

**ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN CHURCH MINISTRY IN THE
METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA, NYAMBENE SYNOD**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies
of Chuka University**

CHUKA UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for an award of diploma or conferment of degree in this or any other university.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved husband Dr. Timothy Bariu, my cherished sons Daxton and Brydon, my dear mother, and my brother Solomon Mutwiri, with all my love and gratitude

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First and foremost, I thank the Almighty God for the gift of life, strength, wisdom, and grace that have carried me through every step of this academic journey. Without His guidance and provision, completing this thesis would not have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has transformed communication and interaction across sectors, including religion, by offering new avenues for evangelism, fellowship, and outreach. In Kenya, religious institutions are increasingly integrating digital tools into their ministry, yet many rural churches continue to face challenges in effectively adopting and utilizing social media for spiritual engagement. This study examined the use of social media in church ministry within the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), focusing on the Nyambene Synod—a largely rural context where digital transformation remains uneven. Specifically, the study sought to: (i) assess the level of awareness and adoption of social media platforms among congregants, (ii) evaluate the impact of social media on ministry activities, and (iii) identify challenges affecting its adoption and use for religious purposes. Guided by the functionalist theory, the study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A sample of 408 respondents—including clergy, lay preachers, church leaders, and members—was drawn through stratified random and purposive sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed using SPSS version 21. Descriptive and inferential analyses, including logistic regression, were used to determine relationships between social media use and ministry outcomes. Findings revealed high awareness and individual use of social media among congregants, with WhatsApp and Facebook being the most utilized platforms for church communication and ministry. Younger, male, and leadership respondents exhibited higher adoption levels. Social media was found to enhance evangelism, youth outreach, preaching, and dissemination of church updates, with 95.1% of respondents affirming that it expanded the church's reach beyond its physical congregation. Logistic regression results indicated that both the variety of online ministry activities and the frequency of social media use significantly influenced positive perceptions of its impact. Nonetheless, the study identified key challenges such as poor internet connectivity—especially in remote areas—limited digital skills among older members, distractions from secular content, and the absence of formal digital ministry policies.

The study concludes that social media presents vast opportunities for effective ministry in the Nyambene Synod but remains constrained by infrastructural and capacity limitations. It contributes to the discourse on digital religion by highlighting the dynamics of online ministry in rural church settings. The study recommends that the MCK develop formal social media policies, invest in digital infrastructure, and establish IT/media teams to manage online engagement. Additionally, targeted digital literacy training should be prioritized for women, older congregants, and rural members to enhance participation and reduce digital exclusion. By embracing structured digital strategies and faith-based content management, the church can strengthen spiritual growth, inclusivity, and community outreach in the digital age.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CU	: Chuka University
ESC	: Education Service Center
ICT	: Information and Communication Technology
KJV	: King James Version (if Bible references are cited this way)
KNBS	: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
MCK	: Methodist Church in Kenya
NS	: Nyambene Synod
RQs	: Research Questions

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Throughout history, Christianity has employed various communication methods to disseminate its doctrines. The apostles utilized ink and scrolls to convey their teachings, while the medieval and Renaissance ages witnessed manifestations of doctrine through architecture, sculpture, and painting. The Protestant Reformation harnessed the power of the printing press, and missionaries mastered numerous languages to spread their message. Throughout the 20th century, the Church adopted mass media through the press, television, and radio. The 21st century has experienced significant technological changes, especially with the emergence of the internet. This new digital era has permeated almost every aspect of daily life, compelling religious organizations to integrate technology into spiritual practices. The utilization of social media in church activities has led to a blending of online and offline religious spheres, creating a hybrid of religious practices and beliefs. According to Campbell (2020), communication technology influences how people practice religion. With the increasing popularity of the internet, scholars of religion must examine its impact on religious groups and culture. The Church must replicate its offline structural dominance in the online space (Benson, 2015). This study sought to identify new opportunities and problems for persons and religious groups and assess the implementation of social media in the Methodist Church of Kenya.

Social media refers to the infrastructure, tools, and content that drive digital communication, including personal messages, news updates, ideas, cultural items, and the users, companies, and industries involved in its creation and consumption. Popular examples include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn, blogs, 2go, and WhatsApp. These platforms empower users to share information, connect with others, and contribute their creative content. Today, social media has become one of the most popular online forums. According to a study by Statista (2022), social media networks have amassed over 459 billion users worldwide. The African continent has an average of 384 million users (Statista, 2022). In Kenya, the number of social media users has been rapidly rising, with an estimated 10.55 million social media users and over 20 million internet users (Statista, 2022).

The utilization of social media is steadily transforming the workings of religious interactions, communities, and authority (Cheong, 2014, 2017). Spiritual organizations like churches offer an engaging environment in which to explore the use of social media. Unlike in the past, when church operations were mainly carried out in person, churches now utilize social media sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram to complement conventional spiritual activities. White, Tella, and Ampofo (2016) assert that social media has become an avenue for many televangelists and pastors to reach the masses. It has thus become a valuable communication tool for those offering spiritual services to people in the Church. The relationship between religion and technology is dual in nature, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. Burdick (2018) states that the internet and technology significantly increasingly influence religious organizations. Churches must utilize social media, digital applications, and electronic avenues to engage the community and reach out. Many religious facilities post worship services online for home-based audiences to watch and interact with them electronically through their platforms. They also use social media to market and inform on upcoming occasions. Social apps, especially WhatsApp groups, have aligned specific congregation agendas with the church's objectives. For example, they bring people together to raise funds for church programs and activities and offer financial and emotional support to needy congregation members. Some churches even provide services for individuals who maintain online existences as avatars. Hence, religious institutions are tasked with balancing discipleship and outreach digitally, as well as biblically and theologically.

In America, the Church has tremendously utilized social media. Preachers such as Joel Osteen, Billy Graham, and Robert Schuller have propelled the popularity and growth of their mega-churches through social media. Sircar and Rowley (2020) note that churches appreciate and experiment with online platforms to communicate and share information with existing congregants and solidify connections within the church society. YouTube is essential in promoting churches and providing congregants access to specific videos and live-streaming options. Large, diverse, and scattered church groups are proactive in employing social media to market event tickets, support new music videos, and share pictures of recent occasions, all of which foster a well-connected and engaged community (Sircar and Rowley, 2020). Many

local or special interest groups also have solid social media presence. The structure and purpose of these groups vary immensely. For instance, religious institutions utilize Facebook for community creation, growth, and event marketing. Similarly, churches have several online pages on Facebook according to specific parishes and dioceses.

In Asia, social media has amplified religious and social voices in countries where freedom of faith and speech are undermined (Le Duc, 2019). However, the internet has also acted as a pathway for fake news and misinformation to reach the masses, creating digital wildfires that foster mistrust and disharmony among religions and people. Social media has significantly aided evangelization in areas where Christians face persecution. In Vietnam and Myanmar, Christians have used social media to connect individuals, especially transnational parents and small Christian communities, to one another and the broader Church. However, it has also been a source of interreligious violence and social divisiveness.

In Nigeria, churches have adopted social media to transfer messages to local and international audiences (Chiluwa, 2012). Christians utilize social media to share details about their spirituality (Ogunsola & Raji, 2019). Amanze and Wogu (2015) assert that Facebook and Twitter are the most popular sites churches use. Facebook is mainly utilized to share church operations and reach out to members (Amanze & Wogu, 2015). YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are employed to continuously update people about activities and programs and recruit new individuals to the church (Eke & Enweani, 2019). Some religious institutions use Facebook to promote spiritual activities, programs, devotionals, and future events (Eke & Enweani, 2019). YouTube is used to share faith-based messages and previous or live sermons. Eke and Enweani (2019) discovered that churches also use Instagram to share posts concerning church flyers and events. Chiluwa (2013) conducted a study on social interaction in online religious discourse in Cameroon, Nigeria, and Ghana, finding that on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, the clergy viewed their pages and profiles as opportunities to attract members using teachings, announcements, and prayers. In the same study, most respondents knew the social media platforms used by the church, and members reacted with gratitude and shared stories of the pastors' influence on their lives.

The African continent has embraced the growth and democratization of social media platforms. Technologically savvy young citizens use social media to express themselves, influence public discourse, and rebrand their countries (Ojeifo, 2023). However, the African church has slowly adopted digital media for several reasons. Firstly, most supporting digital technologies come from North America, Asia, and Europe. Secondly, there is the problem of inconsistent power supply in many regions throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Digital media requires a reliable power source and infrastructure, which are often lacking. Thirdly, there is a formation challenge, as many individuals, including African church staff, start to communicate with and use the media without extensive training and development on the ethics of appropriate use, leading to the proliferation of fake news and unethical information.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted all sectors globally, compelling institutions to rethink their modes of operation (Hitt et al., 2021). In Kenya, restrictions on physical gatherings accelerated the need for digital solutions across various fields, including education, business, and religious ministry. Churches, as indispensable pillars of society, were not left behind. The pandemic highlighted the urgency for the Church to adopt innovative communication channels such as social media to maintain fellowship, provide spiritual nourishment, and sustain community outreach amidst physical distancing (Hitt et al., 2021). This shift demonstrated the growing importance of digital platforms in ensuring continuity of ministry and spiritual engagement during crises.

In Kenya, existing studies have primarily focused on using social media in sectors like agriculture, advertising, and politics. This narrow focus leaves church ministries without the necessary insights to leverage social media for outreach and community building fully. The absence of targeted research affects the ability of church leaders to interact with their congregants effectively, especially when physical meetings are not possible, hindering their outreach and engagement efforts. Several studies have been carried out on social media use in marketing, politics, agriculture, and the business sector (Kipkurgat, Onyiego, & Chemwaina, 2016; Lagat, 2022; Kipkoech, 2023). Studies on the church have focused on the use of social media for church expansion, the challenges of its use in youth ministry, and church marketing and evangelization

(Kathambi, Gitome, & Bwire, 2022; Jelagat, 2022; Mbithi, Kamwaria, & Kinuthia, 2023).

The existing literature on the adoption of social media in church ministries highlights several critical gaps that warrant further investigation. For instance, Campbell (2020) analyzes the impact of digital interactions on spiritual practices but fails to assess congregational and leaders' awareness of the usage of these platforms. Similarly, Animante, Akussah, and Darko-Adjei (2021) observe that social media strengthens church branding and increases attendance; however, they do not explore its specific effects on congregants' spiritual growth and engagement. While Statista (2023) indicates high social media usage in Kenya, suggesting significant potential for church communication, it does not provide insights on how churches can effectively harness this reach. Additionally, Pillay (2020) points to potential social isolation from internet use in church contexts but offers limited discussion on how social media could foster community building within congregations. Ronkacova (2021) identifies mental health risks associated with high social media usage without addressing how religious organizations can guide youth on responsible use. Bwalya (2021) notes high social media engagement among Catholic youths in urban areas, yet this perspective neglects rural populations and other church demographics. Lastly, Lacy (2021) finds that church members primarily learn about social media through friends and announcements, lacking a systematic approach to enhancing social media literacy among congregations. These gaps underscore the necessity of comprehensive research on how social media can be effectively integrated into church ministries, particularly within the Methodist Church of Kenya, Nyambene Synod, to foster engagement and spiritual growth.

The Nyambene Synod consists of different churchgoers in rural and semi-urban contexts within Meru County. The residents are mainly agrarian farmers with various levels of exposure to technologies. Regardless of the financial limitations, including inconsistent internet access and unstable ICT infrastructure, there is increasing mobile device penetration, especially among young people and working-class locals. According to the Communication Authority of Kenya (2023), mobile phone ownership in rural areas in Kenya is now at more than 80%, with WhatsApp and Facebook being the most used sites. Social media utilization in the Nyambene Synod

is concentrated among younger church attendees, with WhatsApp being the most adopted platform because of its accessibility, low data consumption, and ease of operation. Facebook follows closely behind. It is often used for broadcasting live services, sharing Bible verses, event marketing, and community announcements. Elderly individuals and those in remote areas continue to be technologically marginalized due to digital illiteracy or lack of mobile devices.

Religious institutions in Nyambene Synod have incorporated social media into their daily activities, including worship, youth engagement, and community coordination. Some congregations livestream sermons through Facebook or share summaries and devotional content in WhatsApp groups. Lay preachers and circuit ministers utilize social media sites to distribute prayer points, scriptures, and pastoral encouragement. WhatsApp groups are employed to mobilize people to come for events, fundraise, and disseminate announcements. Youth ministries, women's guilds, and choirs have active groups that focus on fellowship and schedule activities. Social media is instrumental in engaging the youth, who increasingly prefer digital platforms over traditional strategies. Churches that incorporate creative digital content, such as videos, memes, reels, and testimonies, in their religious activities report better youth participation. Unfortunately, several challenges prevent the full integration of social media, including unreliable internet, lack of content creation skills, resistance from conservative members, and absence of formal media regulations. There is also concern about misinformation and preserving theological integrity online.

Despite its transformative potential, there is a significant gap in comprehending the implementation of social media within church ministries in Kenya, particularly in the Methodist Church of Kenya, Nyambene Synod. Comprehensive research on effectively using social media to engage congregants and expand virtual communities is lacking. The urgency of addressing this gap cannot be overstated; as social media continues to evolve, churches should adapt to maintain and grow their influence in an increasingly digital landscape. Without a current assessment of social media use within the Methodist Church of Kenya, Nyambene Synod, actionable insights cannot be provided to enhance engagement and outreach efforts.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is minimal participation in church attendance, congregational engagement, and youth attendance in the Nyambene Synod of the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK). This is evidenced by consistently fewer congregants and limited involvement in church programs, indicating a growing gap between the church's traditional ministry approaches and the contemporary needs of its members. The situation was further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted physical gatherings and exposed the vulnerability of traditional ministry approaches. This period underscored the need for churches to explore alternative means, particularly social media platforms, to sustain worship, communication, and outreach (Hitt et al., 2021). The reduced participation is not a sudden phenomenon; it reflects a long-standing challenge in adapting to modern communication trends, particularly the rise of social media, which raises concerns about the effectiveness of current ministry approaches. Research highlights a persistent struggle in retaining church members. The limited engagement not only hampers spiritual development but also threatens the overall growth of the church community. While social media has transformed communication and engagement globally, its potential remains underutilized in church ministry. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches effectively use digital platforms to strengthen outreach and maintain active participation. Yet, the MCK Nyambene Synod lags, and its current ministry approaches do not adequately resonate with church member's needs, limiting its ability to connect with members. Leadership disputes further complicate digital adoption, sometimes intensifying divisions rather than fostering unity. The urgency of this research is apparent, as revitalizing members' engagement and church attendance is essential for the church's future development in the MCK Nyambene Synod Region.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to assess the use of social media in church ministry in the methodist church in Kenya, Nyambene synod.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the level of awareness and adoption of social media platforms among congregants of MCK, Nyambene Synod.
- ii. To assess the impact of social media on church ministry in the Methodist church, Nyambene synod.
- iii. To determine challenges faced by the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, in use of social, media for church ministry purposes.

1.5 Research Questions

The questions that the study will attempt to answer are as follows:

- i. What is the level of awareness on the use of social, media among the congregants of MCK Nyambene synod?
- ii. What is the impact of social media use of church ministry in the MCK Nyambene Synod?
- iii. What challenges do the Methodist church members face in the use of social media within Nyambene Synod?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant from a sociological perspective, as it examines how a key social institution—the Church—adapts to technological and cultural transformations in contemporary society. Religious institutions play a central role in maintaining social cohesion, transmitting values, and offering moral guidance. However, the emergence of digital technology and the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional patterns of social interaction, compelling all sectors, including the Church, to reconfigure their methods of engagement. By investigating how the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, integrates social media into its ministry, this study contributes to understanding how social systems adjust to external shocks and maintain stability in times of change.

The findings provide insights into the adaptive functions of religion within society, showing how churches utilize social media to preserve social bonds, sustain communal worship, and promote inclusion despite physical distance. The study highlights the Church's role as an indispensable pillar of society—serving not only as

a spiritual center but also as a hub for social support, communication, and collective identity.

Furthermore, the study offers empirical evidence useful to policymakers, theologians, sociologists, and church administrators seeking to enhance social resilience through digital inclusion. It demonstrates how technology can be harnessed to strengthen community ties, facilitate moral education, and promote social solidarity in both rural and urban contexts. In doing so, it expands sociological understanding of institutional adaptation, digital socialization, and the continuity of collective life in the post-pandemic era.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study was confined to assessing the use of social media in church ministry within the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), Nyambene Synod, located in Meru County. The Synod was chosen because it represents a mix of rural and semi-urban congregations where technological adoption is gradually taking shape amidst infrastructural, cultural, and economic challenges. The study focused on three key variables: the level of awareness and adoption of social media platforms among congregants, the impact of social media on church ministry, and the challenges faced by the Methodist Church in using these platforms for ministry. The target population comprised clergy, lay preachers, church leaders, and ordinary members, ensuring representation of both leadership and congregational perspectives. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram were examined as channels for evangelism, fellowship, information sharing, and community coordination. The study thus sought to understand how the church, as a vital social institution, utilizes digital tools to maintain cohesion, spiritual growth, and social interaction in a changing communication environment.

The research covered the period between 2020 and 2024, which coincided with the global COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent recovery phase. This period was significant because restrictions on physical gatherings compelled churches and other social institutions to explore digital alternatives for ministry and interaction. The Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, was not exempt from these transformations; it increasingly adopted social media platforms to sustain worship,

outreach, and pastoral care. The selected timeframe therefore provided an ideal context to analyze both the initial adaptation to digital ministry during the pandemic and the long-term institutional integration of social media in the post-pandemic era. The scope was limited to the Nyambene Synod, and while the findings may not represent all church contexts in Kenya, they offer valuable insights for understanding the sociological dynamics of digital transformation within faith-based institutions in similar rural and semi-urban settings.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study faced several limitations, including the remoteness of some areas within the study location, which lacked adequate transport infrastructure. Poor network connectivity and the high cost of internet bundles also hindered timely data collection, particularly for digital interactions. Additionally, the researcher encountered harsh weather conditions during field visits, which occasionally disrupted the research schedule. To address these challenges, the researcher planned field visits during more favorable weather periods and scheduled data collection in phases to allow flexibility. In areas with poor network coverage, physical questionnaires were used as an alternative to online tools. The researcher also sought support from local church leaders to facilitate transportation and mobilization of respondents. To manage internet-related costs, data collection was conducted in centralized locations with stable connectivity where possible.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

This study was based on the following assumptions:

- i. Congregants of the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, were familiar with or actively used social media platforms.
- ii. Social media significantly impacted religious practices and enhanced church outreach and community engagement.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

Church Management: The church management in Methodist church in Nyambene synod consists of all the leaders described above and outlining of their roles they need to carry out. These roles are based on the main activities of the church that facilitate in running and organization of the ministry.

Lay church leaders: Elected church leaders that are in charge of the church in each circuit

Social Media: Social networking websites and applications that enable young people in Nyambene to participate in creating and sharing content.

Synod: The Methodist Church has a system where a bishop is in charge of several churches that come together to form a synod. A synod is made up of Methodist churches that are located close to each other. In Kenya, these church groups are mostly organized based on political constituencies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Awareness and Adoption of Social Media among Church Congregants

In the current competitive environment, churches measure success by enhancing awareness and informing members about their offerings (Okyere, Agyapong, & Nyarku, 2011). Most churches take advantage of the social media marketing aspect to ensure relevance and competitiveness. Badmos (2014) states that the Church must have an awareness of the implications of using social media. Bwalya (2021) notes that most Catholic young people in Nairobi are computer and social media users. They appear to utilize social media for different reasons but mainly as an interactional tool for communicating with friends. More than half of the subjects (55.0 percent) seem to use social media to talk to their friends. The study also showed that 48.1 percent of the subjects adopted social media use as a means of acquiring new information. WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, in that order, were the most popular and used social media sites among young Catholic congregants in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. Okyere et al. (2011). While previous studies, such as those by Okyere et al. (2011) and Badmos (2014), present social media as a competitive tool, there is limited research on how churches, particularly in Kenya, strategically use social media for awareness creation among congregants. The Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) Nyambene Synod operates in a competitive religious environment alongside Pentecostal churches. However, little is known about how MCK Nyambene Synod utilizes social media to enhance engagement and awareness among its members. Therefore, this study aimed to close this gap by assessing how MCK Nyambene Synod uses social media to create awareness among congregants. The study findings provide insights into the effectiveness of social media strategies in church ministry and offer recommendations for improving digital engagement in religious institutions.

Research conducted by the Education Service Center (2019) found that a significant majority of churchgoers were conversant with different social media platforms, consistent with Chikuwa's (2013) research indicating high awareness of social media applications among church members. Most members learned about these sites through church announcements, department heads, and church training. McKinney (2014) explored the use of social media among religious institutions and found that over 30%

were active on Facebook daily, while 15% had never used the platform. Additionally, nearly half of the respondents considered social media to be the most effective communication method, compared to about 25% who preferred traditional door-to-door methods (Pitman, 2012). Chilwa (2012) also confirmed high awareness of social media platforms among churchgoers. The study sought to identify awareness sources and usage patterns unique to the MCK Nyambene synod.

Lacy (2021) observed that most respondents learned about social media platforms through friends and general announcements. This aligns with Chilwa's (2013) findings that pastors use platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter for teachings, prayers, and announcements, with members responding positively and sharing testimonies. In another study, Musa, Azmi, and Ismail (2015) found that 98.5% of subjects were conversant with social media users, with Facebook (78.5%), Twitter (71.9%), and WhatsApp (73.3%) being the most popular platforms. The majority accessed these platforms via mobile phones (91.9%), followed by laptops (32.6%) and cafes (4.4%). Most used social media for interactions (71.9%), sharing details (54.8%), and educating members (48.1%). This study sought to explore social media use in a rural Kenyan context within the MCK Nambene synod.

Williams and Krisjanous (2023) explore the notion of 'spiritual consumption' on social media, attending to the ways in which users, in the context of a consumerist logic, engage with religious and spiritual content. The motivation, behavior, and emotional connection to consuming religious content online compared with other types of content consumption are analyzed in this study. It seeks to determine how religious content consumption differs from other types of online content consumption in terms of engagement and loyalty. The researchers found that social media platforms promote a consumer-oriented approach to spirituality through actively consuming and commenting on religious content, as well as creating derivative content. This is a shift in the way spirituality is being practiced as users choose and incorporate religious content into their everyday lives with the choices that suit them and their beliefs. The study also indicates that social media facilitates a more personalized spirituality in which users curate their religious experiences by following religious influencers, joining faith-based communities and choosing to interact with

content that resonates with them. Williams and Krisjanous (2023) say social media have made spirituality more accessible and flexible, but they warn the consumerist approach could also undermine traditional religious values. Users may focus on content that provides entertainment rather than content that challenges or deepens their faith. While the study clearly assesses spiritual consumption, it does not look at how such consumption impacts people's broader religious identities and commitments. Future research could examine whether consumerist approaches to religion lead to superficial or fragmented spiritual engagement, where people only dip in and out of religion without developing a clear faith identity. This research paper sought to assess the effects of social media use in the Nyambene synod rural methodist context.

Myers, Syrdal, Mahto, and Sen (2023) investigate the utility of religious influencers on social media, particularly Christian influencers and how their message cues influence audience engagement. Myers, Syrdal, Mahto, and Sen (2023) examine how different types of message cues, including emotional appeals, scriptural references, or calls to action, vary in their impact on audiences on other platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The research shows that emotional appeals and narrating a relatable story tend to increase engagement more for younger audiences, and scripture-based posts tend to perform better with audiences already inclined toward religious content. The study calls attention to the notable role of religious influencers in influencing perceptions of Christianity, not just among people who may not attend Church but who look for spiritual content on the Internet. While these influencers are effective, it is contingent on how much-perceived authenticity and relatability they are presented to the user because that's the person they are more likely to associate with. Myers et al. (2023) find that religious influencers can strengthen religious identity and build community because they use personalized, inclusive messaging that resonates with a variety of audience segments. Gultom et al. (2022) add to our understanding of how message cues shape influence but should not be taken to suggest that the psychological underpinnings of the depth and strength of followers' faith in any given influencer are unimportant. Future research could explore the relationship between influencer engagement and followers' religious behaviors and beliefs. It is imperative to determine how the use of influencer-led religious

content affects the amount of individual agency that takes place in the spiritual growth of followers. This research sought to investigate if influencers shape Nyambene's synod engagement with social media.

Kenya has a mobile penetration rate of 90%. Congregants, especially youth, may independently discover platforms like WhatsApp, broadening awareness on their own (Communication Authority Kenya, 2023). Okyere, Agyapong, and Nyarku (2011) acknowledge the transformative impact of online platforms on interactions and the public perception of the Church. They advocate for supporting responsible and informed online engagement through blogging and social media interaction. Dean (2017) emphasizes the importance of church staff, volunteers, and attendees contributing to a valuable online community. Monitoring comments and promptly addressing non-compliant content helps maintain the Church's standards. Black (2010) outlines two perspectives for creating a social media policy: creating a comprehensive policy covering all social media platforms or developing policies as needed based on the organization's presence on specific platforms. As organizations expand their online presence, they may need to update their policies to include new platforms. Generally, a well-crafted social media policy provides clear expectations for online conduct, ensuring that church employees and members represent the Church positively and adhere to its values and mission.

Bocala-Wiedemann (2022) investigates how social media is used for evangelism, in this case, at the expense of youth and young adults who are very active online. The ways in which religious organizations and individual evangelists use social media to connect with younger audiences, from posting scripture to sharing testimonies to joining in live discussions to taking on the latest news through a faith-based lens (Gultom et al., 2022). The study's key finding is that social media offers a rare opportunity for people to bypass the usual barriers to religious engagement, like being physically separated or across generations. Social media is a personal and accessible way for youth and young adults to engage in evangelism on their terms, which may be more accessible and personalized than more traditional religious settings. Bocala-Wiedemann (2022) adds that while social media is great for reach, it also requires a message explicitly tailored to the audience that social media appeals to, which can be

a younger demographic that is hesitant to trust overtly institutional messaging. Consequently, the study argues that social media is a practical but complex avenue for evangelism and that it requires strategic, culturally sensitive approaches to reach younger followers. While the study looks at social media as an evangelistic tool, it doesn't address the long-term implications of this social media engagement on religious commitment or participation in physical church activities. Future studies should investigate the sustainability of social media evangelism by looking at whether initial online engagement leads to more profound, longer-term religious commitment or regular church attendance. Understanding how different platforms affect youth engagement could help us know platform-specific strategies.

The expansion of social media applications in the Church has played an integral role in the blending of online and offline religious spheres. When religious practices and digital culture merge, they form a hybrid of spiritual practices and beliefs. While discussing digital religion, Campbell's (2020) book analyzes different ways in which communication technology influences how people practice religion. Her research underpins the place of digital spirituality in the twenty-first century. It gives a historical overview of spiritual engagement with the Internet and further notes that with the increasing popularity of the Internet, scholars of religion must pay attention to the effect of the online world on religious groups and culture. The Internet provides new opportunities and difficulties for individuals and spiritual groups. Thus, this assessment sought to identify the ones that influence the Methodist Church of Kenya's use of social media in church ministry.

Cheong's (2016) essay on religious power and social media branding in a culture of spiritual exercise examines branding practices on Twitter from clergies of the megachurches in the United States. The study discusses the response of the clergy as spiritual leaders and role models in social media space. Religious authorities can implement social media as a tool to build credibility. The contemporary church leader must engage in self-branding through a strategic narrative that focuses on the church ministry. A notable example of such ministry leaders is Joel Osteen, Billy Graham, and Robert Schuller, who have managed to rebrand themselves through social networks and build a vast number of followers both offline and online. The essay

emphasizes the need for clergy to create a brand identity and thus preach indirectly. However, the work focuses on the clergy without further mention of the correlation between social media and the congregation at large.

Crawford (2017) details the primary motives for the Church to utilize social media sites: to distribute the gospel of Jesus Christ with the aim of offering encouragement and to provide resources, insight, and the word of God, and to ensure the participation of young people so that they can draw closer to God. This study, however, seeks to go beyond the pros and cons of social media. This is no longer a matter of question, but rather, the Church must align itself to ascertain its dominance; that is why this work proposes to determine the challenges encountered by the church congregation in the use of social media. Animante, Akussah, and Darko-Adjei (2021) utilized the technology acceptance framework to gauge the perceived usefulness of social media in the charismatic Church. The study observed that the use of social media sites strengthened the brand of churches and increased church attendance. The need for training church members, providing strong internet connectivity, and establishing policies on basic skills on social media platforms keeps changing. The study, however, fails to identify the effects of the social media sites on the congregation.

According to the International Center for Law and Religion Studies (2011) report, around 45% of the Kenyan population is Protestant, and approximately 33% are Roman Catholic. The reports note that more than 4,000 registered religious institutions in Kenya, with diverse denominations like Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and newer Pentecostal churches. According to Statista (2023), Kenya has an approximate of over 10 million social media users. WhatsApp was the most adopted social media platform, followed by Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Facebook Messenger. Additionally, according to Statista's (2023) Global Consumer Survey, the most frequent practice on social media applications was commenting on people's posts. Seventy percent of individuals stated that they leave comments. On the other hand, following people and liking posts by other users received one percentage point less than commenting on posts. Three percent of the participants highlighted using the online platforms passively, while just one percent mentioned not using them at all. This is an indication that social media usage in Kenya is at a high rate among

Christians, who constitute a high number of Kenyans. This shift has sparked discussions regarding its impact on churches, with both positive and negative social and economic implications being explored (Tella & Ampofo, 2016). One concern surrounding the use of the Internet in churches is the potential for increased social isolation (Pillay, 2020). However, others assert that social media sites can enhance interaction and foster a stronger sense of community among church members (Socialbakers, 2015). These platforms offer tools for promoting participation in church activities and strengthening relationships between members. Social media has amassed millions of members and followers, surpassing traditional communication media. (Njuka, & Phiri, 2021)

The Methodist Church of Kenya has joined a variety of social media platforms and amassed several followers. Registered users can even connect as "friends" and comment on one another's posts, fostering a more interactive online environment. The Methodist church is an institution that is characterized by a rigid hierarchy and marked traditional character. This study seeks to assess how the institution adapts to the new communication revolution, the social media. While various studies explore the potential advantages and others criticize social media utilization in expanding Church reach, they fail to determine the current impact, awareness and disruptions in church practices. The awareness level of the overall use of social media, as well as its capabilities and limitations, is largely overlooked in many organizations (Dwivedi et al., 2021). On the contrary, social media is regarded as an invention with its evils. Appraisal of the awareness and willingness among church leaders is lacking from previous studies. Church leaders are the selected implementers of God's idea of the Church and congregation. In their model, most churches are run-like organizations that consist of hierarchical orders in decision-making. However, the effectiveness in decision-making is pegged on gospel reach, and continuity of ministry rather than feedback from the congregates and leaders (Sullivan, 2023). It is imperative to conduct research that collects perceptions and perspectives on the usage of online platforms as a tool in an ever-evolving world. Furthermore, churches are a focal point in the economy and societal well-being of a country. The gaps in previous studies expound on the need to assess the usage of social media and help decision-makers in advancing their ministerial work.

Social media has its challenges. One problem is that with powerful marketing forces and algorithms, people may have fewer choices than they realize. There is plenty of evidence that frequent users of social media experience a higher rate of depression and anxiety and even more evidence that the link is, at the very least, correlational. According to Ronkacova (2021), there is a causal association between the high utilization of social media and psychological health risk. At the onset of these challenges, the Church must equip itself adequately. It is a pivotal time for pastoral theologians, religious leaders, and educators to use social media to guide young adults and younger people in the utilization of social media. While the need for education holds, previous studies fail to provide an adequate assessment of awareness and current usage of social media within the churches. The level of awareness and knowledge church leaders have will determine the effectiveness of each initiative. Successful adoption and rollout of new mechanisms depend on extensive scope analysis, such as understanding congregational input and responses. Understanding the suitable mechanisms and approaches decision-makers will use to enhance the ministerial agenda is also essential.

Kühle and Larsen (2021) examine how religious minority and majority communities navigated the disruption of in-person worship by COVID-19 lockdowns through digital media. Kühle and Larsen's (2021) research details how these communities were "forced" into online spaces but had to do so regardless of their digital preparedness or inclination. The study documents a range of responses: tech-savvy communities quickly took to digital platforms for religious engagement, and this was easy for some churches. Others found it difficult because of low digital literacy, age demographics not so comfortable with technology, or no access to reliable Internet. Religious minorities were reported to have experienced compounded difficulties in adopting digital practices due to limited access to resources and infrastructure. The study shows that the digital medium transformed the very nature of worship itself and that this transformed worship affected the sense of community, participation and interaction between congregants. According to Kühle and Larsen (2021), online worship practices were often traded for a less immersive and communal experience. The research illuminates socio-technological gaps within religious communities, arguing that while digital solutions can be effective in emergencies, they do not fully

substitute the communal and sensory-rich experience of in-person worship (Wiesenberg, 2020). The study specifically examines the use and challenges of digital worship during the COVID-19 lockdown. Still, it does not analyze afterward how these communities returned to traditional settings or combined digital elements in their worship practice. For instance, future research could investigate long-term adaptations of these religious groups after the pandemic, whether online practices have been permanently integrated into their worship or instead abandoned.

The study by Baraybar-Fernández et al. (2020) examines how the Spanish Episcopal Conference has been using social media communication strategies to be relevant to the digital world. They evaluate how religious institutions adapt their messages and presence in the digital world. Baraybar-Fernández et al. (2020) assess the Catholic Church's social media efforts, looking at what type of content is shared, to whom it is targeted, and what the overall communication objectives are. The findings show that the Church's strategies are multi-faceted, not only to teach religious doctrines but also to build a communal feeling, address societal issues and appeal to older traditional audiences and younger, digitally native audiences. The Spanish Episcopal Conference creates content that resonates with current social contexts to influence and be connected to followers in a media environment that is increasingly competitive and fragmented. The authors argue that social media can be much more than a broadcast medium for religious institutions but can be used as a forum for dialogue, support, and engagement. The study by Nurhadi and Masykuri (2020) shows that social media provides a flexible, accessible medium for religious organizations to expand their reach and accommodate cultural changes. Still, the success of such strategies relies on consistent adaptation and alignment with modern communication trends. The study offers a rich picture of the communication strategies used by the Church, but it does not examine the levels of engagement and outcomes resulting from these strategies. Future research could also investigate the effectiveness of different kinds of content in terms of engagement, community growth and the Church's capacity to reach non-traditional audiences. Moreover, comparative studies between different religious organizations in Spain would add to understanding digital strategies in the religious sector.

Martini's (2022) study analyzes Vatican documents from over five decades using text mining to provide a unique view of how the Catholic Church has adapted to the changing media and communication landscape. The study documents a chronological narrative of the Church's position on media through official documents from 1967 to 2020, from a tone of caution and moral oversight to engagement and adaptation. The Vatican's gradual recognition of media as a powerful tool of outreach and evangelization, especially to younger generations more attuned to digital and social media, is one of the themes of the study. The findings show that the Church has gradually come to accept media to spread religious messages, promote community and be used to address social and moral questions. The study, however, also shows that the Church is not afraid to take a cautious embrace of media, which could potentially spread content that contradicts the Church's teachings. This view results from the Church's comprehension of the double-edged outlook of media and its choice to employ digital platforms while maintaining a skeptical stance toward content regulation and ethical concerns. The text mining approach works well to capture the evolution of the Church's perspective of and position on media; however, it does not explore how these positions have translated into practice in Catholic dioceses worldwide. Future studies might examine how the Vatican directives have been operationalized by local dioceses in different sociocultural contexts and compare how media strategies have been employed in various regions. In addition, it would be helpful to survey other denominations' followers' responses to these media engagements to gain insight into how well the Church's evolving media strategies are working.

2.2 Impacts of Social Media use in Church Ministry

Social media enhances church ministry by extending its reach beyond physical boundaries, connecting congregants across distances. Campbell (2022) highlights how platforms like Facebook and YouTube enable live-streamed sermons to reach absent or remote members; the analysis is based on case studies, and it underscores the adaptability of social media in delivering sermons and announcements, effectively turning local ministries into accessible online experiences that transcend traditional boundaries. Kimaru (2019) investigated a Norwegian church experience, finding that social media enabled the dissemination of church content to a diaspora community,

enhancing inclusivity through regular updates and interactive posts during the covid 19 pandemic. This study, grounded in surveys and interviews, highlights how digital tools maintain ties with members abroad, fostering a sense of belonging despite physical separation. These insights suggest a powerful tool for outreach. Atuehene (2022) complements this view, Ghanaian charismatic churches context finding that WhatsApp became a vital tool for sharing sermons and prayers. His interviews with the clergy and laity highlight how this immediacy overcame logistical challenges, ensuring no one was left out of spiritual care. They primarily focus on urban charismatic churches and diaspora contexts with reliable infrastructure. The gap lies in understanding how this reach operates in a rural setting with limited connectivity, such as the Nyambene Synod. This research fills the gap by examining social mediascape and its effectiveness for church ministry in the MCK Nyambene synod.

Churches use social media to build community engagement within churches by facilitating interactive and participatory platforms. Alade (2020), in his study of the Methodist church Nigeria, interviewed about 20 clergy and youth leaders across 50 churches, finding that social media facilitated online youth bible studies and prayer meetings and increased engagement among youth. Mbithi et al. (2023) delve into Kenyan protestant churches, revealing how WhatsApp groups become hubs for sharing devotional, prayer requests and event reminders, creating a vibrant digital community that reinforces bonds among members. Their mixed method approach, involving detailed surveys, shows that these interactions increased participation rates, as congregants felt more connected through frequent informal exchanges that supplemented Sunday services. There is a gap in the lack of insights into how engagement manifests in rural Methodist churches like Nyambene, where traditional community values dominate, and this research fills the gap by assessing digital participation in such a setting.

English (2021) examines U.S. churches, finding that during the COVID-19 pandemic, messaging tools enabled pastors to provide timely support. Cheong (2022) offers an Asian insight. She investigates clergy adaptations during the global crisis, finding that tools like WhatsApp and private messaging allowed pastors to provide real-time counseling, prayer and encouragement, strengthening their caregiving roles. Her

interviews with clergy reveal how these direct lines of contact addressed urgent needs like bereavement faster than in-person visits, deepening trust and responsiveness. Omollo et al. (2023) extend this in a Kenyan rural context, showing that SDA clergy used social media to follow up on members' welfare, such as checking on the sick or coordinating aid, which reinforced pastoral presence despite physical distances. Their survey data illustrate how this immediacy bridged gaps in rural areas with poor transport.

Social media revitalized youth ministry by aligning with the digital preferences of younger congregants, boosting involvement. Dyikuk (2017) supports this in a Nigerian context, finding that youth respond to short, engaging posts and online prayer sessions, which clergy use to sustain their spiritual connection. His anecdotal evidence highlights how this immediacy kept youth tethered to church life amidst competing distractions. Maitai et al. (2022) surveyed 100 youth and leaders in the Methodist church, Nyambene Synod, across 15 rural congregations, finding that 80% of youth were digitally active on platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, suggesting social media could increase participation in church programs if utilized, their findings show this potential to engage remains due to limited church initiatives Mwila (2022) conducted fieldwork in Nyambene synod, interviewing 30 Methodist clergy and members across 10 churches, finding that youth accessed Pentecostal digital content with about 100 youth per congregation showing interest, indicating a Methodist opportunity to boost retention. Her detailed interview reveals a competitive digital appeal unmet. This research sought to understand how social media affects the Methodist church, including the youth ministry.

The church evangelism efforts are amplified by social media, expanding outreach to attract new members and share the gospel widely. Dunaetz (2023) analyzes U.S. churches, finding that social media campaigns, such as event promotions and testimonies videos, drew in newcomers by increasing visibility in digital spaces where people increasingly seek community. His statistical approach, based on large-scale surveys, shows a measurable uptick in attendance linked to those efforts emphasizing social media's role as a modern evangelistic tool. The study assessed the evangelistic impact of social media in the Methodist church.

Social media can diminish physical church attendance, as congregants opt for digital alternatives over in-person worship. Campbell (2022) reinforces this globally, noting that some congregants disengage from Sunday gatherings after growing accustomed to digital streams, a trend their case links to reduces accountability. This shift challenges churches reliant on physical fellowship. This research will fill the gap by exploring the impact of social media on physical attendance. Kgatle (2018) observed a similar trend in southern Africa, where social media elevated prophetic voices, sidelining established church leaders and fragmenting authority. The congregant-focused analysis shows how these empowered new leaders. This could affect the Methodist structure. This research sought to explore the impact of social media on leadership in the Methodist church.

Misinformation is prevalent in social media and threatens the integrity of church teachings and congregation trust. Mbithi et al. (2023) investigated Kenyan Pentecostal churches and found that false messages like unverified prayer chains spread via WhatsApp, requiring clergy to correct narratives and restore trust. Their survey data reveal how this confusion undermined teaching consistency, especially among less discerning members. There is a gap in the impact of misinformation in a rural Methodist church in Kenya. This research sought to assess the effects of misinformation on Nyambene ministry integrity.

Marginalized congregants with limited access or skills often experience an exacerbated digital divide. Omollo (2023) examined the rural SDA churches, finding that older members and those without smartphones were excluded from digital ministry, widening generational gaps and economic gaps. This exclusion reduced participation as content remained inaccessible to non-users. World Bank (2021) supports this, documenting Kenya's rural internet and cost barriers, which inappropriately affect poorer communities. The data underscores how infrastructure limits inclusivity. Nyambene synod likely faces similar divided, but Methodist-specific rural impacts are unstudied. The research sought to evaluate MCK Nyambene synod digital inclusivity challenges.

The interaction between religion and media has led to the emergence of a new study referred to as digital religion. It examines the extent to which traditional spiritual activities are being adapted to the digital environment and how elements of the digital culture are influencing the life and patterns of offline religious institutions. According to Campbell (2013), online and offline religious spheres are blended and integrated. Sutinen and Cooper (2021) discuss the double-edged character of digital technologies and their influence on religious and spiritual preferences. Campbell and Tsuria (2022) further highlight the importance of digital media in everyday lives and the expression of religious faith. Religious leaders who may have resisted technological advancement in early 2020 have had to reexamine their choices and embrace technology. Traditionally, churches leveraged social media's power to disseminate information and maintain engagement with their congregations (Hunsinger et al., 2019). This approach proved particularly effective in reaching younger audiences accustomed to online interaction (Adelaku, 2020). However, the rise of social media influencers, the unpredictable nature of knowledge on social media timelines, and the platform's growing influence necessitate a more critical approach from religious institutions. Churches must exhibit a heightened awareness of how they function within these social media ecosystems, particularly regarding content creation and dissemination (Livingston et al., 2023). Research suggests that online content consumption significantly shapes beliefs and knowledge (Constantine & Jung, 2018). In the era of misinformation, the church must play a key role in creating awareness of misinformation and building mechanisms to ensure the safety and verification of social media content rather than relying solely on the individual user.

2.3 Challenges of Using Social Media in Church Ministry

Social media platforms play a crucial role in facilitating church activities. They offer opportunities and come with challenges that can impact their effectiveness. Omollo, Kinuthia, and Wamalwa's (2023) journal on Measures to Enhance Use of Social Media Platforms among SDA churches identifies specific themes of digital transformation, outreach and evangelism, cultural awareness and rural engagement. According to the study, members of the church need to understand and embrace social media platforms for practical use. Mbithi, Kamwaria, and Kinuthia (2023) observe that the Kenyan church has not fully embraced the usage of social media sites for

evangelization and youth ministry. The survey, involving over 400 respondents, shows that the church must develop both the infrastructure and policies needed for an effective social media presence. The study also observed the need for the presentation of content that is more appealing and attractive to the youth. The study focuses mainly on the youth demographic and leaves out the rest of the congregation. This gap means that there is a need for research on the overall church congregation to understand its level of engagement and perception of the adoption of social media in church ministry.

Another research done by Kathambi, Gitome and Bwire (2022) on the utilization of social media for evangelization provides evidence of the challenges faced using social media, namely lack of ICT personnel, low internet connectivity, unaffordable tools and negative attitudes towards the use of the platforms. These findings provide a picture of the inadequacies experienced by the church but fail to examine the level of awareness on the usage of social media from different demographics in the church, a gap this study will be keen to fill. One significant challenge faced by churches in leveraging social media is unstable internet connectivity. Chukwudi, Ogu, and Monday (2016) highlighted this issue, noting that while infrastructure gadgets like computers or tablets are readily available, unreliable internet access hampers effective outreach efforts. This observation is consistent with findings from Andrews (2011), Appiah, Dwomoh, Kyire (2013), and Akakandelwa (2015). Effective utilization of social media platforms requires proper training. Okyere, Agyapong, and Nyarku (2011) identified inadequate training and development as a key factor leading to the mismanagement of social media sites by spiritual leaders.

Church members sometimes misuse social media platforms to market themselves rather than engage in church-related activities. Weisgerber (2013) found that some social media managers struggle with content creation, posting irrelevant material that fails to resonate with the audience. Andrews (2011) explored the privacy implications of social networking, revealing that while users may have more control over their data, sharing information on social media can still compromise privacy. Churches must exercise caution when posting online to protect sensitive information and maintain trust. Without proper content filtering, church members may be exposed to

inappropriate material online. Crispin et al. (2004) highlighted the risk of encountering objectionable content on platforms like Facebook, which can undermine faith and values.

Social media can be a significant time sink, distracting users from more productive activities. Buch (2019) pointed out that while social media can facilitate valuable connections, it can also lead to time-wasting activities like gaming and chatting. Younger generations are vulnerable to the adverse effects of social media addiction due to their reliance on digital technology for social interaction. Buch (2019) noted that this dependency can cloud judgment and exacerbate pre-existing mental health issues. In regions with unstable power supplies, consistent internet access becomes a challenge. Adomi (2007) and Akonu (2005) found that power outages hinder internet usage, impacting organizations, including churches that rely on social media for communication.

Generally, while social media platforms offer numerous benefits for church activities, they also present various challenges. Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning, proper training, and vigilant oversight to ensure appropriate and responsible use of social media within the church community. Cultural perceptions and resistance create significant obstacles to integrating social media into church ministry. Badmos 2014 conducted a qualitative study at a conference of the Redeemed Christian Church of Nigeria, involving approximately 50 clergies and members. It found that 60 percent resisted social media, perceiving it as a secular threat to traditional worship practice, fearing it undermined spiritual authenticity. Cheon (2016) explored the global protestant and catholic context, primarily North America, through a theoretical analysis of 15 secondary sources, concluding that 70 percent of church leaders hesitated to adopt social media due to its association with celebrity culture clashing with sacred traditions. These findings highlight a persistent cultural tension but are primarily based on pre covid 19 when churches were forced to adapt to social media. My research seeks to examine the specific cultural problems of utilizing social media in MCK Nyambene synod church misinformation and content reliability undermine the credibility of social media in church ministry. Kgatle (2018) interviewed 25 leaders and members of prophetic churches in South Africa and Zimbabwe, finding

that 70 percent reported misinformation, such as false prophecies on Facebook, eroding trust in church teaching and requiring clergy intervention. Ikiba (2024) surveyed 60 members and leaders of Pentecostal churches, finding that 65 percent encountered anti-Christian social media content, prompting defensive responses that strained ministry focus. These works provide a prophetic and Pentecostal view. This research sought to analyze social media effects in the Kenyan Methodist context.

Content management and ethical concerns complicate social media use in churches. Ennin's (2023) dissertation provides robust data surveying 200 members and clergy of the Kumasi Diocese of the Methodist Church in Ghana, finding that 50 percent faced ethical dilemmas such as privacy concerns hindering social media evangelistic use. Cheong (2016) found that leaders worried about branding issues like misrepresentation online. My research sought to explore the specific ethical issues affecting MCK Nyambene synod.

According to Wiesenberg (2020), some Christians perceive the church as an institution whose main aim is to avoid transformation. Consequently, they consider technology to be an enemy of the church and an avenue for Satanic influence. This type of thinking is erred and makes those who embrace such philosophy significantly reduce their effectiveness in distributing the word of God. Additionally, the scripture is not against technology. The Bible records the words of God to man as, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" in Gen. 1:28. The Hebrew word that is translated as "subdue" is defined as "to the first man and woman were given the task of controlling their environment." In essence, God dictated people to innovate and grow extensively; hence, they are allowed to change and use technology.

The same automobile that takes a person to the bar can also take them to a religious institution. Hence, the same internet that can offer pornographic images can also deliver the Word of God. The result, whether positive or adverse, is determined by its application. One shortcoming of technology is the temptation to worship the outcomes of digital advancements (Lawton, 2022). The book of Isaiah states the foolishness of skilled laborers crafting an idol and then kneeling and worshiping the creation. The book illustrates that the same wood used to construct the idol is at man's disposal to

be utilized as fuel for warmth or baking bread. It shows the absurdity of worshipping things created by man's hands. Mankind tends to be controlled by pride when it comes to technological achievements. It is wrong to think that there is no limit to the technological advancements developed by human beings. To assume that there are no boundaries for technology.

The limits of man are exhibited in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. In Dan. 4:30, the boastful king announces, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" As a result of Nebuchadnezzar's boastfulness concerning the technological developments in his kingdom, he was stricken with madness (Garcia, 2020). The scripture also describes his condition in this manner: "He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Dan. 4:33). The example from the Bible gives ample warning concerning the dangers of being too consumed by human achievements.

Moreover, there is another bible story that offers powerful insight into another ungodly behavior that man may be tempted to demonstrate, considering his advances in technology. The tower of Babel shows man's erroneous tendencies in developing technology when the people constructing the building wanted to reach God. Those who conspired to build the tower tried to elevate themselves to the level of the creator of the universe. They viewed themselves with extreme importance and declared, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4). Man must understand that all his achievements occur under God's watchful eye. If we fulfill something, it is God's grace that allows us to succeed. There are multiple instances in which technology can bring glory to God. Horsfield (2020) states that on several occasions, technological projects are ordered by God. For example, the Lord instructed Noah to build an ark and Moses to create the Tabernacle and praised David for his interest in constructing a temple. All these advancements brought glory to God and displayed His master plan for saving humankind.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study will be studied by the functionalism theory. Functionalism, an influential idea in sociology traced back to Émile Durkheim and later refined by Talcott Parsons, holds that each part of society plays a role that keeps the whole system running smoothly. Applied to the Methodist Church in Kenya's Nyambene Synod, this perspective helps explain how church leaders now pull social media into everyday ministry. Seen through this lens, religion stays a vital institution that steadies social life by shaping common values, shared rules, and a sense of belonging. When the church turns to social media, these platforms become an up-to-date extension of traditional bulletin boards, hymn books, and fellowship gatherings. Constant online chat therefore supports core church tasks, such as welcoming newcomers, offering spiritual advice, building tight-knit groups, and guiding everyday conduct, by making communication quick, open to all, and layered with faith-filled content. Apps like WhatsApp and Facebook become digital sanctuaries where prayers are repeated, group spirit is stirred, and social bonds stay strong, even during emergencies such as the COVID-19 lockdown. Functionalism gives a handy lens for spotting how different people, including the clergy, lay preachers, and everyday worshippers, keep the online church running. The same lens also flags problems that threaten social harmony, like fake news, excluding older members from tech spaces, and weaker face-to-face ties because everything now happens on screens. When this study uses that framework, it can weigh how social media props up Nyambene Synod's work and, just as importantly, where shaky media habits put that role at risk. In short, functionalism offers a wide-angle view that shows both the steadying force of digital tools in church life and the new stresses they bring along.

Functionalism looks at how each part of society keeps the whole system running. Seen this way, social media becomes a key gear that oils the main tasks of the Methodist Church in Kenya's Nyambene Synod, including community building, news sharing, and spiritual growth. So platforms such as WhatsApp or Facebook are more than trendy gadgets. Churches welcome them because each click helps to keep worship and fellowship on track. Functionalism helps explain why churches turn to social media by showing how these platforms fill both the clear and hidden needs within a faith community. The clear needs are sermon uploads, Bible verses, and

event announcements. They are the manifest functions everyone notices. In contrast, hidden needs like building friendships, sparking conversations across ages, and encouraging daily devotions through short posts count as the latent functions that quietly matter too. In the Nyambene Synod, for instance, WhatsApp groups do more than share schedules. They become informal rooms for emotional check-ins, testimony swaps, and collective prayer, thus weaving church members together in a tighter, more supportive network.

Functionalists see every part of society, religion included, as a team of subsystems that need to run in tune with one another. Inside the Methodist Church, duties and ceremonies are laid out to keep order and pass the faith forward. When social media entered the scene, it did not crack that balance. It simply dressed old tasks in new clothes. A sermon that used to echo from the pulpit is now streamed on Facebook Live or saved in a YouTube link, still teaching the same lessons. Youth groups that depended on face-to-face hangouts now spark conversation with digital Bible games, Instagram reels, and shareable memes. From this view, new technology is not a rebellion against tradition but an upgrade that outfits religion for a moving, modern world. From a functionalist point of view, researchers can see how social media boosts religion's binding power by tightening the shared sense of right and wrong. Emile Durkheim stressed that religion builds community by giving people a feeling of "we-ness." Online platforms pick up that task, letting members publicly profess their faith, join digital prayers, and stand together with the larger church family. Shared values such as forgiveness, kindness, or humility-often travel through scripture images, morning devotionals, or quick notes in parish group chats. Taken together, these small postings form an online holy space that sits beside, rather than replaces, the church building.

Functionalism offers a useful lens for understanding how church systems adjust when faced with outside pressure. Take the Nyambene Synod: when young members drift away or churchgoers switch to flashier Pentecostal congregations, the Synod turns to social media as a fallback. That platform then carries and updates usual duties-care, teaching, even worship-in a language the younger audience knows. Parsons calls these survival moves "functional prerequisites," the idea that any institution must tweak

itself to new conditions or risk fading. By grooming digital volunteers, naming communication officers, and setting aside funds for live streams, the Methodist Church shows it can learn, grow, and stay relevant. Functionalism adds depth to discussions about social equilibrium and internal regulation. It helps explain church pushback against social media not just as stubbornness but as a drive to protect identity and stability. Many older members and some clergy eye online ministry warily, fearing it waters down the sacred feel of in-person worship. Yet, from a functional angle, this wariness is useful feedback that slows innovation so church teaching and ethics remain aligned.

Consequently, Functionalism broadens the study by offering a sociological lens that reaches past surface-level gadget talk. It places social media inside the larger church system, showing how it can still nurture ritual life, build unity, and steer adaptation. Hence, the research does not simply count Facebook or WhatsApp users. It also asks how those platforms carry on the Church's core mission in an online world.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Location of the Study

This study was conducted in the Nyambene Synod of the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), located in Igembe Sub-County, Meru County. The Synod comprises 24 circuits, including Laare, Maua, Mutuati, Kangeta, Njia South, Amungenti, Nthambiro, Kiengu, Antobetwe, Athi, Nturuba, Athiruujine, Tuuru, Muringene, Mailitatu, Njia North, Kawiru, Machungulu, Kathelwa, and Gichanine, each with approximately eight churches. According to Mwila (2024), the Nyambene Synod has experienced a notable shift in religious affiliation and participation patterns, influenced by modernization and changing social values. The area presents a dynamic religious landscape shaped by both rural and semi-urban characteristics, making it suitable for examining social media adoption in ministry.

The choice of Nyambene Synod was strategic and justified due to its diversity in demographics, socio-economic conditions, and levels of digital exposure. The Synod reflects a typical Kenyan rural context where traditional beliefs and modern technology coexist, providing a rich environment for studying the Church's adaptation to digital transformation. Its congregations include a mix of tech-savvy youth and older members less familiar with social media, thus offering contrasting perspectives on digital ministry. Moreover, the region faces infrastructural challenges such as poor internet connectivity, which mirror the realities of many rural churches in Kenya. From a sociological perspective, Nyambene represents an ideal case for understanding how a vital social institution—the Church—responds to technological and cultural shifts to maintain cohesion, relevance, and communal identity in the post-pandemic digital era.

3.2 Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive survey research approach, which was appropriate for gathering data on the current status through direct engagement with informants and respondents (Mazhar, Anjum, Anwar, & Khan, 2023). The survey design was considered relevant for analysis as it permitted various data collection strategies,

including semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and document evaluation (Cohen et al., 2017). The design enabled the researcher to generalize the situation under study without engaging the entire population. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to gather up-to-date insights from selected lay preachers, church leaders, and church ministers, thereby providing a comprehensive snapshot of current practices and perceptions regarding the utilization of social media in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod. The study focused on exploring how social media influenced various aspects of church ministry using primary data and secondary data derived from relevant literature, research reports, and online sources.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study comprised members of the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), Nyambene Synod, located in Meru County. According to the Methodist Church in Kenya Annual Statistical Report (2024), the Synod had an estimated 25,463 registered church members, 24 ordained church leaders, and 24 lay preachers, distributed across its 24 circuits. This population was considered appropriate as it represented diverse groups within the church hierarchy, enabling the study to obtain comprehensive views on the use of social media in ministry. Church leaders and lay preachers provided insights into the institutional and leadership dimensions of digital engagement, while ordinary members offered perspectives on awareness, accessibility, and participation in online church activities.

Table 1: Population Summary Characteristics of the Nyambene synod

Category	Population
Church members	21645
Church lay preachers	2037
Church lay leaders	1527
Circuit clergy	254
Total	25463

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The selection of respondents in this study was conducted using both random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. According to Mweshi and Sakyi (2020), random

sampling ensures equal chances for all individuals in the population, while purposive sampling targets individuals with specific knowledge relevant to the study. The researcher employed random sampling to select the circuits in the Nyambene Synod that participated in the study. Appendix G gives the sampling determining table. A complete list of the 24 circuits was arranged alphabetically, and every fourth circuit was selected starting from the first, resulting in a sample of six circuits. Systematic random sampling was also used to select the churches within the sampled circuits. Churches were listed alphabetically, and every fifth church was chosen starting from the first. To ensure sufficient representation, the study sampled 14 churches out of a total of 46, which accounted for more than 30 percent.

Based on Kathuri and Pals (1993), a sample of 377 was determined appropriate for a population of 25,463 using a simple random sampling table. Proportionate sampling was therefore used to select 377 church members from the sampled circuits. In addition, purposive sampling was employed to select key church leaders with experience in social media use in ministry. These included six circuit ministers, one church leader from each of the 14 churches, and the synod bishop. Their insights were essential in understanding how social media was integrated into church ministry. Fourteen lay preachers—one from each of the selected churches—were also purposively chosen due to their critical role in church services.

In total, the study comprised a sample of 412 participants: 377 church members, 14 church leaders, 14 lay preachers, six circuit ministers, and the synod bishop. This sampling approach aligned with Creswell (2008), who emphasized the importance of selecting respondents familiar with the research variables to ensure relevant and reliable data.

Table 2: Sampling Matrix

Respondents	Population	Sample
Bishop	1	1
Clergy	6	6
Church leaders	14	14
Lay preachers	14	14
Church members	25428	377
Total	25463	412

3.5 Research Instruments

Data were collected through the administration of structured interview schedules and questionnaires. Saldana (2011) argued that using multiple data collection techniques provides a broader range of views for analysis and presentation. According to Harris (2010), the adoption of more than one data acquisition method enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. The questionnaires consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Structured interview guides were used for the bishop, circuit ministers, and church leaders, while questionnaires were distributed to church members.

3.5.1 Questionnaire

The study utilized a structured questionnaire as the main data collection instrument, presented in Appendix B. The questionnaire contained both closed- and open-ended questions designed to collect information from church leaders, lay preachers, and ordinary church members of the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod. It was divided into three main sections: Section A captured demographic information such as gender, age, position in the church, and frequency of social media use; Section B focused on the use of social media platforms among church leaders, assessing their level of awareness, training, and the perceived impact of social media on ministry; while Section C addressed social media use among church members, exploring their engagement, participation, and challenges encountered in accessing or utilizing digital platforms for ministry. The instrument included both Likert-scale items and checklist-type questions to measure respondents' opinions, attitudes, and experiences. It was developed and refined based on the guidelines of Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) to ensure clarity, validity, and consistency with the study objectives.

3.5.2 Interview

The study employed both structured and informal interviews (Appendices C, D & E) to collect detailed data from lay preachers, clergy, and church leaders, in line with Osborne and Grant-Smith (2021). This method allowed participants to express their views freely and provided flexibility to consider individual contexts. The interview schedule was structured to address the study's objectives: (i) to assess the impact of social media use in church ministry, (ii) to examine awareness

of social media platforms within the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, and (iii) to identify challenges encountered in the use of social media for ministry. These interviews also helped the researcher understand the difficulties church leaders faced in managing ministry in the digital era and provided insights into the spiritual effectiveness of social media platforms.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher visited the sampled respondents, including the synod bishop, church ministers, superintendent ministers, lay preachers, and church members. Respondents were contacted ten days prior to the scheduled data collection to book appointments and explain the purpose of the study. Adequate preparation ensured effective planning and execution of interviews and questionnaire distribution. Both questionnaire (Appendices B) and interview schedules (Appendices C,D & E) were administered to all relevant participants.

3.7 Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were applied to evaluate the collected information (Mezmir, 2020). Field notes were condensed and categorized using note cards. Raw data were organized, synthesized with secondary sources, and thematically arranged based on the study objectives. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21 was used for the quantitative analysis. Qualitative data from church records and field notes were also evaluated. During the data organization phase, note cards were used to record responses, while interview notes were edited and categorized. The analysis focused on assessing the adequacy, consistency, validity, credibility, and usefulness of the collected information in addressing the study objectives.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

Kombo and Tromp (2006) emphasized the importance of addressing ethical issues in research. In line with this, Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) advised that researchers must avoid causing psychological or physical harm to participants by refraining from asking irrelevant or intrusive questions, using threatening language, or making respondents uncomfortable. Accordingly, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the Chuka University Ethics Review Committee, followed by a research permit from

the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) Appendix I. The purpose of the study was explained to all participants, and confidentiality of their identities and responses was assured. All data collected were handled with strict confidentiality and care throughout the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEVEL OF AWARENESS AND ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AMONG CONGREGANTS OF MCK, NYAMBENE SYNOD

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses findings relating to the first objective of the study, which was to examine the level of awareness and adoption of social media platforms among congregants of the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), Nyambene Synod. The discussion integrates descriptive and inferential statistics with insights from prior literature and is interpreted through the lens of functionalist theory. This theoretical framework views digital technologies such as social media as modern tools that maintain the continuity of societal systems, including religious organizations, by reinforcing communication, cohesion, and adaptation (Durkheim, 1912; Parsons, 1951). In this context, social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook are seen as digital extensions of church space, facilitating evangelization, fellowship, and information flow (Campbell & Tsuria, 2022; Mwila, 2024).

4.2 Response rate

The study targeted 412 respondents across five categories: bishops, clergy, church leaders, lay preachers, and church members. A total of 388 questionnaires were returned and 20 interviews conducted, resulting in an achieved sample of 408 respondents, which represents a high response rate of approximately 99% (Table 3). All categories except church members exceeded their targeted sample sizes, with particularly strong participation from clergy and church leaders. The slightly lower response from church members did not significantly affect the overall response rate, which was sufficient to support the reliability and validity of the study findings.

Table 3: Response rate

Respondents	Estimated Population	Target Sample	Returned questionnaires	Achieved interviews	Total Achieved sample
Bishop	1	1	2	0	2
Clergy	6	6	14	3	17
Church leaders	14	14	41	10	51
Lay preachers	14	14	15	7	22
Church members	25428	377	316	0	316
Total	25463	412	388	20	408

4.3 Demographic Information of the Respondents

The study captured demographic characteristics of respondents in terms of gender, age bracket, and church position. The findings indicated that a majority of the respondents were male (58.8%), while females accounted for 41.2% of the total sample. This gender composition suggests that men are more actively involved in church leadership and digital ministry activities within the Nyambene Synod, possibly reflecting the traditional gender roles in church administration. However, the significant proportion of female respondents also indicates growing inclusivity and participation of women in digital and ministry-related initiatives, highlighting the church's gradual shift toward gender-balanced engagement.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents (32%) were aged between 26 and 35 years, followed by 25.8% in the 18–25 category. The 36–45 group constituted 23.2%, while 13.1% were aged 46–55, and 5.9% were 56 years and above. These results imply that most respondents were relatively young, falling within the economically active and technologically adaptive age groups. This finding is significant because younger members are more likely to embrace social media platforms for communication, worship, and outreach, making them key drivers of digital transformation within the church. Conversely, the lower representation of older members suggests possible generational differences in digital literacy and adoption, emphasizing the need for targeted training and inclusion strategies to ensure broader participation across age groups.

Regarding church roles, the largest proportion of participants were regular church members, comprising 81.4% of the sample. Church leaders accounted for 10.6%, lay preachers for 3.9%, and pastors for 3.6%, while bishops made up 0.5% of the respondents. This demographic profile reflects a youthful and male-dominated congregation, with the majority of participants engaged as members rather than in formal leadership positions.

Table 4: Respondents Gender, Age bracket and Church position

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	160	41.2
Male	228	58.8
Total	388	100
Age bracket		
18-25	100	25.8
26-35	124	32
36-45	90	23.2
46-55	51	13.1
56 and above	23	5.9
Total	388	100
Church position		
Bishop	2	0.5
Church leader	41	10.6
Lay preacher	15	3.9
Member	316	81.4
Pastor	14	3.6
Total	388	100

4.4 Awareness and Use of Social Media

This section presents findings on the awareness and use of social media among respondents in the Methodist Church of Kenya, Nyambene Synod. It includes responses on personal use of social media, platforms used for church-related activities and frequency of usage.

4.4.1 Personal Use of Social Media

The study revealed that a vast majority (94.6%) of respondents personally use social media, while only 5.4% reported not using it. This finding signifies widespread digital engagement among members of the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, indicating that social media has become an integral part of their daily communication and interaction patterns. The high level of adoption presents a significant opportunity for the church to harness these platforms for evangelism, teaching, fellowship, and administrative communication, thereby extending its reach beyond physical boundaries. From a sociological perspective, this reflects a transformation in the modes of religious participation, where digital platforms are increasingly serving as spaces for worship, socialization, and community cohesion. However, the small percentage of non-users suggests a degree of digital exclusion, possibly linked to age, limited digital literacy, or poor internet connectivity, underscoring the need for

targeted capacity-building initiatives to ensure inclusivity. The findings further highlight the importance of developing clear policies and guidelines to manage online ministry responsibly, addressing concerns such as misinformation, privacy, and exposure to secular influences. Overall, the high rate of social media usage demonstrates the church's potential to strengthen its ministry and enhance social connectivity through well-structured and ethically guided digital engagement..

Table 5: Personal Use of Social Media

Do you personally use social media?	Frequency	Percent
No	21	5.4
Yes	367	94.6
Total	388	100

4.4.2 Platforms Used for Church-Related Activities

Among the various platforms, WhatsApp (32%) and Facebook (27.1%) were the most commonly used for church-related activities. These were followed by YouTube (20.2%) and Instagram (9.6%). TikTok and X (formerly Twitter) had lower usage rates at 6.6% and 3.4%, respectively. Only 1.2% of respondents indicated that they do not use any social media for church-related activities (Table 6). This shows a strong preference for communication-oriented platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook in ministry contexts.

Table 6. Platforms Used for Church-Related Activities

Social media platforms	Frequency	Percent
Facebook	258	27.10%
WhatsApp	305	32.00%
YouTube	192	20.20%
Instagram	91	9.60%
TikTok	63	6.60%
X	32	3.40%
None	11	1.20%

4.4.3 Frequency of Social Media Use for Ministry

The study found that a majority of respondents (68.8%) reported using social media for ministry purposes on a daily basis, while 23.5% indicated using it weekly. Only a small proportion used it monthly (3.1%), rarely (3.6%), or never (1%), indicating that social media plays a consistent and integral role in church communication and

engagement within the Nyambene Synod. This high frequency of use demonstrates that digital platforms have become central tools for religious participation, allowing members to remain continuously connected to church activities, teachings, and fellowship. From a sociological perspective, the finding reflects a shift in how religious communities sustain social bonds, as digital interaction now supplements traditional forms of worship and congregational life. The predominance of daily engagement implies that the church's messages and programs are accessible in real time, enhancing responsiveness, inclusivity, and spiritual continuity. However, the small fraction of respondents with limited or no use of social media signals possible barriers such as digital fatigue, technological constraints, or generational differences in media consumption. Therefore, these results underscore the importance of developing structured digital ministry programs that promote balanced, meaningful, and sustained online participation while ensuring that all congregants, regardless of age or digital capacity, remain actively involved in the life of the church.

Table 7. Frequency of Social Media Use for Ministry

Frequency of use of social media	Frequency	Percent
Daily	267	68.8
Monthly	12	3.1
Never	4	1
Rarely	14	3.6
Weekly	91	23.5
Total	388	100

4.5 Chi-Square Test between Demographic Factors and Social Media Awareness

A Chi-Square test of independence was performed to assess the association between demographic factors (gender, age, and respondents' church position) and the level of awareness and adoption of social media use among congregants of MCK, Nyambene Synod. The findings are presented in Table 8. The Chi-Square results indicated a statistically significant association between gender and awareness of social media use ($\chi^2 = 8.351$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.004$). This implied that awareness levels differed significantly by gender, with males demonstrating slightly higher awareness compared to females. Similarly, a significant relationship was found between age and awareness of social media ($\chi^2 = 25.762$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$). Younger congregants (18–35 years) reported higher awareness levels than older groups, particularly those aged

56 years and above, who exhibited the lowest awareness. This suggests that age plays an important role in determining adoption and familiarity with social media platforms.

Table 8. Chi-Square Test between Gender, Age, Church Position and Social Media Awareness

Gender	Aware	Not Aware	Total	Chi-Square	Df	P-Value
Female	145	15	160	8.351	1	0.004
Male	222	6	228			
Age				25.762	4	0.000
18-25 years	97	3	100			
26-35 years	122	2	124			
36-45 years	85	5	90			
46-55 years	46	5	51			
56 and above years	17	6	23			
Church position				14.414	4	0.006
Bishop	2	0	2			
Church leader	40	1	41			
Lay preacher	11	4	15			
Member	301	15	316			
Pastor	13	1	14			

*Df is the Degrees of Freedom

In addition, church position was significantly associated with awareness of social media ($\chi^2 = 14.414$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.006$). Members and church leaders recorded the highest awareness, whereas lay preachers and pastors had comparatively lower awareness. This finding may indicate that leadership responsibilities influence engagement with social media tools. The Chi-results demonstrated that demographic characteristics specifically gender, age, and church position, significantly influence awareness of social media among congregants of MCK, Nyambene Synod. Younger members and those in leadership positions are more aware and likely to adopt social media for church activities, while older congregants and certain leadership roles exhibit lower awareness. These findings highlight the need for targeted digital literacy programs and structured training to ensure inclusive adoption of social media in church ministry.

4.6 The Church and Social Media Awareness and Adoption

4.6.1 Church Demography

The study examined demographic characteristics of respondents in terms of gender, age distribution, and church roles. The results revealed that 58.8% of respondents were male, while 41.2% were female. In terms of age distribution, the majority (32%)

were between 26 and 35 years, followed by 25.8% aged 18–25 years. Respondents aged 36–45 years accounted for 23.2%, those between 46–55 years made up 13.1%, while only 5.9% were above 56 years. Regarding church positions, the majority were regular members (81.4%), whereas church leaders constituted 10.6%, lay preachers 3.9%, pastors 3.6%, and bishops 0.5%. These findings indicate a male-dominated and youth-centered congregation, with most participants being regular members rather than clergy or leaders.

The study found that males constituted a greater proportion (58.8%) than females (41.2%). This finding concurs with Bwalya (2021), who reported similar gender patterns among Catholic youths in Nairobi, where men dominated online engagement and digital church forums. A comparable trend was observed by Jelagat (2022), who noted that men were more involved in social media adoption in Pentecostal churches in Kenya. However, this result contrasts with Kathambi et al. (2022), who found that women in Methodist congregations were actively engaged in digital evangelization, often more than men. These variations may be attributed to cultural differences, digital literacy levels, and traditional gender roles influencing church participation in different settings.

The results revealed that younger respondents, particularly those aged 18–35, were the most represented group as seen in Figure 1. This finding aligns with Jelagat (2022), who indicated that social media adoption in Kenyan churches is driven largely by youth. Similarly, Akussah et al. (2022) observed that in Ghanaian charismatic churches, young congregants were the leading participants in online worship and ministry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Maitai et al. (2022) also reported that youth play an integral role in church-initiated programs within the Methodist Church in Kenya, underscoring their significance in embracing digital platforms. These findings collectively suggest that young people's familiarity with technology positions them as key drivers of social media use in religious contexts.

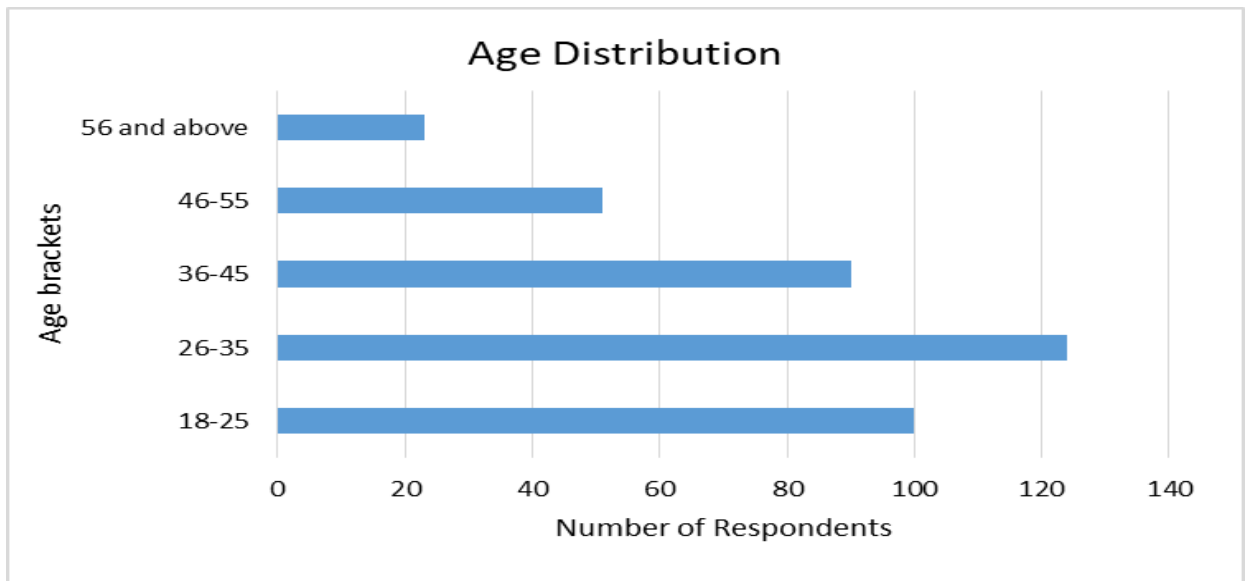


Figure 1.0: Respondents age distribution

The finding that 81.4% of respondents were regular members, with very few in formal leadership roles, is consistent with Omollo et al. (2023), who reported that in SDA churches in Kenya, digital engagement is dominated by ordinary members rather than clergy. Similarly, Mbithi et al. (2023) found that lay congregants are more active on social media for evangelization than pastors, indicating that social media is more appealing to grassroots members. However, Mwila (2024) notes that in some Methodist congregations, clergy participation in digital ministry is gradually increasing, driven by the need to remain relevant in modern communication spaces. These insights suggest that while leadership involvement remains low in the Nyambene Synod, trends elsewhere indicate potential for greater clergy participation in the future.

4.6.2 Awareness and Adoption of Social Media Platforms

The study revealed that 94.6% of respondents personally use social media, indicating widespread engagement among congregants. This concurs with Eke and Enweani (2019), who found that Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are extensively used for evangelism and information sharing in African churches. Similarly, Dwivedi et al. (2021) emphasized the growing ubiquity of social media platforms globally, including in religious settings. Pillay (2020) also noted that social media adoption in church communities has become inevitable as congregants seek alternative means of

fellowship and spiritual engagement. These studies reinforce the current finding that social media has permeated religious life, making it a vital tool for church ministry.

The descriptive results indicated that WhatsApp (32%) and Facebook (27.1%) were the most preferred platforms for church-related activities, followed by YouTube and Instagram. This aligns with Baraybar-Fernández et al. (2020), who observed that Facebook remains the most widely used platform for church communication due to its capacity for group interactions and content sharing. Similarly, Eke and Enweani (2019) reported that WhatsApp and Facebook dominate digital evangelization strategies because they enable real-time interaction and low-cost connectivity. Campbell and Tsuria (2022) also noted that communication-oriented platforms such as WhatsApp have become digital sanctuaries for prayers, fellowship, and announcements, particularly during disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study established that 68.8% of respondents use social media for ministry on a daily basis, while 23.5% engage weekly. This finding concurs with Wiesenberg (2020), who highlighted that digital worship and communal experiences have normalized daily engagement with social media in many congregations. Likewise, Bocala-Wiedemann (2022) emphasized that youth and young adults increasingly rely on social platforms for spiritual formation, making frequent use a common trend. Eke and Enweani (2019) further confirmed that digital tools are no longer supplementary but central to everyday church communication and evangelization.

Chi-Square results as shown in Table 9 indicated that gender, age, and church position significantly influence awareness and adoption of social media. Younger members demonstrated higher awareness than older congregants, consistent with findings by Gultom et al. (2022), who noted that Generation Z exhibits strong affinity for digital platforms, making them vital in shaping ministry practices. Similarly, Njuka and Phiri (2021) reported that young church members across Africa lead in digital religious engagement due to greater exposure to technology. Differences across roles align with Dunaetz and Bocock (2020), who found that organizational commitment and work engagement affect technology uptake among church staff and volunteers. However, Wiesenberg (2020) suggested that leadership participation in digital ministry is

increasing globally, signaling a possible future shift toward clergy-led online engagement in the Methodist Church.

Table 9. Chi-Square Test between Gender, Age, Church Position and Social Media Awareness

Demographics	Chi-Square	Df	P-Value
Gender	8.351	1	0.004
Age	25.762	4	0.000
Church position	14.414	4	0.006

*Df is the Degrees of Freedom

4.7 Conclusion

The findings of this chapter reveal that awareness and adoption of social media among congregants of the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, is remarkably high, with 94.6% of respondents reporting active use of social media platforms. WhatsApp and Facebook emerged as the most preferred platforms for ministry-related activities, primarily because of their accessibility, affordability, and suitability for group communication and live interaction. Frequent usage patterns, with over two-thirds of respondents engaging daily, illustrate that social media has become a central channel for religious communication rather than a supplementary tool. These trends resonate with existing literature emphasizing the growing role of digital platforms in promoting evangelization and sustaining fellowship within Christian communities. Younger congregants dominate social media use, reinforcing their critical role in driving digital transformation in ministry. Conversely, older members and some leadership categories demonstrated lower levels of awareness, indicating potential gaps that require targeted interventions.

Chi-Square analysis confirmed significant associations between awareness and demographic variables such as gender, age, and church position, suggesting that sociocultural and structural factors influence digital engagement in church settings. From a functionalist perspective, the integration of social media into church ministry reflects the adaptive capacity of religious institutions to maintain cohesion and relevance in an increasingly digital society. However, the disparities identified in awareness and adoption call for deliberate strategies such as structured digital literacy programs, provision of affordable internet access, and formal guidelines for online ministry engagement. These measures would ensure inclusivity and maximize the

benefits of digital platforms for spiritual growth and outreach. The next chapter builds upon these findings by exploring the specific impact of social media on church ministry, examining how these tools shape communication effectiveness, member participation, and evangelistic reach.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CHURCH MINISTRY IN THE METHODIST CHURCH, NYAMBENE SYNOD

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings and interpretation related to the second objective of the study, which was to assess the impact of social media on church ministry within the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), Nyambene Synod. The analysis explores the extent to which social media influences evangelism, communication, member engagement, and overall ministry effectiveness. As digital technologies increasingly shape contemporary religious practices, understanding their implications for ministry is essential for both strategic planning and theological reflection.

The discussion draws on descriptive statistics, inferential analysis, and thematic insights from interviews with clergy, lay preachers, and church leaders. It also incorporates evidence from previous empirical studies and theoretical frameworks. Anchored in functionalist theory, this chapter interprets social media as a structural adaptation that fulfills essential functions of communication, cohesion, and participation within a religious system (Durkheim, 1912; Parsons, 1951). Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube serve as digital spaces for preaching, worship, and fellowship, enabling the church to maintain relevance in a rapidly digitalizing society (Campbell & Tsuria, 2022; Bocala-Wiedemann, 2022).

The findings are presented under key thematic areas, including ministry activities conducted via social media, its role in extending the church's reach beyond physical congregations, perceived impact among members, and determinants of impact based on regression analysis. Qualitative responses from interviews complement these quantitative findings, offering nuanced perspectives on how social media reshapes ministry practice in the Nyambene Synod.

5.2 Social Media Engagement in Ministry

This section presents the findings related to how church members and leaders utilize social media for ministry engagement. The analysis covers the types of ministry activities commonly conducted through digital platforms and whether social media has extended the church's outreach beyond its physical congregation.

5.2.1 Extending Church Reach beyond Physical Congregation

An overwhelming 95.1% of respondents agreed that social media has helped extend the church's reach beyond the physical congregation. Only 3.1% said "No," while 1.8% were "Not sure." This highlights the transformative role of social media in enabling broader outreach and digital evangelism.

Table 10. Extending Church Reach beyond Physical Congregation

Social media and physical reach	Frequency	Percent
No	12	3.1
Not sure	7	1.8
Yes	369	95.1
Total	388	100

5.2.2 Types of Ministry Activities via Social Media

Respondents reported using social media for a range of ministry activities. The most common were teaching/preaching (20.1%) and youth engagement (20.0%), followed closely by evangelism/outreach (17.3%) and announcements & church updates (18.0%). Other activities included prayer and fellowship (12.9%) and fundraising/mobilization (9.7%). A small percentage (2.0%) indicated they do not engage in ministry activities online. These findings suggest that social media is a versatile tool for various forms of church ministry.

Table 11. Types of Ministry Activities via Social Media

Types of Ministry Activities via Social Media	Frequency	Percent
Evangelism / Outreach	157	17.30%
Teaching / Preaching	182	20.10%
Youth Engagement	181	20.00%
Announcements & Church Updates	163	18.00%
Prayer & Fellowship	117	12.90%
Fundraising / Mobilization	88	9.70%
I do not engage in ministry online	18	2.00%

5.3 The use of Social Media Platforms among Church leaders

This section assessed church leaders' perspectives on their knowledge, training, and attitudes toward the use of social media in ministry. Responses were analysed by aggregating levels of agreement for clearer interpretation. A majority of respondents (46.3%) agreed that they are well-informed about the social media platforms available for ministry, while 14.2% remained neutral and 9.5% disagreed. When asked whether church leaders are aware of how social media enhances outreach and engagement, 44% agreed, 14.9% were neutral, and 11.1% disagreed. On whether social media guidance is regularly provided, 44.8% agreed, 12.9% were neutral, and 12.3% disagreed.

The impact of social media on church participation was also highlighted, with 46.9% agreeing that its use has increased attendance and engagement, 15.2% remaining neutral, and only 8% disagreeing. Furthermore, 52.1% agreed that social media helps reach younger community members effectively, 11.3% were neutral, and 6.7% disagreed. Regarding challenges, 48.2% of respondents agreed that lack of training limits effective ministry, while 15.5% were neutral and 6.5% disagreed. Privacy and security concerns were also noted, with 48.7% agreeing, 13.4% neutral, and 8% disagreeing. Importantly, 50% of respondents affirmed that social media is an essential tool for modern ministry, while 14.2% were neutral and 5.9% disagreed. Additionally, 52.1% agreed that the church should invest more in social media tools, 11.9% were neutral, and 6.2% disagreed (Table 12). The findings suggest a strong positive attitude among church leaders toward the role of social media in enhancing ministry, despite the noted gaps in training and infrastructure.

Table 12. The use of Social Media Platforms among Church leaders

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am well-informed about the social media platforms available for ministry use in the church.	58 (14.9%)	122 (31.4%)	55 (14.2%)	19 (4.9%)	18 (4.6%)
Church leaders are aware of how social media can enhance outreach and engagement.	25 (6.4%)	146 (37.6%)	58 (14.9%)	27 (7.0%)	16 (4.1%)
Guidance on effective social media use is provided to church leaders regularly.	45 (11.6%)	129 (33.2%)	50 (12.9%)	23 (5.9%)	25 (6.4%)
Using social media has increased the overall attendance and participation in church activities.	52 (13.4%)	130 (33.5%)	59 (15.2%)	20 (5.2%)	11 (2.8%)
Social media allows the church to reach younger members of the community more effectively.	62 (16.0%)	140 (36.1%)	44 (11.3%)	17 (4.4%)	9 (2.3%)
Lack of sufficient training on social media use presents a challenge for effective ministry.	57 (14.7%)	130 (33.5%)	60 (15.5%)	13 (3.4%)	12 (3.1%)
Concerns over privacy and security make it difficult to use social media effectively in church activities.	55 (14.2%)	134 (34.5%)	52 (13.4%)	18 (4.6%)	13 (3.4%)
I believe social media is an essential tool for modern church ministry.	53 (13.7%)	141 (36.3%)	55 (14.2%)	11 (2.8%)	12 (3.1%)
The church should invest more in social media to enhance its ministry and reach.	66 (17.0%)	136 (35.1%)	46 (11.9%)	10 (2.6%)	14 (3.6%)

5.4 The use of Social Media Platforms among Church members

This section assessed church members' perceptions of how social media is utilized to enhance communication, connection, and participation in ministry activities. Responses were summarized into the following categories: agree, neutral, and disagree and results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13. The use of Social Media Platforms among Church members

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The church informs congregants about activities and events through social media.	90 (23.2%)	175 (45.1%)	51 (13.1%)	38 (9.8%)	34 (8.8%)
I feel adequately informed about church ministry activities through social media updates.	40 (10.3%)	177 (45.6%)	77 (19.8%)	63 (16.2%)	31 (8.0%)
Social media helps me stay more connected to the church's ministry activities.	93 (24.0%)	180 (46.4%)	63 (16.2%)	28 (7.2%)	24 (6.2%)
Social media has made it easier for me to engage with church teachings and sermons.	88 (22.7%)	191 (49.2%)	65 (16.8%)	29 (7.5%)	15 (3.9%)
Using social media allows me to interact with other congregants more frequently.	95 (24.5%)	198 (51.0%)	54 (13.9%)	25 (6.4%)	16 (4.1%)
Social media has improved my overall participation in church activities.	88 (22.7%)	194 (50%)	64 (16.5%)	26 (6.7%)	16 (4.1%)
I face challenges in accessing social media due to lack of internet or technical skills.	86 (22.2%)	184 (47.4%)	69 (17.8%)	33 (8.5%)	16 (4.1%)
Privacy and security concerns discourage me from engaging with the church on social media.	65 (16.8%)	185 (47.7%)	84 (21.6%)	33 (8.5%)	21 (5.4%)
I find it difficult to focus on church-related content due to other distractions on social media.	80 (20.6%)	175 (45.1%)	87 (22.4%)	27 (7.0%)	19 (4.9%)

A majority of the respondents (68.3%) agreed that the church informs congregants about activities and events through social media, while 13.1% were neutral and 18.6% disagreed. Similarly, 55.9% felt adequately informed about church ministry activities via social media, although 19.8% were neutral and a relatively high 24.2% expressed disagreement. In terms of connectivity, 70.4% of the participants agreed that social media helps them stay more connected to church ministry activities, 16.2% were neutral, and 13.4% disagreed. Likewise, 71.9% agreed that social media has made it easier to engage with church teachings and sermons, while 16.8% were neutral and 11.4% disagreed. Social media was also perceived as a tool for enhancing fellowship. About 75.5% agreed that it allows more frequent interaction with other congregants, 13.9% were neutral, and 10.5% disagreed. In addition, 72.7% affirmed that social

media has improved their participation in church activities, 16.5% remained neutral, and 10.8% disagreed (Table 13).

However, 69.6% of the respondents agreed that they face difficulties in accessing social media due to internet or technical skill limitations, 17.8% were neutral, and 12.6% disagreed. Concerns over privacy and security were also present, with 64.5% agreeing, 21.6% neutral, and 13.9% disagreeing. In addition, distractions on social media emerged as a barrier, with 65.7% agreeing that it affects their ability to focus on church content, while 22.4% were neutral and 11.9% disagreed. The findings indicate that while most congregants recognize the value of social media in enhancing church communication and participation, some experience challenges related to access, security, and distractions.

5.5 Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

To achieve the second objective, a binary logistic regression analysis was performed. The dependent variable was whether respondents perceived that social media had made it easier to reach people beyond the physical church, coded as Yes = 1 and No/Not Sure = 0. The independent variables included the types of ministry activities conducted via social media, frequency of social media use, gender, and age brackets. The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 18.72$, $p < .001$, which indicates that the selected predictors collectively improved the ability to predict the likelihood of perceiving social media as impactful compared to the null model. Furthermore, the model explained a substantial proportion of the variation in the dependent variable, as shown by the Nagelkerke R^2 value of 0.42 in Table 14. This suggests that approximately 42% of the variance in the perception of social media impact was accounted for by the predictors in the model.

Table 14. Logistic Regression Analysis Results on the Impact of Social Media on Church Ministry

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Types of ministry activities	0.834	0.386	4.662	1	0.031	2.302
Frequency of use	-0.9	0.274	10.804	1	0.001	0.406
Gender (Male=1, Female=0)	-0.052	0.598	0.008	1	0.93	0.949
Age bracket			5.625	4	0.229	
18-25 (Yes=1,No=0)	0.854	0.869	0.965	1	0.326	2.349
26-35 (Yes=1,No=0)	1.509	0.957	2.484	1	0.115	4.523
36-45 (Yes=1,No=0)	0.391	0.818	0.229	1	0.632	1.479
46-55 (Yes=1,No=0)	2.446	1.261	3.763	1	0.052	11.536
Constant	2.526	1.095	5.324	1	0.021	12.508
Model $\chi^2(4)$	18.72				.000	
Nagelkerke R ²						0.42

Note: B represents the regression coefficient (log-odds), S.E. is the standard error, Wald tests the predictor's significance, df is degrees of freedom, Sig. is the p-value, and Exp(B) indicates the odds ratio.

The analysis revealed that two predictors were statistically significant. First, the types of ministry activities carried out through social media significantly influenced the perception of its impact on ministry ($p = .031$). For each additional type of activity undertaken online, the odds of perceiving social media as effective increased by approximately 130% ($\text{Exp}(B) = 2.302$). Second, the frequency of social media use also significantly predicted the perception of impact ($p = .001$). Respondents who used social media more frequently were substantially more likely to consider it an effective tool for ministry. The odds ratio for frequency of use ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.406$) indicates that less frequent use was associated with a markedly lower likelihood of perceiving social media as impactful, emphasizing the importance of consistent engagement.

Gender did not emerge as a significant predictor ($p = .930$), indicating that male and female respondents did not differ significantly in their perceptions of social media's role in ministry. Similarly, the age bracket variable was not statistically significant overall ($p = .229$). However, the age group of 46–55 years approached significance ($p = .052$) and had an odds ratio of 11.536, suggesting a possible trend that individuals within this category may be more inclined to perceive social media as beneficial, although this result was not conclusive. These findings demonstrate that the breadth

of ministry activities undertaken through social media and the frequency of its use are the most influential factors in shaping positive perceptions of its effectiveness for church ministry. Conversely, demographic factors such as gender and age appear to exert minimal influence on these perceptions. This underscores the importance of promoting diverse ministry engagements and encouraging regular social media use to maximize its impact on church outreach.

5.6 Thematic Analysis of Clergy Interviews

This section presents the thematic analysis of interviews conducted with clergy members regarding their use of social media in ministry. The data was analyzed inductively, and three overarching themes emerged: (1) Integration and Use of Social Media in Ministry, (2) Capacity and Challenges in Social Media Utilization, and (3) Opportunities for Improvement and Impact on Ministry.

Theme 1: Integration and Use of Social Media in Ministry

The clergy unanimously acknowledged the significant role social media plays in enhancing communication and ministry activities. Platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook Live were commonly cited as the primary tools used to deliver spiritual messages, conduct prayers, and provide pastoral support. These platforms have made it easier for clergy to reach a broader audience, especially during virtual services or when congregants are geographically dispersed.

“WhatsApp posts, Facebook Lives, messages or SMS...” (Clergy 1)

“Meeting through WhatsApp, occasionally Facebook Lives...” (Clergy 2)

In addition to facilitating real-time interaction with congregants, social media was used to organize church events such as crusades, vigils (Keshas), and group prayer sessions. This theme demonstrates the increasing integration of digital platforms into daily pastoral routines and church operations.

Theme 2: Capacity and Challenges in Social Media Utilization

Despite the widespread use of social media, most clergy members reported inadequate training and limited capacity to fully exploit digital platforms for ministry. Some clergy rated their social media skills as average, while others expressed outright concern about lacking the necessary knowledge and digital literacy.

“Not adequate” (Clergy 1)

“Average” (Clergy 2 and 3)

In addition to the skills gap, clergy faced various operational challenges. These included the lack of appropriate equipment (e.g., laptops, projectors, and smartphones), insufficient internet bundles, and occasional negative feedback from online audiences. Moreover, they observed that not all congregants were active on social media, limiting reach and participation.

“Lack of tools like projectors, laptops, good phones...” (Clergy 1)

“Not everyone is using social media, negative feedback...” (Clergy 2)

This theme highlights both human and infrastructural barriers that hinder the seamless integration of social media in ministry.

Theme 3: Opportunities for Improvement and Impact on Ministry

While acknowledging existing challenges, the clergy also recognized the transformative potential of social media in delivering sermons and enhancing spiritual engagement. Respondents noted that digital tools have made it easier to access biblical materials, understand scripture, and personalize sermon content for diverse audiences.

“Social media helps one get the meaning of the Bible texts...” (Clergy 3)

“Positive influence, easy to communicate and download materials...” (Clergy 1)

To maximize these benefits, clergy members recommended a range of interventions. These included structured training on digital ministry, provision of reliable internet access, creation of secure platforms for online engagement, and broader digital awareness campaigns within congregations.

“Improve knowledge on social media use among the clergy through training...”

(Clergy 3)

“Facilitation by provision of Wi-Fi/bundles...” (Clergy 1)

This theme reveals a proactive attitude among clergy, who are open to embracing technology if given the necessary support and tools.

5.7 Thematic Analysis of Lay Preachers Interview Responses

This section presents the thematic analysis of interviews conducted with lay preachers to explore their experiences and perceptions regarding the use of social media in ministry. The respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions related to their engagement with social media platforms, the effectiveness of these tools in spreading the gospel, challenges faced, and the kind of support needed to enhance digital evangelism and various themes developed.

Theme 1: Embracing Social Media for Ministry Outreach

The first theme highlights the widespread use of social media among lay preachers for evangelistic purposes. Respondents indicated that platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube were instrumental in reaching congregants with sermons, scriptures, and spiritual music. The majority of lay preachers perceived social media as a valuable and accessible tool for enhancing their ministry, particularly in terms of reach and engagement. Several noted that social media was especially effective in connecting with the youth, increasing church attendance, and facilitating spiritual growth among members who might not physically attend church.

One respondent noted, *“I use Facebook Live and WhatsApp to stream services and share scriptures.”* Another added, *“Social media is good, simple, and has increased reach.”* Such responses point to a growing recognition of the digital space as a legitimate and impactful ministry platform.

Theme 2: Barriers to Effective Social Media Use

Despite the enthusiasm for social media use, various barriers were identified that hinder effective engagement. These included technological limitations such as lack of smartphones, unreliable internet access, and costly data bundles. Additionally, some lay preachers lacked adequate digital skills or experienced challenges interpreting online language. There were also instances where negative feedback or perceptions from the audience discouraged their efforts.

For example, one lay preacher remarked, *“The challenge is the lack of smartphones among members.”* Another stated, *“We face negative messages and poor internet connectivity.”* These limitations present significant obstacles to the consistent and

meaningful use of social media for spiritual outreach, particularly in underserved or rural communities.

Theme 3: Need for Capacity Building and Technological Support

The third theme reflects the respondents' collective desire for increased support to enhance their digital ministry efforts. Lay preachers emphasized the need for structured training on the effective use of social media tools, access to biblical and theological content such as Bible commentaries, and improved technological infrastructure. This includes the provision of internet bundles, Wi-Fi access, and necessary equipment.

Multiple participants expressed this sentiment, with one stating, *"We need training on social media and installation of Wi-Fi at the church."* Another added, *"Provision of skills and facilitation in terms of bundles would help a lot."* These responses underscore the importance of investing in the digital capacity of lay preachers to ensure more impactful and sustained online ministry.

5.8 Thematic Analysis of Church Leaders' Responses

This section presents a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with church leaders on the use of social media for church management and ministry. The responses focused on the platforms used, attitudes and awareness of social media's role in ministry, observed impacts, challenges faced, and strategies proposed to overcome those challenges. The analysis revealed three dominant themes which are; growing acceptance of social media in church ministry, digital literacy and access challenges, and need for structured policy and capacity building.

Theme 1: Growing Acceptance of Social Media in Church Ministry

Church leaders expressed an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards the use of social media in church operations. WhatsApp and Facebook emerged as the most frequently used platforms, with leaders leveraging them for communication, outreach, and engagement. Many respondents noted that social media had significantly increased church participation, enhanced information flow, and improved connectivity with members both locally and in the diaspora.

For instance, one leader stated, *“We use WhatsApp and Facebook to inform members on various occasions,”* while another emphasized, *“Social media has simplified communication and improved participation.”* This theme indicates a growing trend among leaders who view digital platforms as valuable tools for spiritual and administrative functions in the church.

Theme 2: Digital Literacy and Access Challenges

Despite the enthusiasm, respondents identified several access-related and literacy-based barriers. Commonly cited issues included lack of smartphones, poor internet connectivity, limited digital skills, power outages, and the high cost of mobile data. Additionally, leaders noted that some members were unaware of how to use social media effectively, and a few expressed concern over inappropriate use or timing of social media engagement.

One leader remarked, *“The main challenge is illiteracy and lack of smartphones.”* Another added, *“Social media use in the wrong time and negative posts are concerning.”* This theme reflects a digital divide that hampers equal participation and underscores the need for broader inclusion and awareness-building within church communities.

Theme 3: Need for Structured Policy and Capacity Building

The final theme highlights the need for institutional support and capacity development to enhance the responsible and effective use of social media in ministry. Several leaders pointed to the absence of formal church policies guiding digital engagement. Moreover, many respondents called for member training on the correct and safe use of social media, cybersecurity awareness, and investment in infrastructure such as Wi-Fi and backup power.

For example, one respondent recommended, *“Create awareness of the importance of social media and install Wi-Fi.”* Another said, *“Educate members on cyber security and the rightful use of social media.”* These views indicate that beyond individual effort, structural and organizational interventions are necessary to sustain digital ministry.

5.9 Social Media and Church Ministry

5.9.1 Impact of Social Media on Church Ministry

The study revealed that the most common activities conducted through social media were teaching and preaching (20.1%) and youth engagement (20.0%), followed by evangelism and outreach (17.3%) and announcements and church updates (18.0%). These findings demonstrate that social media has become a multifunctional tool for ministry. This concurs with Adelaku (2020), who reported that Kenyan churches widely use social media for evangelism and educational purposes. Similarly, Bocala-Wiedemann (2022) emphasized that digital platforms enhance outreach and discipleship among youth and young adults, which aligns with the prominence of youth engagement observed in this study. Furthermore, Livingston et al. (2023) observed that social media supports diverse ministry functions, including preaching and community mobilization, indicating its role in expanding both formal and informal aspects of church communication. These findings underscore the adaptability of digital platforms in fulfilling key ecclesiastical roles traditionally performed through in-person interactions.

5.9.2 Extending Church Reach beyond Physical Congregation

An overwhelming 95.1% of respondents agreed that social media has extended the church's reach beyond its physical congregation. This resonates with findings by Kühle and Larsen (2021), who documented that during the COVID-19 lockdown, social media became essential for maintaining and expanding church membership globally. Similarly, Sircar and Rowley (2020) highlighted that social media offers churches a global presence, enabling real-time interaction beyond geographical boundaries. Campbell and Tsuria (2022) also noted that digital platforms create "networked religious communities," allowing churches to reach audiences previously inaccessible through traditional means. These findings imply that social media is not merely a supplement to physical gatherings but a critical extension of church ministry into broader digital spaces.

5.9.3 Perceived Impact of Social Media on Ministry

The study found that 64% of respondents viewed social media as having a very positive impact on church ministry, while 25% considered the impact somewhat positive (Figure 2). These results are consistent with Murumba and Omuya (2017), who reported that Kenyan churches perceive social media as an effective means of

spreading the gospel and maintaining engagement. Similarly, Williams and Krisjanous (2023) argued that social media promotes spiritual consumption, offering congregants easier access to religious content and interactive worship experiences. Njuka and Phiri (2021) also asserted that social media enhances communal identity among African churches, supporting fellowship beyond physical meetings. Collectively, these studies reinforce the notion that digital platforms significantly enrich ministry by improving communication, participation, and evangelization.

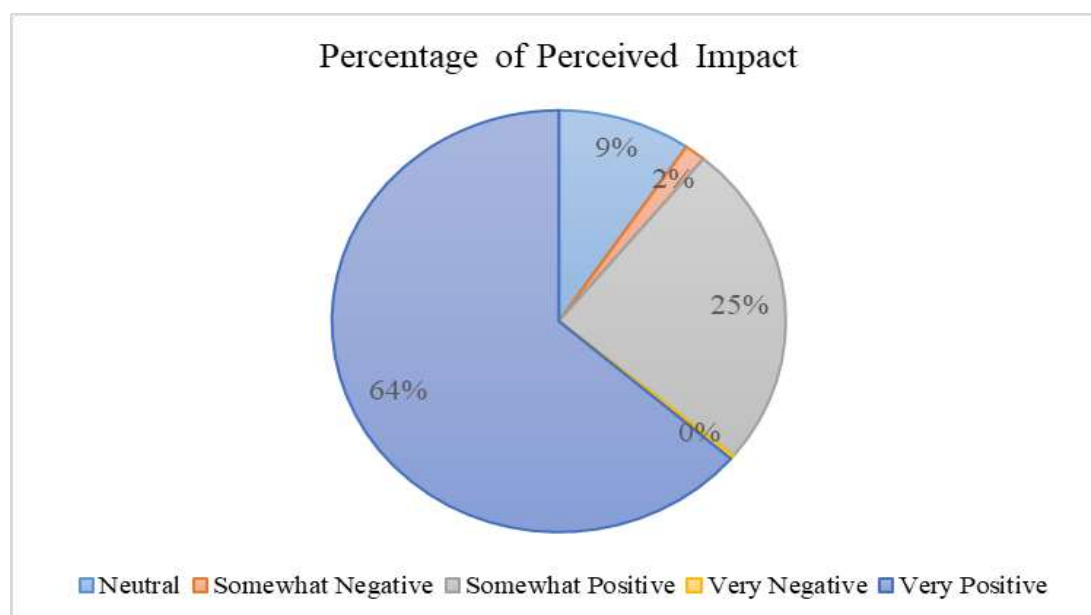


Figure 2.0: Perceived Impact of Social Media on Church Ministry

5.9.4 Determinants of Perceived Impact (Regression Findings)

The logistic regression analysis showed that the types of ministry activities and frequency of social media use were significant predictors of perceived impact, accounting for 42% of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.42$). For each additional type of activity conducted online, the likelihood of perceiving social media as impactful increased by 130%. This aligns with Animante et al. (2021), who found that perceived usefulness of social media in religious settings is strongly tied to the variety of activities integrated into digital ministry. Similarly, Dwivedi et al. (2021) emphasized that consistent engagement with digital tools strengthens perceptions of their utility and impact. The findings also show that demographic factors such as gender and age were not significant predictors, which contradicts earlier studies like Bwalya (2021) and Gultom et al. (2022), who linked age and gender to varying levels of digital engagement in churches. These results imply that actual usage behaviors—rather than

demographic attributes—are more critical in shaping perceptions of social media’s value in ministry.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that social media significantly enhances church ministry in the Nyambene Synod by broadening outreach, improving communication efficiency, and fostering member engagement, particularly among the youth. Platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook have become vital tools for delivering sermons, mobilizing resources, and maintaining spiritual connection across geographic boundaries. Statistical analysis revealed that frequent use and diversity of online activities are key drivers of positive perceptions regarding social media’s impact, while demographic factors play a secondary role.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings affirm the adaptability of religious institutions to technological shifts, consistent with functionalist theory. Nonetheless, the church must mitigate potential drawbacks, including digital exclusion and reduced interpersonal fellowship. This calls for deliberate strategies to integrate online and offline ministry in a complementary manner, ensuring that social media remains a tool for strengthening—not replacing—communal worship and discipleship. The next chapter focuses on the third objective: identifying challenges that hinder the effective use of social media in church ministry and exploring potential strategies for overcoming them.

CHAPTER SIX

CHALLENGES OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CHURCH MINISTRY IN THE METHODIST CHURCH, NYAMBENE SYNOD

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the third objective of the study, which was to determine the challenges encountered in adopting and utilizing social media for church ministry in the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), Nyambene Synod. While social media offers numerous opportunities for evangelism, communication, and engagement, its integration into ministry is not without difficulties. Understanding these challenges is essential for designing effective strategies that enhance digital evangelization while mitigating risks associated with technological adoption.

The challenges examined include infrastructural limitations, digital literacy gaps, distractions from secular content, negative feedback, and the absence of formal church guidelines. These issues are analyzed through both quantitative and qualitative data obtained from congregants, clergy, and church leaders. The discussion also interprets findings through the lens of functionalist theory, which posits that social systems adapt to maintain stability and cohesion. In this context, addressing barriers to social media adoption ensures that the church remains a cohesive institution capable of meeting spiritual needs in a digitalized society (Durkheim, 1912; Parsons, 1951).

6.2 Social Media Challenges, Perceived Impact and Suggested Improvements in Church Ministry

The study identified several challenges faced by church members and leaders when using social media for ministry. The most common challenges reported were poor internet connectivity (30.1%) and limited digital skills (25.7%), followed by distractions from secular content (22.1%). Negative feedback or criticism (13.9%) and lack of official church guidelines (6.3%) were also noted, while a small portion (1.9%) reported experiencing no major challenges (Table 10). In terms of perceived impact, the majority of respondents (63.7%) viewed social media as having a very positive impact on church ministry, while 25% found it somewhat positive (Table 15). Only a small proportion reported neutral or negative views, indicating an overall favorable perception of social media's role.

To improve social media use in ministry, most respondents suggested practical steps such as establishing a church media/IT team (28.1%), investing in better equipment and internet access (27.1%), and training church leaders on digital ministry (25.5%). Other suggestions included creating official church social media accounts (11.3%) and developing ministry guidelines (7.2%), with only 0.8% believing no improvements were needed (Table 15).

Table 15. Social Media Challenges, Perceived Impact and Suggested Improvements in Church Ministry

Challenges	Frequency	Percent
Limited digital skills	201	25.70%
Poor internet connectivity	236	30.10%
Distractions from secular content	173	22.10%
Negative feedback or criticism	109	13.90%
Lack of official church guidelines	49	6.30%
No major challenges	15	1.90%
Perceived impact		
Neutral	37	9.5
Somewhat Negative	6	1.5
Somewhat Positive	97	25
Very Negative	1	0.3
Very Positive	247	63.7
Total	388	100
Improvements		
Creating official church social media accounts	44	11.3
Developing social media ministry guidelines	28	7.2
Establishing a church media/IT team	109	28.1
I don't think any of these are necessary	3	0.8
Investing in better equipment and internet access	105	27.1
Training church leaders on digital ministry	99	25.5
Total	388	100

6.3 Chi-Square Test Results for Challenges

A Chi-Square test of independence was conducted to establish whether these challenges differed significantly across gender, age, and church position. The results indicate that most challenges—including limited digital skills, negative feedback, and lack of official church guidelines—did not show significant variation across any demographic category ($p > 0.05$). This finding as shown in Table 16 suggests that these challenges are experienced broadly across the congregation regardless of gender, age, or leadership role, which aligns with the descriptive results.

However, two exceptions emerged. The first was poor internet connectivity, which showed a significant association with gender ($\chi^2 = 4.753$, $p = 0.029$). This suggests that connectivity challenges were not equally distributed between men and women, with descriptive statistics indicating that female respondents reported slightly higher difficulties in this area. The second exception was distractions from secular content, which varied significantly by age ($\chi^2 = 14.712$, $p = 0.005$). Younger congregants were more likely to report this challenge compared to older members, likely because of their higher engagement with social media platforms and greater exposure to non-religious content. All other challenges, such as negative feedback and lack of guidelines, showed no significant differences across demographic groups. This indicates that these issues are systemic within the church and not confined to specific categories of members. The Chi-square results imply that while most challenges require broad-based interventions, targeted measures should be introduced to address gender-related disparities in internet connectivity and age-specific issues of content distraction.

Table 16. Chi-Square Test Results for Challenges by Gender, Age, and Church Position

Challenge	Gender χ^2 (p)	Age χ^2 (p)	Church Position χ^2 (p)
Limited digital skills	3.364 (0.067)	1.212 (0.876)	4.451 (0.348)
Poor internet connectivity	4.753 (0.029)	2.373 (0.668)	7.402 (0.116)
Distractions from secular content	2.994 (0.084)	14.712 (0.005)	7.649 (0.105)
Negative feedback/criticism	0.458 (0.499)	6.105 (0.191)	2.578 (0.631)
Lack of official guidelines	2.215 (0.137)	8.261 (0.082)	5.972 (0.201)

Note: χ^2 = Chi-Square statistic; p = significance level.

6.4 Challenges in Using Social Media for Ministry

The study identified several obstacles that hinder effective utilization of social media for ministry in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod. The most reported challenges as seen in Figure 3 were poor internet connectivity (30.1%) and limited digital skills (25.7%), followed by distractions from secular content (22.1%). Other challenges included negative feedback or criticism (13.9%) and lack of official church guidelines (6.3%), while only 1.9% of respondents reported experiencing no major challenges. These findings indicate that despite high adoption of social media for ministry, structural, technical, and behavioral constraints persist.

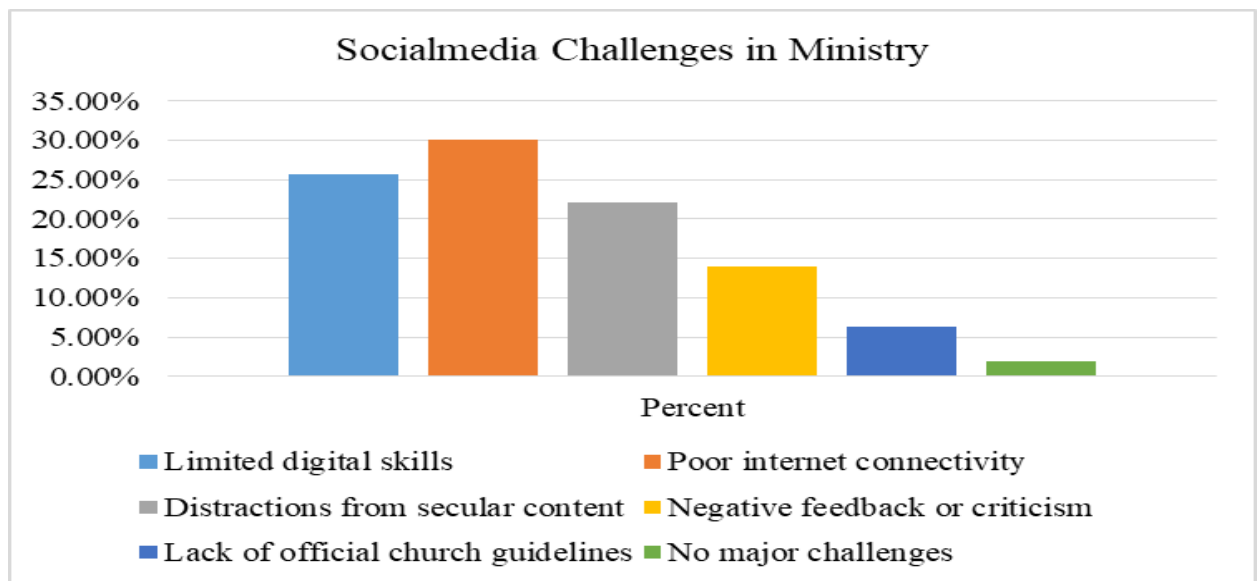


Figure 3.0: Social media challenges in church ministry

A Chi-Square test of independence was conducted to examine whether these challenges significantly differed across demographic factors such as gender, age, and church position. The results revealed that most challenges, including limited digital skills, negative feedback, and lack of official church guidelines, did not show significant variation across demographic groups ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that these barriers are systemic and affect members broadly, regardless of gender, age, or leadership role. However, two challenges demonstrated significant associations: poor internet connectivity varied by gender ($\chi^2 = 4.753$, $p = 0.029$), and distractions from secular content differed by age ($\chi^2 = 14.712$, $p = 0.005$). These findings have important implications for policy and practice as they highlight areas that require targeted interventions in addition to general solutions.

6.4.1 Poor Internet Connectivity

Poor internet connectivity was the most prevalent challenge (30.1%) and showed a statistically significant association with gender ($\chi^2 = 4.753$, $p = 0.029$), with descriptive results indicating women reported slightly more difficulty than men. This observation is consistent with Akakandelwa (2015), who emphasized that inadequate broadband access remains a major barrier to digital transformation in religious institutions across Africa. Similarly, Appiah et al. (2013) found that connectivity limitations in rural Ghanaian churches hindered the delivery of online worship and digital evangelism programs. Recent data by Statista (2023) confirms regional

disparities in internet penetration in Kenya, with rural areas—where most Nyambene congregations are located—facing persistent network instability. Gender-based disparities may stem from social and economic factors, including lower technology ownership among women. These findings suggest that while improving infrastructure is a systemic requirement, addressing gender gaps in technology access will enhance inclusivity in digital ministry.

6.4.2 Limited Digital Skills

Limited digital literacy, reported by 25.7% of respondents, was the second most cited challenge. This finding corroborates Kathambi et al. (2022), who noted that lack of technical proficiency among clergy and members is a primary impediment to leveraging social media for evangelization in Kenyan Methodist congregations. Similarly, Pillay (2020) observed that insufficient digital competence is a recurring obstacle in African churches, which affects their ability to create and manage faith-based content. Omollo et al. (2023) argued that without structured training programs and user support, churches risk excluding less tech-savvy members from digital fellowship and communication. These insights highlight the need for comprehensive capacity-building programs tailored for clergy, youth leaders, and older congregants to ensure sustainable digital engagement across the Synod.

6.4.3 Distractions from Secular Content

About 22.1% of respondents identified distractions from secular or inappropriate content as a major challenge, with Chi-Square analysis showing a significant relationship with age ($\chi^2 = 14.712$, $p = 0.005$). Younger congregants were more likely to report this issue than older members, likely due to their higher social media activity and exposure to diverse digital content. This finding supports Ronkacova (2021), who highlighted that exposure to entertainment-oriented material can dilute spiritual focus and lead to digital fatigue. Similarly, Buch (2019) cautioned that social media addiction and exposure to non-religious content can negatively impact mental health and spiritual discipline, particularly among youth. These results imply the need for strategic interventions, such as promoting faith-based digital alternatives and responsible media consumption campaigns targeting younger congregants.

6.4.4 Negative Feedback and Lack of Official Guidelines

Although negative feedback (13.9%) and lack of official church guidelines (6.3%) were less frequently mentioned, they represent critical governance issues in the digital space. Dean (2017) asserted that the absence of structured social media policies often results in reputational risks and inconsistent messaging in religious institutions. Similarly, Akyire et al. (2013) stressed that clear communication protocols and ethical guidelines are essential for ensuring accountability and professionalism in online evangelization. Establishing formal digital communication policies in Methodist congregations would help minimize criticism, enhance credibility, and maintain doctrinal consistency in online ministry practices.

6.4.5 Chi-Square Implications

The Chi-Square findings have important implications for intervention strategies. The non-significance of most challenges across demographic categories suggests that barriers such as limited digital skills and negative feedback are systemic and require Synod-wide solutions, including infrastructure investment and formal policy development. However, the significant gender difference in connectivity challenges and age-specific issues of secular distractions indicate that one-size-fits-all solutions may not be sufficient. Targeted interventions should include improving women's access to affordable internet and creating youth-focused digital literacy programs emphasizing safe and purposeful media engagement. These recommendations align with Dwivedi et al. (2021), who argue that successful digital transformation requires addressing both organizational and demographic-specific barriers to inclusion.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the primary obstacles faced by MCK Nyambene Synod in adopting social media for ministry purposes. Key challenges include poor internet connectivity, high data costs, limited digital skills among older congregants and clergy, distractions from secular content, negative feedback, and the absence of formal guidelines governing online engagement. These barriers underscore the complexity of integrating digital technologies into religious practice, particularly within rural and resource-constrained contexts.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach involving infrastructural investment, capacity-building programs, and the development of clear

digital ministry policies. Such interventions would enable the church to fully harness the benefits of social media while safeguarding against its potential risks. The final chapter builds on these findings to present a comprehensive summary, draw conclusions, and propose recommendations for enhancing digital ministry within the Methodist Church of Kenya, Nyambene Synod.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Summary

This section presents a comprehensive summary of the findings based on the study's three objectives, which aimed to assess the use of social media in church ministry within the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), Nyambene Synod. The objectives of the study were to: (i) examine the level of awareness and adoption of social media platforms among congregants, (ii) assess the impact of social media on church ministry, and (iii) determine the challenges faced in using social media for ministry purposes. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data from 408 respondents, including clergy, lay preachers, church leaders, and ordinary members.

Regarding the first objective, the study found a high level of awareness and widespread personal use of social media platforms among congregants. Specifically, 94.6% of the respondents confirmed that they used social media, with WhatsApp (32%) and Facebook (27.1%) being the most utilized platforms for church-related activities. Other platforms like YouTube and Instagram also featured prominently, although their use was slightly less frequent. The majority of respondents (68.8%) reported using social media for church ministry daily. Furthermore, analysis revealed that awareness and adoption were significantly influenced by demographic factors such as age, gender, and church role. Younger congregants and those in leadership positions demonstrated a higher level of awareness and frequency of use than older members and lay preachers. This suggests a generational gap in digital literacy and access, which may require targeted interventions to bridge.

The second objective focused on evaluating the impact of social media on ministry activities. The findings indicate that social media has had a substantial and positive influence on various aspects of ministry in the Nyambene Synod. Respondents reported that platforms were used for teaching and preaching (20.1%), youth engagement (20.0%), evangelism and outreach (17.3%), and making announcements (18.0%). Additionally, 95.1% of respondents agreed that social media had enabled the church to extend its reach beyond its physical congregation, especially through digital sermons, livestreams, and updates. Logistic regression analysis confirmed that the

diversity of ministry activities conducted through social media and the frequency of its use were strong predictors of a respondent's belief in its positive impact. This shows that social media is not only facilitating church communication but also redefining how ministry is conducted, especially in a post-pandemic digital environment. The functionalist theory applied in the study helps explain how social media platforms function as modern tools for reinforcing religious values and community cohesion in the face of social change.

The third objective sought to identify challenges faced in using social media for ministry. The most prevalent challenges included poor internet connectivity (30.1%), limited digital skills (25.7%), and distractions from secular or inappropriate content (22.1%). Other concerns included negative feedback (13.9%) and the absence of formal guidelines (6.3%). These challenges were largely experienced across demographic lines, suggesting they are systemic. However, statistical tests showed that poor internet connectivity was more frequently reported by female respondents, while distractions from secular content were more commonly cited by younger congregants. Qualitative data from clergy and lay preachers confirmed these issues and further highlighted the need for structured training, availability of digital tools, and institutional support for effective digital ministry. Respondents emphasized that while they recognize the value of social media, the lack of strategic guidance and technical capacity limits their ability to engage effectively.

The study showed that the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod has embraced digital transformation in ministry through social media, but still faces significant infrastructural and capacity-related challenges. The results indicated a strong willingness among congregants and clergy to use social media more effectively, provided that the necessary support mechanisms are put in place.

7.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that social media has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing ministry in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod. The high rate of personal use, coupled with frequent engagement in church-related activities on digital platforms, demonstrates that social media is now integral to the way congregants experience and participate in ministry. Through platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, the church has managed to extend its reach beyond traditional boundaries,

especially to members in remote areas, younger audiences, and those who may not attend physical services regularly.

The Functionalist theory provided a useful framework to interpret the role of social media in reinforcing the church's functions of communication, spiritual nourishment, and social integration. Social media serves as a "digital sanctuary" that enables the church to perform its traditional roles in new and innovative ways. It supports evangelism, fellowship, pastoral care, and spiritual formation in an increasingly digital society.

Despite these benefits, the study highlights several ongoing challenges. Limited internet access, particularly among women, and inadequate digital skills among older congregants and some clergy, restrict the church's ability to fully leverage the potential of social media. Additionally, distractions from secular content, lack of church-based IT structures, and the absence of formal social media policies continue to hinder effective digital ministry. The statistical analysis confirmed that these challenges are not merely anecdotal but are statistically significant and require targeted solutions.

The study affirms that while the church has made commendable strides in adopting social media, more needs to be done to institutionalize its use, ensure inclusivity, and align digital strategies with ministry objectives. Strategic investment in digital infrastructure, capacity building, and policy development is essential for the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, to fully embrace the opportunities of digital ministry while mitigating the challenges it currently faces.

7.3 Recommendations

In light of the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

- i. The church should develop structured digital ministry training programs for clergy, lay preachers, and congregants to enhance capacity and digital literacy.
- ii. MCK, Nyambene Synod should invest in necessary infrastructure such as reliable internet, smartphones, projectors, and sound systems to support online ministry.

- iii. The Synod leadership should formulate and implement official guidelines and policies to standardize social media use and ensure doctrinal consistency.
- iv. Church leaders should establish IT/media teams within congregations to manage digital tools and platforms professionally.
- v. Targeted digital inclusion strategies should be designed to address the unique challenges faced by women, older members, and those in rural areas.
- vi. The church should promote safe, faith-aligned digital spaces and content to counter distractions and secular influence, especially among the youth.
- vii. The use of popular platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube should be optimized for worship, announcements, and pastoral care, while responsibly exploring youth-oriented platforms like TikTok.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings of this study, the following areas are suggested for future research:

- i. The effectiveness of social media in enhancing spiritual formation across different age and gender categories in rural congregations.
- ii. A comparative study of digital ministry practices between urban and rural Methodist churches in Kenya.
- iii. Strategies for managing privacy, data security, and ethical concerns in digital church platforms.
- iv. The long-term impact of social media evangelism on church growth, attendance, and member retention.
- v. The role of social media in building resilient online faith communities during crises such as pandemics or political unrest.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

I am a student at Chuka University pursuing Degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies of Chuka University.

Title: An assessment of Social Media uses in Church Ministry in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod.

Introduction:

You are invited to engage in a study on the “An assessment of Social Media uses in Church Ministry in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod”. Your participation is voluntary.

Study Procedures:

If you agree to participate, you will be required to complete a questionnaire or engaged in an interview schedule about your knowledge on the extent of which you understand the level of awareness on the application of social media sites by the Church congregants, the impact of the utilization of social media in church ministry, the difficulties encountered by MCK congregants in the utilization of social media, Nyambene synod

Risks and Benefits:

There is NO risk involved in the research. Nevertheless, sharing your awareness on the “An assessment of Social Media uses in Church Ministry in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod” you contribute to a better understanding of the research topic and adding value to this study.

Confidentiality:

Information you offer will be handled with high level of confidentiality and applied for educational purposes only.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is completely out of free will. You can leave at any time.

Consent: I have read and examined the evidence given in this consent form. I therefore, willingly agree to give my response on this study.

Respondent's Signature: Date.....

Signature Date.....
Elosy Mukami Akula
(Researcher)

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Please note that all the information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for academic purposes. Kindly tick appropriately.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender:
☐ Male
☐ Female
2. Age:
☐ 18–25
☐ 26–35
☐ 36–45
☐ 46–55
☐ 56 and above
3. Position in Church:
☐ Bishop
☐ Pastor
☐ Church Leader
☐ Member
☐ Other (Specify) _____
4. Do you personally use social media?
☐ Yes
☐ No
5. Which social media platforms do you regularly use for church-related activities?
☐ WhatsApp
☐ Facebook
☐ YouTube
☐ Instagram
☐ TikTok
☐ X (formerly Twitter)
☐ None
☐ Other
6. How frequently do you use social media for church ministry purposes?
☐ Daily
☐ Weekly
☐ Monthly
☐ Rarely
☐ Never
7. Which types of ministry activities do you most engage in through social media?
☐ Evangelism / Outreach
☐ Teaching / Preaching
☐ Youth Engagement
☐ Announcements & Church Updates
☐ Prayer & Fellowship

- ☐ Fundraising / Mobilization
 - ☐ I do not engage in ministry online
8. Has social media made it easier for you to reach people beyond your physical church?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not sure
9. What challenges have you encountered in using social media for ministry?
- ☐ Limited digital skills
 - ☐ Poor internet connectivity
 - ☐ Distractions from secular content
 - ☐ Negative feedback or criticism
 - ☐ Lack of official church guidelines
 - ☐ No major challenges
10. Overall, how would you rate the impact of social media on church ministry in your experience?
- ☐ Very Positive
 - ☐ Somewhat Positive
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Somewhat Negative
 - ☐ Very Negative
11. Which of the following would improve the church's use of social media in ministry? (Checkboxes – select all that apply)
- ☐ Training church leaders on digital ministry
 - ☐ Establishing a church media/IT team
 - ☐ Investing in better equipment and internet access
 - ☐ Creating official church social media accounts
 - ☐ Developing social media ministry guidelines
 - ☐ I don't think any of these are necessary

SECTION B: The use of Social Media Platforms among Church leaders

Please provide [✓] your responses in space provided. To show the level you agree with the statement stated below. The Likert scale provided is 5-Strongly Disagree, 4-Disagree, 3 - neutral, 2-Agree, and 1-Strongly Agree.

Question	5	4	3	2	1
I am well-informed about the social media platforms available for ministry use in the church.					
Church leaders are aware of how social media can enhance outreach and engagement.					
Training or guidance on effective social media use is provided to church leaders regularly.					
Using social media has increased the overall attendance and participation in church activities.					
Social media allows the church to reach younger members of the community more effectively.					
Lack of sufficient training on social media use presents a					

challenge for effective ministry.					
Concerns over privacy and security make it difficult to use social media effectively in church activities.					
I believe social media is an essential tool for modern church ministry.					
The church should invest more in social media to enhance its ministry and reach.					

Section C: The use of Social Media Platforms among Church members

Please provide [✓] your responses in space provided. To show the level you agree with the statement stated below. The Likert scale provided is 5-Strongly Disagree, 4-Disagree, 3 - neutral, 2-Agree, and 1-Strongly Agree.

Question	5	4	3	2	1
I am aware of how the church uses social media to engage and communicate with members.					
The church informs congregants about activities and events through social media.					
I feel adequately informed about church ministry activities through social media updates.					
Social media helps me stay more connected to the church's ministry activities.					
Social media has made it easier for me to engage with church teachings and sermons.					
Using social media allows me to interact with other congregants more frequently.					
Social media has improved my overall participation in church activities.					
I face challenges in accessing social media due to lack of internet or technical skills.					
Privacy and security concerns discourage me from engaging with the church on social media.					
I find it difficult to focus on church-related content due to other distractions on social media.					

Appendix C: Interview for Church Leaders

Interview Questions

1. Which social media platforms do you personally use for church management, and how frequently?

2. What do you think is the overall attitude of church leaders towards using social media for ministry?

3. How would you describe the awareness level among church leaders regarding the potential of social media in ministry?

4. Are there any specific church policies or teachings about social media use that you follow?

5. In what ways do you think social media has positively impacted the church's outreach and engagement with members?

6. Have there been any negative effects observed from social media use within the church?

7. What are the main challenges that members and leaders face in using social media for church activities?

8. What strategies do you think could be implemented to overcome these challenges?

Appendix D: Interview for Clergy

1. How do you use social media to communicate with congregants and deliver spiritual messages?

2. What role does social media play in enhancing your pastoral responsibilities?

3. Do you feel adequately equipped or trained to use social media effectively for ministry?

4. How has social media influenced the delivery and reception of sermons or teachings?

5. Have you experienced any challenges in integrating social media into your pastoral work?

6. What improvements or support would make social media use more effective for clergy members?

Appendix E: Interview for Lay Preachers

1. Do you use social media to share sermons, scriptures, or spiritual content?

Yes/No

If so, how?

2. What is your perception of social media as a tool for spreading the gospel?

3. How have church members responded to your use of social media in ministry?

4. What challenges do you encounter when using social media as a lay preacher?

5. Are there particular tools or platforms you find more effective for lay preaching?

6. What support or resources would enhance your ability to use social media for ministry?

Appendix F: Sample Size Determining Tables

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	150	108	600	234	6000	361
15	14	160	113	650	241	7000	364
20	19	220	140	700	248	8000	367
25	24	230	144	750	254	9000	368
30	28	240	148	800	260	10000	370
35	32	250	152	1200	291	15000	375
40	36	260	155	1300	297	20000	377
45	40	270	159	1400	302	30000	379
50	44	280	162	1500	306	40000	380
55	48	290	165	1600	310	50000	381
60	52	300	169	1700	313	75000	382
65	56	320	175	1800	317	100000	384
70	59	340	181	1900	320		
75	63	360	186	2000	322		
80	66	380	191	2200	327		
85	70	400	196	2400	331		
90	73	420	201	2600	335		
95	76	440	205	2800	338		
100	80	460	210	3000	341		
110	86	480	214	3500	346		
120	92	500	217	4000	351		
130	97	550	226	4500	354		
140	103			5000	357		

N = Population, S= Sample Size

Source; Kathuri, J.N & Pals DA (1993)

Appendix G: Map showing the Nyambene Synod Region.



Appendix H: Chuka University Ethics Clearance Letter



REF: CUIERC/ NACOSTI/794
TO: Elosy Mukami Akula

RE: Assessment of Social Media Use in Church Ministry in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod

This is to inform you that *Chuka University IERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812*. The approval period is 18th June, 2025 – 18th June, 2026.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

- Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Chuka University IERC*.
- Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours of notification
- Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours
- Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institution
- Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Chuka University IERC*.

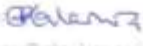
Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely


Dr. Benjamin Kanga
SECRETARY



Appendix I: NACOSTI Research Permit

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 437784	Date of Issue: 30 June 2025
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Ms. ELOSY MUKAMI AKULA of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Meru on the topic: ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN CHURCH MINISTRY IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA, NYAMBENE SYNOD for the period ending : 30 June 2026.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/25/4176091	
437784	 Deputy Director NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Applicant Identification Number	Verification QR Code
	
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