

**Digital deconstruction of tradition:
religion and family values in the network environment**

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ABSTRACT

The article is dedicated to analyzing the impact of digitalization on the transformation of religious and family traditions in the context of network society. The focus of the research is the deconstruction of sacred narratives and the reinterpretation of family roles under the influence of information and communication technologies. The author examines how digital platforms are transforming ritual practices, changing modes of spiritual education, and complicating the processes of intergenerational transmission of religious and moral norms.

The digital age is giving rise to new configurations of interaction between the individual, the family, and religious institutions, disrupting the traditional hierarchy of the sacred. The online environment shapes alternative socialization mechanisms where faith takes on a personalized and fragmented character, and the family functions in hybrid communication formats that combine physical presence with virtual practices. The article explores the adaptation of religious institutions to the digital logic of perception, specifically the broadcasting of services, virtual participation in rituals, and online communities of believers. In a family context, the changes in leisure activities, rituals, authority, and religious education through digital media are emphasized.

Within the framework of an interdisciplinary approach (religious studies, sociology, anthropology), key challenges are outlined: the risk of superficial religious experience, the rise of digital addiction, the fragmentation of collective memory, and the ethics of online education. At the same time, new possibilities are highlighted: accessibility of spiritual knowledge, flexibility in forms of participation, and the expansion of tools for transmitting values. Digitization not only adds new media to traditional forms of interaction but also radically changes the mechanisms of identity formation, religious affiliation, and the structuring of the sacred in everyday life.

KEYWORDS: digital deconstruction, transformation of family and religious practices, the sacred, digitization, religion, family, virtual religiosity, digital family, digital media, socialization.

Received : 01/08/2025

Revised : 24/09/2025

Accepted : 10/09/2025

1. Formulation or the problem. Modern society is undergoing a phase of intensive digital transformation, encompassing all spheres of human activity – from economics and politics to culture, education, and religion. The issue of adapting traditional social institutions, particularly religious communities and the family, to the new conditions of the network environment is becoming particularly relevant. Ignoring digital processes can lead to an exacerbation of the identity crisis, the degradation of family relationships, and the weakening of mechanisms for spiritual succession, posing a risk to the preservation of cultural and religious continuity.

Digitalization is radically changing the structure of social institutions, influencing forms of communication, methods of socialization, and the construction of identity. Religion as a form of sacralization of cultural experience faces the challenge of a hybrid reality in which the sacred is combined with digital technologies, and faith takes on mediatized and fragmented forms of expression. Digital media are transforming ritual practices, symbolism, and formats of spiritual communication, blurring the boundaries between collective and personal religiosity.

The problem becomes particularly relevant in the context of global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war, which have accelerated the processes of digitalization and demonstrated both the opportunities and limitations of virtual forms of religious and family interaction. The rapid development of digital technologies is creating a new information and communication reality, significantly changing the ways spiritual values are transmitted. The internet, social media, artificial intelligence (AI), and virtual reality are changing the ways people interact with religious practices and family values. In this context, the question arises: how does digitalization affect religious practices and family models? Is it a tool for renewing traditions, or a mechanism for deconstructing them?

Digitalization creates both new opportunities to strengthen religious and family ties and risks associated with the loss of traditional forms of interaction. For example, virtual religious services and online family communication expand access to spiritual and social resources, but can weaken feelings of community and emotional closeness. Today, the digital reality doesn't just complement everyday life; it actively shapes it, changing the ways we communicate, spend our leisure time, learn, and even perceive the world. The family, being the primary agent of socialization and the transmission of religious beliefs, is facing unprecedented challenges and transformations under the influence of the digital environment. These changes are not limited to altering communication methods or leisure activities; they affect the

very structure of family relationships, the hierarchy of authority, identity formation, and the nature of religious practice.

In the context of rapid digitalization, traditional values and practices of religion and family are undergoing profound transformation. On the one hand, technology opens up new ways of communicating, creating, and maintaining valuable and spiritual connections; on the other hand, it poses risks of losing "living" social practices and spiritual depth. This poses the most important challenges for science and society. What are the mechanisms of influence of digital formats (online communities, streaming of religious services) on religious identity and practices? How are digital formats changing parent-child relationships and family traditions? What challenges and opportunities accompany the transition of religion and family into the digital space for the practice and preservation of values? These questions are related to important scientific tasks: rethinking socialization, adapting institutions, and the reception of spirituality against the backdrop of technological changes.

2. Analysis of recent research and publications. Contemporary research on the impact of digitalization on religion and family encompasses a wide range of disciplines. In the field of religious studies, scholars like H. Campbell, W. Bellar emphasize that digital technologies are creating a new form of religiosity – "digital religion" – which is characterized by virtual communities and online practices (Campbell & Bellar , 2023). Other researchers, such as P. Chain, point to the role of social media in popularizing religious content, but also note the risk of spreading misinformation and simplifying spiritual teachings (Cheong , 2011).

In the context of family studies, works such as D. Boyd's focus on the impact of digital technologies on family communication. At the same time, S. Livingstone's work shows that digital technologies provide families with new tools for educating and raising children, but they also require parents to be digitally literate (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2022). Modern research by H. Campbell and T. Hutchings highlights several key areas: digital religiosity as a new phenomenon, the transformation of family religiosity under media influence, and intergenerational conflict in digital religious education (Hutchings, 2017).

The theoretical basis of the research is the concept of social transformation developed by P. Sztompka, which views social change as a complex process encompassing structural, cultural, and agentic components. Contemporary scientific works (e.g., the works of M. Castells, Z. Bauman, Yu. Harari) extensively cover the global changes brought about by digital technologies, touching upon issues of identity transformation, the nature of social connections, and ethical dilemmas (Bauman , 2003). S. Holloway and G. Valentine investigated the transformation of childhood under the influence of digital technologies (Holloway & Valentine , 2003). Digital technologies are viewed not as an external influencing factor, but as an element of the institutional environment that is simultaneously shaped by and shapes social practices. Qian Yu identifies three levels of influence: micro-social, functional, and symbolic, where digital

platforms are changing routine family practices and rituals and creating new forms of intimacy (Qian & Hu, 2024).

In our opinion, it's also worth mentioning sources that focus on the digital transformation of family practices in the 21st century, including religious aspects, intergenerational communication, and the impact of technology on intimacy and rituals: K. Barrie, J. Bartkowski, and T. Haverda have researched intergenerational patterns of digital communication within families and how they are changing religious and emotional connections (Barrie et al., 2019), K. Balleys, O. Martin, and S. Jochems conducted a sociological analysis of how digital practices are transforming family norms, including religious rituals, children's autonomy, and parental control (Balleys et al., 2018), A. McDonald, M. Golden, and K. Twamley introduced the concept of "platformised relationality" to describe how digital platforms are changing intimacy, care, and religious practices within families (McDonald et al., 2024), and Q. Fu and Y. Zhang analyzed how digital resources within the family influence children's emotional development, including religious and educational practices (Fu & Zhang, 2024).

An analysis of the scientific literature reveals several unresolved aspects of the problem: accompanying transformations of family and religion in the digital space, the impact of digitalization on intergenerational families and the transmission of religious values, the role of digital technologies in shaping a new understanding of ritual and practice, aspects of the interaction between digital culture and family spiritual life, the role of religious institutions in supporting families in the digital space and adapting intergenerational spiritual transmission, the specifics of family digital religiosity, and the long-term impact of digitalization on the transmission of religious values.

Unresolved aspects of the problem also include the ontological status of the digital sacred, the decomposition of institutional religiosity within the family, the digital religious socialization of children, algorithmic ethics in family spiritual life, the hybridization of rituals and transformed family ceremonies, post-intimacy, and digital faith.

3. The purpose of the article is to analyze the impact of digital transformation on sacred meanings, family religiosity, and ritual practices, to identify new forms of spiritual experience and their social and cultural legitimation in the context of a post-secular society.

4. Presentation of the main material. The digital revolution of the 21st century has fundamentally changed all spheres of human life, including such conservative institutions as religion and family. Traditional forms of religious practice are facing the need to adapt to the virtual space, where new models of spiritual communication and religious experience are being formed. The family, as a basic social institution, is undergoing profound transformations related to changes in communication practices, forms of leisure, and ways of maintaining family ties.

Digital technologies have fundamentally changed the nature of family communication and the ways in which family ties are maintained. Messaging and video calls allow families to stay connected regardless of geographical distance, creating new forms of closeness and presence. Social media is becoming a space for co-creating family history through the sharing of photos, videos, and memories (Larsen, 2004)

Digital technologies significantly impact children's socialization processes and the formation of parent-child relationships. Parents face new challenges in digital parenting, including managing screen time, ensuring online safety, and developing digital literacy in children. Educational apps and online platforms are expanding opportunities for family learning and child development. However, excessive use of digital devices can negatively impact the quality of family time and the depth of interpersonal communication. The phenomenon of "digital autism" – immersion in the virtual world at the expense of real communication – is becoming a serious problem for modern families.

Digital technologies are contributing to the emergence of new models of family organization and labor relations. Remote work and flexible schedules allow parents to spend more time with their children and be more actively involved in family life. Digital platforms for finding nannies, tutors, and other services are transforming the system of family outsourcing. Online dating is changing traditional ways of forming couples, expanding the geographical and social boundaries of partner search. Family budget planning and household management apps contribute to more efficient organization of family life.

Digital technologies open up new possibilities for religious education within the family, providing access to a variety of educational resources and interactive materials. Families can participate in online services, study sacred texts using specialized apps, and connect with fellow believers through social media. Virtual pilgrimages and 3D tours of holy sites allow families to study religious history and traditions together. Online courses and webinars on religious topics make theological education more accessible to parents who wish to deepen their knowledge for effective religious upbringing of children (Livingstone et al., 2011).

The digital space is characterized by a high degree of pluralism and competition of ideas, which poses challenges to traditional religious values in the family context. Children and adolescents gain access to a wide range of worldviews through the internet, which can contradict family religious beliefs. Social media and media content often promote values that are incompatible with traditional religious norms (Erstad et al., 2024). Parents face the need to protect their children from content that contradicts their religious beliefs while simultaneously ensuring freedom of information access. Digital technologies can contribute to the formation of individualistic attitudes that conflict with the collectivist values of many religious traditions. Family religious projects, such as creating digital archives of family spiritual history or participating in online charity, contribute to strengthening religious identity and family bonds. Family prayers can include the use of religious apps and online resources. The study of sacred texts is

supplemented by digital commentaries and interactive materials. Religious holidays and rituals are taking on a new dimension through the use of digital technologies for their organization and execution.

Digital platforms allow religious families to find like-minded individuals and create communities of interest. The digitalization of religion and family is impacting forms of social solidarity and public integration. Virtual religious communities can both strengthen and weaken traditional forms of social connection. On the one hand, digital technologies expand opportunities for creating transnational religious networks and maintaining connections between co-believers. On the other hand, the virtualization of religious experience can lead to a weakening of local community ties.

Digitalization is leading to the democratization of access to religious knowledge and family advice, which is changing the role of traditional authorities. Religious leaders are facing competition from online preachers and influential bloggers. Parents are competing with digital sources of information for influence over children. The emergence of new digital authorities – religious bloggers, YouTube preachers, family relationship influencers – creates alternative sources of moral guidance. This can both enrich religious and family experiences and create conflicts between traditional and digital authorities (Yan , 2024).

Digitalization has contributed to the spread of online worship services, video sermons, and spiritual mobile apps. Families have the opportunity to participate in religious life regardless of their location, but there is a risk of religion being perceived superficially as an informational product. Children and teenagers consume spiritual content not from their parents, but through TikTok or YouTube, and furthermore, a new media platform for religious socialization is forming, where “faith influencers” become authorities. Parents are losing their monopoly on spiritual upbringing and must seek new ways of communication. New questions are arising in the digital space: how acceptable are online confessions or “virtual communion”? How to maintain confidentiality in spiritual chats? Can Zoom replace live contact with society?

Churches and other denominations are actively adapting digital resources: creating family and spiritual marathons, parenting schools, online Bibles, and these tools became particularly effective during the COVID-19 pandemic. Christmas or Easter celebrations are increasingly taking place online: on the one hand, this ensures the participation of all members, but on the other hand, it diminishes the ritual depth, especially among young people. In scattered families and diasporas, digital tools are becoming the primary way to preserve religious identity. Live broadcasts from their home temple, online consultations with priests, virtual Saturdays – all of this forms the family’s “digital parish.”

Messaging apps like WhatsApp and video calls via Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams allow you to stay connected with relatives who live far away – this is especially important for families separated by migration or professional obligations. Parents face the need to control the time their children spend online and protect them from unwanted content, such as violence or misinformation. At the same time, digital technologies provide access to educational resources that can contribute to children’s development.

For example, platforms like Khan Academy or Coursera offer courses that families can use to learn together.

Virtual reality and the metaverse open up new possibilities for family interaction. Families can gather in virtual spaces for shared activities like holidays or games. However, this raises questions about the authenticity of such interactions and their impact on emotional bonds. Many religious organizations offer online courses on family ethics, marriage, and child-rearing, actively utilizing digital platforms to counsel families on spiritual upbringing. Social media has also changed the concept of family privacy. Publishing family photos or discussing personal matters online can contradict religious principles of modesty. At the same time, such platforms allow families to share their faith experiences, strengthening religious identity.

Digitalization offers numerous advantages for religion and family. Technology makes religious practices and family connections more accessible, flexible, and inclusive. They allow us to overcome geographical and social barriers, strengthening global religious and family communities. For example, online platforms allow families and religious communities to stay connected in the context of global mobility. The digital environment contributes to the spread of disinformation, which can distort religious teachings or family ideals. Virtual reality and the metaverse are opening up new horizons for family interaction. For example, families can gather in virtual spaces for shared activities like holidays or games. Digitalization requires parents to develop new competencies, including digital literacy and the ability to balance online and offline life. Social media, messengers, and video calls allow you to stay in touch with relatives who live far away. This is especially important for families separated by migration or work.

Many religious organizations offer online courses on family ethics, marriage, and child-rearing. Such programs help families integrate spiritual principles into their daily lives. For example, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities are actively using digital platforms to counsel families on marriage and parenting. Frequent use of technology can weaken personal connections and undermine traditional values. Additionally, the digital environment often contributes to the spread of disinformation, which can distort religious teachings or family ideals. It is important to develop strategies that will allow us to maintain a balance between tradition and innovation. Traditionally, the family served as the primary unit of religious socialization. Through family rituals (baptism, marriage), the individual was integrated into the religious community. However, in the digital age, this model is subject to deconstruction.

The virtualization of religious life is leading to new phenomena: many religious families in the US are using Zoom for communal prayers, and virtual Easter services and iftars are becoming the new norm. In Orthodox families, "digital red corners" are appearing – tablets with icons and prayers. Muslims use apps with the Qibla and prayer times. Unique phenomena are forming: social media as pilgrimage sites (the pages of deceased relatives become digital altars), and the gamification of religious experience (apps like "Bible Quiz" transform the study of sacred texts into a quest).

The digital age poses serious challenges to traditional family religious life. One of the key factors is the defocusing of attention and the fragmentation of religious practice. This often leads to a reduction in the time allocated for shared religious rituals, such as communal prayer, reading sacred texts, or spiritual conversations. Each family member can immerse themselves in their own unique digital “bubble,” which contributes to the creation of “parallel worlds” and the individualization of faith. Shared points of contact in religious experience, which were previously formed through shared practice, may weaken as each person consumes their own, often personalized, spiritual content (Spadaro, 2014).

Another serious challenge is the spread of disinformation and the risk of radicalization. Sectarian movements, aggressive ideologies, and false teachings find fertile ground for spreading online, posing a threat to the spiritual health of individual family members and the entire family unit. New ethical and moral dilemmas are also emerging, related to cyberbullying, the formation of digital addiction, the accessibility of unacceptable content (such as pornography), and complex issues of AI ethics. Finally, there is a decline in the role of the traditional authority of spiritual leaders, which can weaken the influence of established religious authorities and institutions in family life.

Despite numerous challenges, digitalization also opens up unprecedented opportunities for family religious life and strengthening faith, which can be actively utilized for adaptation and development. First and foremost, it’s about increasing access to religious education and information. The internet provides a wide range of online lectures, courses, webinars, e-libraries, and resources for studying sacred texts, which expands educational opportunities for all family members, regardless of their location or physical limitations. Digital platforms contribute to strengthening communities and developing interreligious dialogue. Online prayers, live streams of services, virtual meetings, and conferences allow community members to stay connected, support each other, and overcome geographical barriers, creating the effect of an “extended presence” of the church in the lives of believers. Global religious communities are being created, fostering understanding and dialogue between different traditions, which was previously extremely difficult (Family Online, 2023).

New forms of missionary work and social service are developing. Digital technologies can also actively support family values. Finally, digitalization contributes to the preservation and transmission of religious traditions. Digital archives, virtual museums, and tours of holy sites allow new generations to learn about the history and heritage of their faith, making them more accessible and appealing. Among the key transformations, we can note both positive (access to global religious resources, new forms of intergenerational dialogue, flexibility of religious practices) and negative (erosion of traditional rituals, commodification of the sacred, digital inequality in the religious sphere).

Digital technologies are also transforming the processes of religious education and spiritual guidance. Online theology courses, virtual libraries of religious literature, and mobile applications for studying sacred texts are expanding access to religious knowledge and making it more personalized.

Social media, messengers, and video conferencing provide constant connection and the possibility of individual spiritual guidance. An analysis of the content of religious social media reveals three main types of religious communication in the digital environment: informational (dissemination of religious information and news), educational (religious teaching and enlightenment), and pastoral (spiritual guidance and support).

Digital technologies have a profound impact on children's socialization processes and the formation of parent-child relationships. Modern parents are facing the need for "digital parenting" – a new form of upbringing that includes managing screen time, ensuring digital safety, and developing digital literacy in children.

One of the key aspects of the interaction between the digitalization of religion and the family is the transformation of religious socialization processes. Digital technologies create new opportunities for religious education within the family, but they also pose challenges for the intergenerational transmission of religious values. Family digital practices play a special role in religious socialization: participating in online services together, studying religious texts using mobile apps, and creating family religious blogs (Horsfield , 2015).

Digital technologies contribute to the emergence of new models of family organization, characterized by greater flexibility and adaptability to changing life circumstances. Remote work allows parents to participate more actively in family life and child-rearing, creating the conditions for the formation of more egalitarian gender roles within the family. The digitalization of religion and family is leading to significant changes in the value system, which can be classified into several areas: the transformation of the concept of authority, the shift in the concept of privacy, the transformation of temporal and spatial boundaries, and the individualization of religious and family experiences.

Table 1.

Comparative Overview of Religious and Cultural Traditions in the Context of Digital Transformation

Aspect	Christianity	Islam	Judaism	Eastern Societies
Worship	Church attendance, communal prayer	Mosque attendance, Friday prayer	Synagogue attendance, Torah reading, minyan	Temple rituals, domestic practices, meditation
Beliefs	Trinity, salvation through grace	Monotheism, Qur'an, path of submission	Monotheism, commandments, historical memory	Karma, harmony, polytheism or non-theism

Aspect	Christianity	Islam	Judaism	Eastern Societies
Ethics	Love, mercy, commandments	Sharia, virtue, submission	Halakhic norms, social responsibility	Duty, compassion, nonviolence, harmony
Family	Nuclear family, autonomy	Patriarchal structure, collective responsibility	Partnered families, community-based	Multigenerational family, collectivism, filial piety
Identity	Individual, faith- and choice-based	Collective, umma-based	Diasporic, collective, textually enduring	Role-based, harmonious, linked to social status
Moral Norms	Human rights, ethics of autonomy	Religious duty, ethics of submission	Sanctity, responsibility, commandments	Ethics of harmony, obligation, interdependence
Holidays	Christmas, Easter, Sunday services	Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Friday prayer	Sabbath, Passover, Yom Kippur	Lunar New Year, Diwali, Vesak, local ritual calendars
Digital Adaptation	Online services, digital prayers, virtual communities	Digital fatwas, Muslim apps, online sermons	Digital Torah study, online minyans, preservation	Meditation apps, digital rituals, virtual sanghas

Table2.

Analytical Table of Religious and Family Transformations in the Digital Age

Religious Practice	Collective participation, physical presence, ritual as a form of communal experience	Online rituals, individualized participation, gamification of spiritual experience	Religion becomes personalized, losing part of its ritual depth and social cohesion
Family Hierarchy	Vertical structure, authority of older generations	Horizontal communication, influence of digital norms on upbringing	Digital culture blurs generational authority and reshapes parenting models
Moral Orientations	Based on religious texts, traditions, and cultural narratives	Pluralism of values, influence of influencers, algorithms, and trends	Ethical fragmentation emerges, where moral norms become

			situational and platform-dependent
Institutional Trust	High trust in religious and family institutions	Doubts about traditional authorities, search for alternatives online	The digital environment stimulates critical reevaluation of the institutional role of tradition
Family Communication	Personal, direct, emotionally rich	Mediated, fragmented, often asynchronous	Digital platforms alter the quality of family dialogue, reducing emotional depth
Family Roles	Clearly defined (father, mother, children), gender-specific	Blurred, reinterpreted through digital narratives and social media	Role deconstruction leads to new models of family interaction

5. Conclusions. The study revealed that digitalization is not only changing the channels through which the sacred is transmitted, but is also fundamentally transforming the very nature of religiosity and family interaction. The digital environment emerges as a space of individualized faith, fragmented morality, and virtualized ritual, within which traditional forms of religious and family life are gradually losing their normative stability. At the same time, the adaptation of religious institutions to digital culture expands opportunities for inclusion, access to spiritual resources, and participation in transnational religious communities, but it is accompanied by the risk of faith becoming routinized, the symbolic ritual content being simplified, and the intergenerational transmission of religious values being weakened.

Families, functioning in a digital mode, are undergoing changes in parenting models, experiencing a transformation in communication practices, leisure activities, and ways of maintaining family connections. Social roles are being rethought, the authority of tradition is weakening, and new educational tools often lead to dependence or create digital inequality. Online platforms make religious practices more accessible, but at the same time, they undermine traditional community and the depth of religious experience. The adaptation of religious and family institutions to network logic is occurring through various models shaped by cultural, social, and technological factors.

The processes of digitizing religion and family are interconnected and mutually influence each other, especially in the realm of religious socialization and intergenerational transmission of sacred meanings. At the same time, the digital age is shaping new models of social stratification, where digital

inequality can exacerbate or deepen existing social and religious divides. In general, the digital deconstruction of tradition is an ambivalent process: it is capable of both renewing the religious and family fabric of society and deforming its foundations. This tension between preservation and transformation requires further investigation, particularly in the fields of digital spirituality, ethics, and the ontology of networked being.

The main problems include: the commodification of the sacred (paid online confessions), a crisis of authenticity in religious experience, and digital inequality in access to spiritual resources. Digitization creates a paradoxical situation: while destroying traditional forms of religious family life, it simultaneously gives rise to new hybrid practices. Further research could focus on a comparative analysis of practices across different denominations, as well as on the development of ethical principles for digital religious interaction within the family.

Important aspects of research on this topic include: theoretically understanding the concept of the “digital sacred” in the context of the mediatization of faith, private religiosity, and family communication; analyzing the transformation of religious practices within the family (domestic rituals, online liturgies, digital prayers, algorithmic management of beliefs); investigating the influence of digital platforms on intergenerational spiritual interaction; the role of social media in shaping children’s beliefs and digital “spiritual mentors”; identifying new formats of family religiosity (hybrid rituals, visualization of faith in digital content, sacralization of media images); and identifying signs of a reinterpretation of sacred space (the emergence of digital saints, memetic symbols of faith, algorithmic amulets).

Among the promising directions for further research, we can highlight the long-term impact of digitalization on religious identity, the development of ethical standards for digital religiosity, comparative studies of the long-term effects of engagement in digital family and religious practices across different denominations, methodologies for integrating digital rituals with offline practices to strengthen intergenerational bonds, digital platforms as spatial-semantic environments for transmitting cultural narratives, and ethical and technological barriers to the use of AI services and the metaverse in religious and family communication.

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