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Impact of Online Church Teachings on Pentecostal Members in the Post-Covid-19 Pandemic in Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced distortions in religious services across the world, especially in the usual pattern of Christian worship that relies heavily on physical fellowship and community-building. Following movement and group assembly restrictions established during the pandemic, numerous Pentecostal churches rapidly shifted to online platforms to continue church activities and keep members spiritually connected. Nevertheless, though this change guaranteed the continuity of worship and preaching, it also posed serious questions about its future impact on the spiritual life of believers, as well as their participation and communal experience. This paper titled 'Impact of Online Church Teaching on Pentecostal Church members in the Post-COVID-19 Pandemic in Kaduna State, Nigeria,' and the research question was: How does online church teaching impact Pentecostal church members in the post-pandemic era? The research design was a descriptive survey that combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study. Pentecostal members and clergy in selected urban and suburban areas were surveyed using questionnaires and interviews. Of the 1,152 questionnaires distributed, 1,138 returned valid responses, indicating a high response rate. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data obtained through the interviews. The study results showed that online church services have significantly impacted the activities of Pentecostal Christians in the post-pandemic period. In particular, the results revealed that online church teaching has increased the level of biblical literacy and access to scripture among members. Most respondents affirmed that sermons recorded and live-streamed offered them flexibility in their learning process, as they could revisit teachings when they have time, thus enhancing their understanding. However, in spite of these advantages, the research also indicated that online church teaching has some limitations. Interestingly, no physical contact and direct mentorship in the context of online sessions were identified to make the discipleship process any less profound and personal accountability any less effective than face-to-face church meetings. These results imply that although online platforms are important means of teaching dissemination, they might not be as effective as face-to-face church interaction in terms of relational and experiential aspects. Based on these results, the study recommended that church leadership ought to make sure that they offer unending theological training and guided mentorship opportunities both online and physically. This practice is needed to ensure the integrity of the doctrines, enhance the discipleship process, and encourage the holistic spiritual development of the members who have been involved in virtual church settings

Keywords: Pentecostal churches, online teaching, post-COVID-19, Christian education, discipleship, Nigeria

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Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 and its rapid global spread in 2020 caused unprecedented disruption across all spheres of human activity, including religion. Government restrictions on movement and gatherings in the country had a major impact on Christian worship, which has traditionally been based on physical fellowship, communal learning, and interpersonal discipleship. In turn, many Pentecostal churches quickly embraced online platforms, including live streaming, social media, and video conferencing tools, to continue church teaching and other spiritual practices (Adeyemi, 2022; Nwachukwu and Okeke, 2023). This shift has been a significant change in ecclesiastical practice, redefining how biblical teaching and spiritual formation are delivered in modern Christianity.

Online church teaching became one of the most important tools for maintaining continuity in scriptural teaching during the pandemic. Digital platforms, sermons, Bible studies, and doctrinal teaching became more widely available to a broader audience, no longer geographically restricted. Research has demonstrated that the transition increased biblical literacy and engagement among participants who would otherwise not have been able to attend physical services because of distance, health, and time (Ojo, 2024; Yusuf and Danladi, 2022). In addition, recordings were flexible, enabling believers to revisit the teachings, thus strengthening comprehension and individual study practices.

Nevertheless, amid these advantages, concerns have arisen about the long-term implications of the shift to online teaching for discipleship and spiritual growth. In Pentecostal ecclesiology, mentorship, personal interaction, and communal accountability are traditionally highly valued, yet such elements cannot be easily recreated in virtual space. Researchers believe that the lack of face-to-face experience can erode the substance of spiritual formation and limit the possibility of immediate feedback, correction, and the development of a relationship, which is key to good discipleship (Ezeh and Ibrahim, 2023; Bello, 2025). Therefore, online teaching has increased access, but it can also decrease the quality of spiritual guidance and pastoral care.

The post-pandemic period has seen most Pentecostal churches continue to incorporate online teaching into their ministry frameworks, even as restrictions have been lifted and physical meetings have resumed in churches. This hybrid model poses significant questions about the long-term effects of online church instruction on members' spiritual life, patterns of participation, and the overall development of Christianity. In places like Kaduna State in Nigeria, where socio-cultural and technological forces interact in a distinctive way to determine the role of religion in human life, there is a pressing need to critically evaluate the role that these digital innovations play in the lives of Pentecostal believers following the pandemic (Danjuma and Yakubu, 2026).

Thus, the proposed research will analyse the effects of online church teaching on the members of a Pentecostal church in the post-COVID-19 period in Kaduna State, Nigeria. It will assess the advantages and drawbacks of online teaching and, with a view to offering insights that can help church leaders strike a balance between digital and physical forms of ministry to be effective in Christian education and discipleship.

Online Church Services in the Dissemination of Teachings and Doctrinal Beliefs

The introduction of online church services has changed the spread of the Pentecostal teachings and doctrinal beliefs. The digital platforms have emerged as critical resources to reach a wide variety of people and support spiritual development in modern Christian practice. Scholars have discussed the opportunities as well as the challenges related to this transformation and provided information on the implications of this transformation on contemporary Pentecostalism. The most important benefits of online church services are likely to be that they do not have geographical barriers. Campbell and Tsuria (2022) argue that digital platforms establish environments where people in various regions of the world can be exposed to Christian teachings. This worldwide coverage improves access to the gospel, especially for those who might have problems accessing the gospel because of disability or persecution and work-related limitations. In the same manner, Hutchings (2022) observes that through online platforms, people can participate in worship activities in real-time, which increases the scope of church ministries beyond the local congregations.

Contextualisation of teachings is also made possible via online church services. Churches are able to deliver messages through digital media using culturally acceptable formats with local languages, music, and styles of communication. This flexibility improves the comprehension and participation among various audiences (Cheong, 2022). In addition, multimedia technologies such as videos, podcasts, and interactive content can be used to facilitate the successful delivery of doctrinal content, especially with younger, digitally savvy demographics.

Nevertheless, there are significant challenges regarding the growth of online church services. Among the concerns are the possibility of theological dilution. The nature of the digital platforms (informal and decentralised) may result in the misinterpretation or simplification of complex doctrinal issues (Isetti *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, a lack of physical contact minimises the possibility of mentorship, accountability, and relational discipleship, the key to long-term spiritual development (Anderson, 2022).

The other important question is authenticity and credibility in online teaching. As more religious materials are spread on online sites, it has become harder to tell the difference between true teachings and false doctrines. According to Cheong (2022), church leaders should be doctrinally sound and offer authoritative leadership in the digital context. Such difficulties notwithstanding, online church services present a huge potential for evangelism and discipleship. As Wagner and O'Brien (2023) note, online platforms underline new evangelistic practices, such as social media outreach, virtual

prayer meetings, and multimedia campaigns. These strategies will be especially effective in reaching younger audiences who are active on the Internet. In addition, organised online discipleship courses, which include interactive discussions, mentoring, and online learning modules, offer opportunities to have ongoing spiritual growth (Kimmons and Veletsianos, 2023).

The emergence of web church services also poses crucial theological challenges about the essence of worship and the Christian community. Campbell (2022) emphasises that there are discussions about the possibility of virtual worship to completely reproduce the embodied and sacramental components of the physical meeting. Some scholars may believe that it is a valid form of worship as a complement; however, others are of the opinion that it cannot fully substitute the face-to-face fellowship.

In prospect, researchers recommend a mixed approach that combines online and physical manifestations of church life. Miller and Pohl (2023) posit that this is the best way to maximise the advantages of digital access and maintain the relational richness of traditional worship. Pentecostal churches in Nigeria and the rest of the world are increasingly adopting this model as a strategic reaction to the changing social and technological realities.

The online church services are a new and dynamic medium in the spread and propagation of Christian teachings and doctrine. They open up new possibilities of accessibility, innovation and international reach never before realised, but also pose an issue of theological integrity, community building and discipleship. The Church can still effectively serve its mission in the digital age by overcoming these challenges and capitalising on digital opportunities.

Research Methodology

This research was conducted using a mixed methods approach, which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the effect of online church teaching on the members of the Pentecostal church in the post-COVID-19 period, in Kaduna State. The data were collected at one point in time by means of a cross-sectional survey that allowed evaluating the perceptions and experiences of the members.

The population included all members of the Pentecostal churches who are 18 years and above in the 23 Local Government Areas of Kaduna State, whose population is registered to be 1,461,078. The sample size of 1,152 respondents was chosen through a combination of purposive, stratified random, and proportionate sampling methods to ensure sufficient representation across senatorial zones, denominations, and demographic groups. The churches selected were Deeper Life Bible Church, Living Faith Church, and the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

The questionnaires and structured interviews were used to gather data. The questionnaire had 11 Likert-scale questions that addressed the different aspects of activities in the church, and interviews with 18 pastors produced qualitative information. The tools were checked by professionals and supervisors, and a pilot test with 50 respondents was done. A reliability test based on Cronbach's Alpha gave a coefficient of 0.796, which is an acceptable internal consistency.

To collect the data, we got the consent of the church authorities, and the questionnaires were distributed and retrieved with the help of trained research assistants, with the researcher also conducting the interviews himself. The analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (t-test, a significance level of 0.05) to test hypotheses. Thematic analysis of qualitative data based on interviews was used to supplement quantitative data.

Results and Discussion

The study is based on data obtained from 1,138 respondents, representing a response rate of 98.8% from the total of 1,152 questionnaires distributed. Demographic information was analysed using frequency counts and percentages, while the research questions were answered through the application of mean and standard deviation, ensuring alignment with the study's objective.

Demographic Information of Respondents

The study analysed demographic variables such as church role, gender, marital status, location, age, and educational level, selected for their direct relevance to the research objectives. These variables were categorised and presented in Tables 2 through 7, with frequency distributions and percentages used for analysis.

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by their role in the church. The results reveal that 883 respondents, representing 77.6%, were congregants, while 255 respondents, accounting for 22.4%, were clergy. This distribution shows that the majority of participants were lay members, providing insights into the experiences of the general congregation. The inclusion of clergy respondents ensures leadership perspectives were also captured, enriching the overall understanding of online church engagement after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2 shows the gender distribution among respondents. The data indicate that 785 respondents (69.0%) were male, while 353 respondents (31.0%) were female. This distribution demonstrates a notable gender imbalance, with a higher representation of males. This reflects participation trends within Pentecostal churches in Kaduna State, where men often assume active roles in both physical and online church activities. Nevertheless, the presence of female respondents provides balance and allows for gender-based comparative insights in the study.

Table 3 presents the marital status of respondents. The findings show that 628 respondents (55.2%) were single, while 510 respondents (44.8%) were married. The predominance of single respondents suggests that younger and possibly more technologically adept individuals were more engaged in online church platforms. However, the significant proportion of married respondents indicates that virtual participation also appeals to family-oriented church members who value the convenience and accessibility of online worship.

Table 4 presents the respondents' residential distribution. The results show that 824 respondents (72.4%) resided in urban areas, while 314 respondents (27.6%) lived in suburban locations. This indicates that most respondents came from urban centres, where internet connectivity and access to digital devices are more reliable. The high urban representation also reflects the greater concentration of Pentecostal churches with online streaming capacities in metropolitan areas compared to suburban congregations.

Table 6 shows the distribution of respondents by age. The data reveal that 628 respondents (55.2%) were younger, while 510 respondents (44.8%) were elderly. This indicates that the study sample was slightly dominated by younger participants, though a substantial proportion of elderly respondents was also represented. This balance suggests that the study captured perspectives across both age groups, allowing for meaningful comparison. The higher proportion of younger respondents also implies a greater influence of youthful perspectives, particularly in areas such as adaptability and engagement with online church services.

The distribution of respondents by educational level is shown in Table 6. The data reveal that 982 respondents (86.2%) were graduates, while 156 respondents (13.8%) were non-graduates. This demonstrates that the study sample was predominantly well-educated, which has positively impacted their ability to adapt to and engage with online church platforms. The finding aligns with previous research suggesting that higher educational attainment often correlates with greater technological literacy and willingness to adopt digital innovations in religious contexts.

Responses to Research Questions

Results of the data from the questionnaire are presented below, following the analysis of the respondents' responses.

What is the impact of online church teachings on Pentecostal church members in the post-COVID-19 Pandemic in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Table 7 presents the opinions of respondents on the impact of online church teachings among Pentecostal members in Kaduna State. A substantial number of respondents agreed that online platforms have enabled consistent biblical and doctrinal delivery since the pandemic (526 and 418), yielding a mean score of 3.23. Similarly, 510 and 434 respondents affirmed that interactive Bible study sessions have enhanced scriptural engagement (mean = 3.22, SD = 0.87). In Item 14, a majority (548 and 404) acknowledged that virtual platforms improved access to doctrinal materials, with a high mean of 3.25. Item 15 reveals that 494 and 426 respondents agreed that online theological teachings uphold doctrinal integrity, while 144 and 74 disagreed (mean = 3.18).

Furthermore, Item 16 shows that 522 and 430 participants agreed that online sermons enrich spirituality and ministry readiness, producing a mean of 3.23. Items 17 and 18 emphasize that online platforms effectively address theological issues and promote relatability through local languages and illustrations (means = 3.15 and 3.14 respectively). Item 19 indicates that recorded teachings extend the church's ministry beyond physical boundaries, as agreed by 512 and 436 respondents (mean = 3.22). Similarly, Item 20 shows that online teachings strengthened biblical understanding (mean = 3.20). However, Item 21 records a lower mean of 2.63, showing that lack of physical fellowship limits doctrinal mentorship, though Item 22 reaffirms that online teaching platforms still maintain theological depth and foster spiritual maturity (mean = 3.23). The cumulative mean of 3.13 (above the 2.50 decision mean) and standard deviation of 0.90 indicate that online church teachings have a positive and consistent impact on Pentecostal members. Respondents affirmed that online teaching platforms ensured continuity in doctrinal instruction, encouraged participation, enhanced access to learning resources, and supported spiritual growth, though physical fellowship remains essential for mentorship and discipleship.

The results of the study showed that online church teachings enhanced biblical literacy and increased access to biblical teachings. A significant number of respondents reported that recorded and live-streamed sermons helped them be flexible in their learning and revisit the messages at their own convenience. However, the research established that physical contact and mentorship were missing in online lessons and, thus, lowered the level of discipleship and self-responsibility in online church services.

Discussion of Findings

The data analysis conducted on data gathered to undertake this study reveals that online church teaching has significantly influenced Pentecostal members in Kaduna State in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. The result of the online teachings also indicates that Pentecostal churches in Kaduna State have welcomed technology as an avenue of spreading sound doctrine and scriptural teachings. The quantitative findings indicate that the majority of respondents concurred that online lessons have been effective in ensuring consistency in teaching the bible, and recorded sermons and virtual bible

studies have boosted understanding of the doctrine. This fact correlates with the perspective of Nwankwo and Chukwu (2021), who claim that virtual teaching platforms enhance scriptural literacy due to the presence of continuous learning opportunities outside of the physical church time. This conclusion can be drawn using the insights gained during the interviews with the participants (Interviewees 3, 8, 10, and 16), as they reported that online teaching sessions enable the believers to re-watch recorded sermons, take a break in the process, and discuss the lessons in the family. Such developments are indicative of a democratisation of access to theology- where members, regardless of their educational level or location, are able to access scriptural material.

However, a minimal percentage of the respondents reported barriers to online teaching, including decreased interpersonal mentorship and problems concentrating on virtual classes. These results can be aligned with the study of Okafor and Adeyemi (2020), who assert that online learning may increase the range of doctrines, but it is not always as relational as physical discipleship can be. Moreover, regardless of the advantages of interactivity and recorded material, the lack of embodied presence in moments of teaching restrains affective and pastoral relationships. This highlights the need to balance virtual and physical teaching, where the Pentecostal focus on experiential and communal instruction does not get lost in translation (Brown, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicated that although online platforms are important means of teaching dissemination, they might not be as effective as face-to-face church interaction in terms of relational and experiential aspects.

Based on these finding, the study recommended that Church leadership ought to offer ongoing theological training and chances of mentoring both online and offline to make sure that the integrity of doctrine, discipleship and spiritual development do not falter among members who are interacting via virtual mediums.

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Tables**Table 1:** Distribution of Respondents by Church Role

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percent
1	Congregant	883	77.6
2	Clergy	255	22.4
Total		1,138	100

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

S/N	Gender	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	785	69.0
2	Female	353	31.0
Total		1,138	100

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

S/N	Gender	Frequency	Percent
1	Single	628	55.2
2	Married	510	44.8
Total		1,138	100

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Location

S/N	Location	Frequency	Percent
1	Urban	824	72.4
2	Suburban	314	27.6
Total		1,138	100

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Age

S/N	Age	Frequency	Percent
1	Younger	628	55.2
2	elderly	510	44.8
Total		1,138	100

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

S/N	Education	Frequency	Percent
1	Graduate	982	86.2
2	Non-graduate	156	13.8
Total		1,138	100

Table 7: Opinions of Respondents on the Impact of Online Church Teachings on Pentecostal Church Members

S/N	Items	AS	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
12	Online platforms have enabled consistent delivery of biblical and doctrinal teachings post-pandemic.	526	418	130	64	3.23	0.86
13	Online interactive Bible study sessions have encouraged deeper engagement with the Scriptures.	510	434	126	68	3.22	0.87
14	Access to doctrinal resources and study materials has improved through virtual platforms.	548	404	118	68	3.25	0.84
15	Theological teachings delivered online have upheld the doctrinal integrity of the church.	494	426	144	74	3.18	0.90
16	Online sermons and teachings offer spiritual enrichment for members and help prepare them for ministry.	522	430	122	64	3.23	0.86
17	Pentecostal churches have effectively utilised online platforms to address members' theological concerns.	486	412	162	78	3.15	0.92
18	The use of local languages and contextual illustrations has made online teaching more relatable and accessible.	478	420	162	78	3.14	0.93
19	Recorded teachings have been shared widely, extending the church's teaching ministry beyond physical boundaries.	512	436	124	66	3.22	0.87
20	Online doctrinal teachings have contributed to a firmer grasp of biblical principles among congregants.	498	432	138	70	3.20	0.89
21	The lack of physical fellowship has posed challenges to doctrinal learning and mentorship.	304	382	284	168	2.63	1.05
22	Online teaching platforms have consistently provided the theological depth necessary for fostering spiritual maturity.	520	428	126	64	3.23	0.87
Cumulative						3.13	0.90

Decision mean = 2.50