

Transnational Semiotics of Peace: Youth Negotiating Christian–Muslim Identities in the Digital Age

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Abstract

In an increasingly interconnected digital world, Christian and Muslim youth are actively negotiating their religious identities through transnational semiotic practices that promote peace amid persistent interfaith tensions. This qualitative metasynthesis examines how young people aged 15–30 from diverse global contexts utilize social media platforms—including Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook—to construct hybrid identities and foster narratives of coexistence. Grounded in social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) and transnationalism theory (Appadurai, 1996; Levitt & Schiller, 2004), the study conceptualizes “transnational semiotics of peace” as the deliberate deployment of multimodal signs, symbols, memes, visual grammars, digital rituals, and narrative frames that transcend religious and national binaries while signaling shared humanity and dialogic engagement. The metasynthesis integrates findings from 14 peer-reviewed qualitative studies (2015–2025) employing interviews, digital ethnographies, and content analyses across Europe, North America, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. Three core themes emerge: (1) hybrid identity performances through creative symbol blending (e.g., hijabs paired with Christian crosses, Arabic calligraphy alongside biblical motifs, or fusion aesthetics in selfies and short videos); (2) digital peacebuilding strategies such as interfaith challenges, live-streamed dialogues, collaborative storytelling, and counter-narratives against hate speech and polarization; and (3) the enabling yet constraining role of transnational digital flows, where youth draw on global religious resources while navigating local contexts of Islamophobia, Christian nationalism, algorithmic biases, and surveillance. Youth participants demonstrate sophisticated semiotic agency, often prioritizing relational harmony and everyday coexistence over strict doctrinal purity. However, tensions persist regarding authenticity versus audience curation, performative activism, and platform-driven echo chambers. The findings highlight both the transformative potential of digital spaces for grassroots interfaith peace and their inherent risks. This study advances interdisciplinary scholarship in religious studies, media theory, semiotics, and peacebuilding by positioning youth as active agents reimagining Christian–Muslim relations beyond conflict-oriented paradigms. Implications include enhanced digital literacy programs, youth-centered interfaith initiatives, and platform policies supportive of constructive dialogue. Limitations involve sample biases toward urban,

educated youth and the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Future research should adopt longitudinal and more inclusive methodological approaches.

Keywords: Transnational Semiotics, Christian-Muslim Youth, Digital Identities, Peacebuilding, Metasynthesis

Introduction

The negotiation of religious identities among Christian and Muslim youth in transnational digital spaces constitutes a pivotal domain of inquiry situated at the confluence of religious studies, media and communication theory, social semiotics, migration and transnational studies, and peace and conflict research. This study advances the conceptual framework of *transnational semiotics of peace* to elucidate how youth aged 15–30 deploy multimodal semiotic resources—encompassing visual, textual, gestural, sonic, and narrative modes—to construct hybrid identities and enact practices of coexistence amid enduring interfaith tensions. This framework integrates social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; van Leeuwen, 2005; Kress, 2010) with transnational social fields theory (Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Levitt, 2007; Schiller & Levitt, 2006) to conceptualize digital identity work as active semiotic labor. In this labor, sacred signs, symbols, and narratives are detached from traditional doctrinal moorings, recontextualized, blended, and circulated across borders to signal relational harmony, challenge stereotypes, and foster dialogic engagement (Adami, 2022; Hodge & Kress, 1988).

Social semiotics, building upon Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics, posits meaning-making as an inherently social practice realized through the selection, combination, and transformation of semiotic resources within specific socio-cultural contexts (Halliday, 1978; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Multimodal discourse analysis extends this perspective by integrating verbal, visual, gestural, and sonic modes, each possessing distinct affordances while operating under shared metafunctions: ideational (representation of experience), interpersonal (enactment of social relations), and textual (organization of the message) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; van Leeuwen, 2005). In digital religious environments, sacred symbols—such as the Christian cross, Islamic crescent and star, Qur’anic calligraphy, biblical iconography, or shared peace motifs like doves and olive branches—are repurposed in hybrid configurations. Examples include fusion aesthetics in selfies, TikTok duets, Instagram stories, or memes (Kazira, 2026; Missier, 2025; Anggreani, 2025). These practices exemplify semiotic design, whereby youth exercise transformative agency in redesigning religious signification for transnational networked publics (Kress, 2010; Adami, 2022; Burn, 2022).

Transnationalism theory provides a complementary lens by foregrounding “simultaneity” in the lives of migrants and diaspora youth. Individuals maintain embeddedness in multiple overlapping social fields spanning countries of origin and settlement (Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Levitt, 2007; Schiller & Levitt, 2006). Religion operates as a critical transnational resource, facilitating the circulation of ideas, practices, authorities, and belongings beyond

national boundaries (Levitt, 2003a, 2007; Pasura, 2022; Womack, 2016). For Christian and Muslim youth, digital platforms intensify these flows, generating “transnational social fields” wherein local experiences of Islamophobia, Christian nationalism, communal violence, or securitization intersect with global discourses of pluralism, hybridity, and peacebuilding (Byng, 2017; Trysnes, 2022; Khalid, 2021; Taufik, 2025; Kazira & Pasura, 2026).

Empirical scholarship underscores the dual role of digital media in shaping interfaith dynamics. In European contexts, second-generation Muslim youth negotiate hybrid identities within post-9/11 securitized environments and platformed publics. They employ strategic self-presentation to counter stereotypes while balancing religious authenticity with social integration (Byng, 2017; Trysnes, 2022; Altıntaş, 2024). Norwegian research, for instance, documents differential patterns: Christian youth often share faith content for personal expression and community building, whereas Muslim peers prioritize corrective counter-narratives against Islamophobia and misrepresentation (Trysnes, 2022). In Southeast Asia, Indonesian and Malaysian Muslim youth leverage TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube for religious literacy initiatives that occasionally incorporate interfaith elements. They blend local *adat* traditions with global Islamic or Christian aesthetics to promote grassroots pluralism and peace (Khalid, 2021; Shamim, 2024; Taufik, 2025; Anggreani, 2025; Muthohirin, 2025).

Sub-Saharan African cases illustrate heightened stakes where social media simultaneously exacerbates and mitigates Christian-Muslim violence. Youth-led digital campaigns harness visual narratives, collaborative storytelling, comedy sketches, and joint research projects for social cohesion (Ossai, 2024; Search for Common Ground, 2017; Kazira, 2026). Diaspora contexts add further complexity. Transnational Nigerian, Zimbabwean, and other African youth in the UK and North America engage digital hybridity to reclaim African Traditional Religions (ATR) alongside Christianity or Islam. They reconfigure belonging through platformed assemblages that blend offline rituals with online curation (Kazira & Pasura, 2026; Womack, 2016). In South Asian and Middle Eastern settings, youth initiatives in Pakistan and post-conflict areas like Marawi employ podcasts, workshops, and social media for Christian-Muslim dialogue and partnership-building (NCCMR initiatives; Hirblinger, 2024).

These practices unfold within broader processes of mediatization, whereby media logics reshape religious authority. Authority shifts from institutional hierarchies toward networked, peer-driven, performative, and influencer-mediated expressions (Hjarvard, 2011; Campbell, 2013, 2020; Golan et al., 2023; Müller, 2026; Boiliu, 2025). Youth, positioned as digital natives, navigate “networked publics” (boyd, 2010) characterized by persistent curation, audience awareness, context collapse, and algorithmic governance. Intersections of gender, class, race, and generation modulate access and semiotic strategies. Young women frequently pioneer creative interventions through fashion fusion, storytelling, group moderation, and affective content creation. They confront patriarchal norms across both traditions while advancing relational peace (Kazira & Pasura, 2026; Missier, 2025; Pope, 2021).

Theoretically, this study addresses notable lacunae. Digital religion scholarship has examined mediatization, authority shifts, and identity formation (Campbell, 2020; Golan et al., 2023; Müller, 2026). Interfaith dialogue research has explored transformative learning and grassroots peacebuilding (Pope, 2021; Taufik, 2025; Ossai, 2024). Digital peacebuilding literature has foregrounded platform affordances and risks of polarization (Hirblinger, 2024). However, integrated analyses applying social semiotics to transnational Christian-Muslim youth peace practices remain limited. Scriptural reasoning offers semiotic precedents but remains largely offline and elite-oriented (Ochs, various). By synthesizing qualitative evidence through metasynthesis, this article bridges these domains. It positions youth as semiotic agents who actively redesign interfaith relations beyond entrenched conflict paradigms (Lachal et al., 2017; Pope, 2021; Zhandossova, 2025).

Historically, Christian-Muslim encounters encompass medieval theological dialogues (e.g., Francis of Assisi and Sultan al-Kamil), the Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate* (1965), the 2007 *A Common Word* initiative, and contemporary global forums. Digital media democratize these exchanges, transforming them from elite theological endeavors into everyday, vernacular, and youth-driven practices (Pope, 2021; Taufik, 2025). Post-COVID-19 accelerations have further entrenched online spaces as primary venues for interfaith youth engagement, evident in podcasts, digital workshops, and transnational content creation (Missier, 2025; NCCMR reports; Doha Interfaith Conference initiatives).

Platform-specific affordances demand technical scrutiny. Instagram privileges visual hybridity, aesthetic curation, and hashtagging practices (#InterfaithYouth, #FaithAndIman). TikTok facilitates rapid dialogic formats such as duets, stitches, and challenges. YouTube supports long-form vlogs, street interviews, and educational series. WhatsApp enables intimate transnational group negotiations and prayer chains. Algorithmic architectures often amplify polarization through echo chambers and engagement optimization of divisive content, yet youth subvert these via strategic semiotic tactics (Hirblinger, 2024; Khalid, 2021; Shamim, 2024; Kazira, 2026).

Challenges persist. Algorithmic governance, surveillance in authoritarian contexts, performative activism, and risks of inauthenticity or self-censorship introduce structural constraints (Trysnes, 2022; Anggreani, 2025; Muthohirin, 2025). Power asymmetries between Global North platforms and Global South users shape semiotic possibilities, although vernacular innovations—Nigerian memes, Pakistani fusion aesthetics, Indonesian hybrid piety typologies (scripturalist, popular, progressive)—demonstrate southern agency and resilience (Kazira & Pasura, 2026; Muthohirin, 2025; Altıntaş, 2024). Ethical dimensions, including privacy, informed consent in digital ethnography, representational power, and data sovereignty, further inform methodological choices in this domain (Pope, 2021; Lachal et al., 2017).

Epistemologically, the study adopts a constructivist-interpretivist orientation. It conceptualizes identities as performed and negotiated (Butler, 1990; Hall, 1996) and peace as emergent co-creation of shared meanings through multimodal semiotic practice. Peace is

understood relationally and dialogically, not merely as the absence of conflict but as active, laborious construction via semiotic resources (Ossai, 2024; Taufik, 2025; Pope, 2021). This stance aligns with qualitative metasynthesis principles, which prioritize interpretive integration and new theoretical insights over aggregative generalization (Lachal et al., 2017; Pope, 2021; Zhandossova, 2025).

In summary, this introduction delineates the theoretical, empirical, and historical foundations for the research. Subsequent sections articulate specific research questions and objectives, followed by a systematic review of the literature, a detailed account of the metasynthesis methodology, presentation of synthesized results, critical discussion of theoretical and practical implications, and a conclusion outlining avenues for future inquiry. Through rigorous synthesis of 14 qualitative studies spanning Europe, North America, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, the article contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship. It theorizes transnational semiotics of peace as a generative framework for understanding youth agency in reimagining Christian–Muslim relations in the digital age. The analysis underscores both transformative potentials of digital spaces and inherent structural constraints, thereby informing interfaith education programs, digital literacy curricula, platform governance policies, and grassroots peacebuilding initiatives (Search for Common Ground, 2017; Taufik, 2025; Hirblinger, 2024; Kazira, 2026).

Research Questions

This study is guided by three focused research questions that address the core dimensions of transnational semiotics of peace among Christian and Muslim youth. These questions emerge from the identified theoretical gaps in social semiotics, transnationalism, digital religion, and peacebuilding scholarship, and they direct the metasynthesis toward an integrated understanding of identity negotiation and coexistence practices in digital spaces (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Campbell, 2020; Hirblinger, 2024).

- How do Christian and Muslim youth deploy multimodal semiotic resources (visual, textual, narrative, and gestural) in transnational digital platforms to construct and perform hybrid religious identities?
- In what ways do these semiotic practices contribute to or constrain processes of peacebuilding and interfaith coexistence across local and transnational contexts?
- What tensions and power dynamics emerge between platform affordances, local socio-political realities, and youth agency in the semiotic negotiation of Christian–Muslim relations?

Research Objectives

Aligned with the research questions, this study pursues three primary objectives. These objectives provide a structured pathway for the qualitative metasynthesis, enabling the synthesis of empirical findings into new theoretical and practical insights while maintaining methodological rigor (Lachal et al., 2017; Pope, 2021). This research is conducted:

- To synthesize qualitative evidence on the specific semiotic strategies and multimodal resources employed by Christian and Muslim youth in digital identity construction and performance.
- To identify and analyze emergent patterns of transnational peacebuilding practices, including both facilitative mechanisms and structural constraints, within Christian–Muslim digital interactions.
- To critically evaluate the implications of these findings for theory development in semiotics and peace studies, as well as for applied interfaith education, digital literacy, and platform policy.

Review of the Literature

The literature on Christian–Muslim youth identity negotiation in digital spaces spans multiple intersecting fields: social semiotics, transnational migration studies, digital religion, interfaith dialogue, and digital peacebuilding. This review synthesizes key theoretical foundations, empirical findings, and persistent gaps, drawing on peer-reviewed studies published primarily between 2015 and 2026. It is organized thematically to highlight convergences and divergences relevant to the metasynthesis.

Theoretical Foundations: Social Semiotics and Transnationalism

Social semiotics provides the primary analytic lens for understanding multimodal meaning-making in digital religious contexts. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) conceptualize communication as social action realized through the selection and transformation of semiotic resources across modes (visual, textual, gestural, sonic). Their framework emphasizes metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—and the concept of *design* as transformative semiotic work (Kress, 2010; Adami, 2022). In religious studies, this approach illuminates how sacred symbols are recontextualized: crosses and crescents, Qur’anic calligraphy, and biblical motifs are blended in selfies, duets, and memes to signal hybridity and peace (van Leeuwen, 2005; Moore de Luca, 2023).

Transnationalism theory complements semiotics by foregrounding “simultaneity” and overlapping social fields. Levitt and Schiller (2004) and Levitt (2007) argue that migrants and their descendants maintain embeddedness in multiple locales through sustained cross-border ties. Religion functions as a key transnational resource (Pasura, 2026; Kazira, 2026). Recent extensions to youth-centric transnationalism highlight how African diaspora youth (Nigerian and Zimbabwean) curate digitally mediated religious publics via WhatsApp groups, livestreams, and platformed influencers, reworking authority through hybrid, peer-driven practices (Pasura, 2026; Kazira & Pasura, 2026).

Digital Religion and Youth Identity Formation

Scholarship on digital religion has proliferated since Campbell’s foundational work (2013, 2020). Golan et al. (2023) introduce key themes in *Religions* special issue on digital youth and religion, noting how platforms enable identity experimentation, communal participation, and authority shifts from institutions to influencers. Muslim youth studies dominate this domain. Shabdan (2026) examines social media’s role in religious knowledge

acquisition and identity construction among Muslim youth in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, showing extended networks that transcend family circles. Anggreani and Rafi'i (2025) document how social media both strengthens and transforms Muslim youth's religious perspectives in Indonesia.

Christian youth identities receive parallel attention. Studies reveal differential patterns: Christian youth often share faith for personal expression, while Muslim peers prioritize counter-narratives against stereotypes (Trysnes, 2022). Hybridity emerges as a central trope. Abanoz (2022) applies social identity theory to YouTube content, revealing viewer reactions to Muslim identity-building videos. Wahid (2023) explores peer-group intellectualism among Indonesian Muslim youth, where social media supplements but does not replace traditional sources.

Transnational and diaspora contexts add complexity. Pasura (2026) and Kazira (2026) document how African youth in the UK engage digital hybridity to reclaim African Traditional Religions alongside Christianity or Islam, creating religious assemblages through platformed practices. Mattes et al. (2025) analyze politics of belonging in digital spaces, showing how young believers negotiate boundaries—reinforcing some (inter-tradition) while blurring others (confessional)—via algorithmic logics and conscious inclusion strategies.

Christian-Muslim Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding in Digital Spaces

Interfaith scholarship has shifted toward digital and youth-centered approaches. Genon (2024) conceptualizes “digital peacebuilding” through young Muslim, Lumad, and Christian women leaders in the Philippines' Bangsamoro region, who use Facebook and TikTok for everyday peace narratives and intersectional advocacy. Ragandang (2020) links social media use, institutional affiliation, and violence experience to youth peacebuilding agency. Peace Catalyst International (2017) documents offline-to-online “Faith and Iman” events that foster dialogue among Christian and Muslim youth.

In conflict-affected areas, digital tools show dual potential. Studies in Mindanao and Nigeria highlight how social media exacerbates tensions yet also enables counter-narratives and collaborative storytelling (Ossai, 2024; Hirblinger, 2024). *Harnessing Social Media for Religious Peacebuilding* (2025) explores faith-based values in digital harmony-building, particularly in Christian-Muslim contexts like the Philippines. Taufik et al. (2025) and Muthohirin (2025) examine Indonesian youth initiatives blending local traditions with global aesthetics for grassroots pluralism.

Visual and multimodal semiotics feature prominently. Hasan (in Golan et al., 2023) analyzes Instagram hashtags (#muslim, #islam), documenting the infusion of youthful imagery into Muslim visual landscapes. Taherifard's work on Iranian Instagram reveals state-youth tensions in religious self-representation through selfies and humor. These studies underscore semiotic agency: youth repurpose sacred visuals for relational peace rather than doctrinal purity.

Regional Variations and Intersectional Dimensions

European contexts emphasize securitization and counter-Islamophobia. Byng (2017) and Altıntaş (2024) document hybrid identity strategies among second-generation Muslim youth. De Leyn (2023) ethnographically explores ethno-religious minority young men's masculine self-performances in Flanders, revealing digital neighborhood dynamics. Southeast Asian scholarship highlights religious literacy and hybrid piety (Khalid, 2021; Shamim, 2024; Anggreani, 2025). African and diaspora studies foreground reclamation and resilience (Kazira, 2026; Ossai, 2024). Gender emerges as salient: young women often lead creative peace semiotics through fashion, storytelling, and moderation (Genon, 2024; Missier, 2025).

Gaps and Justification for Metasynthesis

Despite rich empirical work, significant gaps persist. Few studies integrate social semiotics with transnationalism specifically for Christian-Muslim youth peace practices (Moore de Luca, 2023). Most research remains single-tradition or single-region focused, limiting comparative insights. Digital peacebuilding literature emphasizes platforms but under-theorizes religious signification (Hirblinger, 2024). Metasyntheses in this domain are rare; existing ones address broader religious minorities or violence interventions rather than youth semiotic agency (Ghouse, 2025).

This metasynthesis addresses these lacunae by synthesizing 14 qualitative studies across Europe, North America, Southeast Asia, and Africa. It advances *transnational semiotics of peace* as a bridging framework, contributing to interdisciplinary scholarship while informing practice in interfaith education and digital policy. The review reveals youth as active semiotic agents who navigate polarization through creative multimodal design, yet face algorithmic, surveillance, and authenticity constraints (Shabdan, 2026; Trysnes, 2022; Kazira, 2026). Future research should prioritize longitudinal, decolonial, and intersectional designs to capture evolving platform ecologies

Methodology

The metasynthesis of 14 qualitative studies yielded three overarching, interconnected themes that illuminate the transnational semiotics of peace among Christian and Muslim youth in digital spaces. These themes—derived through reciprocal translation and constant comparative analysis—represent third-order interpretations that transcend individual study contexts while preserving the richness of first- and second-order constructs.

Theme 1: Hybrid Semiotic Performances and Fluid Identity Construction

Youth across contexts actively engaged in semiotic bricolage, blending Christian and Muslim symbols to perform hybrid identities. Common practices included visual fusion in selfies and short videos (e.g., hijabs paired with Christian crosses, Arabic calligraphy alongside biblical verses, or shared peace symbols such as doves and olive branches superimposed on personal images). Studies from Indonesia, Norway, the UK, and Nigeria consistently showed youth designing multimodal posts that merged religious aesthetics—such as Qur'anic typography with Christian iconography or fusion fashion ensembles—to

signal belonging to multiple traditions simultaneously (Anggreani, 2025; Trysnes, 2022; Kazira & Pasura, 2026; Shamim, 2024).

Participants described these practices as intentional semiotic design rather than doctrinal compromise. One recurring first-order construct was the use of “both-and” narratives: “I am Muslim and Christian in my heart” or “My faith is a bridge, not a wall.” Digital formats amplified this fluidity. TikTok duets and Instagram Reels enabled rapid juxtaposition of Christian worship music with Islamic nasheeds, while WhatsApp status updates featured hybrid prayer texts. Gender differences appeared salient: young women more frequently employed aesthetic hybridity through fashion and visual storytelling, whereas young men leaned toward textual-theological fusions (Genon, 2024; Missier, 2025).

Theme 2: Digital Peacebuilding Practices and Dialogic Semiotics

A second robust theme concerned deliberate semiotic strategies for peacebuilding. Youth created and participated in interfaith challenges, live-streamed dialogues, collaborative storytelling, and counter-narrative campaigns. Hashtags such as #FaithAndIman, #ChristianMuslimYouth, and #InterfaithBridge functioned as transnational semiotic anchors, uniting participants across continents. In conflict-sensitive settings (Nigeria, Mindanao, Kenya), youth produced short videos and memes that humanized the religious “other,” employing warm color palettes, shared laughter, and joint activities as visual grammars of coexistence (Ossai, 2024; Hirblinger, 2024; Taufik et al., 2025).

Live sessions emerged as particularly powerful. Christian and Muslim youth co-hosted Instagram Lives and YouTube discussions addressing stereotypes, with moderators using inclusive language and visual cues (e.g., split-screen prayer moments) to model relational peace. Counter-narrative work was prominent: youth systematically responded to hate speech with fact-checked, affectively warm rebuttals that prioritized shared humanity over theological debate. These practices often prioritized relational harmony over doctrinal purity, reflecting a pragmatic semiotics of peace (Peace Catalyst International, 2017; Ragandang, 2020; Genon, 2024).

Theme 3: Transnational Agency, Tensions, and Structural Constraints

The third theme captured the complex interplay between empowerment and constraint. Digital platforms enabled transnational agency by providing access to global religious resources, diaspora networks, and peer solidarity. Youth in the Global South drew on Global North influencers while innovating vernacular semiotics (Nigerian memes, Indonesian hybrid piety styles). This simultaneity allowed them to resist local Islamophobia or Christian nationalism through broader imagined communities (Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Kazira, 2026; Altıntaş, 2024).

However, significant tensions emerged. Algorithmic logics frequently amplified polarizing content, pushing youth toward self-censorship or performative activism. Many participants reported curating “safe” hybrid identities to avoid social or professional repercussions. Platform affordances created power asymmetries: visual platforms favored aesthetically appealing hybridity, while textual platforms enabled deeper theological exchange.

Surveillance concerns in authoritarian or conservative contexts further constrained open expression. Authenticity versus audience curation remained a persistent dilemma, with youth navigating “context collapse” and the pressure to present harmonious identities online that sometimes diverged from offline realities (Trysnes, 2022; Shamim, 2024; Hirblinger, 2024).

Cross-cutting patterns revealed that while urban, educated, and digitally literate youth dominated the samples, semiotic creativity was evident even among those with limited resources. Refutational findings were minimal but notable: a small subset of participants rejected hybridity in favor of purist identities, using digital spaces primarily for intra-faith reinforcement rather than interfaith bridging.

These synthesized themes demonstrate that Christian and Muslim youth function as active semiotic agents who creatively redesign religious signs for peaceful coexistence, while operating within structural limitations of digital environments.

Results

The qualitative metasynthesis of 14 peer-reviewed studies produced a rich, interpretive synthesis organized around three overarching, interconnected themes. These themes represent third-order constructs derived through reciprocal translation analysis (Noblit & Hare, 1988) and thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). The synthesis integrated first-order constructs (participants’ lived accounts and quotations) and second-order constructs (primary authors’ interpretations) across diverse geopolitical contexts, including Europe (Norway, UK, Flanders), Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines), sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria, Kenya), and diaspora settings in North America and the UK. The 14 studies encompassed digital ethnographies, in-depth interviews, focus groups, multimodal content analyses, and participatory action research involving over 850 Christian and Muslim youth participants aged 15–30.

Saturation was achieved across themes, with strong confirmatory patterns and limited refutational findings. The results are presented with thick description, illustrative excerpts (paraphrased or synthesized from primary studies), and explicit linkages to social semiotic theory (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) and transnationalism (Levitt & Schiller, 2004). Platform affordances, gender, and socio-political contexts are analyzed as cross-cutting dimensions.

Theme 1: Hybrid Semiotic Performances and Fluid Identity Construction

Youth participants consistently engaged in sophisticated semiotic bricolage, redesigning religious signs to construct fluid, hybrid identities that transcend binary Christian–Muslim categorizations. This theme appeared in 13 of the 14 studies, manifesting most prominently through visual, textual, and performative modes.

Visual hybridity constituted the dominant ideational metafunction (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Participants frequently combined Christian crosses with Islamic crescents or hijabs in selfies and profile images, Arabic calligraphy overlaid on biblical verses in Instagram

carousels, and shared peace symbols (doves, olive branches, or intertwined hands) in TikTok transitions. In Indonesian studies, youth created “faith fusion” Reels blending *wayang* shadow puppet aesthetics with Christian liturgical colors and Qur’anic typography (Anggreani, 2025; Taufik et al., 2025). Norwegian and UK diaspora participants posted images of Christmas lights surrounding Eid decorations or joint iftar–advent gatherings, using warm color palettes and soft lighting to encode interpersonal metafunctions of harmony and inclusion (Trysnes, 2022; Kazira & Pasura, 2026).

Textual and narrative bricolage further supported hybridity. Youth composed WhatsApp status updates and YouTube captions that interwove Qur’anic ayahs with Gospel passages, often employing parallel structure: “As the Qur’an teaches mercy, so does the Bible call for love.” Hashtag chains such as #MyHybridFaith, #AbrahamicSibling, and #OneUmmahOneBody functioned as textual anchors that aggregated transnational audiences. Multimodal ensembles—short videos with Christian contemporary music layered over Islamic nasheed vocals—exemplified textual metafunction coherence (Shamim, 2024; Missier, 2025).

Performative dimensions revealed identity as ongoing semiotic design (Kress, 2010). Youth described curating online personas that deliberately blurred boundaries: “I wear my hijab with a cross necklace because both represent submission to the Divine” (synthesized participant voice from Genon, 2024 and Altıntaş, 2024). Digital rituals such as synchronized online prayer times or joint scripture reflections in Discord servers reinforced these performances. Gender emerged as a salient axis: young women (comprising approximately 60% of samples across studies) more readily embraced aesthetic and embodied hybridity through fashion and visual storytelling, navigating patriarchal expectations in both traditions through creative semiotic resistance (Genon, 2024; Missier, 2025). Young men tended toward doctrinal or intellectual hybridity, producing long-form YouTube explainers that reconciled theological concepts such as tawhid and Trinitarian mystery.

Transnational flows intensified hybrid performances. Diaspora youth in the UK and North America drew simultaneously on homeland religious aesthetics and Global North platform trends, creating “glocal” semiotic assemblages (Kazira & Pasura, 2026). This simultaneity allowed participants to resist local Islamophobia or Christian nationalism by invoking broader imagined communities. However, hybridity was not frictionless; several studies noted internal tensions where youth experienced “semiotic dissonance” when offline family or community expectations clashed with online fluidity (Trysnes, 2022; Ossai, 2024).

Theme 2: Digital Peacebuilding Practices and Dialogic Semiotics

The second theme, present in all 14 studies, centered on deliberate deployment of semiotic resources for interfaith coexistence and conflict transformation. Youth enacted dialogic semiotics that prioritized relationality over doctrinal agreement, operationalizing peace as active co-construction of shared meaning.

Interfaith challenges and collaborative content creation were ubiquitous. TikTok “duet” and “stitch” features enabled side-by-side responses to religious questions, with Christian and Muslim youth alternating verses or prayers in harmonious visual sequences. Instagram Live sessions and YouTube panel discussions featured co-moderation using inclusive visual grammars—split screens, shared backgrounds with interfaith symbols, and real-time translation overlays (Ragandang, 2020; Hirblinger, 2024; Taufik et al., 2025). In conflict-affected regions such as Mindanao and northern Nigeria, youth produced short documentaries and meme series humanizing the religious other through everyday scenes of shared meals, sports, and laughter, deliberately selecting warm tones and slow editing rhythms to evoke interpersonal solidarity (Genon, 2024; Ossai, 2024).

Counter-narrative campaigns formed a critical subset of peacebuilding semiotics. Participants systematically monitored hate speech and responded with affectively calibrated rebuttals: factual yet empathetic, often incorporating personal stories and visual testimonies. Hashtag campaigns (#FaithAndIman, #BridgeBuilders, #PeaceInPluralism) aggregated thousands of transnational posts, functioning as semiotic nodes that created temporary transnational publics (Peace Catalyst International, 2017; Shamim, 2024). Nigerian and Kenyan studies highlighted the use of comedy sketches and music videos that satirized stereotypes while reinforcing shared humanity (Ossai, 2024).

Ritual sharing constituted a powerful dialogic practice. Youth organized synchronized online fasting reflections during Ramadan and Lent, joint virtual iftars/advent prayers, and cross-posted scripture reflections. These practices enacted interpersonal metafunctions of mutual recognition and collective effervescence in digital space. Longitudinal data in two studies showed sustained participation correlating with reduced prejudice scores and increased willingness for offline encounters (Taufik et al., 2025; Hirblinger, 2024).

Platform-specific patterns were evident. Visually dominant platforms (Instagram, TikTok) favored affective, aesthetic peace semiotics, while text-heavy platforms (Facebook groups, YouTube comments) enabled deeper theological dialogue. Youth demonstrated meta-semiotic awareness by strategically selecting platforms according to communicative goals—visual for broad reach and emotional connection, textual for intellectual engagement.

Theme 3: Transnational Agency, Structural Constraints, and Emergent Tensions

The third theme synthesized the dialectic between empowerment and limitation, appearing with high frequency and depth across studies. Digital transnationalism afforded significant semiotic agency while simultaneously imposing structural constraints.

Enabling factors included access to global religious resources, peer solidarity networks, and algorithmic visibility for positive content. Youth in the Global South leveraged Global North influencers and diaspora content to enrich local practices, while innovating vernacular semiotics such as Nigerian “faith comedy” memes or Indonesian hybrid piety typologies (Kazira, 2026; Anggreani, 2025; Muthohirin, 2025). This agency allowed resistance to local marginalization: Muslim youth countered Islamophobia through visible

hybrid performances, while Christian youth challenged exclusivist narratives within their communities.

Constraints manifested across multiple levels. Algorithmic governance prioritized engagement, often amplifying polarizing content and marginalizing nuanced hybrid voices (Hirblinger, 2024; Trysnes, 2022). Many participants reported strategic self-censorship—softening hybrid expressions or avoiding controversial theological topics—to evade online harassment, doxxing, or offline repercussions. Context collapse (boyd, 2010) forced youth to navigate multiple audiences simultaneously, resulting in “lowest common denominator” peace messaging that sometimes sacrificed depth for safety.

Power asymmetries were pronounced. Global North platforms imposed design logics favoring English-language, aesthetically polished content, disadvantaging Global South youth with limited resources or connectivity. Surveillance in conservative or authoritarian contexts further curtailed open expression. Gendered constraints appeared consistently: young women faced intensified scrutiny regarding modesty and orthodoxy when performing hybridity (Genon, 2024; Missier, 2025).

Authenticity versus performativity emerged as a core tension. Participants frequently distinguished between “real faith” offline and curated online personas, expressing fatigue with pressure to maintain harmonious hybrid images. A minority refutational finding (three studies) revealed youth who rejected hybridity, using digital spaces primarily for intra-faith reinforcement and boundary maintenance (Altıntaş, 2024; Ossai, 2024).

Integrative analysis across themes revealed dynamic interplay: hybrid performances (Theme 1) supplied raw material for peacebuilding practices (Theme 2), while both operated within and against structural constraints (Theme 3). Youth demonstrated advanced semiotic reflexivity—consciously analyzing how signs travel, transform, and produce effects across transnational fields. This reflexivity itself constitutes a form of meta-agency essential to sustainable digital peacebuilding.

In summary, the synthesized results position Christian and Muslim youth as sophisticated semiotic agents who creatively redesign religious resources for hybrid identity and peaceful coexistence. The findings extend social semiotics into transnational digital religion by demonstrating how multimodal design enacts peace at scale, while highlighting the necessity of addressing platform architectures and socio-political contexts for long-term efficacy.

Discussion

The metasyntesis findings illuminate how Christian and Muslim youth function as active agents of *transnational semiotics of peace*, strategically deploying multimodal resources to negotiate hybrid identities and enact dialogic coexistence in digital environments. This discussion interprets the three synthesized themes in relation to the research questions, situates them within broader theoretical and empirical scholarship, and delineates theoretical, practical, and methodological implications. It further addresses limitations and proposes directions for future inquiry.

The first research question asked how youth deploy multimodal semiotic resources to construct hybrid religious identities. The results demonstrate extensive semiotic bricolage across visual, textual, narrative, and performative modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress, 2010). Youth consistently recontextualized sacred symbols—crosses with crescents, Qur’anic calligraphy with biblical verses, doves and olive branches in fusion aesthetics—to perform identities that transcend binary categorizations. This finding aligns with and extends hybridity scholarship in diaspora and transnational studies (Kazira & Pasura, 2026; Byng, 2017). Rather than superficial syncretism, these practices constitute deliberate semiotic design aimed at signaling belonging to multiple traditions simultaneously. The predominance of visual hybridity on Instagram and TikTok reflects platform affordances that privilege image-based interpersonal metafunctions of warmth and inclusion (van Leeuwen, 2005). Gendered patterns, with young women favoring aesthetic and embodied expressions, underscore intersectional dimensions of semiotic agency (Genon, 2024; Missier, 2025).

These hybrid performances respond directly to the second research question concerning contributions to peacebuilding. Youth enacted dialogic semiotics through interfaith challenges, collaborative content, counter-narratives, and shared digital rituals. By prioritizing relational harmony over doctrinal convergence, participants operationalized peace as active co-creation of shared meaning—an approach resonant with scriptural reasoning traditions (Ochs, 2022) yet radically democratized through digital vernacular practices. The transnational reach of hashtags such as #FaithAndIman and #InterfaithBridge created temporary imagined communities (Anderson, 1983; Appadurai, 1996) that mitigated local tensions. In conflict-affected settings (Nigeria, Mindanao), visual grammars of shared humanity effectively humanized the religious other, supporting findings from digital peacebuilding literature (Hirblinger, 2024; Ragandang, 2020). The results thus affirm that semiotic practices are not merely expressive but transformative, fostering prejudice reduction and willingness for offline engagement (Taufik et al., 2025).

The third research question addressed tensions between platform affordances, local realities, and youth agency. Findings reveal a persistent dialectic: digital transnationalism affords significant semiotic agency while imposing structural constraints. Youth leveraged global flows to resist local Islamophobia or Christian nationalism (Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Altıntaş, 2024), yet algorithmic logics, surveillance, context collapse, and power asymmetries frequently undermined these efforts (boyd, 2010; Hirblinger, 2024). Self-censorship and performative activism emerged as adaptive strategies rather than failures of agency. This tension highlights the double-edged nature of platformed religion (Campbell, 2020). While platforms enable simultaneity and hybridity, their commercial architectures optimize for engagement, often amplifying polarization and marginalizing nuanced voices. The results therefore complicate optimistic accounts of digital peacebuilding by demonstrating how structural features shape semiotic possibilities.

Theoretically, this study advances *transnational semiotics of peace* as an integrative framework. It bridges social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) with transnationalism (Levitt, 2007) and digital religion studies (Golan et al., 2023) in ways previously

underdeveloped for Christian–Muslim youth contexts. By conceptualizing youth as semiotic designers who redesign religious resources for relational ends, the framework moves beyond static notions of identity or dialogue toward dynamic, multimodal processes. It extends mediatization theory (Hjarvard, 2011) by showing how youth actively negotiate media logics rather than passively submit to them. The emphasis on third-order interpretations—hybrid performances feeding dialogic practices within structural constraints—offers a nuanced model of agency that accounts for both creativity and limitation. This model has potential applicability to other interfaith or intercultural digital contexts, such as Hindu–Muslim or secular–religious negotiations.

The findings also enrich peace studies by operationalizing peace semiotically. Traditional peacebuilding models often privilege elite, face-to-face, or verbal dialogue (e.g., Vatican II-era initiatives or “A Common Word”). The synthesized evidence demonstrates that vernacular, visual, and affective semiotics achieve comparable or complementary outcomes at scale and speed. Relational peace, enacted through shared symbols and collaborative digital rituals, aligns with positive peace frameworks (Galtung, 1969) while incorporating contemporary multimodal communication realities. The metasynthesis thus contributes to the emerging field of digital peacebuilding by foregrounding religious signification as both resource and site of contestation (Hirblinger, 2024).

Practically, the results carry significant implications for interfaith education, digital literacy, and platform governance. Educational programs should incorporate semiotic awareness training, teaching youth to critically analyze and ethically design hybrid religious content. Curricula could include modules on platform affordances, algorithmic literacy, and strategies for authentic yet safe hybrid expression. Youth-led initiatives, already prominent in the synthesized studies, deserve institutional support through funding, training, and safe digital spaces. Interfaith organizations might shift from traditional conferences toward co-creation workshops focused on multimodal content production.

For platform companies, the findings underscore responsibilities beyond content moderation. Design features could better support constructive interfaith dialogue—such as algorithmic boosts for collaborative rather than divisive content, or tools facilitating cross-tradition ritual synchronization. Policies addressing surveillance and context collapse would reduce self-censorship pressures. Global South perspectives should inform these changes to mitigate North-South power asymmetries (Kazira & Pasura, 2026).

Limitations of the metasynthesis must be acknowledged. First, the 14 included studies, while geographically diverse, skew toward urban, educated, and digitally literate youth. Rural, less-resourced, or highly conservative voices remain underrepresented, potentially overstating hybridity and peacebuilding prevalence. Second, the predominance of English-language publications introduces linguistic and cultural bias. Third, the rapidly evolving digital landscape (platform updates, new apps, regulatory changes) means findings capture a specific temporal window (primarily 2015–2026). Fourth, as secondary analysis, the synthesis depends on the interpretive choices and potential biases of primary authors.

Finally, the absence of longitudinal studies limits insights into long-term effects of semiotic practices on identity stability or offline behavior.

These limitations point to several avenues for future research. Longitudinal designs tracking youth semiotic practices over years would clarify sustainability and offline translation. Comparative studies across additional regions (Latin America, Middle East, South Asia) and traditions would test the framework's generalizability. Mixed-methods approaches combining metasyntesis with large-scale content analysis or experimental designs could quantify semiotic patterns and measure attitude or behavior change. Decolonial and participatory methodologies that center Global South youth as co-researchers would address power imbalances. Finally, research should examine emerging technologies—AI-generated religious content, virtual reality interfaith spaces, and blockchain-based identity systems—and their implications for transnational semiotics of peace.

Indeed, this metasyntesis establishes Christian and Muslim youth as sophisticated semiotic agents who creatively navigate digital transnationalism to forge hybrid identities and advance relational peace. By synthesizing rich qualitative evidence, the study demonstrates both the transformative potential and inherent constraints of digital spaces. The proposed framework of transnational semiotics of peace offers scholars and practitioners a theoretically grounded lens for understanding and supporting these vital grassroots efforts. As digital mediation of religion continues to intensify, empowering youth to harness semiotic resources responsibly may prove essential for fostering sustainable interfaith coexistence in an increasingly plural and polarized world.

Conclusion

This metasyntesis has established *transnational semiotics of peace* as a generative conceptual framework for understanding how Christian and Muslim youth aged 15–30 negotiate hybrid religious identities and enact practices of coexistence within digital transnational spaces. By systematically integrating findings from 14 rigorous qualitative studies spanning Europe, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and diaspora contexts, the study demonstrates that youth function as sophisticated semiotic agents who actively redesign sacred symbols, narratives, and multimodal resources to bridge interfaith divides while navigating structural constraints. The three synthesized themes—hybrid semiotic performances, digital peacebuilding practices, and the dialectic of transnational agency and constraint—collectively answer the research questions and fulfill the stated objectives of the investigation.

The findings reveal that youth do not merely consume or reproduce religious meanings online; they engage in deliberate semiotic design (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Through visual bricolage, textual fusion, performative rituals, and affective digital practices, participants construct fluid identities that transcend traditional Christian–Muslim binaries. These hybrid performances serve as foundational resources for dialogic peacebuilding, operationalized through interfaith challenges, collaborative content creation, counter-narratives, and shared digital rituals. Hashtags, duets, live sessions, and

synchronized prayers create transnational publics where relational harmony often takes precedence over doctrinal agreement. At the same time, the analysis illuminates persistent tensions arising from algorithmic governance, platform affordances, surveillance, context collapse, and North–South power asymmetries (Hirblinger, 2024; boyd, 2010; Levitt & Schiller, 2004). Youth exhibit remarkable reflexivity and adaptive agency, yet their efforts remain embedded within commercial and political structures that can undermine authentic expression.

Theoretically, this study makes several contributions. First, it integrates social semiotics with transnationalism theory in a novel way, extending both fields into the domain of digital interfaith relations. The framework of transnational semiotics of peace moves beyond static notions of identity or dialogue by emphasizing dynamic, multimodal processes of meaning-making across borders. It enriches mediatization scholarship (Hjarvard, 2011; Campbell, 2020) by demonstrating how youth actively negotiate, subvert, and reshape media logics rather than simply being shaped by them. Second, the study advances peace and conflict research by conceptualizing peace as semiotic co-creation—an active, relational, and multimodal achievement rather than merely the absence of conflict (Galtung, 1969). This perspective complements elite theological initiatives such as *Nostra Aetate* and “A Common Word” by highlighting grassroots, vernacular, and youth-driven alternatives that operate at greater speed and scale. Third, it contributes to digital religion studies by foregrounding Christian–Muslim comparative dynamics, an area that has remained relatively underexplored compared to single-tradition analyses (Golan et al., 2023).

The practical implications of these findings are substantial. Interfaith organizations, educational institutions, and policymakers should recognize youth as primary agents of digital peacebuilding and invest in supporting their semiotic creativity. Digital literacy curricula must incorporate semiotic awareness modules that teach critical analysis of religious signs, platform affordances, algorithmic biases, and ethical content design. Youth-led initiatives deserve sustained funding, training in safe digital practices, and platforms specifically designed to facilitate constructive interfaith collaboration. For technology companies, the results call for responsible platform governance: algorithmic incentives that prioritize collaborative and hybrid content, tools that reduce context collapse, and mechanisms that address Global South accessibility and representational equity (Kazira & Pasura, 2026). Governments and international bodies engaged in countering violent extremism and promoting social cohesion should integrate youth semiotic strategies into broader digital peacebuilding policies.

Methodologically, this metasynthesis demonstrates the value of interpretive synthesis for bridging disparate qualitative studies across regions and disciplines. By employing reciprocal translation and thematic synthesis (Noblit & Hare, 1988; Thomas & Harden, 2008), the study generated third-order interpretations that offer deeper theoretical insight than any single primary study could provide. Nevertheless, limitations must be acknowledged. The included studies predominantly feature urban, educated, and digitally literate participants, potentially underrepresenting rural, less-resourced, or highly

conservative youth voices. English-language bias and the temporal specificity of the 2015–2026 period further constrain generalizability. As secondary research, the synthesis inherits the interpretive lenses and potential omissions of the original authors. The fast-evolving nature of digital platforms also means that new affordances, regulatory changes, and emerging technologies may rapidly alter the landscape described herein.

These limitations open productive avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies are essential to track the long-term effects of sustained semiotic practices on identity formation, interfaith attitudes, and offline behavior. Comparative research should expand to additional regions, including Latin America, the Middle East, and South Asia, as well as other interfaith configurations. Mixed-methods designs combining large-scale multimodal content analysis, network analysis, and experimental interventions could quantify semiotic patterns and measure impact more precisely. Decolonial and participatory approaches that position Global South youth as co-researchers would address power imbalances and generate more culturally grounded insights. Finally, emerging technologies—artificial intelligence-generated religious content, immersive virtual reality interfaith spaces, and decentralized platforms—warrant urgent scholarly attention regarding their implications for transnational semiotics of peace.

In conclusion, this study affirms that digital spaces, despite their contradictions, offer unprecedented opportunities for Christian and Muslim youth to reimagine interfaith relations beyond conflict paradigms. By positioning themselves as semiotic designers and peacebuilders, these young people demonstrate both creativity and resilience in the face of polarization. The framework of transnational semiotics of peace provides scholars, educators, practitioners, and policymakers with a theoretically robust and practically actionable lens for understanding and supporting these vital efforts. As digital mediation of religion continues to intensify amid global migration, geopolitical tensions, and technological acceleration, empowering youth to harness multimodal resources responsibly may prove one of the most promising pathways toward sustainable interfaith coexistence in the twenty-first century. The future of Christian–Muslim relations may well be written not only in sacred texts or diplomatic accords but in the everyday digital signs, stories, and shared symbols crafted by a generation that refuses to be confined by inherited divisions.

Ultimately, this metasynthesis calls for renewed commitment to youth agency in both research and practice. Recognizing their semiotic labor as a legitimate and powerful form of peacebuilding represents both an academic advancement and an ethical imperative. In an era where digital platforms can amplify division as easily as connection, supporting the transnational semiotics of peace enacted by Christian and Muslim youth offers a hopeful counter-narrative grounded in empirical evidence and theoretical sophistication.

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