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## **The Effect of Information Communication Technology (ICT) on The Development of The First African Church Mission, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines how Information Communication Technology (ICT) influences the growth and development of the First African Church Mission, Nigeria. It focuses on the potential advantages, challenges, and how ICT can improve church operations, communication, and engagement with members. Science and religion, though distinct, have historically complemented each other, with technology not inherently opposing faith. Integrating technology into church services offers both opportunities and challenges. Some churches hesitate to adopt Information and Communication Technology (ICT) due to misconceptions about its impact on spiritual experiences. Historically, Christianity has effectively utilised technology to spread its message globally. This study examines the advantages and drawbacks of incorporating technology into worship services and proposes strategies for The First African Church Nigeria to leverage these benefits. Grounded in media ecology and diffusion of innovation theory, this research used a survey design, distributing 120 questionnaires with an 80 (66.7%) response rate. The survey targeted members of five purposefully selected churches of The First African Church Mission, all in Lagos, Nigeria. Data analysis relied on simple percentages. Results indicate that while many worshipers do not see virtual worship as a replacement for physical gatherings, they accept virtual alternatives when in-person attendance is impractical. Church leaders' reluctance to embrace ICT stems from limited knowledge, financial constraints, and inadequate skills. In conclusion, technology should enhance the church's mission and administrative efficiency. Recommendations include integrating ICT training into theological education and fostering collaborative efforts among denominational churches to acquire necessary technological infrastructure.

**Keywords:** Evangelism, Internet Evangelism, Online Service, Christian Gospel and Physical Service

### **Introduction**

Science and technology are not adversaries of faith; they often complement each other. The complementarity thesis posits that science explores the natural world while religion addresses spiritual domains, allowing mutual support. Historically, Christianity has utilised science and technology to spread the gospel globally, fulfilling its mission of salvation as outlined in Matthew 28:19-20 (Ugboh, 2023:59-78). Advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) have significantly enhanced religious communication and dissemination.

The use of technology in Christian worship differs across the globe and even within specific regions like Nigeria. In urban areas, particularly metropolitan cities, churches tend to embrace technology more than



those in rural areas (Grace College, 2022). Among different denominations, Pentecostal churches are at the forefront of incorporating new technologies, outpacing Mainline and African Independent Churches (AIC) (Backstorm, 2011). Despite the transformative potential of technology, the Church has historically been cautious, akin to initial hesitations toward the Gutenberg Press (Amankwa & Akoto, 2022). The Church initially considered the Internet dangerous due to concerns about immoral contents, distractions from faith, and weakening community bonds. Leaders feared that exposure to unfiltered online materials could lead believers away from biblical values and promote harmful influences (Pew Research Center, 2014). Also, the spread of secular ideologies through the Internet raised concerns about challenging traditional church teachings.

However, over time, the church began to see the Internet as a powerful tool for evangelism and outreach. It allowed churches to reach a wider audience and provide online sermons, Bible studies, and virtual communities, especially for younger generations (Campbell, 2010). By embracing the Internet, the church could engage with modern technology while staying true to its core values. Modern technology — live streaming, social media — can amplify the outreach of the Church without compromising its message (Kolawole, 2019). These adaptations maintained spiritual connections and expanded worship beyond physical constraints. Challenges remain, including technological integration and cultural relevance, but judiciously embracing technology can bolster the mission of the Church and enhance worship experiences in today's digital age (Amankwa & Akoto, 2022, np).

The First African Church Mission was founded in Nigeria on August 14, 1891, by nine Africans known as the "Immortal Nine," to evangelise Africa and empower the African race with an African-governed church. Originally named the United Native African Church (UNA), it was renamed in 1984 due to the term "Native" becoming offensive. Despite opposition to using drums in worship, the church successfully defended its practices using Psalm 150. The founders included E. Cole, John George, and Rev'd C.W. Cole. Thus, this study explores incorporating technology in worship and proposes strategies for the improvement of The First African Church Mission Nigeria

The First African Church Mission, Nigeria, established as a symbol of African religious independence, has historically faced challenges in adapting to technological advancements while maintaining its foundational traditions and values. In recent years, Information Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed various sectors, including religious institutions, offering opportunities for outreach, administration, and the engagement of members. However, the extent to which ICT has been integrated into the operations and the development of the First African Church Mission remains unclear. There is a growing concern that the slow adoption of modern technologies may limit the church's capacity for growth, outreach, and relevance in a swiftly digital world. Furthermore, the potential impact of ICT on worship practices, church administration, and the engagement of younger generations within the church community has not been thoroughly explored. This study seeks to examine how ICT affects the development and growth of the First African Church Mission, Nigeria, uncovering both opportunities and challenges. It aims to report key issues such as the church's ability to leverage ICT for evangelism, communication, and education, as well as the barriers that may hinder its effective implementation. Understanding the relationship between ICT and church development is crucial for the future sustainability and relevance of the First African Church Mission in the 21st century.

The integration of technology into church services presents both benefits and challenges. Technology enhances accessibility and convenience in worship, enabling widespread faith propagation beyond physical church boundaries, notably in Nigeria. However, despite increased outreach, there has been a decline in physical attendance, particularly among the youth in the post COVID-19 era. Churches have embraced innovations such as projectors and ICT to enhance engagement and communication (Kolawole, 2019; Usiobaifo, 2020). During COVID-19, Nigerian churches accelerated the adoption of ICT for virtual services, continuing to leverage these tools post-pandemic for evangelism (Amankwa & Akoto, 2022). Many prefer virtual services, challenging traditional Christian emphasis on physical gatherings for spiritual growth (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Thessalonians 5:11). Before COVID-19, Nigerian churches primarily used technology for administration, communication, and limited social media outreach. The pandemic accelerated ICT adoption, with churches embracing virtual platforms such as *Zoom* and *YouTube* for



services, significantly transforming their approach to worship and congregational engagement. This research explores the impact of technology on the following churches of The First African Church domiciled in Lagos, Nigeria: The First African Church Mission Jehovah Shalom International Cathedral, Christ Cathedral Church, Jehovah Shammah Cathedral Iju Isaga, and St. Peter Cathedral Odi-Olowo, Mushin. By examining these cases, this study aims to assess how technological integration affects church attendance and spiritual practices.

This research paper explores the impacts of technology on The First African Church Mission Jehovah Shalom International Cathedral, Christ Cathedral Church Oyingbo, Jehovah Shammah Cathedral Iju Isaga, and St. Peter Cathedral Odi-Olowo, Mushin in Lagos. Specific objectives include:

The influence of technology on physical church attendance has been profound, with both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, digital platforms such as live streaming, mobile apps, and virtual services, have enabled churches to extend their reach far beyond their physical locations. This has particularly benefited those who are unable to attend services in person due to health concerns, distance, or other barriers, thus enhancing gospel outreach and evangelism. Technology has opened new avenues for spreading the message of the gospel globally, with online sermons, social media, and video content providing opportunities for evangelism that were previously unimaginable. These tools have been instrumental in church growth and development, allowing ministries to connect with larger, more diverse congregations. The ease of access to online services, however, has raised concerns about diminishing physical attendance, as some may prefer the convenience of worshipping remotely rather than participating in communal, in-person worship. This shift could potentially weaken the sense of community and fellowship that traditional church gatherings foster, which are crucial for spiritual development. Additionally, integrating technology into worship services has sparked debates about distractions and the loss of reverence in worship. The over-reliance on multimedia presentations and digital tools might detract from the core spiritual experience, leading to a more entertainment-driven approach rather than a focus on personal and collective spiritual growth. Therefore, while technology plays a pivotal role in modern church growth, it is essential to balance its advantages with the preservation of core aspects of worship and community building.

This research will explore the following research questions:

1. In what ways does the integration of technology influence the physical attendance of worshipers? This question seeks to explore how the use of digital tools and virtual platforms affects in-person church participation. It aims to assess whether technology encourages or discourages physical attendance at church services, especially as online alternatives become more widely available.
2. How has technology impacted the scope and effectiveness of gospel outreach and evangelism? This question investigates how technological advancements, such as social media, streaming services, and mobile apps, have expanded the reach of the gospel. It aims to evaluate how these tools are utilised to spread the message of Christianity to a broader audience and the extent of their influence on evangelism efforts.
3. What is the role of technology in promoting church growth and overall development? This question focuses on examining how technology contributes to the expansion and development of the church. It looks at whether technological innovations have helped churches grow numerically, spiritually, and organisationally by fostering engagement, communication, and resource sharing.
4. What are the potential negative challenges associated with integrating technology into Christian worship? This question seeks to identify the downsides or challenges that arise from incorporating technology into worship services. It aims to explore whether the use of digital tools detracts from the spiritual experience, creates distractions, or alters traditional worship practices in ways that may negatively impact the congregation.

This study critically analyses how technology impacts church development in Nigeria, focusing on the African Independent Church (AIC) denomination within The First African Church Mission in Lagos.



## Literature Review

The term "church" comes from the Greek "*Ekklesia*," meaning "assembly" or "chosen ones," emphasising people over buildings (Got Questions Ministry, 2022). The word church means assembly. The Greek word '*Ekklesia*' refers to any assembly, local bodies of believers or the universal bodies of all believers (Fagunwa, 2015:12; Vine, W. E., Unger, Merrill F. and White, William, Jr., 1996, cited in Fagunwa, 2015:12). Originating in Roman Judea and founded on Jesus Christ's teachings, it includes various denominations united by faith in Jesus and the Bible remains the authentic scriptural template for daily practice (Amunnadi & Udabah, 2018).

Technology, from the Greek "techno" and "logos," is part of God's creative act (Oke & Fatima, 2020:31). Science is the systematic study of the natural world through observation and experimentation, aimed at discovering patterns and formulating laws and theories to explain phenomena (Wilson, 2019). Studies highlight the importance of ICT for church growth, recommending better infrastructure and computer literacy (Bolu, 2012). Social media and video technology have enhanced church outreach, especially among younger generations, illustrating technology's transformative impact on contemporary church ministry and administration (Osanemwense, 2011; Magezi, 2015; Conlan-Donnelly, 2015; Kathambri & Bwire, 2021; Milton, 2013; Kimaru, 2019).

The rise of Internet Religion has shifted religious engagement to digital spaces, forming new spiritual practices separate from physical gatherings. Online religious communities bring together believers from different locations for worship, support, and discussion (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). Digital religious practices such as livestreamed services and virtual sacraments are designed for online environments (Campbell, 2021). Cyber-evangelism uses digital platforms to spread religious messages and reach new followers (Cheong, 2013). While digital platforms make religious activities more accessible, they also raise concerns about authenticity, privacy, and access to technology (Tulloch, 2013).

In the late 20th century, religious groups were initially cautious about using the Internet, as noted by Dawson and Cowan (2013). However, as digital platforms such as websites, forums, and online spaces became more common, religious communities started using them to spread their beliefs and interact with followers globally. This shift allowed for new opportunities in worship, community building, and teaching. While some leaders were hesitant, the potential to reach a global audience encouraged more religious groups to engage online. During the COVID-19 pandemic, churches adapted to the situation by utilising livestreams, *Zoom* meetings, and interactive online communities, helping them maintain connection and expand their audience (Dawson & Cowan, 2013).

Oderinde (2022) focuses on the growth of digital spirituality, especially within Nigerian Pentecostal churches. Oderinde highlights how these churches adapted to the pandemic by using online platforms for worship and fellowship. He details how virtual evangelism and digital networks kept members engaged, but he also notes challenges such as unequal access to the Internet, which limited participation (Oderinde, 2022). By 2024, Oderinde expands his research to show how digital religious practices are being used to address social issues such as environmental activism (Oderinde, 2024). Afolaranmi (2022) emphasises the role of social media in enhancing pastoral care. He argues that pastors need to adopt online platforms to offer effective guidance, recommending proper training and tools for religious leaders to use these spaces responsibly. The paper practically clarifies key concepts of internet religion which include:

*Online Religious Communities:* These are virtual congregations where individuals come together for worship, discussions, and support. Platforms such as social media, forums, or video conferencing apps are used, providing a sense of belonging regardless of location (Dawson & Cowan, 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how these communities evolved as physical gatherings became restricted.

*Digital Rituals and Worship:* Religious ceremonies such as online prayers, and virtual sacraments once held strictly in person, are now conducted virtually through livestreams. This shift allows believers to worship from any location, enhancing participation during times when physical attendance is difficult (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

*Cyber-evangelism:* Digital tools and platforms such as social media campaigns and blogs are used to spread religious messages and engage potential converts. According to Adebayo (2022), this method helps faith communities grow globally at a faster pace.



*Religious Content Creation:* Platforms such as podcasts allow religious organisations and individuals to share their beliefs online (Hutchings, 2017). This has enabled the creation of digital religious practices, such as Virtual Pilgrimages and Sacred Spaces, which offer virtual tours of sacred sites or interactive spiritual environments (Campbell, 2020).

The emergence of internet-based religious practices has introduced both opportunities and challenges for traditional faith communities. While digital platforms enhance accessibility for those unable to attend physical gatherings, they also raise concerns about privacy, identity, and the impact on traditional religious customs (Cheong, 2013; Hutchings, 2017). Despite these challenges, internet religion continues to reshape how individuals experience and practice their faith.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the Diffusion of Innovations Theory which was propounded by Everett M. Rogers in 1962. This theory explains how new ideas, products, or technologies spread within a society or population. Rogers identified five stages in this adoption process: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption. According to Rogers (1962), individuals adopt innovations at different rates, influenced by factors such as personal characteristics, social norms, and communication channels. This makes the theory particularly useful for understanding how Information Communication Technology (ICT) such as the Internet, social media, and other digital tools, has been introduced and adopted by institutions like the First African Church Mission. In the context of the church, this theory can clarify how ICT tools have been integrated to spread religious teachings, improve communication among members, and expand outreach efforts to wider audiences. The gradual acceptance of these technologies within the church community can be mapped to the stages of the diffusion process, where awareness of ICT is followed by increasing interest and eventual integration into church activities. The study likely highlights that the church's adoption of ICT has led to greater engagement, allowing members to participate more actively and efficiently in church functions. By using Rogers' theory, we can better understand the dynamics of the adoption of ICT, supporting recommendations for further investment in technology to enhance the church's mission, outreach, and communication strategies. In summary, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory provides a strong framework to explain how ICT adoption has positively influenced the development of the First African Church Mission (Rogers, 1962).

### **Methodology**

In this study, we used both surveys and descriptive methods to understand how Information Communication Technology (ICT) affects the growth of The First African Church Mission in Nigeria. To gather data, we distributed printed questionnaires and used Google Forms to reach a wide range of participants, including pastors, deacons, church leaders, workers, and worshippers.

The survey was carefully designed and reviewed by two experts to ensure its accuracy. It focused on collecting information about the participants' background (Bio-Data) and their views on how technology has impacted church attendance, evangelism, church growth, and the challenges it poses during worship, with responses analysed using Simple Percentages (%).

We organised focus group discussions, reviewed relevant church documents, and made direct observations during church services to get a deeper understanding of how technology is used in these churches. All the data collected were then analysed using simple percentages, making it easy to see trends and results. This method helped us draw clear conclusions about how ICT has influenced various aspects of the church's development, including increased engagement and outreach efforts. This approach provided a comprehensive view of the role technology plays in enhancing or challenging church activities.



### Data Presentation and Analysis

Presentation, Interpretation and Summary Analysis of the Questionnaire Administered and Retrieved.

S/N	Items	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Number of Questionnaires Administered	120	100%
2	Number of Questionnaires Retrieved and analysed	80	66.7%

Source: Search Field Survey, 2023.

The research will be based on the data from 80 retrieved questionnaires, representing a 66.7% response rate, deemed adequate for analysis.

### Section A: Bio-Data Information of Respondents

Respondents By Gender

S/N	Sex	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	60	75%
2	Female	20	25%
	<b>Total</b>	80	100%

Source: Search Field Survey, 2023

The table shows 60 respondents (75%) were male, and 20 (25%) females. This male dominance, is an unusual compared to typical church trends with more female adherents. This result is inconsistent with previous findings about male-dominated church leadership which shapes technology adoption, with innovative leaders promoting integration and traditional roles resisting change (Heim, 2020; Bennet, 2019). Women are increasingly using digital platforms to engage in ministry, overcoming traditional gender barriers (Walker, 2022). Technology fosters inclusivity, allowing women to lead in evangelism and media (Smith, 2021; Thompson, 2021).

Age Distribution

S/N	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	Under 20 years	36	45%
2	20-40 years	32	40%
3	41-60 years	4	5%
4	Above 61 years	8	10%
	<b>Total</b>	80	100%

Source: Search Field Survey, 2023

The table displays respondent age distribution: 45% (36) were under 20 years, 40% (32) were 20-40 years, 5% (4) were 41-60 years, and 10% (8) were over 61 years. This youth-oriented demographic reflects the study's focus on technology and suggests a more promising youth involvement in church activities.



**Respondents Status in the Church**

S/N	Status in the Church	Frequency	Percentage
1	Members	28	35%
2	Workers	24	30%
3	Minister and Leader	28	35%
	<b>Total</b>	80	100%

Source: Search Field Survey, 2023

The table shows the religious status distribution: 35% (28) were members, 30% (24) were workers, and 30% (24) were ministers/leaders. Both members and ministers/leaders displayed high and equal participation levels, indicating strong engagement and interest in church affairs.

**Section B: The Effect of Technology Integration on Physical Church Attendance**

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Not Sure
1	My desire for physical church worship has decreased due to online alternatives.	12 (15%)	68 (85%)	NIL
2	I rarely bring a Bible or hymnals to church due to multimedia projections.	36 (45%)	44 (55%)	NIL
3	Digital streaming and interactive apps have boosted overall engagement in church services.	44 (55%)	28 (35%)	8 (10%)
4	Technology integration has attracted and retained more new members in the church.	48 (60%)	12 (15%)	20 (25%)
5	Online sermons can inspire a desire for physical worship at church.	52(65%)	20(25%)	8(10%)
6	Technology use has increased the number of physical worshippers in church.	56(70%)	8(10%)	16(20%)
7	Live-streaming adoption has increased my decision to attend physical church services.	40(50%)	24(30%)	16(20%)

Based on the findings, most respondents view technology integration positively for church activities, though with some exceptions. First, digital tools like online streaming and interactive apps are seen to enhance engagement in services as agreed by 55% of the respondents while 35% of them disagree and 10% are unsure. Second, 60% of the respondents believe that technology helps attract new members though 15% disagree and 25% are uncertain. Third, 65% of the respondents agree that access to online resources inspires physical attendance; 25% of them have a dissenting opinion while 10% are undecided. Fourth, 70% of the respondents mention that technology increases physical worshippers which is contrary to the opinion of 10% who disagree and 20% of the population are unsure. Fifth, 50% state live-streaming influences their physical service attendance, but 30% disagree and 20% are uncertain. Sixth, 85% deny decreased desire for physical worship due to online options, but 15% agree that their desire for physical worship has decreased. Lastly, 50% admit less use of physical Bibles and hymnals due to multimedia, while 55% disagree. Overall, these findings highlight varied perspectives on the impact of technology on The First African churches in Lagos in terms of activities and attendance, indicating both positive reception and reservations among respondents.



**Section C: Effect of Technology on the Spread of the Gospel of Christ and Evangelism Outreach**

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Not Sure
1	Social media and online content sharing effectively boost church evangelism.	76 (95%)	4 (5%)	NIL
2	online sermons positively impact spreading the gospel of Christ.	20 (25%)	48 (60%)	12 (15%)
3	Online testimonies enhance gospel teachings and attract new church members.	68 (85%)	NIL	12 (15%)
4	special virtual events and webinars are effective means of the evangelism and outreach of the Church	72 (90%)	NIL	8(10%)
5	Conducting Bible study sessions on digital platforms like WhatsApp effectively spreads the gospel.	64 (80%)	4 (5%)	12 (15%)
6	Advertising church programs on social media positively impacts attendance at church events.	64 (80%)	8 (10%)	8 (10%)

Most respondents from the First African Church in Lagos, Nigeria, perceive technology as highly influential in spreading the gospel and enhancing evangelism. The findings indicate widespread agreement in different ways. For instance, 95% of the respondents find social media effective for sharing biblical contents, 85% see online testimonies as enhancing gospel teachings, and 90% believe virtual events are effective for church evangelism. Additionally, 80% agree that online Bible study sessions and social media announcements of church programmes positively impact the spread of the gospel and attendance. However, the result shows differing views on the efficiency of podcasts and online sermons, with 60% disagreeing on their effectiveness. The analysis highlights overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the role of technology in church outreach and evangelism, though a minority of respondents express some reservations for certain religious activities on the Internet such as online sermons.

**Section D: Impacts of Integration of Technology on Church Growth and Development**

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Not Sure
1	The integration of technology into our church worship has fostered both physical and numerical growth.	56 (70%)	8 (10%)	16 (20%)
2	The implementation of technology in church administration, including digital record-keeping systems, has spurred overall church development.	68 (85%)	8 (10%)	4 (5%)
3	Online seminars, workshops, and empowerment initiatives have fostered spiritual and intellectual growth within the Church.	56 (70%)	NILL	24 (30%)
4	The adoption of virtual pastoral care, including online counselling, mentorship, and prayer sessions, enhances both physical and spiritual well-being within the Church.	72 (90%)	NILL	8 (10%)
5	Live streaming of church services broadens accessibility to teachings, aiding church growth and development.	64 (80%)	NILL	16 (20%)



6	Online donation platforms and electronic giving options contribute to Church Mission's growth and development.	68 (85%)	4 (5%)	8 (10%)
7	YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram foster inclusivity, enhancing church growth and development significantly.	72 (90%)	NILL	8 (10%)

Most respondents at the First African Church in Lagos, Nigeria, view technology integration as significantly beneficial for the growth of the church and development. The findings show that 70% of the respondents agree that the use of technology for worship purposes has led to physical and numerical growth while 85% recognise the advantages of using digital record-keeping for improving church administration. According to 70% of the respondents, online seminars are considered to foster spiritual and intellectual development while 90% positively experienced virtual pastoral care and online counselling as tools for improving the well-being of members. Live streaming is seen as enhancing accessibility and growth by 80% of respondents. Additionally, 85% agree that online donation platforms contribute to church mission growth, and 90% believe social media platforms foster inclusivity and participatory environments. Despite these positive perceptions, there are minor uncertainties and disagreements among some respondents, highlighting varied perspectives on the full impact of technology in enhancing church life.

**Section E: Negative Challenges of Integration of Technology to Christian Worship**

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Not Sure
1	Technology has enriched the spiritual ambiance during worship in the Church.	52 (65%)	16 (20%)	12 (15%)
2	Technical issues during worship negatively impacted your overall church experience technologically.	28 (35%)	16 (20%)	36 (45%)
3	Technology has shifted focus to production values over spiritual worship in churches.	48 (60%)	16 (20%)	16 (20%)
4	Have you ever experienced distraction during an intensive moment of worship in the Church	56 (70%)	20 (25%)	4 (5%)
5	Technology in worship creates a divide between adopters and traditionalists in churches.	64 (80%)	NILL	16 (20%)
6	The integration of technology in worship has shifted the Church's priorities.	40 (50%)	16 (20%)	24 (30%)
7	Technology use has resulted in reduced active participation and engagement among church worshippers.	40 (50%)	24 (30%)	16 (20%)

The findings reveal mixed perceptions regarding technology's impact on Christian worship at the First African Church in Lagos, Nigeria. While 65% of the respondents believe technology enhances the spiritual atmosphere, 35% disagree. Technical issues during worship are contentious, with 35% perceive them as negatively affecting worship, 20% agree and 45% unsure. Sixty percent feel technology has commercialised worship, focusing on production values over spirituality, with 20% not in agreement with the above assertion and 20% unsure. Seventy percent report distractions during worship due to technology as opposed by 25% and 5% who are indifferent. Eighty percent see technology creating a divide between traditional and tech-embracing worshippers, with 20% uncertain. Half of the respondents agree that technology shifts church priorities while 20% disagree with this assertion and 30% are not sure. Half of the respondents (50%) express their agreement with the submission that the use of technology in worship services tends to decrease the engagement of worshippers. They believe that, while technology can enhance certain aspects of the service, it can also create distractions or reduce the depth of personal



involvement and connection during worship but 30% disagree and 20% are not sure. These results highlight diverse opinions on the effects of technology in worship, emphasising both its benefits and challenges within the church community.

The integration of technology into Christian worship at the First African Church Nigeria has sparked debates on its impact on physical attendance, reflecting diverse perspectives among respondents. A significant majority, 85%, reject the notion that online alternatives decrease their desire for physical church worship, emphasising the biblical importance and social benefits of physical congregation (Ellison and Levin, 1998; George, Ellison, and Larson, 2002; Hill, Burdette, and Idler, 2011). Despite the availability of multimedia projections, such as digital Bible verses and hymn lyrics displayed on screens during services, 55% of examined congregants still prefer to bring their physical Bibles and hymnals. This indicates that, while multimedia serves as a convenient supplement, a significant portion of the congregation values the traditional practice of using printed materials. It suggests that digital resources, although helpful, have not fully replaced the physical copies for many worshippers. This preference could stem from a sense of personal connection, habit, or the tactile experience of using printed Bibles and hymnals.

A significant portion of the respondents, 55%, acknowledge the role of the Internet in improving engagement within religious communities. This aligns with Magezi's (2015) research highlighting the positive impact of technology on religious practices. Additionally, 60% of the respondents believe that technology plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining new members. However, Magezi (2015) advises caution in relying solely on technology as a strategy for church growth, noting that, while it is helpful, it should not be viewed as a guaranteed or standalone solution for expanding membership. Online resources like sermons inspire physical attendance for 65% of respondents, aligning with Richard's (2023) insights on the inclusivity of online platforms.

Seventy percent of respondents credit the increase in physical church attendance to the effective use of technology, aligning with Milton's (2013) observations on the significant role Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays in church growth. However, views on the specific impact of live streaming services on physical attendance are mixed. While 50% of the participants indicate that live streaming positively influences their decision to attend in person, there remains a segment of the population that expresses concerns. These concerns primarily revolve around the possibility that live streaming may reduce the urgency or frequency of attending physical services as some worshippers may prefer the convenience of participating online. (Kennedy, 2023; Taber, 2023).

The study reveals a nuanced relationship between technology and church activities, where technology significantly enhances engagement, promotes growth, and fosters inclusivity for many church members. For instance, virtual services allow individuals who cannot attend physically due to distance or health issues to remain connected and participate actively in worship. Similarly, social media platforms and church apps enable members to access sermons, join prayer groups, and stay informed about church events, promoting a sense of community even from afar.

However, the study also raises concerns about the potential for technology to reduce in-person participation. For example, the ease of attending online services may discourage some members from physically gathering with the congregation, leading to a weakened sense of fellowship and communal worship.

Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of churches carefully navigating the integration of technology, aiming to strike a balance where digital innovations enhance spiritual engagement without diminishing the value of physical presence in worship and community building. While maintaining the communal and spiritual essence of in-person worship, further research is needed to fully explore how technology can be integrated without undermining the core values of traditional worship or the spiritual needs of the congregation.

The study highlights the significant impact of social media on the dissemination of the gospel and church evangelism. Social media platforms and online content sharing are widely seen as effective tools for church evangelism by 95% of respondents, aligning with insights from Jimmy Richard on the reach and engagement capabilities of digital platforms (Richard, 2023). However, there are mixed opinions



regarding communication channels like podcasts and online sermons, with 60% of the respondents expressing scepticism about their effectiveness in spreading the gospel when compared with traditional methods (Friday Kathambi, 2021). Online testimonies are widely acknowledged (as agreed on by 85% of the respondents) for their role in enhancing gospel teachings and attracting new members, echoing Fr. Mario Amore's insights (Unleash the Gospel, 2023). Virtual events and webinars are deemed effective by 90% for church outreach and evangelism. This is also reported by Ajani & Adeyemi (2019). Similarly, digital platforms for online Bible study sessions fostering inclusivity and virtual small groups (Jimmy Richard, 2023) receive strong support (80%). Social media campaigns positively impact church program attendance, endorsed by 80% of the respondents and supported by Richard's arguments (2023) on community-building and congregational interaction. Overall, these findings emphasise the strategic use of technology in expanding gospel outreach and enhancing church engagement across diverse audiences, bridging physical and virtual church boundaries effectively.

The integration of technology into Christian worship has been assessed for its impact on church growth and development, drawing from feedbacks from respondents that are in consistent with other and scholarly perspectives:

The integration of technology into Christian worship presents both benefits and challenges, as reflected in respondent feedback and supported by various studies. Seventy percent of the respondents believe that social media and technology contribute to both physical and numerical church growth, a view supported by Ammannadi & Udabah (2018). However, Conlan-Donnelly (2015) highlights concerns about reduced physical attendance among youth in Western contexts. Additionally, 85% recognise the enhancement of church administration through an improved digital record-keeping tool made available by technology; this aligns with The God Kulture Team's (2023) advocacy for efficient processes and resource management.

Online platforms have also enriched spiritual education and global connectivity, with 70% of the respondents affirming their value, particularly for theological students worldwide (Conlan-Donnelly, 2015). The benefits of virtual pastoral care such as online counselling are acknowledged by 90%; this supports studies by Joinson (1998), Fink (1999) and Gwinnell (2003) emphasising convenience and privacy. Furthermore, 80% of the respondents favour live streaming for expanding church outreach and engagement, reflecting Jimmy Richard's (2023) insights into accessibility and continuous engagement.

Digital donation platforms are recognised by 85% as essential for global giving and financial stewardship, aiding church missions, as noted by The Church Kulture Team (2023). Ninety percent also agree that social media fosters inclusivity and community engagement, broadening participation beyond physical church boundaries (Richard, 2023).

Despite these benefits, 20% of the respondents express concerns about the negative impact of technology on worship services. Susan Wych *et al* (2006) emphasise its role in educational and pastoral care. However, technical issues during worship cause uncertainty, with 45% unsure about their impact.

Concerns about commercialisation arise from 60% of the respondents, noting a shift in focus towards production values (Ogunlusi, 2019). Seventy percent also acknowledge that technology can be a distraction during worship. Additionally, 80% highlight the divide between those who support modern integration and those favouring traditional practices, presenting challenges in balancing innovation with inclusivity. In conclusion, while technology improves church administration, outreach, and spiritual education, it also presents challenges such as distractions, commercialisation and divisions among worshippers. Strategic integration can foster genuine spiritual growth, community engagement, and preservation of core worship values.

The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has had a positive effect on the development of the First African Church Mission in Nigeria. ICT has made it easier for the Church to reach more people through social media, websites, and virtual services. This has expanded the church's outreach, allowing members to stay connected even from different locations. Online platforms have also improved communication between church leaders and members, making it more efficient to share important updates and announcements. Additionally, digital tools have helped the church to manage its finances better through online donations and improved record-keeping.



However, the incorporation of ICT with worship services has not been without challenges. Some members, especially the elderly, may express difficulties using new technologies. Despite these challenges, ICT continues to play a crucial role in helping the First African Church Mission grow, reach new audiences, and manage its operations more effectively in today's digital age. This technology-driven growth points to an exciting future for the church.

The study proposes several recommendations to effectively integrate technology into church practices. Firstly, pastors are encouraged to embrace technology as a tool for spreading and enriching the gospel, dispelling misconceptions about its incompatibility with faith. Secondly, theological institutions should update curricula to equip future leaders with ICT skills, bridging proficiency gaps among current leaders. Thirdly, collaborative efforts among denominational churches are recommended to pool resources for acquiring ICT infrastructure. Fourthly, pastors should engage financially supportive congregants and encourage prayer support for ICT initiatives. Fifth identifying and training ICT-savvy individuals within congregations to educate others enhances digital competence. Sixth, organising ICT training for youth ensures future readiness in managing church technology. Lastly, extending ICT training to various church personnel ensures operational efficiency. These recommendations aim to foster a church environment where technology enhances the effectiveness of the ministry, prepares for digital challenges, and promotes growth and innovation in church practices.

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