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SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE YOUTH MINISTRY AT THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EAST AFRICA, NAIROBI CENTRAL PRESBYTERY, NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CWCS	Christians Who Curse Sometimes
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TWSMC	Two-Way Symmetrical Model of Communication
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Effectiveness of Youth Ministry	The degree to which the youth ministry in a church meets fundamental goals like attracting young people, mentoring and promoting their spiritual growth.
Social Media	Web-based applications that enable users to generate and share their own content and obtain feedback.
Social Media Personnel	Individuals in charge of generating and sharing content on behalf of the youth ministry in their church.
Social Media Use Patterns	In this study, the term refers trends of social media usage in youth ministry including purpose of use, frequency of use, format of posts, and characteristic of content.
Youth	In this study, the term refers to individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 years
Youth Ministry	In this study, the term refers to the department of the church that is dedicated to serving the youth.

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ABSTRACT

Youth ministry continues to face significant challenges of declining participation, weak engagement, and high attrition of young people from the church, despite the rapid expansion of social media use. In Kenya, while churches increasingly adopt social media platforms, there is limited empirical and theological understanding of how specific dimensions of social media use influence the effectiveness of youth ministry. This study examined the influence of social media use on the effectiveness of youth ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), Nairobi Central Presbytery, with particular focus on social media platforms used, social media usage patterns, and social media personnel. The study was based on a practical theology framework guided by Osmer's four tasks together with insights from digital ecclesiology, which understands digital spaces as legitimate contexts for fellowship, discipleship, and mission. Socio-technical systems theory and the two-way symmetrical model of communication further informed the study. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed. The target population comprised 2,925 youths and 35 youth leaders across seven parishes, from which a sample of 352 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that social media platforms used, social media usage patterns, and social media personnel significantly influenced youth ministry effectiveness in terms of participation, membership, behaviour, and spiritual growth, jointly explaining 47.3% of the variance. WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube emerged as the dominant platforms, primarily supporting communication, fellowship, and spiritual content sharing. Usage patterns were strong predictors of effectiveness, while personnel competence emerged as the most influential factor. The study concludes that the youth ministry effectiveness in a digital age depends not merely on social media adoption but on theologically informed, intentional digital ministry practices. By integrating Osmer's four tasks and digital ecclesiology, the study contributes to youth theology by demonstrating how social media can function as a meaningful space for discipleship, fellowship, and participation in the mission of God.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the foundational framework for the study on social media use and the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), Nairobi Central Presbytery. It situates the study within its global, national, and ecclesial contexts, highlighting the growing influence of digital media on youth culture and the emerging challenges facing contemporary youth ministry. The chapter begins by presenting the background of the study, which outlines the theological, social, and technological factors that necessitate an examination of social media use in youth ministry.

The chapter further articulates the research problem, demonstrating the gap between the widespread adoption of social media by churches and the limited empirical understanding of how such use influences the effectiveness of youth ministry. The purpose of the study, research objectives, and research questions are then clearly stated to show how the inquiry responds to the identified problem. In addition, the chapter outlines the significance of the study, the scope and limitations, and the operational definition of key terms. Collectively, these sections establish the rationale, direction, and relevance of the study, providing a coherent basis for the chapters that follow.

1.1 Background of the Problem

Youth is widely understood as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, marked by identity formation, moral development, and spiritual decision-making. While definitions vary across contexts, the United Nations categorizes youth as persons aged between 15 and 24 years (United Nations, 2022), the African Youth Charter defines youth as those between 15 and 35 years (African Youth Charter, 2006), and the Constitution of Kenya defines youth as persons aged 18 to 34 years (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Regardless of these variations, scholarship consistently recognizes youth as a critical life stage during which values, beliefs, and long-term commitments—including faith commitments—are formed (Akinsulire, 2021). Decisions made during this period significantly influence adulthood trajectories, including religious identity and participation.

Youth ministry is a discipline within practical theology concerned with nurturing young people's relationship with God and integrating them into the life and mission of the church

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(Hanna, 2020). An effective youth ministry is not only one that attracts young people to church spaces, but one that retains them, fosters spiritual growth, builds Christian character, and encourages meaningful participation in church and society. Aziz (2019) argues that the central task of youth ministry is to help young people understand who they are in Jesus Christ and to develop a sustained and transformative relationship with Him. Empirical studies further demonstrate that active church involvement among youth is associated with reduced engagement in risky behaviours such as substance abuse and delinquency (Kagwiria et al., 2023).

Despite its theological importance, youth ministry globally continues to face significant challenges. Strong (2014) observes that traditional youth ministry models have often failed to produce spiritually mature young adults, leading to widespread alienation from the church. This challenge cuts across denominations, cultures, and regions, resulting in high rates of youth attrition from the Christian faith. Hanna (2020) similarly notes that despite numerous interventions aimed at engaging young people, many churches continue to experience declining youth participation, creating a leadership vacuum that threatens the church's long-term sustainability. In increasingly pluralistic societies, young people are often more influenced by secular and digital cultures than by their local congregations (Williams, 2020). Studies indicate that church retention rates among individuals below 40 years have declined significantly, with some churches retaining fewer than 30% of young adults (Akinsulire, 2021).

In response to these trends, scholars argue that youth ministry must be reimagined to engage youth within their contemporary cultural contexts. Aziz (2019) contends that while the biblical message remains constant, the forms, language, and media through which it is communicated must evolve in response to changing youth cultures. Ndereba (2022) and Hanna (2020) emphasize that modern youth culture is deeply shaped by digital technologies, with many young people turning to the internet and social media for guidance on personal, social, and even religious matters. The rapid expansion of social media has created what Akinsulire (2021) describes as a "global youth tribe," where values are increasingly shaped online, often in ways that conflict with Christian teachings.

Globally, social media platforms have become dominant spaces of interaction among young people. Hill (2022) reports that 95% of 15-year-olds in the United Kingdom were active on social media by 2021. In Kenya, smartphone ownership and internet accessibility have

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expanded rapidly, making social media one of the most accessible and persuasive communication tools among youth. These platforms offer opportunities for connection, content sharing, and community formation that extend beyond geographical boundaries. Scholars and faith-based organizations argue that such platforms can support church functions, including discipleship, evangelism, fellowship, and spiritual formation (Barna Group, 2020).

From a theological perspective, the use of social media in youth ministry aligns with the missional calling of the church to proclaim the gospel in all contexts (2 Corinthians 5:11–20; 2 Timothy 4:1–2). Social media platforms offer unprecedented opportunities to overcome physical and social barriers, resonating with biblical visions of inclusive community (Galatians 3:28) and expansive witness (Acts 2:39). Hill (2022) further observes that social media allows youth leaders to maintain continuous engagement with young people throughout the week, potentially nurturing "everyday Christians" rather than limiting faith expression to Sunday worship.

However, the mere adoption of social media does not automatically translate into effective youth ministry. Several studies caution that many churches use digital platforms primarily for announcements and publicity rather than intentional discipleship and relational engagement (Williams, 2023; Barna Group, 2020). Fear of negative influences, addiction, and moral corruption has also made some churches reluctant to embrace social media, despite its pervasive role in youth culture (Hill, 2022). Hunt (2019) argues that the failure of many churches to address the digital lives of young people reflects a lack of digital discipleship capacity among youth ministers.

Furthermore, scholars emphasize that effectiveness depends on *how* social media is used, *which* platforms are employed, and *who* manages them. Kent and Li (2020) argue that churches must understand the unique features of different platforms and intentionally employ them as tools for relationship-building and discipleship rather than treating them as uniform communication channels. Ugboh (2023) similarly calls for systematic evaluation of social media components, noting that platform choice, usage patterns, content strategy, and personnel competence significantly shape ministry outcomes.

Despite growing interest in digital ministry, empirical research linking social media use to youth ministry effectiveness remains limited, particularly within the Kenyan context. While studies such as Mbithi et al. (2023) have examined the frequency of social media use by

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churches, they have not established how specific dimensions of social media use influence the effectiveness of youth ministry. Within the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), studies indicate that many youth attend church but remain minimally involved in ministry activities, limiting their spiritual growth (Njoroge, 2019).

Given that youth constitute approximately 35% of Kenya's population (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019) and represent the future of the church, the continued ineffectiveness of youth ministry poses both ecclesial and societal risks. Failure to meaningfully engage and form young people may result in weakened church continuity and the erosion of Christian moral values within society. Consequently, there is a pressing need to examine whether and how social media—when used intentionally and strategically—can enhance the effectiveness of youth ministry. This study addresses this need by investigating the influence of the social media platforms used, usage patterns, and social media personnel on the effectiveness of youth ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nairobi Central Presbytery.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Social media platforms have become prevalent in the lives of young people in most parts of the world and have significantly transformed how young people communicate, form relationships, and engage with information. Globally and within Kenya, the youth are among the most active users of digital platforms, making social media a potentially powerful tool for church youth ministry in areas such as communication, fellowship, discipleship, and outreach (Gottfried, 2024; Boyd, 2014). In Kenya, more than 80% of individuals above the age of 18 years have mobile phones, with smartphone usage increasing at a tremendous pace. Churches, including the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), have increasingly adopted social media platforms to engage young people, promote activities, and sustain connections beyond physical church spaces. However, the effectiveness of these digital engagements in achieving core youth ministry goals remains inadequately understood and empirically underexplored.

Despite widespread adoption, existing literature suggests that many churches use social media primarily for announcements and event promotion, with limited strategic integration into holistic ministry objectives such as spiritual formation, mentorship, and evangelism (Hutchings, 2017; Campbell & Garner, 2016). Furthermore, variations in the choice of platforms, patterns of use, and the competence or training of individuals managing church

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social media accounts have been shown to influence engagement outcomes, yet these factors are often assumed rather than systematically examined (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Smith, 2018). In many church contexts, social media use is informal, volunteer-driven, and lacks clear ministry guidelines, raising questions about consistency, theological intentionality, and sustainability.

Within the Kenyan context, and specifically in the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, there is limited empirical evidence on how social media platforms are used, usage patterns, and the role of social media personnel affect the overall effectiveness of youth ministry (Mbithi et al., 2023). While youth ministries continue to invest time and resources in digital engagement, it remains unclear whether these efforts meaningfully enhance participation, spiritual growth, relational connectedness, and ministry impact among young people. Without such evidence, youth ministries risk underutilizing social media or employing it in ways that are misaligned with their mission and objectives.

Therefore, there is a clear need for a study to examine how social media platforms are used, social media usage patterns, and social media personnel influence the effectiveness of youth ministry at the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. Addressing this gap will provide evidence-based insights to inform the more intentional, strategic, and contextually relevant use of social media in church youth ministry, contributing to both academic discourse and practical ministry development.

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1.3 Objective of the Studies

1.3.1 General Objectives

The general objective of the study is to assess the influence of social media use on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County in Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the influence of social media platforms used on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya.

2. To establish the influence of social media usage patterns on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya.

3. To establish the influence of social media personnel on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the influence of the social media platforms used on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya?

2. How do social media usage patterns influence the effectiveness of the youth ministry at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya?

3. How do social media personnel influence the effectiveness of the youth ministry at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will generate knowledge regarding various aspects of social media use within the church in Kenya and how these aspects affect the effectiveness of the youth ministry. In particular, the study seeks to uncover the social media platforms commonly used by churches to reach the youth, the purposes of using the social media platforms, social media post characteristics, and the personnel involved in managing the platforms.

The knowledge generated in this study will be useful to leaders in the PCEA and other churches. The study will give insight to church leaders on the various aspects of social media use on youth ministry. The leaders can use this insight to effectively integrate social media into youth ministry programmes. Effective integration of social media will enhance the church's reach and engagement with young people, leading to their spiritual growth.

The study will also be of value to researchers and academicians in the fields of religious studies and communication. The findings of the study will expand the existing body of literature on the intersection between social media use and church dynamics. A rich literature base on this subject can contribute to the development of best practices and theories. It will also be useful in providing direction for future research.

1.6 Scope and Delimitations

The study will be confined to the PCEA because this is one of the mainstream churches in Kenya, and thus it will provide data that reflects the situation in most churches in Kenya. The study will also focus on the Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya, because this

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unit encompasses an urban setup. Consequently, the presbytery will provide data that represent the urban setup. The study will focus on three aspects of social media use: the social media platforms used, usage patterns, and the personnel involved in managing them. The study will be conducted between June and July 2024.

1.7 Operational Definition of Key Terms

This section defines key terms as they were used and measured within the context of this study. The definitions were operationalized to ensure clarity, consistency, and shared understanding throughout the research.

Youth: In this study, youth refer to individuals aged 18 to 34 years, in line with the Constitution of Kenya (2010). Operationally, youth are members of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) Nairobi Central Presbytery who fall within this age bracket and participate, either physically or digitally, in youth ministry activities.

Youth Ministry: Youth ministry refers to organized church activities, programs, and initiatives designed to nurture the spiritual growth, discipleship, fellowship, and moral formation of young people within the church. In this study, youth ministry includes both physical gatherings and digitally mediated activities facilitated through social media platforms.

Effectiveness of Youth Ministry: Effectiveness of youth ministry refers to the extent to which youth ministry achieves its intended goals. In this study, effectiveness is operationalized through measurable indicators such as youth participation and retention, level of engagement in ministry activities, perceived spiritual growth, quality of fellowship, and responsiveness to discipleship initiatives facilitated through social media.

Social media: Social media refers to internet-based digital platforms that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and with one another in virtual communities. In this study, social media includes platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) that are used by the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery youth ministry for communication and ministry engagement.

Social Media Platforms Used: Social media platforms used refers to the specific types of social media applications adopted by the youth ministry. Operationally, this variable is measured by identifying which platforms are utilized and the extent to which each platform is used for youth ministry purposes.

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Social Media Usage Patterns: Social media usage patterns refer to how social media platforms are utilized over time. In this study, usage patterns are operationalized by frequency of posting, type of content shared (e.g., spiritual, informational, relational), level of interaction (likes, comments, shares), and consistency of engagement with youth.

Social Media Personnel: Social media personnel refer to individuals responsible for managing and overseeing the church's social media activities. In this study, this includes youth leaders, clergy, volunteers, or designated media teams involved in content creation, posting, moderation, and engagement, as well as their level of training and digital competence.

Digital Ministry: Digital ministry refers to the intentional use of digital technologies, particularly social media, to support church mission, discipleship, fellowship, and evangelism. Operationally, digital ministry is reflected in how social media use is aligned with theological goals and ministry objectives within the youth ministry.

Digital Ecclesiology: Digital ecclesiology refers to the theological understanding of church life, community, and mission as expressed and practiced in digital spaces. In this study, it informs how online interactions, fellowship, and discipleship are understood as authentic expressions of church life.

Fellowship (Koinonia): Fellowship refers to the relational sharing and sense of belonging among youth within the church community. In this study, fellowship is operationalized by the extent of interaction, mutual support, and relationship-building facilitated through social media platforms.

Scripture Engagement: Scripture engagement refers to the ways in which young people interact with biblical content. Operationally, this includes participation in online Bible studies, sharing and discussion of scripture, devotional posts, and engagement with sermons or biblical reflections shared through social media.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This study aimed to examine the influence of social media use on the effectiveness of the youth ministry in the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya. This chapter has delved into the contextual issues that informed this study and detailed the problem that the inquiry seeks to address. The chapter also details the objectives that the study seeks to realize and the research question that will guide the investigation. The significance of the

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research to various stakeholders and scope and delimitation of the investigations are also discussed.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on the subject of the influence of social media on the effectiveness of the youth ministry. The chapter commences with a review of theories that provide a plausible explanation of how social media may influence the effectiveness of the youth ministry. The chapter also reviews empirical studies examining how social media has shaped youth ministries in different settings. It then presents a summary of the reviewed literature and the conceptual framework detailing the key variables of the study and the presumed link between them.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The proposed study will be guided by the social technical theory and the two-way symmetrical model of communication.

2.2.1 Social-Technical Theory

The social-technical theory was first proposed by Trist and Bamforth in 1951, following their action research that focused on the coal mining industry in Britain (Abbas & Michael, 2023). The authors developed this theory with the aim of describing how an optimal organization should function. The theory opines that for an organization to function optimally, the social, technological, and environmental components must work in synergy. The social component comprises the people who produce products or provide services using some technology (Bednar & Welch, 2020). The term also includes the relationships between the people, their values, and their associations. Technology refers to the equipment and procedures used to carry out tasks that lead to the delivery of a product or service.

The social-technical theory contends that for an organization to function optimally, it must deploy technologies that lead to the creation of products or services that are valued by customers (Abbas and Michael, 2023). The people within the organization (social aspects) must also be in a position to apply and deploy the technologies appropriately. This implies that people must possess the skills, capabilities, and attitudes requisite for the appropriate deployment of the technologies. The socio-technical theory highlights the mutuality between humans and technology, where each subsystem shapes the other (Kapoor et al., 2021).

Socio-technical theory is founded on open system theory, which advances that organizations like the church are open systems that are in constant interaction with their environment (Abbas and Michael, 2023). The organizations shape their environment as much as they are

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shaped by their environment. This implies changes in the environment, such as the invention of new modes of communication, such as social media, are bound to affect how an organization like the church operates. The success of an organizational system like the church or the youth ministry is determined by the way it interacts with its environment, its evolution and responsiveness to changes in the condition of its environment (Kapoor et al., 2021). Success is also determined by an organization's ability to learn and adjust to events taking place in their environment.

The theory is relevant to this study because the youth ministry is a social organization within a larger organization called the church. Just like the organizations described in the socio-technical theory, the youth ministry has the social component that comprises of people like the youth pastor, youth leaders, and members of the youth ministry as well as the relationships between them (Ugboh, 2023). These people utilize various technologies including face-to-face interactions, music systems, mass media, and social media to deliver services like evangelism, discipleship, advice, and encouragement, among others. The youth ministry is also an open system that interacts, influences, and is influenced by events taking place in its environment.

The socio-technical theory suggests that for the youth ministry to function optimally, it must adopt the most appropriate technologies. The proposed study is particularly concerned with the technology that the youth ministry uses to communicate and reach out to existing and potential members. It proposes using social media to enhance the effectiveness of the youth ministry. According to Barna Group (2020), social media platforms are effective communication media because they enable timely two-way communication by enabling the recipients of information to react and provide feedback almost instantly. The socio-technical theory also emphasizes the need for the youth ministry to have a social component that is designed to make the best use of social media technologies. An appropriate social component should exemplify a positive attitude towards the social media technologies, skills and expertise in the use of technologies, and awareness of best practices for social media use in church ministries (Janzen, 2019).

The theory also stresses the importance of youth ministry in learning and responding to changes in the environment in which it operates (Abbas & Michael, 2023). The youth ministry should keep abreast with changes like increasingly busy schedules by the young people and changes in communication preferences. The youth ministry needs to recognize

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that the environment in which they operate is never static and that they need to change in line with changes in their environment. The youth ministry and the church at large should view itself as a creative organism that has the freedom to innovate and evolve. In particular, the youth ministry and the church should respond to technological changes because these changes affect all organizations including the church. Ugboh (2023) opines that even in the early church, the disciples of Jesus and other apostles had to devise new methods of ministry like the use of artefacts like letters to respond to persecution that was taking place in their environs. Ugboh (2023) further argues that innovativeness is not evil but one of the characteristics of God as exemplified through His creations. There are also characters in the Bible who exhibited innovation, like Noah, who built an ark that had never existed before.

However, the socio-technical theory is not without its limitations. Kelly (1978) cited that there is an inherent flaw in the theory associated with the joint optimization concept. Kelly argued that most of the studies examining the applicability of the theory favoured the social component while ignoring the role of the technical component in optimizing the functioning of organizations. Pasmore et al. (1982) echoed Kelly's concerns by pointing out that most of the studies examining this theory had largely focused on rearranging the social component around a static technical subsystem, making technology a constant rather than a variable. In the context the proposed study, the socio-technical theory advances that youth ministry should adopt social media because it is the prevailing means of communication that is aligned to modern youth. However, the theory does provide a concise explanation regarding specific ways in which social media may enrich the youth ministry. Consequently, this theory is augmented by a two-way symmetrical model of communication.

2.2.2 Two-Way Symmetrical Model of Communication

The two-way symmetrical model of communication (TWSMC) was developed by James Grunig and Todd Hunt in 1984 to prescribe how best an organization should communicate with the public (Kent and Lane, 2021). Gruning and Hunt were communication experts who were concerned with finding the best way for organizations to communicate with their stakeholders. Gruning and Hunt (1984) observed that many organizations were using the traditional one-way asymmetrical model of communication that entailed using persuasion and half-truths to manipulate their audience to behave the way the organization desires. This traditional model utilized media that present little opportunity for feedback, such as press releases.

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Grunig and Hunt (1984) proposed the TWSMC as an alternative to the traditional one-way asymmetrical model of communication. The TWSMC approach the communication process as a mechanism for negotiation and seeking a common understanding with the public. It is founded on the premise that the goal of communication is to achieve mutual understanding rather than influence the audience in a certain way. It emphasizes the need for open and transparent dialogue between an organization and its stakeholders. The TWSMC advocates for authentic engagement between an organization and the public, where each side presents their views and concerns leading to the identification of a win-win position (Bourrouk & Bousfiha, 2021). It encourages organizations to listen to the concerns, feedback, and perspectives of their publics. The TWSMC favours the use of communication media that facilitate two-way real-time communication between an organization and its audience.

Central to the TWSMC is the idea of building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between the organizations and their publics. Proponents of the model argue that engaging in meaningful and authentic dialogue with the public that leads to mutual understanding cultivates trust, loyalty, and positive relationships between an organization and its stakeholders (Kent & Lane, 2021). The TWSMC is relevant to the proposed study because the youth ministry can be viewed as an organization within a larger organizations called the church. The youth ministry has to communicate with its stakeholders in order to realize its objectives of nurturing the youth and growing them into mature Christians. The TWSMC suggests that the best way for youth ministries to achieve their objective is through the use of two-way symmetrical communication.

The youth ministry ought to have authentic dialogue with the young people who are its target. The youth ministry should engage the youth in an open and transparent way and give them the opportunity to provide feedback and air their views. This kind of communication can only be possible when the youth ministry adopts communication media that supports two-way real-time communication. Social media platforms have several features that enable them to support two-way symmetrical communication. One of the features is the ability for the audience to provide immediate response and reaction to a post through comments or replies (Morshed et al., 2023). For instance, Facebook enables recipients of information to comment in real time. In addition, the social media platforms allow open and transparent communication. For instance, when someone writes a comment in response to a post on Facebook, the comment becomes visible not just to the author of the post but also to other

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users following the post. Consequently, other users get to digest not just the original post but also the comments by others, leading to an enriched discussion.

The two-way symmetrical model of communication suggests that one way through which social media can add value to the youth ministry is by enabling the development of authentic relationships between the youths (Bourrouk and Bousfiha, 2021). It suggests that because social media platforms facilitate two-way symmetrical exchange of information, their influence on youth ministry go beyond technology. The platforms have the potential to create meaningful connections and support systems for the young people in the modern church. The platforms can also help youth ministries to cultivate trust and loyalty among the young people by creating an environment where the young people feel free to express themselves and voice their concerns (Morshed et al., 2023). This would in turn build a strong community within the youth ministry.

However, social media platforms should be utilized appropriately for them to be effective in building community and authentic relationships in youth ministry. This implies that the purpose for which the social media platforms are used, social media post characteristics, and personnel using these platforms have a major bearing on the impact of social media (Kent and Lane, 2021). To build a strong youth community, social media platforms should be used for the purpose of supporting authentic communication and exchanges between the youth. Communication through social media should also be regular. The people managing the social media platforms should also have the skills and attitude needed to facilitate authentic engagement across the channels.

2.2.3 Osmer's Four Tasks of Practical Theology

This study is guided by Osmer's Four Tasks of Practical Theology, which provide a coherent theological and methodological framework for examining social media use and the effectiveness of youth ministry. Osmer's model is particularly suitable for this study because it integrates empirical inquiry with theological reflection, enabling the research to move from describing ministry practice to interpreting it, evaluating it normatively, and proposing informed responses. The four tasks—descriptive, empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic—shape both the structure and analytical flow of the thesis.

Task 1: The Descriptive–Empirical Task – "What is going on?"

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The descriptive–empirical task seeks to identify and describe what is happening in practice. In this study, this task is addressed through a review of literature on youth ministry, digital culture, and social media, with particular attention to empirical studies on youth engagement in church contexts. It is further addressed through the study's own empirical fieldwork, which examines how social media platforms are used within the youth ministry of the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. This task is reflected in Chapters Two and Four, where data on social media platforms used, patterns of use, and personnel involved are analysed to describe the current realities of digital engagement in youth ministry.

Task 2: The Interpretive Task – "Why is this going on?"

The interpretive task seeks to explain the underlying reasons and dynamics shaping the observed practices. In this study, this task draws on interdisciplinary insights from communication studies, sociology, and theology to interpret young people's engagement with digital spaces. The concept of **digital ecclesiology** is central to this task, as it provides a lens for understanding how digital environments function as spaces of community, belonging, and faith formation. This task is developed in the literature review and applied in Chapter Four, where patterns of social media use are interpreted in relation to youth culture, digital identity, and evolving forms of church participation.

Task 3: The Normative Task – "What ought to be going on?"

The normative task focuses on theological evaluation, asking what faithful and appropriate youth ministry should look like in digital contexts. This task is informed by biblical theology and digital ecclesiology, particularly Christian understandings of mission (*missio Dei*), discipleship, fellowship (*koinonia*), and community. Through this task, the study evaluates existing social media practices in youth ministry against theological norms, highlighting areas of alignment, tension, and transformation. The normative task provides the theological criteria used in interpreting the findings and assessing their implications for youth ministry.

Task 4: The Pragmatic Task – "How might we respond?"

The pragmatic task concerns practical action and ministry transformation. In this study, this task is addressed through the integrated analysis and theological reflection presented in Chapter Four, and through the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter Five. Drawing on the empirical findings and theological insights from the preceding tasks, the pragmatic task offers concrete recommendations to enhance youth ministry effectiveness through

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intentional digital engagement, leadership development, and the integration of social media into discipleship, fellowship, and pastoral care. Together, the four tasks provide a structured pathway through which the thesis moves from empirical description to theological interpretation and practical response.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

This section presents a comprehensive review of existing research on youth ministry and the influence of social media on its effectiveness. In particular, the section presents a review of research on the theology of the youth ministry, social media platforms and effectiveness of the youth ministry; social media use patterns and effectiveness of the youth ministry; and social media personnel and the effectiveness of the youth ministry.

2.3.1 Theology of the Youth Ministry

Scholars describe the term youth ministry in different ways. Kock and Norheim (2022) described it as the purposive and persistent endeavour to expose and share with the youth the good news of Jesus Christ. The goal of the youth ministry is to transform the lives of the youth through the power of the Holy Spirit so that they may be subject to the will of God (Alabi, 2021). The youth ministry is instrumental to the formation of the character of young people. This ministry plays a role in moulding young people in a Christian way so as to transform them into mature Christian adults. According to Ndereba (2022), young people are part of the ekklesia and crucial stakeholders in the Body of Christ. Consequently, the effectiveness of the youth ministry has a major bearing on the future of the church.

Unfortunately, some churches view the youth ministry as just activities or programmes that create a safe playing ground for young people. According to Root (2021), youth ministry entails more than merely keeping youth occupied; it is essentially about nurturing the sacred connection between God and youth. Root adds that youth ministry must go beyond the entertainment focus and present something solid and deep. Borgman (2013) argues that youth ministry must be compassionate, God-inspired, and Christ-centred for it to be effective. It must also be integrated with other ministries of the church, include personal stories, focus on the community's socioeconomic context, and offer critical perspectives. Roots (2021) argues that youth ministers need to focus less on filling the youth with moral information and focus more on walking alongside them in knowing Christ.

Borgman (2013) strongly believes that youth ministry should be shaped by our understanding of God. Youth ministry should focus on issues that are important to youth, such as sexuality,

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discernment, hope, doubt, and questions about God, and respond to them based on our understanding of God. Root (2021) observed that youth ministry in most churches is on the periphery because most youth are on the church's periphery too. They have not completely abandoned the Christian faith, but are not invested in it either. Root opines that this is the wrong way of doing youth ministry. The youth ministry should be an intentional process founded on well-thought-out and creative responses to issues the youth encounter. A haphazard approach to ministering to the youth can damage them. Youth ministry should have an equal footing with other church ministries.

An effective youth ministry should be all-rounded and cater to youths with different needs. Dean et al. (2020) observed that youth ministries in most churches focus on reaching unconverted youths and underinvest in the growth of already won youth. Apart from reaching unbelievers, an effective youth ministry should help youth who are already believers to mature in the Christian faith and create personal relationships with other Christians. They should provide an opportunity for the youth to interrogate the traditions of Christian practices and thoughts. According to Amankwa and Gyampoh (2022), youngsters have a central role to play in areas like evangelism, innovativeness, church planting, and music ministry. However, youth in many churches have taken a back seat. The study by Imanirumva et al. (2022) found that 73.6% of the youths in Pentecost Church in Rwanda did not participate in evangelism, 61% did not participate in church leadership, and 56% were not participants in the church's praise and worship activities. Low participation of youths in these activities highlights a bigger problem in the youth ministry.

Hanna (2020) observed that although many churches in the USA still have youthful members, most are less involved in church activities. This disengagement hampers the spiritual growth of the youth and, consequently, the future of the church. The study attributed the disengagement to various factors, including ineffective methods of teaching, ineffective youth leaders, and parental and worldly influences. The study recommended the re-examination of methods used to teach the youth to make them more responsive to the needs and preferences of the youths. Similarly, youth leaders should create and sustain close relationships with the youth for a better chance of attracting and retaining them. In a survey involving Australian youths from the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church, Parker (2023) observed that youths would like to be listened to and accepted for who they are. They also want to engage fully in the church and aspire for more than being inactive observers. Social

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media could be an effective tool for remodelling how youth are taught, as well as for cultivating authentic relationships between youth leaders and youth.

The study by Kagwiria et al. (2023) evaluated the effectiveness of different youth programmes in the Methodist Church of Kenya. The study utilized the survey design that entailed collecting data from youth members and youth ministers using questionnaires and interviews. Programmes such as youth fellowship, conferences and camps, guidance and counselling, Bible study, talent shows and open forums, retreats and games, and rallies and crusades were rated as effective by more than 50% of respondents. On the other hand, programmes like seminars and workshops and substance abuse education were rated as ineffective by the majority of the respondents. The study showcases the various youth programmes that typical churches in Kenya offer to the youth. However, the study did not assess the overall effectiveness of the youth ministry in shaping the character of the youth and moulding their relationship with God. The aim of the proposed study is to assess this overall effectiveness and whether it can be influenced by social media use.

2.3.2 Digital Ecclesiology and Youth Ministry

Digital ecclesiology provides a critical lens for understanding how church life, identity, and practice are being reshaped within digital environments. In addressing Osmer's second task —*"What is going on?"*—digital ecclesiology helps interpret how young people experience and engage with church in contexts where online and offline realities are increasingly intertwined. Ndereba (2022; 2023) observes that for many young people, digital spaces are not peripheral but central to their social, cultural, and spiritual lives. Consequently, a youth ministry that fails to engage these spaces risks becoming disconnected from the lived realities of young people. From this perspective, digital platforms serve as significant arenas where meaning is constructed, relationships are sustained, and religious identity is negotiated, thereby requiring the church to rethink its understanding of presence, community, and formation.

Heidi Campbell advances the concept of digital ecclesiology by arguing that digital media should not be viewed merely as tools for communication, but as environments that actively shape religious belief and practice. Campbell notes that online spaces facilitate new forms of participation, authority, and belonging, particularly among younger generations who are accustomed to networked forms of interaction. For youth ministry, this means that engagement through social media can foster genuine expressions of fellowship, discipleship,

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and spiritual exploration, even outside traditional church structures. Rather than displacing embodied faith, digital engagement often complements it, extending church life into the everyday digital rhythms of young people.

Similarly, Anita Cloete emphasizes that digital ecclesiology challenges churches to critically reflect on how technology mediates faith formation and community. Cloete argues that digital spaces can function as sites of theological meaning-making, where faith is practised through dialogue, storytelling, prayer, and shared reflection. In the context of youth ministry, this highlights how young people use social media to seek spiritual support, ask existential questions, and form faith-based networks. Ndereba further notes that in African church contexts, digital engagement among youth reflects both opportunity and tension, as traditional ecclesial models encounter digitally shaped identities. Together, these perspectives illuminate what is happening in contemporary youth ministry: young people are engaging church not only in physical congregations, but also within digital spaces that increasingly function as authentic expressions of ecclesial life.

2.3.3 Social Media Platform Used and Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry

Theories and empirical literature suggest that social media can add value to the youth ministry because the number of young people using social media continues to increase (Ononogbu and Chiroma, 2018). However, there are numerous social media platforms, each with unique features and appealing to specific audiences. It is also difficult and cumbersome for youth ministries to maintain a presence on all social media platforms (Williams, 2020). It is therefore imperative to identify the social media platforms that have the greatest impact on the effectiveness of the youth ministry.

The study by Wiedemann (2022) found that Instagram was the most preferred social media platform in a sample of SDA high school and college students in the USA. About 47% of the respondents said that they spend more time on Intargram that on other social media platforms. TikTok was the second most popular platform, while YouTube and Twitter (X) came in third and fourth, respectively. The study utilized a survey design that entailed sending questionnaires to 375 SDA students through email, personal websites, and personal social media accounts. These findings shed light on the social media platforms preferred by young people. However, the study was conducted in the USA and focused on the population of school-going youth. The findings may thus fail to reflect the social media preferences of the young people in Kenya. They may also fail to reflect the preferences of the general youth

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population. The proposed study seeks to address this gap by examining the social media platforms used to reach the youth in the Kenyan context.

The study by Rankins (2023) observed that Facebook was the most widely utilized social media platform in the Southern Baptist Convention in the USA. Instagram was the second most popular platform, followed by YouTube and Twitter. The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design that entailed interviewing pastors and digital managers from the churches. The study provides insight regarding platforms that are commonly used by Baptist churches in the Atlanta Metropolitan area, USA. It is, however, not clear whether churches in the Kenyan setup follow a similar pattern. In addition, the study had a relatively small sample of 12 participants because it utilized a qualitative approach. The small size of the sample limits the generalizability of the study findings. Rankins also focused on the use of social media to reach all age groups, and thus it may not reflect the platforms that the church uses to reach the youth. The youth may have different preferences from the general population when it comes to social media platforms. The proposed study will determine whether this is the case.

In Kenya, Bwalya (2021) found that WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram were the most popular social media platforms among the young catholic members in Nairobi in that order. The majority of these youth accessed social media platforms through smartphones rather than laptops or other gadgets. This implies that to unlock the potential of social media among these youths, youth ministries ought to design content that is tailored for smartphones. In addition, the results showed that over 90% of the sampled youths spent at least 30 minutes per day on social media. However, this study focused on youths in Nairobi, which is an urban setup. Findings may not reflect the social media platforms accessed by youth in less urbanized areas where infrastructure such as electricity and the internet is not well-developed.

The study by Omollo et al. (2023) revealed that not all young people attending SDA churches in Ranchuonyo North Sub-County, Homa-Bay County, had access to social media. The authors noted that for social media to serve equally, every youth ought to have a gadget, power, the internet, and know how to use them. Unfortunately, not all young people in rural areas have all these prerequisites for social media use. The study recommended that to enhance the effectiveness of social media in advancing church activities, measures such as the provision of gadgets and data to those unable to afford them should be implemented. In addition, digital activities should be blended with face-to-face activities such as seminars,

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workshops, and rallies. This view is supported by Hill (2022), who opined that a hybrid ministry that captures the best of both the digital and physical world should be implemented to enable interaction between real and virtual spaces.

2.3.4 Social Media Usage Patterns and Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry

Social media present immense benefits to youth ministry, but these benefits cannot be realized if the church does not formulate effective strategies to harness the potential of social media (Ononogbu and Chiroma, 2018). The church needs to devise strategies that will ensure social media is used in a way that advances the mission of the youth ministry and the church as a whole. One aspect of an effective strategy entails defining the purpose for using social media. Social media can be used for various purposes, including publicity, evangelism, discipleship, Bible study, networking, and relationship-building (Rankins, 2023). The purpose of social media use determines the design of messages and content that youth leaders post on social media platforms. It is necessary for a church to proactively define the kind of content and responses that will be issued using the church's social media platforms.

In the study by Wiedemann (2022), the majority of the respondents expressed that the media they consumed impacted their faith, but not in a strong manner. These views call for an examination of how social media is used, including the quality of the content being shared. When respondents were asked to indicate their preferred information format, 80% preferred short videos, while 79% preferred photos. Most of the respondents expressed dislike for long blocks of text or video longer than three minutes. Regarding content, 77% preferred memes or comic content, implying that youth leaders ought to harness the power of humour to reach the youth. The use of humour was also documented in the study by Hill (2022), which focused on two youth groups from a church in the United Kingdom (UK). The author observed that humour created close relationships and a strong sense of group identity among the youth. This perspective is consistent with Root (2021), who opined that humans are built for relationships, and thus that a ministry focused on relationships draws people closer.

Having an Instagram page with 120,000 followers, the ChristiansWhoCurseSometimes (CWCS) successfully brought together a community of young people through memes. Having created a common ground, CWCS could post inspiring and thought-provoking independent questions that encourage Bible study. The founder of the CWCS page reported that the goal of the page is to create a safe space where young people can ask questions and grow without being judged. The founder advanced that social media can make the faith of

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young people deeper and stronger. Sparjman (2021) found that the purpose of social media use should also correspond to the gifts and skills that a particular church has been endowed with. Churches that have good career advisors should use social media to educate youths in this area. The purpose of using social media and content presented should also correspond to the specific needs and challenges of youths in a given church. For instance, if the main issue facing the youthful population in a given church is alcohol abuse, the youth ministry should consider using a social media platform to address the issue.

The study by Wiedemann (2022) further found that facts, quotes, and infographics (text format) were the second most popular content type among the sampled school-going SDA youth. This implies that designing brief quotes is more effective in catching the eyes of young people than long block texts. The study by Williams (2023) revealed that it is possible to use social media to create inspirational faith-based content, influence the youth in a Godly way, mentor the youth, evangelize, and assist the youth to develop in their personal lives. The author noted social media had negative aspects, such as encouraging overconsumption of content and causing addictive behaviours. However, the study showed that the youths can be trained to avoid these pitfalls and utilize social media platforms for discipleship work. This study encourages churches to make use of the gift of content creation that the modern youth possess to advance the gospel.

The study by Barna Group (2020) found that 46% of the sampled pastors were using social media to maintain growth momentum, 33% focused on digital discipleship, while 24% were using social media to respond to needs. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey design that involved 2,694 senior pastors. On the other hand, Rankins (2023) found that Southern Baptist Churches in the USA were using social media platforms mainly to livestream sermons and post encouragement messages. Although these uses are effective in expanding the church's reach, they do not make effective use of the two-way interactive feature that social media platforms offer. Livestreaming sermons and posting encouragement posts does not facilitate effective two-way communication between the church leaders and the audience. In essence, these uses convert the social media platforms to be the same as the mass media platform, where communication only moves in one direction. However, the study was confined to Baptist Churches in the USA, and therefore, findings may not reflect how social media platforms are used in Kenyan churches.

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In Kenya, Bwalya (2021) found that 16.5% of Catholic youths in Nairobi were making use of social media for evangelization. These youths were sharing messages of their faith with the aim of converting their peers. However, the author observed that the youth who were using social media for evangelization needed more training on the use of social media to enable them to package their content in a way that captivates the audience. Results showed that the majority of the youths (55%) were using social media for communication purposes, 48.1% were using the platforms as a source of information, and 36.5% were using the platforms for entertainment. The fact that more than half of the youth use social media for communication means that youth ministry can use these platforms to reach the youth and communicate important information to them. Youth ministries can also use the social media platform to provide information on issues affecting the youths from a Christian perspective.

The impact of social media is also a function of the characteristics of the posts that an institution chooses to convey through the social media platform. These characteristics include frequency of posts, content of the posts, format of the post, and personalization among other. The study by Xu et al. (2023) found that the linguistic richness of a post determine the number of readers with linguistically richer post attracting more leaders. In addition, posts that contain authentic storytelling content attract more readers and engagement than post that geared towards marketing and publicity. These findings highlight the importance of quality of posts in attracting audiences and promoting engagement.

Beckham (2022) found that there is a positive link between social media use frequency and access to religious information by the youth. This finding showed that youth leaders who post faith messages frequently increase access to religious information among their followers. Hunt (2020) opined that an effective youth programme should model frequent intentional decisions among young people to follow Christ amidst the realities of their lives. Frequent interaction protects the youth from becoming discouraged in the pursuit of holiness. Youth leaders should use social media platforms in a manner that enables them to present and provide continuous support to the youth in the Christian journey. They use social media to provide a constant and heartfelt presence, tenderness without limits, and a loving closeness.

According to Hunt (2020), youth ministers should be constantly present in their members' lives just the same way Christ is ever present in our lives. Providing company to the youth in their digital lifestyle is a vital pillar of the digital youth ministry. The study by Amankwah (2019) found that the American Baptist church leaders made use of Facebook for church

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business on a daily basis. The finding shows high usage of Facebook by the Baptist churches. The majority of the leaders (54%) reported that they used Facebook to communicate, 21% said they use it to collaborate, 17% said they use it to organize and store information, and 8% said they use it for learning.

On the other hand, the study by Hodol (2021) found that 71% the sampled churches posted content on Facebook at least once a week. The study focused on Christian churches in Norway and utilized a quantitative approach that entailed the use of a questionnaire to gather data. The findings imply that most churches in Norway post on Facebook somewhat regularly. Regarding the content of the post, 11% of the Churches post a video at least twice in every six months, which is also somewhat regular. Churches in urban areas reported higher usage of social media, with 22% of the urban churches posting at least two videos every six months. The finding further shows that the purpose of posting is often to inform members about events. In essence, most churches in Norway view social media as a substitute for mass media such as newspapers and thus utilized the traditional one-way asymmetric model of communication. This model does not make optimal use of the interactive and relational features that social media offer.

Mbithi et al. (2023) advocate for frequent posting of messages, arguing that frequent engagement is more persuasive than sporadic engagement. However, in their study that focused on youths from protestant churches in Kesses Sub-County, 32.6% of the respondents reported that social media is never used in their churches, while 17.6% said that social media is rarely used. Only 2.6% of the respondents reported regular use of social media in their church. These findings suggest that there is low usage of social media platforms by churches in Kenya. Consequently, most churches have failed to unlock the potential presented by social media when it comes to reaching the youth.

Another characteristic that is essential is the relevance of the post. Jones et al. (2022) found that relevance played a significant moderating role in the relationship between frequency of social media posts and performance of hotels. Findings showed that hotels that posted content rated as highly relevant had higher occupancy rates than those that did not. This finding implies that while posting regularly is good, there is a need to ensure that the posts remain relevant. At times, too much posting can dilute relevance leading to drop in effectiveness of the social media posts. Pelet and Ettis (2022) also found that perceived originality, credibility, intrusiveness, and irritation of a post also affect the effectiveness of social media. In addition,

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Jones et al. (2022) found that incorporating an image further strengthens the influence of social media posts on the performance of the hotels.

The study by Kwon et al. (2021) also found that post usefulness was the most important determinant of the success of social media in popularizing brands. The authors defined usefulness as the degree to which the content presented in the social media platform satisfies the information needs of the audience. This concept of usefulness is close to that of relevance. In the context of youth ministry, usefulness may be viewed as the degree to which posts address what the youth in a particular church would like to learn. Other characteristics that were found to have an impact on the effectiveness of social media include originality/ authenticity and aesthetics.

2.3.5 Social Media Personnel and Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry

The personnel responsible for managing social media platforms have a major bearing on the effectiveness of the platform. The personnel shape the content of the social media platform, facilitate the discussion, and manage the interaction between members (Sparkman, 2021). The study by Verma et al. (2021) found that online reputation, ability to manage digital engagement, capacity to generate authentic content, and community outreach capabilities were among the skills that make a successful social media manager. Other skills include story ideation, editing, presentation, interpersonal skills, problem solving, creativity, research, language skills, and proficiency with technological tools like word and PowerPoint. However, this study focused on social media managers working in commercial organizations.

The study by Pekkala and Zoonen (2022) further revealed that the personnel who post content related to their work are deemed by the public to be reliable sources of information about that organization. This implies youth leaders' ability to communicate about their work has a positive bearing on the effectiveness of the youth ministry. The study further showed that personnel's ability to communicate about their work is shaped by their level of commitment to their work, social media training, clarity about their communicative role, and prior experience with social media. Hunt (2020) opines that to be effective, youth ministers must understand the people to whom they are ministering. They need to be aware of places where the youth visit when they enter the digital spaces, what they do when they are there, and what they search for there. The youth leaders should be aware of the platforms that their specific audience prefers.

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In addition, Ahman and Thoren (2021) contend that social media personnel in churches ought to know how to encourage practical engagement in their online community. The study utilized Taylor's model to analyse the communication components of the Facebook page of the Church of Sweden. The study utilized a qualitative approach where 304 original posts made in the Church of Sweden Facebook page between February 2017 and 31 January 2018 were analysed using the context analysis method. The study found that only 16% of the sampled posts fell into the category of community-building posts. Community-building posts are vital in flattening hierarchies and promoting open sharing of content. It allows both leaders and members to be co-creators of information through interpretation and feedback. It allows people to voice their opinions in a democratic manner.

The study by Markley (2024) found that social media training has become a vital part of youth leader training programmes in the American youth ministry organization known as Young Life. The study used the survey design that entailed interviewing staff at the organization. The interviews disclosed that that they always spend time talking with youth leaders about how technology affects each religious topic and how best they can deliver this topics through technology. Makhutla (2021) observed that to stay connected and evangelise, churches need to recruit talented individuals and train them on the use of technology. The team running social media activities should also be supported to meet, plan, and strategize on how to promote the gospel.

The study by Animante et al. (2021) examined the perception of members of Charismatic Churches in Ghana regarding social media use. The study utilized the survey design that entailed gathering data from the church members using questionnaires. Results showed that most church members had the basic skills needed to use social media. Availability of these skills has led to a positive perception towards social media use in the churches. This implies that the skills of members who are the target recipients of social media information are also a major determinant of the effectiveness of social media.

2.4 Summary of Reviewed Literature

Social media has become a popular tool for communication in modern times and a vital part of the youth culture. The review identified several theories that could explain how social media use affects the effectiveness of youth ministries in churches today. However, the most relevant theories are the socio-technical theory and the two-way symmetrical model of communication. The socio-technical theory underscores the need for churches to adopt

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technologies that improve their operations and align with environmental changes, including shifts in communication practices. The two-way symmetrical model of communication highlights social media's capacity to facilitate authentic engagement between youth ministries and their audiences, thereby building relationships of trust.

The empirical review has established that different communities have different preferences when it comes to social media channels. For instance, Wiedemann (2022) found that Instagram was the channel preferred most by SDA youths, while Rankins (2023) observed the Southern Baptist Convention fraternity preferred Facebook. This implies that each congregation need to identify the social media platform that is most convenient for their youth. The proposed seek to establish the social media platform preferred by youth in the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery.

Regarding social media use patterns, the review has established the importance of being strategic in social media use, including defining the goals social media communication seeks to achieve. The goals should be tailored to the specific needs and challenges of youth in a given congregation. The proposed study seeks to examine the purpose and priorities of the social media communication of youth ministries in the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. The review also established that social media communication should prioritize goals that are geared towards community and relationship building rather than marketing and publicity.

The review also identified various elements that make a social media post effective in achieving its goals. These characteristics include the frequency of the posts, the format of the posts, including whether they incorporate graphics, the content of the posts, including their relevance, authenticity and quality, and personalisation. However, most of the studies examining the characteristics of social media posts have been conducted in commercial organizations rather than churches. The proposed study seeks to examine whether the posts made by youth ministries in churches share these characteristics and how these elements shape the effectiveness of the youth ministry.

The review further established the need to have skilled personnel to operate the social media platform for the youth ministry. Essential skills for social media personnel include Bible knowledge, creativity, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, language skills, research, and problem-solving. The need to provide training to young leaders so as that they can acquire these skills is also highlighted. The proposed study seeks to examine the skills of personnel

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operating the social media platform in the youth ministries of the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery.

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2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 summarises the key variables of the study and the presumed relationship between them.

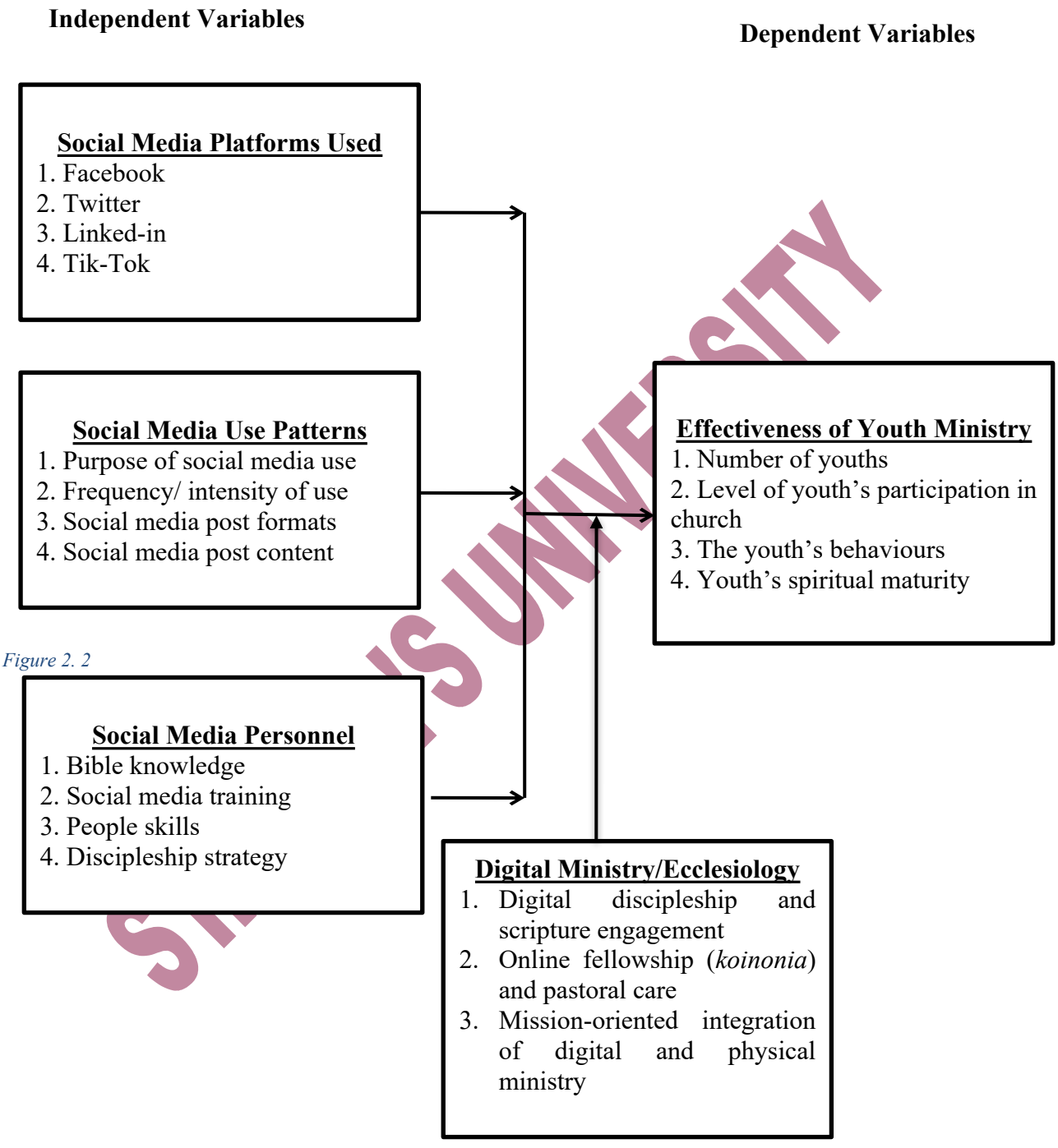


Figure 2. 2

Figure 2. 1: Influence of Social Media Use on the Effectiveness of Youth Ministry

Figure 2.1 illustrates that the study is guided by four independent variables related to social media use: social media platforms used, social media usage patterns, social media post

characteristics, and social media personnel. The framework further incorporates digital ministry/digital ecclesiology as an intervening variable that mediates the influence of these social media practices on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. Digital ministry/digital ecclesiology was included as an intervening variable because the influence of social media platforms, usage patterns, post characteristics, and personnel on youth ministry effectiveness is not purely technical or automatic. Rather, this influence is shaped by how the church theologically understands and intentionally applies digital spaces for ministry. Digital ecclesiology frames social media as a legitimate context for discipleship, fellowship, and mission, thereby mediating how digital practices translate into meaningful youth engagement, spiritual growth, and participation. Without this theological orientation, similar social media practices may yield limited or inconsistent ministry outcomes.

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CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the methods used to conduct the study. It included the study design, description of the study area, the target population, sampling methods, data collection tools and procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

The study made use of the convergent parallel mixed-method research design. The design entails collecting quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and combining the results of the two data collection methods at the interpretation stage (Hall and Hall, 2020). This method is appropriate because it enhances the understanding of the study issue by exploring it from multiple perspectives. Quantitative data was collected from members of the youth ministry in the congregations that made up the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery using closed-ended questionnaires. Qualitative data were collected from the youth leaders, youth pastors and parish ministers within the seven parishes in Nairobi Central Presbytery using semi-structured interviews.

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted at the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. The choice of the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery was informed by its urban set-up, which increases the likelihood of social media use. Statistics indicate a huge rural-urban digital divide in Kenya, where only 17% of the population in rural areas have access to the internet as compared to 44% in urban areas (Lusweti and Omieno, 2023). Consequently, churches in rural areas may find it difficult to deploy social media in engaging the youth.

3.4 Target Population

The target population included the 2925 youths, 35 youth leaders and pastors within in the seven parishes of the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. Consequently, the study targeted a total of 2960 individuals. Table 3.1 illustrates the distribution of the population of youths and youth leaders across the seven parishes:

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Table 3. 1: Population of Youth and Leaders in Nairobi Central Presbytery

Parish	Youth	Leaders and pastors	Total
Bahati	704	5	709
Buruburu	311	5	316
Eastleigh	403	5	408
Athi River	316	5	321
Makadara	451	5	456
Neema	509	5	514
Pangani	231	5	236
Total	**2925**	**35**	**2960**

Source: Church Internal Documents (2024)

The study targeted the youth because they are the audience of the social media communication of the youth ministry. Consequently, these youths were privy to information regarding the social media platforms used, the purpose of social media use, characteristics of posts made in the social media platforms, and the personnel operating the social media platforms. Youth leaders and pastors were also targeted because they would provide additional in-depth information regarding the study variables from the perspective of the youth ministry leadership.

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3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The sample size for the study was determined using the Yamane (1973) sample size formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n is the desired sample size

N is the target population (2960)

e is the margin of error (0.05 for the proposed study)

$$n = \frac{2960}{1 + 2960\ (0.05)^2} = 352.38 \approx 352\ \ respondents$$

The respondents were selected using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. It entailed dividing the population into internally homogenous groups known as strata and then selecting respondents from each stratum in a simple random method. The number of respondents selected from each stratum was proportional to the population in that stratum. In this study, the target population was stratified in line with the 7 parishes. Table 3.2 presents a summary of the sample from each stratum.

Table 3. 2: Sample of Youth and Leaders from Seven Parishes

Parish	Youth	Leaders	Total
Bahati	82	2	84
Buruburu	36	2	38
Eastleigh	47	2	49
Athi River	36	2	38
Makadara	52	2	54
Neema	59	2	61
Pangani	26	2	28
Total	**338**	**14**	**352**

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Stratification of the study population in line with the seven parishes ensured that all the parishes were represented in the sample (Crano et al., 2023). The proportionate aspect of the sampling technique also ensured adequate representation of each parish. Large parishes with a high number of youths got more slots in the sample so that the study could obtain data that reflected those attributes of the population. Random selection of respondents in each stratum also increased the representativeness of the sample.

3.6 Data Collection Tools

The study made use of two data collection tools: a questionnaire which was used to collect information from the selected sample and also an interview guide where selected leaders including youth pastors and ministers were interviewed.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data from the youth aged upto 35 years (Appendix 2). Consequently, the questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions. It comprised six sections, with the first section examining the profile of the youths. The second section contained questions related to social media platforms used, the third section contained questions on social media use purpose, and the fourth section asked questions concerning characteristics of social media posts. The fifth section contained questions on social media personnel, while the final section queried the effectiveness of youth ministry.

3.6.2 Interview Guide

The interview guide was designed to gather qualitative data from key respondents who included youth leaders, ministers and youth pastors (Appendix 3). The guide was semi-structured, meaning that it comprised a list of uniform questions that were asked to all the selected 14 interviewees. The researcher had the latitude to ask follow-up or probing questions based on each interviewee responses to the initial set of uniform questions. The semi-structured guide enabled the researcher to get in-depth information through probing while at the same time the uniform questions ensured that the conversation did not deviate away from the study objectives.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The researcher enhanced the validity of the tools by conducting a thorough review of literature when developing these research tools. The review ensured comprehensive understanding of each of the study variables and their constructs (Hall & Hall, 2020). The researcher also divided the instrument into sections that corresponded to the variables of the study to ensure that each variable was adequately covered. In addition, the researcher asked four peers to evaluate each section of the questionnaire and give a score ranging from1 to 4, with 1 indicating low levels of validity and 4 indicating high levels of validity. The researcher then got the average score for each section and all sections that get a score of 2 or below were revised.

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The reliability of the tools was assessed by conducting a pilot study in one parish in the PCEA Nairobi East Presbytery. The Nairobi East Presbytery was selected because it has similar characteristics as the Nairobi Central Presbytery in terms of socio-economic factors and technology penetration. The pilot study involved 35 respondents, including 33 youths and 2 youth leaders. The pilot study data was analysed using the Cronbach alpha method at a threshold of 0.7. The findings are presented in the table below.

Table 3. 3: Validity and Reliability test

Study Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry	8	0.836
Social Media Platforms Used	9	0.768
Social Media Use Patterns	10	0.781
Social Media Personnel	11	0.910

The validity and reliability test results showed that all the study variables met the acceptable threshold of internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7. The effectiveness of the youth ministry recorded an alpha of 0.836, indicating good reliability. Social media platforms used and social media use patterns, with alphas of 0.768 and 0.781 respectively, both reflect acceptable to good reliability, showing that the items consistently measure their intended constructs. Social media personnel achieved the highest reliability with an alpha of 0.910, demonstrating excellent internal consistency. Overall, the findings confirm that the research instrument was statistically reliable and suitable for measuring the variables under study.

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3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained approval to conduct the research from the SPU ethical review committee and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher also visited each Parish in person and sought authorization to conduct the study from the administration. The researcher then arranged a meeting with the youths together with their leaders, explained the study to them, and asked those who agreed to participate to sign a written consent form. Those who agreed to participate were then given the questionnaire and allowed 30 minutes to complete it, after which the researcher collected the completed questionnaires. The researcher also conducted individual interviews with two randomly selected youth leaders. The study anticipated that each interview would take approximately 45 minutes. The data was collected through note-taking.

3.9 Data Analysis

The questionnaire was coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software and data from each questionnaire entered. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data while inferential statistics were used to test how each independent variable affected the effectiveness of the youth ministry. Frequencies and percentage were then used to conduct the descriptive analysis. Cross-tabulation with chi-square, Pearsons's correlation and linear regression analysis were used to conduct the inferential analysis.

Qualitative data was analysed using the thematic analysis technique. The analysis began by taking an overview of the notes taken during the interview. The researcher then began to generate initial codes; these are tags that were assigned to notes to capture key concepts or ideas (Lusweti and Omieno, 2023). Afterwards, the researcher grouped the codes that had similar meaning into themes; overarching ideas that emerged from the data. The themes were then integrated into the research report and interpreted alongside the quantitative data.

In addition to statistical and thematic analysis, the study incorporated theological reflection as an interpretive layer to deepen understanding of the findings. After quantitative and qualitative results were established, the findings were theologically interpreted using established practical theology frameworks, particularly those concerned with digital mission, fellowship, and scripture engagement in contemporary contexts. This reflective process involved critically engaging the empirical results with biblical principles, theological concepts, and youth ministry praxis to explore how social media use aligns with, challenges, or reshapes the church's mission among young people.

Theological reflection was applied at the discussion stage by placing the findings in dialogue with Christian understandings of mission (missio Dei), community (koinonia), discipleship, and formation. In this way, empirical data did not stand alone but were informed by and informed theological insight. This integrative approach ensured that the study moved beyond describing patterns of social media use to offering faith-informed interpretations that are meaningful for church practice, policy, and ministry development.

3.10 Ethical Issues

The study upheld the informed consent requirement by providing a detailed explanation of the study to all potential respondents. Every respondent had the opportunity to decide whether to participate. Those who agreed to participate were requested to sign a consent form.

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To safeguard the privacy and protect participants from harm, no data that could disclose the identity of the respondents was collected. Respondents were advised not to write their names, telephone numbers or national identification numbers on the questionnaire. In addition, the researcher selected a suitable venue where each respondent completed his or her questionnaire in private. The researcher also distributed the questionnaire and collected it in person. Codes were used during the reporting of interview data. Questionnaires and interview notes were stored under lock and key and destroyed six months after the completion of the study.

The researcher observed high levels of integrity during the study. Content obtained from other sources was cited inside the text, and the bibliographic information of the source material was detailed in the list of references. The researcher also reported findings of the study honestly and without bias.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the methods and procedures used to conduct the study. In the chapter, the study utilised a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design and targeted a population of 2925 youths and 35 leaders from seven parishes in the Nairobi Central Presbytery. A sample of 352, comprising 338 youths and 14 leaders, was selected using the proportionate stratified random sampling method. The researcher used questionnaires to gather data from the youth and an interview guide to gather data from youth leaders. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data was analysed using the thematic technique.

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CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter provides information on the findings of the study. The study sought to assess the influence of social media use and the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, in Kenya. More specifically, the study investigated how social media platforms are used, usage patterns and social media personnel influence the effectiveness of the youth ministry. This chapter presents the findings of the general information of the study sample, provides findings and discussion according to the study's specific objectives**.**

4.2 Response rate

The study targeted a sample of 352 youths and youth leaders drawn from seven parishes of the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. Of the 352 questionnaires administered, 315 were duly completed and returned, representing a high response rate. The results of the questionnaire return rate are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1: Response rate for the administered questionnaires

	Frequency	**Percentages**
Responded	315	89.5%
Not responded	37	10.5%
Total	**352**	**100%**

The response rate of 89.5% is considered very good for survey research, as it exceeds the recommended threshold of 70% (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

4.3 Demographic Information of the sample

This section shows the demographic information of the respondents. This includes gender, age, highest level of education, and the number of years the respondents have been members of the PCEA church. The results are presented in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1.

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Table 4. 2: Background Information

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	180	57.1	57.1
	Female	135	42.9	100.0
	Total	315	100.0	
Age	20 years or below	61	19.4	19.4
	21- 25 years	137	43.5	62.9
	26- 30 years	67	21.3	84.1
	31- 35 years	50	15.9	100.0
	Total	315	100.0	
Highest level of education	Secondary Education	45	14.3	14.3
	Tertiary Education	270	85.7	100.0
	Total	315	100.0	

The results in Table 4.2 revealed that 57.1% of the respondents were male, while 42.9% were female. The findings indicated that the study had slightly more male than female participants, suggesting that male youth were more represented in the sampled congregations.

The largest age group was 21–25 years, accounting for 43.5% of respondents. This was followed by those aged 26–30 years (21.3%), 20 years or below (19.4%), and 31–35 years (15.9%). The findings suggest that the majority of respondents were young adults in their early to mid-twenties, reflecting an active age bracket for youth ministry within the church. Regarding the highest education level attained, the study found that most respondents (85.7%) had attained tertiary education, while 45 (14.3%) had only completed secondary education. Therefore, the findings indicated that the respondents were relatively well-educated, which could influence their engagement with modern communication platforms such as social media.

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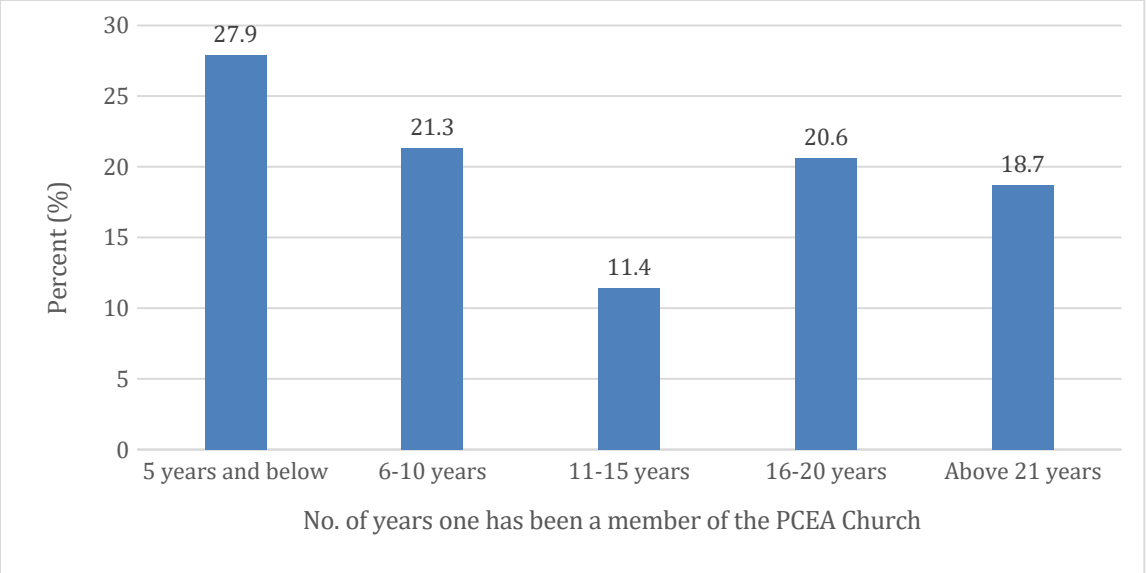


Figure 4. 1: No. of years one has been a member of the PCEA Church

The findings from Figure 4.1 revealed that a notable proportion of the youths (27.9%) stated that they had been members of the PCEA church for 5 years or less, suggesting a relatively new group of entrants. Another 21.3% had stayed for 6–10 years, while 11.4% had a membership of 11–15 years. About a fifth (20.6%) had been in the church for 16–20 years, and 18.7% indicated membership of above 21 years, showing a long-term commitment to the church. Therefore, while PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery continues to attract new youth members, it also benefits from the presence of long-term members who likely play a role in continuity, mentorship, and church traditions.

4.4 Social Media Platforms Used

The study sought to investigate the social media platforms used by PCEA churches within the Nairobi Central Presbytery and how these influence the effectiveness of the youth ministry. In this section, the study analysed the social media platforms used, their appropriateness and the recommended platforms for the youth ministry within the church.

4.4.1 Social Media Platforms Used by Youth Ministry Members

The social media platforms used were analysed, and the results are presented in Table 4.3 below.

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Table 4. 3: Social Media Platforms Used by Youth Ministry Members

	Responses	
	N	Percent
WhatsApp	293	36.4%
Facebook	130	16.1%
TikTok	119	14.8%
Twitter (X)	29	3.6%
YouTube	110	13.6%
Instagram	88	10.9%
Google Meet	7	0.9%
Snapchat	8	1.0%
LinkedIn	22	2.7%
Total	**806**	**100.0%**

The findings of the study established that WhatsApp was the most widely used social media platform among the youth ministry members at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, accounting for 36.4% of the responses. Facebook (16.1%), TikTok (14.8%), and YouTube (13.6%) were also frequently used, indicating that, besides direct messaging through WhatsApp, the youth actively engaged with platforms that supported content sharing and interactive media. Instagram followed with 10.9%, further reflecting the preference for visually driven communication. On the other hand, X, commonly known as Twitter (3.6%), LinkedIn (2.7%), Snapchat (1.0%), and Google Meet (0.9%), recorded low usage. The low usage would indicate that they were not commonly used while facilitating youth ministry communication and interaction. These findings demonstrated that WhatsApp and other socially interactive platforms, such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, were commonly used in youth ministry communication, but more professional platforms were less popular. The respondents were also asked to indicate the social media platforms used for communication and interaction in the youth ministry of their church and whether they were most appropriate. The findings were indicated in the Figure below.

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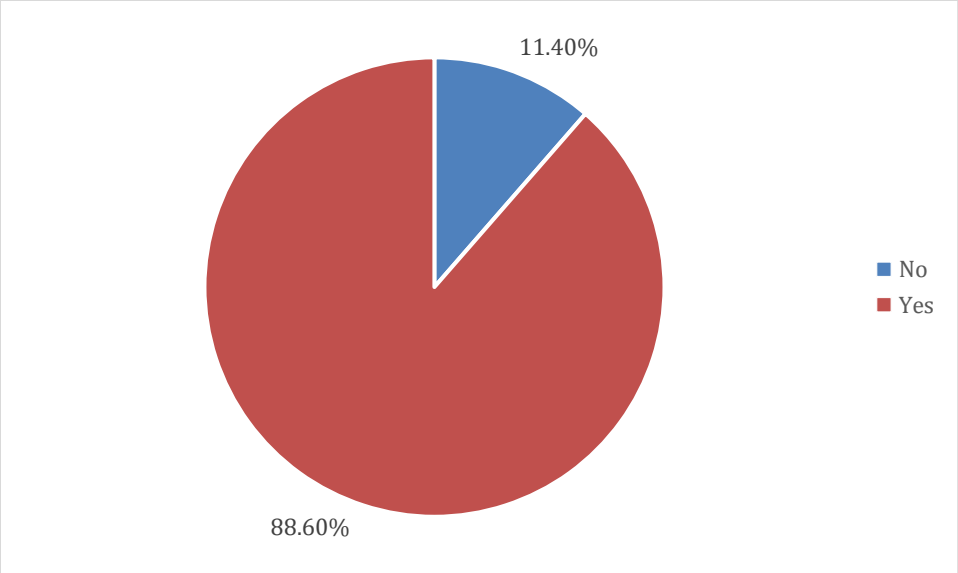


Figure 4. 2: Appropriateness of Social Media Platforms Used in the Youth Ministry

From the study findings, the majority (88.6%) agreed that the social media platforms currently used in the youth ministry were appropriate for communication and interaction. Only 11.4% felt that the platforms were not appropriate. This indicates a high level of satisfaction with the platforms used, suggesting they meet the communication needs of most members. However, the minority view (11.4%) pointed to the possibility that there may still be gaps in accessibility, usability, or relevance of certain platforms for some members, which the church leadership could explore further. Those who said no, were asked to recommend social media platforms for use in their church youth ministry. The findings were presented in the Table below.

Table 4. 4: Recommended Social Media Platforms for Youth Ministry

	Responses	
	N	Percent
WhatsApp	149	22.0%
Facebook	87	12.8%
Twitter – X	64	9.4%
YouTube	86	12.7%
TikTok	130	19.2%
Instagram	112	16.5%
LinkedIn	35	5.2%
Snapchat	15	2.2%
Total	**678**	**100.0%**

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Based on the results above, WhatsApp was the most recommended platform at 22.0%, followed closely by TikTok at 19.2% and Instagram at 16.5%. Facebook and YouTube were also significant, with 12.8% and 12.7 % respectively, while Twitter accounted for 9.4% of the responses, while LinkedIn and Snapchat were the least recommended, with 5.2 % and 2.2 % respectively. Therefore, while the current platforms were useful, the youth strongly favoured more interactive and youth-oriented platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, and Instagram for enhancing communication and engagement within the ministry.

4.5 Social Media Use Patterns

This section analysed social media use patterns, which were part of the second objective of the study, which aimed at establishing the influence of social media usage patterns on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. The study analysed the goals guiding social media use, the frequency of posting, and the quality of content shared by the church, which influenced the effectiveness of the youth ministry. It also examined whether these patterns of use contributed to improved communication, youth engagement, and the overall spiritual growth of the members.

4.5.1 Primary goals for using social media within the church youth ministry

The study investigated the primary goals for using social media within the church youth ministry. The results were presented in the Table below.

Table 4. 5: Primary goals for using social media within the youth ministry

	Responses	
	N	Percent
Sharing/ promoting upcoming events	246	26.3%
Bible study	174	18.6%
Discussing life issues like substance abuse	43	4.6%
Reaching out to non-believers	52	5.6%
Connect youth members and build relationships	110	11.8%
Sharing resources like sermons	72	7.7%
Prayer requests and supports	64	6.8%
Share uplifting messages	174	18.6%
Total	935	100.0%

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The findings indicated that social media within the youth ministry was primarily used to promote events, Bible study, sharing uplifting messages, and promoting connection among young people. These goals can be theologically interpreted through the lenses of digital mission/evangelism, fellowship (koinonia), and scripture engagement in digital spaces, offering a richer understanding of how digital platforms function as ministry spaces rather than merely communication tools.

Although reaching out to non-believers accounted for a relatively smaller proportion of responses (5.6%), the strong emphasis on sharing uplifting messages (18.6%) and promoting events (26.3%) reflects an implicit form of digital mission. From a theological perspective, digital mission extends beyond explicit evangelistic messaging to include *presence, witness, and invitation* in online spaces. Social media platforms become contemporary marketplaces (cf. Acts 17:17) where the church maintains a visible and relational presence among young people. Event promotion, therefore, can be understood not merely as logistical communication, but as missional invitation—drawing youth into communal spaces where faith is practiced, taught, and embodied. In this sense, the digital environment serves as an extension of the church's mission Dei, participating in God's ongoing work by meeting young people where they already are.

The finding that 11.8% of respondents identified connecting youth members and building relationships as a key goal highlights the importance of fellowship in digital ministry. Theologically, this aligns with the concept of *koinonia*, the shared life of believers grounded in their communion with Christ (Acts 2:42). Social media platforms serve as mediated spaces of belonging in which relationships are initiated, sustained, and deepened beyond physical gatherings. The use of social media for prayer requests and support (6.8%) further underscores this communal dimension, reflecting a digitally mediated form of mutual care and bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). These findings suggest that digital fellowship does not replace embodied community but complements it, reinforcing relational continuity throughout the week.

Bible study (18.6%) and sharing sermons and other resources (7.7%) point to the growing role of digital media in facilitating engagement with Scripture. Theologically, this reflects an understanding of God's Word as living and active (Hebrews 4:12), capable of speaking through diverse media and formats. Digital platforms enable flexible, accessible, and youth-friendly forms of scriptural engagement—short reflections, videos, discussion threads, and

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devotional posts—that resonate with young people's learning styles. Rather than diminishing the authority of Scripture, digital mediation can enhance its reach and relevance, allowing Scripture to intersect with everyday life contexts in real time. This supports a practical theology of formation, where spiritual growth occurs not only in formal church settings but also within the rhythms of digital life.

Overall, the findings suggest that while social media use in the youth ministry is often driven by practical needs such as event promotion, its underlying goals are deeply theological. Digital platforms are being used to nurture faith, sustain fellowship, and participate in God's mission among young people. However, the comparatively lower emphasis on outreach to non-believers and engagement with complex life issues indicates an opportunity for a more intentional digital ecclesiology—one that more fully integrates evangelism, discipleship, and pastoral care within online spaces. When approached theologically, social media emerges not simply as a tool but as a meaningful context for youth ministry, where faith is communicated, community is formed, and Scripture is lived out in the digital age.

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4.5.2 Youth Perceptions on Whether the Church Youth Ministry Uses the Full Potential of Social Media

The respondents were then asked to state whether they believed that their church youth ministry was using the full potential that social media offer.

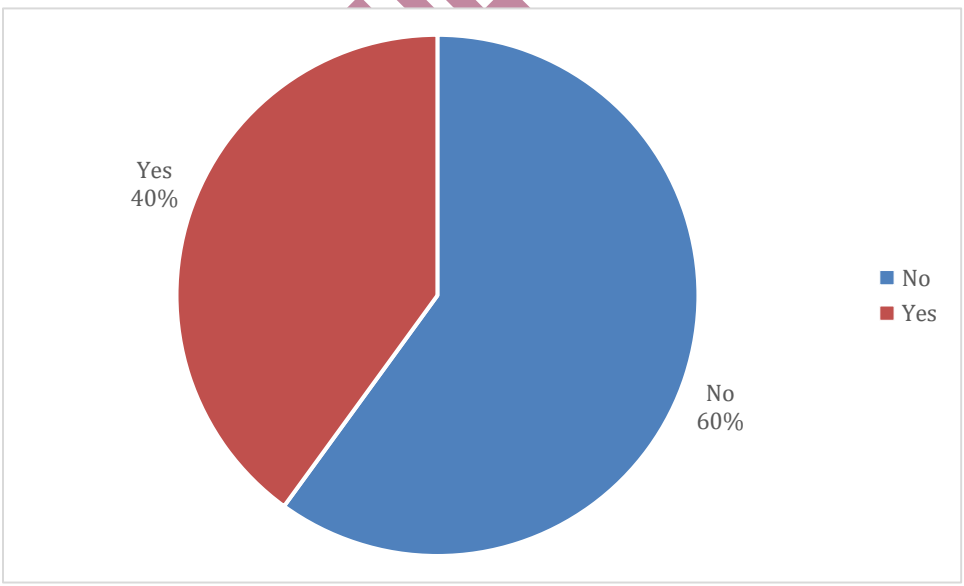


Figure 4. 3: Youth Perceptions on Whether the Church Youth Ministry Uses the Full Potential of Social Media

The results indicated that a majority of respondents (60.0%) felt their church youth ministry was not using social media to its full potential. In contrast, only 40.0% believed that the ministry is maximizing social media opportunities. This pointed out a gap between availability and effective use, or in other words, a need for the church to explore more innovative and strategic ways of engaging youth through social media. For those who responded "No", they were asked to indicate how the social media could be used by the youth ministry.

Table 4. 6: Suggested uses of social media in the Youth Ministry

	Responses	
	N	Percent
Sharing/ promoting upcoming events	80	8.7%
Bible study	130	14.2%
Discussing life issues like substance abuse	110	12.0%
Reaching out to non-believers	108	11.8%
Connect youth members and build relationships	145	15.8%
Sharing resources like sermons	97	10.6%
Prayer requests and support	57	6.2%
Share uplifting messages	189	20.6%
Total	916	100.0%

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The majority of the respondents suggested sharing uplifting messages (20.6%), indicating that many youths desire motivational and spiritually nourishing content online. This was followed by connecting youth members and building relationships (15.8%) and Bible study (14.2%), highlighting the need for social media to facilitate both spiritual growth and community bonding. Other notable recommendations included using social media to discuss life issues such as substance abuse (12.0%), reach out to non-believers (11.8%), and share resources like sermons (10.6%). Less frequently mentioned, but still significant, were promoting upcoming events (8.7%) and supporting prayer requests (6.2%).

While the respondents highlighted the importance of event promotion, the youth saw a greater potential in leveraging social media as a tool for spiritual edification, outreach, and relational support.

4.5.3 Frequency of Posting Content on Youth Ministry Social Media Platforms

The respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which the person(s) in charge of your youth ministry social media platforms post content on the platforms.

Table 4. 7: Frequency of Posting Content on Youth Ministry Social Media Platforms

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Daily Basis	74	23.5	23.5
At least once in a week	160	50.8	74.3
Once in two weeks	22	7.0	81.3
Monthly	29	9.2	90.5
Atleast once in 3 months	7	2.2	92.7
Rarely	23	7.3	100.0
Total	315	100.0	

The results indicated that the majority of youth ministry social media platforms were active on a weekly basis. Specifically, 50.8% of respondents reported that posts were made at least once a week, while 23.5% noted that content was posted on a daily basis. Combined, this shows that nearly three-quarters (74.3%) of youth ministries maintained a consistent presence on social media. However, a smaller proportion indicated lower posting frequencies, with 7.0% indicating to post once every two weeks, 9.2% monthly, 2.2% once every three months, and 7.3% rarely. This shows there is still a notable group where posting is inconsistent or minimal.

4.5.4 Frequent Social Media Posting in Youth Ministry

They were further asked to state whether they believed posting frequently was a good thing.

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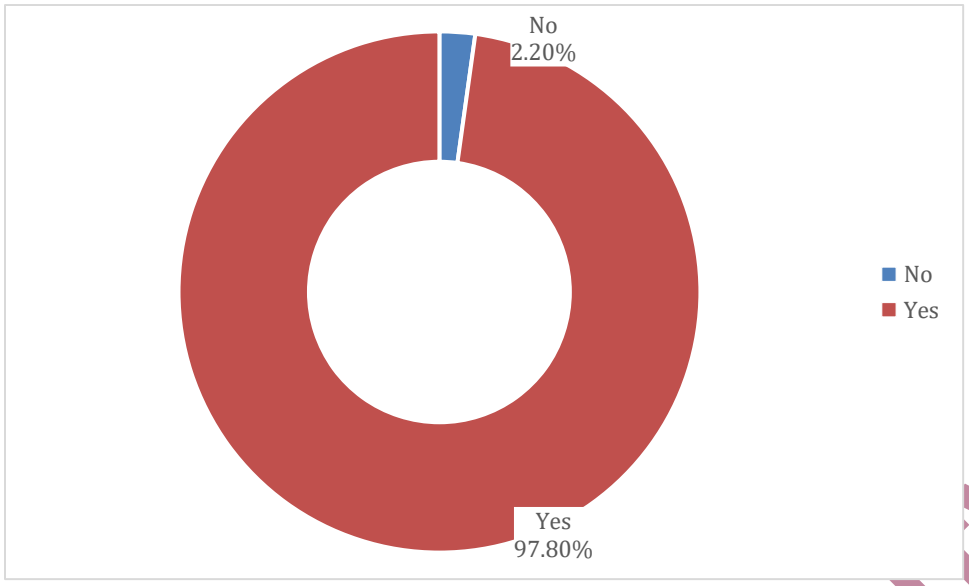


Figure 4. 4: Perception on Frequent Social Media Posting in Youth Ministry

An overwhelming majority, 97.8%, stated that they considered frequent posting to be beneficial. In contrast, only 2.2% of the respondents disagreed with this view. These findings suggested that consistent engagement through regular posts was highly valued among the youth, as it was perceived to enhance visibility, maintain relevance, and foster continuous interaction within the ministry.

4.5.5 Quality of Social Media Posts in Youth Ministry Platforms

To further assess the role of social media in youth ministry, respondents were asked to share their perceptions regarding the quality of posts shared on church social media platforms.

Table 4. 8: Quality of Social Media Posts in Youth Ministry Platforms

	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Mean	Std.Dev
The posts made on the social media platforms are consistent with Christian values and belief	4.4	2.5	2.2	84.1	6.7	3.86	.757
Social media posts are in line with the values and beliefs of the church	2.2	2.5	11.4	77.1	6.7	3.83	.676

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The social media posts have high levels of originality	4.4	2.5	20.6	67.9	4.4	3.65	.797
Social media posts provide valuable information on issues relevant to the youth	2.5		13.7	77.1	6.7	3.85	.642
The social media posts are visually appealing	5.1		22.9	63.2	8.9	3.71	.832
The social media posts incorporate both images and texts	2.2	2.2	9.5	74.3	11.7	3.91	.704
The social media posts are well written making it easy to understand		2.2	7.0	86.3	4.4	3.93	.446
Social media posts incorporate quizzes and challenges to encourage youth members to engage	16.8	4.4	24.8	47.0	7.0	3.23	1.191
Social media posts have clear messages that are easy to understand			4.4	91.1	4.4	4.00	.299
Social media posts are tailored to address issues facing the youth in our church	7.0	2.2	8.9	77.5	4.4	3.70	.874
Aggregated Score						3.77	0.383

The results revealed that most respondents agreed that the posts were consistent with Christian values and beliefs (M = 3.86, SD = 0.757) and aligned well with the broader values of the church (M = 3.83, SD = 0.676). In addition, the posts were seen as valuable in addressing youth-related issues (M = 3.85, SD = 0.642) and visually appealing (M = 3.71, SD = 0.832). Respondents also noted that the posts successfully incorporated both text and images (M = 3.91, SD = 0.704), were well written and easy to understand (M = 3.93, SD = 0.446), and communicated clear messages (M = 4.00, SD = 0.299). Despite these strengths, areas such as originality (M = 3.65, SD = 0.797) and the use of interactive features like quizzes and challenges (M = 3.23, SD = 1.191) scored relatively lower, suggesting opportunities for improvement in creativity and interactivity. These findings are consistent with previous studies highlighting the importance of clarity, relevance, and interactivity in

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faith-based digital engagement (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Horsfield, 2015). The findings suggest that while social media posts in youth ministry effectively communicate church values and increase engagement, incorporating more innovative, interactive strategies could further boost youth participation and relevance.

4.6 Social Media Personnel

This section assessed the skills and attributes of the individuals managing the youth ministry social media platforms, with the aim of determining whether their competence, creativity, and communication abilities influence the effectiveness of online engagement. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements regarding these attributes, and the results are presented in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4. 9: Skills and Attributes of Social Media Personnel in Youth Ministry

	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Mean	Std.Dev
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are very creative	7.0	2.2	15.9	74.9		3.59	.841
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are friendly to all members	9.2		18.4	70.2	2.2	3.56	.920
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are knowledgeable on Biblical issues	2.2		25.1	70.5	2.2	3.70	.622
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are knowledgeable on life issues	4.8	2.2	29.5	61.3	2.2	3.54	.791
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are easy to relate with	4.4	6.7	11.4	75.2	2.2	3.64	.823

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The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are good communicators	6.7	2.2	23.5	63.2	4.4	3.57	.884
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are good in managing time	9.5		30.2	53.7	6.7	3.48	.978
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are willing to listen to others	8.9		16.2	74.9		3.57	.884
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are good in answering questions	6.7		15.9	77.5		3.64	.795
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are good in facilitating discussions.	11.7		20.6	67.6		3.44	.977
The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are good in managing people	11.7	2.2	25.1	61.0		3.35	.990
Aggregated Score						3.56	0.634

The findings on the skills and attributes of the personnel managing youth ministry social media platforms revealed generally positive perceptions among respondents. The highest-rated attribute was that the managers are knowledgeable on Biblical issues (M = 3.70, SD = 0.622), with the majority of respondents (70.5%) agreeing and only 2.2% strongly disagreeing, indicating that the personnel are considered spiritually grounded. Other areas where the managers were rated highly include being easy to relate with (M = 3.64, SD = 0.823) and being good at answering questions (M = 3.64, SD = 0.795), suggesting strong interpersonal and interactive skills. Similarly, attributes such as creativity (M = 3.59, SD = 0.841), friendliness (M = 3.56, SD = 0.920), willingness to listen (M = 3.57, SD = 0.884), and communication skills (M = 3.57, SD = 0.884) were rated above average, showing that the managers are approachable, open, and effective in their engagement. However, relatively lower ratings were noted for time management (M = 3.48, SD = 0.978), facilitation of

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discussions (M = 3.44, SD = 0.977), and people management (M = 3.35, SD = 0.990), indicating areas where improvement may be needed. The overall aggregated mean score of 3.56 (SD = 0.634) shows that, on average, respondents moderately agree that the personnel managing the platforms possess the necessary skills and attributes, though consistency in organizational and leadership skills could be further strengthened. These findings are consistent with past research emphasizing that effective online ministry depends not only on spiritual knowledge but also on communication, relational, and organizational competencies (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Cheong, 2019).

4.7 Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry

This section sought to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the youth ministry in the church. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements measuring the extent to which the youth ministry contributes to spiritual growth, participation in church activities, personal development, and resilience among young people. The responses are summarised in the table below.

Table 4. 10: Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry

	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Mean	Std.Dev
The youth ministry in our church has been effective in bringing more young people to the church	14.3	2.2	18.1	65.4		3.35	1.064
The youth ministry in our church has been effective in winning more souls to God	8.9	2.2	16.5	61.3	11.1	3.63	1.017
The youth ministry in our church has been effective in promoting youth participation in church activities	4.8		8.9	81.9	4.4	3.81	.727

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The youth ministry in our church has been effective in helping the youth to learn more about God	4.4	2.5	11.4	74.9	6.7	3.77	.794
The youth ministry in our church has been effective in helping the youth to solve life challenges	7.0	2.2	22.9	58.7	9.2	3.61	.943
The youth ministry in our church has been effective in moulding the character of youths	7.3	2.2	18.1	61.0	11.4	3.67	.967
The youth ministry in our church has been effective in developing strong commitment towards the Christian faith among the youth	7.0	4.4	13.3	73.0	2.2	3.59	.893
The youth ministry in our church has been effective in making the youth more resilient	9.2		11.1	75.2	4.4	3.66	.932
Aggregated Score						3.63	0.626

The results indicate that the youth ministry in the church was perceived to be moderately to highly effective, with an aggregated mean score of 3.63 (SD = 0.626), suggesting a generally positive perception among respondents. A large majority of respondents agreed that the youth ministry effectively promotes youth participation in church activities (81.9%, M = 3.81, SD = 0.727) and helps young people to learn more about God (74.9%, M = 3.77, SD = 0.794). These findings underscore the ministry's role in enhancing spiritual growth and active involvement in church life, which aligns with Smith and Denton (2005), who emphasize that youth ministries foster religious socialization and encourage deeper faith engagement.

The youth ministry was also viewed as effective in shaping moral and spiritual development. For instance, 61.0% agreed that it moulds the character of the youth (M = 3.67, SD = 0.967), while 73.0% agreed it develops a strong commitment to the Christian faith (M = 3.59, SD = 0.893). This demonstrates the ministry's influence on instilling Christian values and resilience (75.2% agreement, M = 3.66, SD = 0.932). These results are consistent with Dean

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(2010), who found that effective youth ministries play a crucial role in nurturing long-term faith commitment and moral identity among young people.

However, effectiveness in outreach was mixed. While 65.4% agreed that the youth ministry has been successful in bringing more young people to the church (M = 3.35, SD = 1.064), a notable 18.1% were unsure. Similarly, in terms of winning souls to God, 61.3% agreed, but 16.5% were undecided (M = 3.63, SD = 1.017). This points to some uncertainty about the ministry's evangelistic effectiveness compared to its internal nurturing role. Scholars such as Nel (2018) argue that while youth ministries are often effective at discipleship and community building, they sometimes struggle with consistent outreach and evangelism strategies.

Furthermore, the ministry was recognized for supporting youths in solving life challenges, with 58.7% agreeing (M = 3.61, SD = 0.943). This suggests that, beyond spiritual guidance, the ministry addresses psychosocial needs, a role supported by Erikson's (1968) theory of identity formation, which highlights the importance of community-based mentorship in navigating adolescent challenges.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that the youth ministry is highly effective in fostering spiritual growth, participation, and resilience, though its role in evangelism and recruitment of new members appears less certain. These results corroborate earlier studies (Smith & Denton, 2005; Dean, 2010; Nel, 2018) which emphasize the dual role of youth ministries in nurturing faith within the church and extending outreach, with stronger outcomes typically observed in the former.

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4.8 Correlation analysis between the effectiveness of the youth ministry and social media use

Correlation analysis was performed in this section as the study sought to examine the relationship between the effectiveness of the youth ministry and various dimensions of social media engagement, namely social media platforms used, social media use patterns, and the presence of social media personnel. Correlation analysis established the strength and direction of relationships between the independent variables (social media platforms, use patterns, and personnel) and the dependent variable (effectiveness of the youth ministry).

Pearson's correlation values can range from -1 to 1, where a value of -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship, 0 indicates no relationship between the variables, and +1 indicates a

perfect positive relationship. The strength of the linear relationship between the variables is determined by the absolute Pearson's correlation value, with a value of 0.5 or greater indicating a strong linear relationship, while a value below 0.5 suggests a weak linear relationship. Additionally, the direction of the relationship is indicated by the sign of the Pearson's correlation coefficient value. A p-value of less than 0.05 at a 95% confidence level signifies that the linear relationship between the variables is statistically significant.

Table 4. 11: Correlation Between Effectiveness of the youth ministry and social media platforms, use patterns, and personnel

		Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry	Social Media Platforms Used	Social Media Use Patterns	Social Media Personnel
Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry	r	1			
	p				
	N	315			
Social Media Platforms Used	r	.348**	1		
	p	.000			
	N	315	315		
Social Media Use Patterns	r	.308**	.168**	1	
	p	.000	.003		
	N	315	315	315	
Social Media Personnel	r	.536**	.100	-.095	1
	p	.000	.075	.093	
	N	315	315	315	315

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis revealed that the effectiveness of the youth ministry is positively associated with the use of social media platforms. The results ($r = .348$, $p < .001$) indicate a moderate and statistically significant relationship, suggesting that churches that make broader, more strategic use of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube tend to have more effective youth ministries. This implies that platform diversity and intentional use of these tools contribute to greater youth engagement, outreach, and spiritual formation. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Hendriks, 2020), which emphasize that young people are more likely to participate

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actively when churches meet them across multiple social media platforms where they already interact.

Similarly, a significant moderate relationship was established between the effectiveness of the youth ministry and social media use patterns ($r = .308$, $p < .001$). This means that the frequency and style of content posting—such as devotionals, youth activity updates, or interactive sessions—affect how effective the ministry is perceived to be. Consistent, engaging, and contextually relevant social media activity fosters stronger youth participation and spiritual growth. These results align with previous research (Almenayes, 2014; Olagoke, 2020), which suggests that regular, interactive use of social media strengthens youth identity, nurtures a sense of belonging, and promotes discipleship.

The strongest association was observed between the effectiveness of the youth ministry and the presence of social media personnel ($r = .536$, $p < .001$). This strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship underscores the importance of having skilled and dedicated individuals, such as youth leaders, media teams, or digital evangelists, in managing church social media activities. Their expertise in digital engagement significantly enhances ministry outcomes such as youth participation, resilience, character molding, and spiritual growth. This corroborates earlier findings (Cheong, 2013; Hutchings, 2017), which highlight that leadership and digital literacy are crucial in transforming technology into impactful ministry tools, particularly for digital-native generations.

The findings were further illustrated using scatter diagrams below,

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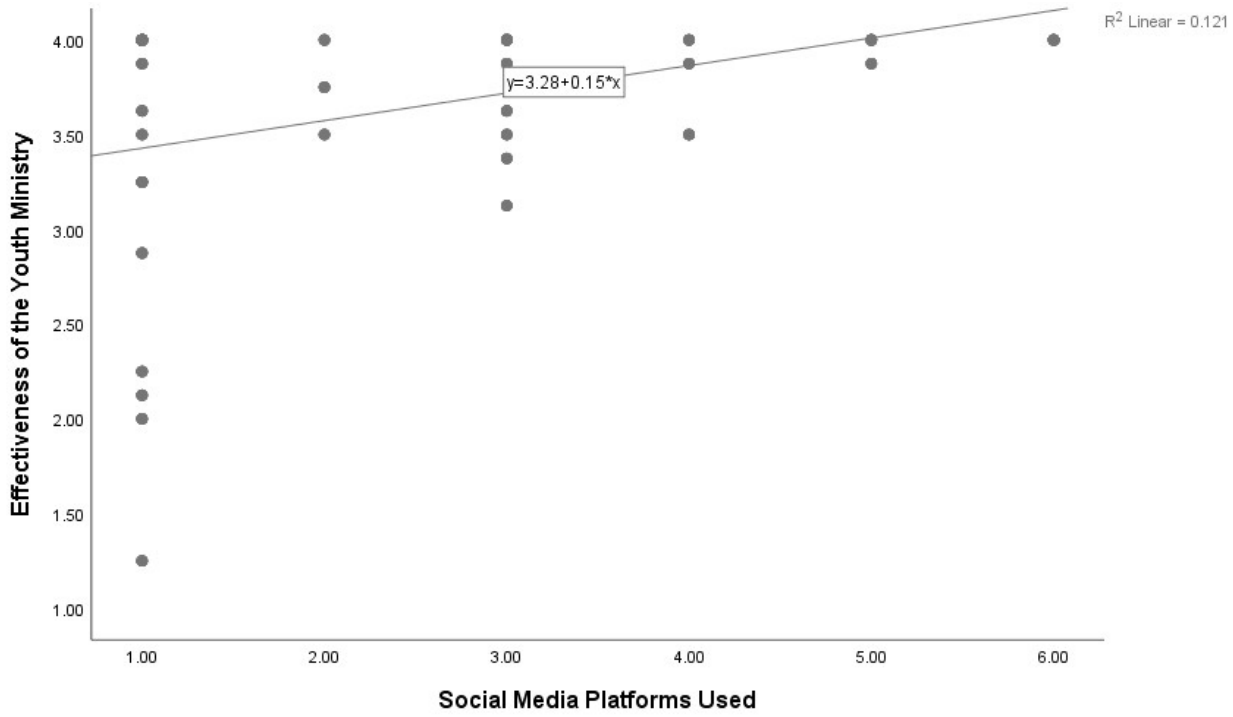


Figure 4.5: A scatter diagram showing the relationship between Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry and Social Media Platforms Used

The scatter plot showed an upward trend, indicating a positive relationship social media platform used (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) and youth ministry effectiveness. The findings implied that the churches that utilized multiple and relevant platforms had higher levels of youth engagement compared to those that relied on only one or few platforms.

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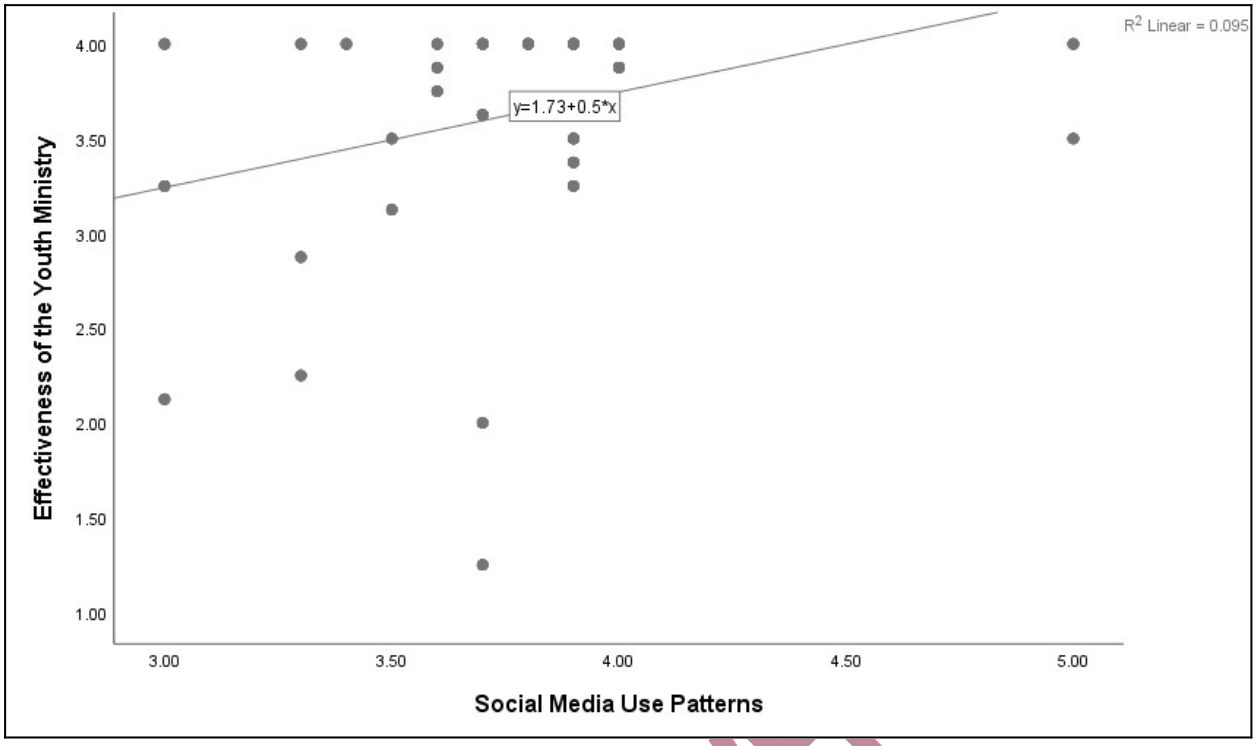


Figure 4.6: A scatter diagram showing the relationship between Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry and Social Media Use Patterns

The scatter plot indicated a positive relationship between social media use and youth ministry effectiveness. Churches that had posts with clear purposes, who posted more frequent, had varied formats, and high-quality content were more effective. Higher frequency and interactive content corresponded with higher ministry effectiveness, emphasizing that strategic and consistent use of social media enhances youth engagement.

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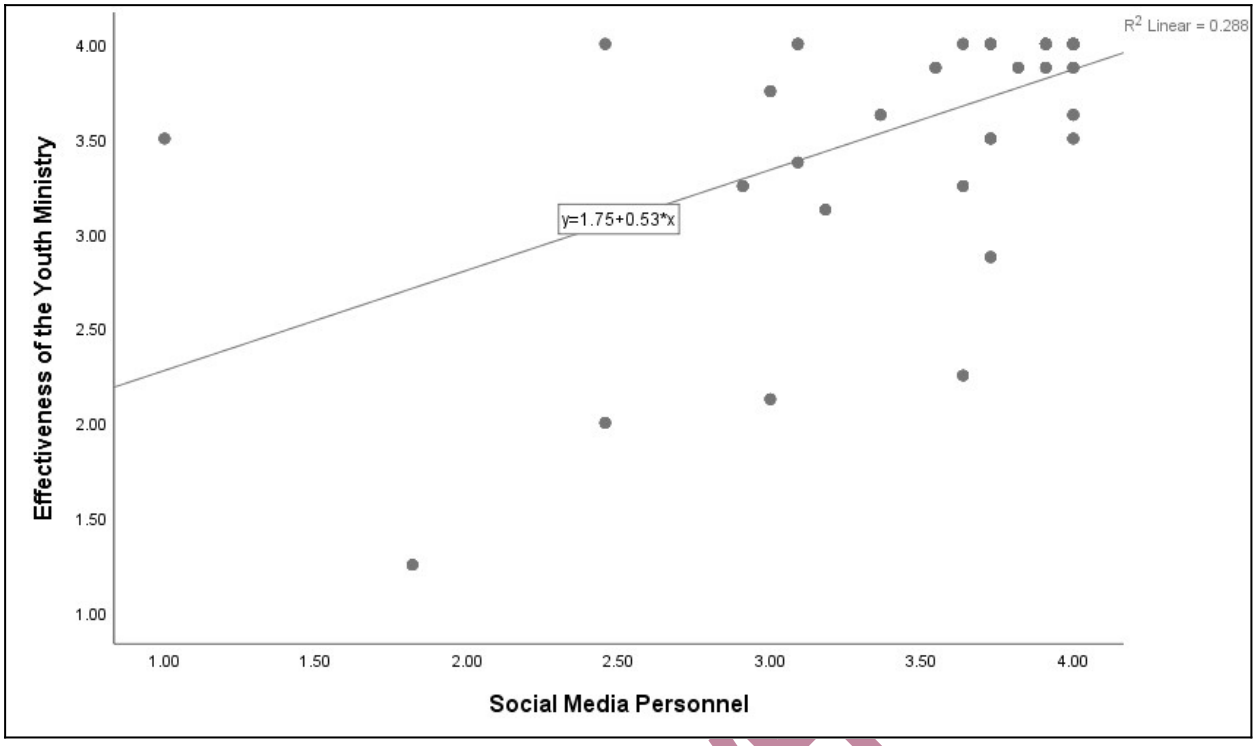


Figure 4.7: A scatter diagram showing the relationship between Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry and Social Media Personnel

The scatter plot indicated a positive relationship between social media personnel and the youth ministry's effectiveness. Ministries that had skilled, approachable, and biblically knowledgeable personnel managing social media had higher effectiveness scores, showing that human capacity is an important driver of digital ministry success.

4.9 Influence of Social Media Use (platforms, patterns and personnel) on the Effectiveness of Youth Ministry

To establish the influence of social media use on the effectiveness of the youth ministry, the study performed a linear regression analysis. The dependent variable was effectiveness of the youth ministry while the independent variables were social media platforms used, the social media patterns and the social media personnel. The results were presented in three tables; a model summary table, ANOVA table and the table of model coefficients. Each has been discussed below.

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Table 4. 12: Model Summary Table

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.688[a]	0.473	0.468	0.45668

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Personnel, Social Media Use Patterns, Social Media Platforms Used

The results in the Model Summary table helped to assess how well the independent variable explained the variation in the dependent variable. The results indicated that the three predictors collectively explained 47.3% of the variance in the effectiveness of the youth ministry (R^2 = .473), suggesting that nearly half of the changes in effectiveness can be attributed to social media use platforms, patterns and social media personnel.

Table 4. 13: ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	58.160	3	19.387	92.956	.000[b]
Residual	64.862	311	.209		
Total	123.022	314			

a. Dependent Variable: Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Personnel, Social Media Use Patterns, Social Media Platforms Used

The ANOVA results further confirmed the model's statistical significance, with the regression model yielding an F-statistic of 92.956 and a p-value of .000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the overall regression model provided a good fit for the data and that the predictors jointly had a statistically significant effect on the effectiveness of the youth ministry.

The model coefficient table was also produced, showing the significance of each predictor.

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Table 4. 14: Model Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-0.486	0.307		-1.581	0.115
Social Media Platforms Used	0.100	0.018	.239	5.690	0.000
Social Media Use Patterns	0.523	0.069	.319	7.599	0.000
Social Media Personnel	0.536	0.041	.543	13.028	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry

The model equation was as follows:

$Y = -0.486 + 0.100X_1 + 0.523X_2 + 0.536X_3$

Where:

X1 = Social Media Platforms

X2 = Social Media Use patterns

X3 = Social Media Personnel

From the model, the coefficients provided insight into the relative contributions of each predictor. Social media personnel emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .543$, $p < .001$), implying that the skills, competence, and availability of personnel managing church social media accounts have the most substantial influence on youth ministry effectiveness. This shows how important human resource capacity in driving impactful digital engagement. Social media use patterns also had a significant positive influence ($\beta = .319$, $p < .001$), suggesting that consistent, purposeful, and interactive use of social media enables stronger connections and enhances ministry outcomes. Similarly, the number and type of social media platforms used was positively significant ($\beta = .239$, $p < .001$), highlighting that broader platform diversity contributes to reaching and engaging a wider spectrum of youth.

The overall results demonstrate that effective youth ministry depends not only on the platforms chosen but also on the patterns of usage and, most importantly, the quality of

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personnel managing these platforms. These findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the pivotal role of social media in youth engagement, spiritual growth, and church participation (e.g., Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Kołodziejska, 2018).

4.10 Discussion of Findings

The study aimed at assessing the influence of social media platforms used, usage patterns, and personnel on the effectiveness of youth ministry at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. Based on the findings, all three dimensions significantly influenced the effectiveness of the youth ministry in terms of the number, level of participation, their behaviour and spiritual growth. These dimensions accounted for 47.3% of the effectiveness of the youth ministry.

In the first study objective regarding social media platforms, the study found that WhatsApp was the dominant tool, used by 36.4% of the respondents for communication, coordination, and fellowship. Other platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram collectively accounted for over half of platform usage (55.4%), highlighting the growing role of interactive media in sustaining engagement. These findings align with Bwalya (2021), who reported high WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram usage among urban Kenyan youth, and support the concept of "religious-social shaping of technology" (Campbell, 2010), whereby churches adapt digital platforms to meet spiritual and social needs. The inferential analysis, correlation and regression confirmed a moderate positive relationship ($r = .348$, $p < .001$) between social media platforms used and youth ministry effectiveness, suggesting that ministries using diverse platforms can reach larger audiences, facilitate multiple forms of participation, and maintain dynamic engagement. Literature also indicates that context matters: preferences observed in U.S. studies (Wiedemann, 2022; Rankins, 2023) differ from those of Kenyan youth, emphasizing the need for local adaptation and consideration of access challenges in less urban areas (Omollo et al., 2023).

Based on the second objective, the study revealed that social media use patterns strongly influence the effectiveness of the youth ministry. From the findings, event promotion was the most common purpose of using social media (26.3%), followed by Bible study and sharing uplifting messages (18.6% each), while relational bonding, prayer support, and addressing life issues were also valued. Youth respondents emphasized the need for greater focus on spiritually enriching, interactive, and relational content. From the literature, there is a need for purpose-driven, contextually relevant messaging (Hill, 2022; Root, 2021; Sparjman, 2021). The findings also emphasized on regular posting which was a key factor, with 74.3%

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of ministries maintaining weekly or daily engagement and 97.8% of respondents confirming the benefits of consistent posting. Content quality was generally strong, with posts being clear, aligned with church values, and visually appealing, though originality and interactivity were limited. These findings were consistent with past studies emphasizing that relevance, aesthetic appeal, linguistic richness, and authenticity enhance engagement (Xu et al., 2023; Kwon et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2022). Correlation and regression analyses further confirmed that use patterns were significant predictors of youth ministry effectiveness (r = .308, p < .001; β = .319, p < .001), reinforcing that purposeful and consistent engagement drives digital ministry outcomes.

Finally, the last objective looked at how social media personnel influence the effectiveness of the youth ministry. Respondents rated personnel highly for biblical knowledge, creativity, and relational skills, but organizational competencies like time management and facilitation were weaker. Correlation and regression analysis showed personnel competence had the strongest impact on ministry effectiveness (r = .536, p < .001; β = .543, p < .001), highlighting that technology alone cannot guarantee meaningful engagement. This aligns with literature emphasizing the importance of human agency, training, and strategic planning in digital ministry (Sparkman, 2021; Hunt, 2020; Markley, 2024; Pekkala & Zoonen, 2022). Skilled personnel act as digital pastors, curators, and facilitators, transforming social media platforms from communication tools into spaces for community, discipleship, and spiritual formation.

In summary, the study confirms that effective youth ministry in the digital era depends on the integration of appropriate platforms, purposeful use, and competent personnel. WhatsApp serves as the central communication tool, while TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram enhance interactive engagement. Strategic use patterns—aligned with youth needs and consistently delivered—maximize ministry impact.

4.11 Pastoral and Theological Reflection on the Findings

This study is situated within the discipline of practical theology and is interpreted through Osmer's four tasks, which provide a structured way of engaging the findings theologically. The empirical results—those social media platforms used, patterns of use, and the competence of personnel significantly influence the effectiveness of youth ministry—are not

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treated as merely technical outcomes, but as indicators of deeper ecclesial and pastoral dynamics shaping youth engagement in the digital age.

Descriptive–Empirical and Interpretive Tasks: What is Going On and Why?

At the descriptive–empirical level (*what is going on?*), the findings show that interactive platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram are central to youth participation and engagement. Interpreted through the interpretive task (*why is this going on?*), these findings reflect the realities of digitally shaped youth culture, where communication is relational, visual, and dialogical. From the perspective of digital ecclesiology, these platforms function as meaningful spaces of interaction rather than peripheral tools. As Heidi Campbell argues, technology is socially and religiously shaped; it both influences and is reshaped by faith communities. Theologically, this affirms that digital technologies are not neutral but must be intentionally stewarded for ministry, just as earlier Christian communities used letters, gatherings, and oral traditions to sustain fellowship (*koinonia*).

Normative Task: What Ought to Be Going On?

The strong influence of social media usage patterns—particularly purposeful, spiritually enriching, and consistent content—speaks to Osmer's **normative task** (*what ought to be going on?*). Theologically, this resonates with the church's calling to authentic communication, discipleship, and pastoral care. The two-way symmetrical model of communication aligns with biblical patterns of dialogical engagement, as exemplified by the apostle Paul's reasoning and interaction with diverse audiences (Acts 17:17). Normatively, youth ministry digital spaces should move beyond event promotion toward practices that foster scripture engagement, prayer, mutual encouragement, and theological reflection. Such practices reflect a faithful expression of church life in digital contexts.

Pragmatic Task: How Might We Respond?

The prominence of social media personnel as the most influential factor highlights Osmer's pragmatic task (*how might we respond?*). Theologically, this underscores the indispensable human element in ministry, grounded in the doctrine of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12) and the call to equip leaders for service (Ephesians 4:11–12). Competent and biblically grounded personnel function as digital shepherds who guide, moderate, and nurture faith within online

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communities. However, identified weaknesses in organization and facilitation point to the pastoral need for intentional training, mentoring, and theological formation of those entrusted with digital ministry.

Overall, the integration of technology (platforms), intentional practices (usage patterns), and human agency (personnel) reflects the socio-technical synergy articulated by Trist and Bamforth (1951). When interpreted through Osmer's framework and informed by digital ecclesiology, this synergy reinforces an incarnational understanding of ministry: the gospel is mediated through both embodied and digital presence. The findings, therefore, call the church to a theologically intentional digital ministry that aligns technological practices with the missional purposes of discipleship, fellowship, and service among young people.

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CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study, conclusions and recommendations. The study sought to assess the influence of social media use and the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, in Kenya. More specifically, the study sought to examine the influence of social media platforms used, usage patterns and social media personnel on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study conclusions were made based on the analysis, and each recommendation came from the findings and conclusions. This chapter finally suggested areas of further research while shedding light on the key areas which need more research to be conducted.

5.2 Summary of findings

While seeking to meet the research objectives, the study collected data and presented the findings in chapter four, in line with the objectives. The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-method research design, which helped in investigating the influence of social media on the effectiveness of the youth ministry. The study targeted all the 2925 youths and 35 youth leaders in the seven parishes of the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery. This population was used to derive the sample size of 352 respondents. A total of 315 responded, translating to a 89.5% response rate, which was sufficient for analysis. The data was collected using a questionnaire and an interview guide for key respondents. The collected data was entered and analyzed using SPSS version 27.0. The study adopted both descriptive and inferential analysis. Under descriptive analysis, mean, frequency, standard deviation and percentage were produced to summarize the collected information and the results were presented using figures and tables. Pearson's correlation and regression analysis were used under inferential analysis to examine the significance, strength and direction of the relationships between the effectiveness of the youth ministry, which was the dependent variable and the independent variables, which were social media use platforms, usage patterns and social media personnel. From the findings, social media platforms, usage patterns and personnel were found to influence the effectiveness of the youth ministry by 47.3%.

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The first objective examined the influence of social media platforms used on the effectiveness of youth ministry. The findings revealed that platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram were widely used within the youth ministry; however, their use was largely **functional rather than missional or pastoral**. Descriptive results showed that these platforms were predominantly utilized for announcements, event promotion, sharing devotional messages, and maintaining fellowship among existing members. While regression analysis indicated that the diversity of platforms significantly enhanced communication and participation, there was limited evidence that these platforms were intentionally used for evangelism, outreach to non-believers, or sustained pastoral engagement. This suggests that although social media platforms enhance internal connectivity and visibility of youth activities, their potential as tools for mission and pastoral care remains largely underutilized.

The second objective sought to establish the influence of social media usage patterns on the effectiveness of youth ministry. Descriptive findings indicated frequent engagement by youth, particularly during evenings and weekends, reflecting alignment with youth digital habits. However, the dominant usage patterns emphasized information dissemination rather than dialogical or pastoral interaction. While regression results confirmed that consistent and interactive use positively influenced ministry effectiveness by increasing participation in programs and discussions, the content rarely extended to intentional evangelistic conversations, pastoral follow-up, or deeper discipleship processes. This finding highlights a critical gap between *engagement* and *mission*, indicating that effectiveness was measured largely by participation rather than by transformative pastoral or missional outcomes.

The third objective examined the influence of social media personnel on the effectiveness of youth ministry. The findings showed that the presence of dedicated personnel significantly improved the organization, consistency, and attractiveness of digital content. Regression analysis confirmed that personnel competence had a strong and statistically significant influence on ministry effectiveness. Nevertheless, the study found that many personnel lacked training in digital pastoral care, online evangelism, and theological engagement in digital spaces. As a result, social media management focused primarily on coordination and communication rather than intentional pastoral accompaniment or mission-oriented engagement. This key finding underscores that while personnel capacity enhances technical effectiveness, the absence of a clear theological and pastoral orientation limits the use of social media as a space for evangelism, discipleship, and care. Overall, the study reveals that

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social media in youth ministry is largely underutilized for mission and pastoral work, pointing to the need for a more theologically intentional approach to digital ministry.

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

Based on the findings, the study concludes that social media has become an important component of contemporary youth ministry; however, its contribution to ministry effectiveness is shaped more by *how* it is used than by mere adoption. With regard to the first objective, the study concludes that the social media platforms used—particularly WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram—play a significant role in enhancing communication, coordination, and participation within the youth ministry. These platforms have enabled faster dissemination of information and strengthened internal connectivity among youth. Nonetheless, the study further concludes that platform use remains largely inward-looking, focusing on announcements, event promotion, and fellowship among existing members, with limited intentional use for mission, evangelism, or pastoral outreach.

In relation to the second objective, the study concludes that social media usage patterns significantly influence youth ministry effectiveness. Frequent, consistent, and interactive engagement was associated with higher participation and responsiveness among youth. However, the findings reveal that these usage patterns are predominantly informational rather than formational. While regular posting sustains visibility and engagement, it does not automatically translate into deeper discipleship, pastoral accompaniment, or evangelistic impact. The study, therefore, concludes that current usage patterns support participation but fall short of leveraging social media as a space for sustained spiritual formation and mission-oriented engagement.

Regarding the third objective, the study concludes that social media personnel are a critical determinant of youth ministry effectiveness. The presence of dedicated and competent personnel improves the organization, consistency, and appeal of digital communication. However, the study also concludes that most personnel have limited theological and pastoral orientation toward digital ministry. As a result, social media management is treated primarily as a technical or administrative function rather than as a form of pastoral and missional ministry. This limits the church's ability to use digital platforms as spaces for evangelism, pastoral care, and discipleship.

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Overall, the study concludes that while social media enhances communication and participation in youth ministry, it is largely underutilized as a tool for mission, evangelism, and pastoral care. For social media to meaningfully contribute to youth ministry effectiveness, it must be intentionally integrated into the church's theological vision of discipleship, fellowship, and mission. Without such integration, digital engagement risks remaining functional rather than transformative in shaping young people's faith and spiritual growth.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

The study made recommendations based on the findings of the study for each objective as follows:

Based on the first objective, the study recommended that the PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery should strategically adopt and strengthen the use of platforms most preferred by the youth, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. At the same time, the church should explore emerging platforms that resonate with younger generations to remain relevant and accessible. Investing in interactive features like live streams, polls, and Q&A sessions could further boost engagement and inclusivity.

Based on the second objective, it is recommended that the church develop clear guidelines and schedules for posting and engaging with youths on social media. Consistency in posting spiritually enriching content, timely updates on church activities, and regular interaction with members will ensure that the ministry maintains relevance and effectiveness. The church should also encourage youths to share content, thereby creating a participatory culture rather than a one-way communication flow.

Lastly, the study recommends that the presbytery should invest in training and equipping social media personnel with skills in digital communication, content creation, and online ministry management. Designating a dedicated and active media team will ensure professionalism, creativity, and consistency in content delivery. Furthermore, mentorship programs can be introduced to nurture talented youth to become future church media leaders, thereby ensuring sustainability.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

The study recommends that further research be conducted to:

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1. Conduct comparative studies across different church denominations to identify best practices and context-specific strategies.
2. Investigate additional factors contributing to the unexplained 52.7% of variance in ministry effectiveness. They may include youth motivation, peer and parental influence, offline ministry integration, and content creativity.
3. Examine the long-term effects of consistent social media use on youth faith development, moral formation, and church retention.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

Title of the Study: Influence of Social Media Use on the Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Principal Investigator: David Mburu

Introduction:

You are being invited to participate in a research study on the influence of social media use on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and this form is intended to provide you with information about the study to help you make an informed decision about participating. This study has received the relevant clearance from the Institutional Scientific & Ethics Review Committee (ISERC) and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations (NACOSTI).

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of social media use on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study aims to understand the social media platforms being utilized within the youth ministry, purpose of social media use, characteristic of social media posts, and personnel operating the social media platforms, and how these elements may be affecting the effectiveness of the youth ministry in reaching and engaging with youth members.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire or participate in an interview. Your responses will be kept confidential and will only be accessed by the researcher. Your name will not be linked to any of the data collected, and all information will be stored securely.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study. The benefits of participating include contributing to the research on social media use in youth ministry and

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potentially helping to improve the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nairobi Central Presbytery, Kenya.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a participant, please contact the researcher at 0720926741.

Consent:

I have read and understand the information provided in this form, and I voluntarily agree to participate in the study on the influence of social media use on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix 2: Questionnaire for the Youth

Instructions

This questionnaire consists of several sections, each focusing on different aspects of social media use and the youth ministry. Please read each question carefully and provide your responses based on your experiences and opinions. Your honest and thoughtful responses ill help us gain valuable insights into the topic of study.

Section A: Background Information

1. Kindly indicate your gender

Male [ ] Female [ ]

2. Kindly indicate your age

20 years or below [ ] 21- 25 years [ ] 26- 30 years [ ] 31-35 years [ ]

3. Kindly indicate your highest level of education?

No formal education [ ] Primary education or below [ ] Secondary education [ ]

Tertiary education [ ] Other (please specify)_____

4. For how many years have you been a member of the PCEA Church Nairobi Central Presbytery? _____

Section B: Social Media Platforms Used

5. As the members of youth ministry in your church, which social media platforms do you currently use for communication and interaction? (tick all that apply)

Facebook [ ] Instagram [ ] Twitter [ ] Snapchat [ ]

LinkedIn [ ] YouTube [ ] TikTok [ ] WhatsApp [ ]

Other (Please specify): _____

6 (a). In your opinion, are the social media platforms used for communication and interaction in the youth ministry of your church are the most appropriate?

No [ ] Yes [ ]

6 (b). If your answer to question 6 (a) above is "No", which social media platforms would you recommend for use in your church youth ministry?

Facebook [ ] Instagram [ ] Twitter [ ] Snapchat [ ]

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LinkedIn [ ] YouTube [ ] TikTok [ ] WhatsApp [ ]

Other (Please specify): _____

Section C: Social Media Use Patterns

7. What are the primary goals for using social media within your church youth ministry? (Tick all that apply).

Sharing/ promoting upcoming events [ ]

Bible study [ ]

Discussing life issues like substance abuse [ ]

Reaching out to non-believers [ ]

Connect youth members and build relationships [ ]

Sharing resources like sermons [ ]

Prayer requests and supports [ ]

Share uplifting messages [ ]

Other (Please specify) _____

8. (a) In your opinion, do you believe your church youth ministry is using the full potential that social media offer?

No [ ] Yes [ ]

8 (b) If your answer to 8 (a) above is "No", how else should social media be used by the youth ministry?

Sharing/ promoting upcoming events [ ]

Bible study [ ]

Discussing life issues like substance abuse [ ]

Reaching out to non-believers [ ]

Connect youth members and build relationships [ ]

Sharing resources like sermons [ ]

Prayer requests and support [ ]

Share uplifting messages [ ]

Other (Please specify) _____

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9. How often do the person(s) in charge of your youth ministry social media platforms post content on the platforms?

Daily basis [ ] At least once a week [ ] At least once in two weeks [ ]

Monthly [ ] Once in 3 months [ ] Once in 6 months [ ]

Other (please specify): _____

10. In your opinion, do you believe posting frequently is a good thing?

No [ ] Yes [ ]

11. Kindly indicate your agreement with each of the following statements regarding the quality of the social media posts made in your youth ministry social media platforms. Indicate your agreement by ticking under the appropriate column.

Statement	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**
The posts' made on the social media platforms are consistent with Christian values and belief			
Posts are in line with the values and beliefs of the church			
The posts have high levels of originality			
Posts provide valuable information on issues relevant to the youth			
Posts are visually appealing			
Posts incorporate both images and texts			
Posts are well written making it easy to understand			
Posts incorporate quizzes and challenges to encourage members to engage.			
Posts have clear messages that are easy to understand			
Posts are tailored to address issues facing the youth in our church			

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Section D: Social Media Personnel

12. Kindly indicate your agreement with each of the following statements regarding the skills and attributes of the people in charge of the social media platforms of the youth ministry in your church. Indicate your agreement by ticking under the appropriate column.

The people managing the youth ministry social media platforms in our church are:	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**
Very creative			
Friendly to all members			
Knowledgeable on Biblical issues			
Knowledgeable on life issues			
Easy to relate with			
Good communicators			
Good in managing time			
Willing to listen to others			
Good in answering questions			
Good in facilitating discussion			
Good in managing people			

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Section F: Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry

13. Kindly indicate your agreement with each of the following statements regarding the effectiveness of the youth ministry in your church. Indicate your agreement by ticking under the appropriate column.

The youth ministry has been effective in:	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**
Bringing more young people to the church			

Winning more souls to God			
Enhancing youth's participation in church activities			
Helping the youth to learn more about God			
Helping the youth to solve life challenges			
Moulding the character of youth			
Developing strong commitment towards the Christian faith among the youth			
Making the youth more resilient			

Thank you for participating.

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Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Youth Leader

1. Gender of the interviewee

2. Age of the interviewee

3. Highest education level

4. For how many years have you been a member of the PCEA Church in Nairobi Central Presbytery?

5. As the youth ministry, which social media platforms do you currently use for communication and interaction?

6. What are the primary goals for using social media within your church youth ministry?

7. In your view, how else can social media platforms be applied in the church youth ministry?

8. How often do you post on the church youth ministry's social media platforms?

9. Kindly describe the type of posts that you commonly made on the youth ministry social media platforms.

10. Who are the people in charge of the youth ministry social media platforms?

11. Kindly describe the skills and strength of the personnel managing your social media platforms?

12. Kindly describe the weakness of the personnel managing your social media platforms?

13. In what ways has the social of social media affected the effectiveness of the youth ministry in your church?

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Appendix 4: ISERC Approval Letter

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Private Bag 00217 Limuru,
Kenya
Email: office@spu.ac.ke
Website: www.spu.ac.ke

Tel Office: +254 (0) 20-2020505/10
Mobile: +254 (0) 728-669000
(0) 736-424440

REF: SPU/242/2024 **Date: 16th September 2024**

TO: David Mburu
St. Paul's University

Dear David,

==========

REF: Influence of Social Media Use on the Effectiveness of the Youth Ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya

==========

Greetings,

This is to inform you that SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee has reviewed the above-named research proposal. **Your ERB approval number is 251, for the period between 16th September 2024 – 16th September 2025 (1 year).**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments) will be used.
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within 72 hours of notification
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect

the integrity of the research must be reported to *SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee* within 72 hours

v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.

vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.

vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.

viii. Please note that it is within the ISERC's mandate to monitor your research and to do random visits to the site. All research is subject to post approval monitoring.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) ***https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke*** **and also obtain other clearances needed.**

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Daniel Nzengya, PhD
Chairperson
SPU- Institutional Scientific & Ethics Review Committee

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY
(ISERC)
APPROVAL WITH
CONTIGENCIES
RESEARCH
DIRECTORATE
INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Appendix 5: NACOSTI Introduction Letter

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Private Bag 00217 LIMURU, KENYA
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BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

28th November, 2024

National Commission for Science and Technology,
P.O. BOX 30623-00100,
Nairobi.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RECOMMENDATION FOR DAVID NGIGI MBURU – MTHNRB427526 TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter confirms the above-named person is a student in the Degree of Master in Theology Studies (MTH) Program at St. Paul's University.

The second year consists of a major research work leading to a Thesis. The student's selected topic is:

"Influence of social media on the effectiveness of the youth ministry at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Nairobi Central Presbytery, Nairobi County, Kenya."

Kindly grant this student the required permit.

Yours Faithfully,

DIRECTOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY 28 NOV 2024 P.O. BOX 020/2020505/2020510 PRIVATE BAG - 00217 LIMURU

Dr. John Muhoho
Director Board of Postgraduate Studies

Appendix 6: NACOSTI Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **749090**

Date of Issue: **11/March/2025**

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