

Rethinking the Use of Technology and the Online Church for Christian Services During the COVID-19 Lockdown

Indonesian Journal of Religion and Society,
2023, Vol. 5 (1), 1-12
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DOI : 10.36256/ijrs.v5i1.281

www.journal.iasigo.org/index.php/IJRS

Lasigo Journal

Article History

Received : October 21st, 2022

Revised : January 3rd, 2023

Accepted : January 27th, 2023

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the scope of the world, and various stakeholders have used technological advancements around the world. Fear of death and health emergencies have brought people closer to religion. However, social and other limitations have made it hard for people to keep their religious duties. This study examines the use of technology and the online church for Christian services during the COVID-19 lockdown period, which is not in accordance with the concept of congregation. The author discusses the validity of the use of technology and online church by Christians and how it impacts traditional worship services from biblical and theological perspectives. Research Findings show the high attendance after the change from traditional worship services to the use of technology and online church. The data used in this study is secondary data that was found through desk research and reliable sources. The research findings indicate big effects on all parts of society and religion, which should not be a surprise. The epidemic has changed religious practices from traditional to online church and contradicts biblical injunctions. Most religions, including Christian ones, put a lot of emphasis on the importance of community. It has been found that online churches have become popular in the proposed areas, and the technology provides a better opportunity for Christians in Nigeria, the Balkans, and Indonesia to carry out their religious obligations by following lockdown restrictions.

Keywords: *Online Church; Worship; Covid-19; Restriction*

1. Introduction

The widespread distribution of COVID-19 across the globe has significantly impacted many facets of the economy and the social fabric. Extremely difficult challenges are presented when attempting to forecast the nature, magnitude, and progression of necessary modifications as the pandemic develops. The reason of this case is due to different countries variety reactions of different future COVID-19 scenario probabilities (Brewer et al., 2020). Consequently, every country produces and implements its particular system of public policies to combat pandemics. When evaluating the epidemic's social, economic, and cultural effects, it is impossible to avoid considering several dimensions and significant levels of uncertainty (Tadese et al., 2022).

According to the research study of Francis et al. (2021) in order to have strong religious convictions, accept religion only tentatively, and yet refuse to entertain any religious claims. Some people say they have firm religious beliefs, while others only tentatively endorse religion.

Additionally, even within the same individual, a person's religious convictions can shift throughout their lifetime. It is the utmost importance to inquire as to what factors impact individuals' religious beliefs. Stress is one of these contributing variables (Afolaranmi, 2020). According to the research of Williams et al. (2021) one way that some individuals react to traumatic experiences is by becoming one way to cope with pressure to have a stronger religious devotion.

In contrast to the preconceived notions that religion is an ineffective method of coping, empirical research has shown that practicing religion can frequently assist adherents in effectively managing the effects of stress, mainly through regulating their emotional state (Village & Francis, 2021). Religion may be beneficial in managing stress to the extent that it explains the stressful events occurring in one's life as a source of hope and a sense of belonging to a religious community. Although information about the link between stress and religion still need to be found. The rate at which the pandemic caused by the coronavirus is spreading across the planet is picking up speed. It should be no surprise that this has far-reaching repercussions for all facets of society and religion (Serrao & Chaves, 2020). The epidemic is impacting religious practices, which, in almost all religions, including Christian denominations, strongly emphasize the importance of community.

The global COVID-19 epidemic has had repercussions that have reached far and wide. There has been a general deterioration in people's mental health globally, albeit varying degrees. In a paradoxical turn of events, some evidences show religion benefits your mental health. There is also some evidence that turning to religion as a strategy of coping with the terror in order to feel less anxious (Wild-Wood et al., 2021). It has been studied by Thinane (2022) on the possibility of impact of economic losses. According to the research, the significant financial problem concerns in the face of the pandemic and this contributes to the economic crisis. People who practice their religion regularly may have a better chance of seeing a quicker economic recovery because they may be less anxious about the future.

Nevertheless, the possibility of religion role in the escalation of losses is higher because some religious communities ignored recommendations for social distancing and continued to hold religious mass gatherings (Mahiya & Murisi, 2022). In addition, if the epidemic has permanently increased the use of religion, it will lead to the increasing in worldwide religiosity; this may have long-term repercussions for socioeconomic factors such as economic growths, innovations, and gender roles. For this purpose, knowing how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced people's religious practices is essential. The purpose of this paper is to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the worship practices of various Christian congregations and the new models adopted for worship.

2. Theoretical Review

The church's leaders made a slow but steady transition through time, shifting the emphasis from a specific geographic location to the people of God responsible for God's work for God's glory. Good leaders understand that clarity is the utmost significance when there is a lot of uncertainty. Most religious organizations took advantage of the holiday to conduct an internal assessment, narrow their focus to the most critical aspects of their work, and identify areas where they may benefit from further development (Ezechimere et al., 2021). The quotas of social isolation that the government imposed were disastrous to religious congregations. It is essential for the growth and vitality of the church, as well as for the multiplication of both disciples and leaders, for there to be Sunday schools and home groups, no matter how large or small. Even among individuals who had previously opposed such techniques, these limits fostered much-needed innovation, such as the emergence of online choices for providing services and making donations (Kim & Suh, 2021). This was possible by the proliferation of the internet.

There have indeed been some helpful advancements but there have also been some significant disadvantages to these inventions. Because of the circumstance's gravity, many people justified their decision to isolate themselves by claiming that they needed more insulation. People are beginning to question the significance of getting together for fellowship due to our culture's emphasis on individualism and consumerism, even while they appreciate the ease of attending church services online (Rep, 2021). Some people have shifted their perspective on the church from its once-central role to that of a peripheral institution. However, religion is built on relationships and the presence of God in the world. This shift has occurred even though religion is built on relationships and the presence of God in the world. When individuals choose to "do religion" on their own or rely solely on information obtained

from the internet, we do not know the long-term effects of this choice (Lee & Oh, 2021). Several individuals have mentioned the increasing in spiritual warfare, disagreements within their inner circles, and decreasing in their capacity for patience and resilience. When the growing cancel culture, political polarization, and general societal unhappiness are considered, people have the makings of a perfect storm that will inevitably result in leadership failure, resignation, and exhaustion (Chukwuma, 2021).

The fundamental premise of human contact has been completely rethought due to the enormous spread of the COVID-19 pandemic across the planet. Since the first COVID-19 pandemic cases were discovered in China in December 2019, they have affected the whole economic system, as well as social conventions and religious practices that are now in place (Church-Hill, 2021). The method of withdrawing from society and isolating oneself from other people has evolved into the new norm. Along with this shift, it has threatened the religious customs that are followed in every region of the world. Consequently, the right to congregate orderly, a vital component of the actualization of religious practice, has been curtailed (Sulkowski & Ignatowski, 2020). As a direct result, churches in these uncharted regions must negotiate and establish a new standard.

Consequently, this might be challenging. It will be necessary for churches to develop novel approaches to communicating their message and putting their faith into practice in everyday situations if they wish to keep their membership numbers stable (Pillay, 2020). As a result of the widespread anxiety and tension, people need to be able to quickly and easily visit the places of worship that are significant to them in their local communities. This research aimed to analyse how churches are modifying themselves to ensure they can continue to be a source of approachable and helpful social support for contemporary society (Addo, 2021). The church's response to the new kinds of exclusivity introduced into church operations as a direct result of the epidemic and the nature of these new forms of exclusivity has become contentious topics of discussion.

By March 2020, the number of deaths caused by the coronavirus had skyrocketed worldwide, and several countries had taken extreme steps to contain the pandemic. Rome's churches temporarily closed in March and reopened so that worshippers can again attend services and spend time in prayer and Eucharistic adoration (Campbell & Osteen, 2021). In order to stop the spread of the disease, public prayer was banned in Italy and elsewhere. Clergy members could choose not to distribute Holy Communion "until this is not physically available to lay persons" if they so desired. Only within the priest's private residence could the Eucharist be celebrated in a way that allowed the faithful to share in a sacramental union (Wildman et al., 2020).

From the pandemic's beginning, religious communities and their leaders have been challenged to rethink the norms of their gatherings and rituals. When 2020 rolled along, many religious leaders who had been opposed to technology realized they needed it to survive. Since March 2020, dozens of experimental weekend online services have been hosted on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Zoom (Kim & Chung, 2021). For some religious communities, COVID-19 has been a trying experience, especially for those that have been wary or outright averse to incorporating internet technology into their religious services. As a result of the pandemic, these communities have begun discussing online how they might use technology for good (DeSouza et al., 2021). Francis & Village (2021) mentioned the advantages of going digital for years, urging religious organizations to think about how technology might help them reach more people and take advantage of more chances. As a result of pressing needs, religious communities are rising to the challenge and discovering new ways technology may serve them.

Some religious groups have been meeting online for some time, but the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the appearance of many others. There was a steep learning curve, fraught with blunders and difficulties, for those communities. However, the technical insights and opportunities to try out new methods and strategies they have gained through this hands-on learning have allowed them to develop connections inside their congregations in previously impossible ways in the offline world (Ganiel, 2020). Researchers found that when members of a religious community could adapt to new circumstances, it sparked new forms of religious expression within the community. After only a few days of hearing about the crisis and approaching lockdowns in the United States, many religious leaders found new methods to be creative while still adhering to centuries-old rituals and practices (Wobodo, 2020). These organizations have fostered change by being willing to try cutting-edge tools and innovative techniques of community celebration. This kind of adaptability demonstrates to declining

congregations that it is possible to reimagine religion and construct resilient communities in the face of shifting circumstances.

3. Method

This qualitative study tries to figure out why Christians are moving away from traditional church services and toward technology and online churches. This study applies conceptual approach to address the research problem. A conceptual approach is used to analyze the changes in worship practices in Nigeria, the Balkans and Indonesia during the Covid-19 lockdown period. The author uses both national and international secondary sources, books, journals and reliable data sources to analyze the problem.

The study departs from the change of traditional worship services to the use of technology and online churches that are incompatible with the concept of face-to-face worship services practiced by Christians. Thematic analysis was employed to accomplish the research objectives. The thematic analysis focused on answering the research questions: First, how can online church and the use of technology replace traditional services according to Christianity? Second, how do online church services and the use of technology fit into Christian worship?

4. Result and Discussion

Many places of worship and other religious organizations had never held worship services online before the COVID-19 outbreak. Despite this, in the nearly two years since that time, churches have adjusted to the changing times and reached new people by adopting digital streaming (Francis et al., 2021). According to the research study of Thompkins et al. (2020) while the COVID-19 outbreak was going on, there was an increase in the number of individuals who went to church who did not typically do so. The vast majority of those who never go to church in person also claims that they have never watched a church service on television or online during this period. Religions that conduct all of their services virtually, as is the case with the one that Reverend Whang's congregation practices, have been around for some time but have just recently gained widespread attention as a direct result of the epidemic (Elia, 2020). Even the most traditional places of worship have been driven to experiment with online services because of constraints on gathering sizes and worries about the general public's safety.

The outbreak of the coronavirus, known as Covid-19, affected the majority of the world's population (UN 2020), which included Indonesia. This is due to the fact that the World Health Organization has classified it as a "Public Health Emergency of International Concern," which indicates that it is both a national and an international emergency in terms of public health (OJILE, 2020). In June of 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported a total of 28,233 confirmed cases of Covid-19, including 1,698 fatalities and 8,406 recoveries (WHO.int, 2022). Because of the high number of persons who are infected with Covid-19 in Indonesia, the country has the highest death rate in the world. It was anticipated that the total number of cases would increase despite the measures that were taken to halt the spread of the disease. The Indonesian government's policies in term of the implementation of a lockdown would not be the most effective method for preventing the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Instead, the government declared a health emergency, which led to the passage of Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020, which restricted fundamental human rights (Papazoglou et al., 2021). In order to stop to the development of Covid-19, a policy called as the Large-Scale Social Restrictions has been implemented. This policy restricts the movement of humans and encourages social segregation.

In contrast to Nigeria, where 91% of the population already attends church online, most Christians in Indonesia lack digital platform skills, as do the majority of people in the six Western Balkan countries, and two-thirds of people in the six Western Balkan countries lack the skills needed to navigate digital spaces (Chiluwa, 2012; OECD, n.d; Latif et al, 2022).

4.1. Face-to-face conversion to online church

Several religious experts are baffled as to why members of virtual churches continue to want a worship in this manner, given that it is now considered safe for many people in the United States to resume attending religious services in person (Chiluba & Shula, 2020). The reason is based on consideration of safety for many people in the United States to continue attending religious services. Although attending virtual worship sessions occasionally provides a sense of fulfilment, it generally falls short of expectations on both the spiritual and social fronts (Kipkoros, 2021). Conversely, the adoption of technology and online churches for worship

services does not establish personal communication with other members of the congregation in real life, as virtual meetings can never replace physical meetings.

The necessity for ministries (Churches) to have a good understanding of how to use the internet is one of the most important takeaways from Covid-19. This is one of the most crucial takeaways. The church that will exist in the end times will, among other things, require its members to have a strong foundation in information technology (reuters.com, 2022). A handful of churches in Nigeria are flourishing in spite of the difficulties created by Covid-19 because of the considerable online presence that these churches maintain. We have compiled a list of the names and services of the Nigerian churches that have the most online presence by utilizing live streaming gadgets and social media accounts like as YouTube and Facebook.

Christ Embassy, also known as LoveWorld Incorporated or Believers' Loveworld, is well-known for its technological prowess; the church owns the social networking app yookos, which boasts at least 10 million subscribed users and ranks fifth among the top 10 social application categories; and it broadcasts its services online via ceflix, the church's own live-streaming application, in addition to a network of streaming sites. LoveWorld Incorporated is another name for the organization that goes by the name Christ Embassy. At least three billion distinct persons were prayed for during the course of a single gathering that Christ Embassy held in order to be ready for Covid 19 (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2019).

The second church on the list to have a large presence online is the church that Prophet TB Joshua began and is now the senior pastor of. Because it has more than 3.7 million admirers on Facebook and more than 1.6 million subscribers on YouTube, he has solidified his position as the runner-up in this area. On the list of churches that have a significant presence online, the third spot goes to the Living Faith Church, which is also known by its former name, Winners Chapel. There is no Ministry TV Station that is operated by the congregation that was founded by Bishop David Oyedepo. Instead, members interact with one another in person or via internet channels such as YouTube, which has more than 220,000 users belonging to the church. In addition, her services at the Church of Living Faith are marketed on Facebook within that particular location (BBC.com, 2022).

Even though it contradicts one of God's commands in 1 Corinthians 12:18, the online church is creative and innovative. "But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose." However, the online church has been able to reach out, serving people with in context of the times. Cyber churches arose as a result of the use of technology and social media to facilitate religious activities. As a matter of fact, it's indeed fitting to affirm that online worship has been requisite in the present and the future.

4.2. Online Church According to Christianity

According to research study of Yezli & Khan (2021), Zoom worship, church services that were held at home, morning prayers on Facebook, spiritual influencers, Minecraft services, and intercession hotspots. This was done if they were unable to travel to a specific location. Many religious organizations could rely on the support and excitement of members, particularly younger ones, when it came to coming online because they lacked the essential technical competence to do so on their own. This was especially true for younger members. Users who could not maintain a connection to the internet or possessed the appropriate technical ability to run it were accommodated by regularly integrating offline features into online service platforms. Hoffmann added that they had gotten information on "telephone prayer chains" and "worship DVDs" distributed around the church (Pluss, 2020). He mentioned that this material was given out to everyone. During this holiday season, the churches distributed Easter greeting cards in addition to "Easter worship bags."

It is not unheard of for pastors to take their congregations on walking sermons, during which they deliver lectures and prayers via loudspeakers in various outdoor locations. Walking sermons are becoming increasingly popular. On Easter Sunday, participants in a flash mob event with an Easter theme were asked to stand on their balconies and sing a prerecorded song out loud at exactly ten in the morning. This was to be done in observance of the holiday (Churches & Jorm, 2020). Compared to traditional worship, the use of digital worship forms resulted in an increase in the number of people able to be reached, bringing the total number of people who were able to be compared to 6.5 million (Agundez Marquez, 2020). According to the study, seventy-two percent of churches and temples that started utilizing digital formats during the COVID-19 exile intend to continue using those forms. The amount of spoken discourse in many new designs has also been substantially reduced in favor of music and participatory structures. This has the effect of decreasing the barrier for

interested individuals to experience a worship service (Masoga, 2020). Consequently, one of the issues that must be addressed is how to bring in newer and younger audiences and keep them there. This issue was resolved in the Balkan region by using the technology and connecting the people through virtual channels (balkaninsight.com, 2022).

The Church currently finds itself in a fascinating predicament as the rest of the world continues to progress in terms of its technological sophistication in Indonesia, Balkan and Nigeria. These are extreme illustrations of possible responses; nevertheless, they are also caricatures of reactions that could occur. The first sticks to the belief that things should continue and gets on the bandwagon, while the second takes an arrogant and "prophetic" position toward the situation (Corpuz & Sarmiento, 2021). The absurdity that gives caricatures their undeserved reputation in the first place makes caricatures unfair due to the absurdity that shows them that reputation. Despite this, I believe that they are effective in this context because they bring to people's attention that many conversations and choices regarding the use of technology in the worship life of the Church are not taken seriously. This is the environment in which they carry out their activities. It has been studied by Thinane (2021) in no way implying that other people's viewpoints on this matter are not legitimate or that they have not given adequate thought to it. Instead, the difficulty is practically on their judgments after giving much thought that goes beyond a simple codification of their individual preferences.

The inclusion of technology into the worship services of the Church produces a wide variety of organizational issues. These challenges can be broken down into several categories. The local church's polity will substantially impact the outcome of several of these matters (Saptorini et al., 2022). However, some concerns arise regarding how to put technological improvements to use. The bigger the number of material objects we utilize in worship, the greater the likelihood that something may go wrong. This is only one way of looking at it. It is up to individuals to push their ideas toward becoming a reality; ideas do not automatically become a reality (Capponi & Carneiro Araújo, 2020). It is up to individuals to deliver their ideas and inspiration toward becoming a reality.

Although the online church has been challenged for contradicting the biblical concept of worship "the people who gather and the act of gathering," the online church, which ostensibly can only gather with the nuclear family physically and others virtually, does not negate the meaning of true worship as long as it is carried out with a heart set on God and a desire to worship God as well as a desire to show solidarity with others.

Trial action is the quickest way to solve problems. Therefore, you must ensure you get it correctly. This is especially true regarding the progression of technology, the advantages of which are equaled only by the potential risks they present if something goes wrong. The responses of individuals on the worship life of the church are heavily influenced by their preferences, peculiarities, and psychological make-up, regardless of whether like it or not and whether we believe it should be this way or not (Widjaja et al., 2021). Whether to think it should be this way or not, this is the case. This is the case regardless of whether we believe this as the appropriate course of action. By no stretch of the imagination is this issue isolated to the small percentage of congregants who are theologically naive or foolish. Instead, this is a problem that affects everyone. Personal preference is just as likely to play a role in a pastor's evaluation of a worship service as any other factor (Dada et al., 2022). Yet, we are better at finding ways to get others to accept our preferences by wrapping them up in theological terms.

It has been mentioned by McKenna (2021), that technology served as a warning that incorporating technical elements into religious rituals makes it more likely to generate responses from believers beyond those that can be explained by pure cognition alone. To claim that these responses are typically unreasonable is to take a perspective that is too critical of the situation. It is crucial to remember that the pastor is addressing more than just the intellectual concerns of the congregation, and this is something that must be kept in mind at all times. When going up against guts, it is considerably more difficult to protect ourselves (Dowson, 2020). People's hearts will respond with ardent enthusiasm when it comes to things concerning worship.

This case can be considered in the case study of the theory of the evolution of biological species. Anytime changes are made to the worship service, the pastor must be attentive to the congregation's feelings. However, this is especially true whenever new technology is adopted. Some people are resistant to change, while others actively welcome it. Some people resist change, while others enthusiastically embrace change (Sukamto & Parulian, 2020). However, this action would result in an oversimplification of the situation. That is not a proper posture

to take. The development of new technologies has affected almost every sphere of human activity. Both of the widespread availability of mobile devices, which put a wealth of information within reach at all times, as well as the proliferation of the internet and websites that enable us to communicate with practically anyone and any business, are evidence that the power of technology is only going to increase in the years to come (Molli, 2022).

It should not be surprising that modern advancements affect church's religious practices because these changes have been happening for a while now. Even the most ancient and renowned pieces of spiritual literature are now accessible worldwide because of the widespread availability of digital forms (Parker & Spennemann, 2020). For instance, a significant number of people who attend religious services, such as young adults who take part in Bible study sessions on tablets and pastors and other church leaders who prepare sermons on the computer, are increasingly consulting digital editions of the Bible. This includes young adults who participate in Bible study sessions on tablets. According to the research of Lacsá (2022) proliferation of apps for the Bible, Torah, and Quran on smartphones is helping to contribute to the growing acceptance of digital copies of holy writings. This is particularly true in the case of the Christian community. Since it was made initially accessible to the public in 2008, the Bible app has been downloaded by more than 260 million worldwide (Tan et al., 2022). A total of more than that amount of time has been clocked in by users while using the app, and more than 3 billion verses out of the Bible's more than 636 million verses have been highlighted at least once.

According to the research study of Santos & Chai (2022) who directs the Codec Research Center for Digital Theology at the University of Durham in the United Kingdom, one of the earliest uses of computers by Christians may have been the digitization of the Bible. Phillips makes this claim because he is responsible for overseeing the center. Because of the widespread availability of cell phones, it is now possible for anybody to read digital versions of ancient religious writings such as the Bible, the Torah, and the Koran, in addition to other works of literature. Additionally, the capability to digitally highlight specific passages makes it much simpler for younger readers to connect with the material in a suitable platform for the age and experience (Adedibu, 2022). This is especially helpful for books aimed at the middle school or elementary school students. It is highly legitimate to use digital research techniques in the study of religion, just as we have adapted similar tools to the study of anything from textbooks to business practices. It is very fair to apply digital research techniques to the study of religion.

Churches and other religious organizations are increasingly resorting to video recording technology to make the services available to a larger audience. This has been analyzed previously that the three regions have different level of restrictions due to Covid-19 but the technology provided them the equal opportunity to become a part of big religious community. This includes making the services available to individuals unable to attend the events in person (Bruce, 2020). Congregation members no longer need to participate in physical services physically; instead, they can tune in to live broadcasts or watch replays of the sermon whenever it is most convenient for them. This has eliminated the need for members of the congregation to attend services physically (Niche, 2022).

There are some advantages of online church models such as, (1) All members of the congregation are not restricted by territorial space or it is often called as bringing the distant closer; (2) The exchange of information is getting faster and easier. The gospel news can be widely spread through Youtube, Facebook, live streaming, Instagram, Google meet, zoom, and other applications. (3) Efficient (time, power and funds); the congregation do not need to pay for the expense of transportation to worship God and also the congregation do not need to experience traffic jams on the road to go to worship, especially for churches in big cities. (4) Online church accommodates the needs and challenges of the times faced by the church during the Covid-19 pandemic and the industrial era 5.0. (5) Offerings are made by transferring money to the church's account. (6) There is a shift in worship by looking for other channels. Perhaps the advantage and disadvantage of online churches is on the loyalty on the former church. Congregants who have no strong solid foundation can "go astray" and abandon sound teachings. Hence, the minister needs to continuously build a rapport with his congregants so that they thrive in the healthy gospel. The congregation may no longer feel like worshipping in church as they are used to online services after the Covid-19 pandemic has subsided.

Believers can still hear the message even if they cannot physically attend services due to illness or travel. They can receive the word in a variety of ways. This technique may prove to

be especially beneficial for churches that have members who are elderly and have physical issues, as well as for churches located in more remote sections of the country (van der Merwe, 2020). People who are not yet members of the church might have a better knowledge of the message and mission of the church by watching a tape of the services that took place over the previous week. This will likely pique their interest in attending church services in person and possibly even joining the congregation as a whole. The pastors and leaders of smaller houses of worship can get profit just as much as their congregations and worshippers from the advanced equipment and systems accessible to more prominent places of worship (Ganiel, 2021). Thus, larger houses of worship have more resources available to them.

When religious leaders talk touchy topics or answer challenging questions raised by younger congregation members, it is especially vital to bear this in mind because it will be challenging for them. This category may include contentious disagreements between various religious groups and complex political problems with spiritual implications (Holmes, 2021). Regardless of the circumstances, church leaders can use technology to their advantage by researching how other members of their subgroup or parent church have dealt with challenges comparable to those they experience. Leaders have the power to converse with their followers about this topic in a way that is beneficial and makes sense to the followers (Djalante et al., 2020). Ministers can better serve the congregations for which they are accountable by reading online the blogs and forums of other religious leaders and organizations. Thus, they can learn from the experiences of others and draw on the lessons gleaned from those experiences.

In the years leading up to the COVID-19 epidemic, churches were free to decide whether or not they wanted to live-stream their services. Live-streaming platforms such as Facebook Live, YouTube Live, Zoom, Google+, and Periscope are being used by churches to reach out to the online community (Storslee, 2022). In addition, many churches are using third-party streaming systems that enable multiple-platform simulcasting. The unexpected rise in online services provided to congregants has resulted in mixed outcomes, some favorable and others less. As a result of streaming their services live online, even smaller churches are drawing in hundreds or even thousands of spectators for each of their events (Wobodo, 2020a). Since the epidemic, the online visibility has climbed by a factor of three, but the amount of financial funding of the church has decreased.

Research conducted by Parish (2020) found that 65 percent have seen a reduction in donations. Nearly half of the churches report that their online viewership has increased to double or more than their usual in-person attendance. However, almost half of these churches reported that their online viewership has increased to double or more than expected in-person attendance. There are two types of viewers: those who are just interested in gathering information and actively looking for it. Regardless, as a result of the surge in the number of people attending church services online, many different places of worship are now accountable to a significantly larger audience than they were in the past (Hanly et al., 2022). The discussion and the analysis section reflected that technology had played a substantial role in continuing religious practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital technologies have made it possible to conduct virtual prayers in Churches. The top religious' leaders accept this model of worship.

However, it is impossible to dismiss that the Covid-19 pandemic has managed to succeed in altering the paradigm of Christian worship. The online church demonstrates that the true church is not limited to physical structures, but church can also be held anywhere on accessible place of internet access. God's presence is not limited by buildings, musical instruments, the people who gather, or the act of gathering; God is present even in "emergency" situations. As a result, churches that shelter congregations are not advised to stick to the old style; instead, churches can use information technology for broader services and adaptation to the needs of the times. When the government announced that all activities, including worship, should be done from home, online churches are the best solution; online worship ensures that congregants can meet God and others virtually.

5. Conclusions

It has been analyzed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the issues of social distancing and health emergencies were common, and it restricted people from performing their religious practices. In this research study three of the regions that is Nigeria, Indonesia and Balkan has been studied. Technology innovated the world at that time of crisis, and various digitalization techniques were used for performing prayers virtually by sitting at home. It has been analyzed

from the discussion that the top religious' leaders found this source of technology feasible for virtual or online prayers. Due to the unanticipated quick growth of the online community, the church is now faced with the necessity of addressing issues that have surfaced due to this growth. Streaming services are essential to the continued existence of churches, regardless of whether or not members of the congregation enjoy using them in Indonesia. During this period of transition, there are reasons to be concerned; nonetheless, it is encouraging to see churches employing technology to reach new individuals with their message in Balkan. In the years leading up to the COVID-19 epidemic, churches were free to decide whether or not they wanted to live-stream their services in Nigeria.

Online churches using technology as their platform despite contradicting the biblical concept of people gathering and the act of gathering have turned into cyber churches in Nigeria, the Balkans and Indonesia. Technology has played an important role in ensuring that religious practices can continue even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Technology has enabled churches to hold online versions of services now. Encounters and experiences with God are not determined by a place of worship and gathering together, but by a sincere heart and longing for a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus. Online church gives people the opportunity to connect with each other and take part in religious practices in Nigeria, the Balkans, and Indonesia. It's indeed fitting to affirm that online worship has been requisite in the present and the future.

6. Funding

This research received no external funding.

7. Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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