THE CHALLENGES YOUNG RELIGIOUS IN FORMATION PROGRAMS FACE IN USING SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: This study highlights the challenges young religious face in their formation process with regard to social media. Social media has brought some beneficial progress in communication at the same time some challenges. From the findings, According to the findings, many young religious agree that the use of social media during formation should be regulated and restricted. The young religious find themselves addicted to the social media platform and forget what had brought them in formation. One example cited by many young religious is the use of Facebook and Whatsapp. Many young religious spend a lot of money in buying internet bundles in order to chat with their friends on the social media platforms. For example, in the formation of young religious, the social media usage has impacted negatively as well because of lack of proper usage of the media by the formees. From this study, it was concluded that, the most frequent cited challenges included: addiction, visiting prohibited adults sites, exposure of personal information and engaging in illicit affairs. The use of social media in formation programs needs regulation. The young religious who secretly possess smart phones and use them hidden during the critical stages of their formation are dishonest and need spiritual guidance to overcome dishonesty. Smart phones should be regulated especially when young religious join the formation houses.

Key Words: Religious, formation, social media

1.1 Study Background

Social media entails a collection of applications such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, or YouTube as well as websites that link people to share information and be aware of any event through social networking (Ali, Kanwal&Iqbal, 2016). From the beginning of the 21st century, social media has rapidly progressed. In this way, social media has rapidly become the"platform that allows individuals to interact, using two way communications; meaning, that anyone who has online accounts can share their opinions with other social media users (El-Badawy&Hashem, 2014). Social media has been utilised in so many different ways throughout the years. Egypt is known to be one of the heavy users of social media, specifically Facebook. It dominates 25% of the total MENA region, having almost 11 million users, even though the penetration rate is only about 13%. In the first six months of the year 2012, Egypt had an additional 1,608,420 users on Facebook, which is the highest number in the MENA region. Richards stated that 46% of Egyptian social media users believe that social media has great influence in empowering them to change their country (Richards, 2012). According to Curtis (2013), in 2014, there is about 1.28 billion Facebook users and 255 million Twitter users, 55 million of the Facebook users and 3.7 million of the Twitter users are from the Arab world.

A study conducted in Malaysia by Salvation and Adzharuddin(2014) to analyse the impact of social network sites on students' academic performance in Malaysia showed that more students prefer the use of Facebook and Twitter in academic related discussions in complementing conventional classroom teaching and learning process. Thus, it is imperative that lecturers and academic institutions should implement the use of these applications in promoting academic excellence. The gap with this research is that it focused on students and not the religious. This was gap that this research sought to fill (Salvation &Adzharuddin, 2014). In Saudi Arabia, a research was conducted by Alim and Shahzad(2014) to explore the influence of social media usage on academic performance of students. The survey also explored which social network was the most popular among Saudi students. The survey received 108 responses and descriptive statistics including normality tests i.e., scatter plots were used to examine the relationship between the average numbers of hour's students spent of social media per week and grade point average (GPA) scores of the students. The results demonstrated that there was no linear relationship between social media usage in a week and GPA score. Students highlighted that besides social media usage, time management is a factor which affects students' studies negatively (Alwagait, Shahzad&Alim, 2014). In 2017, Asiedu conducted a study in Ghana to investigate and analyse the positive and negative effects of social media on students' academic and social lives. With the adoption of survey methodology, 204 students from University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology were randomly selected to participate in the study. The results of the study indicated that the positive effects of social media outweigh its negative counterpart hence students should not be entirely discouraged from visiting social media sites (Asiedu, 2017).

In East Africa, the use of Facebook among urban youths between the age of 12 and 24 years in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, is very high (Church &Olivera, 2013). According to Mutua (2011), 35% of the targeted group in the region have access to the internet with Kenya leading with 49% internet access, 30% in Tanzania and 26% in Uganda. The study indicated that, of these 74% of Kenyans use an online social network and 59% of Ugandans use social network across the region. This shows how young people overly depend on the use of social media.

In Kenya, a study was conducted by on the impact of online social networking sites on academic performance among high school students in urban areas. The study focused on three respondents, that is, students' parents and teachers and used questionnaires and interviews as research instruments. The findings of the study shed insight on how students use online social networking sites, the time spent and the kind of information sought. The study also provided recommendations on how online networking can be used in order to improve academic purposes (Mwadime, 2015).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Social media is an important means of communication and a tool for development in contemporary society. People have gained greater access to information and have more opportunities to engage in public speaking. Consequently, it has enhanced their ability to undertake collective action. Shirky (2011) affirms that social media is currently being utilized by both the public and the church as a broadcasting platform to amplify messages from traditional media sources and as an entirely new way of collaborating and co-creating content with target audiences. Since the message or information gets to the target audience in a faster and effective manner, it helps people in worship because it complements the incarnational nature of Christian liturgy among others. Notwithstanding the acclaimed benefits of social media, young persons including religious are overly dependent on its use. Over- reliance on social media is conceived to affect their spiritual development (Auday& Coleman, 2009). Social networking technologies can influence attitudes, behaviours, and social norms (Young, Shakiba, Kwok &Montazeri, 2014). A prolonged overuse or over reliance on social media may promote distractions, isolationism, individualism and other behaviours that are dangerous to religious life. Studies on social media (relate to the literature gap). The objective of this study is to explore the challenges young religious in Nairobi- County face in using social media as they undergo their initial formation.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The use of social media is becoming increasingly important among the religious in formation. This is because many young people today come into religious formation with the knowledge and competence of the use of social media. Hence, there is a tendency in most formation houses to misuse, abuse or over depend on social media. The research findings equip the mentors or formators and even the young religious themselves with some guidelines for responsible utilization of social media so as social media can be beneficial rather than destructive in formation programs. It is further hoped that this study creates a bridge between the formators and formees in appreciating the constructive role social media plays in the formation programs of the young religious when they are properly used.

1.4 Literature review

Challenges of using social media

While social networking undoubtedly plays a vital role in broadening social connections and learning technical skills, its risks cannot be overlooked. The difficulty in self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure makes adolescents and young people vulnerable to such evils or realistic threats as Facebook depression, sexting, and cyber bullying (Ramasubbu, 2016). Self-regulation is thus highly required in the use of social media communication. Strassberg, McKinnon, Sustaíta and Rullo (2013) carried out a study to provide preliminary information about

sexting by high school students recruited from a private high school in South-western U.S. The sample was 606 students. The study employed a descriptive survey design and used the questionnaire and interview guide for data collection. The key findings were that nearly 20 % of all participants reported they sent a sexually explicit image of themselves via cell phone while almost twice as many reported that they received a sexually explicit picture of someone via Smartphone. Of these, over 25 % indicated that they had forwarded such a picture to others. Similarly, over a third reported that they had sent a sexually explicit cell phone picture and they did so despite believing that there could be serious legal and other consequences attached to the behaviour.

The role of mass media in shaping attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of people is very vital. The youngsters who heavily view certain violent television programmes, commercial products, and gender based roles may become addicted to such programs. In connection to addiction of television viewing, a study of youth in the United States concluded that children will have viewed 200,000 acts of violence and 16,000 acts of murders by the time they reach 18 years of age (Donnerstein, 2010). Dominick (2013) also conducted a research and concluded that frequent viewing of crime and gangster movies can change people's attitudes on acts such as capital punishment and prison reform. More recently, other researchers have noted a connection between heavy viewing of violent television programmes and attitudes towards the use of violence in real life. The challenge of the use of various types of social media will depend on the types of risks a young person is exposed to by use of the media, and the psychological makeup of the young person. It is important to note that most young people at risk often engage in risky behaviours offline and also have difficulties in other areas of their lives (O'Keeffe, G.S.,& Clarke-Pearson,K. (2011).

Moreover, there can also be a risk of disclosure of personal information which might be unguarded and which might lead to sharing of private data with unknown people. There is also the risk of health issues due to excessive and frequent use of social media which might lead victims to practice masturbation (for those addicted to pornographic contents) which may in time lead to health complications. It may as well cause auditory complications as loud music may damage ear drums or increase consequences of cancer disease (Alijomaa, Qudah, Albursan, Bakhiet&Abduljabbar, 2016).

1.5 Method
This section describes the sample size and the procedures employed to select the sample from the population of young religious in the formation programs and their formators in Nairobi County.
Sample Size

A research sample size usually states how many people or units are included in the sample. A sample size describes the number of people, elements or units who directly participate or are involved in providing data that help in addressing the research objectives. A sample of 136 participants was selected from a population of 680 (AOSK, 2013) for the young religious in formation to participate in the study. This was found to be adequate based on the proposition that 20% of the population is sufficient for statistical analysis and generalization based on Mugenda and Mugenda's (2003) formula for calculating sample size. $S = \frac{PX20}{100}$,
Where:
S= sample size,
P = population

Therefore following the above formula, the sample size is calculated thus:

Hence, $S = \frac{680 X 20}{100} = 136$

Likewise, 86 formators were selected from 110, based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table for sample size determination as shown inthe appendix.

Sampling procedure

A sampling procedure is used to select the units or elements from the population of interest so that by studying the sample it is possible to generalize to the entire population from which the sample was selected. Likewise, Kerlinger (2006) describes sampling as taking any portion of a population as representative of the entire group. Sampling, according to Sankaranarayanan et al (2005), is the generalization of a segment or section in terms of the whole group from whom research data is sought. Hence, the researcher employed a non-probability sampling approach to select the sample. With this technique, not all units of the target population were given equal chance to be included in the sample. This is because the researcher decided the people or units to become representative members of the sample group. For gender balance, the researcher selected 222 participants (50 female and 36 male formators; 90 female and 46 male young religious) using the quota sampling technique. This technique was preferred given that the members of the sample did not possess homogenous characteristics. They were made up of men and women.

1.6 Findings

Demographic information provides data regarding research participants and is necessary for the determination of whether the individuals in a particular study are a representative sample of the target population for generalization purposes. In this study, demographic information was collected concerning gender, stage of formation and age.

Respondents' Gender

Table 1 indicates that 16% were males while 84% were females. This, however, did not raise any concern in generating inferential implications since admission to formation programs is unique to each formation house and its capability. The gender of the respondent was very crucial in this study as it helped the researcher to understand the status of the respondents concerning the use of social media in formation programs. Concerning findings, it is evident that many of those in formation are female; this could be because the female population countrywide is more compared to that of men.

Table 1: Respondents Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	20	16%
Female	105	84%
Total	**125**	**100%**

Source: Field data, 2019

Respondents' Stage in Formation

From the study findings in table 2, 48% (60) of the young religious were in Postulancy, 32% (40)

were in the Novitiate, 12% (15) were in the Scholasticate while 8% (10) were in the Aspirancy stage of formation. The findings assisted the researcher to understand the status of the respondents in formation programs concerning their stage of formation. Concerning the findings, the number of young religious tends to reduce significantly with progress in the stage of formation. This might be due to the process of discernment of both the formator and the formee.

Table 2: Stage in the formation program

Stage of Formation	Frequency	Percentage
Aspirant	60	48%
Postulancy	40	32%
Novitiate	15	12%
Scholasticate	10	8%
Total	**125**	**100%**

Source: Field data, 2019
Respondents' Age

From the study findings in table 3, 78 (62.4%) of the young religious were in the age bracket of 23-27, 22 (17.6%) were in the age bracket of 28-32, 14 (11.2%) were in the age bracket of 18-22 while 11 (8.8%) were in the age bracket of 33 and above. Respondents' age was sought to determine different experiences of the population with regard to theuse of social media by the respondents in the formation programs. In relation to the findings, many of the young religious who join formation seems to join at the age of twenty three, this might be because they were still pursuing other post- secondary studies or were still discerning their vocation.

Table 3: Respondents' age

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
23-27	78	62.4%
28-32	22	17.6%
18-22	14	11.2%
33 and above	11	8.8%
Total	**125**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2019

Challenges of using social media by young religious

The objective of the study was to examine the challenges of using social media on the formation of young religious. For this objective, the challenge faced in using social media is the independent variable while formation of young religious is the dependent variable. According to the findings, many young religious agree that the use of social media during formation should be regulated and restricted. The young religious find themselves addicted to the social media platform and forget what had brought them in formation. One example cited by many young religious is the use of Facebook and Whatsapp. Many young religious spend a lot of money in buying internet bundles in order to chat with their friends on the social media platforms. This finding tends to agree with Ramasubbu (2016) who opined that social networking continues toplay a vital role in broadening social connections and learning technical skills. But, according to him, its risks cannot be

overlooked. The difficulty in self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure makes adolescents and young people vulnerable to such evils or realistic threats as Facebook depression, sexting, and cyber bullying. This therefore calls for self-regulation in the use of social media.

The use of Face book is increasing globally. According to Seidman, G., & Miller, O. S (2013), the use of Facebook is especially high among young adults: 86% of 18-29-year-olds use Facebook, 31% of 18-22-year-old's Facebook users post status updates daily or more frequently compared with 3% of users over 49, 18-29-year-old Facebook users have substantially more online 'friends'. Usage is particularly high during university or college years when majority of students report daily use to communicate with friends they already know offline. Facebook use may also lead to increased social engagement: 82% of Facebook users belong to a voluntary group or organization compared with 75% of all adults and 56% of non-internet users (p. 228).

Discussion
Results on our objective show thatmajority of the respondents agree that social media in formation poses challenges and should be restricted or regulated. This is evident going back to the literature review where Ramasubbu (2016) argued that difficulty in self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure makes adolescents and young people vulnerable to such evils or realistic threats as Facebook depression, sexting, and cyber bullying. Some of the challenges that were mentioned by the respondents included addiction, visiting prohibited adults sites, exposure to personal information and engaging in illicit affairs. These risks were seen as great challenges to the use of social media especially when it comes to individual decision making.

1.7 Conclusion
The findings of our objective have shown that the use of social media in formation poses some challenges. Therefore there is need to regulate the usage of social media in formation houses. The most frequent cited challenges included: addiction, visiting prohibited adults sites, exposure of personal information and engaging in illicit affairs. The use of social media in formation programs needs regulation. The young religious who secretly possess smart phones and use them hidden during the critical stages of their formation are dishonest and need spiritual guidance to overcome dishonesty. Smart phones should be regulated especially when young religious join the formation houses. It has been noted that smart phones do not contribute much in the spiritual growth of the young religious and therefore, its use should be controlled to avoid interfering with the spiritual formation of the young religious.

1.8 Recommendations
a) Short term action plan

Meetings
The first action is for the researcher to create a rapport with the formators. This will create an awareness of the objectives of the use of social media among the young religious.
Seminars, Trainings and Workshops
Seminars, trainings and workshops are tools through which the researcher will be able to reach out, sensitize and create awareness to the young religious on the use of the social media. In collaboration with ISMM and other interested organizations dealing with young people, a training manual will be developed. These seminars, trainings and workshops are expected to address issues on awareness of social media, challenges brought by use of social media and beneficial ways of

using social media in formation programs.

b) Long term action plan (Lobby and Advocacy)

For transformation to be realized there is need for lobbying and an advocacy plan. In collaboration with formators, the researcher will embark on lobbying and advocacy. The aim is to direct all those concerned to the proper use of the social media as indicated in various parts in the discussion of the findings of this study.

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