

Research Article

The Effect of social media on the Growth of Faith and Character of the Youth in the Gunungsitoli and Teluk Dalam Parishes

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ABSTRACT

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This study argues about the influence of social media on the growth of faith and character of the youth, specifically in the Gunungsitoli and Teluk Dalam parishes. The use of social media is vital to human's activity in today's society. The Church has to welcome the growth of social media positively and considers that the media expansion as a gift from God. However, it cannot be denied that the young people sometimes behaving unwise in using the media. The purpose of this research is to attend and discover the real facts among the youth about the influence the social media. In addition, the researchers also effort to reflect on the data obtained with critically and systematically. This research uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The main result to be achieved is the role of media social in the formation of faith and the character of the young people. The social media have a significant function in the process of human life dynamics. Therefore, the research has several significant implications, first, the social media is a medium for conveying knowledge and information to construct solidarity, second, the social media is an effective resource for the formation of faith and character of young generation in order to develop humans holistically.

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1. Introduction

Human beings are social creatures and instinctively must have the relationships with others. The interactions can arise among the people who are living in a particular community or outside the community. There are several opinions have emerged around the phenomenon of community, some people argue that community members must live in the same place, while others argue that member of the community they may be geographically dispersed (Chang & Heo, 2014). Another opinion about community must involve through relationships with certain moral qualities and without acts of exploitation; on the other hand, some argue that in communities it is necessary to instil an attitude of solidarity. It is important to realize that communities require good and correct communication. In other word, the social media in the digital era become the power to connect people around the world (Chattell, 1998).

The development of communication through social media in this era has revealed extraordinary progress. There are many signs of progress from the human's life segment have used the existence of technology itself. Its occurrence has had a significant impact on human life in various aspects and dimensions (Danby, 2017). The communication is an activity of every human being as very important aspect in order to establish relationships or interactions with others. Information technology has so many benefits for improving learning and communication skills to anyone, such as using communication media such as: internet, twitter, Facebook

and others. The public networking sites have led human being to a new era of global interconnectedness (Manthiou, Chiang, & Tang, 2015). The media social allow for the occurrence of communication through sending and receiving of messages or news between two or more people. Human being has entered an era of life marked by the revolution in communication and information technology (Bakke, 2010). The development of digital technology has also brought changes in various aspects of human life, both in politics, economics, culture and religion. The lives of people today are different from the lives of people in previous eras.

In addition, the central aim in communication and collaboration are building of the human fellowship and community growth. Human being can use media social to find various information from all corners the of the world through newspapers, films, radio, and television. The social interconnection has positive sides which make work easier to establish brotherhood or sisterhood. This means the social media is seen as a gift from God to help human being transmits every profession and especially in terms of building good connection and collaboration (Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, 1992).

The significance of social media for communication is inseparable from human life. It is because the communication can enrich awareness and knowledge through information. Over time, the access using the social media has become very easy and familiar to most of the people, particularly the youth (Schroeder,

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2018). The younger generation has a very wide opportunity to explore various countries thanks to the help of social media. Their access supported by a much easier internet network, especially in urban areas and even in remote areas of the country (Silbey, 2022). Hence, it is not surprising that more than half of Indonesia's population has utilized technological developments (Forshee, 2006). The social media affords important benefits and advantages for many aspects of life, such as for religious feature. The internet is also a resource for the Church to communicate with groups of people who live in remote areas and other religious members who may be difficult to reach (Shaw, 1994).

The Church as the community of people in the world requires being more creative in using social media for character and faith development, especially for young people. The purpose of using social media communication is to encourage the progress of humanity, justice and peace. Every person requires building society at the national and international levels for the common good and solidarity (Young, 2014). The Church as community calls to live prophetic aspect and being a witness in order to proclamation of the Gospel with the technology. God gives intelligence and ability to human being to create communication media to provide opportunities to channel all news that has happened (Shaw, 1994). With the existence of communication media, it is very closely related to society to find out all useful information and is able to interchange the ideas of many people. Through the communication media support human efforts to improve the progress of their lives. So that the society has the right to get information based on justice and love (Bakke, 2010).

The development of media and informatics techniques has changed human relations regarding space and time with the family. One thing that is happening at this time is that the younger generation based on media in the family is a reality that must be accepted and taken seriously. Although the distribution of various media devices in the family varies greatly by country and based on income and education level, the striking similarity is that the target of the media is everyone, especially the younger generation. New innovations in devices are global and have changed interaction patterns in the family (Danby, 2017). The younger the age group of family members, the more virtual experiences and the amount of media can be accessed compared to what happened in the childhood of older people in the age group in the family. The purpose of this research is find factual changes in life thanks to the development of social media. It is an opportunity to reflect when people without media social has limited access, but teenagers today have used android cell phones equipped with internet networks, so they have the opportunity to search for all information without limits of space and time (Mills, 2022).

2. Methodology

The research objectives to find out the experience of the family regarding the influence of social media for formation of faith and character especially in two parish locations, Gunungsitoli and Teluk Dalam. Media as part of social communication is very valuable in the progress of human life. Through social media, the families can develop a spiritual life and develop abilities to increase family income. Similarly, in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it can be disseminated with the help of media. However, if the use of media is without a good foundation of faith and true moral values, the media's progress can be as a threat to human well-being. In order to explore this matter, the researchers collect data and investigate the problem comprehensively using quantitative and qualitative methods through literature studies. The steps to be carried out by the researcher namely, first, to explain about media social and families as media users to guidance the teenagers to use media appropriately; then the researcher will describe the progress of

fellowship and human progress through the help of media and finally will describe the significance of moral responsibility in communicating and using social media. Thus, it is hoped that there will be pastoral practices that become recommendations for pastoral actions for fostering the faith and character of teenagers.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Family and Effect of social media on Communication

This research discusses a typical phenomenon that occurs in families, especially in the digital era. The development of informatics technology occurs at the level of comprehensive globalization. The digitalization of children's living environment in the family and in the daily environment is an important thing to be addressed wisely (Lahikainen, 2017). The digital revolution has also made it difficult for families to interact directly. Families experience a decrease in the frequency of attendance influenced by the presence of various media devices. The various problems and implications and consequences of this transformation are still largely unknown. This research attempts to show how vulnerable parents are under the influence of media in fostering the faith and character of adolescents (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.).

The interaction between children and parents is seriously challenged for the effectiveness of child development and care (López & Trujillo, 1996). All information around the significance of using media and informatics facilities appropriately is urgently needed. This research reveals the complexity and diversity of media related to family interaction and fostering the faith and character of adolescents as a pastoral "land" for families (Green, 2017). By using the data obtained and studied comprehensively, it will provide an important contribution to fostering the faith and character of adolescents in the family. The Church accurately utilizes social media to increase widespread communication for proclamation of the Gospel. This gradually intensive communication encourages the solidarity movement of the people even though they are separated by distance and place (Danby, 2017).

Information technology and social communication have presented the Church through the media, both print media, such as newspapers, magazines and tabloids, as well as electronic media such as radio, television, smartphones, computers, and the internet with its various applications. The family as the particular Church should know and its voice heard by the community. The Church must continue to carry out its role to observe developments and provide pastoral attention (Seran & Naibaho, 2024). The role of the Church is important to maintain human social relationships, while at the same time stemming the tendency of uncontrolled technological consumerism, especially in family life (Gula, 1989).

The Catholic Church's attitude towards the media, today's pastoral officers are also given the opportunity to preach through new media that are close to their daily lives (Issler, 2012). This is a special opportunity to help everyone who is served to know God better through their daily experiences. The simplest thing that almost everyone can do is use a telephone idea to call a friend or send a message that needs comfort (Naibaho & Sipahutar, 2024). In this category, pastoral officers or anyone interested can use it to create a reflection and verses of scripture and send them through that media. Through the Facebook or Twitter application, people can experience a development such as telling and sharing their experiences with Jesus every day. From this experience, it also helps each reader reflect and become a new strength for her or him. Therefore, the pastoral officers are invited to make reflections on the Gospel (Issler, 2012).

The progress of information technology and social media progress is very remarkable for human beings. On the other measure, if human beings are not cautious, they will be trapped in the sophistication of social media tools rather than efforts to build pastoral insight for growth of the faith and appropriate behaviour in using social media tools (Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, 1992). In field research in the Gunungsitoli and Teluk Dalam Parishes, it was found that parents use media in developing the faith and character of young people in the family as shown in the following table 1.¹

Apakah pemakaian handphone berguna untuk meningkatkan karakter yang baik dan iman pada remaja Katolik?

Is mobile phone use useful for developing good character and faith in Catholic teenagers?

Table 1. Parents' opinions on the use of media in fostering character and faith

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Berguna/ useful	8	21.1	88.9	88.9
	Sungguh sangat berguna/ It is really very useful	1	2.6	11.1	100.0
	Total	9	23.7	100.0	
Missing	System	29	76.3		
Total		38	100.0		

The data show the parent realizing that social media can also be used to develop the character and faith of young people in the family. Church through its pastoral instructions calls the people to nurture pastoral perception on the one hand and on the other hand to link with faith. Thus, the people request to have wisdom on using social media in order to expose for the growth of faith and characters building in the Church community (Green, 2017).

It is true that Church information may circulate quickly with the help of these tools. However, the quickness process does not in to grant the communication of faith, if the relationship of life with others is not supported according to the demands of discipleship of Jesus Christ (Issler, 2012). The goodness and humility need to underlie the rapid turnover of statements and information, so that the Church does not get caught up in the vanity of developments in information technology (Yesudoss, Naibaho, Obe, Sipahutar, & Ola, 2024). In communication with social media, everybody must have a responsibility in shared all news appropriately. The habit of social communication is more effective and efficient with training activity to develop communication skills, such as print and electronic journalism and public speaking (Chattell 1998).

The use of social media communication is truly good and necessary but must be balanced proficiency in its habit. These skills must be grasped, so that communications can attain on time, perfectly, objectively, correctly and refreshingly. The question is do social media communication skills help the Church fellowship to be more brotherly or sisterly in an attitude of mutual respect and appreciation? The Joy of the Gospel becomes an integral part of social media communication capability (Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, 1992). All people must use the

advancement of social media communication and information technology wisely and responsibly, so that the social media communication will not harm a human being (Fitzpatrick, 1933):

The human being's enthusiasm in using social media communication tools can make humans forget themselves and their own environment. The social media communication networks seem to expand human life, but without realizing it, the growth of personality, especially among the younger generation, is actually stunted (Glover, 2017). The presence on the internet with all the applications that accompany it materially opens up social media communication networks which in turn are expected to enrich human relationships. However, on the other hand, the internet can also be used to damage human relationships due to greed to obtain results that immediately oneself, such as gossip and bullying (Buelmann, 2014).

3.2 Media for Human Unity and Progress

The Church views the social media communication as "gifts of God" accordance with God's providential plan, uniting people in brotherhood and thereby helping them to cooperate with His plan for their salvation (Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, 1992). A deeper, more pervasive understanding of social media communication and the contribution that can be made by the tools used by modern society can be drawn from a number of documents issued at the instigation and direction of the Second Vatican Council, such as *Inter Mirifica*, *Aetatis Novae* and *Communio et Progressio*.

With *Aetatis Novae* document all deal with the important aspect of social media communication. A deeper understanding based on the teaching and spirit of this Council will guide the Christians in their attitude toward the social media communication (Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, 1992). The pastoral instruction issued at the direction of the Second Vatican Council establishes basic doctrinal principles and general guidelines, deliberately does not deal in detail with a subject that is constantly changing and developing and varies greatly according to time and place (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1991).

The channels of social media communication addressed to individual needs and influence the whole of society. They inform the wider public what is happening in the world and present current human attitudes towards social media. This reality requires absolutely necessary functioning of modern society with its complex and constantly changing needs. The Church as community of the believer remain all the people wisely to use all social media by keeping with the Church's view of how human beings should live always in unity and interconnectedness in Christ (Atkinson, 2014).

These practical advances have the goal of bringing humans into closer contact with one another. By conveying knowledge about people's shared anxieties and hopes, these channels help people solve the problems they face. The Church's view of the contribution that social communication tools make to human well-being is rooted in fundamental principles. Currently, the presence of information technology and social media communication has changed the pattern and stimulated communication between individuals of the faithful (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1989). At the same time, social communication technology has functioned to move the joints of life, as well as various other works and efforts for human unity and progress. Likewise, the Church utilizes social media communication facilities to shape relationships among the people

¹ Field research results and data from Google forms by the researchers on July 10-August 15, 2024.

in the Church fellowship (internal communication) and with the outside world (external communication) (Day, 2006)

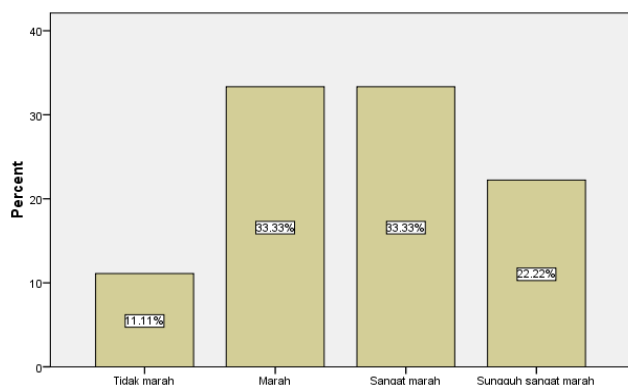
Media has a very important role in serving individuals and cultures. The existence of various social media communication gives the opportunity to create long-distance communication and to get the information. Any information can be obtained through the internet, the web or network with easy access, sometimes can manipulate and destroyed the human welfare. In addition, with the existence of the internet in this era, it is hoped that all information that has occurred, especially the proclamation of salvation, can be felt by all mankind, especially those who are oppressed, poor and marginalized (Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, 1992).

Evangelism through social media technically requires the people to prepare everything including supplies, life equipment, cultural approaches and mission strategies prudently. All of that is really a concern to eliminate obstacles to the process of evangelizing in new places for less than a long time. In the digital era like today, cyberspace has become a place for evangelizing the good news. It is easy to interact with many people with different backgrounds and circumstances (Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, 1992). The media serves a new

The main target of social media is to advance humans towards a prosperous life. All the communication media should create to educate humans more holistic. The social media communication provides real services for human progress. The main focus of social media is for the benefits and development of humans (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1989). It is obligatory to know especially the importance of the anthropological factor in communication. The understanding of the human aspect in this field has an important and determining role, rather than those amazing mechanical and electronic (Schroeder, 2018).

Social media is certainly a new aspect of today's culture, because it has succeeded in influencing so many people. The parents attempt to use social media and get angry when teenagers misuse the facilities. This was also found by researchers in both parishes as the basis for the study as shown in the following table 2.

Bagaimana reaksi bapak ibu bila melihat remaja Katolik menggunakan handphone dengan tidak bertanggung jawab?



From the table 2 above, the questions asked to parents are: bagaimana reaksi bapak-ibu bila melihat remaja Katolik menggunakan handphone dengan tidak bertanggung jawab? How do parents react when they see Catholic teenagers using cell phones irresponsibly? Parents' reactions and answers include tidak marah/not angry, marah/angry, sangat marah/ /very angry, sungguh sangat marah/really very angry. From the field research

evangelization concerning new techniques and means in preaching. Evangelization also encourages the use of new means of communication that are more in line with the progress of humanity. The use of media today is something essential in evangelization in catechesis (Górmez, 1997).

The Church as a fellowship of Christ's disciples lives and develops in accordance with the expansion of the times. The Church is present and stands firmly above its time. For these reasons, the growth of the Church cannot be separated from the development of technology. The Church must be responsive and wise in proclaiming the Kingdom of God through social media. The social media becomes a supporting and important for the Church, to maintain and glorify the dignity of the human person according to God's plan of creation (Green, 2017). However, the Church must also be wise and active in interpreting the development of science and information technology. The Church must not be trapped in the glamor and technical tendencies, but the Church can competently utilize the social media to build justice and peace.

3.3 Media to Educate Humans Towards Mature and Productive Individuals

shows that with the use of communication tools such as mobile phones, almost all parents do not want their children to use mobile phones irresponsibly. There are 33.33% who are angry, balanced with very angry, even 22.22% who are very angry if parents witness their children using mobile phones irresponsibly. However, there are still parents who are not angry when their children use mobile phones irresponsibly, which is 11.11%.²

The consequence is that social media communication can enrich the local culture to the international world on the one hand. With the help of the social media, every human being easily overcoming great distances to gain knowledge that is useful for human growth as individuals and communities. This wave of communication media develops from era to era it is true performances naturally are neutral. What is needed is the way and attitude of humans in using social media communication (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1989).

In other words, social media communication is able to offer possibilities to answer many the needs of the people and honourable cultural interests. In principle, the social media must be able to convey noble cultural content that is professional and interesting (Danby, 2017). The social media communication continues to afford society with a means, in order to deepen and expand its own culture. Therefore, mediators must carry out wise personal reflection and friendly exchange of views with others (Young, 2014). One example of the cultural possibilities that can be offered by social media communication is the contribution to preserving literary and artistic culture in many countries, stories, performances, songs, and dances, can be maintained as ancient cultural heritage of society.

The benefits of the social media communication are to enlarge the communication between humans in the following ways: increasing message production and distribution, increasing storage and retrieval of communication messages (Bakke, 2010). In addition, the existence of the social media communication can improve human civilization because through communication humans will learn, socialize and interact easier and more effective (Lahikainen, 2017). The social media communication with all its uses is expected to contain several things such as elements of information, entertainment, education and others.

² Field research results and data from Google forms by the researchers on July 10-August 15, 2024.

Today the Church realizes that in order to create the broader relation and create humanity community, the human's dialogue and fellowship by exchanging news and information its necessary (Egonsson, 1998). In other words, the Church is not against social media communication, but the Church continues to provide the necessary assistance so that people can use the media correctly, appropriately and responsibly. The Church develops the sophistication of this social media communication in the process of proclamation and mission, including dialogue with the outside world. It is in order to bring to life the commitment of cooperation to solve the great problems of humanity (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1991).

The Church is present in the midst of the world, while at the same time giving witness to the Kingdom of God through this social media. Social media is a room that can be used to find new friends, increase knowledge, share knowledge with the community, and even as a place to earn income. However, social media is not free from shortcomings, be wise and vigilant (Young, 2014). Many problems can also occur with improper use of social media. The problem deviations or crimes in the media are stalking us all the time, just waiting for our time to be free, and then bad things might happen.

3.4 Media used for Faith and Character Formation

The Church realizes that news or information packaged in social media communication is something that is very much needed for everyone. Every person has the right to obtain complete and accurate information so that it will lead to a deep understanding and comprehension. So, the community has the right to information about what concerns both individuals and the community as a whole according to their respective situations. Communication should respect and pay attention to moral law, the community's rights that should be collecting and disseminating news (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1991). In the family life, the formation of faith and characters building used the social media on the right part.

In relation to the laity to use social media communication in the task of proclaiming the Gospel, particularly in the family as basic Church is obliged to demonstrate how to use social media correctly. The family as the first community of people has significant effort and contribution in the teenagers' holistic growth process (Atkinson, 2014). Hence, the family understands that social media and dialogue are very narrowing linked for the efficiency of the lives of the people. In addition, the family lives in the society, where it must go deeper through dialogue and relationships through social media.(Young, 2014). Hence, the family realizes the significance social media in the relationships of dialogue and fellowship by exchanging news and information.

The Church acknowledged the positive influence of media development of pastoral and church activities, especially during the Covid-19 period. Church worship and service activities can be carried out well with the help of the media (Prasetyono & Pandor, 2024). So that, the Church provides clear direction to everyone using social media in order to minimize the negative influence of social media which destruction of life. In addition, the Church can also provide training and courses to the family about the social media. This aims to maintain and develop Christian moral values (Paul VI, 1964). The Expansions in the field of communication technology allow everyone to access various kinds of information from all over the world.

This evidence allows media users to see directly so that it can create an attitude of empathy towards external conditions. The social media can have a positive influence for faith and character formation. Therefore, the influence of social media users is a personal choice based on moral values. The most significant thing

for users in choosing news and information is to follow the desire of their conscience (Prasetyono & Pandor, 2024). Social media users are able to listen to the invitation of their conscience so that the choice of news and information takes place according to God's plan and will.

Conclusion

The social media communication can be used to shape a fellowship and human development in the world. The Church utilizes the social media to express formation of the faith and characters building using the media. The good news of salvation to the faithful can be delivered through social media appropriately. In pastoral activities, the Church can utilize media to build a fellowship in carrying out apostolic and preaching tasks. The family is called to be able to use social media communication. The social media can support the work of the Church in universal and family in particular in preaching the Gospel. The use of social media communication should be experienced as a form of the Church's calling to assess the development of the times and take a stance in fellowship and human development. Efforts to proclaim God's work on social media are not easy because as a millennial generation, the priests' catechists, and religious teachers do not fully understand the media properly and correctly and are still not innovative in using the media in everyday life.

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