

ALGORITHMIC AMPLIFICATION AND THE CHRISTIAN GENOCIDE NARRATIVE IN NIGERIA'S SOCIAL MEDIA SPACE

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Abstract

This study examined how algorithmic amplification and political-economic incentives shape the construction, visibility, and strategic mobilisation of the 'Christian genocide' narrative in Nigeria's new-media ecosystem. Using qualitative

analysis of Facebook posts, video transcripts, media reports, and layered comment threads, the study explored how clergy, media organisations, advocacy groups, government institutions, and ordinary users frame and circulate emotionally charged claims about religious persecution. These actors drew on victimhood framing, historical analogies, moral appeals, and counter-evidence strategies that aligned with engagement-driven platform logics. Algorithms amplified content that evoked strong emotional or identity-based responses that reinforced a visibility structure tied to attention rather than factual accuracy. Users interpreted this amplification as validation, strengthening the viral power of sensational narratives. The findings showed how distrust of state institutions and Nigeria's socio-religious and partisan divisions interact with algorithmic systems to sustain the narrative. Clergy and Christian organisations used moral authority to legitimise it, while political and advocacy actors, including foreign politicians and international Christian networks, promoted its circulation for ideological or fundraising purposes. Media outlets extended these frames through selective emphasis, whereas government efforts to counter the narrative often deepen scepticism. By integrating Algorithmic Media Theory and the Political Economy of Communication, the study showed that the endurance of the Christian genocide narrative reflects systemic interactions between digital infrastructures, emotional engagement, and political-economic interests. The analysis contributes to Global South debates by illustrating how complex falsehoods circulate within Nigeria's sociotechnical environment and shape public interpretation of religious violence.

Keywords: algorithmic amplification; political economy; falsehoods; Christian genocide narrative; new-media ecosystem.

Introduction

Algorithms systems, as deployed in the social media space, influence users' exposures and engagement with digital platforms. These systems determine the content-types, sort and personalise them based on past behaviour and preferences. It provides information regarding the quantum of engagements relating to number and who 'likes' 'views' 'shares' etc of such contents. The uniqueness of social media algorithm is further reinforced since no two individuals are exposed to the same feed at the same time (Kumar et al., 2024). Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) use engagement-driven algorithms that often amplify sensational or emotionally charged content, contributing to the global spread of falsehoods

(Hastuti et al., 2025; The Guardian, 2024). The appeal of social media lies in the digital affordances it offers users. Due to its ubiquitous nature, social media and its users provide easy path to information and communication generation, distribution and consumption real time with or without limited control by agencies. Affordances in the ongoing debate imply ability to create, share, and interact with content instantly across diverse networks without spatial or temporal limitation (Hsieh, 2012; Madebo, 2024).

Scholars have examined several intersections between social media and falsehoods (Ike, 2022; Raimi & Boroh, 2025; Riyan Hidayat & El-Feyza, 2022). Allcott et al. (2019) highlighted the widespread concerns about the damaging effects of social media on public institutions and the societies. Domenico et al. (2021) examined the effects of misinformation and fake news on consumers, especially social media platforms potential to fabricate and sustain falsehoods. From a unique perspective, Meshi and Molina (2025) drew our attention to the need to consider individual users' cognitive capacity to believe falsehoods and to act on them rather ascribing the negative effects of social media on the platforms. While the ongoing debates provide a balanced approach to understanding falsehood and its dimensions, there is a general understanding that falsehoods in digital media produce negative outcomes. Within the Nigerian digital media space, Jimada (2023) and Obono and Diyo (2022), evaluated how misinformation was weaponised as instrument of hate and violence during elections. Ola (2021) found that social media platforms were being used to spread misinformation during protests. Ukwuru and Nwankwo (2020) highlighted the contributions of fake news in the spread of corona virus. Jalal-Eddeen (2025) explored how FinTech used algorithm as tool for exploitation of their clients. Despite the significant scholarly interests in the study of social media and falsehoods (Adebisi et al., 2025; Onayinka et al., 2022; Oputa et al., 2025; Oyedele et al., 2023), studies on algorithmic amplification and its political-economic motivations are few.

The Nigerian digital media space is not immune to the various opportunities and challenges associated with the use of social media platforms as applicable in other parts of the world. However, the Nigerian scenario is complicated by its socio-religious, ethnic, security and political peculiarities. Hence, phrases such as, 'Christian genocide' has often been exploited to create narratives that reveal the fragile fault lines in the society. Recently, these narratives have taken on heightened local and international dimensions, becoming a key test case of algorithmic amplification and political instrumentalisation. Foreign actors, such as U.S. Senators (Cruz, 2025), advocacy groups (Open Doors USA, 2025) often latch onto these narratives without establish (Allcott et al., 2019) ing sources of their claims or supported by any empirical evidence (Al Jazeera English, 2025).

In addition, there is the absence of empirical studies linking the relationships between algorithms, advocacy, monetisation structures and the shaping of such narratives. Thus, no scholarly research has yet evaluated the recurring 'Christian genocide' narrative that is often topical in the Nigerian social media space through algorithmic amplification and political economy. Therefore, this study contributes to closing a critical gap in media and communication research by linking algorithmic amplification with the political economy of falsehoods in a Global South context. It examines how engagement metrics, recommendation systems, and advocacy networks converge to construct and disseminate the Christian genocide narrative in Nigeria's new-media ecosystem. The study intends to reveal the contributions of new media platforms to the distribution and consumption of false or exaggerated claims about religious persecution in Nigeria with a special focus on the Christian genocide narrative. The study identifies the social media personalities involved, analyses the influence of algorithm and engagement logics while also investigating the political-economic incentives that sustain such narratives. By foregrounding the intersection of algorithmic systems and political-economic forces, this study advances

critical understandings of how falsehoods circulate in digital environments beyond Western contexts. The paper proceeds as follows: after reviewing relevant literature, it presents the study's methodological framework, discusses findings from digital trace data and content analysis, and concludes with implications for policy and global media ethics.

Objectives of the Study

The study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. to examine the extent to which new-media platforms amplify the Christian genocide narrative in Nigeria relative to its empirical evidence base;
2. to analyse how algorithmic logics, such as engagement metrics and recommendation systems, shape the visibility and diffusion of emotionally charged narratives;
3. to investigate the roles of political and economic actors, including foreign politicians, advocacy groups, and media organisations, in the strategic amplification of the narrative; and,
4. to assess how the amplified narrative influences public perception, policy discourse, and sectarian relations within and outside Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. How do actors across Nigeria's new-media environment construct and circulate the Christian genocide narrative through platform affordances and engagement-oriented communication practices?
2. How do algorithmic systems shape users' interpretive experiences of the Christian genocide narrative based on discourse patterns and perceptions of visibility dynamics?
3. How do political and economic interests influence the strategic promotion and legitimisation of the Christian genocide narrative within local and transnational advocacy networks?

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Framework

Falsehoods

This study conceptualises falsehoods as a 'bouquet' a composite category that encompasses various forms of information disorder. These include misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, fake news, propaganda, rumour and conspiracy theories, clickbait and sensationalism, fake news, algorithmically amplified falsehoods (emerging category). The framing allows the study to capture all types of misleading or deceptive communication in the new media environment without separating them artificially (Toma & Scripcariu, 2020). Falsehoods are treated as an interconnected continuum rather than as distinct phenomena. This approach recognises that unverified, manipulated, and strategically distorted information often overlaps and circulates fluidly across digital platforms (Bragazzi & Garbarino, 2024; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Algorithmic Amplification

Algorithmic amplification describes how automated systems on digital platforms boost some content above others. These systems rely on engagement metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and watch time. They are not neutral. Instead, they follow platform logics built around attention optimisation (Bucher, 2018; Sirajudeen et al., 2017). Content that provokes strong emotional or moral reactions is more likely to be recommended and widely shared.

This reflects what Zuboff (2020) calls surveillance capitalism, a system where user attention becomes a commodity for data-driven profit. Social media platforms, therefore, function as engagement economies rather than truth economies. False or sensational content often performs better because it keeps users active and generates advertising revenue. In this study, algorithmic amplification is seen as both a technological process, how

algorithms rank and recommend and a structural condition; how platform design rewards virality over accuracy.

Political Economy of Falsehoods

The political economy of falsehoods explains how money, power, and media structures shape the production and spread of deceptive content. In capitalist media systems, visibility equals profitability. Platforms earn more from engagement, while political and advocacy actors use the same systems for agenda-setting and ideological influence (Fuchs, 2021; Michalis, 2013).

In Nigeria, these dynamics appear when politicians, advocacy networks, and religious groups use digital media to push geopolitical or sectarian narratives, such as the Christian genocide claim. Falsehoods are not just mistakes or individual errors. They are systemic products of media environments built around profit, visibility, and ideological control. Algorithms act as the technological infrastructure that supports this political economy. They amplify narratives that serve attention-driven and power-sustaining interests.

This study is therefore anchored on the interaction between algorithmic amplification and the political economy of falsehoods within Nigeria's new-media ecosystem. The framework illustrates how structural features of digital platforms, political interests, and user engagement dynamics combine to produce, sustain, and legitimise the 'Christian genocide' narrative. Driving the conceptual framework is the empirical reality of pervasiveness of inter religious tensions, discussions, and violence in Nigeria with verifiable data. There is need to take cognisance of the selective framing and interpretation of religious narratives in social media. Hence, these algorithmic systems driven by engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments amplify certain narratives while suppressing others, not necessarily on the basis of factual accuracy but on their potential to maximise user attention and platform revenue.

The political-economic layer interacts with this algorithmic process. Political actors, advocacy groups, and media organisations, both local and foreign, strategically engage with and promote the Christian genocide frame for diverse purposes ranging from advocacy and fundraising to agenda-setting and ideological positioning. As algorithms amplify such content, local and foreign political figures, faith-based organisations, social media influencers may inadvertently or deliberately reinforce these narratives. The repeated exposure to emotionally laden narratives constructs a skewed sense of reality, leading to perceptual distortions that frame one religious group as perpetual victims. This in turn feeds into policy reactions such as international pressure, misinformed advocacy, or calls for foreign intervention. The algorithm induced narrative amplification moderates public engagements and interactions on social media platforms as determined by their socio-political, economic and religio-cultural interest.

Christian Genocide

The phrase Christian genocide operates as a highly charged moral and political frame rather than a settled empirical category. Genocide, in legal and scholarly terms, entails deliberate and systematic acts committed with intent to destroy a religious, ethnic, or national group. In public discourse, however, the term is often deployed with rhetorical elasticity, serving as a symbolic shorthand for severe victimhood, existential threat, and moral urgency. In Nigeria's socio-religious environment, shaped by recurring farmer, herder clashes, banditry, insurgency, and communal violence, the term has become a contested label used by religious organisations, advocacy groups, media actors, and political figures to interpret and politicise insecurity.

Research indicates that insecurity is experienced unevenly across regions and identity groups, yet public narratives often simplify diverse drivers of violence into binary communal frames (Ike, 2022b). Nigerian and international advocacy groups have amplified persecution narratives by

combining verified and unverified claims, selective casualty reports, and emotionally framed testimonies. Such framings echo earlier findings that misinformation in Nigeria tends to flourish around issues of religion, ethnicity, and political grievance (Jimada, 2023b; Obono & Diyo, 2022b).

International actors have further contributed to the conceptual inflation of the genocide label. US-based organisations like Open Doors USA and certain foreign politicians have circulated high casualty figures that lack transparent sourcing or methodological documentation (Cruz, 2025; Open Doors USA, 2025). Investigative journalism and global media reports have repeatedly challenged or contextualised such claims, noting that insecurity in Nigeria affects multiple communities and does not neatly map onto single-group targeting (Al Jazeera, 2025). The narrative thus functions as a moral-political artefact shaped by advocacy incentives, identity politics, and international attention economies rather than empirical consensus. Within the study's conceptual framework, the *Christian genocide* narrative is best understood as a strategic communicative frame: it blends religious identity, selective evidence, moral claims, and political mobilisation. It is reinforced by structural conditions that make inflammatory narratives effective tools for domestic and transnational advocacy, fundraising, constituency building, and ideological signalling.

Social Media and Algorithmic Amplification

Social media platforms operate as socio-technical systems shaped by algorithmic ranking, user engagement, and platform-specific affordances. Algorithms determine the visibility of content by prioritising posts that are likely to maximise attention, interaction, and platform retention. These systems function as invisible editorial logics that structure what users see, how frequently they see it, and how rapidly content spreads (Beer, 2017a) for profit (Kendell, 2020).

In environments with high political and socio-religious tension, algorithms amplify emotionally charged or morally provocative content,

which tends to include narratives of victimhood, threat, betrayal, or injustice. Studies show that misinformation spreads more rapidly than factual information where algorithms reward virality, novelty, and emotional intensity (Allcott et al., 2019; Meshi & Molina, 2025). In Nigeria, social media has become a primary arena for identity-laden political communication, with falsehoods significantly shaping perceptions of elections, protests, and security crises (Ola, 2021; Raimi & Boroh, 2025; Ukwuru & Nwankwo, 2020).

Platform affordances live streaming, sharing, hashtags, visual testimonies, and threaded comments create a communication environment in which users participate in constructing, validating, and contesting narratives in real time. These affordances compress the boundaries between elite and public discourse, allowing clergy, advocacy groups, digital entrepreneurs, and ordinary users to exert influence simultaneously. The draft captures this dynamic by framing falsehoods as a composite information disorder that circulates through overlapping communicative networks. The Nigerian context enhances the power of social media in shaping public understanding. High distrust in state institutions, pervasive insecurity, and deep religious and ethnic cleavages create conditions where algorithmically amplified content is readily accepted as truth. Users often interpret visibility itself as evidence, mistaking engagement intensity for empirical validity. This feedback loop reinforces sensational frames and sustains narratives such as the Christian genocide claim, regardless of their factual complexity. Conceptually, social media in this study is therefore understood as *an* algorithmically mediated attention economy where structural platform incentives interact with political and religious motivations to produce and circulate falsehoods at scale.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by Algorithmic Media Theory and the Political Economy of Communication, both provide analytical pathway for the understanding of how digital infrastructures, economic imperatives, and political interests interact to shape the production and circulation of mediated falsehoods.

1. Algorithmic Media Theory

Algorithmic media theory formalized by media scholar Jack Myers, explains how computational systems particularly those embedded within social media platforms govern visibility, attention, and engagement (Beer, 2017b; Bucher, 2018). Algorithms act as invisible editors, ranking and filtering content based on metrics such as clicks, shares, and watch time rather than factual accuracy or public value (Gillespie, 2018; Gillespie & Seaver, 2016). Within this study, algorithmic logic is conceptualised as a structural driver of amplification: it determines which narratives trend, whose voices are heard, and which issues are made salient. By rewarding emotional intensity and engagement potential, algorithms tend to amplify sensational or conflict-laden content over neutral or data-driven information (Ferreira, 2025; Hastuti et al., 2025b).

This theory explains how the Christian genocide narrative in Nigeria gains disproportionate visibility not necessarily because of empirical support, but because it aligns with the engagement economy underpinning social media design.

2. Political Economy of Communication

The political economy of communication developed by foundational scholars Dallas Smythe and Herbert Schiller (Dutt, 2011; Knoche, 2021; Morgan, 2014) focuses on how ownership, profit motives, and power relations shape media production and circulation. These perspective situates falsehood, not as a mere information disorder, but as a product of capitalist and political interests embedded in media systems. In this context, political and economic actors, including advocacy groups, religious lobbies, and

foreign politicians are not passive participants but strategic agents who leverage algorithmic affordances to advance ideological or financial agendas. The Christian genocide narrative functions as a political commodity: it generates emotional traction, mobilises support, attracts funding, and legitimises policy positions. This approach highlights how the interplay between platform capitalism (driven by monetisation through engagement) and advocacy-driven politics (driven by ideological positioning) sustains the circulation of polarising narratives (Al Jazeera English, 2025).

The interaction of algorithmic media theory and political economy theory provides a comprehensive explanation for the study's central phenomenon. While algorithmic theory elucidates how the Christian genocide narrative is amplified through engagement-driven visibility political economy theory clarifies why such amplification persists because it serves political, ideological, and economic interests. The combination of both frameworks underscores the systemic nature of falsehoods: false or exaggerated narratives are not accidental anomalies but emergent outcomes of structural logics within digital capitalism (Fuchs, 2015). In this integrated framework, algorithmic systems act as the mechanisms of amplification, while political-economic forces represent the motivations sustaining it. Together, they produce a feedback loop in which sensational narratives like the Christian genocide claim are continuously circulated, monetised, and legitimised. This cyclical process shapes not only public perception but also global policy responses toward Nigeria's internal conflicts.

Methodology and Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative design that examines how actors construct, circulate, and legitimise the Christian genocide narrative in Nigeria's new-media environment. The approach aligns with the theoretical postulation that algorithmic amplification and political-economic incentives shape the visibility and meaning of falsehoods. The Facebook dataset served

as the core empirical material and provided a grounded basis for analysing narrative construction, user responses, and perceived visibility dynamics.

Research Design

The study used a qualitative strategy that combined discourse analysis, thematic coding, and political-economic interpretation. This design attends to how meaning is produced across actor types and post formats, with attention to digital affordances, emotional registers, and identity cues that structure narrative formation. The approach aligns with the conceptual framing of falsehoods as a composite information disorder and with the idea that visibility in digital spaces is driven by engagement logics rather than factual accuracy.

Data Source and Corpus

The dataset consists of scraped Facebook posts, transcripts, and comment threads that feature claims, counterclaims, or interpretive disputes surrounding the Christian genocide narrative. The corpus includes clergy-led video statements, media reports from Channels TV, Sahara Reporters, Punch, Okwu Digital Media, official communication from the Ministry of Information, and extensive public reactions. These reactions range from affirmation clusters to sarcasm, political signalling, and moral appeals. Together, these materials form a dense communicative field where elite actors, news organisations, religious institutions, and ordinary users negotiate meaning, legitimacy, and visibility.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling guided the selection of posts. Items were included if they referenced the Christian genocide narrative, involved clerical, political, media, or advocacy actors, attracted a minimum ten engagements, or showed clear discursive contestation. Sampling followed the logic of theoretical saturation, ensuring that the dataset captured varied framings, actor positions, and interpretive patterns that illuminate how the

narrative evolves across contexts.

Data Collection Procedure

The dataset was compiled from publicly accessible or bookmarked Facebook contents. For each post, the study collected the full text or transcript, engagement metrics, top-level comments, a random subset of replies deeper in the thread, and actor metadata. This process produced thick textual and interactional data suitable for discourse and thematic analysis.

Analytic Procedures

Analysis proceeded in three interconnected phases. The discourse analysis examined how actors framed the narrative, validated claims, invoked evidence, and mobilised moral or political authority. Attention was given to victimhood and denial frames, religious and historical references, depictions of state failure, and interactions between elite statements and public interpretations.

The thematic coding phase organised recurring patterns into analytical categories. Codes captured narrative construction practices, perceived visibility dynamics, political-economic signalling, and emotional or moral registers. Coding advanced through iterative cycles until saturation.

The political-economic interpretation examined the strategic uses of the narrative by religious bodies, media actors, government officials, and the public. This phase focused on how actors legitimised or contested genocide claims, how official communication attempted to counter foreign pressure, and how users drew on the narrative for ethnic or partisan positioning. The analysis follows the conceptual understanding of the narrative as a political commodity mobilised to shape agendas and constituencies.

Analytical Integration

Findings from the three analytic phases were synthesised to show how narrative meaning, emotional resonance, and perceived algorithmic visibility intersect. This integrated approach aligns with the theoretical model that positions algorithms as structures of amplification and political-

economic forces as motivations that sustain the narrative.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness was established through triangulation across post types, actor categories, and comment layers, supported by iterative coding and consistency checks. The analysis relies solely on publicly accessible data, and all user identifiers remain anonymised. The study adheres to ethical standards for digital research involving public communication.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1. Coding Frame for the Facebook Dataset

Code Category	Meaning	Indicators	Illustrative Examples
Victimhood frame	Positions Christians as targeted group facing systematic violence	References to persecution, displacement, targeted attacks	CAN claims of “Christian genocide”; users describing abandoned communities
Denial/refutation	Challenges or rejects genocide claims	Downplaying targeted violence; citing alternative explanations	Gumi’s “empty coffins” refutation; users demanding proof
Historical analogy	Links present violence to older conflicts	Invocations of past riots or massacres	References to Maitatsine, Zangon Kataf, 1966 riots
Emotional register (fear)	Expressions of vulnerability and insecurity	Anxiety language; existential concern	“They want our land”; “Our people are not safe”
Emotional register (anger)	Outrage or condemnation	Moral indictment; accusations	“Liars everywhere”; user-directed curses
Moral appeal	Ethical or religious justification	Scripture, prayer, moral reasoning	“Whatsoever a man sows...”; “God will judge the wicked”
Political signalling	Identity or partisan positioning	References to parties, leaders, ethnicity	Mentions of Trump, Yoruba loyalty, Biafra

Delegitimising government	Challenges state credibility	Claims of denial, propaganda, complicity	"Government asked you to post this"
Delegitimising media	Claims of media bias	Accusations of silence or distortion	"Channels is part of the problem"; "BBC is unreliable"
Evidence claim	Attempts to validate narrative	Lists of killings, casualty numbers	Ashimolowo's enumeration of cases
Counter-evidence claim	Attempts to invalidate narrative	Requests for proof; logical challenge	"Where is your evidence?"
Foreign intervention appeal	Calls for external actors	References to US, EU, Vatican	Calls for intervention by Trump or the Vatican
Ethno-religious identity	Uses identity to justify stance	References to Yoruba, Igbo, Muslim, Christian groups	"Once a Yoruba, always a Yoruba"
Call to action	Mobilisation appeal	Directives, collective appeals	"Help Nigeria on time"; "Take action now"

Source: FACEBOOK_Datasets_Christian genocide_2025- including Ashimolowo interview transcript, CAN NEC meeting post, Sahara Reporters updates, Ministry of Information rebuttal, and associated comment threads in:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19hlMuY9rNZEfNbodj2haaYvF3rOuv3IVyEti72F5M/edit?usp=sharing>

Table 1 presented the coding framework developed for analysing the Facebook dataset on the Christian genocide narrative. The coding categories reveal that the discourse is constructed through a combination of victimhood narratives, emotional appeals, political positioning, identity-based arguments, and competing claims of evidence and counter-evidence. The prevalence of codes such as victimhood frame, moral appeal, emotional registers, and call to action suggests that the narrative is sustained not only through factual claims but also through affective and identity-driven communication. Simultaneously, the presence of denial/refutation, counter-evidence claims, and delegitimation of government and media demonstrates that the discourse remains highly contested, with actors competing to define the meaning and legitimacy of the narrative.

The coding frame further indicates that social media discussions extend beyond religious persecution claims to encompass broader political, ethnic, and international dimensions. Codes such as political signalling, ethno-religious identity, and foreign intervention appeal show how the narrative is embedded within wider struggles over identity, governance, and international advocacy. This finding supports the argument that the Christian genocide narrative functions as a complex communicative frame rather than a straightforward description of insecurity.

The implication for this study is that algorithmic amplification operates within an environment already characterised by emotional intensity, identity mobilisation, and institutional distrust. These communicative features increase the likelihood of engagement and visibility on social media platforms, making the narrative particularly attractive to algorithmic systems that prioritise user interaction. The coding framework therefore provides empirical support for the study's proposition that the persistence and circulation of the Christian genocide narrative result from the interaction between platform logics, emotional engagement, and political-economic interests.

Table 2. Actor–Code Matrix

Actor Type	Dominant Codes	Interpretive Meaning
Clergy and faith leaders	Victimhood frame; historical analogy; moral appeal; evidence claim	Use religious authority and selective history to legitimise genocide claims
Christian organisations	Victimhood frame; moral appeal; call to action; delegitimising government	Institutional discourse reinforces persecution narratives and mobilises followers
Media outlets	Evidence claim; frame contestation; political signalling	Media posts trigger interpretive conflict and narrative amplification
Government actors	Denial/refutation; counter-evidence claim; political signalling	Government communication attempts reframing but receives strong rejection

Islamic clerics	Denial/refutation; counter-evidence claim; anger in comments	Refutation generates polarised and identity-charged responses
Advocacy/diaspora influencers	Evidence claim; counter-evidence; frame contestation	Influencers reshape or challenge the narrative within global political frames
Ordinary users	Emotional registers; delegitimising media; delegitimising government; political signalling	Users extend narratives through emotion and identity positioning
Digital media entrepreneurs	Political signalling; evidence claim; call to action	Content framed for engagement and alignment with advocacy positions

Source:FACEBOOK_Datasets_Christian genocide_2025-Actor roles and coding patterns derived from posts and comments by Channels TV, Punch, Sahara Reporters, CAN, PFN, Ministry of Information, Reno Omokri, and Gumi in:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19hlMuY9rNZEfNbodj2haaYyJF3rOuv3IVyEti72F5M/edit?usp=sharing>

Table 2 showed that the Christian genocide narrative is constructed, amplified, contested, and sustained by multiple actors performing distinct communicative roles. Clergy and Christian organisations primarily legitimise and promote the narrative, while government actors and Islamic clerics attempt to challenge or refute it. Media outlets, influencers, and digital entrepreneurs function as amplification channels, whereas ordinary users reinforce or contest the narrative through emotional and identity-based engagement.

The implication is that the narrative is not driven by a single actor but emerges from interactions among religious, political, media, and public actors. This multi-actor participation strengthens the visibility and persistence of the narrative within Nigeria's digital media ecosystem and supports the study's argument that algorithmic amplification operates through interconnected networks of influence and engagement.

Table 3. Code Co-Occurrence Patterns

Code A	Code B	Observed Pattern	Interpretive Meaning
Victimhood frame	Moral appeal	High	Persecution claims are moralised to strengthen legitimacy
Victimhood frame	Evidence claim	High	Users attach lists and testimonies to validate claims
Victimhood frame	Delegitimising government	High	State failure is central to the construction of persecution
Denial/refutation	Counter-evidence claim	High	Refutation relies on challenging facts or logic
Denial/refutation	Political signalling	Moderate	Refutation becomes politicised by users
Moral appeal	Call to action	Moderate	Ethical arguments lead to mobilisation appeals
Political signalling	Delegitimising government	High	Identity cues co-occur with accusations of state complicity
Evidence claim	Historical analogy	High	Past events anchor current claims
Anger	Delegitimising media	High	Outrage often directed at perceived biased media
Fear	Foreign intervention appeal	Moderate	Fear prompts calls for external support
Delegitimising government	Delegitimising media	Moderate	Institutional distrust extends across domains

Source:FACEBOOK_Datasets_Christian genocide_2025- Co-occurrence derived from comment clusters in posts involving Ashimolowo, CAN, PFN, Sahara Reporters, Ministry rebuttal, and Reno Omokri as captured in:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19hlMuY9rNZEfNbodj2haaYyF3rOuvI3IVyEti72F5M/edit?usp=sharing>

Table 3 showed that victimhood framing frequently co-occurs with moral appeals, evidence claims, and criticism of government, indicating that persecution narratives are strengthened through ethical justification and institutional distrust. The findings also reveal that emotional responses, political signalling, and calls for action are closely interconnected. The implication is that the Christian genocide narrative gains strength through the combination of emotion, identity, and perceived institutional failure, making it highly engaging and susceptible to algorithmic amplification within social media environments.

Table 4. RQ–Theme–Evidence Matrix

Research Question	Theme	Evidence	Interpretive Insight
RQ1	Clerical construction	Ashimolowo video; CAN statements	Clergy shape narrative using authority and continuity
RQ1	Media-triggered circulation	Channels, Punch, Sahara threads	Media posts act as interpretive and amplification sites
RQ1	User elaboration	Public comments expanding persecution frames	Users merge personal and collective grievances
RQ1	Affordance use	Videos, headlines, live formats	Affordances heighten emotional salience
RQ2	Perceived suppression/promotion	Claims of censorship or rapid spread	Visibility read through suspicion of manipulation
RQ2	Engagement as validation	High-volume threads	Engagement becomes proxy for truth
RQ2	Emotional virality	Anger and fear dominating responses	Emotional intensity aligns with perceived amplification
RQ3	Clerical advocacy	CAN and PFN calls for action	Religious institutions frame violence as genocide
RQ3	Government counter-framing	Ministry of Information post	Public pushes back against official narratives
RQ3	Identity signalling	Biafra, Yoruba, Muslim–Christian identity cues	Identity politics embedded in narrative interpretation
RQ3	Foreign intervention appeals	Calls for US, EU, Vatican action	Narrative adopted for transnational advocacy

Source:FACEBOOK_Datasets_Christian genocide_2025- Themes drawn from clerical, media, governmental, and user-generated content in:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19hlMuY9rNZEfNbodj2haaYy/F3rOuyt3IVyEti72F5M/edit?usp=sharing>

Table 4 showed that the findings consistently address the three research questions through evidence drawn from clerical, media, governmental, and user-generated content. The themes reveal that narrative construction, perceived algorithmic visibility, and political advocacy jointly shape the circulation of the Christian genocide narrative.

The implication is that the narrative persists through the combined influence of religious authority, media amplification, user engagement, and identity politics, reinforcing the study's argument that algorithmic and

political-economic forces work together to sustain its visibility and legitimacy.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis revealed a patterned interaction between clerical communication, media framing, algorithmic visibility, and political-economic motivations that shape the construction and circulation of the Christian genocide narrative in Nigeria's new-media ecosystem. These findings reflect the structural conditions identified in the conceptual framework, where falsehoods function as a composite category of information disorder (Toma & Scripcariu, 2020; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017) and circulate across platforms through engagement-driven logics rather than empirical verification. The data show how emotional intensity, identity cues, and political interests interact with algorithmic affordances to sustain and legitimise the narrative. This dynamic demonstrates the entanglement between technological systems and the political economy of falsehoods described in the draft.

Narrative Construction through Clerical, Media, and Public Actors

Clerical actors play a central role in framing insecurity through a victimhood lens that positions Christians as targeted subjects of systematic violence. Their statements, including those from prominent pastors and Christian associations, employ moral appeals, historical analogy, and evidence claims. These rhetorical patterns align with the broader theorisation of falsehoods as emotionally charged narratives that draw on selective histories and moral authority to achieve resonance. The Facebook dataset shows that users frequently adopt and extend these frames, connecting current events to earlier episodes of religious conflict. This confirms Ike's (2022) observation that Christian victimhood narratives are often grounded in lived experiences of insecurity, which audiences readily mobilise to interpret ambiguous events.

Media outlets act as amplification nodes that help circulate clerical framings to broader audiences. Posts from Channels TV, Sahara Reporters, Punch, and Okwu Digital Media trigger interpretive encounters in comment threads. These threads reveal how audiences blend personal grievances with media-framed claims, often reinforcing narratives of abandonment, state failure, and religious persecution. This aligns with global concerns that social media affordances enable the rapid propagation of misleading content through engagement-optimised systems (Allcott et al., 2019; Domenico et al., 2021).

Public commenters extend these narratives through identity signalling, emotive expression, and political critique. Their responses illustrate how narratives of persecution become embedded within wider socio-political cleavages, especially given Nigeria's religious, ethnic, and political diversity. The tendency of users to merge insecurity with partisan blame echoes earlier analyses of how falsehoods have been weaponised during elections or protests (Jimada, 2023; Ola, 2021; Obono&Diyo, 2022).

Taken together, the interaction of clerical authority, media framing, and user elaboration creates a self-reinforcing narrative ecosystem. Emotional expressions such as anger, fear, and moral condemnation intensify these dynamics, producing communication patterns that privilege sensationalism over nuance. This mirrors the observation that falsehoods often endure because they align with psychological predispositions and community identities rather than empirical accuracy (Meshi & Molina, 2025).

Algorithmic Visibility and User Interpretation

Across the dataset, users interpreted visibility as a product of algorithmic choices rather than mere audience interest. Claims that content is “hidden”, “trending”, or “being suppressed” reflect public awareness of algorithmic systems as invisible editors, consistent with Algorithmic Media Theory (Beer, 2017; Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2018). The perception that

emotionally charged content spreads faster encourages users to equate virality with legitimacy. This parallels findings in the literature that social media platforms function as engagement economies, where emotional and sensational content receives enhanced visibility (Hastuti et al., 2025a; Sirajudeen et al., 2017).

Emotional intensity appears as a consistent driver of engagement. Anger and fear often cluster around posts that amplify the genocide narrative, while counter-claims attract contestation and sometimes hostility. These patterns align with the idea that platforms reward emotional content because it sustains user attention, reinforcing Zuboff's (2020) argument that platforms operate within a surveillance capitalist logic where user engagement is monetised.

Discussions under government statements illustrate how algorithmic visibility intersects with distrust of political institutions. When the Ministry of Information attempted to counter the genocide narrative using a BBC investigation, users dismissed the intervention as propaganda. This reaction supports the political economy perspective that falsehoods persist not only because of technological affordances but because of structural distrust in institutions and power asymmetries embedded in communication systems (Fuchs, 2021; Michalis, 2013; Morgan, 2014).

Political and Economic Interests behind Narrative Promotion

Findings showed that political and economic interests shape the narrative's construction and persistence. Clerical organisations used the narrative to justify mobilising appeals, strengthen institutional authority, and frame religious identity as politically significant. This reflects the broader tendency of advocacy actors to deploy religious violence narratives for ideological or fundraising purposes, as indicated in reports from Open Doors USA (2025) and public messaging by international political figures such as U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (2025).

Media organisations also play strategic roles. Through headline framing, selective sourcing, and amplification of clerical statements, they contribute to the visibility and perceived urgency of the narrative. This corresponds to analyses that highlight how media industries produce and circulate falsehoods as part of broader commercial and ideological projects (Fuchs, 2015; Knoche, 2021).

Government actors attempt to counter the narrative, but public distrust undermines their efforts. The antagonistic responses to official communication illustrate how state institutions are often perceived as unreliable sources of information. This finding aligns with the political economy argument that institutional responses to falsehood are weakened when media systems are structured around commercial incentives and partisan contestation (Dutt, 2011).

The dataset further shows that users leverage the narrative to signal belonging, critique leadership, and support transnational advocacy. Calls for foreign intervention, references to Western political actors, and appeals to global Christian institutions reveal how the narrative circulates beyond domestic boundaries. This confirms the draft's claim that the Christian genocide narrative serves as a political commodity with transnational implications.

Conclusion

The study shows that the Christian genocide narrative in Nigeria's new-media ecosystem emerges from the interaction of algorithmic systems, emotional communication, and political-economic incentives. Clergy, media organisations, advocacy networks, government bodies, and public users all contribute to constructing and recirculating the narrative through interpretive practices shaped by digital affordances and engagement-driven visibility. The dataset illustrates how falsehoods function as composite information disorders, circulating fluidly across platform spaces where sensationalism and moral intensity are privileged over factual accuracy. This pattern aligns

with broader concerns that algorithmic infrastructures elevate content designed for attention optimisation rather than public value (Beer, 2017; Bucher, 2018) and that political actors and advocacy groups leverage these infrastructures to advance strategic ideological aims (Fuchs, 2021; Michalis, 2013). The Christian genocide narrative persists not because of consistent empirical support but because it aligns with user emotions, institutional distrust, and platform logics embedded within surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2020). These findings underscore the systemic nature of falsehoods in Nigeria's digital communication environment and the need for nuanced approaches that address both technological and sociopolitical drivers of amplification.

Recommendations

The study highlights the need for coordinated interventions that address the technological, political, and socio-cultural conditions sustaining falsehoods in Nigeria's digital sphere.

1. First, platform companies should strengthen contextual moderation systems for high-stakes content related to religion and conflict. This includes improving detection of emotionally charged falsehoods and increasing the transparency of recommendation criteria in contexts prone to identity-based tensions.
2. Second, government communication agencies should adopt evidence-based crisis communication strategies that acknowledge public distrust and prioritise clarity, timeliness, and multi-platform responsiveness. Attempts to counter falsehoods through denial alone often intensify public scepticism, especially in polarised environments.
3. Third, religious and advocacy organisations should adopt responsible communication frameworks that promote verified information and avoid framing insecurity in ways that heighten sectarian cleavages. These institutions hold significant moral

authority, and their messaging shapes public perceptions of violence. Fourth, civil society groups should expand digital-literacy initiatives that address the emotional, identity-based, and algorithmic dimensions of falsehoods rather than focusing solely on fact-checking.

4. Finally, researchers and policymakers should collaborate to build local capacity for independent monitoring of algorithmic influence in Nigeria's media ecosystem, drawing on interdisciplinary approaches from media studies, communication, and technology ethics.

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