



Digital Dissemination of Neo-Prophetic Theologies in Ghana: Societal Impact and Challenges in the Age of Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become a primary platform for the spread of Neo-Prophetic theologies, particularly within Ghana's Pentecostal movement. Through a qualitative research approach, this study examines how contemporary Ghanaian prophetic ministries affect religious behaviours and become integrated into society. The online Neo-Prophetic content frequently features prosperity gospel, spiritual warfare narratives, and extraordinarily sensational prophecies. Data was collected through group and individual interviews, participant observation, and analysis of content on Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram across a variety of participants from Christian traditions. The results show a significant impact on the worldviews, behaviours, and decision-making of believers. While some prophetic leaders exploit their followers economically and psychologically, many adherents reported finding spiritual fulfilment within these ministries. The potential fallout from the digital revolution within prophetic recognition creates both potentially enriching and potentially harmful pathways in personal spirituality. Government agencies and civil society organisations, among others, have devised countermeasures in the form of public education campaigns and legislative action to help assess religious content on social media. The study recommends integrating media literacy and critical thinking in Ghanaian schools' curricula, strengthening the regulatory framework and enforcement, and fostering interfaith dialogue and community engagement would go a long way to minimise the impact of these Neo-Prophetic theologies. The study contributes to a scholarly understanding of the intersection of religion and technology, media studies in religious contexts, the Pentecostal and charismatic movements in Ghana, and contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media in recent times has given the public the platform to publish and share information, and also has the power to determine the sentiments of the people. However, it is very easy for such platforms to televise incorrect information or even messages that may cause harm, particularly which has a connection with religion. The proliferation of knowledge in social media related to different

religions is a problem that requires serious consideration because it has a huge impact on the unity of people, their mental state and the economy of the world. The changes in global faith systems and their relationships with social media have been felt in diverse societies. Due to technological changes, many are now practising “digital religion,” which refers to a way of engaging in faith or belief through electronic online means.¹ This development has created a conducive environment for the rapid propagation of different kinds of religious beliefs, some of which may pose a danger to the public. On the other hand, most global socio-cultural practices have been influenced by organisations’ leadership and guidelines on such issues since time immemorial.

The process of globalisation was significantly accelerated due to digital communication. When the COVID-19 pandemic came about, it transformed our way of living, and many were unable to gather at church to worship like they once did. Church services were thus conducted online. This cleared the way for countless renowned men of God or prophets to preach lies and deceive people. Also, today on all social media platforms throughout Africa, there are always wrong ideas of religion that are spread every minute. This indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has expedited this trend, with many of the activities pertinent to faith being conducted virtually and both congregants and leaders leaning on social media platforms for guidance.² Furthermore, the combination of traditional African religions with Christianity and Islam and the increasing presence of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements characterise Africa’s religious terrain.³ Also, rapid urbanisation coupled with widespread technology use amidst pluralistic religious settings has provided an enabling environment for such cultic groups to thrive and adapt to the digital phase like other sectors do. Due to this reason, it does not come as a surprise that many charismatic leaders take advantage of their position to influence people within such complex religious systems.⁴ Also, there has been an increase in religious content being shared on social media platforms in Ghana. Combining a highly religious population and greater internet access has resulted in an environment where false doctrines thrive online.⁵ Ghanaian social media is full of messages like “end time” and “we need to be saved,” among others. Most of the time, it comes from respected pastors as well as charlatan prophets.⁶

Considering the above, the rise of neo-prophetic ministries that use social media to gain huge followings and that often teach about a combination of the above-mentioned is prevalent. This study therefore focuses on how these theologies are getting into Ghanaian social networking sites and what they mean to the public. Through the analysis of the relationship between digital platforms, religious stories, and sociocultural issues, this study seeks to add to and contribute to the existing literature on digital religion and its societal effects in Africa, particularly Ghana. Also, this study contributes to scholarship in religion, science and technology; religion and media; Pentecostalism, charismatic and neo-prophetic movements in Ghana; and contemporary Christianity in Ghana. The study seeks to answer specifically the following questions: In what ways do contemporary Ghanaian prophetic ministries, especially those with online presence, influence religious expression and social interaction within Ghana? How do these teachings influence individual cognitive processes such as beliefs, actions, and decision-making? What are the wider societal effects posed by such doctrines on matters regarding unity among people, financial activities, and political participation? The outcome of this study is significant for academia, as well as offering important information to policymakers, church leaders, and NGOs who seek to mitigate the impact of Neo-Prophetic theologies and fake news, among others, on social media in the country.

¹ Heidi A. Campbell and Giulia Evolvi, “Contextualizing Current Digital Religion Research on Emerging Technologies,” *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies* 2, no. 1 (2020): 5–17.

² Francesco Molteni et al., “Searching for Comfort in Religion: Insecurity and Religious Behaviour during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy,” *European Societies* 23, no. S1 (2021): S704–20.

³ Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Migration, Diaspora Mission, and Religious Others in World Christianity: An African Perspective,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 4 (2015): 189–92.

⁴ Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity, New Edition: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (Indiana University Press, 2004).

⁵ D. A. Tetteh, “Doing Theology with Social Media: Understanding the Challenges of Religious Engagement in the Age of Social Media,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 23, no. 1 (2020): 26–32.

⁶ Cephas N. Omenyo and Abamfo O. Atiemo, “Claiming Religious Space: The Case of Neo-Propheticism in Ghana,” *The Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 1, no. 1 (2006): 55–68.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prosperity Gospel and Conceptualisations of the Good Life

In Ghanaian Pentecostal prophetic circles, the talk about wealth unveils a complicated combination of religious beliefs, societal goals, and matters concerning survival. This review explores how prosperity has been understood, why there are emergent neo-prophetic churches, the role of spiritual beings or forces, and what these issues mean for Ghanaian society under Pentecostalism.

According to Amakye, prosperity symbolises one of the core aspects enshrined under the teachings of Jesus that make up for a “good life,” which should be followed by all Christians. But this is not just a matter of having money or property; it also includes being healthy and feeling happy within oneself, thus serving as an expression of national identity. The writer posits that such an integrative perspective on success complies with typical African ethical standards that give precedence to general progress over personal riches.⁷ On the other hand, there is what may be described as a “bad life” in which one does not have access to such benefits as mentioned above. As a result, people will look for solutions through prophecies, with most cases involving some form of transformation rituals meant to ease their way through challenges believed to emanate from enemies or evil spirits.⁸ This opposition between good and bad lives establishes a fundamental rationale behind pursuing economic success within Ghanaian Pentecostal spheres.

The Concept of ‘Other’ and Divine Intervention

The talk revolves around a character known as ‘the Other’ who is seen as responsible for causing poverty and suffering. It is in this light that such forces are taken into account while positing that believers require supernatural assistance so that they can overcome any threats hindering their well-being. The term ‘Other’ may refer to evil spirits or ghosts that prevent one from living comfortably due to some factors like social order, while he/she is at fault for being inactive or lazy enough to achieve success.⁹ In addition, Quayesi-Amakye uses the parables of Christ in Luke 16 as a basis for coming up with a conceptual framework that views prosperity as not just the accumulation of riches by individuals alone but rather serving to promote a peaceful co-existence in Ghanaian society. This view proposes that there is a complex nature and interaction between having enough to spare on the one hand and social duties or obligations towards others on the other hand.

The Rise of New Prophetic Movements

According to Omenyo, the Neo-Prophetic movement emerged in Ghanaian Pentecostalism in the 1980s, representing the coming back of prophetism into African Christianity. The Neo-Prophetic movement is a modern Pentecostal movement emphasising prophecies, miracles, and charismatic authority. Charismatic individuals like Salifu Amoako, Emmanuel Kwaku Apraku, and T. B. Joshua spearheaded this movement, which witnessed increased attention on matters of spirituality, dream analysis as well and miracles.¹⁰ Specifically, within this movement, many individuals have been given the title “Prophet,” but some people are worried about how this may change their religion and what will happen with the following churches. In particular, Omenyo states that these new kinds of prophets have become very powerful, like T. B. Joshua, who was known worldwide and had top-level supporters. The case emphasises the role played by contemporary socio-political leaders not only within Ghana but also far beyond.

Ancestral Spirits and Witchcraft Fears

The work by Christian Tsekpoe posits that Africans believe in a God whose power is manifested through spiritual entities occupying various levels in the spiritual realm, namely deities and deceased

⁷ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, “Prosperity and Prophecy in African Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 20, no. 2 (2011): 291–305.

⁸ Amakye, “Prosperity and Prophecy in African Pentecostalism,” 291–305.

⁹ Amakye, “Prosperity and Prophecy in African Pentecostalism,” 291–305.

¹⁰ Cephas N Omenyo, “Man of God Prophecy unto Me: The Prophetic Phenomenon in African Christianity,” *Studies in World Christianity* 17, no. 1 (2011): 30–49.

relatives' spirits.¹¹ This perspective explains why Ghanaians still live in constant fear that somebody might carry out their plans with help from evil otherworldly forces. In his analysis for instance regarding Ghana, Tsekpoe observes that before the arrival of Christianity, accusations of witchcraft followed certain norms of cultural rules however, the introduction and subsequent spread of Christian principles led to increased levels and degree of fear associated with such spiritual forces thereby creating continuous enmity including cases where people fight or kill each other because of witchcraft issues.¹² As a result, there has been a total transformation in understanding witches, leaving behind a complex terrain that comprised a mixture of syncretism among some members.

Prophetic Ministries and Their Importance

African Christianity has seen an increase in the prophetic ministries that provide practices such as exorcism and spiritual cleansing. This is because they are against the norms of the traditional churches, but at the same time, there have been accusations of exploiting people. Despite these issues, Tsekpoe points out that such ministries have greatly facilitated Africans' understanding of the Gospel by creating a space within which both their cultural spirituality and Christian faith could be accommodated.¹³

Cultural Impact and Representation

Agboadannon and Dossoumou's analysis of Amma Darko's novel "Not Without Flowers" provides insights into the literary representation of these religious phenomena. The increase of the 'new prophets' all over the Ghanaian towns, which are illustrated within Darko's work, reflects upon wider socio-economic issues comprising poverty and joblessness, but also has some roots from the past, such as colonization and evangelism.¹⁴

The reviewed literature above clearly describes how some prophets take advantage of their followers and prey on innocent people within society. This poses a challenge for academics, politicians, laymen, and followers on what they can do to prevent or minimise its harm to African societies. The fact that prosperity is seen as something different from just having money, continued belief in evil forces and their possible harm, and the role played by prophets in dealing with such issues create a unique combination of experiences within the religious sector. Such combinations, one can say, are like crossroads where two different paths meet; one represents traditional norms while another is linked with Christianity, calling upon people to follow what is right before God alone. It may therefore call for additional studies into the future implications in Ghanaian society or any other related issues concerning these matters, like African Christianity's theology vis-a-vis interculturality.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a qualitative research approach was applied to explore how Neo-Prophetic Theologies and information through social media affect Ghanaians. The qualitative data was collected through group and key informants' interviews, participant observation, news bulletins, and reports on different Ghanaian social media platforms and users drawn from various Christian backgrounds, and some of them were taken from Facebook, Twitter (X), WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram. Social media applications have transformed our communication, information sharing, and community-building in the digital era. In various aspects of our connected world, each platform offers specific benefits and serves a distinct function. Facebook is still one of the biggest social media networks in the world, with billions of users globally, which allows users to establish profiles, connect with friends and family, join interest-based groups, and share everything from personal updates to news articles.¹⁵ Twitter,

¹¹ Christian Tsekpoe, "Contemporary Prophetic and Deliverance Ministry Challenges in Africa," *Transformation* 36, no. 4 (2019): 280–91.

¹² Tsekpoe, "Contemporary Prophetic and Deliverance Ministry Challenges in Africa."

¹³ Tsekpoe, "Contemporary Prophetic and Deliverance Ministry Challenges in Africa."

¹⁴ Koumagnon A Djossou Agboadannon and Ashani Michel Dossoumou, "Fake Prophets and Evangile for Sale in Amma Darko's Not without Flowers," *International Journal on Studies in English Language And*, 2018.

¹⁵ Inc Meta Platforms, "Facebook,," <https://www.facebook.com> Accessed March 3, 2025.

rebaptized X in 2023, is a short-form communications platform which is limited to 280 characters or less. It allows users to share short bursts of thoughts, news, or media, facilitating a fast-paced information ecosystem that has changed how we receive and distribute information.¹⁶ WhatsApp has become one of the leading messaging platforms for private text, voice, and video communications, and its end-to-end encryption feature from end-to-end has gained popularity for secure personal communications as well as those in business.¹⁷ It is widely known that YouTube is the largest video-sharing platform in the world, with content covering entertainment, education, news, tutorials, and much more. It has opened new avenues of career opportunities for content creators and entirely changed the way we consume video content.¹⁸ As a visual platform, Instagram is all about storytelling through your photos and videos and also includes features like Stories, Reels, and shopping capabilities, making it a hub for creative expression and digital marketing.¹⁹

These are among the most frequently used platforms worldwide.²⁰ During these interviews, the researchers asked reflective questions about their experiences regarding neo-prophetic teachings to understand what the respondents feel or think about some given theological narratives, which may be true, not be true, or may mislead or guard them. Purposive sampling was adopted for the key informants' interviews, convenient sampling was used for respondents of the group interviews, and snowball sampling was used for hard-to-reach populations. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. The researchers observed moral considerations like securing permission from the participants, keeping their identities confidential, and following the set rules while carrying out digital ethnography to avoid bias. The data analysis also involved checking on the consistency among responses obtained by different respondents (member checking), debriefing experienced colleagues (peer debriefing), and being self-evaluative throughout the research process (reflexive practice) so that valid and reliable results can be achieved from it. The study also recognised some limitations, such as sample size, generalizability, as well as difficulties in studying sensitive religious issues.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Transformations, Opportunities and Challenges of the Digital Revolution of Neo-Prophetic Movements in Ghana

The emergence of the neo-prophetic movement in Ghana is a clear indication that there have been changes in what was known before within the religious setting. This kind of movement is characterised by an up-to-date form of spirituality as well as leadership that is very charismatic. It is different from classical Pentecostalism and emerged at the end of the twentieth century because it focused on direct revelations from God, miracles, and prophecies.²¹ Through this movement, Ghana's spiritual landscape experienced a revolution that affected the way people worship and what they believe in.²² The study found out that there were some popular prophets: religious leaders claiming divine inspiration, namely: Elvis Agyemang,²³ Isaac Owusu Bempah,²⁴ Patricia Asiedu (Agradaa),²⁵

¹⁶ X Corp, "X," <https://x.com>, 2025.

¹⁷ Inc. Meta Platforms, "WhatsApp," <https://www.whatsapp.com>, 2025.

¹⁸ Google LLC., "YouTube," <https://www.youtube.com>, March 3, 2025.

¹⁹ Inc. Meta Platforms, "Instagram," <https://www.instagram.com>, March 3, 2025.

²⁰ Noah Darko-Adjei, Mariam Ansa Animante, and Harry Akussah, "Use of Social Media by Leaders of Charismatic Churches in Ghana," *Library Philosophy and Practice* 1 (2021): 2.

²¹ Daniel Orogun and Jerry Pillay, "Between African and American Neo-Pentecostalism: An Examination of the Link, Influence, Merits and Demerits," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 47, no. 3 (2021): 1–18.

²² Orogun and Pillay, "Between African and American Neo-Pentecostalism: An Examination of the Link, Influence, Merits and Demerits."

²³ Elvis Agyemang is the Head Pastor of Grace Mountain Ministry, Accra, Ghana and the Chief Minister of the popular global midnight prayer channel and moment "Alpha Hour" in Ghana. He is the C.E.O. of Alpha TV and Genesis TV. He is affectionately referred to in Ghana as Pastor Elvis or "Alpha Hour" for easy identification. Available at: <https://elvisagyemang.org/about-pastor-elvis/> Accessed on 26th February 2025.

²⁴ Isaac Owusu Bempah is the Head Pastor of Glorious Word Power Ministry International (GWPMI), South Odorkor- Busia Road, Ghana. He is affectionately referred to in Ghana as Rev. Owusu Bempah for easy identification. Available at: <https://www.gloriouswordchapel.org/who-we-are/> Accessed on 26th February, 2025.

²⁵ Patricia Asiedua is the Head Pastor of Heaven Way Church, Weija, Ghana. She is affectionately referred to in Ghana as Evangelist Mama Pat or "Agradaa" for easy identification. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/adom106.3fm/videos/leader-of-heaven-way-chapel-evangelist-patricia-asiedua-agradaa-in-church-celebr/1101616348039230/> Accessed on 26th February, 2025.

Ebenezer Adarkwa Yiadom (Opambour),²⁶ Daniel Obinim,²⁷ Francis Kwaku Adjei Antwi (Obofour),²⁸ Stephen Adom Kyei-Duah (Adom Nyame/Second chance),²⁹ Nicholas Osei (Kumchacha),³⁰ Selina Baidoo (Pastor Selina),³¹ and Nigel Gaisie.³² These individuals have gained followers due to their perceived spiritual authority, with which they can address both individual and communal challenges through otherworldly means. Nevertheless, some of them are seen as public figures who live expensively or engage in controversial matters, hence posing another side of the story about them.

Furthermore, the study found that the emergence of social media has completely changed how far and by what means followers and neo-prophetic figures in Ghana can be reached. Today, these leaders can easily take advantage of a variety of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter (X), WhatsApp and Instagram, among others, to reach out beyond the conventional boundaries. During the collection of data, it was observed that through the internet, a prophet can reach many people globally as he gives live sermons as well as carries out virtual miracles, and also prays with them that seem to cross all physical obstacles or distance. This change has greatly increased their visibility and influence.³³ Followers can share content on social networks such as Facebook, comment on it, and engage with each other in real time (e.g., typing Amen if they agree), thereby creating an enhanced form of online worship. This observation agrees with the findings from Chiluya's study in 2013 on community and social interaction in digital religious discourse in African countries like Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon. Her findings revealed that pastors were optimistic about how social media, if well-harnessed, could effectively create a unique niche for mass dissemination and acceptance of teachings, testimonies, prayers and announcements. In using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which theorises a positive relationship between perception and usage, the study of Darko-Adjei *et al* revealed that the higher level of awareness and positive perception of social media among members and leaders has increased its usage by churches.³⁴

Nonetheless, the study also discovered that moving prophetic ministries to social media resulted in an increased spread of false teachings and heresies. The findings of Darko-Adjei *et al* attest to the widespread sharing of and access to teachings via social media by churches.³⁵ The unregulated space provided by the internet enhances the ease with which such teachings may travel across without any form of control. This is because personalities like Bishop Daniel Obinim and Rev. Obofour are known for preaching about the prosperity gospel while at the same time carrying some miracle money plans that may fail or work on people who believe everything will be all right without any problems on their

²⁶ Ebenezer Adarkwa Yiadom is the Head Pastor of Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre, headquartered in Ahenema-Kokoben, Ashanti Region. He is the C.E.O. of New Mercury 91.5 FM Station located in Bantama, Kumasi, and Prophet 1 TV in Ghana. He is affectionately referred to in Ghana as Rev. Opambour, Prophet 1 or simply "Opambour" for easy identification. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/nationprophet1/> Accessed on 26th February, 2025. See: George Anderson Jr, "Ghana's Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity: Future Prospects," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies (ERATS)* 5, no. 1 (2019): 22, 23.

²⁷ Daniel Obinim is the Head Pastor of International God's Way Church (IGWC) and the Chief Minister of the popular "Aboroso Family" in Ghana. He is the C.E.O. of the Soul TV. He is affectionately referred to in Ghana as Rev Obinim, Bishop Obinim or Angel Obinim for easy identification. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/AngelDrObinim/> Accessed on 26th February, 2025.

²⁸ Francis Kwaku Adjei Antwi is the Head Pastor of Anointed Palace Chapel (APC) headquartered at Tanoso/IPT. He is the C.E.O. of CASH TV and SWEET TV. He is affectionately referred to in Ghana as Rev. Obofour or simply "Obofour" for easy identification. Available at: <https://yen.com.gh/tags/reverend-obofour/>; <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/Being-a-genuine-pastor-does-not-mean-you-re-perfect-Rev-Obofour-replies-critics-1938336> Accessed on 26th February, 2025.

²⁹ Stephen Adom Kyei-Duah is the Head Pastor of the Believers Worship Centre, Ghana, and the owner of Second Chance TV. He is popularly known in Ghana by many as The Prophet of God, Adom Kyei-Duah or Adom Nyame. Available at: <https://www.bwcghana.org/the-prophet> Accessed on 26th February, 2025.

³⁰ Nicholas Osei is the Head Pastor of Heaven's Gate Ministries, Ghana. He is affectionately known as Prophet Kumchacha or simply Kumchacha. Available at: <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/How-can-you-say-there-are-no-genuine-men-of-God-in-Ghana-Kumchacha-chides-Rev-Obofour-1937775> Accessed on 26th February, 2025.

³¹ Selina Baidoo is the Head Pastor of Faithway International Chapel and the CEO of Pastor Selina Ministries. She is the owner of Faithway Bible Institute, Ghana. Available at: <https://pastorselinaministries.org/> Accessed on 26th February, 2025.

³² Nigel Gaisie is the Head Pastor of Prophetic Hill Church, Dome-Ghana, and the Chancellor of Hills College of Prophecy located at Dome. He is the owner of Hill TV. He is affectionately called and known by many Ghanaians as Prophet Nigel Gaisie or simply Nigel Gaisie. Available at: <https://ghananewsonline.com.gh/biography-of-prophet-nigel-gaisie-the-set-man/> Accessed on 26th February, 2025.

³³ Derick McKinney, *Social Media in the Church* (University of Arkansas, 2014).

³⁴ Darko-Adjei, Animante, and Akussah, "Use of Social Media by Leaders of Charismatic Churches in Ghana."

³⁵ Darko-Adjei, Animante, and Akussah, "Use of Social Media by Leaders of Charismatic Churches in Ghana."

side. For instance, Patricia Asiedua (Agradaa) was once reported for engaging in fraudulent activities, but surprisingly turned around to pose as an evangelist; this case clearly shows how information is capable of moving around among followers, especially now that we live in a digital world. As seen from this analysis, the conversion experienced within these new religious movements cuts both ways. On one hand, it has surely broadened the reach and availability of spiritual guides, but on the other hand, telling what is real from what could harm an individual has become even more difficult due to the introduction of this era, whereby everything, including education, can be accessed through one's smartphone. The high speed at which sensational statements and spiritual cures spread through social media underlines why people should critically think about everything they encounter online, including religion. In emphasising Serman and Sims' findings on the risk of sharing and using unverified information,³⁶ Zhang and Cheng conclude that false or unverified information tends to heighten the dissemination of misinformation or fake news. They lament that such practice may degrade the credibility and importance of social media usage as well as pose serious consequences for persons and society.³⁷

It is important to take note of both the demerits and potential advantages of applying technology in worship as the Neo-Prophetic movement advances in Ghana. The progress of this group will probably be determined by how well they can use digital platforms on one hand while still upholding spiritual teachings on the other hand, without compromising anything all around for everyone involved. To an extent, it may even be said that this continually changing nature not only affects changes experienced within the religious sector alone but also demonstrates a difference seen in information sharing at large due to the increased use of technology.

Characteristics of Neo-Prophetic Theologies in Ghana

According to the data collected, neo-prophetic theologies in Ghana often place a heavy focus on fear, which makes followers live in perpetual worry about their lives falling apart. For instance, some pastors claim to have heard from God and say some events may happen soon, like deadly accidents or mass sickness. These messages do not come with specific details but play on deep fears, such as spiritual attacks from demons. A well-known figure caused panic recently when he warned there would be a plane crash; another made people scared that there would be post-election violence. With these prophets always predicting doom, people feel like they need special help to avoid disaster. Also, people are manipulated emotionally as well. These preachers also retain control and influence in their communities by acting as saviours of the people from harm. In addition, the study revealed that the second big theme among Ghanaian prophets is "deliverance," a term used to describe various rituals that are meant to free individuals from negative forces such as curses or the devil. Some prophets insist that for one to be completely free from curses or evil forces, they need several sessions, which cost hundreds of Ghana cedis each.³⁸ These rituals are said to be the only way to get God's favour and protection. In this, people end up relying on the prophets, and by stressing deliverance so much, the prophets also show off their spiritual power while making a lot of money out of it. A key informant remarked:

One pastor became famous for his 'spiritual' baths, which followers believe can wash away bad luck. They had to buy expensive oils and pay for many sessions. What these pastors do does not just play with the emotions of people, but these religious leaders can keep hold of cash as well as influence a whole community.

Furthermore, the study found that tricking vulnerable people is key to how these preachers deceive their followers with made-up messages from God. They take advantage of poverty, ill health,

³⁶ Zehra Ece Serman and Julian Sims, "Source Credibility Theory: SME Hospitality Sector Blog Posting during the Covid-19 Pandemic," *Information Systems Frontiers* 25, no. 6 (2023): 2317–34.

³⁷ Zeqian Zhang and Zhichao Cheng, "Users' Unverified Information-Sharing Behavior on Social Media: The Role of Reasoned and Social Reactive Pathways," *Acta Psychologica* 245 (May 2024): 104215, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104215>.

³⁸ Daily Graphic, "Church Business." <https://www.graphic.com.gh/daily-graphic-editorials.html>, 2018. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/daily-graphic-editorials.html> Retrieved February 2, 2024

and unhappiness, offering hope and cures but only if individuals show loyalty through gifts or payments. For example, one of the respondents who is a member of one of these ministries stated that if someone is very unwell or has money problems, the prophet will promise them a sudden recovery or wealth if they donate to their church or ministry. Often, those who want to hear about good fortune coming their way soon have first handed over quite large sums as part of a “seed sowing” offering. Also, a male respondent indicated a prophet who claimed that he could heal AIDS with prayer. He then charged patients lots of money for special services, which left some even more sick or poorer than before. In search of a miracle, those in need end up worse off because they have very little to start with, yet feel compelled to give what they can to their prophets who promise supernatural help. This cycle of exploitation can deepen believers’ despair as well as their poverty. Nevertheless, the study found some respondents who testified to the good and great help they have received from these prophets in terms of healing and employment.

Impact on Ghanaian Society

The study revealed that the widespread use of fear-based communication by some of these prophets in the country has a strong impact on people’s minds. Hearing nothing but predictions of death and destruction can make followers very anxious and paranoid; they feel they cannot do anything but worry. This state of dread is bad for mental health; individuals become so concerned about what might happen to them or their loved ones. If one is often told that something terrible is about to happen and that only a special few can see it coming, this kind of prophecy puts fear in the people involved, which leads to anxiety. These prophets’ acolytes have discovered that existential fear does not promote feelings of empowerment or independence.³⁹

Instead, many people become stuck in cycles of anxiety or behave erratically due to ongoing stress.⁴⁰ They may even stop making decisions without first consulting their chosen guides, further undermining notions of individual safety-net creation as well as personal freedom from psychological manipulation. The study found that some people prioritise prayer over medical treatment when confronting epidemics like HIV and AIDS, thereby perpetuating prejudice surrounding its spread, while also curtailing public health initiatives designed to curtail it. In addition to these individual effects, there are societal ones too. This cultural shift adds to the marginalisation of people seen as being targeted by evil spirits, making those already at risk even more vulnerable. For example, it was revealed that instead of getting medical help, such as anti-seizure medication for epilepsy or other brain-based conditions, individuals may be isolated and forced to undergo dangerous rituals like exorcisms.

Besides, the study found that huge sums of money are exchanged within Neo-Prophetic groups and usually not in ways that benefit their members but the leaders. Followers often face great pressure from prophets to hand over hefty donations if they want to receive blessings, stay healthy, or avoid misfortune. Some people give up large sums during ‘seed sowing’ services, hoping it will lead to wealth and favour from God. Such financial exploitation can leave individuals impoverished and struggling to care for their families. In general terms, these practices have an ongoing effect of keeping poor people poorer while making profits for others. A respondent who is a close friend of one of these prophets remarked:

When mainstream churches try to bring the truth before these followers of the false prophets, it creates differences between both groups, which often leads to mistrust. This tension, along with wider feelings of disappointment by these prophets, is a big worry to them. Also, some prophetic figures enjoy extremely comfortable lives thanks to contributions from believers whose everyday existence is nothing to write home about.

³⁹ Daily Graphic, “Church Business.”

⁴⁰ Daily Graphic, “Church Business.”

Impact of Social Media on Religious Expression and Social Engagement in Ghana

The study found that the ministries, whose leaders say they have prophetic powers and are often charismatic, do not just speak to their congregations in church but also broadcast over platforms like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and WhatsApp. This has changed the way Ghanaians relate to religion because now more individuals can take part in discussions and activities; it also means there is an archive of videos for them to look back on or share. One only needs to watch the live stream from one of these groups to see how influential and popular some have become, and their posts can reach thousands of viewers who may then share clips via their accounts. Community building used to work mainly offline, but it now happens both online and offline as people join different groups based on shared interests or experiences. Networking this way may even accentuate theological divides between two “friends,” especially if they follow rival church figures.

Many Ghanaian social media users will be familiar with key ideas when they hear them explained in live videos or see quotations overlaid onto images shared on Facebook. They might never set foot inside a particular church building, but exposure via friends’ shares can mean that some names of leaders and places of worship become quite familiar. Just because someone has hundreds of thousands of followers does not necessarily make him or her a household name across the entire country’s online population. However, what counts as a mass medium here still tends to be divided along linguistic lines. WhatsApp and TikTok are other platforms where the circulation of sermons and video clips is made simple. Using these channels from a handheld smartphone has allowed for an entirely new kind of parasocial activity that previously would have been impossible. There seems to be little doubt that different kinds of Christian expressions are now flourishing within the mediated public sphere. At any given moment, one can come across posts and messages through “street preaching,”⁴¹ Calling on people to develop personal relationships with Jesus. Alongside that, others would be stressing the importance of community sacraments such as baptism or Holy Communion. Another common thread the study found is cult leaders fostering harmful dependencies with devotees convinced they alone have a hotline to heaven. But what happens when people buy into beliefs that are bad for society? It messes them up with something chronic, distorting views on everything from personal growth and the entire community. Unhealthy fixations between prophets who claim connections no one else shares with divinities, they say followers need links from or risk losing out either spiritually (think: salvation) or materially (jobs/houses/cars). These themes play out repeatedly among different cults analysed here. Leaders sugar-coat control with claims such as what a respondent stated:

My prophet told me I would have died by now if I had not attended prayer meetings regularly and that it was only my prayers that kept me safe. From that day to date, I have not missed a prayer meeting, and that has brought positivity into my life. I have not fallen sick frequently, which is a good thing.

Now and then, there might be instances when someone hears a message from the pulpit on Sunday morning and then spends the rest of the week worrying. A respondent stated that their prophets told them not to go on holidays on particular days of the week, such as Wednesday evenings, because things may fall apart on that day. One of the churches that is more involved in these acts is the ‘Thursday lunchtime ministry’ that encourages this kind of magical thinking. Here is a story illustrating the point stated by a key informant. The informant stated:

If someone falls sick in our ministry, he or she does not need to seek medical help because he or she has been promised a cure forthcoming via divine intervention instead. Several members have been cured of both daily and chronic sicknesses by our ministry.

⁴¹ Isaac Boaheng, Clement Amoako and Samuel Boahen “‘Kejetia Preaching’: An Analysis of Contemporary Phenomena of Street Preaching in Kumasi, Ghana,” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)* 5, no. 1 (2024): 13.

Also, the study found that financial promises have a huge sway and often lead to terrible investment decisions and donations. A respondent remarked:

They sometimes promise investors cashback straight off the bat, but this never happens. I was lured into investing in one of them, but was finally chased away by their men with nothing.

In contrast, the study found that some of these prophets are not all the time deceitful as they can predict the future of their followers, which may go a long way to save them from impending dangers. A respondent remarked:

My encounter with two prophets in my attempts to seek spiritual guidance and answers to my joblessness after I had been looking for a job from one end to the other for several years. I was finally told by them to go and make peace with my paternal auntie, whom I have begrudged for meddling in my marriage, which led to a huge misunderstanding between me and my wife. My wife now lives with her parents and refuses to come back to me. Lo and behold, I found a job after I made peace with her, and there has been frequent communication between my wife and me. She might even come back to me soon.

The Broader Societal Implications of Neo-Prophetic Theologies, Particularly in Terms of Social Cohesion, Economic Behaviour and Political Engagement

The implications of these Neo-Prophetic Theologies discussed above go beyond individuals, but they have far-reaching effects on society as a whole. Socially, such beliefs can unite and divide families and communities at the same time. The study found that Neo-Prophetic Theologies weaken social ties and split communities into rival camps; however, these theologies, according to some respondents, unite individuals in societies as they mend broken relationships and provide a source of livelihood to individuals. Nonetheless, they encourage believers to chase after divine cash prizes, instead of working hard like good Protestants. This could stall economic growth if nobody works hard to invest. These also bring down standards in education because most of the youth are deceived by these prophets that their trust in God can bring them a degree when they sow seeds for heaven.

Furthermore, politics in the country is also affected by these prophets, and politics is also played out among the owners of prophetic ministries. The study revealed that these prophets can influence policies in the country by giving false revelations from God about future events to people in power. They also use these false prophecies to gain favours from government officials to back them in what they do and their ministries over other ministries. This creates rivalry and competition among these prophets. This might amount to religious interference in the country's government, which undermines democracy. By suggesting spiritual answers to social problems, some politicians then take up and overlook the practical steps that are needed to resolve national problems. Finally, the study found that tackling poverty becomes more difficult as officials and church members listen to church leaders who say joblessness is due to insufficient belief in God and the people's inability to sow seeds for God rather than a lack of decent jobs.

It is important to acknowledge that transforming deep-rooted neo-prophetic theologies in Ghanaian society is a long-term endeavour that requires sustained commitment, patience, and a human-centred approach. Anderson's research has explored some of these theologies, namely: anointing, prayer, the concept of the enemy, *et cetera*.⁴² By actively involving religious leaders and communities as well as the media as partners in this process, leveraging their moral authority and influence, and promoting a culture of respect, compassion, and accountability, one can create a safer and more equitable true Christian environment for the Christians in Ghana.

⁴² George Jnr Anderson, "Ghana's Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity: Future Prospects," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 5, no. 1 (2019): 16–27.

Actions Taken by Civil Society to Combat Misleading Religious Messages on Social Media

Nevertheless, the study found that civil society in Ghana is taking action against misleading religious messages on social media. Non-governmental organisations, religious groups, and advocacy organisations have all started campaigns to warn people about lies in prophecy and religion that are designed to exploit them. For example, the Christian Council of Ghana has criticised self-styled prophets who scare worshippers for money and has informed Ghanaians to be careful around such figures. Meanwhile, IMANI Africa, a think tank based in Accra, in an interview with some of their officers, stated that they are educating and cautioning the public to be able to tell the difference between real religious teachings and scams. Their campaign, called 'Faith and Reason', tries to do just that by using facts to show why some practices may not be very holy after all. Campaign activities include educating communities through schools and churches; making sure information about what is true or false gets out there as widely as possible via newspapers, etc.; plus holding events where these issues can be debated publicly. There are even some radio shows that have set up debates between experts in Christianity about these acts. Listeners then get both sides' points of view before coming to their conclusions about the phenomenon. By encouraging people to think more critically, these organisations hope individuals will not be taken in by charlatans wanting cash donations, because someone has to put a stop to these crimes.

Also, alongside checking traditional beliefs with family and friends as well as tasking legal advisors, regulating bodies and internet service providers to act as watchdogs to help prevent the contents of these prophets from going online too often without scrutiny. They include the National Communication Authority, whose remit covers broadcast telecommunications issues, plus a cyber unit looking at illegal activity in the digital world, such as hacking bank accounts. The NCA has put in place measures to oversee what online broadcasters do. If these measures are not followed by someone and they either share information that is not true or exploit people, the NCA can punish them.⁴³ Government efforts include teaming up with social media such as Facebook or Twitter, which agree to help stop posts breaking community guidelines or being used to scam others. In addition, a key informant submitted that cybersecurity laws are on the floor of parliament to be passed soon. If passed, they would aim to stop individuals from suffering mental harm or losing wealth because someone made a false claim linked to religion online. These steps indicate authorities have pledged to safeguard ordinary people against the negative effects of false beliefs circulating on the web. One way to tackle wrong teachings online is to promote skills that enable readers or viewers to think carefully about what they see or hear in media reports. This type of education is needed now more than ever. Manu's findings explain how messages on television by the neo-prophetic churches are a key contributing factor to some adverse occurrences in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.⁴⁴ Different bodies could work together on educational projects to teach the importance of scrutinising various sources of news alongside techniques for spotting them if facts have been distorted purposefully. This is something known formally as 'media literacy'. Such teachings might be added across subjects taught formally at schools and still incorporated in campaigns aimed at a wider audience, too. Religious leaders could play a role in getting worshippers to join calls demanding the ability to judge between Neo-Prophetic Theologies and good ones. This will go a long way to minimise the power of the fake prophets or men of God.

Moreover, the study found that the Christian Council of Ghana has started this campaign to educate the youth about these false prophets and their message. On July 11, 2024, the council released a press statement to the Christian Ecumenical Bodies in Ghana stating the council's resolution on the practices of some prophets in the neo-prophetic movements, claiming to be "Messiahs" but are

⁴³ "National Communications Authority. Report," 2023.

⁴⁴ Eric Manu, "Neo-Prophetic Christianity and Television in Kumasi: A Religious-Impact Assessment," *European Journal of Communication and Media Studies* 2, no. 1 (2023): 1–11.

identified by the council to be “false teachers and messiahs.”⁴⁵ The council fears, among other things, that false prophets may take advantage of young people, particularly if their messages are rebroadcast on social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, among others. By giving individuals these abilities, society can develop resilience against information and promote a climate of critical thinking. If people talk more openly about their religious beliefs and practices, then wild claims will seem less mysterious. Sensationalist stories may carry less weight if taboos surrounding questioning spiritual leaders can also be broken down. People may feel more able to decide for themselves how to act, including whether or not to donate money. Such skills don’t just aid personal judgment, but they foster community resistance towards dogmatic messages too (from those intending exploitation).

RECOMMENDATIONS

To foster a more discerning and inclusive society in Ghana, stakeholders must prioritise media literacy education while strengthening regulatory oversight. Schools should integrate critical thinking skills that empower students to evaluate digital content and religious teachings objectively, with religious leaders serving as partners in these educational initiatives through collaborative discussions of online sermons and theological claims.

A comprehensive approach requires establishing specialised regulatory teams to address harmful religious content on digital platforms, supported by clear legal frameworks that balance freedom of belief with protection from exploitation. This must be complemented by intentional community engagement efforts that bring together diverse faith communities through shared activities and dialogue, creating pathways for mutual understanding while working collectively toward common social goals that prioritise cohesion and collective well-being over divisive theological narratives.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the circulation of neo-prophetic theologies on social media by self-proclaimed prophets in Ghana, focusing on how these challenge concepts of truth and impact society. The research revealed that platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok have enabled these figures to reach a wider Ghanaian audience, leading to increased participation in both online and offline religious activities. While sometimes incompatible with orthodox Christian thought or motivated by financial gain, these teachings have significantly reshaped patterns of religious observance and secular behaviours within Ghana’s digital ecology. The impacts are multifaceted, ranging from individual benefits to financial hardships due to excessive giving, and broader societal effects such as reduced community cohesion. The study highlights an urgent need for enhanced media literacy and critical thinking skills to effectively navigate online religious content, suggesting a balance between spiritual aspects and worldly concerns. The findings indicate that collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, educational institutions, religious authorities, and civil society organisations, could help minimise potential exploitation and protect individuals. As digital platforms facilitate easier access to religious materials, there remains a risk associated with the widespread dissemination of certain theological concepts. To address these challenges, policymakers must take proactive measures to mitigate the spread of potentially harmful neo-prophetic theologies, especially as new technologies emerge.

Implications for Future Research

Future research directions include exploring the long-term impacts of false religious beliefs on individuals’ lives, investigating potential sociopolitical consequences such as declining voter turnout and worsening poverty rates, and examining the effectiveness of media literacy programs and legal regulations in balancing religious freedom with public safety.

⁴⁵ Christian Council of Ghana, ““Beware of False Teachers and Messiahs,” Christian Ecumenical Body in Ghana,” July 11, 2024. <https://www.christiancouncilofghana.org/PDF/For-Immediate-Release-Beware-of-False-Teachers-and-Messiahs.pdf> Accessed on 28th February, 2025.

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