Subtitling the Sacred: Navigating Strategies and Challenges in Subtitling Religious Content

Safaa Al-Shlool

Independent Researcher (PhD in Translation, Swansea University, UK)
ALSHLOOLSAFAA@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

Subtitling religious content, particularly sacred texts, presents complex challenges within audiovisual translation, requiring a careful balance between linguistic fidelity, cultural sensitivity, and technical constraints. This study explores the hurdles faced by subtitlers when working with religious material and examines the strategies they employ to navigate these challenges. A survey was conducted to gather insights into the nuanced practices of subtitlers across various audiovisual genres. The survey was distributed via professional networks on Facebook, targeting specialised groups with memberships ranging from 10,000 to over 100,000, and through direct outreach on LinkedIn. Despite efforts to encourage participation through anonymity, the response rate was limited, with only 28 subtitlers completing the survey. The findings reveal that subtitlers prioritise linguistic accuracy while employing strategies such as literal translation, compensation, transposition, and omission to handle the complexities of religious content. Participants identified challenges in preserving meaning and addressing culturally or theologically sensitive material. These challenges are classified into intrinsic factors, such as the theological and linguistic nuances of the source text, and external influences, including technical constraints, media platforms, media genre, censorship policies, audience perspectives, and subtitlers' own perspectives. Moreover, the study highlights a significant gap in formal guidelines for subtitling religious content, leaving subtitlers to rely heavily on their professional judgement, expertise, and personal discretion. This research offers valuable insights that can inform the development of specialised training and standardised practices in this critical yet underexplored field of audiovisual translation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious content is inherently culturally sensitive content due to its deep association with individuals' beliefs, values, and identities. It often includes sacred texts, rituals, and theological concepts that carry profound spiritual and moral significance, making its translation a delicate and complex task. The sacred nature of religious texts, frequently regarded as divine or inviolable, heightens this sensitivity, as any alteration or adaptation during translation can risk controversy or misunderstanding. Moreover, religious practices and beliefs are deeply embedded in cultural traditions and norms, reflecting societal values and heritage. Since

audiences interpret religious content through unique cultural and spiritual lenses, translators and subtitlers must employ strategies that respect diverse interpretations while avoiding language that could be perceived as biased or dismissive. Miscommunication in such content can lead to significant social or political tensions, particularly when themes of morality, ethics, and existential meaning are involved. These challenges underscore the importance of nuanced, culturally informed approaches that balance fidelity to the original text with sensitivity to audience perceptions.

Subtitling religious content, particularly sacred texts, presents unique challenges within audiovisual translation. Such content demands subtitlers to navigate linguistic fidelity while addressing cultural sensitivities and the technical constraints of audiovisual media, including limited screen space, timing, and the need for immediate comprehension. Subtitlers often act as both linguistic mediators and cultural interpreters, striving to preserve sacred meanings while ensuring accessibility for diverse, multicultural audiences. Despite the growing importance of audiovisual translation, academic research has largely overlooked the distinct challenges of subtitling sacred texts, focusing instead on written translations of religious materials. Unlike written translations, subtitling requires brevity and synchronisation with visuals, making it an especially nuanced process.

This study seeks to address this research gap by investigating the subtitling strategies used by professional subtitlers to handle religious content. It examines the challenges they face and the factors shaping their decisions, offering insights grounded in empirical data collected from 28 professional subtitlers via a comprehensive survey. The survey explores subtitling practices across various audiovisual genres and highlights strategies such as literal translation, compensation, omission, and transposition. By shedding light on the decision-making processes involved in subtitling sacred texts, this study contributes to the field of translation studies, enhancing the quality and accessibility of religious audiovisual content for global audiences in an increasingly interconnected world.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Audiovisual translation has gained prominence as a pivotal field within translation studies, addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by multimodal texts that integrate visual, auditory, and textual elements. Foundational scholars such as Jorge Díaz-Cintas, Aline Remael, and Henrik Gottlieb have established robust frameworks for analysing the interplay between language and media, particularly in modalities like subtitling and dubbing. These scholars have laid the groundwork for understanding how linguistic and cultural nuances are conveyed within the constraints of audiovisual formats. For instance, Pedersen's (2011) exploration of cultural

items in subtitling underscores the intricate strategies required to bridge linguistic and cultural divides, emphasising the significance of cultural adaptation to ensure audience comprehension. Similarly, Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014) have investigated how subtitlers navigate technical constraints, such as time and space limitations, while striving to maintain fidelity to the source material. Theoretical perspectives on audiovisual translation are especially pertinent when addressing culturally sensitive and religious content, where the risks of misinterpretation or offence are heightened. By situating the subtitling of religious material within these broader frameworks, this study contributes to an underexplored area of research, specifically the strategies subtitlers employ when handling sacred texts and culturally sensitive themes in audiovisual media.

Generally, translating religious texts, given their sacred nature, presents unique challenges. Previous research has extensively examined the challenges of translating sacred texts, emphasising accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and contextual fidelity (Nida, 1961; Larson (1997); Simms, 1997; Agliz, 2015). Scholars have highlighted the importance of faithful representation and the avoidance of misinterpretations arising from insufficient linguistic, cultural, or theological understanding (Pym, 1992; Venuti, 1995; House, 2015). These challenges are amplified when such texts are translated for subtitling, as audiovisual formats impose technical constraints such as brevity and synchronisation, complicating the faithful rendition of religious content.

Nida (1961), one of the pioneering scholars who investigated the translation of religious content, emphasises the inherent difficulties in translating religious phenomena, citing the intricate nuances of religious systems, the presence of seemingly conflicting elements, and the varied reactions they elicit among adherents. These factors make religious translation particularly demanding, as translators should navigate both linguistic and cultural complexities to convey the intended meaning accurately (Nida, 1961). Several studies have been built on Nida's work. Long (2005) underscores the intricacies involved in translating texts such as the Quran, while scholars like Rahman (1988), Abdul-Raof (2004), and Khalaf and Yusoff (2012) stress the need for translators to balance the inherent sanctity of these texts with their nuanced linguistic and cultural dimensions. Abdul-Raof (2005) further explore the theological dimensions of translation, highlighting the delicate task of preserving the spiritual essence of sacred scripts, such as the Quran, while ensuring they remain accessible and comprehensible for diverse audiences.

Other studies, such as Mehawesh and Sadeq (2014), stress that religious content requires translations that are accurate, ideational, idiomatic, and functional. They argue that such

translations demand a deep understanding of the cultural and theological contexts of both the source and target audiences. Studies, such as Bahameed (2014) further underscore the importance of specialised expertise, noting that translating religious expressions and idioms requires a level of proficiency beyond that of general translation.

Religious texts often serve as vehicles for expressing profound faith and spiritual experiences, making their accurate and respectful translation essential. Elewa (2014) explores the features of translating religious texts and proposes a model for overcoming some of the common obstacles. Drawing on Newmark's (1988) translation procedures, Elewa's model focuses on the printed translation of sacred texts and examines various linguistic aspects, such as phonic and lexical nuances, archaic structures, syntactic complexity, and semantic features. Elewa also discusses stylistic elements like parallelism and repetition, which are often central to the rhythm and structure of religious discourse. He advocates for a bottom-up approach, breaking down texts into their smallest linguistic units and progressing to broader discourse levels. While Elewa's approach is insightful for traditional forms of translation, it is less applicable to subtitling, where technical constraints such as screen space and timing create additional challenges, particularly in audiovisual formats like documentaries or dramas.

The subtitling of religious content, as a subset of audiovisual translation, introduces unique challenges, particularly when dealing with sensitive cultural and theological references. Souayah (2019) provides insights into this area through her study of religious references in the animated film *Moana* (2016). While the study focuses on Polynesian religious and cultural elements, her findings reveal broader patterns in subtitling strategies. Souayah notes that literal translation is often the preferred approach in subtitling, whereas dubbing tends to employ semantic manipulation to make the content more culturally acceptable. For instance, where religious references conflict with the target culture's beliefs, dubbing may adapt or euphemise these references to ensure alignment with audience expectations. However, her research also highlights inconsistencies in subtitling practices, suggesting a need for greater coherence and strategy in the treatment of religious content.

Moll (2017) examines subtitling practices within the context of religious broadcasting, focusing on English-language translations of Arabic-language programmes on Islamic preaching. Although her study centres on a specific religious tradition, her findings are applicable to the broader field of religious subtitling. Moll identifies the dual role of subtitlers as cultural mediators and educators, emphasising their responsibility to bridge cultural divides while ensuring theological accuracy. She also highlights the ideological influences on

subtitling practices, where translations may be deliberately manipulated to serve specific cultural or institutional objectives.

Recently, Al-Shlool (2023) offered a taxonomy specifically designed to address subtitling strategies for religious content. Based on empirical data collected, consisting of Islamic cultural items in nine documentary films, the taxonomy fills a significant gap in the lack of specialised frameworks for subtitling religious material. Al-Shlool also highlights the technical and ideological manipulation often observed in the subtitling of such content, identifying traces of manipulation within the analysed data. Al-Shlool's work sheds light on the complexities subtitlers face, particularly when dealing with content that is both culturally sensitive and ideologically significant.

These studies collectively highlight the multifaceted challenges of subtitling religious content. The intersection of linguistic, cultural, and technical constraints makes this form of audiovisual translation particularly demanding. While traditional approaches to translating religious texts provide valuable insights, the unique requirements of subtitling—such as brevity, timing, and audience accessibility—necessitate specialised strategies. The examples provided, such as the subtitling of Islamic or Polynesian religious references, illustrate the broader complexities involved in adapting sacred content for diverse audiences in an increasingly globalised world.

2.1. Research Aims and Questions

This study aims to examine the methods and considerations used by subtitlers when handling religious content. The study's primary questions include:

- What subtitling strategies do professional subtitlers employ when handling religious content across various audiovisual genres?
- What are the main challenges subtitlers face in preserving linguistic accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and theological integrity when subtitling religious content, and what factors influence the strategies they adopt to address these challenges?

By addressing these questions, this research aims to contribute to the field of audiovisual translation, offering a deeper understanding of the subtitling practices of religious content.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodology employed in this study, detailing the processes of data collection, data analysis, and the classification of survey questions. The questions were specifically designed to gather insights into the techniques subtitlers use, the challenges they encounter, and the factors influencing their decisions. Given the specialised focus on subtitling religious content for diverse audiences, the methodology was structured to capture both

quantitative and qualitative dimensions of subtitling strategies, challenges, and professional perspectives. This dual approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of subtitlers' practices within a culturally sensitive context.

3.1. Data Collection

The primary data for this study was collected through a structured survey distributed among 28 professional subtitlers with experience in handling religious content. Distribution methods included specialised Facebook pages for subtitlers and audiovisual translators, with follower counts ranging from 10,000 to 102,000. These platforms provided a broad international reach, yet only a limited number of participants responded despite the anonymity assured to encourage honest feedback. Additionally, some subtitlers were contacted directly through LinkedIn, where a similarly low response rate was observed. This limited response rate highlights both the sensitive nature of the topic and the challenges associated with collecting data in niche professional fields. To ensure the integrity of responses, the survey was designed to be filled out only once by each participant. Responses were automatically saved and dated in a linked Excel sheet, facilitating data tracking and management. The survey also maintained strict confidentiality, allowing participants to respond anonymously, which was intended to foster openness in discussing the subject of religious content subtitling.

3.2. Data Analysis Process

The survey, conducted via Google Forms, utilised a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather both quantitative data and in-depth qualitative insights. Responses were systematically saved in an Excel sheet for organised analysis. To explore the strategies subtitlers employ, the challenges they face, and the factors influencing their decisions, the data were analysed through a combination of statistical and thematic methods. Quantitative data from closed-ended questions were statistically examined to identify trends in subtitling practices and common challenges. Concurrently, qualitative responses were thematically analysed to uncover subtitlers' subjective experiences and ethical considerations, providing a nuanced understanding of their work. Cross-referencing findings from both analyses allowed for a comprehensive view of subtitling practices, highlighting the challenges subtitlers encounter and the underlying factors driving their decisions.

To ensure participants were adequately prepared to respond to the survey questions, a taxonomy of subtitling strategies specific to religious content was introduced, as shown in Table 1 below. This taxonomy, adapted from Al-Shlool's (2023) framework on subtitling Islamic cultural items, included clear definitions of each strategy. By standardising terminology, participants were able to reflect accurately on their use of these strategies in

practice, ensuring consistency and depth in their responses. The proposed taxonomy not only informed the survey structure but also served as a reference point in the thematic analysis, enabling the evaluation of how subtitlers' practices aligned with or deviated from these predefined strategies.

Table 1: *Taxonomy of Subtitling Strategies for Religious Cultural Items*

Subtitling Strategy	Definition
Loan	Transferring the source text (ST) word, specifically the religious item, into the target text (TT) using the target language (TL) alphabet, a method also known as transliteration or naturalisation.
Literal Translation	Translating the religious item word-for-word into the TT while ensuring it has a semantically identical equivalent.
Substitution	Replacing the closet TT equivalent of the ST religious item with a different TT lexical item.
Transposition	Rendering the ST religious concept, expressed in the form of a religious item, into its religiously accepted equivalence of the concept in TT.
Addition	Introducing a religious item in the TT that is not explicitly mentioned in the ST.
Compensation	Addressing the loss of the religious item translation by offering a general description in the TT that aligns with the ST religious item's meaning or function.
Dummy Compensation	Addressing the loss of the religious item translation by providing irrelevant information in the TT that does not correspond to the ST in terms of function or meaning, often involving mock substitutes unrelated to the original content.
Omission	Completely omitting the religious item in the TT.
Condensation	Partially omitting the religious item in the TT.

3.3. Classification of Survey Questions

The survey begins with a set of background questions designed to gather essential demographic and professional information about the participants. These questions provide context for the analysis, allowing us to explore how factors such as experience level, language pairs, religious content familiarity, primary genres subtitled, and employment type may influence subtitling strategies and decisions. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate their years of experience in subtitling, the language pairs they typically work with, the types of religious content they have handled, and the genres they primarily subtitle (e.g., drama, documentary). Additionally, respondents were asked whether they work as freelancers, are employed by subtitling agencies, or subtitle for broadcasting platforms. This background information is critical for interpreting responses within a structured framework and understanding how subtitling practices may vary according to professional background and experience.

The rest of the survey questions were categorised into three main groups for analysis:

1. Subtitling Strategies Employed

This group of questions aimed to identify the specific subtitling strategies employed by professionals when handling religious content. It explored how subtitlers approach the translation of theologically significant phrases and the adjustments they make to ensure clarity and accuracy. Additionally, it examined how subtitlers adapt their strategies based on the context, audience expectations, and the particular challenges posed by religious content.

2. Subtitlers' Views on Subtitling Religious Content

These questions focused on subtitlers' personal opinions and perceptions regarding religious content in audiovisual media. Here, respondents shared their views on how religious material should be handled, the importance of maintaining reverence, and the ways they manage audience expectations. These insights offer valuable context for understanding subtitlers' attitudes and how these may shape their translation choices.

3. Challenges and Factors Influencing Subtitling Strategies

Questions in this section explore the particular challenges subtitlers of religious content encounter and the factors that may impact subtitling decisions, such as technical constraints, editorial guidelines, and potential censorship. This category also examined ideological influences and personal beliefs, including how subtitlers' own religious background may affect their willingness to subtitle content that conflicts with their personal beliefs. These factors shed light on the complex environment within which subtitlers operate, balancing professional obligations with cultural and personal sensitivities.

In the subsequent sections, analysis and findings will be discussed within the framework of these themes, providing a structured and comprehensive interpretation of subtitlers' strategies, challenges, perspectives, and intrinsic and external influences. This dual approach—incorporating both quantitative and qualitative analyses—ensures that the study captures both the measurable and the deeply contextual aspects of subtitling religious content in audiovisual media.

3.4. Limitations of the Study

This study encountered several notable limitations. First, the response rate was low, despite broad distribution on prominent professional platforms and direct outreach on LinkedIn. This limited engagement may be attributed to the sensitive nature of the topic, as subtitling religious content involves working with sacred texts, deeply held beliefs, and cultural practices that are central to people's identities and worldviews. The potential for misrepresentation or

misinterpretation of such material can lead to misunderstandings, offence, or even social and cultural tensions, which might deter professionals from openly sharing their strategies. Additionally, many subtitlers who received the survey link may not have prioritised participation, either due to time constraints or a perception that completing the survey was not essential. These challenges highlight the complexities of conducting research in this specialised field and suggest that future studies could benefit from incorporating anonymised interviews to explore these issues in greater depth.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the survey findings, structured into three key areas to offer a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved in subtitling religious content. The analysis is grounded in the responses provided by 28 professional subtitlers, focusing on their experiences and strategies when navigating the challenges of subtitling sensitive and contextually significant religious material. The first subsection, *Participant Demographics and Professional Background* examines the profiles of the survey participants, including their linguistic expertise, professional experience, and familiarity with subtitling religious content. This contextual information establishes a foundation for interpreting their responses and understanding the diverse perspectives brought into their subtitling practices. The second subsection, *Subtitling Religious Content*: *Strategies Employed*, explores the various strategies subtitlers use to handle religious material. It delves into specific approaches such as literal translation, compensation, omission, and transposition, while also addressing the decision-making processes and challenges involved in selecting these methods. Finally, the third subsection, *Challenges and Influential Factors Shaping Subtitling Strategies for Religious Content*, analyses intrinsic and external factors that impact subtitlers' approaches. The external factors include technical constraints, media platforms, media genre, censorship policies (e.g. editorial oversight), audience expectations, and subtitlers' personal and professional perspectives. The interplay between these factors and the intrinsic features of the religious content itself (i.e. intrinsic factors) is also discussed, providing insight into the complexity of balancing fidelity, cultural sensitivity, and practical considerations in subtitling religious texts.

4.1. Participant Demographics and Professional Background

The background responses provide essential insight into the professional context and experience of the subtitlers, shedding light on their roles in subtitling religious content. The findings reflect a diverse range of experiences and employment circumstances, each influencing the approach to subtitling and navigating culturally sensitive material.

Regarding professional experience, the majority of respondents demonstrated considerable expertise in the field. Specifically, 32.1% of the subtitlers reported having 6–10 years of experience, 28.6% had 3–5 years, and 21.4% had over 10 years of experience. A smaller proportion (17.9%) indicated having less than 3 years of experience. These findings suggest that most respondents possess substantial professional backgrounds, which likely contribute to their ability to effectively navigate the complexities of subtitling religious content.

In terms of employment status, a notable percentage of the subtitlers were freelancers (46.4%), while 25% were employed directly by broadcasting or streaming platforms, and another 17.9% worked in-house at subtitling agencies. Additionally, 10.7% operated as independent contractors for specific organisations or filmmakers. This variation in employment types emphasises the different working conditions that subtitlers face, influencing their capacity to access resources, work under editorial constraints, and engage with different types of content.

When asked about their experience with religious content, respondents were allowed to select all applicable options and a broad spectrum of religious themes was reported. Notably, 64.3% of subtitlers indicated experience with Islamic content, 57.1% with Christian content, and 32.1% with Jewish content. Some respondents selected more than one religion, such as both Judaism and Christianity, suggesting that subtitlers often work across multiple religious traditions. This pattern highlights their versatility and adaptability in translating such material and indicates a level of education and awareness about various religious items, which is critical in ensuring linguistic accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

Regarding formal training in subtitling religious content, a significant gap was evident, as 78.6% of respondents reported no specific training in religious content subtitling, while only 21.4% had received formal training in this area. This lack of specialised training is a noteworthy challenge for professionals working with religious themes, highlighting the need for more structured educational resources in this domain.

When assessing their expertise in subtitling religious content, the respondents displayed varied levels of experience. 50.0% of the subtitlers considered themselves at an intermediate level of expertise, indicating that they had some experience with religious or sensitive content. 32.1% self-identified as advanced, with extensive experience in subtitling religious and culturally sensitive material, while 14.3% categorised themselves as beginners, indicating limited experience in the field. Only 3.6% self-identified as experts, specialised in the field of religious subtitling.

Finally, when examining the languages in which the subtitlers work, English was universally cited, with 100% of respondents working with it, alongside other languages. 64.3% worked with Arabic, 35.7% with French, and smaller proportions worked with Spanish (14.3%), Portuguese (7.1%), Indonesian (7.1%), and Hebrew (3.6%). The prevalence of English as a primary language, often in combination with others, suggests that these subtitlers are engaged in cross-cultural subtitling, with significant overlap in language pairs used for religious content.

These background responses offer a crucial context for understanding the subtitlers' professional landscape. The diversity in experience, employment settings, and language pairs provides a comprehensive overview of the varied skill sets that subtitlers bring to their work on religious content. This context is essential for interpreting the findings related to subtitling strategies, challenges, and the factors that shape the subtitlers' subtitling strategies for religious content.

4.2. Subtitling Religious Content: Strategies Employed

The subtitling of religious content, particularly sacred texts, presents unique challenges that require subtitlers to adopt nuanced and context-sensitive strategies. This section explores the strategies subtitlers usually employ based on the survey responses.

When asked about the primary strategies employed for subtitling religious content, subtitlers overwhelmingly identified literal translation (92.9%) as their most frequently used strategy. This strong preference underscores a commitment to linguistic fidelity, ensuring that the original meaning and nuances of the ST are preserved. However, literal translation is not always feasible due to cultural differences, linguistic constraints, or technical limitations. To address these challenges, subtitlers reported employing compensation (85.7%), a strategy designed to recreate the intended effect or meaning of the original text through alternative means. For example, compensation might involve providing a culturally relevant description of a religious concept to ensure its function or essence is conveyed in the TT.

Less commonly employed strategies included dummy compensation (39.3%), which involves replacing untranslated religious content with unrelated information to maintain the rhythm or timing of the subtitles (i.e. compensating the TT with mock substitutes). While rarely used, this strategy reflects the practical constraints subtitlers face when dealing with complex or untranslatable material. Omission (32.1%) was another strategy applied sparingly, typically reserved for elements deemed overly sensitive, controversial, or challenging to convey accurately. Similarly, transposition (28.6%), which involves substituting a religious concept from the source culture with its religiously equivalent counterpart in the TT, was infrequently used. Finally, the omission of non-plot-relevant content (3.6%) was the least applied strategy,

highlighting subtitlers' commitment to retaining as much of the ST as possible unless the content's relevance to the narrative was minimal.

The selection of subtitling strategies reflects a nuanced balancing act. Survey respondents prioritised linguistic accuracy (57.1%), emphasising the need to preserve the authenticity of the ST. However, other considerations also shaped their choices: cultural sensitivity and viewer understanding at 21.45% for each were secondary factors that informed decisions on how best to adapt religious content for diverse audiences. These findings indicate that while accuracy is paramount, subtitlers remain mindful of the cultural and interpretative implications of their work.

The findings reveal a layered and context-dependent approach to subtitling religious content. While subtitlers strive to remain faithful to the ST, they also adapt their strategies to address the cultural, linguistic, and technical challenges inherent in translating religious themes. This delicate balancing act highlights the complexities of subtitling religious content, where linguistic fidelity must coexist with sensitivity to audience expectations and external constraints. By navigating these competing priorities, subtitlers play a vital role in ensuring that religious material is both accessible and respectful in a globalised media landscape.

4.3. Challenges and Influential Factors Shaping Subtitling Strategies for Religious Content

The subtitling of religious content presents unique challenges and requires a delicate balance of linguistic fidelity, cultural sensitivity, and technical precision. Subtitling strategies for religious content are influenced by two primary types of factors: intrinsic characteristics of the ST and external factors. Intrinsic factors include the theological significance, linguistic nuances, and cultural context embedded in the religious content, while external factors encompass technical constraints, media platforms, media genre, censorship policies, audience perspectives, and subtitlers' individual perspectives. The challenges faced by subtitlers are deeply interrelated with these factors. They are, in many ways, the flip side of these factors—they arise directly from the complexities and demands these factors impose. They are discussed together in this section to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these elements collectively shape subtitling practices for religious content.

4.3.1. Intrinsic Factors

The nature of the religious content itself plays a crucial role in shaping subtitling decisions. Elements such as the theological significance, cultural weight, and potential for misinterpretation require subtitlers to adopt a contextually aware approach. Strategies like literal translation are often prioritised to ensure faithfulness to the ST, but more flexible

approaches such as transposition or omission may be necessary when the content poses cultural or interpretative challenges.

In this study, the intrinsic features of the ST itself—such as its religious nature, theological message significance, the level of formality in the language, and the use of theological language—are identified as critical considerations influencing subtitling strategies. These features are inherently unique to each ST, as they depend on the specific religious content segments within the material, which carry particular meanings and contexts as they appear in the audiovisual work. The subtitling approach must account for how these religious elements are framed in dialogue, narrative, or visual cues, as well as their intended impact within the broader context of the material. Due to this variability, it is not feasible to provide an exhaustive list or standardised framework for addressing these intrinsic features.

However, the survey responses highlight some of these intrinsic factors, as seen in the question, "What are the main challenges you face when subtitling religious content (e.g., verses of the Quran)?" Respondents identified several challenges, including the eloquence and linguistic nuances of the Quran, terminology complexities, and the time and space constraints involved in subtitling intricate and lengthy verses. Additional challenges cited were the need to interpret the ST's meaning accurately, synchronise it with translated text, and maintain precise timing. These intrinsic challenges also help explain why subtitlers often depend on external resources and existing translations to navigate the nuances of religious content.

A related question asked, "What resources (e.g., glossaries, translation guides) do you use to ensure accuracy when subtitling religious content?" Subtitlers reported using a variety of resources, including glossaries, specialised glossaries for religious translation (e.g., existing translations by recognised scholars), research engines, and even expert consultation. For instance, one respondent referred to consulting a university professor specialising in religious translation for a specific project. Other resources included specialised dictionaries, books, and translation guides.

Furthermore, when asked how often they consult religious or cultural experts while subtitling sensitive religious content, survey responses revealed a notable disparity in practices: 42.9% of respondents reported that they never seek such consultations, while 17.9% said they do so rarely. A quarter of respondents (25%) indicated they sometimes consult experts, and only 14.2%—comprising those who consult experts "often" (7.1%) and "always" (7.1%)—demonstrated a consistent reliance on this practice. These findings reflect a significant gap in

the use of expert guidance, even though it can be instrumental in addressing the complexities and sensitivities associated with subtitling religious content.

In addition, the limited engagement with religious or cultural experts also reflects a broader structural gap within the subtitling industry. Unlike other fields of specialised translation, audiovisual subtitling often lacks formalised processes for integrating expert consultation into workflows. This absence of standardised practices leaves subtitlers reliant on their personal networks or individual initiative to access expert guidance. Given the variability in subtitlers' backgrounds and training, this reliance can lead to inconsistencies in how sensitive religious content is handled.

4.3.2. External Factors

External influences play a critical role in shaping subtitling strategies, encompassing factors such as technical constraints, media platforms, media genre, censorship policies (e.g., editorial oversight), audience perspectives, and individual subtitler views on subtitling religious content. Technical limitations, including screen space, timing, and character counts, frequently compel subtitlers to employ strategies such as paraphrasing or prioritising key phrases to balance accuracy with accessibility. Censorship policies, such as editorial oversight, can further shape subtitling decisions, with editors promoting cultural inclusivity or avoiding contentious interpretations. Media platforms and genres often dictate how religious themes are presented, while audience sensitivity may require adjustments in language to ensure clarity or neutrality. Individual subtitler views also emerge as a notable external factor, as personal beliefs, experiences, and familiarity with religious content can subtly influence the choice of subtitling strategies. The survey findings underscore the significance of these external factors, highlighting how these factors collectively influence the subtitling process. These aspects are explored in detail in the following subsections.

4.3.2.1. Technical Constraints

In subtitling, technical constraints refer to the limitations imposed by time and space on the display of subtitles. These include the number of characters per line, the duration subtitles remain on screen, and synchronisation with audiovisual elements. These constraints significantly play a role in shaping subtitling strategies, particularly when dealing with intricate or lengthy content. For religious content, these limitations can complicate the subtitler's task of conveying intricate meanings, maintaining theological integrity, and ensuring cultural sensitivity.

Survey responses highlight how subtitlers navigate the challenges posed by technical constraints when handling religious content. Several respondents noted that the degree of

impact depends heavily on the ST. For example, lengthy or dense religious passages require more nuanced strategies, such as paraphrasing or splitting content across multiple subtitles. Conversely, shorter or simpler texts were seen as less affected by time and space constraints.

Additionally, many subtitlers mentioned the use of subtitling strategies, compensation or omission*,* when subtitling lengthy or complex religious verses, especially when the omitted content does not directly impact the plot. This approach helps subtitlers align with time and character limits while striving to preserve the essence of the message. However, some subtitlers expressed concern that omitting content risks diluting the theological or cultural significance of the material. Other subtitlers highlighted that subtitling religious phrases often involve terms or concepts unfamiliar to non-expert audiences, which require additional explanations to clarify their meanings for target audiences. However, the brevity mandated by subtitles often made such explanations difficult, leading to a tension between achieving linguistic clarity and maintaining audience comprehension. This challenge becomes especially pronounced when subtitling theological terms or culturally specific references that lack direct equivalents in the target language.

To maintain integrity within these constraints, subtitlers employed various approaches, as highlighted in the survey responses:

- Paraphrasing (39.3%) was the most common strategy, allowing them to retain the essence of the text while adjusting its form.
- Simplifying language (39.3%) was also noted, highlighting efforts to ensure clarity within limited screen space and timing.
- Prioritising key phrases (21.4%) and omitting less critical details reflect a selective approach to balancing narrative and technical demands.

Interestingly, not all subtitlers reported being significantly affected by these constraints. A minority indicated that their strategies remained consistent regardless of the ST's complexity, suggesting that experience or established workflows might mitigate the challenges of technical limitations.

These findings underscore the pivotal role of time and space constraints in shaping subtitling practices for religious content. Subtitlers employ a range of adaptive strategies, such as compensation and omission, to navigate these challenges while preserving the theological and cultural significance of the ST. Nonetheless, the tension between brevity and accuracy highlights the need for further resources and training to support subtitlers in effectively addressing the unique demands of religious audiovisual translation.

4.3.2.2. Media Platforms

The analysis of media platforms in this study reveals subtitlers' extensive engagement across a range of audiovisual formats and platforms, with respondents able to select more than one platform where they work. YouTube and video-sharing platforms emerged as notably prominent, with 71.4% of respondents indicating that they work in this sector. Such platforms often feature informal, widely accessible content, necessitating flexible subtitling strategies attuned to a global, culturally diverse audience. Streaming services, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, are also significant, with 57.1% of subtitlers working in this domain. These high-demand, subscription-based platforms require careful consideration of cultural nuances and linguistic expectations due to their vast international reach.

Traditional media continue to play a key role, with 39.3% of respondents working in television broadcasting and 28.6% in film distribution. Content in these mediums is typically more formal, calling for subtitling practices that prioritise narrative coherence and cultural sensitivity, particularly when addressing religious themes. Additionally, 50% of respondents reported working on educational or institutional media, which highlights a need for precise, clear subtitling suited to structured learning or organisational settings. Uniquely, one subtitler noted subtitling for a church-specific community (3.6%), demonstrating that some subtitlers operate in niche, community-driven projects aimed at serving particular cultural or religious audiences.

The diversity of media platforms on which subtitlers work suggests a requirement for adaptable skill sets that can meet the distinct expectations of each medium. The prominent role of digital and streaming platforms underscores the shift towards a global, digital landscape, where subtitlers should balance accessibility with linguistic and cultural accuracy. In contrast, the presence of educational and community-specific media suggests that subtitlers frequently address subtitling needs that go beyond entertainment, fulfilling educational and cultural bridging roles across various media contexts.

4.3.2.3.Media Genre

The survey findings highlight how the media genre significantly shapes subtitlers' approaches to religious and culturally sensitive content, revealing varied strategies across different types of media. For instance, documentaries frequently demand a factual and respectful tone, while comedy requires added sensitivity to avoid potential offence. These genre-specific requirements illustrate the importance of adapting tone, language, and cultural references based on the content type to effectively engage the target audience.

Feature films emerged as the most frequently subtitled genre, with 53.6% of respondents indicating this as their primary focus. This preference suggests a focus on balancing narrative immersion with cultural sensitivity. Educational videos accounted for 17.9% of responses, showing a significant portion of work focused on structured learning environments, which emphasise clarity and accessibility. Social media content accounted for 14.3% while documentaries accounted for 7.1%. Other genres, each at 3.6%, included TV shows, and mixed formats, such as documentaries combined with feature films. This broad engagement across genres indicates the adaptability required from subtitlers to meet the unique demands of each context.

When asked how genre influences their subtitling strategies for religious material, respondents highlighted notable genre-specific adjustments. Only 33.3% felt that genre does not impact their approach, indicating that most subtitling strategies are highly genre-responsive. For example, 29.6% observed that certain genres, such as comedy, allow for a more light-hearted approach, though balancing humour with cultural respect remains a significant challenge in religious contexts. Among those acknowledging genre's influence, 71.4% reported that genres like documentaries require a more formal tone to convey respect for sensitive topics. Furthermore, 57.1% noted that genre shapes their choice of language and expressions, underscoring the need for precise linguistic adjustments. Similarly, 57.1% indicated that genre affects decisions to include or omit content, particularly when handling material with high sensitivity. These findings suggest that subtitlers carefully adapt their strategies to align with the unique demands of each genre, ensuring both fidelity and cultural appropriateness.

These findings emphasise the essential role of genre in shaping subtitling strategies for religious content. Subtitlers must adopt a flexible, context-sensitive approach to align with genre conventions and audience expectations, which is crucial for achieving both cultural respect and accessibility for diverse audiences.

4.3.2.4. Censorship in Religious Content Subtitling

Censorship policies significantly influence subtitlers' approaches to religious content. The findings indicate that subtitlers often work under varying levels of institutional oversight, such as media platforms' subtitling guidelines and editorial reviews, which shape the representation of religious themes.

Despite the critical role of formal controls in ensuring consistency and cultural sensitivity, the findings reveal a significant absence of standardised guidelines for subtitling religious content. A striking 71.4% of respondents reported that broadcasting platforms do not provide specific guidance in this area. As a result, subtitlers are often left to rely on personal judgment to

navigate sensitive material, leading to variability in how religious themes are approached. This challenge is further compounded by the lack of formal training, with 78.6% of participants indicating they had received no specialised education in audiovisual translation for religious content. The absence of both standardised guidelines and formal training underscores the need for subtitlers to adopt highly adaptive strategies to meet diverse audience expectations. These findings align with Al-Shlool's (2023) research, which examined subtitling practices in relation to existing guidelines from audiovisual translation scholars, specialised committees such as the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST), and major video-on-demand platforms including Netflix, Channel 4 (All 4), and Amazon Prime. Al-Shlool's study identified a notable lack of explicit subtitling guidelines for religious content, highlighting a critical gap in industry standards. This deficiency emphasises the pressing need for formalised frameworks to support subtitlers in addressing the unique challenges associated with translating religious material.

In addition to these structural challenges, subtitlers' individual approaches are also shaped by institutional or client-driven values. For example, one respondent working on content affiliated with a church described adapting their subtitling approach to respect the religious values inherent to the institution. This demonstrates how certain organisations may encourage or expect specific interpretive approaches to align with their religious or cultural mission. Subtitlers may therefore find themselves balancing fidelity to the original message with respect to the particular ideological perspective of the hiring entity.

Editorial oversight also plays a significant role in shaping subtitling strategies, particularly for religious content. When asked at what stage(s) of the subtitling process editors typically review or provide input, the responses revealed a diverse range of practices. While 29.6% of subtitlers indicated that no editorial review is conducted, the majority—70.4%—reported experiencing some level of editorial involvement. Specifically, 14.8% noted editorial input at the initial translation stage, 22.2% identified review after the first draft, and 40.7% indicated that final reviews occur before publication. These findings underscore the prevalence of editorial oversight in the subtitling process, with a clear majority of subtitlers acknowledging some degree of external evaluation.

Further insights into editorial influence emerged when subtitlers were asked whether editorial reviews often result in requests for changes that affect their subtitling strategies in general, rather than specifically on religious content. Responses were a near-even split: 54.2% of subtitlers reported frequent requests for modifications, while the other 45.8% stated they experienced no such editorial interference. This dichotomy highlights the variability in

subtitlers' experiences, with some retaining significant autonomy while others face substantial editorial input that shapes their work.

A related question explored how subtitlers collaborate and coordinate when working on the same project, shedding light on the structural dynamics of teamwork in subtitling. When asked how work is typically divided and coordinated, 84% of respondents reported that each subtitler is assigned a specific portion of the content to subtitle independently. In contrast, only 8% described collaborative efforts where subtitlers work together on all parts and discuss strategies collectively. Another 8% noted instances where one subtitler requested changes to another's work for consistency or accuracy, often as part of the editorial review process. These findings suggest that subtitlers predominantly operate in isolation, relying on their professional judgment for the sections assigned to them. Collaboration is limited to addressing specific inconsistencies or ensuring alignment during editorial reviews. While this decentralised model may enhance efficiency, it can also result in inconsistencies in tone or approach, particularly when dealing with sensitive religious content that demands careful consideration of cultural or theological nuances.

Moreover, this segmented approach reflects the broader structural limitations of the subtitling process, where subtitlers' contributions are often confined to the production stage, leaving audience engagement and broader quality assessments to editors and other stakeholders. Such practices point to an opportunity for greater collaboration and unified strategy development, which could enhance the coherence and sensitivity of subtitling projects involving religious themes.

Finally, subtitlers were asked whether they were requested by editors, filmmakers, or broadcasting platforms to alter their subtitling approach for religious content. Most respondents (26 out of 28) reported no such requests. However, the remaining respondents described cases where significant adjustments were required. For instance, one subtitler recounted being asked to replace a term with religious connotations with a more neutral synonym, illustrating editorial efforts to remove specificity and ensure broader audience appeal. Another respondent referenced projects such as *God's Not Dead 2*, where translators were guided to apply specific subtitling strategies to ensure cultural sensitivity and accuracy, which influenced their approach significantly. This may involve using strategies such as paraphrasing or omission to navigate potentially controversial themes while maintaining the intended message. Such requests can lead to a more cautious and nuanced subtitling strategy, balancing fidelity to the ST with respect for diverse audience beliefs and values.

These findings illustrate the complex interplay of independent decision-making, editorial oversight, and external stakeholder influence in the subtitling process. Subtitlers must navigate a challenging landscape, balancing fidelity to the ST with the diverse expectations of audiences, editors, and platforms. This dynamic process underscores the professionalism required to translate religious content that is accessible, culturally sensitive, and aligned with industry standards. Enhanced collaboration and the development of formalised guidelines could provide subtitlers with the tools needed to address these challenges more effectively, fostering consistency and inclusiveness in the subtitling of religious audiovisual content.

4.3.2.5. Audience Perspectives

Audience perspectives also play a role in shaping subtitling strategies for religious content, requiring subtitlers to navigate the intricate balance between cultural sensitivity, and audience expectations. Insights from survey responses reveal the nuanced ways in which audience considerations influence decision-making processes in this specialised field.

One notable area of audience influence pertains to altering or omitting content due to potential audience sensitivities. When subtitlers were asked if they had felt the need to adjust religious content to align with audience expectations or platform requirements, their responses varied: 46.4% indicated "no," 21.4% answered "yes," and 32.1% responded "maybe." These findings highlight the diversity in approaches among subtitlers, with nearly half maintaining consistency irrespective of perceived sensitivities. However, the significant proportion of "yes" and "maybe" responses underscores that for many, decisions about adapting content are highly context-dependent. The "maybe" responses suggest an awareness of audience sensitivities and a willingness to adapt strategies when circumstances warrant it.

When asked whether they have you ever experienced challenges or uncertainty when translating or omitting certain religious verses due to their sensitive nature or potential viewer interpretation, one respondent mentioned a project where the editor instructed them to avoid directly translating Quranic verses about fighting and instead use more neutral phrases such as "reciting Quran." This reflects an awareness of audience sensitivity and a strategic effort to prevent potential misinterpretation or offence. Such editorial oversight highlights how audience expectations and cultural sensitivities can influence subtitling strategies, requiring subtitlers to adapt their work to align with the anticipated reactions of the target audience.

The potential impact of subtitling on audience perceptions of religion emerged as another key area of exploration. When asked whether subtitling religious content influences how audiences perceive a religion, most subtitlers answered "no." This prevailing view suggests a consensus that audience perceptions are shaped more by the audiovisual work's broader context and

narrative than by the subtitling process itself. Only two respondents answered "yes," with one asserting that subtitling could enhance religious understanding. Another emphasised that the perception of religion depends largely on the film's topic and context. These findings suggest that while subtitlers acknowledge the potential influence of their work, they generally regard subtitling as a secondary factor in shaping audience perceptions.

Another crucial dimension of audience influence is feedback, or the lack thereof, from viewers. When asked whether they had received feedback regarding the subtitling of religious content across genres, 20 subtitlers unequivocally responded "no," while the remainder did not provide an answer. This lack of audience feedback reflects a significant structural limitation in the subtitling industry. Subtitlers typically work in isolation from end audiences, focusing on production rather than post-production engagement. Consequently, they lack opportunities to gauge audience reception or refine their strategies based on feedback.

This absence of interaction also points to a broader gap in the academic literature. Studies exploring audience perceptions of subtitled religious content remain limited, hindered by challenges such as the difficulty of reaching diverse and geographically dispersed audiences and the sensitive nature of the subject matter. These barriers complicate efforts to understand how religious subtitling is perceived by viewers, leaving subtitlers with little insight into the real-world impact of their work. Addressing this gap could provide valuable guidance for subtitlers and contribute to the development of more effective and audience-sensitive subtitling practices.

In conclusion, audience perspectives represent a critical external factor in subtitling religious content, influencing decisions about adaptation, content omission, and overall strategy. However, the limited engagement between subtitlers and audiences restricts opportunities to assess the effectiveness of these strategies. Bridging this gap through targeted research on audience perceptions could enrich the field, offering subtitlers a deeper understanding of their work's impact and enabling more informed practices in this highly specialised area of audiovisual translation.

4.3.2.6. Subtitlers' Individual Perspectives

Subtitlers' individual perspectives, including their religious and cultural orientations, also play a vital role in shaping the subtitling process. This section highlights some insights into subtitlers' perspectives on handling religious content. Key areas explored include ethical considerations in subtitling religious content, how subtitlers manage the potential for misinterpretation and sensitive topics, their preferences for referencing existing translations

versus crafting their own, and their approaches in handling situations where the content to subtitle contradicts their personal religious beliefs.

Ethical Considerations in Subtitling Religious Content

Subtitling religious content presents unique ethical challenges that often surpass those encountered in other types of audiovisual translation. Responses to the survey question regarding whether subtitling religious content requires more ethical consideration than other types of content were varied, revealing important insights into how subtitlers perceive the ethical dimensions of their work.

Several respondents emphasised that religious content demands heightened ethical sensitivity because of the deep, sacred meanings often tied to people's beliefs and values. These subtitlers highlighted the importance of accuracy and respect to avoid mistranslations or misinterpretations, which could distort the original message or inadvertently cause offence. One respondent noted that subtitling religious content involves transferring the original message honestly, while another pointed out that mishandling sacred material could be perceived as disrespectful. These views suggest that the potential consequences of inaccuracies in religious subtitling are particularly significant, given the personal and cultural importance of such content.

The notion that subtitling religious texts or themes involves sacred scripts amplifies the responsibility placed on subtitlers. Unlike other types of content, religious material is often associated with moral, spiritual, and cultural dimensions that require careful consideration. For example, one respondent stressed that ethical considerations are essential to ensure the accurate and respectful representation of sacred texts, avoiding unintended interpretations that might undermine the original intent or offend viewers. Such sensitivities necessitate an acute awareness of both linguistic nuances and cultural context, a skill that not all subtitlers may possess without specialised training or experience.

However, not all respondents agreed that religious content warrants more ethical scrutiny than other genres. A notable subset of respondents argued that ethical considerations are integral to subtitling all types of content. One respondent stated, "ethical consideration is required in all types of content," suggesting that professional integrity and fidelity to the ST should be a universal standard, regardless of subject matter. This perspective underscores the broader ethical responsibilities of subtitlers, including accuracy, transparency, and respect for the ST and its intended audience, whether religious or not.

Interestingly, one respondent commented, "The truth may sound hurt than lie," suggesting that the ethical challenge lies in conveying the original message truthfully, even if the content is controversial or challenging to certain audiences. This view highlights the subtitler's dual role as both a mediator and a gatekeeper, tasked with ensuring that ST's message is faithfully communicated while navigating the sensitivities of a diverse audience.

The responses also revealed some ambiguity, with certain subtitlers expressing nuanced positions such as "to some extent." This reflects the context-dependent nature of ethical considerations in religious subtitling. For instance, translating a prayer in a documentary about interfaith dialogue may require a different level of ethical sensitivity compared to subtitling a satirical depiction of religion in a fictional series. The subtitler's judgement is therefore critical in assessing the level of ethical care needed for each project, taking into account the ST's purpose, the target audience's expectations, and the broader sociocultural implications of the translation.

Collectively, the responses illustrate the complexity of ethical decision-making in subtitling religious content. While some subtitlers regard religious themes as inherently requiring heightened ethical care due to their sacred and culturally sensitive nature, others emphasise the universal ethical obligations that apply across all genres. This dual perspective underscores the multifaceted nature of subtitling, where ethical considerations are influenced by the content, context, and subtitler's professional philosophy. The findings also point to an important gap in formal guidance. The absence of standardised ethical frameworks specific to religious subtitling places the onus on individual subtitlers to navigate these challenges. This underscores the need for targeted training and the development of industry-wide ethical standards that address the unique demands of translating religious content. Such measures would not only support subtitlers in making informed ethical decisions but also contribute to greater consistency and respect in the representation of religious themes in audiovisual media.

Handling Potential Misinterpretations and Sensitive Religious Topics
Subtitling potentially contentious themes, such as references to interfaith relations, requires careful decision-making and nuanced strategies. Subtitlers highlighted several approaches shaped by both external frameworks and individual judgment. Adhering to platform guidelines for sensitive content in general (42.3%) emerged as a common practice, reflecting the influence of institutional norms on subtitling decisions, even though these guidelines are not specifically designed for religious sensitive content. Meanwhile, independent decision-making (34.6%), guided by cultural and audience sensitivities, showcased subtitlers' autonomy and their ability

to navigate complex scenarios. Consulting editors or filmmakers (23.1%) also played a role in aligning subtitling strategies with broader creative and cultural objectives.

When subtitlers encountered verses or phrases that risked misinterpretation across different cultural contexts, their strategies became even more targeted. The most frequently cited approach was adapting language for clarity (39.9%), ensuring the content remained accessible and understandable to diverse audiences. Neutral phrasing (25%) was also a prevalent strategy, reflecting an effort to avoid contentious interpretations. Other techniques, such as omission (7.1%) and conditional inclusion (25%), illustrate subtitlers' attempts to strike a balance between narrative cohesion and the avoidance of controversy. For instance, some subtitlers reported using neutral phrasing for plot-relevant sensitive content, while opting for omission when the material held no direct relevance to the narrative. This dual approach demonstrates the delicate balancing act required to respect audience expectations, uphold narrative integrity, and avoid unnecessary controversy.

These findings underscore the complexity of subtitling religious content, highlighting how subtitlers should balance professional guidelines, personal judgment, and cultural sensitivities. The prevalence of strategies like adapting language for clarity and employing neutral phrasing suggests that subtitlers aim to bridge cultural divides while minimising the potential for misinterpretation. At the same time, the use of omission and conditional inclusion points to a pragmatic approach in managing content that might not translate effectively across cultural or linguistic boundaries.

The diversity in reported strategies reflects the lack of standardised guidelines for handling religious content, leaving subtitlers to rely heavily on their expertise and judgment. This reliance underscores their role not just as linguistic mediators but also as cultural interpreters navigating sensitive topics. The findings highlight the significance of subtitlers' autonomy in shaping the audience's perception of religious material, particularly in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

By addressing these challenges, subtitlers contribute to making audiovisual content accessible and respectful, ensuring that it resonates with audiences while avoiding unnecessary controversy. Future research could further explore how subtitlers' decisions are influenced by evolving audience expectations and platform-specific norms, providing insights to better equip professionals working with culturally sensitive material.

Referencing Existing Translations of Sacred Scripts

When subtitling sacred texts, subtitlers' individual perspectives emerge as a significant external factor influencing their strategies. These perspectives are shaped by their knowledge, experience in translation, and attitudes toward existing resources. 51.9% of respondents reported referring to established translations, a practice that ensures consistency with widely accepted interpretations but is also influenced by personal biases and preferences. For example, subtitlers' choice of which existing translation to use reflects their individual perspectives on the suitability of the language and interpretative style. Among the referenced translations of the Quran, for example, Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Hilali and Khan were noted for their explanatory nature and clarity, while Abdul Haleem's translation was praised for its accessibility and modern language, making it particularly well-suited for English-speaking audiences. Conversely, one subtitler expressed a preference for older translations of sacred texts, citing concerns that modern versions might be shaped by subjective interpretations.

Additionally, 40.7% of respondents stated that their choice of approach depends on the context. This highlights the adaptability required in subtitling sacred texts, as subtitlers should evaluate the unique demands of each audiovisual project, including its tone, intended audience, and the narrative significance of the religious content. This flexibility suggests a nuanced understanding of the interplay between fidelity to the ST and the needs of the target audience.

Interestingly, 7.4% of respondents indicated that they translated sacred texts themselves. This finding is notable as it underscores the highly specialised nature of this work, where subtitlers may draw upon their own linguistic and theological knowledge to address gaps in existing resources or to better align the translation with the audiovisual content's context. However, this approach also introduces potential risks, as the absence of peer-reviewed translations could result in misinterpretations or deviations from established theological interpretations.

These findings collectively underscore the variability in subtitlers' approaches, shaped by a combination of personal perspectives, contextual considerations, and professional judgment. They reveal the intricate balancing act required to maintain linguistic accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and narrative cohesion when subtitling sacred texts.

Handling Situations Where the Content to Subtitle contradicts Subtitlers' Personal Religious Beliefs

When asked, "How do you handle situations where the content you are subtitling contradicts your personal religious beliefs?", subtitlers overwhelmingly indicated a commitment to professionalism. Specifically, 93.3% of respondents stated that they "translate the content as required, maintaining professional neutrality." This reflects a strong professional ethos,

highlighting subtitlers' dedication to impartiality, even when personal beliefs may conflict with the content being subtitled. However, 6.7% of respondents selected the option to refuse the project or request reassignment, indicating that a small but notable proportion of subtitlers may prioritise their personal beliefs over professional obligations in certain cases. Interestingly, when examining the experience level of those who chose this option, it was found to be less than 3 years. This suggests that less experienced subtitlers may be more inclined to refuse projects that conflict with their personal beliefs, potentially due to lower confidence in navigating such challenges or a heightened sensitivity to ethical dilemmas early in their careers. Additionally, 5 subtitlers chose not to answer this question, which could reflect ambivalence, discomfort, or reluctance to disclose their strategies for managing such situations. This lack of response points to the complexity of the issue, suggesting that while professional neutrality is widely upheld, subtitlers may still grapple with personal tensions, ethical considerations, or institutional pressures that shape their decisions in ways that are not always openly articulated.

These findings suggest that while subtitlers generally uphold professional neutrality, personal beliefs and ideological orientations can still subtly shape their strategies, particularly in sensitive contexts. In situations where religious themes or phrasing conflict with subtitlers' personal beliefs, there may be unspoken ethical considerations at play. Although the data indicates that subtitlers primarily handle these conflicts with care and professionalism, individual beliefs or the orientation of the hiring entity might still subtly influence the final approach to subtitling religious content.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has provided a comprehensive exploration of the subtitling strategies employed by professionals when handling religious content, with a particular focus on sacred texts. By analysing survey responses from 28 professional subtitlers, this research has highlighted the nuanced and multifaceted decisions involved in subtitling religious content.

One of the key findings is the influence of intrinsic factors related to the ST, such as the theological and cultural significance of religious segments, which require careful interpretation within the audiovisual context. These intrinsic features, inherently unique to each ST, demand a tailored approach that reflects the meaning, tone, and intended impact of the material. External factors, including technical constraints, media platform, media genre, censorship policies (e.g. editorial oversight), audience perspectives, and subtitlers' individual perspectives, were also shown to significantly shape subtitling strategies.

The findings also reveal a predominance of literal translation as a preferred strategy, reflecting subtitlers' emphasis on preserving linguistic and theological integrity. However, the frequent

use of compensation, omission, and transposition demonstrates the necessity of flexibility in addressing linguistic, cultural, and technical challenges. Subtitlers' practices are further influenced by their professional backgrounds, their reliance on existing translations, and their interpretations of audience needs. This research also underscores the absence of formalised guidelines for subtitling religious content, coupled with a lack of specialised training, which places the onus on subtitlers to exercise their judgement, often relying on personal resources such as glossaries or established translations to navigate sensitive material.

Furthermore, this research suggests that many media platforms may not have explicit guidelines for subtitling religious content, potentially to avoid addressing sensitive religious themes directly. This absence of detailed guidelines on religious material might reflect a deliberate strategy to steer clear of controversial topics that could lead to audience backlash or legal challenges. Platforms may prefer to leave the subtitling process more open-ended, allowing subtitlers to use their discretion and professional judgment when dealing with religious content. Without specific instructions or protocols, subtitlers are left to navigate the complexities of sacred texts and religious references on their own, relying on general content guidelines or platform policies related to sensitivity, neutrality, and cultural inclusivity. This lack of detailed guidance underscores the significant role of subtitlers' personal expertise and ethical considerations in ensuring that the subtitling of religious material respects both the integrity of the ST and the sensitivities of diverse audiences.

To conclude, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in subtitling religious content. It highlights the critical need for further research and industry-wide initiatives to develop standardised frameworks and training programs that support subtitlers in this specialised area. Such efforts would not only enhance the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of religious content translation but also ensure its accessibility to diverse audiences in an increasingly interconnected world.

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