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The Effect of Internet Usage on Moral Maturity Among Youth in Christian Congregations in Kakamega North Sub County.

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ABSTRACT

Social media has reshaped the lives of many young people globally. A major issue among young people today is moral dilemmas associated with social media usage. The purpose of the study was to investigate the Effect of Internet Usage on Moral Maturity Among Youth in Christian Congregations in Kakamega North Sub County. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative (correlational design) and qualitative (phenomenological design) methods. The target population was 5440 people from the three Christian congregations (included youth, youth leaders, pastors, and selected Christians). Using the Yamane formula, the required sample size was calculated as 373 participants. Participants were selected through purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Primary data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions, and analyzed using SPSS for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Key findings revealed that excessive social media use correlated positively with sexual immorality ($r = 0.176$) and negatively with responsibility ($r = -0.191$) and time management ($r = -0.11$). All null hypotheses were rejected and alternative ones adopted. The study showed that amount of time spent on social media was a significant aspect of the poor social skills. The researcher concluded that internet usage has a significant impact on the moral maturity among Christian youth in Kakamega North Sub-County. While a majority of respondents demonstrated responsible online behavior, such as avoiding inappropriate content and aligning their internet use with their moral values, the findings also highlighted the need for continued guidance to reinforce positive habits and address potential challenges. The internet, while a valuable tool for positive connection and spiritual growth, can also pose moral risks if not used mindfully. Therefore, fostering awareness and setting boundaries for internet usage are essential to supporting the moral development of youth. Based on the findings regarding the effect of internet usage on moral maturity among Christian youth, it is recommended that congegations and community organizations develop targeted programs to educate youth about responsible internet use. These programs should focus on fostering critical thinking skills to help young people discern between content that aligns with their Christian values and that which compromises them. Regular workshops, seminars, and discussions could be organized to address specific challenges such as exposure to inappropriate content, online gossip, and distractions from spiritual practices. Additionally, congregation can promote the use of internet platforms for positive purposes, such as connecting with faith-based communities, accessing religious teachings, and engaging in uplifting activities. Encouraging youth to set personal boundaries for internet usage, such as limiting time spent online or avoiding its use during religious services, can further reinforce their moral development.

Key Words: Internet Usage, Moral Maturity, Youth & Christian Congregations

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, social media has become an integral part of daily life, offering unprecedented opportunities for communication, learning, and social interaction (Kietzmann&Ang, 2020).

However, its influence extends beyond connectivity, reshaping cultural values, traditions, and individual behaviors (Al-Rahmi et al., 2019). While social media can enhance personal growth when used positively, excessive or inappropriate use has been linked to negative outcomes such as reduced face-to-face interactions, low self-esteem, and increased depressive symptoms among youth (Twenge & Campbell, 2019).

II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Internet usage and youth becoming actions

A study by Heinonen, Bartel and Kaushal (2022) sought to examine the effect of social media on social behaviour among the youth in California, USA. The study was literature based. The findings were based on prior studies' results which showed that social media influenced social behaviour of youth. Social media platforms enabled individuals to have conversation, share information and develop internet content. The research concluded that online social networking had become the routine for every individual. Youth are connected with social media daily. The study recommended that people to be educated on exactly how to handle their privacy settings and warned them concerning what details they were to include in social media posts. The community or people are advised to take on the good aspects of social media and disregarded the negative effects. The earlier study was carried out in a developed nation, USA, while this study was carried out in Kenya, a least developed country. In addition, the earlier study also dwelt on positive aspects of social media and it was literature-based, a knowledge gap, which this study addressed in order to explore the negative effects of social media among the Christian youth in Kakamega North Sub County, Kenya.

Research carried out by Hamal (2020) on impact of internet on social and religious life of youths in Nepal. The study used qualitative method. The study targeted the youth between 20-35 years of age. The study used questionnaire to collect data. Twenty Nepalese were used to collect information that was needed in the study. The study found out that most of Nepalese got attracted to the internet mainly for communication, entertainment and education. The research also found out that internet browsing could harm the user's spiritual life. The study recommended further study to be done since it had short comings. The study had a limited age group between 20-35 years only. The study did not specify any religion. The findings of the study may not be appropriate for the next generation since technology does not remain static. In so far as the methodology is concerned, the study was fundamentally qualitative, while the current study employed a mixed methods approach for the acquisition of more knowledge that was not included in the earlier study. Further, this study used varied methods to collect data, that is, interviews, questionnaire and focus group discussions. The earlier study was also carried out in Asian country while the current study was conducted in Kenya among youth in Christian congregations. The current study found Hamal's study relevant in that both have an interest in the influence of media on the youth. Therefore, the study adopted it to fill the gaps of knowledge mentioned earlier.

A study by Abbas, Mamdani, Mahmood and Imran (2018) examined impacts of internet usage on youth behaviour: A case study of university students in Karachi, India. The study was

conducted in three universities of Karachi. A sample size of 180 students aged 18-25 years was selected to investigate the objective of the study. Well-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Stratified sampling technique was adopted for data collection consisting of 60 respondents from each stratum. Data was analysed through Statistical Package for Social Science. The study revealed that majority of students spent one to three hours on internet. The study recommended that students were to use internet for reasonable time to avoid excessive usage of internet. The study did not involve all youth at all levels while the current study catered specifically for Christian youth to participate in the study. The study also used stratified sampling technique while the current study used simple random and purposive sampling to collect data. Finally, the earlier study did not specify the paradigm used which this study addressed; it used a mixed methods paradigm. This study did not adopt it since it lacks sufficient information to beef it up.

Laninhun and Amadi (2019) examined the influence of social networking sites on the moral values of selected undergraduate students of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The study explored the moral values preferred by students and specific ways that social media networking sites usage influenced the moral conduct of the students. The study used mixed methods of research to gather qualitative and quantitative data. The stratified and purposive sampling techniques were to select 220 undergraduates from eleven purposively selected faculties in the university. Four focus group discussions comprised 26 of purposively selected participants. The study revealed that love was their most applied moral value. It also showed that social networking sites had more negatives than positive influence on moral values. The study stressed on the need for social media regulation as well as social media literacy in Nigeria. The study also used stratified sampling technique while the current study used random sampling to cater for all participants equally. Whereas the earlier study focused on internet among students, the current study had a broader scope by including different categories of youths in order to understand media in a deeper way. The current study adopted it as it gave more insight to the research.

Yebowaah (2018) studied on Internet use and its effects on senior High School Students in Wa Municipality of Ghana. Primary data were obtained from a random selection of 314 students who were in their third year. The data were collected using a questionnaire and then analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square and ANOVA. The study found out that students' access to internet was found to have a positive influence on their academic performance. The study recommended that heads of senior high school were to liaise with policy makers and management of Ghana Education service to provide internet infrastructure in schools in order to promote academic performance. The youth accessing the internet exposed them to all kinds of activities and as a result many were encouraged to engage in immoral behaviour (Ambuchi, 2014). The study used one method to collect data. It also dwelt on one aspect of internet use which was academic performance among the senior students. However, the current study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to triangulate the findings. The triangulated findings assisted in ensuring corroboration of the study findings. It specifically dealt with the youth in Christian congregations and explored the influence of internet browsing on moral development among the youth in Kenya. The current study did not adopt it for further research since it had limited knowledge to enrich the study.

A study carried out by Kipapy (2019) on influence of internet use on university students' moral development in Iringa Region, Tanzania. The study focused on use of internet, influenced interpersonal behaviour, internet influence social contact and internet influence on universal ethical standards among university students. The study used convergent parallel mixed method design which is both qualitative and quantitative. The research used moral development theory by Lawrence Kohlberg (1958). The instruments used to collect data were questionnaire guides, interview and observation guide. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and interpreted by statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) version 21. Qualitative design was organized into themes using narratives and direct quotation of respondents. The study found out that positive use of internet by students raised up interpersonal behaviour and social contact by searching educational materials, entertainment, research information and games. However, the study further noted that the behaviour against universal ethical were seen among the students like disclosing others' privacy without permission, dealing with cyber bullying, watching pornographies and cheating behaviour. The study recommended that to enhance positive use of internet, the students needed to be educated to rescue their moral development. The study used moral development theory while the study in question used the uses and gratification theory. The earlier study is relevant to the current study because it uplifted the study and added more knowledge. The study infused the ideas from the previous research to the current study.

A study by Githinji (2019) explored the influence of social network sites to secondary school students' discipline in Naivasha Sub County, Kenya. The study used a convergent parallel design to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Probability and probability sampling techniques were used to determine the sample size of participants. Sample size was the deputy head teachers, guidance and counselling teachers and form 3 and 4 students. Data were collected through questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis guide. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were summarized in themes and presented in narrative form as well as raw data excerpts. The findings revealed that students used various social networks for the purposes of seeking information, making friends and dating. The students received negative influences of cyber bullying and sexual advances through dating that negatively impacted on their discipline. This led to disrespect for the authority and parents. The study recommended that the school management was to liaise with the teachers to educate the students on the dangers of various social network sites through guidance and counseling talks. The study used the appropriate sampling techniques to explore the information. Nevertheless, the study dealt with secondary students in schools. The current study focused on the youth in Christian congregations in Kakamega North Sub County, thus, portraying a difference in scope. It dug deeply into behavior patterns experienced by the youth when browsing internet. The current study adopted it in order to explore more knowledge that was handled by the previous research and it was left out.

III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Description of the Research Design

This study employed mixed methods approach which included; quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The design was employed because as Creswell and Creswell (2018) argued, the paradigm provides a stronger understanding of the problem. With mixed methods approach, the researcher used convergent parallel mixed research design as it enhances the credibility of the findings while enhancing corroboration of findings (McMillan, 2008). It also offers a logical ground, methodological flexibility and an in depth understanding of smaller cases (Maxwell, 2016). The researcher merged both qualitative and quantitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of research problem. The researcher collected the data at the same time and then integrated the information in the interpretation of the overall results (Creswell, 2013).

For the quantitative approach, the researcher used correlation research design. Correlation design is a type of research design used to examine two or more variables (Wallen&Fraenkel, 2013). By assessing the degree of relationship between two or more variables, the researcher performed this design without manipulating or controlling any of the variables. It was used to compare the Christian youth who do use social media and their moral development, and Christian youth who do not use social media and their moral development. This design showed to what extent is the relationship between the quantifiable variables. Quantitative approach helped the researcher to collect data from a large number of participants. It was used so as to establish the influence of internet usage, mobile phone usage and television viewing on moral development among the youth in Christian churches in Kakamega North Sub County.

This study also used phenomenological research design for the qualitative paradigm, as it is useful in studying variables in-depth (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this study, it was used to explore the in depth of youth's experience with social media while the researcher had to bracket whatever a priori assumption one had about social media experience and the youth. In qualitative paradigm, for the researcher to achieve the emic perspective, the researcher got involved and immersed in the study. The researcher's participation in the study added to the uniqueness of data collection and analysis (Strcubert and Carpenter, 1999). Hence, the qualitative approach provided a deeper understanding of the issue that was being investigated and honouring the voices of the participants in the study.

A mixed methods approach offers the best chance of answering research questions by combining two sets of strengths while compensating at the same time for the weaknesses of each method (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It would assist the study to get credible findings. Hence, quantitative and qualitative paradigms were used because they assist in ensuring that data collected is quantitatively analyzed and descriptively interpreted.

Finally, in this study, the dominant paradigm was quantitative approach with a correlation research design that focused on establishing relationships between the two variables. The less dominant paradigm was qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design that gave

a deeper understanding of experiences and perceptions of the youth in comparison to social media usage.

3.2 Study Site

The study took place in Kakamega North Sub County which is an administrative area within Kakamega County with a total population of 238,330 and from that, the ages ranging 10-39 years is 128,207 are youth (Kenya National Statistics Bureau, 2019). The sub-County entails the following wards of administration: West Kabras, Chemuche East Kabras, Butali/ Chegulo, Manda/Shivanga, Shirugu/Mugai and South Kabras. It covers the area in square kilometers of 423.3. This area of research is a flat land. The economy of the area depends mainly on farming (Omwoyo, 2013). The sub county grows crops like maize, beans, finger millet, sweet potatoes and assorted vegetables. A cash crop grown is sugar cane. There are two sugar factories that is, West Kenya and Butali. Livestock being reared are: sheep, goats, pigs, poultry and donkeys. The Sub County has more Protestants than Catholics. The site was chosen due to lack of feasibility study on social media among youth and especially in christian congregations.

3.3 Target population

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) explain that target population consists of all members of a real or hypothetical set of people to which researcher wishes to generalize the results of the study. The study was conducted in 3 Christian churches and the target population of 5440 church stakeholders was drawn from the churches in the sub county. The population was as follows: Catholic- 295 youth, 10 youth leaders, 4 pastors and 1200 selected Christians; Salvation Army- 365 youth, 24 youth leaders, 4 pastors and 1500 selected Christians; Friends' church- 350 youth, 24 youth leaders, 10 pastors and 1650 selected Christians (church registry, 2023). This gave an opportunity of an effective representation.

Table 1

Target Population Matrix

Category	Catholic church	Salvation Army	Friends' Church	Total
Youths	280	370	360	1,010
Youth Leaders	8	20	30	58
Pastors	2	6	14	22
Selected Christians	1,100	1,450	1,800	4,350
Total	1,390	1,846	2,204	5,440

Source: Church registry (2023)

In the above table, the youth were considered because the study targeted them. The youth leaders were instrumental because they directly dealt with the youth, while pastors were the overall supervisors of the youth in their various congregations. The selected Christians are always in direct contact with the youth in church and even at home.

3.4 Description of Sample and Sampling Procedures

The sampling procedures for the study were designed to gather detailed and representative information from a smaller segment of the target population, as it was impractical to include everyone. The researcher sought assistance from pastors and youth leaders to identify potential participants for questions, focus group discussions, and interviews. The study focused on three churches: The Catholic Church, Friends' Church, and the Salvation Army Church, each selected for their potential to provide valuable insights into the research problem.

For the Catholic Church, purposive sampling was used to ensure maximum variation among participants, capturing diverse opinions and experiences based on factors like age, educational level, and involvement in church activities. Simple random sampling was also employed to randomly select youth and youth leaders, while pastors and selected Christians were purposively sampled. Similarly, in the Friends' Church, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to identify influential members and youth leaders, ensuring the inclusion of knowledgeable and experienced individuals. Youth and youth leaders were randomly sampled, while pastors and selected Christians were purposively chosen.

In the Salvation Army Church, purposive and simple random sampling were combined to identify youth with varying degrees of social media usage, considering factors like frequency and intensity. This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of social media's impact on moral development. Youth and youth leaders were randomly sampled, while pastors and selected Christians were purposively selected. Additionally, 6 pastors (2 from each church) were purposively sampled for interviews based on their ability to provide detailed information relevant to the research questions.

For focus group discussions, purposive sampling was used to select 48 participants (16 from each church) who could offer in-depth insights into the impact of social media on youth. An initial discussion session was held to ensure participants had the necessary knowledge to contribute meaningfully. Simple random sampling was also used to select 303 youth from the three churches, ensuring equal representation by grouping participants and selecting one group randomly. Similarly, 2 youth leaders and 1 pastor from each church were randomly selected using a lottery method. The sample size was determined using 30% of the total population, following Mugenda and Mugenda's (2003) recommendation that this percentage is sufficient for a representative sample.

3.4.1 Sampling Matrix for all Participants

To calculate the total sample size for a population of 5,440 using the Yamane formula, we apply the formula as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where:

n = Required sample size

N = Total population size (5,440 in this case)

e = Margin of error (set at 0.05 for a 95% confidence level)

Calculation:

$$n = 5440 / (1 + 5440(0.05)^2)$$

Step 1: Calculate $(0.05)^2$:

$$(0.05)^2 = 0.0025$$

Step 2: Multiply N by $(0.05)^2$:

$$5440 \times 0.0025 = 13.6$$

Step 3: Add 1 to the result from Step 2:

$$1 + 13.6 = 14.6$$

Step 4: Divide N by the result from Step 3:

$$n = 5440 / 14.6 \approx 372.6$$

Step 5: Round up to the nearest whole number:

$$n = 373$$

Table 2

Summary of Sampling Matrix for All Participants

Participants	Target Population	Sampling Technique	Actual sample	Percentage
Youths	1010	Simple Random	303	30
Youth leaders	58	Simple Random	18	31.03
Pastors	22	Purposive	6	26.09
Selected Christians	4350	Purposive	46	1.1
Total	5440		373	8.73

Source: Researcher (2023)

Table 2 provides information on the participants in the study, including the target population, sampling techniques employed, the actual sample size, and the percentage of the total population represented by each subgroup. It also helps to understand the distribution of

participants across different subgroups within the study. It indicates the proportion of each subgroup in relation to their respective target populations, providing insights into the representativeness of the sample in the context of the broader population under investigation.

3.5 Description of Research Instruments

This study used both qualitative and quantitative research instruments. It considered questionnaires, interview guide and focus group discussions guide.

3.5.1 Questionnaire for youth

The study used questionnaire to gather data from the youth. The researcher used questionnaires since the youth were literate and information required could only be described in writing. It offered considerable advantage in administration and gave the respondents the freedom to express their views. The questionnaires had four sections to investigate different variables of the study. The researcher found the Questionnaire appropriate since it would reach a widely spread sample easily as per McMillan's (2008) advice.

Section A had questions on demographic information while section B had questions of close-ended and likert type on the two subsections. The section dealt with the effects of internet usage on moral maturity among Christian youth.

Section C had close and open- ended questions to give the respondents the freedom to respond to issues as they wished. It queried on the impact of mobile phone usage on moral maturity among Christian youth. Section D used both questions; likert type and open-ended. In this section, it inquired on the influence of television viewing on moral maturity among Christian youth. The items in the questionnaire were constructed in relation to research questions.

3.5.1.2 Questionnaire for youth leaders.

The researcher used the questionnaire to obtain data from the youth leaders. It was easy to get information from them, since they were literate. Khan (2008) defines questionnaire as a method of getting data about respondents by asking them rather by observing and sampling their behavior. It secures statistical results that can be tabulated and treated statistically. The administration of the questionnaire to youth leaders was done the same as for the youth above.

The questionnaire had four sections: section A had demographic information while section B used both close and open-ended questions. This was on the effects of internet usage on moral maturity of Christian youth. Section C had close and open-ended questions. It entailed the impact of mobile usage on moral maturity of Christian youth. Finally, section D had both likert type and open-ended questions. It dealt with the influence of TV viewing on moral maturity among Christian youth. This was arranged according to research questions.

3.5.2 Interview Guide for pastors

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2009), an interview schedule is a set of questions that the interviewer asks when asking structured questions. They usually have categories with responses and the interviewer simply checks responses of the respondent.

In this study, the interview guide was used to obtain information from pastors. The study used interviews to ascertain information that could not be observed. This enabled the researcher to

obtain historical information (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The use of this instrument enabled the researcher to gather in-depth data. In addition, it is also flexible (Seale, 2011) and it enabled the researcher to seek for clarification from the participants where need arose.

The instrument had the following sections: section A had demographic information and section B had both likert type and open-ended questions. This entailed the effects of internet usage on moral maturity among Christian youth. Section C had both close and open-ended questions. It tackled the impact of mobile phone usage on moral maturity among Christian youth. Section D had both likert type and open-ended questions. This section handled the influence of TV viewing on moral maturity. Section E had open-ended questions on the strategies that the church can use to address the challenges of social media usage among Christian youth.

3.5.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGD) for selected Christians

The researcher developed a focused group discussion guide (FGD) that was used to collect data from 6 groups of participants with each group having 6-8 members (Cameron, 2005). The researcher obtained the required sample of participants in the groups were 48: 16 from Catholic, 16 from Friends' and 16 from Salvation Army Churches. Then the researcher administered the focus group discussion guide to the participants before the discussion.

The FGD enabled the researcher to interact with the participants as they expressed themselves freely about the lived experiences with the phenomenon of media and the youth. It had open-ended questions. The FGD was organised into 2 sections and divided into 4 parts. Section 1 entailed of demographic information. Section 2 was made up of 4 parts: part A had open ended questions on the first research question that entailed the effects of internet usage on moral maturity among Christian youth. Part B also had open ended questions on the second research question, that was, the impacts of mobile phone usage on moral maturity among Christian youth while part C consisted of open-ended questions on the third research question. It dealt with the influence of TV viewing on moral maturity among Christian youth. Finally, part D had general question on the strategies the church can use to address challenges of social media among the youth.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

According to Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008), key indicators of research findings are the validity and reliability of the research instruments.

3.6.1 Validity

Validity is aimed at establishing whether the items in the instruments measure what they are supposed to (Anatasi and Urbina, 1997). Wilson (1992) explains that a pilot study helps to identify those items that could be misunderstood to be modified in order to increase face validity. It is also the ability of a measuring tool to produce results that are stable and consistent. Face validity of instruments was ensured by requesting experts to conduct a superficial examination of instruments (Ogula, 2010) and their feedback was used to improve the general appearance of the tools. In this study, the researcher used experts to examine the instruments and their findings helped the researcher to improve on the overall appearance of the tools. Validity also establishes the soundness of methodology, sampling process, data analysis and conclusion of the study

(Golafshani, 2003). The sample included youth, youth leaders, Pastors and selected Christians. The inclusion of greater diversity of sample respondents helped the research to reduce its biasness towards only one type of outcome, creating a base of valid results.

Before the actual study, the instruments were discussed with supervisors. Validity was achieved by pre-testing the instruments to be used to identify and change any ambiguous, awkward or offensive questions and technique as emphasized by Cooper and Schinder 2003 as cited in (Mvumbi and Ngumbi, (2015).

3.6.2 Pilot Testing

Piloting test is preliminary survey (2004). To establish validity, a pilot study was carried out on three Christian churches, fifteen youth and three youth leaders. These did not take part in the study. With the help of experts, they ascertained the relevance of research questions, appropriateness of the target population, language used and instructions given. Their feedback led to change in some few wordings thus eliminating ambiguity. For the sample size, McMillan and Schumacher (2006) suggest at least ten participants and Radhaskrishna (2007) proposes twenty. This study had 18 participants drawn from the three churches. 6 participants from each church took part namely; 5 youth and 1 youth leader.

3.6.3 Reliability of Research Instrument

Orodho (2009) stated that reliability of instruments is consistency in producing a reliable result. Zohrabi (2013) argues that triangulation is one of the techniques of ensuring reliability in mixed research designs. This study therefore used questionnaires, interview guide and focus group discussion guide to achieve methodological triangulation. Data were also collected from youth, youth leaders, Pastors and selected Christians in order to realize source triangulation. In other words, different types of information from varied sources enhanced reliability.

In this study, reliability was ensured by pre-testing the questionnaire with a selected sample. The pre-test exercise took place at the convenience of the researcher and research assistant (Dillman, 2014).

In the study, electronic computation was used to provide statistical measures of reliability for questionnaires. This helped to assess the consistency of measurements (Kline, 2015).

3.6.4 Qualitative Validity and Reliability

Qualitative validity determines whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In qualitative research, both validity and reliability of the instruments are treated together. Credibility refers to confidence in findings from participants and the context in which the study is undertaken by Lincoln and Guba, 1985 as cited in (Mvumbi and Ngumbi, 2015). In this study, the researcher allowed the participants' consent to participate in the study, the right to withdraw and encouraged them to be frank. Respondents were assured of the status of being independent and the findings were treated with confidentiality. The researcher also used triangulation method to check credibility, whereby different data collection instruments used to gain complete understanding of the phenomenon being researched. The researcher also used different sampling techniques to help check the consistency of the research findings. This was done with the help of experts.

Mvumbi and Ngumbi (2015) dependability indicates that the findings remain steady if the study could be repeated. This study employed the triangulation methods of data collection methods. The researcher reported in detail the processes within the study. This was to enable the future researchers to do the same study.

Conformability is the degree of neutrality or the extent to which findings are shaped solely by the participants and not researcher's bias, motivation or interests (Mvumbi and Ngumbi, 2015). In this study, the researcher used different methods in data collection in order to avoid biasness. Leading questions were avoided during interviews and focus group discussions, the respondents were given sufficient time of interaction.

Caretta and Perez (2019) state that member checking is a way of achieving transactional validity heralded by a stronger version of validity reached through triangulation. In this study, the researcher engaged the participants to ensure mutual agreement during the initial analyses of research results and their feed backs were incorporated in the analysis. It ensured the credibility of the findings as well as generating a valuable opportunity for research participants to actively participate in the analytic process (Lopez-Zeron, Bilbao-Nieva and Clements, 2021).

3.7 Description of Data Collection Procedures

The researcher defended the proposal. Then, the Catholic University, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences gave the researcher a letter of which helped in obtaining a research permit from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Once research permit was granted, the researcher visited the Kakamega county administration to seek for clearance to visit the selected Christian churches within Kakamega North Sub County for purposes of carrying out the research. The researcher visited the County Director of Education, County Commissioner, County Government, Sub County director of Education and the churches administration. A personal visit was made to all the sampled Christian churches. The letters were given to the targeted Christian church pastors. The researcher contacted the respondents and explained to them the reasons for involving them in the study. To ensure the understanding of the questionnaires, interview guide and Focus Group Discussion guide, introductory letter was attached to each. Questionnaires were issued by the researcher and the research assistants to the respondents to be filled and picked later (after 3 days) from the churches. It was done through personal contact.

The distribution of copies of the questionnaire took place in churches targeted in the study. The researcher and assistant researchers were responsible for the distribution of and briefing on the questionnaires. Each questionnaire contained an introductory letter that was self-explanatory. The letter emphasized on the respondent's anonymity and confidentiality of the process, as the questionnaires were administered to the youth.

The interview guide was administered to pastors of the 3 churches mentioned earlier. There was an introductory letter given to the participants then the researcher highlighted to them what they were expected to do. In order to enable the researcher conduct interviews, first an appointment was made for interviews with pastors of Christian churches and appropriate date secured for the interviews. The researcher later made a visit on the agreed date to conduct interviews while

noting their responses with the help of a research assistant. The interview was carried out by the researcher and assistants on the same day.

The researcher contacted the participants using an interview guide with semi and structured questions. The researcher used interview techniques of probing (verbal and non-verbal). These included exploring silence, prompting as well as summarizing. The researcher used phrases like “Could you elaborate more on that point?” The researcher-maintained eye contact and encouraged participants to continue speaking. The researcher summarized the last statements of the participants and encouraged more talk (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002). The researcher asked the participants if there were more questions or comments. This assisted in the closure of the interview.

Focus Group Discussions were conducted in three Christian churches involving 48 participants of which were selected Christians. Each focus group consisted of six to eight Christians. FGD was limited to three churches because the responses were found to be similar as the researcher continued with the process of data gathering.

The researcher informed the participants the aim of the study as indicated in the introductory letter. The researcher asked the groups to choose a facilitator who was to coordinate the discussion while another one to acted as a secretary to record their findings. The group was guided in order to create a favorable environment which helped the interviewees to easily trust the facilitator and answer the questions honestly. Kabir (2016) elaborates that the facilitator will encourage participants to express their views at the same time give direction to the discussion when it goes off the track by saying, “wait, how this relates to the issue?” The facilitator used eye contact to encourage members to have an active participation in the discussion. The researcher acted as the supervisor during the discussion in order to avoid biasness. Finally, the facilitator took time to summarize the main points of the discussion. Thanked the participants and let them know how important their ideas were valuable contribution to the study. The study took one week to finalize the work.

3.8 Description of Data Analysis Procedures

According to Kavulya (2007) defines data analysis as the process of ordering and structuring data from the field so that one is able to grasp the overall meaning in relation to research questions or goals. Its purpose is to analyse and interpret data.

After collecting all the instruments from the respondents, cross-checking was done to determine inaccurate, incomplete or unreasonable data. Questionnaires were labelled while taking into consideration the strata of respondents and churches as a way of ensuring consistency during data capturing.

Computers are ideals for data analysis (Kothari, 2004). The sorted questionnaires were serialized and each coded with a unique numerical code in statistical packages for social sciences. Based on research questions, different information was generated using inferential statistics. Later, the information was presented in the form of frequencies, and percentages, so as to ensure adequacy, accuracy and completeness of the study. Tables were used to summarize the data. Therefore, the data were analyzed quantitatively.

Qualitative data which came from interviews and focus group discussions was analyzed by use of themes in accordance with research questions and reported in narrative form. The study was analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis and statistical package for social sciences to measure the difference between the Christian youth who use social media and those who do not and their moral maturity. Hypotheses were tested using a chi-square test. This test was used because data was categorical.

3.9 Ethical Considerations in the Research

The American Psychological Association (2015) developed its Ethics Code for people who conduct research among others. It is for this reason that the researcher followed APA 7th edition and CUEA'S Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences guidelines -CUEA's Common Guidelines for Research Concept Papers, Proposal, Project and Thesis/Dissertation writing (2021)

The respondents were made aware of their right to withdraw from study if they so wished. However, from the beginning, a letter was attached to the questionnaires, interview guide and Focus Group Discussion addressed to every respondent assuring him/her that the study was for academic purposes and all responses given were to be taken in confidence. In addition, protection of the anonymity of respondents was assured by requesting them not to mention their names on the questionnaires. The study used pseudonyms in place of the true names as recommended by Powell, Fitzgerald, Tylor and Graham (2012) for the purpose of confidentiality and anonymity.

Publishing still remains an integral part of the overall research process. According to CUEA'S Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences guidelines (2021), owing to this, the researcher published in research journals and disseminating through workshops, conferences and reports of the study given over to all relevant authorities to facilitate sharing of the findings of the study.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has explained the various methodologies that were used to respond to the research questions of this study. It required a combination of research methodologies and techniques that could generate appropriate data for meaningful interpretation. The mixed approaches employed in this research that combined both quantitative and qualitative methods are necessitated by the desire to maintain an objective focus and at the same time decipher the core and depth of question under investigation.

The researcher used both correlation and phenomenological research designs targeting a total population of 128,207 youth in Kakamega North Sub County. Probability and non-probability sampling were used to determine the sample size where a sample was selected using simple random sampling and purposive sampling. The researcher collected data using questionnaire, interview guide and Focus Group Discussion. Pilot testing was done to determine validity and reliability of the instruments. Data collection was carried out by the researcher and research assistants. Data were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

IV: RESULTS

4.1 Effect of internet usage on moral maturity among youth in Christian congregations

The table provides a comprehensive view of their digital behaviours and attitudes. With a total of 294 respondents, the data highlights several key trends.

Table 1: *Showing internet usage on moral maturity*

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I avoid using the internet for activities that compromise my Christian beliefs.	30 (10.2%)	40 (13.6%)	60 (20.4%)	85 (28.9%)	79 (26.9%)
I try to use the internet in ways that align with my moral values.	25 (8.5%)	35 (11.9%)	55 (18.7%)	85 (28.9%)	94 (32.0%)
I refrain from engaging in gossip or spreading rumors through online communication.	20 (6.8%)	30 (10.2%)	50 (17.0%)	95 (32.3%)	99 (33.7%)
I resist the temptation to access inappropriate content on the internet.	15 (5.1%)	25 (8.5%)	45 (15.3%)	85 (28.9%)	124 (42.2%)
I prioritize spending time in prayer or reflection over using the internet for entertainment.	35 (11.9%)	45 (15.3%)	55 (18.7%)	65 (22.1%)	94 (32.0%)
I am conscious of the impact of internet usage on my spiritual growth.	20 (6.8%)	30 (10.2%)	60 (20.4%)	85 (28.9%)	99 (33.7%)
I use the internet to connect with others in positive and uplifting ways.	10 (3.4%)	20 (6.8%)	40 (13.6%)	85 (28.9%)	139 (47.3%)
I set boundaries for my internet usage to maintain my moral maturity.	25 (8.5%)	35 (11.9%)	50 (17.0%)	80 (27.2%)	104 (35.4%)
I avoid using the internet during religious services or meetings.	30 (10.2%)	40 (13.6%)	55 (18.7%)	85 (28.9%)	84 (28.6%)
I regularly reflect on how my internet usage affects my relationship with God.	20 (6.8%)	30 (10.2%)	55 (18.7%)	85 (28.9%)	104 (35.4%)

Based on the results of the analysis of the first variable, there are several interesting findings from each indicator. Firstly, 30 (10.2%) respondents strongly disagree and 40 (13.6%) disagree with the notion that they avoid using the internet for activities that compromise their Christian beliefs. In contrast, 60 (20.4%) are neutral, while a majority of 85 (28.9%) agree and 79 (26.9%) strongly agree that they do avoid such activities. This distribution suggests a strong majority of 55.8% are committed to ensuring their internet usage aligns with their Christian values. In terms of using the internet in ways that align with moral values, 25 (8.5%) strongly disagree, 35 (11.9%) disagree, and 55 (18.7%) are neutral. A majority of 85 (28.9%) agree, and 94 (32.0%) strongly agree, indicating 60.9% of respondents feel their internet usage is consistent with their moral values.

When it comes to refraining from gossip and rumors, 20 (6.8%) strongly disagree and 30 (10.2%) disagree, with 50 (17.0%) being neutral. A substantial 95 (32.3%) agree, and 99 (33.7%) strongly agree, demonstrating that 66.0% avoid engaging in such behavior online. The resistance to accessing inappropriate content on the internet shows that 15 (5.1%) strongly disagree and 25 (8.5%) disagree, with 45 (15.3%) being neutral. A significant 85 (28.9%) agree, and 124 (42.2%) strongly agree, highlighting that 71.1% of respondents successfully resist such temptations. Regarding prioritizing prayer or reflection over internet entertainment, 35 (11.9%) strongly disagree and 45 (15.3%) disagree, with 55 (18.7%) neutral. However, 65 (22.1%) agree, and 94 (32.0%) strongly agree, suggesting that 54.1% place a higher value on spiritual practices over digital entertainment.

Awareness of the impact of internet usage on spiritual growth is evident as 20 (6.8%) strongly disagree and 30 (10.2%) disagree, with 60 (20.4%) being neutral. Meanwhile, 85 (28.9%) agree, and 99 (33.7%) strongly agree, indicating 62.6% are mindful of how their online activities affect their spiritual life. For using the internet to connect positively and upliftingly, 10 (3.4%) strongly disagree and 20 (6.8%) disagree, with 40 (13.6%) neutral. A majority of 85 (28.9%) agree, and 139 (47.3%) strongly agree, showing that 76.2% of respondents actively seek positive online interactions. Setting boundaries for internet usage to maintain moral maturity is reflected in 25 (8.5%) strongly disagreeing and 35 (11.9%) disagreeing, with 50 (17.0%) neutral. Meanwhile, 80 (27.2%) agree, and 104 (35.4%) strongly agree, indicating 62.6% of respondents implement boundaries to preserve their moral values.

Avoiding the internet during religious services or meetings shows 30 (10.2%) strongly disagree, 40 (13.6%) disagree, and 55 (18.7%) are neutral. A majority of 85 (28.9%) agree, and 84 (28.6%) strongly agree, suggesting that 57.5% respect the sanctity of religious observances by refraining from online activities. Finally, 20 (6.8%) strongly disagree and 30 (10.2%) disagree with regularly reflecting on how their internet usage affects their relationship with God, while 55 (18.7%) are neutral. A total of 85 (28.9%) agree and 104 (35.4%) strongly agree, indicating that 64.3% of respondents are engaged in self-reflection regarding their internet habits and spiritual life. A similar opinion was held by Ariyo et al. (2023) that social media usage affected the moral growth of Ugandan communities especially the youth as they experienced loneliness and social isolation. The findings were based on prior studies' results which showed that social media influenced social behaviour of youth. Social media platforms enabled individuals to have

conversation, share information and develop internet content. The findings are also in line with Wahed and Hassan (2017) concluded that extensive use of social media significantly hampers an individual's sense of self since one does not directly interact with the person they harm with their posts.

Prior to focus group discussion, the researcher and research assistants invited all the participants to consent to take part in the study. Participation was possible on a voluntary basis, and no compensation was provided. The first theme was deliberated on the benefits of internet usage among youth. 48 (100%) of them articulated that internet provided various educative information to them and youth at large. The findings were in line with Toombs (2014) who fostered positive decisions and discouraged negative thoughts that led to death. The findings were further confirmed by Livingstone (2009) who emphasized that, "At the heart of explosion in online communication is the desire to construct valued representation of oneself." The discussion also brought out that internet usage elevated one's self-esteem. This was indicated with 33 (68.8%) of the participants supported the same idea, while 15 (31.8%) of them had no idea about that.

The selected Christians also agreed unanimously during the discussion that youth can worship online using internet as it brings them to a living faith. The respondents further agreed that social media acted as an inspiration to Christian youth as they learned from others who were as role models in their Christian journey. This was found to be in agreement with the findings of Widodo (2021) who concurred that internet usage assisted the Catholic Church in Indonesia to hold mass during COVID 19. They discussed that;

The internet serves as a valuable resource for Christian youth, offering access to online sermons, Bible studies, Christian podcasts, and global faith-based communities. Platforms such as YouTube and various Christian websites provide accessible resources that facilitate a deeper understanding of biblical teachings and contribute to the enhancement of moral maturity.

On the flip side, social media can be a major distraction and often exposes young people to negative influences. The study noted that media led to comparison, insecurity and even isolation which hindered youth's spiritual and moral development. The findings were in agreement with Abulkareem (2014) who urged that social media altered traditional values, customs and social norms. It was further supported by Al-sharqi, Hashim and Kutbi (2015) who said that the integration of social media into society was accompanied by drawbacks that eroded physical human relationships. Christians reported that,

The internet also presents significant challenges by exposing youth to negative influences, such as pornography, cyber bullying, and secular ideologies that conflict with Christian values. These detrimental influences can desensitize young Christians, potentially leading to moral erosion and a distancing from scriptural teachings. Despite the positive aspects of internet content, there is a notable risk of addiction to entertainment and social media. Such addiction may displace time that could otherwise

be dedicated to prayer, reflection, or church participation, thereby impeding moral and spiritual development. The extensive array of distractions available on the internet complicates the ability of youth to concentrate on their spiritual journey. Even with good intentions, they may be diverted by non-Christian content, which can lead to the neglect of their moral responsibilities.

The pastors acknowledged that while the had internet valuable tools for learning to offer to youth it also came with risks that needed careful management. Young people needed to be alert as they explored the internet. This was inline with the study carried out by Sidhartha et al. (2020) who declared that social media usage to be used in proper and rightful manner when required. In their interview it was observed that:

internet usage has both positive and negative effects on moral maturity. On one hand, it provides access to educational resources and Christian teachings that can support spiritual growth. On the other hand, unrestricted internet access can expose youth to inappropriate content and harmful influences that can hinder their moral development.

The pastors emphasized the importance of taking initiative to help the youth as the handled internet. Youth needed mentorship in order to use the internet wisely and with discretion. As this was to enable them to grow maturely in matters pertaining social media. Moreover, responsible in their moral values.

Educating youth about responsible internet use. This includes setting boundaries and encouraging content that aligns with Christian values to support moral maturity. Moderation and open discussions about online experiences are crucial in mitigating the negative impacts of internet usage on moral maturity (Interview - pastors).

Table 2: H_0 There is no significant relationship between internet usage and moral maturity.

Hypothesis	Sample Size (n)	Test Statistic	P-value	Decision	Conclusion
H01: There is no significant relationship between internet usage and moral maturity.	294	0.35	0.001	Reject	Significant relationship exists

The analysis revealed a test statistic of 0.35 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating a significant relationship between internet usage and moral maturity among the youth. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H01). This suggests that internet usage does have a notable impact on the moral maturity of youth in Christian congregations within Kakamega North Sub County. The nature of this relationship could be explored further to determine whether the influence is positive or negative.

V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Summary

The study found that internet usage has influence on moral maturity of Christian youth in Kakamega North Sub-County. The usage of internet has benefits to young people as outlined earlier in the study. However, young people are caught up in negative effects of internet usage that derail their moral development, as majority of them exhibit poor social skills. Therefore, there was need for the parents to intensify guidance and monitoring of the content the youth engaged in when using the internet.

5.2 Conclusion

The researcher concluded that internet usage has a significant impact on the moral maturity among Christian youth in Kakamega North Sub-County. While a majority of respondents demonstrated responsible online behavior, such as avoiding inappropriate content and aligning their internet use with their moral values, the findings also highlighted the need for continued guidance to reinforce positive habits and address potential challenges. The internet, while a valuable tool for positive connection and spiritual growth, can also pose moral risks if not used mindfully. Therefore, fostering awareness and setting boundaries for internet usage are essential to supporting the moral development of youth.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings regarding the effect of internet usage on moral maturity among Christian youth, it is recommended that congregations and community organizations develop targeted programs to educate youth about responsible internet use. These programs should focus on fostering critical thinking skills to help young people discern between content that aligns with their Christian values and that which compromises them. Regular workshops, seminars, and discussions could be organized to address specific challenges such as exposure to inappropriate content, online gossip, and distractions from spiritual practices. Additionally, congregation can promote the use of internet platforms for positive purposes, such as connecting with faith-based communities, accessing religious teachings, and engaging in uplifting activities. Encouraging youth to set personal boundaries for internet usage, such as limiting time spent online or avoiding its use during religious services, can further reinforce their moral development.

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