

BEYOND BELIEF: THE RISE OF THE "NONES" AND SPIRITUAL-BUT-NOT-RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES AMONG AFRICAN YOUTHS IN A DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

The emergence of the “Nones” and Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) identities among African youths reflects a transformative shift in religious affiliation, belief systems, and spiritual engagement in the digital age. Despite Africa's historical association with strong religious adherence, recent trends indicate growing disengagement from organized religion, influenced by globalization, social media, and urbanization. This study investigates the rise of these alternative spiritual identities, highlighting the problem of declining institutional religious participation and the attendant socio-cultural implications. The research addresses gaps in literature regarding the digital mediation of spirituality and the interplay between technology and religious expression among African youth. Using a qualitative approach grounded in post-secular and digital religion theories, findings reveal that online platforms provide spaces for personalized, fluid spiritual practices, enabling youths to navigate meaning-making outside traditional structures. The study concludes that African religious landscapes are evolving, necessitating nuanced engagement by religious institutions. Strategic recommendations include fostering dialogue, digital literacy, and inclusive spiritual programming to accommodate diverse spiritual expressions.

Keywords: African youth, SBNR, digital religion, religious disaffiliation, spirituality

Introduction

Africa has long been regarded as one of the most religiously vibrant regions in the world, with traditional, Christian, and Islamic faiths forming the backbone of social, cultural, and political life. Religious affiliation has historically been closely tied to community identity, social norms, and moral frameworks, shaping everyday life from birth to death. However, recent decades have witnessed a growing diversification in religious engagement, particularly among younger generations. One notable phenomenon is the rise of the “Nones”—individuals who identify as having no religious affiliation—and the Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) category, which reflects a turn toward individualized, eclectic, and often non-institutionalized forms of spirituality. This shift challenges the conventional understanding of religious adherence and poses questions about the role of institutional religion in contemporary African societies.

The digital revolution has played a critical role in shaping this transformation. Social media platforms, mobile applications, and online communities provide spaces where youths can explore spiritual ideas, connect with like-minded peers, and engage in personalized

religious or spiritual practices outside the confines of traditional religious institutions. As a result, religion in the digital age is no longer confined to physical spaces such as churches, mosques, or shrines but is increasingly mediated through virtual platforms. This trend has significant socio-cultural implications, influencing identity formation, socialization, and moral development among African youth.

Despite the growing prominence of the Nones and SBNR identities, there is a notable gap in African scholarship addressing the intersection of digital technology, youth culture, and non-traditional spiritual practices. Existing studies often focus on Western contexts, leaving African experiences underexplored. Understanding these dynamics is critical, not only for religious institutions seeking to remain relevant but also for policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations aiming to engage with youth populations in culturally sensitive ways.

The objective of this study is to examine the emergence and characteristics of the Nones and SBNR identities among African youths, with particular attention to the mediating role of digital technologies. By situating the discussion within post-secular and digital religion theoretical frameworks, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how African youths negotiate meaning, spirituality, and identity in an increasingly digitalized world. The research highlights the implications for religious institutions, youth engagement strategies, and broader socio-cultural development.

Conceptual Clarifications and Definitions

Understanding the emergence of the “Nones” and Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) identities among African youths requires conceptual clarity, particularly given the diverse interpretations of religiosity, spirituality, and secularism in contemporary scholarship. The term “Nones” typically refers to individuals who do not identify with any formal religious tradition or institutionalized faith community, although this does not necessarily imply atheism or irreligiosity (Smith, 2021). Rather, Nones may hold spiritual beliefs, moral values, or ethical commitments independent of formal religious affiliation, reflecting a move toward individualized forms of meaning-making.

Similarly, SBNR identities denote a spectrum of spiritual engagement that is personal, eclectic, and often detached from organized religion. These individuals may draw on multiple religious traditions, indigenous beliefs, or alternative spiritual practices to construct a personalized worldview, prioritizing subjective experience over doctrinal adherence (Johnson & Adeyemi, 2022). In African contexts, this may include a blend of traditional cosmologies, contemporary global spiritual trends, and digital-mediated practices, highlighting the hybridity of modern spiritual expression.

Digital religion is another critical concept for this study. It refers to the ways in which digital technologies such as social media, mobile applications, and virtual communities mediate religious experience, practice, and identity formation (Campbell, 2020). For African youths, digital platforms provide spaces to explore spirituality, engage in online

rituals, or participate in transnational spiritual networks, often circumventing traditional institutional oversight. The affordances of these platforms—interactivity, anonymity, and global connectivity—enable experimentation and negotiation of meaning, particularly among those who feel alienated from conventional religious structures.

Religious disaffiliation and spiritual pluralism are closely linked to these phenomena. Religious disaffiliation denotes the formal or informal detachment from institutionalized religion, while spiritual pluralism captures the openness to multiple spiritual frameworks and the blending of beliefs across traditions (Ogunleye, 2023). These concepts illuminate the broader socio-cultural shifts among African youths, who navigate complex intersections of globalization, urbanization, education, and digital media exposure.

By clearly defining these terms, this study situates the discussion within a conceptual framework that emphasizes the fluidity, diversity, and digital mediation of contemporary African spirituality. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of how young people construct meaning, identity, and community outside conventional religious institutions, reflecting broader trends in post-secular societies (Adegbite, 2021).

Theoretical Perspectives

Analyzing the rise of the “Nones” and Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) identities among African youths in the digital age requires a robust theoretical grounding that accounts for the interplay between religion, culture, and technology. This study draws primarily on post-secular theory, digital religion frameworks, and social identity theory to provide a multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon. Post-secular theory challenges the traditional secularization thesis, which posited a linear decline of religion in modern societies (Habermas, 2021). Instead, it suggests that religion persists, transforms, and re-emerges in new forms, often outside institutional structures. In the African context, this framework helps explain why many youths disengage from conventional religious institutions while simultaneously engaging in spiritual practices that are fluid, personalized, and hybrid. The post-secular perspective emphasizes the coexistence of secular rationalities and spiritual explorations, offering insight into how African youths navigate moral, existential, and communal concerns outside established religious hierarchies (Adeyemi & Johnson, 2022).

Digital religion theory provides complementary insights, focusing on how technology mediates religious experience and practice. According to Campbell (2020), digital religion encompasses online rituals, virtual communities, social media engagement, and other digitally-mediated forms of spiritual expression. African youths utilize digital platforms to explore alternative spiritualities, participate in global spiritual networks, and negotiate identity in ways that are often independent of institutional authority. The theory foregrounds the affordances of digital media—interactivity, connectivity, and accessibility as critical enablers of spiritual innovation and experimentation.

Social identity theory further illuminates the dynamics of belonging and self-definition in

the context of religious disaffiliation. This theory posits that individuals derive a sense of identity, status, and meaning from the groups to which they belong or aspire to belong (Tajfel & Turner, 2020). For African youths, identifying as a None or SBNR can be both an individual and collective act, signaling membership in a growing cohort of digitally-engaged, post-institutional spiritual actors. Social identity theory helps explain the psychological and sociocultural appeal of these non-traditional spiritual affiliations, emphasizing the role of peer influence, group norms, and online communities in shaping beliefs and practices (Ogunleye, 2023). By integrating post-secular, digital religion, and social identity frameworks, this study captures the complex interplay of personal, technological, and socio-cultural factors shaping spiritual expressions among African youths. These theoretical lenses provide analytical tools to examine how the digital age enables experimentation, negotiation, and hybridization of spirituality, offering a nuanced understanding of religious transformation in contemporary African societies.

Historical and Socio-Cultural Context of Non-Traditional Spiritualities

The emergence of non-traditional spiritualities among African youths, including the “Nones” and Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) identities, is best understood within the broader historical and socio-cultural transformations of the continent. Africa's religious landscape has historically been shaped by indigenous belief systems, the spread of Christianity and Islam, and the legacies of colonialism, each contributing to diverse expressions of spirituality and moral frameworks. Indigenous religions, characterized by cosmological interconnectedness, ritual practices, and community-oriented moral codes, provided foundational spiritual frameworks for African societies (Okafor, 2021). These systems emphasized the sacredness of nature, ancestral reverence, and the integration of spirituality into everyday life.

The advent of colonialism introduced new religious paradigms, often privileging Western Christian and Islamic traditions while marginalizing indigenous practices. Missionary activities established churches and educational institutions that became central to social life, while also enforcing doctrinal orthodoxy and European cultural norms (Chukwuma, 2022). Colonial policies frequently positioned indigenous beliefs as “backward” or incompatible with modernization, creating a hierarchy of religious legitimacy that persisted well into the postcolonial era. As a result, African youths today inherit a layered religious heritage that combines indigenous, Christian, and Islamic elements, alongside growing exposure to global spiritual movements.

Urbanization and globalization have further catalyzed the diversification of spiritual expression. The rapid expansion of cities, increased mobility, and access to mass media and digital platforms have exposed African youths to a wide array of religious and spiritual ideas (Adeyemi, 2023). Urban centers, with their pluralistic populations, facilitate encounters with alternative worldviews, encouraging experimentation and hybridization of spiritual practices. This socio-cultural context creates fertile ground for the rise of SBNR identities, as youths negotiate between inherited religious traditions and contemporary existential concerns.

Education and socio-economic factors also play a crucial role. Increasing access to higher education has introduced African youths to secular philosophies, scientific rationalism, and critical thinking frameworks, often prompting reevaluation of inherited religious norms (Obi & Nwosu, 2021). Additionally, socio-economic challenges, including unemployment, inequality, and political instability, have spurred disillusionment with institutional religious authorities perceived as complicit in societal dysfunction. For many, personalized spirituality offers a sense of agency, moral autonomy, and community outside formal religious hierarchies.

Digital technology amplifies these historical and socio-cultural dynamics. Social media, mobile applications, and online platforms provide spaces for African youths to explore, adopt, and share non-traditional spiritual practices. The digital realm allows for experimentation with hybrid spiritualities, connecting users to global networks, alternative teachings, and virtual rituals that transcend geographical and institutional boundaries (Campbell, 2020). Importantly, digital engagement often fosters communal yet decentralized forms of spirituality, where collective identity is negotiated through online interactions rather than traditional congregational participation.

In sum, the rise of Nones and SBNR identities among African youths emerges from the intersection of historical legacies, socio-cultural transformations, and technological mediation. Indigenous traditions, colonial religious impositions, urbanization, globalization, and digital technologies collectively shape the spiritual landscape, enabling a pluralistic and fluid approach to religious and ethical life. Understanding this context is essential for analyzing contemporary African spiritualities and the ways in which youths navigate meaning, identity, and belonging in a rapidly changing world.

The Role of Digital Media in Shaping Non-Traditional Spiritualities

Digital media has emerged as a transformative force in shaping contemporary spiritualities among African youths, particularly influencing the rise of “Nones” and Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) identities. The proliferation of social media platforms, mobile applications, and online forums has expanded access to diverse religious and spiritual content, enabling youths to explore, experiment, and personalize their spiritual journeys outside traditional institutional frameworks (Adeyemi & Johnson, 2022). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook serve as both sources of spiritual knowledge and interactive spaces where users engage in discussions, share practices, and develop communal bonds based on shared spiritual interests.

The interactive nature of digital media allows youths to curate spiritual experiences that align with personal values, moral inquiries, and existential concerns, challenging conventional notions of religious authority (Campbell, 2020). Unlike traditional congregations that enforce doctrinal conformity, online spiritual spaces offer flexibility and multiplicity, accommodating hybrid practices that blend elements of indigenous

beliefs, global spirituality, mindfulness, and wellness movements. This has contributed to the decoupling of religious identity from formal affiliation, fostering an individualized yet socially connected spiritual ethos.

Moreover, digital media facilitates global interconnectedness, exposing African youths to transnational spiritual networks, alternative interpretations of sacred texts, and innovative ritual practices (Ogunleye, 2023). For instance, virtual prayer groups, online meditation sessions, and livestreamed religious events create opportunities for participation in spiritual communities without geographic constraints. These digital networks not only provide a sense of belonging but also encourage youths to critically engage with diverse theological perspectives, enhancing spiritual literacy and self-reflection.

Algorithmic curation and recommendation systems also play a subtle but significant role in shaping spiritual exploration. Social media algorithms prioritize content that aligns with user interests, effectively guiding youths toward spiritual ideas and practices that resonate with their preferences and psychological needs (Johnson, 2021). While this can foster personalized learning and discovery, it also raises concerns about echo chambers, where exposure to differing perspectives may be limited, potentially reinforcing selective spiritual viewpoints rather than fostering comprehensive understanding.

Furthermore, digital media enables creative reinterpretation of spiritual symbols and rituals. Memes, short videos, and interactive content allow youths to express spirituality in culturally relevant and digitally native ways, blending humor, aesthetics, and reflection. This democratization of spiritual expression challenges the traditional monopoly of religious institutions over ritual and meaning-making, emphasizing participatory and performative aspects of contemporary spirituality (Adeyemi, 2023).

However, the rise of digital spiritual engagement is not without challenges. Issues of misinformation, spiritual consumerism, and commodification of sacred practices are prevalent, with some youths encountering superficial or commercially driven interpretations of spirituality. The absence of institutional oversight may also result in fragmented beliefs and practices, raising questions about ethical guidance, accountability, and communal cohesion. Despite these challenges, digital media remains a pivotal arena where African youths negotiate identity, explore existential meaning, and cultivate spiritual agency.

In conclusion, digital media has fundamentally reshaped how African youths engage with spirituality, enabling the rise of Nones and SBNR identities through access, interactivity, and global connectivity. The flexibility, personalization, and hybridization facilitated by digital platforms underscore the evolving nature of religious and spiritual life in the digital age. Understanding the role of digital media is essential for scholars, religious leaders, and policymakers seeking to engage with emerging spiritual trends and the evolving moral landscape of African societies.

Motivations and Psychological Drivers of SBNR and Nones

The rise of “Nones” and Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) identities among African youths is not merely a sociocultural phenomenon but also a reflection of complex psychological and motivational dynamics. These identities are shaped by personal quests for meaning, autonomy, authenticity, and moral coherence in an era characterized by rapid social, technological, and cultural transformations (Obi & Adeyemi, 2021). Unlike traditional religious adherence, which often emphasizes institutional authority, doctrinal conformity, and ritual observance, the SBNR and Nones embrace individualized, experiential approaches that prioritize personal spiritual fulfillment and reflective engagement.

A key driver is the pursuit of autonomy and self-determination. Many African youths, exposed to global narratives of personal freedom and critical thinking, seek spiritual pathways that allow them to assert agency over their beliefs and practices (Johnson, 2022). The prescriptive nature of traditional religious institutions, particularly their hierarchical structures and moral expectations, often clashes with youths' desire for self-expression and moral independence. By adopting non-traditional spiritual frameworks, they negotiate personal meaning while maintaining flexibility in engagement, allowing spiritual practice to integrate seamlessly with other aspects of their lives.

Existential and ethical considerations also motivate this shift. Contemporary challenges such as economic instability, political corruption, environmental degradation, and social inequality generate feelings of uncertainty and moral dissonance (Adeyemi, 2023). Many youths perceive traditional religious institutions as inadequate in addressing these complex realities, prompting them to seek spiritual frameworks that emphasize practical ethics, mindfulness, social responsibility, and transformative engagement with their communities. The SBNR approach provides a moral compass rooted in reflection, personal values, and relational responsibility, rather than doctrinal enforcement or ritual compliance.

Psychological well-being and mental health are further drivers of this spiritual orientation. Studies highlight those personalized spiritual practices, including meditation, mindfulness, nature-based rituals, and contemplative reflection, promote resilience, stress reduction, and emotional regulation (Ogunleye, 2021). These practices appeal to youths navigating the pressures of urbanization, education, employment, and digital hyper-connectivity, offering a sense of grounding and internal coherence. The digital age amplifies these psychological drivers, as online communities provide emotional support, shared narratives, and affirming spaces for spiritual exploration without judgment or coercion.

Another critical motivation is identity formation and social belonging. African youths increasingly navigate multiple cultural, religious, and digital spaces, often balancing familial, communal, and global influences (Chukwuma, 2022). SBNR identities allow for hybridization, enabling youths to integrate elements from indigenous traditions,

Christianity, Islam, global spirituality, and wellness practices. This fluidity provides a sense of inclusivity, allowing individuals to craft an identity that resonates with their experiences, aspirations, and ethical frameworks while remaining socially connected through online and offline communities.

Intellectual curiosity and exposure to diverse worldviews also fuel this trend. Access to digital media, higher education, and cross-cultural exchange encourages critical reflection on inherited religious beliefs, prompting experimentation with alternative spiritualities (Obi & Nwosu, 2021). The ability to engage with multiple perspectives simultaneously fosters discernment and selective integration, where youths adopt practices and beliefs that align with their evolving moral and spiritual sensibilities.

In conclusion, the emergence of SBNR and Nones among African youths is driven by a constellation of psychological, existential, and social factors. Autonomy, moral reflection, mental well-being, identity formation, and intellectual engagement collectively shape the motivations underpinning these spiritual orientations. Understanding these drivers is essential for scholars, religious leaders, and policymakers seeking to engage meaningfully with the evolving spiritual landscape of African youth in the digital age.

Societal Implications of SBNR and Nones

The proliferation of Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) and Nones identities among African youths carries profound societal implications, reshaping cultural norms, social cohesion, ethical frameworks, and civic engagement. These shifts reflect not only changing patterns of belief but also the broader negotiation between tradition and modernity in African societies (Adeyemi & Johnson, 2022). While the emergence of individualized spiritualities offers avenues for personal empowerment and moral autonomy, it also challenges established religious, communal, and political structures.

One key societal implication is the transformation of communal and religious cohesion. Traditional African societies have historically relied on religion as a primary mechanism for social integration, moral regulation, and collective identity formation (Obi, 2021). The rise of SBNR and Nones challenges this function by promoting individualized, non-institutional forms of spirituality. Although these identities foster personal ethical reflection, they can weaken the authority of religious institutions as mediators of communal life. Consequently, ritual participation, community-based moral instruction, and intergenerational knowledge transmission may experience decline, leading to potential fragmentation of shared cultural values.

Another implication is the reconfiguration of moral and ethical frameworks. SBNR and Nones tend to prioritize personal conscience, experiential learning, and reflexive ethics over doctrinal compliance, emphasizing values such as social justice, environmental stewardship, inclusivity, and human rights (Ogunleye, 2023). This can foster ethical pluralism and critical moral reasoning among youths, encouraging engagement with societal challenges in innovative ways. However, the absence of centralized moral authority may also result in fragmented ethical perspectives, generating variability in

social norms and potentially complicating consensus on communal responsibilities and civic duties.

The political and civic dimensions of society are also affected. African youths increasingly engage with governance, social justice, and human rights through lenses informed by their spiritual orientations (Chukwuma, 2022). SBNR and Nones may be more inclined toward secular civic activism, human-centered policy advocacy, and transnational social movements, less constrained by religious hierarchies or partisan religious affiliations. This can energize civil society participation, encourage critical scrutiny of governance structures, and promote innovative responses to socio-political challenges. However, it may also reduce the mobilizing capacity of traditional religious institutions, historically central to community organization and political negotiation in Africa.

Cultural production and media consumption are additional arenas influenced by these spiritual identities. Digital platforms enable youths to create, share, and perform alternative spiritual expressions, shaping cultural narratives and public discourse (Johnson, 2021). Artistic expressions, storytelling, and digital rituals reflect hybridized spiritualities, contributing to evolving social imaginaries and moral sensibilities. While this fosters creativity and intercultural dialogue, it also challenges conventional gatekeepers of religious and cultural knowledge, leading to tensions between traditional authorities and emergent spiritual communities.

Finally, the intergenerational dynamic is significantly impacted. Older generations, often deeply invested in institutionalized religion, may perceive SBNR and Nones as a departure from communal responsibility, ritual propriety, and moral continuity (Adeyemi, 2023). This can result in intergenerational tensions, necessitating dialogue and negotiation to reconcile divergent spiritual orientations. At the same time, these dynamics offer opportunities for redefining mentorship, ethical education, and community engagement in ways that are more responsive to contemporary realities.

In sum, the rise of SBNR and Nones among African youths has multifaceted societal implications. While fostering moral autonomy, civic engagement, and cultural innovation, these identities challenge traditional religious authority, communal cohesion, and intergenerational continuity. Understanding these dynamics is critical for policymakers, religious leaders, and social scholars aiming to navigate the evolving landscape of spirituality and its broader societal consequences in Africa.

Findings and Analytical Discussion

The analysis of Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) and Nones identities among African youths reveals complex patterns of belief, practice, and societal engagement, highlighting both continuity and transformation in religious and cultural life. Empirical observations indicate that these youths increasingly prioritize autonomy, personalization, and experiential engagement over institutionalized religious authority (Obi & Adeyemi, 2021). This trend reflects a broader global shift in religious expression, accelerated by digital

connectivity, urbanization, and exposure to transnational ideas. Unlike earlier generations, whose spiritual lives were closely intertwined with communal rituals and hierarchical religious structures, contemporary African youths construct flexible spiritual frameworks that accommodate hybrid identities, ethical experimentation, and global cultural flows (Johnson, 2022).

One significant finding is the centrality of digital platforms in shaping spiritual practice. Social media, streaming services, and interactive online communities facilitate exposure to diverse spiritual perspectives, fostering syncretism and experimentation (Ogunleye, 2021). These platforms also provide spaces for peer validation, collective reflection, and ethical deliberation, allowing youths to negotiate moral and existential questions collaboratively rather than relying solely on institutional guidance. Consequently, digital media functions not just as a tool for information dissemination but as a crucible for the formation of new spiritual identities, values, and social norms.

Another key finding is the shift in ethical orientation. SBNR and Nones exhibit strong inclinations toward social justice, environmental sustainability, and human rights, reflecting an ethical engagement that transcends traditional doctrinal boundaries (Adeyemi, 2023). This suggests a moral reorientation in which spirituality is closely linked with civic responsibility and global consciousness. The personalized nature of these spiritualities encourages critical reflection, fostering ethical pluralism and nuanced decision-making in navigating complex social challenges. However, the absence of a centralized moral framework may also produce variability in norms, potentially complicating communal consensus on social responsibilities and ethical obligations.

Identity formation emerges as a core analytical theme. African youths engage in hybridized spiritual practices that draw from indigenous religions, Christianity, Islam, global wellness trends, and secular philosophies (Chukwuma, 2022). This integration allows them to craft identities that are fluid, contextually responsive, and digitally mediated, supporting resilience in navigating social, cultural, and economic pressures. Such fluidity also challenges conventional authority structures, as traditional religious and community leaders must negotiate the legitimacy and relevance of non-institutional spiritual practices within societal frameworks.

Intergenerational dynamics constitute another critical dimension. The divergence between older generations, invested in institutionalized religion, and youths embracing SBNR or Nones identities generates both tension and opportunity (Adeyemi & Johnson, 2022). While these differences may threaten ritual continuity and communal cohesion, they also open avenues for dialogue, mentorship, and the development of inclusive spiritual and ethical frameworks that reflect contemporary realities. The negotiation between continuity and innovation highlights the adaptive capacities of African societies in responding to generational shifts.

Finally, the rise of SBNR and Nones underscores a broader societal transition toward individualized, experiential, and digitally mediated spirituality. This transition reflects not

a rejection of meaning or morality but a reconfiguration of how spirituality, ethics, and social engagement are enacted. African youths are shaping a spiritual landscape that is pluralistic, responsive to contemporary challenges, and ethically engaged, signaling both opportunities and challenges for institutions, policymakers, and communities navigating the evolving intersection of faith, identity, and social responsibility. The findings reveal that SBNR and Nones identities are reshaping African spiritual, ethical, and social landscapes. The analytical discussion highlights autonomy, digital mediation, ethical reorientation, hybridized identity, and intergenerational negotiation as defining features of this transformation, with significant implications for religious institutions, societal cohesion, and policy frameworks.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The rise of Spiritual-but-Not-Religious (SBNR) and Nones identities among African youths reflects a profound transformation in the religious and spiritual landscape of the continent. This study has highlighted how contemporary African youths are increasingly moving beyond traditional institutionalized forms of religion to embrace individualized, experiential, and digitally mediated spiritualities. These shifts signify a reconfiguration of identity, moral reasoning, and social engagement, emphasizing autonomy, ethical reflection, and global consciousness. The findings demonstrate that SBNR and Nones identities are not indicative of a decline in spirituality but rather represent adaptive responses to changing social, cultural, and technological contexts.

The study underscores several key implications for African societies. First, the transformation of spiritual practices challenges traditional religious authority, necessitating dialogue between older generations and youth to preserve cultural continuity while accommodating innovation. Second, the ethical and civic orientations of SBNR and Nones indicate opportunities for enhanced social responsibility, advocacy for human rights, and engagement with pressing societal issues, including climate change, social justice, and community development. Third, the digital mediation of spirituality highlights the potential of technology as a tool for cultural negotiation, moral discourse, and community formation.

Looking forward, policymakers, religious leaders, and scholars must recognize the significance of these emergent spiritual identities. Strategies that promote intergenerational dialogue, ethical education, and inclusive spiritual spaces will be critical to harnessing the positive potential of SBNR and Nones for societal cohesion and moral development. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies of youth spiritual trajectories, the impact of digital platforms on belief systems, and comparative analyses across urban and rural contexts. Understanding these dynamics will be essential for cultivating a spiritually pluralistic, ethically engaged, and culturally resilient Africa in the digital age.

In sum, African youths' embrace of SBNR and Nones identities represents both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge to traditional religious authority and communal structures, and an opportunity to foster innovative, inclusive, and ethically grounded forms of

spirituality that resonate with contemporary realities.

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