

## Ramadan tafsir of the glorious Qur'an goes virtual during Covid-19 lockdown in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The researchers were motivated by the adoption of digital communication applications and social media platforms by some Islamic scholars in Nigeria to conduct annual Tafsir of the glorious Qur'an in Ramadan 2020 in the midst of coronavirus lockdown. The paper adopted Lull's Gratification Theory for theoretical explanation of virtual interaction between the scholars who conducted the Tafsir from an isolated places and the audience who watched or listened from their homes in adherence to safety measures to stop the spread of the disease. Methodologically, the study adopted a cross-sectional research design and purposive sampling technique to elicit secondary data from the target participants. The study found that there is usage of digital medium of communication and interaction between Islamic clerics and their followers. This explains the flexibility of Islam to embrace development, adopt and adapt it in conformity with Islamic rules and regulations. The findings also show that Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram are the most common internet based interactive platforms which Islamic scholars explored and disseminated their Tafsir virtual to the audience. The paper concludes that internet has enabled people not only to interact virtual but Tafsir and other forms of Islamic preaching can be conducted without co-presence of the preachers and the audience. The option of live streaming video on Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram which consume a lot amount of data has enabled Muslim users to followed the Ramadan Tafsir from distant places.

**Keyword:** coronavirus, digital communication, nigeria, virtual tafsir

**Abstrak:** Peneliti termotivasi dengan diadopsinya aplikasi komunikasi digital dan platform media sosial oleh beberapa ulama di Nigeria untuk melakukan Tafsir Alquran tahunan pada Ramadhan 2020 di tengah-tengah lockdown virus corona. Artikel ini mengadopsi Teori Gratifikasi Lull untuk penjelasan teoritis tentang interaksi virtual antara para ulama yang melakukan Tafsir dari tempat-tempat terpencil dan penonton yang menonton atau mendengarkan dari rumah mereka dengan mematuhi langkah-langkah keselamatan untuk menghentikan penyebaran penyakit. Secara metodologis, penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian cross-sectional dan teknik pengambilan sampel purposive sampling untuk memperoleh data sekunder dari partisipan sasaran. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa ada penggunaan media digital untuk komunikasi dan interaksi antara ulama dan pengikutnya. Ini menjelaskan fleksibilitas Islam untuk merangkul perkembangan, mengadopsi dan mengadaptasinya sesuai dengan aturan dan regulasi Islam. Temuan juga menunjukkan bahwa Facebook, WhatsApp dan Telegram adalah platform interaktif berbasis internet paling umum yang dieksplorasi ulama Islam dan disebarluaskan virtual Tafsir mereka kepada khalayak. Makalah ini menyimpulkan bahwa internet telah memungkinkan orang tidak hanya untuk berinteraksi secara virtual tetapi Tafsir dan bentuk dakwah Islam lainnya dapat dilakukan tanpa kehadiran pendamping dai dan penonton.

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Pilihan video live streaming di Facebook, WhatsApp dan Telegram yang menghabiskan banyak data memungkinkan pengguna Muslim untuk mengikuti Tafsir Ramadan dari tempat yang jauh.

**Kata Kunci:** virus corona, komunikasi digital, nigeria, tafsir virtual

## Introduction

Communication among human beings is as old as the existence of humans on earth. However, development in science and technology as well as digital interactive interface have become a watershed advancement in human communication. Before the scientific breakthrough in communication technologies, most of the communication was interpersonal which requires copresence and written communication through emails. The advent of Radio, Television, telephone, and later internet-based medium of communication has shaped how human beings interact and communicate. These mediums of communication do not require people to communicate regardless of time and space.

In the 21st century, internet connectivity and web-based social media platforms unlike television, radio, and telephone, enable the sender and receiver of a message to interact instantaneously while seeing each other. For example, in Indonesia, the internet has become a genuine means of interactive communication between people. With the advent of Information technology, information sharing has become easier and anyone who has internet access can share the information received or generate

latest news (Mazaya, 2019). However, in Nigeria the number of internet subscribers has reached 126,078,999 as at December 2019, which is 61.2% of the population, of 206,139,589 inhabitants, this implies a 13.2% internet penetration (Internet World Stats, 2020).

It has, however, noted that, expressed differently, the convenience of exchanging information and freedom to generate content may have a negative effect if it turns out that the information received is genuine or from an authorized source. Similarly, this form of digital media can create a gap in the definition of communication context.

West and Turner (2010) we explain further that situational boundaries are increasingly uncertain as to the number of participants' increase, distance, space and time decreased. Media features various channels that are incorporated into the whole process of information generation, sharing, and discussion online.

Connected with the above, the year 2020 is inundated with the new coronavirus disease which has become a pandemic. The mode for the spread of the disease has affected some Islamic methods of worshipping which requires gathering in the congregation. Quadri (2020) states

that Nearly every part of the world and human life has been infected by the current coronavirus. This forced governments and health agencies around the world to design emergency pre-cautionary measures to stop the infection from spreading. The introduction of physical distancing is one of the protective measures against the Covid-19 pandemic. Quadri (2020) succinctly expressed that: Several world religions and religious organisations strongly recommend congregations of the faithful at local and transnational levels, but a meeting of large numbers of people in close vicinity may be fertile ground for the spread of novel pathogens. Refusing to suspend such gatherings could lead to a possible widespread dispersal of infections. In times of epidemics, dealing with religious congregations and gathering may be a complex task.

Apart from their faith, most of the major religions in the recommend congregation of their believers at local, national, and international to assemble for prayers, preaching, and crusade The assemblage of faithful is a point where infected and uninfected persons can meet and possible an avenue for the dispersal of new pathogens, particularly those that are transmitted by the respiratory route. This is substantiated by the events related to the COVID-19 distributed or shared breathing or airborne means from an infected person to uninfected in a face-to-face interaction or conversation. Ideally, to evade the spread of the disease, government and

health personnel in Nigeria instructed the suspension of all social gathering. This aside other precautionary measures to curb the spread of the disease in a country where the healthcare services is poor and cannot handle such an emergency. Based on this notion, religious ceremonies and congregations, as well as other social gatherings, were looked at. It has a strong effect on the magnitude and global distribution of epidemic illnesses. In the way that we deal with infectious disease outbreaks from the viewpoint of RC and their suspension, covid19 should act as a gamechanger. Islamic precepts characterize the faithful's spiritual, social, and community life. All teenage and adult men in the mosques are ordered to deliver congregational prayers five times a day. Friday congregational prayer (Jum'at) is obligatory adult who are healthy and not embarked on a journey is the most affected activity by covid-19 safety regulations in Nigeria.

Also, Ramadan Tafsir where Muslims congregate or assemble to listen explanation (Tafsir) of the Qur'anic verses by Islamic scholars was also banned to prevent contact between infected and uninfected. New information technologies have enabled more intricate network organized interactions. The switch from mainstream mass media to a system of decentralized communications systems organized all over the technology and wireless communication has introduced a plethora of social interactions at the

root of a fundamental systemic change, as virtual reality has become an integrated part of human existence. Castells discusses innovations that occurred within two decades, the most notable of which is the fusion of internet and wireless devices (mobile internet, Wi-Fi connections are widely used today, everywhere we go, anywhere as we go, people can sit and access the net through their smartphones or laptops). New technologies also enhance the creation of a virtual world online contexts that combine sociability and experimentation with roleplaying games (Castells, 2020). The new media allows users to make one or another sort of communication, or even various tool combinations, like twitter, facebook and instagram, etc. (4) Free of charge. The modern digital media are, as a rule, available for their creators and their subscribers. (5) Contest and compatibility. Usage of a shared interaction platform, such as a shared account for Gmail, YouTube, Facebook, etc. by Google users as a rule (6) The social character.

Intrinsic to the new new media are the (Levinson, 2009) Internet Aided Communication New media have five distinguishing characteristics: digitality-materialization of media text; convergence of online media computes information, media, electronic communication, and digital electronic forms and functions; interactivity freedom to generate and recreate information content and form

during an interaction; hypertextuality-new life perspectives for human beings (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2009).

In response and adaptation to covid-19 pandemic, some developed countries have initiated measures to enable workers' carryout their responsibility even at home with the help of the internet. Kniffin, et. al. (2020) submits that while it also induced an escalation of changes that were already underway involving the transfer of jobs to online or virtual environments. Covid-9 suddenly changed normal work routines. Nevertheless, a key difference when considering research on practices such as Work from Home (WFH) before the pandemic is that WFH was always sensitive to employee desires previously, but Covid-19 pushed many into Mandatory Work From Home (MWFH). Work from Home (WFH) strategies have started to gain popularity in the world of work as part of the new trend. Gartner (2020) survey of 229 Human Resources (HR) departments indicated that during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, about half of the corporations had more than 80 % of the total of their workforce operated from home and projected significant longterm improvements in remote work after the pandemic. Recent remote work patterns facilitated by the growth of networking and communication technologies have stimulated the need for millions of personnel at WFH in response to COVID-19 (Kniffin et al., 2020).

Therefore, based on the above discourse, the objective of this study to examine how an internet-based medium of communication was utilized by Muslim scholars in Nigeria to disseminate Tafsir in Ramadan of 2020 has synchronized with the time of covid-19 lockdown in Nigeria.

Consequently, this research intends to answer the question, how interest-based means of communication were utilized for Ramadan Tafsir by Muslim scholars and their followers in Nigeria at the height of covid-19 lockdown? In the same vein, the significance of this article is to portray the flexibility and dynamism of Islamic scholars in Nigeria in coping with the existing social and health challenges to keep in touch with their followers. Additionally, it would demonstrate the thirst for Islamic knowledge by Muslims in Nigeria, that is, seeking for knowledge through unconventional means unknown to Islam before the development of ICT.

Additionally, Islamic scholars have adopted and adapted the emerging developments in the world of digital communication to spread the words of Allah with the use of orthodox and new platforms of interaction and communication. This is because aspects of social-economic life have demonstrated the utility of the internet and can be adopted and adapted to all spheres of human life.

Gupta, Abdelsalam, and Mittal (2020) emphasize that in an attempt to stem the spread, the usefulness of

the internet to ensure safety protocols to prevent uninfected people to contract Covid-19 is preserved. The adoption of more efficient and automated response systems is expected to be feasible with the use of real-time data sharing with law enforcement, city councils, or other stakeholders. For example, drones can be used to collect data about a population to ensure social distance and restrict group sessions, and messages can be sent to the local traffic signals to divert traffic to other locations.

At the same time, automated disinfectant and fogging may be introduced depending on the number of current instances, vulnerabilities, or large gatherings in some places. The availability of parking can be distributed with cloud service providers in real-time and registered users can be assigned time to ensure a minimal human interface.

### **Literature review**

This section reviews literature that is relevant to the research objective and guides in answering the research question. Accenture (2020) demonstrates that businesses, academic institutions, and governments are moving as much of their jobs to virtualized work environments as possible, where people are now going to work from home. 850 million students are now studying and attending classes from home, according to UNESCO, while hundreds of millions of staff are suddenly working remotely, causing

an immense shift in the use of communication networks. In Europe, network traffic rises by up to 50 percent as most of the population is limited to their homes. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, live sports have closed before reopening, but without spectators, online gaming and live streaming have accelerated, according to Accenture (2020). As parents search for new ways to educate their children during school closures, demand for educational content grows, and secondary and advanced degree institutions switch to digital classrooms and remote teaching strategies to keep students and teachers/professors engaged.

As home-bound audiences interact for prolonged times, Accenture (2020) online streaming service is also rising, and content creators have rapidly introduced direct-to-consumer streaming options. In recent times, the available content collections have grown significantly, and select media companies are expanding their VOD release windows and catalogs to maximize the content supply.

With theatrical release windows, there is even more experimentation, as film studios test premium video-on-demand (PVOD) to sell theatrical content directly to customers, while the activities of film exhibitors are suspended. The first global pandemic of the era of the internet is COVID-19. By early April, over half population of the globe has been under freeze restrictions.

10 As women and men turn to the internet for work, education, and social activities, quarantine steps, and self-isolation policies have increased internet use between 50 percent and 70 percent. Subscribers with minimal technology literacy are at prone to cyber-assault throughout this period (UNODC, 2020). Chiou and Tucker (2020) investigate the relationship between the availability of internet links, profit, and enforcement at the height of the coronavirus pandemic with security policies to self-isolate at home. During the lockdown time, researchers documented data across 19 million portable devices in Cambridge. The results of the study suggest a close correlation between income levels and the desire to stay at home. Besides, the study also shows that digital portable gadgets have a greater chance of not staying at home during the lockdown in areas without either high-speed internet or high income. The result of Chiou and Tucker shows that the availability of high wages, apart from high incomes, also appears to motivate people to remain at home at the height of the pandemic.

However, apart from business and government organizations, religious activities were also conducted online. A church service emphasizes participation and communication in face-to-face religious events before the practice of physical distancing due to covid-19, Danielsson (2020), but it has transitioned to online worship. It is about getting people together,

interaction and engagement at heart, face-to-face, and online worship. Furthermore, Chau (2020) found that most modes of evangelizing and fellowship, including Sunday worship, were engaged out via the internet or telephone in adaptation to the physical distance measures (Chau, 2020). Similarly, Danielsson (2020) confirms that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva decided to schedule Sunday worship remotely in Geneva, Switzerland when the government reduced the gathering of people to no more than five. The live streaming of the first service was broadcast from the church building.

As the rules stipulated, there were five people present. Those who took turns leading. Online, the audience joined and shared comments, prayers, and gratitude. We would participate in sessions over the coming weeks that required the active engagement of members of the congregation while being led by the five gathered in the church building. They drew the congregation from their homes to pray. They read the bible, prayed, and works of art were made.

Floberg (2020) explains that at the peak of the lockdown of covid-19, Church leaders realized that going online was something that felt like being vaguely humanoid at first. That is, to most, members and priests are not physically present. Wireless meeting means that in a multitude of ways in which human beings interact, we do not respond to each other. Online interaction is far more of one-

way streaming that positions the services officer as the artist and others who interact as an audience online.

In an attempt to preserve physical distance and stop the deadly infection from infecting church members, this depicts many weaknesses of online church service. Similarly, Perry (2020) describes how, due to the lockdown of covid-19 throughout the USA, many churches had gone online. Members of St. Philip's Church agreed to meet in the Diocese of Texas during Palm Sunday 2020 through a zoom application for worship, daily prayer, and other church business.

This demonstrates how internet-based applications enabled members of the congregation to congregate remotely and carry out their regular religious activities from anywhere. Internet-based means of communication have provided alternative means of one-on-one interaction and dissemination of information. Snow (2007) argues without being physically present, the internet could be adopted as alternative medium of interacting with people.

That is virtual - reality sessions mostly through online forums, which are among the most prevalent ways of meeting others on the internet, above email and interactive platforms (McCown, Fischer, Page, & Homant, 2001). Snow (2007) found in his research that before having a face-to-face encounter with someone they had contacted over the internet, participants often had a telephone

interaction people. This means that before they meet physically or in real life, several individuals begin communicating with one another over the internet. Similarly, online communication and responses can be done simultaneously similar to one-on-one conversation or interaction. Instant responses, comments and content generation which requires co-presence of people has been enabled by the development in digital communication. This has been utilized by some Islamic scholars in Nigeria to conduct Islamic activities using the platforms of digital interaction and communication.

An example of a widely used technique of simultaneous social online communication is instant messaging. Most interviewed students reported talking with friends through the messaging system (Kindred & Roper, 2004). Laziness, the ability to have privacy while others were in the room, ease of use, the ability to have other instant messenger conversations, watch television, or multitask in other ways, or as a substitute, were the possible reasons for their use of messaging apps. The use of the internet or web-based platforms for interaction between people is seen in this study. After 2004, when Kindred and Roper conducted their study, and 2007, when Snow made the above submission, new technologies emerged. Before the outbreak of coronavirus disease, there was some initiative by some Christians to start online Church services.

Casey (2001) argues that God has seemed to have appeared on the internet, with a very overwhelming presence that is impossible to disregard. Jacobson (1999) found that at a point when theological appetite is rising in the West, the net has become a major supplier of theological thought. Nearly 80 percent of respondents said that the medium played a part in their spiritual lives in a study of faith and the Internet has been undertaken by sociologist Ken Bedell of the United Methodist Church (Martin, 1999), with some turning to it up to three times a week. The findings indicate that out of 600 respondents sampled, 53 percent stated that they sought prayers via e-mail.

The Pew Internet and American Life Project (Larsen, 2000) found that, for religious ceremonies, more individuals use the Internet for purposes other than religious. In the USA, there are about two million people are seeking for spiritual or religious content on the Internet, and religious organizations are gradually incorporating the Internet into their daily activities.

Why are millions of digital pages devoted to expressing what is ineffable, what can't be put into words? Is cyberspace becoming a new holy space or a new one? As it grows, a debate is sparking the field of virtual worship that cuts to the core of what "religion" entails. Following this shift in religious sensibilities, many religious, as well as cultural, and social issues, arise.



In this sense, the study observed the possibility and need to investigate the website and social media sites phenomena in terms of their unique uses and possibilities as discovered by different religious groups. Nonetheless, many think technology holds enormous promise. It provides an audience of millions with the ability to explore, rediscover, or share their faith at their own pace with others or privately (Martin, 1999).

It could work very well to use virtual space to deliver prayer as a series of theological ideas, but could the Internet properly offer religion's emotional side and the conviction that many beliefs are central to the very meaning of spirituality itself? The holy encounter can be turned less than fascinating by software difficulties. The Internet embraces spirituality and religion in different ways, but can we conceive of a faith community of five billion people wired into their personal computers?

### **Theoretical framework**

The researchers adopted a Gratification Model propounded by Lull (1980) to explain the main focus of the study. The model examined the different ways in which audience, users or subscribers engaged in different medium of communication to satisfy their need for information, communication and interaction. Lull further stressed that media users in the digital era, they media to acquire knowledge and following trending issues within their environment and

outside. Other users of the media use it to interact with co-workers in close and distant places while some use it to enhance intimate relationship in dating. This explains why Islamic scholars used the digital media to interact with their followers or audience in distant places and the audience also availed the opportunity provided by the internet based media to watch or listen to the interpretation of the Glorious Qur'an in the Holy month of Ramadan. This explains one of the basic proposition of Gratification Model enunciated by Lull, that subscribers use the media a platform for learning. It could be deduced that The model further explains that in the era of ICT, users of internet services involved actively and participate in online interaction. It has been observed that interactivity is one of the most distinguishing advantage of online interaction based on internet service where the subscribers surf to satisfy their varied demands, needs and derive satisfaction.

### **Method**

This paper has adopted a cross-sectional design for the study. A cross sectional study enables the researcher to elicit data from the large population within a short time. A cross-sectional analysis includes measurements of a sample or cross-section of the population of interest at a time or time series, depending on the researcher 's interest (Babbie, 2013). Being a cross-sectional study,

the researchers have adopted an exploratory type of research to explore how Muslim scholars in Nigeria have explored the use of internet or web-based means of communication to present Ramadan Tafsir. This is because Babbie (2013) submits that exploratory and descriptive studies are often cross-sectional.

Purposive technique has been adopted to sample Muslim scholars from Northern Nigeria which the majority of its population are Muslim and the presentation of Ramadan Tafsir is an age-long practice in cities, towns, and villages where there is a sizeable number of Muslims. For the selection of respondents for the study (Muslim scholars), there are nineteen states in Northern Nigeria. Additionally, the study adopted mixed methods of data collection where interviews were conducted with some online followers of the selected Islamic scholars. The researchers collected two page followers or audience of each of the selected scholar and sought for their consent to participate in the research which they consented and granted the interview via telephone.

These states are divided into three geopolitical zones: Northeast, Northwest, and Northcentral. There are seven (7) States in Northwest while the Northcentral and Northeast have six states apiece. The population of Northwest and Northeast States is predominantly Muslims because they had early contact with Islam than

Northcentral states who embraced Islam.

Therefore, the researchers used purposive sampling to select most of the Islamic scholars from Northwest and Northcentral because they have the highest number of Islamic scholars than the Northcentral geopolitical zone. In this kind of situation, purposive sampling is the best sampling technique, Babbie (2013) states that sometimes it is appropriate to select sample based on a population's understanding, part, and intent of the research. This type of sampling is called purposive or judgmental sampling.

The data were sourced from secondary sources, that is, internet-based means of communication such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom meeting, telegraph, and YouTube are analyzed thematically. Additionally, qualitative data were elicited from telephone interviews with some audience of the selected Islamic scholars who carried online Tafsir in Nigeria. The followers were from the comment sections of each of the selected Islamic scholar.

## **Result and discussion**

The result in this section means the number of Muslim scholars who presented Ramadan Tafsir in midst of stay at home directive by the government, without the presence of the audience which has been the usual practice before the outbreak of the health pandemic. Also, the results show majority of the sampled

scholars have adopted the web-based means that the sampled scholars adopted to disseminate the Tafsir to their audience. Additionally, a total of 18 eighteen (18) telephone interviews were conducted with online audience of the nine selected Islamic selected in this study. That is, two online followers were selected from the nine scholars which give a total of eighteen people.

#### Northwest

Kaduna State is among the states in Northwestern Nigeria with a sizeable population of Muslims. Sheikh Musa Yusuf (Asadus Sunnah), Sheikh Tukur Al-Manar, Dr. Ahmad Mahmud Gumi, Dr. Muhammad Rabi'u Rijyar Lemu were selected. All of them presented Ramadan Tafsir from the beginning of Ramadan till the end of the Month virtually.

Musa Yusuf Asadus Sunnah apart from Tafsir of the Glorious Qur'an presented numerous lectures in Ramadan through Facebook live streaming, zoom, and telegram. Similarly, the audio and videos of both lectures and the Qur'an Tafsir were shared with people through the WhatsApp group created by his followers. From the beginning of the Ramadan of 1441AH/2020 the population of subscribers following his Facebook has tripled from ten thousand to thirty thousand. That is 34,740 people follow his Facebook page named Sheikh Musa Yusuf Asadu Sunnah while 92,885 people like the page ([\[ulkiram.\]\(https://web.facebook.com/assahabat\)," n.d.\). Dahiru Malami and Al-Amin Zailani Ahmed were selected for the interview.](https://web.facebook.com/assahabat</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Another leading figure among Muslim scholars in Kaduna city is Sheikh Dr. Tukur Adam Al-Manar. He is the Chief Imam of Al-Manar Masjid and Lecturer with Kaduna State University has conducted online Tafsir of the Glorious Qur'an in 2020 during coronavirus lockdown (["https://web.facebook.com/tukuradamalmanar.almanar,"](https://web.facebook.com/tukuradamalmanar.almanar) n.d.). There are 37,695 audience who follow the Islamic scholar. Umar Shehu Zaria and Hamzat Ladan were selected from the online followers and conducted interview with them.

Dr. Ahmad Abubakar Mahmud Gumi: He has conducted an online Tafsir of the Glorious Qur'an from Sultan Bello Masjid Kaduna. The masjid is among the famous Masjid in Kaduna named after one of the Sultan of Sokoto and brother to the late 18th century Islamic Jihadist Uthman ibn Fodiyo. It was the Masjid which late Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi used as a center where he taught and presented annual Ramadan Tafsir in his life. He was a father to Dr. Ahmad. During the covid-19 lockdown, Dr. Ahmad Abubakar Mahmud Gumi has adopted the use of social media platforms to disseminate his Tafsir. Apart from being a Ph.D. holder in Islamic studies from Saudi Arabia, a Medical Doctor and a retired military officer. The combination of western and Islamic education has added to his popularity and fame of his late father in Nigeria

(Sheikh Abubakar Gumi), has made him one of the most followed Islamic scholar on social media and internet sites in Nigeria. Apart from televising the Tafsir on Islamic cable TV Stations (Sunna TV, Africa TV3, and Manara TV), the Tafsir was also held via live streaming on Facebook. Because of the live streaming of the Tafsir, total population of follower of his Facebook increased dramatically to 36,799 followers in less than thirty days

(“[Dr. Muhammad Rabi'u Rijiyar Lemo received his university education from the Islamic University Medina, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A younger brother to Dr. Muhammad Sani Umar Rijiyar Lemo has gone virtual and conducted the 2020 Tafsir of the Glorious Qur'an in Kano](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fdandalinsunnah.com%2F%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR2UFg283uJXk7rRHePbecjSxNxhmYQAUKY6U7Jr3K8DMspXbiE42Mcptgw&h=AT2gCg07QRuabzXeAWRNEh6DyfdWg4qlYwtBBF2c1uYb7luu--fFrroydLJUTvgnVbMcgMQ44sGPscH7SIXQCvgNXXbIbKj146E5GXnECIms8E4rGh,”</a> n.d.). For the phone, A S Ibrahim OjoArome from Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria and Garba Ibrahim (it is their Facebook Account name) who were regular viewer live streaming of Tafsir and other programmes Dr. Ahmad Mahmud Gumi were interviewed. The population of Muslims who likes and followed his live streaming Tafsir has reached 273,067 people like and 326,224 respectively.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

metropolis. He majorly used Facebook live to aired the Tafsir to the audience which the number of Muslims who liked his Facebook page rose to 45,286 people and 48,617 people followed him on Facebook

(“[Auwal S. Mahmoud and Hamza Hussaini were selected from some of his followers who viewed and listened to the preaching and Tafsir of the Islamic scholars.](https://web.facebook.com/Muhammad-Rabi'u-Rijiyar-Lemo-546232648750496,”</a> n.d.).</p></div><div data-bbox=)

#### Northcentral

Sheikh Muhammad Nura Khalid is among the popular Islamic scholar and Imam in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. He is the Chief Imam of Apo Legislative Quarters, at the heart of the city centre and he is dubbed as Digital Imam even before the utilization of internet-based social media sites due to covid-19. The population of users who like the page has increased from 7,465 to 15,446 people like in three weeks of Ramadan while those who watched the live streaming of his Tafsir have reached 26,927 before the closure of Ramadan

Tafsir (“[Sheikh Dr. Isa Ali Pantami as of September 2020, he is the Nigerian Minister of Communication and Digital Economy. He was appointed](https://web.facebook.com/SheikhDigital,”</a> n.d.). Audi Umar and Zakari Isah were selected from online followers of Sheikh Muhammad Nura Khalid and were interviewed.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Director-General, National Information and Communication Development Agency (NITDA) and appointed as Minister. Since 2015 when he became the DG of NITDA, he has been delivering lectures and Ramadan Tafsir of the glorious Qur'an at Anur Masjid Abuja. The Islamic scholar has delivered the 2020 Ramadan Tafsir through Facebook Live, YouTube, zoom, and telegram. For the Facebook page alone, the number of Muslims who like his page has reached 610,276 people while those who followed his preaching and Tafsir have reached 695,875 people (["https://web.facebook.com/Dr-Isa-Ali-Pantami-206689862714715,"](https://web.facebook.com/Dr-Isa-Ali-Pantami-206689862714715) n.d.). Lawan Bulama and Abdullahi Ahmad Abdallah were interviewed among followers who have been following and watching the activities of Dr. Isa Ali Pantami online.

#### Northeast

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Sani Umar Rijiyar Lemo is unarguably one of the most popular and educated Islamic Scholars in Nigeria presently. He obtained a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in Science of Hadith from the University of Madinah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He has many followers and his style of explanation and Tafsir has endeared him to most Muslims in Northern Nigeria as especially among the youth. He is based on Kano State but conducts annual Ramadan Tafsir in Gwalaga Masjid in the city of Bauchi, Bauchi. Due to preventive measures against the spread of covid-

19, the scholar decided to go virtual, through Facebook live streaming.

However, even before the restriction of the gathering of people, every Friday except in Ramadan, he presents and transmits Tafsir from Usman ibn Affan Masjid Kano live on Facebook. The statistics show that 104,728 people like his page whereas 124,600 people follow his page on Facebook. This includes those who cannot afford to watch live streaming of the Tafsir but wait to download audio or video clip of the daily Tafsir is uploaded on his Facebook account. ([https://web.facebook.com/search/top?q=dr.%20muhd%20sani%20umar%20r%20flema,](https://web.facebook.com/search/top?q=dr.%20muhd%20sani%20umar%20r%20flema) n.d.). Hamza Nura Abubakar and Abduljabbar Dankaka were selected for telephone interview.

In Yola, Adamawa State, Sheikh Abubakar Mukhtar Yola is among the fellow Islamic Scholars who conducted an online Ramadan Tafsir at the heat of coronavirus lockdown. The concentrated on the use of live streaming of Tafsir on Facebook to the audience. Therefore, a total of 7,000 people like his Facebook page and 29,288 people followed him. (["https://web.facebook.com/search/top?q=sheikh%20mukhtar%20yola,"](https://web.facebook.com/search/top?q=sheikh%20mukhtar%20yola) n.d.). Ahmad Aley Nuhu and Mujaheed Sani Ahmad are some of his online followers selected for the interview.

Further, the findings reveal that in Maiduguri, Borno State, 67,448 people like the Facebook page of Ash-Sheikh Modu Mustapha Albarnawy, and 79,369 people followed his Facebook account. He

delivered both Ramadan Tafsir and Lecture Series from an isolated venue to his audience via the internet to avoid mammoth crowd. The scholar used Facebook live to transmit the Tafsir apart from the recorded clips that were shared on WhatsApp group members.

(“<https://web.facebook.com/ShkModuMustafa>,” n.d.). Suleiman Bukar and Mohammed Kachalla Ibrahim were selected for the interviews.

### **Discussion of findings**

Majority of the people interviewed were unanimous in their opinion that they have not utilized internet interactive platforms prior to the period of lockdown. In fact, majority of were used to in-person appearance at the venue of the annual Tafsir in the month of Ramadan. However, the prohibition of in-person or congregational worship has compelled Muslims to stop attending the annual Tafsir ritual as part of the safety measures and protocols to curb the spread of coronavirus in Nigeria. Similarly, the qualitative findings further revealed that the online audience of the Islamic scholars who presented Ramadan Tafsir in 2020 were satisfied with the effectiveness of the channel of interaction, particularly Facebook streaming, video shared through WhatsApp groups, telegram and YouTube. The level of satisfaction of the users or audience who followed the Tafsir online is in line with the gratification model adopted in the study.

The results of the study reveal that there is a growing increase in the number of Islamic scholars that utilize the potentialities of internet-based technology that facilitates communication which does not require users to be present but can either receive, send messages instantly or watch live programme or events. This correlates with the findings of Bozkurt, Karadeniz, Kocdar (2017) which found that coming of Web 2.0 technologies has modified internet technology into communal spaces in which the top layer has been user-generated content. With the opportunities that arose from Web 2.0, websites for social networking became very popular. The capacity of social networking sites promises communication and interaction opportunities, especially for distance learning students who are separated in terms of time and/or space from their teachers, learning tools, and other students.

Similarly, the findings indicate Muslims in Nigeria have devised some means of keeping in touch with the annual Qur'an Tafsir. This is in line with the conclusion of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Metropolis, and UN-Habitat (2020) which states that Technology has proven to be a valuable and critical instrument to help ensure that local and regional emergency frontline governments continue to provide vital public services during the crisis of COVID-19. Now that Cov-19 has affected all parts of the globe, authorities, policymakers have

placed major restrictions on travelling and movement of people, the functioning of services, and rules on physical distancing. Furthermore, the majority of Muslims during the lockdown has increased the use of mobile devices and computer to use internet to watch or listen to Islamic programmes.

This implies that the use of internet services had increased exponentially because of high demand for it as people stay home to comply with covid-19 safety protocols. This motivated some providers of internet services in some countries have decided to reduce the price of data and increased its efficiency. In Kenya, SafariCom is offering data-capped plans with zero-rated educational resources up to 250MB per day for 60 days (["https://www.safaricom.co.ke/about/media-center/publications/press-releases/release/919."](https://www.safaricom.co.ke/about/media-center/publications/press-releases/release/919), 2019)

Waweru (2020) further added that SafariCom has also doubled the internet speed of its home broadband customers, free of charge.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of the study have achieved the objective and answered the research question of the study. It has revealed the extent of the use of internet or web-based means of communication has enabled some Islamic Scholars to carried out virtual Ramadan Tafsir of the Glorious Qur'an in Northern Nigeria without which, the audience and scholars can

only rely on orthodox medium of communication such as Radio and Television which is expensive for the scholars to pay for the fees and watching television and listening to Radio it is not popular among Nigerians. Therefore, the message would not reach the target audience or reach the population of subscribers and followers of Facebook accounts and pages of the selected scholars.

The study further established that Islam is a versatile religion which at any given situation and circumstance, is flexible in adapting to the prevailing situation, circumstance innovations in line with the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith, utilize the available resources to propagate the religion. Social media network platforms, particularly, Facebook, zoom, WhatsApp, and YouTube have demonstrated that the ban of social gathering and keeping of physical distancing due to covid-19 cannot stop Muslim scholars from reaching their audience.

This is a new development among Islamic scholars which most of the literature reviewed portrayed that online religious services are rare among Muslim scholars but prevalent among Christian evangelists. However, the recent transformation and development among Islamic scholars in embracing and utilizing emerging social networking applications and platforms have reduced time and space in ensuring the message of Islam has reached Muslims and non-Muslim wherever they are and through every medium

available at every epoch. Similarly, the audience of the Islamic scholars have expressed satisfaction with the use of internet based interactive platforms which enabled them to follow programmes and activities of Islam despite the lockdown.

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