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The Influence of Social Media and Digital Platforms on Dispute Resolution in Nigeria's Sharia Courts

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of social media and digital technologies on the resolution of disputes in Sharia courts in Nigeria in terms of their implication for the principles of Islamic law, fairness in procedure, and access to justice. The study uses the doctrinal and qualitative research approaches. Doctrinal approach involves analysis of existing legal framework, principles of Islamic jurisprudence, and applicable rules of dispute resolution, electronic communication, evidence, privacy, and enforcement of online settlement agreements. Qualitative approach makes use of the findings obtained from interviews of 13 respondents, which are composed of academic scholars, court officials, and lawyers. The findings show that digital technologies help improve communication, decrease costs and facilitate negotiations, mediations, and reconciliations in compliance with the principle of *sulh* in Islam. But there are problems related to authentication of electronic evidence, privacy issues, cyber security, digital divide, voluntariness of consent, jurisdictional issues, and legality of online settlements. It is suggested that digital dispute resolution can be used alongside the Sharia court dispute resolution process as long as technology innovation conforms to Islamic justice and fairness and protects parties' rights.

Keywords: Social Media, Digital Platforms, Dispute Resolution, Sharia Courts, Nigeria

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information and communication technologies has changed the way people communicate, share information, resolve conflicts and look for solutions for their disputes[1]. Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, X, along with digital means of communication, such as email, video conferencing, and online dispute resolution services have provided new ways of conflict resolution through the utilization of technologies other than physical meetings[2]. The use of information and communication technologies is

[1] Yunus Adelodun and Mubarak Nurudeen, "Navigating the New Normal: Exploring the Impact of Online Dispute Resolution on Access to Justice in Post-COVID Nigeria," *Ohio State Technology Law Journal* 20 (2023): 387.

[2] Moses Adeolu Adoi, Bukola Abosede Folarinmi, Achmad Tubagus Surur, and Hendri Hermawan Adinugraha, "Modernizing the Administration of Islamic Law in Nigeria through Digital Innovation:

characterized by fast exchange of information, storage of electronic communications, and direct communication between the parties involved in the dispute, lawyers and others[3]. Thus, digital technologies might provide assistance in dispute prevention through providing means of early communication, conflict negotiations due to exchange of offers, and mediation since neutral parties can communicate with disputants remotely[4]. However, there are several issues related to the use of these means in terms of misinformation, privacy rights' violation, validity of digital evidence, unequal access to technologies, and enforceability of agreements made using the Internet[5]. Thus, in countries where these technologies gain popularity in conjunction with traditional legal institutions, there are several aspects to consider when examining the impact of social media and digital platforms on dispute resolution[6].

Sharia courts are a significant element of the plural legal system in Nigeria, especially in some northern states where Sharia law governs particular civil cases, and in some criminal cases as dictated by the relevant laws of the states. The constitutional framework provides for Sharia Courts of Appeal under sections 275–279 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as amended, while section 277 outlines the jurisdictions of the courts largely as regards civil cases relating to Islamic personal law[7]. Sharia court institutions coexist with other methods of Islamic dispute resolution such as negotiation, mediation, reconciliation and arbitration where legally permitted[8]. These are rooted in the jurisprudence of Islam where the key emphasis is on justice, fairness, reconciliation and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Important Islamic religious sources include provisions in the Qur'an such as the appointment of arbiters in marital disputes in Qur'an 4:35, and in the reconciliation of disputing parties in Qur'an 49:9–10. The introduction of digital communications opens up opportunities in the context of achieving such goals[9]. At the same time, the use of digital communications should be assessed on the basis of the jurisdiction of the relevant court, procedural requirements, Islamic law, and rights of the parties involved[10].

Increased use of digital communications in daily social, business, and institutional interactions makes social media and digital platforms ever more relevant to the prevention and

Opportunities and Challenges," *Ahlika: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 3, no. 1 (2026): 29–67.

[3] Rashidat Olayinka Ajise, "Online Dispute Resolution as an Impetus for Addressing Early and Forced Marriages in Nigeria," *Scholars International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 9, no. 5 (2026): 169–76.

[4] Patience Omohoste Agbale, Mu'adil Faizin, and Izevbuwa Osaretin George, "Strengthening Customary Legal Protection of Sacred Natural Sites against Commercial Development in Nigeria and Indonesia," *Afro-Asian Journal of Law and Governance* 1, no. 1 (2026): 1–17.

[5] Abdulrazaq Adelodun Daibu, Taiye Oniyide, and Yunus Adelodun, "Covid-19 Pandemic and Emerging Trends in Dispute Resolution in Nigeria: From Alternative Dispute Resolution to Online Dispute Resolution," *African Journal of International and Comparative Law* 33, no. 1 (2025): 29–52.

[6] Eregbuonye Obieshi, Michael Inagbor, and Ogoma Sunday Ani, "Legal Reliability of AI-Generated Evidence in Criminal Justice Systems in Nigeria," *Africa Digital Governance and Law Review* 1, no. 1 (2026): 1–17.

[7] Engku Rabiah Adawiah Engku Ali, Umar A. Oseni, Adewale Abideen Adeyemi, and Nor Razinah Binti Mohd Zain, "Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in the Islamic Finance Industry in Malaysia: Towards a Legal Framework," Al-Shajarah: *Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 20 (2015): 19.

[8] Abdulkabeer Akinlabi Habeebullah, Aysel Aliyeva, Haoua Zeinabou, Fonkoua Moussa Abdoulaye, and Leyla Heikkinen, "Beyond the Pulpit and the Screen: Digital Fatwas and the Transformation of Islamic Legal Authority in Nigeria," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Law* 9, no. 1 (2026): 71–99.

[9] Oluwaseye Thompson Adeboye and Aderemi Olubunmi Oyebanji, "Air Pollution and the Right to Health in Nigeria: Developing an Environmental Health Liability Framework," *African Journal of Health and Environmental Law* 1, no. 1 (2026): 15.

[10] Asep Syarifuddin Hidayat, "Utilization of Technology in the Process of Dispute Resolution in Religious Courts," Mizan: *Journal of Islamic Law* 7, no. 1 (2023): 1–18.

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resolution of disputes within the framework of Nigeria's Sharia court system[11]. The exchange of WhatsApp messages, emails, discussion on online forums, and videoconferencing can help disputing parties clear up misunderstanding, convey complaints, negotiate an agreement, and seek legal advice, without necessarily meeting in person[12]. Digital communication may contain relevant documents, which can become a basis of the dispute in question, including any form of agreement, transactions, threats, or previous negotiation process, if it applies to evidentiary rules. For instance, in cases of family disputes, digital communication may assist in the initial discussion of questions regarding maintenance or reconciliation, despite the necessity of ensuring that private issues will not be disclosed and abused inappropriately[13]. On the other hand, online interactions can aggravate conflicts as a result of harassment, spreading false information, open accusations, as well as dissemination of personal data. The issue of the genuineness of electronic documents, the identification of the parties, the uneven level of digital literacy and whether the remote procedure is enough to guarantee procedural justice is also under question[14]. Hence, digital technology cannot be considered neutral, either positive or negative per se its impact needs to be evaluated through empirical evidence and Nigerian law.

In spite of increasing importance of the digital communication channels, it is still an unresolved legal issue how social media and digital technologies affect the process of conflict resolution within Sharia courts in Nigeria[15]. The key research question relates to the relationship between the new practices and mechanisms of Islamic conflict resolution. While the use of digital platforms might contribute to negotiation[16], reconciliation and availability of information, there can be uncertainties surrounding the admissibility of electronic communication, the safeguarding of personal information, acceptance of electronically mediated agreements and the treatment of online interaction during judicial processes[17]. In light of the above, the goal of this research is to investigate the impact of social media and digital platforms on the process of dispute resolution in Nigeria's Sharia courts, evaluate their potential benefits and problems and determine the adequacy of the existing legal and procedural framework as well as the necessary reforms to enhance fair and equitable dispute resolution. Four research questions will guide this research: How do social media and digital platforms impact dispute resolution in Nigeria's Sharia courts? To what extent can these technologies contribute to dispute prevention, negotiation, mediation and adjudication? What legal, procedural, ethical and practical challenges come along with the use of these technologies?

[11] Faith Kelechi Ekwe and Abdulaziz Saud Salim Almamari, "A Legal Pathway towards Adopting Digital Technology as a Sustainable Means of Addressing Environmental Challenges in Nigeria," *African Journal of Health and Environmental Law* 1, no. 1 (2026): 58 ff.

[12] Putra Halomoan Hsb and Ihsan Helmi Lubis, "E-Courts in Indonesia: The Effectiveness of Supreme Court Regulation No. 3 of 2022 on Electronic Mediation in the Religious Courts of Medan and Riau," *Al-Qadha: Jurnal Hukum Islam dan Perundang-Undangan* 13, no. 1 (2026): 19–36.

[13] Umar A. Oseni and Sodiq O. Omoola, "Prospects of an Online Dispute Resolution Framework for Islamic Banks in Malaysia: An Empirical Legal Analysis," *Journal of Financial Regulation and Compliance* 25, no. 1 (2017): 39–55.

[14] Saminu Abacha, Mu'adil Faizin, and Abdulaziz Saud Salim Almamari, "Maqasid al-Sharia and Algorithmic Governance in Digital Waqf Administration in Nigeria: Learning from Indonesia," *Africa Digital Governance and Law Review* 1, no. 1 (2026): 18–31.

[15] Muhammad Shuhufi, Fatmawati Fatmawati, Muhammad Qadaruddin, Muttaqien Muhammad Yunus, and Nainunis M. Nur, "Islamic Law and Social Media: Analyzing the Fatwa of Indonesian Ulama Council Regarding Interaction on Digital Platforms," Samarah: *Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (2022): 823–43.

[16] Andrew Ikhayere Imiefoh and Delroy Omonge, "Traditional Oaths in Africa Customary Legal System in Addressing Corruption in Public Office in Nigeria and Kenya," *Africa Frontier Law Review* 1, no. 1 (2026): 34.

[17] Chioma Chidera Ugwu, "Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) and the Future of Digital Commercial Arbitration and Mediation in Nigeria," EKETE: *International Journal of Advanced Research* 3, no. 5 (2025): 15–32.

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What reforms are needed for ensuring that digital communication is contributing effectively to dispute resolution?

2. METHOD

The study research employ a doctrinal and qualitative research approach to analyze the impact of social media and other digital technologies on dispute resolution in the Sharia Courts in Nigeria. The doctrinal method entails a descriptive and analytic technique for analyzing the pertinent legal rules, Islamic law and jurisprudence, academic literature, on dispute resolution, electronic evidence, privacy, fair procedure, and the enforcement of online settlements. Primary legal materials, which include legislation and decisions from the judiciary will be analyzed, together with secondary legal resources, including law books, academic journals, and commentaries. Much emphasis will be placed on the Islamic concept of sulh (peaceful settlement), mediation, reconciliation, consent, and safeguarding the rights of the parties. This method helps to establish whether the practice of digital dispute resolution is consistent with the laws of Islamic justice and the applicable laws in Nigeria.

Qualitative analysis uses data collected through interviews from 13 respondents including academics, court officials, and legal practitioners. Interviews are meant to elicit information on the practical application of social media and other digital tools for effective communication, negotiations, mediation, reconciliation, and settlement of disputes within Nigeria's Sharia Courts justice system. These responses have been classified according to six interview questions. Presentation has been done by coding the responses in accordance with themes that recur. Number of respondents who had provided responses relating to particular themes has been quantified. Percentage has been determined by formula: number of respondents providing response on a particular theme ÷ 13 × 100. In qualitative thematic coding, respondents may mention more than one issue and therefore the themes are not mutually exclusive and percentages will exceed 100% in total. Figures are based on the content of the interviewees provided.

Theme analysis is used to analyze the interviews by highlighting recurring themes, organizing the themes into thematic groups, and making interpretations in light of the research objectives of this study. In cases where necessary, the number of respondents who discussed certain themes is highlighted descriptively to show the frequency with which the theme has been mentioned without implying that the frequency is statistically significant or representative of the entire population. The results of the qualitative analysis are then combined with the results of the doctrinal analysis to find commonalities between the practice and law, among others, and make relevant recommendations.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Sharia Courts and the Growing Role of Digital and Social Media in Islamic Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in Nigeria

Sharia courts are an integral part of Nigeria's plural legal system, functioning within the constitution which provides for the use of Islamic law in certain aspects. Sections 275–279 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (amended) establish the Sharia Courts of Appeal of the States, their composition, jurisdictions, and powers[18]. For example, Section 277(2) states that the matters in respect of Islamic personal law, including marriage, family relations, guardianship, gifts, wills, and succession fall under the jurisdiction of Sharia Courts, depending on constitutional conditions[19]. The Sharia Court of Appeal mainly acts on the level

[18] Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, Oluwaseye Oluwayomi Ikubanni, and Nosakhare Okuonghae, "The Prospects, Challenges, and Legal Issues of Digital Banking in Nigeria," *Cogito* 14, no. 3 (2022).

[19] Umar A. Oseni, Sodiq O. Omoola, Adewale Abideen Adeyemi, and Nor Razinah Binti Mohd Zain, "Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in the Islamic Finance Industry in Malaysia: Towards a Legal Framework," *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 20 (2015): 19.

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of appeal and supervision, and lower Sharia courts act based on jurisdiction granted by relevant state laws[20]. There are 13 northern states of Nigeria which have Sharia Courts of Appeal in Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kwara, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara. The Sharia Court of Appeal is also established in the Federal Capital Territory according to section 260 of the Constitution[21]. They function according to the different systems of legal and procedural order in the states where they are located[22].

The development of digital communication in Nigeria gives grounds for using a statistical foundation to assess the importance of social media for dispute resolution in Islam. DataReportal report titled "Digital 2026: Nigeria" estimates that the number of internet users in the country was 109 million at the end of 2025, accounting for 45.5% of the population[23]. In addition, the number of social media user accounts in Nigeria was 47.8 million in October 2025, accounting for 20% of the population. Finally, there were 165 million cellular mobile communications active in the country in 2025, accounting for 69.2% of the population. The statistics show the wide distribution of digital communications although cellular mobile communications do not necessarily imply unique individuals or the usage of the Internet[24]. In addition, social media user accounts do not mean that the statistics refer to different people[25]. In reality, the popularity of communication tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram makes it possible for disputing parties to exchange messages, share documents, contact legal experts and mediators[26]. Nevertheless, statistics provided at the national level do not show the frequency of the use of digital means by Sharia courts.

The process of Islamic dispute resolution in Nigeria is made up of both judicial adjudication and consensual modes of dispute resolution like negotiation, reconciliation, mediation, and arbitration where relevant[27]. The mechanisms have been formulated based on Islamic principles which include elements of justice, mutual consultation, reconciliation, and peace in settling differences among people. The Qur'an, in verse 4:35, advises the appointment of arbiters in marital disputes, while in verses 49:9-10, it promotes reconciliation between those who are at variance with each other[28]. The above principles serve as a theoretical basis for the possibility of using modern digital technology in the context of dispute resolution mechanisms

[20] Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, "The Legal Impact and Relevance of Using Plea Bargains to Resolve Tax Disputes in Nigeria," *Brawijaya Law Journal* 9, no. 2 (2022): 196–212.

[21] Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, Oluwaseye Oluwayomi Ikubanni, Nosakhare Okuonghae, and Adefisayo Ifeoluwa Oyedeji, "The Challenges and Relevance of Technology in Administration of Justice and Human Security in Nigeria: Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Cogito* 13, no. 3 (2021): 149–171.

[22] Nor'Adha Abna Hamid, Norziah Othman, Nurhayati Abdul Ghani, Tuan Nurhafiza Raja Abdul Aziz, and Rosana Eri Puspita, "Redress Mechanism in the Financial Dispute Resolution: A Bibliometric Analysis," *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal* 10, no. 33 (2025): 179–84.

[23] Oyiza Rhoda Adinoyi, "Performing Sexuality in a Digital Environment: GenZee Culture, Technology and the Politics of Morality in Northern Nigeria," Àgídìgbo: *ABUAD Journal of the Humanities* 13, special issue (2025): 1–12.

[24] Patience Omohoste Agbale and Dike Magdalene Nwanyiuzor, "Legal Challenges and Prospects of Digital Trial Systems in Nigeria's Justice Administration," *Africa Digital Governance and Law Review* 1, no. 1 (2026): 64–80.

[25] Sophia Thabane, Benjamin Okorie Ajah, and Malefane Justice Matele, "AI and Indigenous Cultural Sovereignty: Legal Protection against Algorithmic Extraction of Community Knowledge in Africa: A Focus on Lesotho," *Africa Digital Governance and Law Review* 1, no. 1 (2026): 50–63.

[26] Omar Saad Ahmed, Hussein Ajlan Hasan, Sameer Dawood Salman Bazool, Aigul Mirzaeva, and Oudha Yousif Salman Al-Musawi, "Fitnah in the Digital Age: Regulating Social Media Misuse Through Islamic Criminal Principles," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 10, no. 2 (2025): 535–62.

[27] Abdulrauf Ambali and Ameen A. Abdulkadir, "Resolving Communal Conflicts Using Media as Alternative Approach for Peaceful Co-Existence among Tribes: Case Study of Share-Tsaragi, Kwara State, Nigeria," *Journal of Development and Society, Faculty of Social Science* 7, no. 2 (2026).

[28] Dalia Abass Ahmed and Yasein Hassan M. Osman, "Customary Justice Systems and Modern Criminal Law: Legal Pluralism in Post-Conflict Societies of Somalia and Sudan," *Afrocentric Legal Review* 1, no. 2 (2025): 13–26.

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that exist. For instance, WhatsApp messages can be used by disputants to start initial negotiations between spouses or family members while video conferences can allow the participation of disputants residing in different places in mediation[29]. Digital messages can also be used by disputants to send settlement offers or convey any necessary information before any formality takes place. However, digital negotiations do not necessarily amount to legal settlement, as the legitimacy of mediators, consent of participants, and relevant national laws become essential[30]. The use of these forms of digital technology in Nigeria's Sharia Courts might facilitate better communication among the stakeholders and the disputants; however, its effectiveness should be determined empirically, not on the basis of assumptions because of the increased usage of social media technology[31].

The incorporation of social media and digital platforms in Islamic dispute resolution can present several strengths. These include enhanced communication speed, lower travel cost, ease of exchanging documents, and easier access for those who live far from the courts[32]. However, at the same time, one needs to consider a number of difficulties related to technology, evidential, ethical, and legal concerns. Lack of internet connection, differences in digital proficiency, unreliable electronic documents, identity fraud, cyberbullying, and leakage of sensitive information about family disputes can pose barriers to effective dispute resolution[33].

3.2. Legal Framework on the Influence of Social Media and Digital Platforms on Dispute Resolution in Nigeria's Sharia Courts

The legal framework of Sharia court dispute resolution in Nigeria is based on the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as amended, the relevant state Sharia laws, and the relevant procedural rules. Section 275 provides for the setting up of a Sharia Court of Appeal in the state requiring one, whereas section 277(1)-(2)[34] gives details of the appellate and supervisory jurisdiction of the Sharia Court of Appeal in relation mainly to civil cases under Islamic personal law dealing with matters of marriage, family relations, guardianship, gifts, wills, and succession. Section 279 gives the power to the Grand Kadi to make procedural rules, subject to any state law. These sections provide the constitutional basis for determining the type of disputes that can be heard by Sharia courts, but they do not directly govern social media mediation, negotiation, and dispute resolution[35]. It is therefore necessary to look at the state laws in order to determine the jurisdiction of the lower Sharia courts and the procedure to follow in each type of dispute[36]. For example, the Kano State Sharia Courts

[29] Ahmad Muhammad Aduwal, "Analysis of Facebook Users' Comments on Amasa Firdaus Hijab Saga at the 2017 Call to Bar and the Implication for Nigeria's National Unity," *Ebonyi State University Journal of Mass Communication* 5, no. 1 (2018): 130–49.

[30] Ahmad Muhammad Auwal, "Social Media and Hate Speech: Analysis of Comments on Biafra Agitations, Arewa Youths' Ultimatum and Their Implications on Peaceful Coexistence in Nigeria," *Media and Communication Currents* 2, no. 1 (2018): 54–74.

[31] Andrew Ikhayere Imiefoh and Hassan A. Ismaila, "Intellectual Property Rights in the Creative Economy: Protecting Digital Content Creators in Nigeria and Uganda," *Afrocentric Legal Review* 1, no. 2 (2025): 27–42.

[32] Samsudeen Dayo Badmus, "The Dynamics of Intra-Religious Conflict among Sunni and Sufi Muslim Scholars in Yorubaland: Causes, Impacts, and Resolution Strategies," *Jigawa Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 9, no. 2 (2026): 188–95.

[33] SM Buddin, M. Muji, Dody Sulistio, Mochammad Irfan Achfandhy, Muhammad Alfan Sidik, and Muhammad Nurul Mubin, "Islamic Law, the Constitution, and Digital Media: A Study of Islamic Discourse Construction in Contemporary Indonesia," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 25, no. 2 (2025): 20–36.

[34] Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999

[35] Kelvin Inobemhe and Santas Tsegyu, "#EndSARS Protest: A Discourse on Impact of Digital Media on 21st Century Activism in Nigeria," Galactica Media: *Journal of Media Studies* 4, no. 4 (2022): 100–24.

[36] Kazeem Oluwaseun Dauda, "Social Media for Islamic Da'wah and Peaceful Coexistence in Yorubaland, Nigeria," Proceedings of International Conference on Islamic Civilization and Humanities 1 (2023): 178–89.

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(Civil Procedure) Rules 2021 provide the process for commencing an action, summoning parties, receipt of documentary evidence, and pronouncement of judgment.

Social media communication is admissible in Sharia courts based on existing laws such as the Evidence Act of 2011 as amended by Evidence (Amendment) Act of 2023[37]. The admissibility of electronic evidence is covered in section 84 of the Evidence Act and the additional provisions of section 84A to 84D made through Evidence (Amendment) Act of 2023. Sections 84A to 84D cover additional provisions of electronic information. Where there is a need to present computer-generated records, WhatsApp messages, emails, social media posts, audio recordings, screenshots, and electronically stored agreement to prove a case, one may use section 84 of the Evidence Act. However, it should be noted that a screenshot does not have to be treated as a conclusive proof just because it was presented in court. It is necessary to ensure that it is authentic and meets other criteria of admissibility as per the applicable laws[38]. It is also important to note that state Sharia court rules that provide documentary evidence requirements under Islamic law should also be observed. For instance, Order 11 of the Kano State Sharia Courts (Civil Procedure) Rules 2021[39] deals with the issue of documentary evidence and admissibility in accordance with Islamic law.

There exist several issues with respect to privacy and confidentiality and the use of social media in the resolution of Sharia court disputes[40]. This can be addressed by taking a look at Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023. In particular, it contains key guidelines in the matter. Section 1 is dedicated to listing the objectives of the Act which include, among other things, the protection of fundamental rights and the regulation of personal data processing. Section 24 requires that the processing of personal data must be done in a fair and lawful manner and that it is always transparent and secure. Section 25 outlines various circumstances where the processing of personal data can be conducted, including consent, legal obligation, public interest, and other grounds[41]. These sections come into play when courts, lawyers, mediators, or parties to a dispute collect, circulate, store, or disclose messages, photographs, financial information, and family records as part of the process. Circulating private conversations about divorce, inheritance, maintenance, or custody may lead to reputational damage and unnecessary disclosures[42]. However, confidentiality does not imply total non-disclosure of such information for the purposes of judicial proceedings. The problem is to strike a balance between necessity of evidence and privacy[43].

Through the use of digital platforms, the process of dispute resolution through the Sharia court system can be enhanced in terms of communication, preliminary negotiations, participation and exchange of documents[44]. However, all these factors need to be considered within the framework of the constitution and fair hearing as provided for in section 36(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as amended. In a situation where processes are carried out through digital communications, the court should consider whether

[37] Evidence (Amendment) Act of 2023

[38] Abubakar Muhammad Jibril, Mu'adil Faizin, and Aneesh V. Pillai, "Weaponisation of Social Media in Nigeria's Armed Conflicts: Cognitive Warfare and Its Implications for the Law of Armed Conflict," *Cogent Social Sciences* 12, no. 1 (2026): Article 2717916.

[39] Kano State Sharia Courts (Civil Procedure) Rules 2021

[40] Zaleha Kamaruddin, Zati Ilham Abdul Manaf, and Nadhilah A. Kadir, "The Necessity for the Formulation of an Online Family Dispute Resolution Management Framework in Malaysia," *Journal of Information Systems and Digital Technologies* 2, no. 1 (2020): 1–15.

[41] Manzoor Apenna Lawal and Kazeem Oluwaseun Dauda, "Islām, Social Media and the Fallacy of Religious Proselytization in Yorubaland," *NASRED Religions' Educator* 20, no. 1 (2014).

[42] Eregbuonye Obieshi Kingsley, "Digital Platforms and Electoral Integrity: Regulating Misinformation in Elections in Nigeria," *Afrocentric Legal Review* 1, no. 1 (2025): 16–31.

[43] Manzoor Apenna Lawal and Kazeem Oluwaseun Dauda, "Islām, Social Media and the Fallacy of Religious Proselytization in Yorubaland," *NASRED Religions' Educator* 20, no. 1 (2014).

[44] Ratzinger E. E. Nwobodo, "Interreligious Dialogue in 21st Century Africa: The Role of Digital Communication," *IAAJAH-IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 11, no. 1 (2025).

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the parties received the appropriate notice, accessed the evidence, were given the chance to respond and were protected against any coercion and impersonation[45]. The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act 2015[46], as amended in 2024 is a law that deals with specific conduct as regards cyber-related offences. Nevertheless, this law needs to be used in the context of the specific facts and statutory requirements of the case at hand[47]. This Act alone is not sufficient in giving the procedure for online dispute resolution through Sharia courts. Thus, there is great scope for reform in clarifying when electronic filing, service, hearings, mediation and digital settlements are acceptable in Sharia courts.

3.3. Presentation of Result from the Interview Question

Qualitative responses were provided by 13 participants; academics, court administrators and legal practitioners. The responses were coded under six interview questions. The number of times each theme emerged from the responses of the respondents was counted in order to present the responses in thematic form.

The calculation of percentage was done as: number of respondents mentioning the theme ÷ 13 × 100. This is because this qualitative thematic coding allows for respondents to mention more than one theme in their response and therefore, the themes that emerge from each question are not mutually exclusive. Percentage could sum up to over 100% when the percentages for the different themes for a single question are added up.

3.3.1. Influence of Social Media and Digital Platforms

All 13 respondents mentioned the usefulness of digital platforms for communication or information transfer. Respondents further indicate the importance of negotiation and early settlement, as well as legal awareness and court administration as other uses of digital platforms.

Theme reflected in responses	Respondents (n)	Percentage	Visual scale
Communication and exchange of information	13/13	100.0%	100.0%
Negotiation, mediation, or early settlement	10/13	76.9%	76.9%
Legal awareness and access to information	2/13	15.4%	15.4%
Court administration, scheduling, or service updates	1/13	7.7%	7.7%

Bar chart with percentage ruler (0–100%):

3.3.2. Consistency with Sharia Principles

The general impression among respondents was that digital dispute resolution is Sharia-compatible when justice, fairness, and the rights of the parties involved are maintained.

[45] Uchenna C. Okeke, "Enhancing Access to Justice through Technology in Developing Countries: Technology-Based Initiatives, Challenges and Emerging Technologies," *International Journal for Court Administration* 16, no. 3 (2026): 5.

[46] Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act 2015

[47] Ari Tobi-Aiyemo, The Role of the Nigerian Judiciary in a Democracy: A Judge's Dilemma (Reno: University of Nevada, Reno, 2021); Temple Uwalaka, "Nigerian Military Strategic Use of Social Media during Online Firestorms: An Appraisal of the NDA Terrorist Attack," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 50, no. 3 (2026): 401–21.

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Voluntariness and reconciliation were additional conditions for digital dispute resolution raised by the respondents.

Theme reflected in responses	Respondents (n)	Percentage	Visual scale
Justice, fairness, or protection of parties' rights	13/13	100.0%	100.0%
Voluntary consent and absence of coercion	6/13	46.2%	46.2%
Reconciliation or sulh	8/13	61.5%	61.5%
Confidentiality or procedural safeguards	3/13	23.1%	23.1%

Bar chart with percentage ruler (0–100%):

3.3.3. Access, Cost, and Efficiency

Time and cost saving were common advantages identified by respondents. However, issues related to inequality in digital literacy, poor internet connection, and inability to substitute all hearings completely with digital alternatives were highlighted as constraints.

Theme reflected in responses	Respondents (n)	Percentage	Visual scale
Reduced travel, time, or legal/administrative costs	13/13	100.0%	100.0%
Improved communication or access for distant parties	5/13	38.5%	38.5%
Digital literacy or access divide	3/13	23.1%	23.1%
Poor internet connectivity or infrastructure limitations	2/13	15.4%	15.4%
Digital methods cannot replace every physical hearing	1/13	7.7%	7.7%

Bar chart with percentage ruler (0–100%):

3.3.4. Adequacy of Existing Laws

All 13 respondents indicated that Nigeria's current legal framework requires clarity with respect to the following aspects of digital dispute resolution in Sharia Courts: electronic evidence, online settlement, digital proceedings, confidentiality, and process of implementation.

Theme reflected in responses	Respondents (n)	Percentage	Visual scale

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Need for clearer or more specific legal guidance	13/13	100.0%	100.0%
Rules for electronic evidence or digital proceedings	5/13	38.5%	38.5%
Online settlement procedures or enforceability	4/13	30.8%	30.8%
Privacy or protection of sensitive information	2/13	15.4%	15.4%

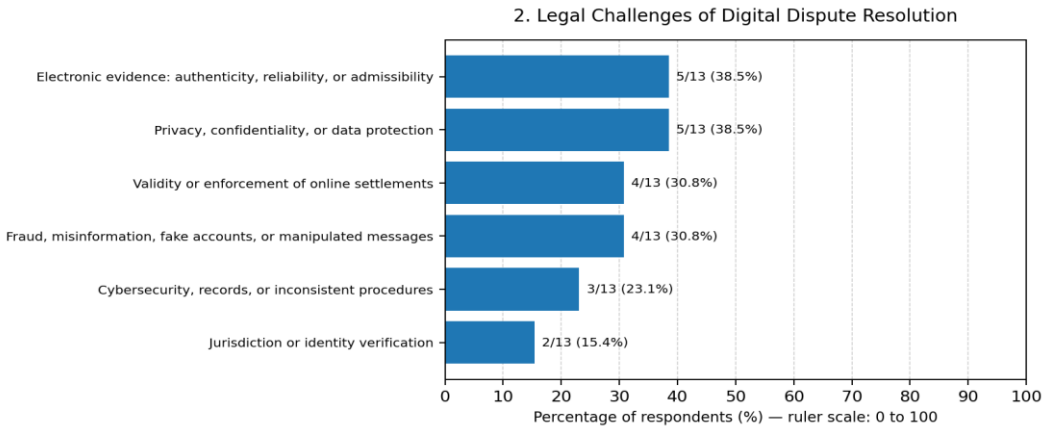
Bar chart with percentage ruler (0–100%):

3.3.5. Legal Challenges of Digital Dispute Resolution

The main areas of concern that emerged from the findings were reliability and validation of digital evidence and protection of privacy or sensitive information. Other issues highlighted by respondents were online enforcement of settlement agreements and fraud or misinformation.

Theme reflected in responses	Respondents (n)	Percentage	Visual scale
Electronic evidence: authenticity, reliability, or admissibility	5/13	38.5%	38.5%
Privacy, confidentiality, or data protection	5/13	38.5%	38.5%
Validity or enforcement of online settlements	4/13	30.8%	30.8%
Fraud, misinformation, fake accounts, or manipulated messages	4/13	30.8%	30.8%
Cybersecurity, records, or inconsistent procedures	3/13	23.1%	23.1%
Jurisdiction or identity verification	2/13	15.4%	15.4%

Bar chart with percentage ruler (0–100%):



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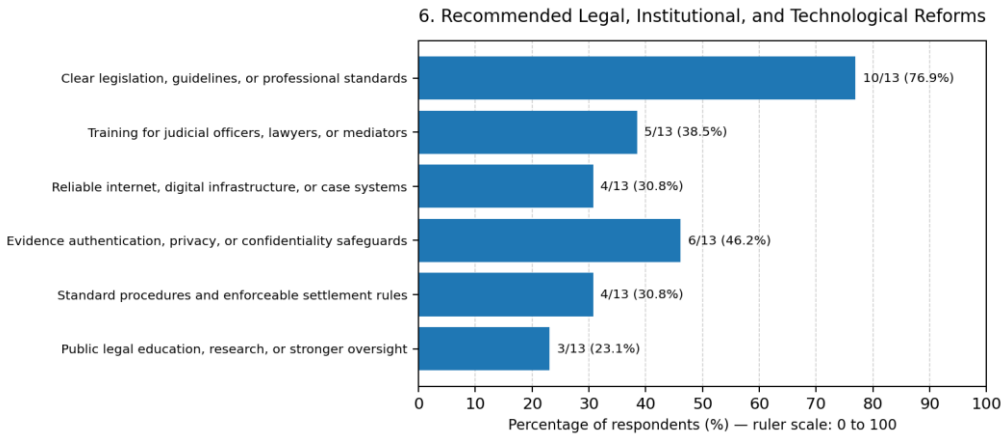
3.3.6. Recommended Legal, Institutional, and Technological Reforms

Clearer legal and technical guidelines emerged as the strongest priority. The other priorities suggested by respondents included training, reliable systems and infrastructure, and security of evidence, privacy, and settlement agreements. The recommendations suggest that reform will require a combination of legal, institutional, and technical reforms.

Theme reflected in responses	Respondents (n)	Percentage	Visual scale
Clear legislation, guidelines, or professional standards	10/13	76.9%	76.9%
Training for judicial officers, lawyers, or mediators	5/13	38.5%	38.5%
Reliable internet, digital infrastructure, or case systems	4/13	30.8%	30.8%
Evidence authentication, privacy, or confidentiality safeguards	6/13	46.2%	46.2%
Standard procedures and enforceable settlement rules	4/13	30.8%	30.8%
Public legal education, research, or stronger oversight	3/13	23.1%	23.1%

Bar chart with percentage ruler (0–100%):



3.4. Discussion of Findings concerning the Result

From the empirical results of the qualitative research conducted on 13 major stakeholders, including researchers, court administrators, and legal practitioners, it is clear that there is a significant operational impact of social media and digital platforms on dispute resolution in Sharia Courts of Nigeria. One hundred percent of the respondents viewed the use of digital platforms as an important means of communication and information sharing, while 100.0% mentioned considerable savings in terms of travel, time, and administrative expenses. In addition, 76.9% considered it useful for negotiation, mediation, and dispute resolution, while 38.5% pointed out better access for litigants living farther away. As far as the law is concerned, the use of digital platforms to facilitate judicial communication and pre-trial agreements is a

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perfect way of addressing the constitutional provision of the CFRN 1999 (as amended) stipulated by Section 36(1). It obliges courts to ensure that the litigant receives a fair trial in a reasonable period of time.

In connection with jurisprudence, all 13 of the participants (100.0%) confirmed that online dispute resolution is consistent with Islamic jurisprudence if basic principles of justice, fairness, and rights of the parties involved are guaranteed. Most importantly, 61.5% of the participants indicated Sulh (amicable reconciliation) as one of the main requirements for online processes, while 46.2% insisted on the importance of voluntary consent without any coercion. Such thematic agreement is consistent with the statutory jurisdiction of Sharia Courts pursuant to Section 277 of the CFRN 1999 (as amended), and state Sharia Court Civil Procedure Rules, which emphasize the resolution of disputes out of court through the process of amicable settlement of Islamic personal law disputes. The utilization of digital processes in the resolution of disputes, consistent with the main principle of Sulh in Sharia, is the best way of dispute resolution in Islamic jurisprudence.

However, apart from these procedural strengths, there are various evidential and technical difficulties that would limit its formal adoption. For example, 38.5% of the participants stated the admissibility and authenticity of electronic evidence as one of the major legal challenges, coupled with digital fraud, fake accounts, and manipulation of messages (30.8%). Besides, 23.1% were concerned about digital literacy gap and 15.4% were worried about the unreliability of internet connectivity. All these issues bear relevance to Section 84 of the Evidence Act 2011 (as amended 2023) dealing with the admissibility of computer-generated evidence in Nigerian courts. Meeting the requirements of Section 84, such as proving system integrity and certification of device operation, involves certain peculiar difficulties in Sharia Courts owing to Islamic rules of evidence (Bayyina and Iqrar). In the absence of special practice directions, electronic evidence collected from social media might be inadmissible or evidentially compromised, as stated under Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act 2015 (as amended 2024).

Finally, this research highlights the existence of a significant regulatory challenge because all the 13 respondents (100.0%) agreed that Nigeria's existing legal provisions lack any specific legislative direction concerning digital proceedings in the Sharia Courts. There is a need for regulation of the following: data privacy (38.5%) and enforceability of online agreement (30.8%). As such, there is a need to provide statutory guidelines by 76.9% of respondents and strong evidence authentication and privacy protection by 46.2% of respondents in order to address these gaps. The privacy of digital communications of litigants is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN 1999 (as amended)) in Section 37, as it guarantees the right to privacy of correspondence and telegraphic communications. In addition, it is also protected by the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

The application of social media platforms into the Sharia courts of Nigeria is an extremely transformative move which would ensure improved access to justice, efficiency in dispute resolution as well as a reduction in costs of travel and administration of the parties involved. It should be noted that the empirical report highlights that digital communications and exchange of information as well as online negotiations are entirely consistent with Islamic jurisprudence as long as these processes rely on the essential aspects of equity, consent and Sulh (conciliation). At the same time, certain obstacles of legal and systemic nature exist, including the rigorous rules regarding the authentication of electronic evidence under Section 84 of the

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Evidence Act 2011 (amended 2023), the protection of data privacy under Section 37 of the 1999 Constitution, as well as the existing shortcomings of infrastructure. Full implementation of digital disputes resolution processes can only be achieved by moving beyond informal use of the platforms to a full-fledged and enforceable regulatory regime.

In order to overcome these mentioned legal, procedural and technical hurdles, there is need for the state judicial institutions and the legislatures to come up with Sharia Court Digital Dispute Resolution Practice Directions that would provide standardized procedures of carrying out virtual proceedings, online enforcement of settlement and digital evidence validation. In particular, the procedures should clearly spell out the processes that would be followed in meeting the requirements of section 84 of the Evidence Act 2011 (amended 2023) in the use of encryption and identity verifications of litigants' data privacy protection under Section 37 of the 1999 constitution and the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023. Moreover, state judicial service commissions have to ensure capacity building of Khadis, court clerks and lawyers on matters of digital literacy and handling of electronic evidence in addition to utilization of secure court management software. The combined implementation of these measures would guarantee efficiency, security and compliance with the dictates of Islamic equity and justice in the digital resolution of disputes in Sharia Courts.

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