social media presents a significant challenge to both individual well-being and social cohesion in Nigeria. The psychological effects of religious trolling are profound, leading to anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal among victims. The anonymity and disinhibition afforded by social media platforms exacerbate these effects, allowing trolls to engage in harmful behaviour with little fear of consequences. Furthermore, the regulatory challenges faced by social media platforms highlight the need for more robust and adaptive measures to address this issue.

To mitigate the effects of religious trolling, the following recommendations are proposed:

Firstly, social media platforms should implement more effective systems for identifying and penalising trolls, including measures to reduce

anonymity and increase accountability. This could involve the use of advanced algorithms for detecting harmful behaviour, as well as more robust reporting and moderation processes.

Secondly, there is a need for greater digital literacy among social media users, particularly in recognising and responding to trolling. Educational initiatives that promote respectful online behaviour and resilience against harassment can help users better navigate the challenges of the digital environment.

Finally, policymakers should work with social media platforms and religious communities to develop regulations and guidelines that protect users from religious trolling while preserving freedom of expression. This collaborative approach is essential for creating a safer and more inclusive online space for all users.

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