

Chapter Eight

Religious activities through social media during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Social media remain one of the big disrupters in human and organizational interaction and communication in the 21st century to make effective crisis management controllable in Africa. The disruption is seen across different continents of the world, and Africa is not left out. The disruptiveness of social media has been witnessed during crisis periods such as earthquakes, pandemics, and many others. A crisis is disruptive, and it requires crisis management to control and mitigate the effect. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic threw religious institutions in Africa and globally into a crisis that disrupted the activities of religious institutions. Many African countries went into total and partial lockdown and put measures to mitigate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on society. Most conventional (face-to-face gathering) religious activities were stopped, and many adopted digital or online (social media) platforms to continue their activities. Social media provided a disruptive means for religious institutions to engage and conduct their activities. The chapter focuses on determining the role of social media platforms in managing religious activities in crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter adopted qualitative research by applying the interview data collection method in addressing the chapter's objective. The chapter shows that the COVID-19 pandemic forced religious bodies to adopt online activities using different social media platforms. It is shown that social media provide a mechanism for religious organizations to conduct their activities online.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Social media, Health crises,

Introduction and background

Health crises create uncertainty. Crises are an uncertainty that includes natural disasters, diseases, and many more (Snoussi, 2020). Religious (church organizations are affected by world uncertainties and embracing digital culture (Dyikuk, 2017) to manage the effects. Social media is used in a crisis to create and share quick information and communication. Social media provide communication and information-sharing channel for users (people), empowering them to generate content and be able to share them (Reuter, Hughes & Kaufhold, 2018; Ramluckan, 2016). Religious institutions use social media to influence persons' behavior during crises (Barua, Barua, Aktar & Kabir, 2020). Religious institutions, especially Christianity, provide the base for people to build their faith and hope of survival in a midst of crises. In the health crisis (COVID-19 pandemic), social media became an integral part of information sharing and effective communication. Social media has become a center point for information sharing and communication tools in crises for religious institutions to engage with congregants. Institutions in different sectors, including religious organizations (Churches and even Mosques), have accepted the use of social media platforms to conduct their religious activities. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the dependence on social media platforms by Christian institutions, in this case, churches. Churches of different denominations use social media to share church information, communicate (Sircar & Rowley, 2020), and engage in live services (activities) (Lewis, 2016). However, the role of social media as a disruptive technology in managing religious activities during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic is missing in the literature. This chapter aimed to determine the role or impact of social media platforms in managing church gatherings and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic health crisis. According to Ramluckan (2016), there are limited academic materials on social media platforms for crisis communication.

Literature review**The place of religious activities in the digital age (world)**

Social media platforms hold the possibility to augment emergency warnings, and crisis response actions (Bunker et al., 2015). The platforms have revolutionized how communication is managed in the period of crisis as evidenced in the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, religious organizations were done in a traditional way that communities were able to participate without hesitation. Currently, due to the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has moved to digitalization, which now changes the systematization of information and decision-making amongst religious organizations. Religious activities are effective where there is a human touch, although there can be implications when social media is used. Congregants heal on an eye for eye church services, tithes are better offered traditionally than using digital banking systems. Furthermore, the use of online banking for religious offerings does not accommodate everyone in the church community, demographically, elder congregants are unable to pay tithes during this time of the COVID-19 crisis, however, it is easy for the young congregants.

Amid this catastrophe, religious activities are in the middle place in the digital world as compared to when things were done traditionally before. Therefore, church leaders and other church committees find it hard to commence with normal church activities and decision-making techniques.

The emergency health crises

The COVID-19 pandemic created a global health crisis, and the mitigation and coping strategies mainly were done online/virtually (via social media) (Abbas, Wang, Su & Ziapour, 2021). According to Burkle Jr (2019), a health crisis or emergency is defined as a crisis that affects the function and operation of the public and private health systems. Today's health crisis is increasing more than ever seen in human history and affecting millions globally (Kohrt, Mistry, Anand, Beecroft & Nuwayhid, 2019). The emergency health crisis is challenging for national and international healthcare systems and providers. Individuals are confused and traumatized in dealing with and coping with healthcare crises. Modern society is faced with healthcare challenges resulting from natural disasters, climate change, urbanization growth, insecurity, national and international terrorism, war and conflict, and many more (Burkle Jr, 2019). These challenges lead to health crises affecting developing and developed countries. The emergency of health crises is so overwhelming for local and international healthcare systems and providers in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed global weak healthcare systems and brought them to a standstill human activities. Religious institutions were badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and global lockdown. Face-to-face religious activities were shut down, and some resulted in online services using social media platforms and other channels to engage with the congregation.

The emergency health crises exposed the weak health system and digital divide in the African continent. Several strategies were used to conduct religious functions and activities across the continent of Africa to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic national lockdowns to keep the spiritual well-being of the people alive. Ramluckan (2016) believed that social media platforms provide direct communication during crisis periods.

The roles of disruptive social media platforms in managing religious activities in crises

African society and its religious institutions are gradually becoming human-centric by the day. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed the transformation into a human-centric society by providing a lot of innovations and technological dependence through social media and other forms of digital media. Social media disrupts the dissemination of information about any disaster in defining individuals and organizational perceptions and decision-making (Mirbabaie, Bunker, Stieglitz, Marx & Ehnis, 2020). Social media platforms disrupted traditional religious (church) gatherings during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing online religious (church) activities. Religious (church) worshipers gather in various places (small groups or individuals) through their social media to listen and participate in their church activities. According to Ramluckan (2016), social media provides a disruptive and improved communication channel during a crisis. The platforms were disruptive because they changed and transformed how

individuals, health organizations, and other institutions communicate and share health information in a crisis period. Individuals and organizations have moved to use social media platforms to communicate and manage a crisis in health crises. The inception of social media has revolutionized and transformed how communication is carried out in a crisis period, as seen in the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced national and international lockdowns and shutdown of human movements and other activities, including religious activities in the African continent. Religious persons and organizations used social media platforms and other online platforms to conduct services while members were locked in their homes and places without movement.

Social media is a technological disrupter that changes and disrupts religious (church) activities. The disruption was felt less pre-COVID-19 pandemic and more during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the different national and international lockdowns. According to Ramluckan (2016), communication patterns are changed in crisis periods because of social media. The changes allowed religious bodies and individuals to connect to their spiritual leaders (Pastors, Iman, Bishop, and others) for their spiritual works and services. Social media platforms positively disrupted the function of church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and allowed congregates to engage in the services virtually continuously.

The challenges in managing disruptive social media platforms in handling religious activities during health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media usage increased more than before as a result of massive reliance on the platforms for news sources including health information for themselves and their loved ones. Bergquist, Kiani and Manda (2020), state that the egress of the COVID-19 pandemic developed into a global public health crisis. Having said that, religious activities are delayed due to the mental distress that the pandemic has caused. Although social media platform provides easy access to information, it is also contributing factor to the mental health of the church leaders, this brings risk to decision-making on how to manage the religious activities in the churches. Yayan (2019) affirms that in recent times, the online environment challenges the traditional authority model to transform into new religious authorities that influence and impact traditional boundaries.

Furthermore, technology can be helpful to religious bodies to enrich the collective aspects of religion, and communal aspects but challenges abound. Certainly, other aspects of technology disrupt religious activities such as online evangelism, publicity, and many more. According to Yayan (2019), disruption establishes a new strategic model and innovation across different fields like information, business, religion, education, and many more. However, church leaders and the community at large should bring active participation in religious activities using social media platforms. Yayan (2019) explains that one of the best ways to evaluate the vitality of religious activities is determined through the process of distributing knowledge. This practice will eliminate most of the challenges found on disruptive social media platforms.

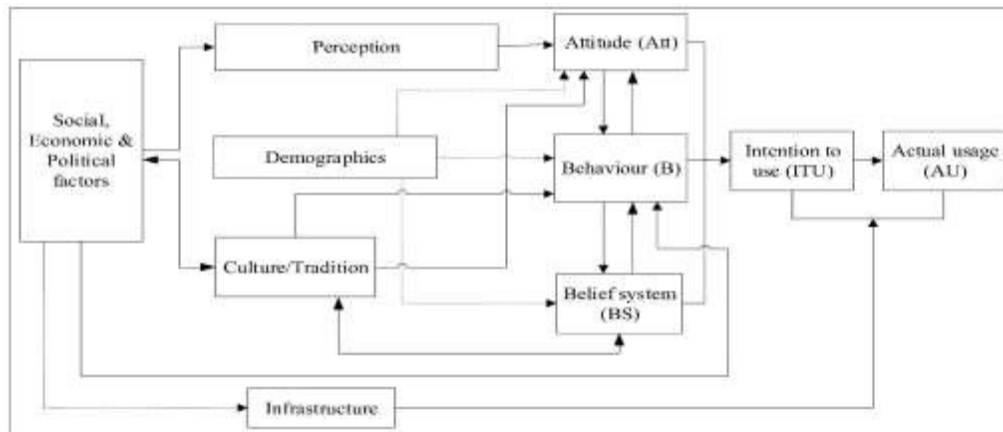
Managing religious activities in a health crisis period effectively through social media

Mirbabaie et al. (2020) and Snoussi (2020) believed that social media affects the dissemination of information in times of crisis. Many infodemics have been spread in a time of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These infodemics are spread and rectified on social media. The role of social media in the time of crises is no longer in doubt due to how it is used to manage information flow from the health care personnel to the people and vice versa. According to Reuter and Kaufhold (2018), social media provide a critical role in a time of difficulty since the 2001 9/11 attack. Natural disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, diseases, and many more saw individual and organizational dependence on social media to mitigate and manage the consequences on the people and society. In modern history, the COVID-19 pandemic was a health crisis that shocked the entire world (Anwar, Malik, Raees & Anwar, 2020), causing panic and loss of lives and livelihood. At the same time, church (religious) institutions were grounded, and other human activities and movements were grounded to a full halt that worshipers could not gather except for essential services. However, social media platforms were a relief for churches and other religious institutions to be connected virtually. Religious (church) activities were conducted on social media platforms allowing wider connectivity between the congregates. Churches (religious) bodies use social media platforms to provide traditional services (Sircar & Rowley, 2020; McKinney, 2014) such as counseling (consultation), prayers, church services, offerings, and other activities. Social media platforms provide churches an avenue to remain connected in faith with wider coverage for church activities; however, many were marginalized in Africa due to the digital divide.

Theoretical framework

The research process is built on an existing framework called the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework provides the basis for framing the research process, research objectives, problem statement, and research methodology. There are different kinds of theoretical frameworks to choose from in conducting information systems (IS) research, and one of them is revised TAM. Revised TAM focuses on individual and organizational factors affecting the indigenous acceptance of modern technology (Chukwuere, Ntseme & Shaikh, 2021). Revised TAM is arranged into five (5) layers: Social, Economic & Political (SEP) factors, perception, demographics, culture/tradition, infrastructure, attitude (Att), behavior (B), belief system (BS), intention to use (ITU), and actual usage (AU). These define factors and components that affect technological adoption in developing countries (Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Revised technology adoption model (TAM), adopted from Chukwuere et al. (2021)



Research method for the chapter

This study adopts the qualitative research method using interviews. While the content and document analysis were used to interpret primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected in three Christian denominations within Mahikeng of the North West Province, South Africa to showcase and evaluate existing academic materials covering this chapter. The Christian denominations that participate in the study are from the following churches: Baptist, Pentecostal, and Catholic. The participants were drawn using convenience sampling. It allows the researchers to collect data from those accessible in the church congregation. According to Edgar and Manz (2017), convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that allows researchers to collect data from participants who are located within the study. While Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) suggest that convenience sampling is used where the targeted population meets some criteria like accessibility, availability, willingness, and geographical proximity. The collected data were analyzed using the content and document analysis approach. Sometimes, both content analysis and document analysis are interchangeable in meaning.

According to Brown (2009), document analysis provides a systematic review and evaluation of academic materials in answering research questions or addressing the research gap. While content analysis involves an examination of words written in a document. In recent years, document analysis or qualitative text has emerged as the most used qualitative method of research (Rasch, 2020). While Morgan's (2022) document analysis is an underused method of qualitative research, which allows researchers to carry out an impossible study. The adopted research method was used to study the role of social media platforms as a disruptive technology in managing church services (religious activities) during health crises in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were conveniently selected because they are reachable and have the necessary interest, knowledge, and characteristics to produce the correct data for the study. The participants comprise church pastors (ministers) and congregants, N=20.

The documents to evaluate are accredited and peer-review documents directly dealing with the research questions and the topic. Document analysis aims to elicit meaning and interpretation

of existing documents to elicit to build understanding, knowledge, and arrival at empirical conclusions and direct decision-making. While content analysis evaluates and interprets the meaning behind the interview data collected. The data was collected, evaluated, and analyzed in line with the pre-structured open-ended questions using statistical tools like ATLAS.ti. ATLAS.ti was applied to analyze the collected data. Table 8.1 presents the association between the theoretical framework adopted for the chapter and the research questions used.

Table 8.1: Revised TAM vs. Research questions

1	What are the roles of social media platforms in managing religious activities in crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic?	Layers 2, 4 and 5
2	What are the challenges in managing social media platforms in handling religious activities during health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic?	Layers 1, 2 and 3
3	How can disruptive social media be used to manage religious activities in a health crisis period effectively?	

In this study, document analysis draws academic papers and documents through different online databases like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and many other \others. These databases provide the researcher with high-profile and peer-review documents to inform the chapter and address the chapter's research questions while the content analysis assists to interpret the meaning of the collected data.

Steps of document analysis (Rasch, 2020):

1. **Research question defined** – the chapter research questions are defined to guide the research as provided in table 8. 1 and the section below,
2. **Gather (collect) and sample data** – the researchers consider the kind of data source/s to answer the chapter research questions. Data can be collected and sampled using observation, interviews, surveys, and documents. In this case, documents were suitable to answer the chapter’s research questions,
3. **Select and prepare data** – gather (select) appropriate data and prepare them for quantitative descriptive analysis (QDA) like the transcription of data (interview data), selecting appropriate parts of the document for analysis,
4. **Code development** – develop code,
5. **Unitizing and coding guide** – set rules and guidelines on the coding,
6. **Training and reliability** – test the codes, test coding reliability, and possibly train other coders,
7. **Revise and modify** – revise code and modify were necessary,
8. **Coding** – the entire data is coded and revised in the process,
9. **Analyze and make a comparison** – draw meanings and conclusions from research questions, notice important issues and content, and many others,
10. **Interpret and present findings** – interpret the data findings and make presentations.

Problem statement and rationale of the chapter

There are diverse areas where social media can be incorporated into religious activities for sustainable church development (Sircar & Rowley, 2020; Lee, 2018; McKinney, 2014;

Badmos, 2014) but this has not been fully explored within the context of the study. Social media is seen to enhance daily life activities in real-time today, although it is a disruption in terms of the COVID-19 crisis. Social media studies are available in showing the role and impact of the platforms on human and organizational well-being and activities. However, little is known about the disruptive role of social media on religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research questions

1. What are the roles of social media platforms in managing religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the challenges in managing social media platforms in handling religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How can disruptive social media be used to manage religious activities in a health crisis period effectively?

The challenges in adopting social media in health crises

According to Park et al. (2019), social media allows individuals to improve their understanding of health by sharing health information, experience-based opinions, and health-related current events. Some users are endorsed experts, including the aforementioned researchers, as well as providers. In addition, Wong et al. (2021) state that professionals, organizations, and individuals who engage on social media platforms continually have increased in recent years. There remains significant debate as to the merits of social media in terms of actual learning and improvement in the quality of care provided. An innovative application of social media as a means of location-tracking and hence contact tracing has materialized directly because of the pandemic.

Furthermore, the massive usage of social media platforms to rapidly distribute expert opinions and consensus by medical personnel and organizations is considered an additional capacity to the pre-existing social media features and serendipitously coincides with the growing necessity for both users and medical personnel to work remotely (Wong et al., 2021). Abbas et al. (2021) suggest that through social support it is now clear in practical terms how social media care for those who are within the platforms. However, Wong et al. (2021) emanate from the previous discussions that the rate at which the pandemic affects the global community, combined with the volume of online content, communication, and daily generation of data can present various problems to the healthcare systems, professional who adopted social media usage. Notwithstanding the challenges opposed by the application of social media in the healthcare sector, social media continue to drive innovative communication and content in bettering the healthcare system, especially during the health crisis period. In summary, researchers believed that confidentiality concerns, misinformation (infodemic), disinformation and inaccurate information, poor quality of information, privacy issues, damage to professional image, licensing, and legal issues, and many more are health-related issues that remain challenges affecting the adoption of social media (Park, Bowling, Shaw, Li & Chen, 2019; Ventola 2014),

especially in a healthcare crisis. While Ghalavand, Panahi and Sedghi (2020) attributed challenges to the lack of willingness of medical professionals (doctors) in engaging with the public, privacy concerns, inadequacy to follow medical principles, ethics, and standard, and inability to manage negative social media comments.

Results and interpretation of chi-square of demographic information, frequency, and percentage analysis

Section A: Results and interpretation of Chi-Square analysis of demographic information

The Chi-Square Test for Association is applied to determine if there is any association between two variables. The Chi-Square Test is a hypothesis test of independence among variables. The null hypothesis shows that the two variables are not associated with each other, for example, independent variables. The alternate hypothesis shows an association between two variables. The Chi-Square Test of Independence determines whether there is an association between categorical variables (for instance, whether the variables are independent or related). It is a nonparametric test. This test is also known as the Chi-Square Test of Association. A Chi-Square (χ^2) statistic determines the difference between the observed outcomes and the expected frequencies of a set of variables or events. Chi-Square is critical for analyzing those differences in grouping variables, for example, those nominal in nature.

This section addresses the influence of demographic variables such as Age, Educational level, and gender on social media usage. Hence, test for the association of demographic information and social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. To determine whether the variables are independent, the researchers compare the p-value to the significance level. Often, a significance level of 0.5 (denoted as α or alpha) is acceptable. A significance level of 0.05 (5%) may risk researchers concluding an association between the variables exists when there is no real association. In this section, SPSS Version 20 was used for the Chi-Square analysis.

In Chi-Square Test Analysis, **P-value $\leq \alpha$** ; The variables have a significant association (Reject H_0) If the p-value is less than or equal to the significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the conclusion will be that there is a significant association between the variables. Furthermore, **P-value $> \alpha$** : Cannot summarise that the variables are associated (Fail to reject H_0). If the p-value is bigger than the significance level, the researchers fail to reject the null hypothesis because not enough evidence to conclude that the variables are associated.

Table 8.2: Demographic factors influence social media usage for religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

S/N	Question	P-Value	Remark
1	Is Age associated with Social Media usage	0.569	No association
2	Is Educational level associated with Social Media usage	0.770	No association
3	Is Gender associated with SM usage	0.089	No association

Interpretation:

Since **P-value (0.569, 0.770, and 0.089) $> \alpha$ (5%)** Cannot conclude that the variables are associated. Hence, there is no association between age, education, gender, and Social Media

usage. Therefore, the researchers conclude that demographic factors did not influence the use of social media usage in church activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Section B: The roles of disruptive social media platforms in managing religious activities in crisis periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic

The Results and Interpretations of Frequency/Percentage Analysis. This section is a frequency and percentage analysis of the respondents based on research questions and objectives, using SPSS Version 20 also.

Table 8.3: Kind of social media used in church services during the COVID-19 pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Facebook	12	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Zoom	2	10.0	10.0	70.0
	Youtube	2	10.0	10.0	80.0
	Instagram	1	5.0	5.0	85.0
	Microsoft	1	5.0	5.0	90.0
	None	2	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

From table 8.3 above 60% of respondents were using Facebook, while Zoom and Youtube had equal usage of 10% each. There was also an equal usage of 5% each for Instagram and Microsoft whereas 10% indicated they use none of the social media platforms. The finding indicates that Facebook was mostly used for church service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 8.4: Reasons/intentions of using social media during church service during the COVID-19 Pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Communication	9	45.0	45.0	45.0
	Comfortability	1	5.0	5.0	50.0
	Be Safe (infection of COVID-19 pandemic)	6	30.0	30.0	80.0
	Spiritual Life	3	15.0	15.0	95.0
	Others	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

Table 8.4 shows the respondents’ main intention for using social media. 45% of the respondents said it’s for the purpose of communication, and 30% said it is because of the need to be safe during the pandemic. 15% said it’s to help their spiritual life. 5% of the respondents indicated that it’s for comfort, whereas Others (5%) reported that it is for other reasons. The study revealed that most of the respondents use social media for church services for church service for communication reasons.

Table 8.4: The role of social media in conducting church services during the COVID-19 pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Reach out to people	11	55.0	55.0	55.0
	Be safe (infection of COVID-19 pandemic)	3	15.0	15.0	70.0
	Continuation of worship	6	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

The role of social media in conducting church services during the COVID-19 pandemic was represented in table 8.5. The majority (55%) of the respondents indicated that the role of social media in conducting church service is to reach out to people, 30% of the respondents indicated that it is for a continuation of worship, while 15% indicated it is for safety. The study shows that many of the respondents suggest that the role of social media in conducting church services during the COVID-19 pandemic is to reach out to many people (church members).

Table 8.6: The roles of social media in managing church services and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Continuity of Worship	9	45.0	45.0	45.0
	Be Safe (infection of COVID-19 pandemic)	5	25.0	25.0	70.0
	Information dissemination and communication	3	15.0	15.0	85.0
	None	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

Table 8.6 shows the roles of social media in managing church services and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. 45% indicated it is for continuity of worship. 25% indicated it is to ensure safety. 15% believe it is for information dissemination and communication while 15% indicated no role. According to the finding, the study revealed that managing church service during the COVID-19 pandemic in providing continuity support for worship.

Table 8.7: Participants' perception of the use of social media in managing religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very useful	6	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Useful	11	55.0	55.0	85.0
	Undecided	1	5.0	5.0	90.0
	Less useful	1	5.0	5.0	95.0
	Not Useful	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

The perception of the use of social media in managing religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic is presented in table 8.7. 30% of the respondents said it's very useful. More than half of the respondents (55%) indicated that it is useful. However, 5% of each of the respondents were undecided, another 5% feels it was less useful and the remaining 5% is of the opinion that social media is not useful at all in managing religious activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The finding shows a positive perception (very useful) of the use of social media in managing religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4.8: Demographic factors (gender, age, and education) affect the adoption of social media in church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unaffected	3	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Less Affect	7	35.0	35.0	50.0
	Undecided	5	25.0	25.0	75.0
	Affect	2	10.0	10.0	85.0
	Highly Affects	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

Table 8.8 shows the demographic factors (gender, age, and education) affecting the adoption of social media in church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. 15% of the respondents indicated that demographic factors do not affect the adoption of social media during church activities. However, 35% of the majority of the respondents indicated that demographic factors have less effect on the adoption of social media in church activities. 25% of the respondents are undecided, 2% said demographic factors affect social media adoption, as well as 3% of the respondents, stated that demographic factors highly affect the adoption of social media during church activities.

Table 8.9: The use of social media in the church during the COVID-19

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Meetings	8	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Church services	7	35.0	35.0	75.0
	Sermons	4	20.0	20.0	95.0
	None	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

Table 8.9 shows the responses to what social media is used for in church during COVID-19. 40% of the respondents indicated that it is used for meetings, and 35% indicated that it was used for church services. However, 20% of the respondents believe it is used for preaching sermons and 5% feel it is none of the above. The finding indicates that respondents use social media for a religious meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section C: The challenges in managing disruptive social media platforms in handling religious activities during health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic

The Results and Interpretations of Frequency/Percentage Analysis. This section is a frequency and percentage analysis of the respondents based on research questions and objectives, using SPSS Version 20 also.

Table 8.10: Challenges of Church using social media during church activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poor/Unavailability of network	7	35.0	35.0	35.0
	Limited number of participants	3	15.0	15.0	50.0
	High cost of data	5	25.0	25.0	75.0
	Poor revenue	1	5.0	5.0	80.0
	Literacy of some members	4	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

Responses on the challenges the church faces using social media during church services are presented in table 8.10 above. 35% of the respondents being the majority indicated poor or unavailability of a network as a challenge. 15% of the respondents stated that a limited number of participants was a challenge, while 25% believed that the high cost of data was the challenge. However, 5% of the respondents in their view saw the poor revenue of the church as a challenge whereas 20% believed that the literacy of some members of the church posed a challenge to the church in using social media during church activities. It was indicated from the findings that poor/unavailability of a network was the most challenge for the church in using social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 8.11: What challenges do church congregants face in using social media for church services and others?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High cost of data	8	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Poor/Unavailability of data	7	35.0	35.0	75.0
	Limited participants	1	5.0	5.0	80.0
	None	2	10.0	10.0	90.0
	Others	2	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

Table 8.11 above presented the challenges church congregates face in using social media for church services and activities. The majority of the respondents (40%) identified high cost of data, 35% said poor network and unavailability of data, 5% says it encouraged limited participation of her members in church services, 10% feel it poses no challenge while 10% of the respondents indicated other challenges church congregate face in using social media during church activities. The findings prove that the high cost of data was the most challenge the church congregates were facing in the use of social media for church services and activities.

Table 8.12: Social, economic, and political factors that affect the use of social media for church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Money	12	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Poor connectivity	3	15.0	15.0	75.0
	Restrictions on SM use	2	10.0	10.0	85.0
	None	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretations:

The responses on social, economic, and political factors that affect the use of social media for church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic are presented in table 8.12 above. 60% which is more than half of the respondents believe that money is a factor affecting the use of social media for church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. 15% of the respondents said poor connectivity was a factor. 10% of respondents which is the least indicated that restrictions on the use of social media either by government policies or service providers affect the use of social media for church activities, whereas 15% indicated none. Among different social, economic and political factors which affect the use of social media for religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, money (lack of money) was the most factor that affect the usage.

Table 8.13: Culture/tradition affect your adoption of social media in church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	3	15.0	15.0	15.0
	No	17	85.0	85.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

Table 8.13 shows the responses on whether culture/tradition affects the adoption of social media in church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of the respondents (85%) disagree while 15% of the respondents agree that culture/tradition affects the adoption of social media in church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The finding indicates that users' culture/tradition doesn't affect the adoption of social media for church (religious) activities.

Table 8.14: Adoption of social media during the COVID-19 Pandemic and its effect on infrastructure

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unaffected	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Undecided	2	10.0	10.0	15.0
	Affected	15	75.0	75.0	90.0
	Highly affected	2	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

From table 8.14 above, 5% of the respondents indicated that the adoption of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic has no effect on the church infrastructure. 10% were undecided. However, 75% feel that the adoption of social media for church activities during the pandemic

has affected and should affect the church infrastructure while 10% said it has highly affected the church infrastructure. The finding proves that the level of the church and personal infrastructure available affected the adoption of social media platforms for church (religious) activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 8.15: The use of social media in church during the COVID-19 pandemic affects attitude, behavior, and belief

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive	11	55.0	55.0	55.0
	Negative	4	20.0	20.0	75.0
	No effect	3	15.0	15.0	90.0
	Undecided	2	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

Table 8.15 shows the responses of the respondents as to if the use of social media in church during the COVID-19 pandemic affects attitude, behavior, and belief. 55% which is more than half of the respondents indicated that the use of social media in church during the COVID-19 pandemic has a positive effect while 20% of the respondents indicated it has a negative effect. 15% said it has no effect at all while 10% of the respondents were undecided. The finding established that attitude, behavior, and belief were positive in adopting and usage of social media in church (religious) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 8.16: How to address the challenge

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Reduce the cost of data	4	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Improve network connection	7	35.0	35.0	55.0
	Return to physical service	2	10.0	10.0	65.0
	Awareness/training on the use of SM	3	15.0	15.0	80.0
	Nothing	4	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

The ways to address these challenges associated with the use of social media are presented in table 8.16 above. 20% of the respondents said a reduction in the cost of data, 35% being the majority believes an improved network can address the challenge, 10% believe returning to physical service will address the challenge, while 15% of the respondents said that creating awareness and training on the use of social media will go a long way to address these challenges, 20% feels that nothing can be done to address the challenges. Among the solutions to address the challenges, improving the network was the most among them according to the respondents.

Summary of analysis

The COVID-19 outbreak in 2019 became a global pandemic that was checked through many means to curtail its high spread and death rate in many countries. Among many measures employed to check this deadly pandemic was a sit-at-home, hence the global order by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international health organizations to sit-at-home affected many outdoor activities including religious institutions in almost all countries of the world.

This chapter analysis is aimed at carrying out a research survey, data analysis, and inference through an empirical study to determine the role or impact of social media platforms in managing church gatherings and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic health crisis. Furthermore, the study evaluated both percentage and frequency analysis of the following:

- a. Kind of social media used in church services,
- b. Reasons/intentions of using social media during church service, the role of social media in conducting church services,
- c. The roles of social media in managing church services and activities,
- d. Perception of the use of social media in managing religious activities,
- e. Demographic factors (gender, age, and education) affect the adoption of social media in church activities,
- f. The use of social media in the church,
- g. Challenges the church faced using social media during church activities,
- h. Challenges church congregates face in using social media for church services and activities,
- i. Social, economic, and political factors that affect the use of social media for church activities,
- j. Culture/tradition affects the adoption of social media in church activities,
- k. How adoption of social media affect church infrastructure,
- l. How social media affects attitude, behavior, and belief during the COVID-19 pandemic
- m. Suggestions on how to address the challenges in the use of social media during church services.

Summary of findings

The summary of the research reveals the following:

- a. Based on the p-values (**0.569, 0.770, and 0.089**) $> \alpha$ (5%), there is no association between age, education and gender, and social media usage. Therefore, we conclude that demographic factors did not influence the use of social media usage in church activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic,
- b. The Facebook platform has the highest percentage (60%) of using more than its counterpart Zoom and YouTube platforms with 5% each respectively. It means Facebook is more popular with South African social media users,

- c. 45% of the respondents being the highest said the reasons/intentions for the usage of social media during church activities are for communication and comfort, however, 30% said it's for their safety and 15% noted that it was for their spiritual life,
- d. On the role of social media in conducting church services, 55% indicated it helps to reach out to people, 15% stated it is for safety, and 30% for the continuation of worship. Basically, its role is to reach out to the church congregates for continuity in worship with the safety of the people in mind,
- e. The majority of the respondents of 85% cumulatively have the perception that social media was useful in managing church activities during the pandemic,
- f. 50% of the respondents stated that Demographic factors like age, gender, and education do not/less slightly affect the adoption of social media usage, whereas a cumulative of 25% indicates that it affects,
- g. Table 4.8 above shows that 40% indicated that social media is used for meetings, and 35% indicated for church services. 20% for sermons. It, therefore, means that social media is used for various church activities,
- h. From table 8.9, challenges the church faced using social media during church activities can be traced to the high responses of the respondents such as poor/unavailability of Network (35%), high cost of data (25%), and literacy levels of some members. (20%),
- i. The challenges the congregates faced while using social media during church services are somewhat similar to the challenges faced by the church 40% complained of the high cost of data, and 35% stated poor/unavailability of a network,
- j. The social, economic, and political factors affecting the use of social media for church services are money (60%), poor connectivity (15%), and political restrictions on social media usage (10%),
- k. Table 4.12 show that culture and tradition almost do not affect the adoption of social media usage in church activities as the majority (85%) of the respondents indicated that it does not affect whereas a very small number 15% indicated that culture and tradition affect social media adoption,
- l. From table 8.13, a cumulative of 85% indicated that the adoption of social media during church activities has an effect on the church infrastructure,
- m. Regarding, the use of social media in church activities as shown in table 8.14, 55% of the respondents indicates that it positively affects attitude, behavior, and belief whereas a few respondents, 20% said it affects it negatively. Therefore, it has a high positive effect and a slightly negative effect on attitude, behavior, and belief,
- n. In addressing the challenges, reduction of data cost (20%), improvement of a network (35%), and creation of awareness and training on the use of social media (15%) were identified by the respondents as a way to address the challenge of using social media platforms for church activities.

Recommendations

For the purpose of this research, the following recommendations are proffered:

- Moderate charges of mobile data by the telecommunication industry should be encouraged by the government for effective usage of social media platforms, especially during a health crisis,
- Quality and effective data networks should be introduced like the 5G network at a global scale,
- A high level of awareness and training on the use of various social media platforms should be encouraged as it will enhance the use of social media in church activities as well as other functions/Programmes.

Conclusion

The above findings indicated that social media plays a good role in allowing church members to connect with their members as well as various religious (church) activities and programmes in the Church during the pandemic. Social media also helped to promote Church events and the continuous running of the church during the sit-at-home. Therefore, we can conclude that social media plays a great role in both conducting and managing church activities and reaching out to the church congregate, for continuity in worship without going against the safety protocols of the various world international health organizations.

Social media continue to improve the social and healthcare of the people. The chapter provided an in-depth evaluation of the role of social media in disrupting religious activities in times of health crisis. Going forward, the chapter made a way to how social media can be used in disrupting religious activities during a period of a health crisis.

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