EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CHURCH ACTIVITIES AMONG CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The study sought to examine the experiences and perception towards the use of social media for church activities by the Evangelistic Ministry, North Legon and the Maker's House Chapel International, Kwabenya in Ghana. The adoption of social media by churches is increasing as the world is preparing towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution and currently battling with the novel COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Methodology: The mixed-method approach which involves both qualitative and quantitative techniques was deployed to undertake the research expedition. The Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry, North Legon, and The Makers House Chapel International were purposely selected as a target population for the study. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from a sample size of 152 respondents. Also, 2 head pastors and their deputies, as well as 2 IT personnel, were interviewed.

Findings: The study found that church leaders and church members, in general, possessed at least some basic computer skills to enable them to access and navigate social media platforms adopted by the churches. The instrumental contribution of social media to the churches was evident as the study revealed the positively perceived usefulness of the social media platforms. This can also be

attributed to the fact that the basic skills directly influence the perceived ease of use that the church members possess.

Conclusions: The study concluded that is very cardinal for church members to receive constant training on the use of social media platforms since updates on social media is on the rise. This move will help the church to keep pace with updates on social media use.

Recommendations: The church should provide adequate continuous training for leaders since the functional features of the social media platforms functional features keep changing. Much emphasis should be put on the interface and functional features of the churches' social media platforms that church leaders and members will require to access church programmes. There should be a provision of strong internet connectivity. Internet is the gateway to access social media platforms. Church leaders should be provided with strong and reliable internet access for them to assist church members and keep monitoring the churches' activities on social media platforms. There should be continuous education on policies regarding the use of social media platforms, enforcing members to be abided by them and emphasizing its importance to the church.

Keywords: *Social Media, Platforms, Churches, System, Leaders, Gospel,* Charismatic

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The advancement of the internet has drastically changed the dynamics of communication where most people in the world are now gearing towards the use of digital platforms to reach one another. This move has reduced the difficulty in spreading information by entities such as churches, governments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) etc to their target audience (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020; Wise, 2014). Social media has become one of these critical digital platforms being utilised by these entities to carry out their agenda in terms of propagating information to a larger populace. Social media cannot be left unmentioned when dealing with the most important communication tools in this Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). These social media platforms include WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and others (Adelaku, 2020).

WhatsApp creates a common platform where most churches use to outlay their announcements concerning church activities, church discussions and other information. Social media platforms have been considered the cheapest way of placing calls to reach one another. Whiles Facebook makes live streaming of church services very effective for church members to join and follow sermon synchronously and asynchronously, Instagram gives the church, opportunity to share vivid photos and videos about important church activities. Twitter also serves as a golden opportunity for churches to create a hashtag to promote a programme underway (Wise, 2014). YouTube also provides church members with the chance to watch church services or other related church programmes at their own pace. Individuals can also recommend programmes by sharing links to church members, family and friends (Lewis, 2016, Wise, 2014).

The use of social media platforms for church activities has been enormously increased as the world is battling with the outbreak of the novel COVID-19 globally (Adebowale, 2020; Shereen et al., 2020). Also, in the quest for the church to stay in constant communication with their members and beyond and to reach a large audience, the utilisation of social media platforms has become the order of the day (McKinney, 2014). Lewis (2016) aver that the use of social media platforms is considered an innovative way of reaching out to a majority of church members irrespective of their geographical location and the time of the day. In this regard, having church services on social

media platforms has been recommended by governments, church leaders and health professionals as it is the safest and best way of reducing physical social gathering (WHO, 2020; Shereen et al., 2020). Lewis (2016) added that social media platforms provide the avenue for church members to actively engage and follow church sermons, share their reactions with photos and text, asking questions, tweeting along. Similarly, social media offers much more space for congregations to actively engage with sermons by tweeting along, asking questions, sharing photos of church activities, or continuing discussions throughout the week and not just on Sundays. (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020; Lewis, 2016).

There is no doubt that there is a perceived effect of social media" on the church. Several authors have debated the pros and cons of the use of social media in the Church. Again, Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, (2020) intimated that, the use of social media by churches has made it possible to attract the attention of the technologically savvy youths who feel reluctant to join church services. This crop of youths are usually found glued to their social media platforms and this makes it easy to redirect their attention to churches services. Whiles the debate continues, there is the need to examine the issue from an empirical point of view. This study focuses on the use of social media by leaders of Charismatic churches in Ghana, using the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry (CEM) in North Legon and The Maker's House Chapel International (MHI) at Kwabenya, as cases of study. For the past few years, the common denominator of these two churches has been that they both use social media to execute their leadership functions. They heavily depend on social media mainly on Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, WhatsApp and others for their church activities such as crusades, harvest, annual gathering to mention but a few. It is these platforms that have made churches go global and harness their publicity.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today social media is one of the most dominant forces in our culture. It is therefore not surprising that churches are using it to manage their activities. Several churches all over the world have started to embrace the use of social media technology to expand their church community into the virtual world. The impact of social media on church life is generally seen as positive. Church leaders who desire to actively practise their religious faith, have the opportunity to interact with people they may otherwise never have the opportunity to meet physically. Despite the phenomenal benefits of social media" to churches, a study by Badmos (2014) revealed that a high percentage of heads and leaders of churches were reluctant to "use social media to perform their functions and activities in their churches. In similar research," Acheampong (2014) found out that there was largely an underutilization of social media by churches to directly communicate with existing and prospective church members.

In Ghana, several kinds of research have been conducted in the area of use of social media" (Ahenkorah-Marfo, 2015; Ayivor, 2015; Ahenkora & Akussah, 2017). Most of these researches, however, focused on the use of social media in libraries, marketing, and politics. A few researches however, focusing on the use of social media in churches have been conducted. (Asare-Kusi, 2007; Bonsu & Belk, 2010; Acheampong, 2014). These researches, concentrated on the adoption and impact of social media in churches generally. The researchers have not come across any in-depth research work on the experiences and perception towards the use of social media in Charismatic churches in Ghana. This research seeks to examine experiences and perception of the use of social media as a tool to manage church activities by the leaders of the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry, North Legon, and The Marker's House Chapel International Church.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

i. To determine the level of computer proficiency of leaders of the Evangelistic Ministry and the Maker's House Chapel International.
ii. To determine the perceived ease of use of social media platforms by leaders of the Evangelistic Ministry and the Maker's House Chapel International.
iii. To determine the perceived usefulness of social media platforms by the leaders of the Evangelistic Ministry and the Maker's House Chapel International.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to underpin the study. The model states that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use determine an individual's intention to use a system, intending to use serving as a mediator of actual system use. Perceived usefulness is also seen as being directly impacted by perceived ease of use (Figure 1).
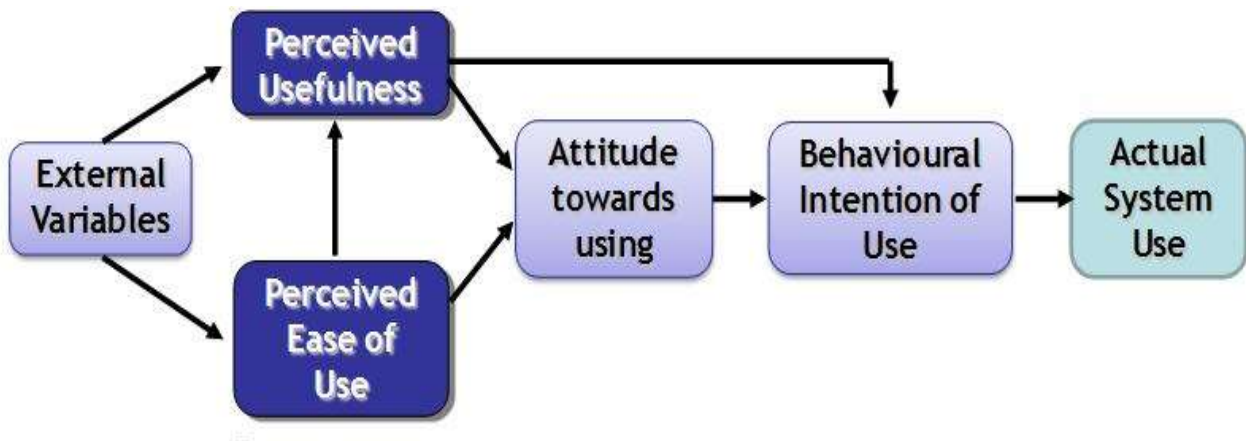

Figure 1: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Source: Davis (1989)

With perceived usefulness, it is presupposed that, if the leaders at Charismatic Evangelistic Church, Legon, and The Makers House Chapel International Perceive that the use of social media platform is beneficial then they will continue to use it otherwise they will shun the social media platform. Perceived ease of use explains that if the leaders of Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry, Legon, and The Markers House Chapel International perceive that the use of social media platform is easy then they will continue to use it otherwise they will stay away from the platform.

2.2 Concept of Social media

The world has changed in terms of communication and social media plays a pivotal role in this new dispensation where several activities unlike before are undertaken digitally. Social media is not a new concept, it has gone through a developmental change since the dawn of human interaction (Edosomwa, 2019). Social media supported by the internet and telecommunication gadgets have solved a great deal of issue lumbered by individuals, organization and institutions. For instance, social media has made it possible for people not to worry about distance and the stress to attend an in-person conference. Not only does it solve travelling cost but also saves the

individual from putting themselves under risk of contracting a virus such as the deadly COVID-19 virus and other related viruses (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020).

Social media is a digital platform that allows subscribers to share information among themselves provided there is the availability of digital device such as smartphones, palmtop, laptop, desktop, and as well as internet access (Mateus. 2017). These platforms make it possible for users to have a conversation, share information among friends and family on a personal level. On a professional level, social media makes it possible for users to build their brand, advertise their business, create content for users to followers, and also provide an avenue to get feedback from customers to help improves services (University and Communication Marketing, 2020). Social media platforms may be in a form of blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, social networking sites, photo-sharing sites, instant messaging, video-sharing sites, podcasts, widgets, virtual worlds, and more (Mateus, 2017). Manning (2014) also succinctly defined social media as the term often used to refer to new forms of media that involve interactive participation.

2.3 Overview of Social media use by churches

The Church is one of the large non-governmental organization that is vastly taking advantage of the social media platforms to reach out to their audience. The use of social media is steadily changing the nature of religious communication, communities, and authority (Cheong, 2014, 2017), churches offer an interesting context in which to explore the use of social media. Unlike before, where church activities were primarily taking place in person only, now, churches are utilizing social media platforms such Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram as a complement to the traditional way of conducting church activities. White, Tella and Ampofo (2016) aver that social media as a new phenomenon has become a tool used by many televangelists and pastors. It has become an essential and valuable communications tool for those providing services for people in the Church. Crawford (2017) outlined the cardinal reasons why the church elects to use social media platforms are as follows; to share the gospel of Jesus Christ on a mission through social media, to share encouragement and to share resources, insight, Scripture, to constantly engage the youth to draw them closer to God etc.

2.4 Computer proficiency of church members

Computer literacy is an understanding part of the concepts, terminology and operation that relate to general computer use. It is the essential knowledge needed to function independently with a computer. Computer literacy is defined by Webopedia as the level of expertise and familiarity someone has with computers. Computer literacy generally refers to the ability to use applications rather than to programme (Cheong, 2012). This functionality includes being able to solve and avoid problems, adapt to new situations, keep information organized and communicate effectively with other computer literate people. To properly and effectively use social media platforms, it is imperative for church members, leaders as well as pastors to possess at least some basic knowledge in computer literacy (Okyere, Agyapong, & Nyarku, 2011).

Mateus (2017) conducted a study on the media and the church whereby everybody who took part in the research responded in affirmative that, at least they possessed some basic skills in computing such as the ability to browse and surf the internet, and the ability to retrieve information and communicate with friends, colleagues and church members on social media. In confirmation of what Mateus revealed, White, Tella and Ampofo (2016) conducted a study on the use of social media (Facebook) by some Ghanaian Pentecostal Pastors and was found that the majority of the pastors and members were at least having some basic skills in computing which enabled them to

access social media with ease. McKinney (2014) found that training "played a critical role in the use of social media" for church activities. The author found out that, training enabled users to obtain basic skills which added them in using social media for church business. Similar findings were found in the works of Lacy (2021) and Asamoah-Gyadu (2007) in which it was found that training was a compelling factor that determines the extent of use of a social network platform.

2.5 Perceived ease of use of social media platforms by churches

Perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort. According to Davis (1989) who is the brainchild of the Technology Acceptance Model, perceived ease of use is the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular information technology system would be free of effort. An application perceived to be easier to use than another is more likely to be accepted by users. Brooks (2013) hypothesized that technological characteristics significantly impact affect. Affect has a significant relationship with most of the personal characteristics, but interestingly, is the only character to directly influence usage. The results of this study show that additional factors beyond the commonly-studied constructs (Ease of Use, Usefulness, etc.) are of importance with the use of social media. This research has implications on the design and functionality of social media as well as providing directions for studies with additional characteristics and varied hedonic systems. This finding is in tandem with that of Asur and Huberman (2010) in which it was found that due to its ease of use, speed, and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society and setting trends and agendas in topics that range from the environment and politics, churches.

Similarly, Lane and Coleman (2017) undertook a study on the technological ease of use through social networking media and it was revealed that, concerning the ease of use and usefulness, more autonomous users of social media platform seemed to find the social platform more difficult to use. Higher perceived ease of use leads to higher perceived usefulness and ultimately greater intensity of use of social networking media. This study however did not support the works of Heijden (2004) in which it was found that though the ease of use is an important consideration when examining technology usage when considering the extent of use of social media, it is unlikely to be a direct predictor of usage since no matter how easy it is to use the system, it won't be used if the users do not like and enjoy using it. This finding did not support the works of (Brooks, 2013; Asur & Huberman, 2010).

Sago (2013) concluded that the perceived ease of use of social media services is the reason for its frequent use. Lee et al. (2007) conducted an online survey of business students and found that perceived ease of use has a stronger impact on behavioural intention to use instant messaging. In an online survey of undergraduate and graduate business students, Strader and Houle (2007) found that perceived ease of use had a positive effect on the intention to use instant messaging. Van Slyke (2007) together with Ilie et al. (2005) found that the perceived relative advantage and ease of use influenced the intention of users of social to use instant messaging positively.

2.6 Perceived usefulness of social media platforms

The popularity of social media means that some churches have started to embrace this technology to expand their church community into the virtual world (Badmos, 2014). Cheong, Fisher-Nielson, Gelfgren, and Ess (2012) argue that Tweets play a constitutive role in religion, as microbloggers produce and circulate scripture and its interpretations as well as create new religious practices, including Twitter memes, prayers, and drama. It was stated that "microblogging practices enabled on Twitter on a variety of mobile platforms can be understood as microblogging

rituals, as they facilitate epiphany and a sense of the sacred, which in turn revitalizes communal sentiments and a higher moral purpose through identification and solidarity with other believers" (Cheong, et al., 2012, p. 201). In a study by Burnett (2013), it was found that social media platforms had made announcements very cheap and easy. It was further emphasized in the study that for instance, pictures combined with announcements had been proven as a powerful way to grab attention and Instagram was one such media.

On Instagram, churches have the opportunity to post pictures to announce upcoming events and engage followers through a visual post. It is important on Instagram to be unique, to know your audience, and to make the most engaging. Churches can even make it personal by introducing their staff with a picture and a short biodata about who they are and what they do (Burnett, 2013). This finding supports the works of the New Heights Student Ministry (2013) in Fayetteville, where Arkansas uses Instagram to communicate with its students. In the findings of a research conducted by Badmos (2014) on the effect of social media on the church, he stated that every organisation, including the church who needs to get the word out about its upcoming fundraising or new product or service, there is no better way to get the message to millions of people 24/7 than through a social media website". The author emphasised that the use of social media had enabled the church to reach a large number of church members as well as the entire public as a whole. Perhaps the best part was that the word could be spread through social networking profiles for free.

In the work of Donath and Boyd (2004) it was emphasized that social media played a critical role in overcoming the impact that high levels of mobility and complexity could have on long-term relationships. In effect, social media helps to bond church members together. For example, according to Badmos (2014), some Christians had retained their relationship with some old friends in the secondary school in far remote villages up till their graduate school, through social media websites such as Facebook. This finding supports the study which was undertaken by Munt, Basset and O'Riordan (2002) whereby it was revealed that social media helps to connect with others with shared values, views, needs or experiences, and can assist church members experiencing marginalization to identify potential supportive connections in their local community. Similar findings were found in the research carried out by Valkenburg, Peter and Schouten (2006). Their study demonstrated that Facebook, for instance, had helped young people with lower levels of social skills to develop friendships online which then translated into offline. Vosko (2011) had similar findings whereby it was emphatically stated that "the primary purpose of using social media was to establish and maintain relationships; to connect with and stay connected with members of the congregation"

In a study conducted in Nigeria by Aduloju, et al. (2009) to assess the impact of advert media on sales/church growth, the results revealed that there was a significant relationship between an advert and church growth and improved image. They described this relationship as being positive. They further asserted that the choice of social media platform in advertising, the message and the format were critical ingredients for a successful advertising programme in churches. Joshi and Hanssens (2010) also confirmed these findings when their empirical results recognised that a positive relationship existed between advertising expenditure and the growth of churches. In their study, they focused on the direct and indirect effects of advertising spending on church value. They went ahead to say that advertising had a double impact on churches' value through direct and indirect routes which provided strong justification for investments in adverting.

In research undertaken by Akanbi and Adeyeye (2011), the authors investigated the association between the use of social media platforms for advertisement and church growth. Their results

revealed that positive and significant relationships existed between advertisement and church growth. The study also showed that there was a significant improvement in church growth as a result of advertising. The authors posited that as the services of the church were sold, the overall church membership also increased. Social media provides a means for sharing faith as well as modelling Christian life beyond the building commonly called the church (Gould, 2013). Sharing information that has already been posted has proved to be effective in marketing church activities. This study agrees with the works of Lacy (2021) in which it was found that Twitter, for instance, gains users the option to retweet information that others had already tweeted with the intent of sharing faith. This finding also supports the works of Asamoah-Gyadu (2007) in which it was shown that most religions, including Christianity, were taking advantage of the social media for information dissemination, identity, and evangelization.

Bolu (2017) examined the church in the contemporary world and the findings revealed that Church leaders agreed that the areas that were most impacted by the use of social media were evangelism, Bible teaching and pastoral care. Surprisingly, he did not find any major impact on prayer intercession, church administration, and church infrastructure administration or in healing/deliverance ministries. Narayanan, et al. (2012, p.73) also indicated, social media helps the church to obtain immediate feedback from the audience. For instance, the author emphasized that "The timeline of social media has made news incredibly dynamic by enabling instant sharing of news in a web of connected people" This allows for organizations such as churches to instantly get news or information out to their specific audience. It also allows for churches to have access to instant updates on other churches and Christian organizations.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The mixed-method approach which involves both qualitative and quantitative techniques was deployed to undertake the research expedition. The Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry, North Legon, and The Makers House Chapel International were purposely selected as a target population for the study. The intent for this choice is the fact that these two charismatic churches have focused on the use of social media to a large extent. Indeed, they are among the few churches which have adopted social media platforms to run their day-to-day activities. The population of this study comprised the heads of departments, deputy heads of departments and departmental coordinators of both the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry and the Makers House Chapel International, totaling 162. Also, the head pastors and their deputies of the two churches as well as the IT heads were part of the population. Therefore, the total population for the study was 168. The researcher used the entire population for the study. Therefore, there was no sampling. This is because the population was not too large and for that matter manageable. Data gathered using questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), results were presented in descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages whiles the principles of thematic analysis was used to analyzed qualitative data.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Computer literacy skills

Computer literacy skills refer to the ability to use computers, such as knowing how to log in, use keyboards, mouse, explore and to use its features or tools and the internet (Emily, 2016). If users possess the right computer literacy skills it will contribute to the extent to which they will be willing to use any information system platform or their perception of it. By inference, the computer skills church members possess, will determine their responsiveness towards the use of social media platforms. Against this background, respondents were asked to indicate if they did have the skills to use a computer and other related technology. The results are represented in Figure 2
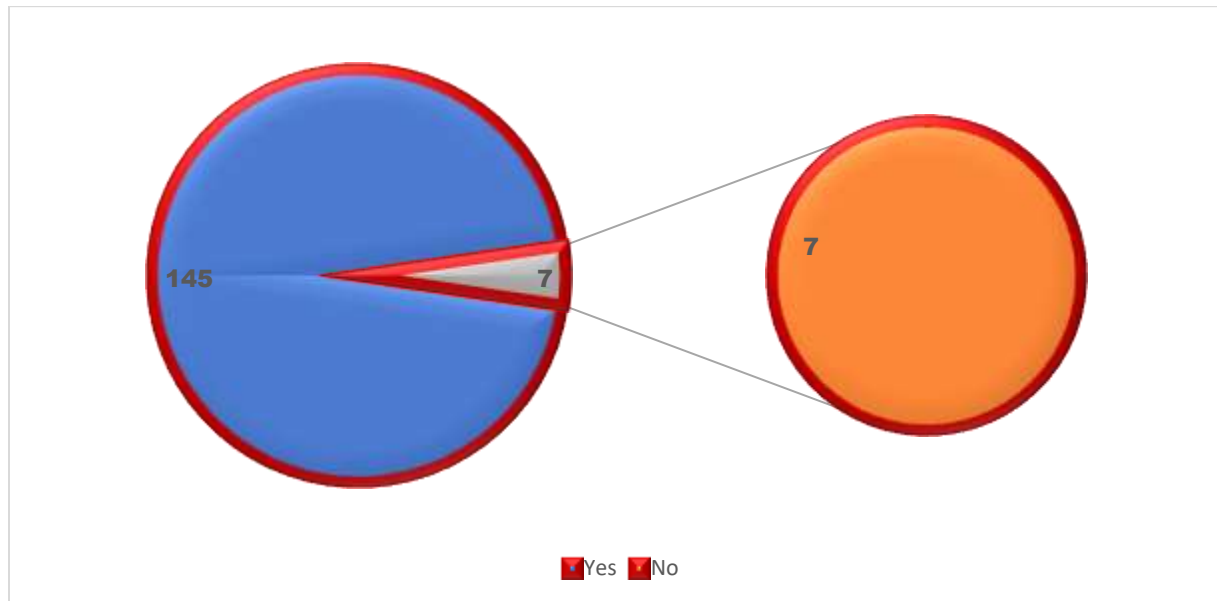

Figure 2: Computer literacy skills of respondents.

Figure 2 shows that out of the 152 respondents, 145 (95%) indicated "YES" confirming they did have the skills to use computers and other related technologies whilst 7 (5%) representing the rest of the respondent indicated "No". It can be inferred from these findings that the majority of the church members possessed at least some basic computer skills to access electronic devices and be able to navigate on social media platforms.

4.2 Level of computer literacy skills

To fathom the level of the church leaders' computer literacy skills, respondents were asked to rate themselves by indicating categories they belonged to. Their responses are captured in Figure 3
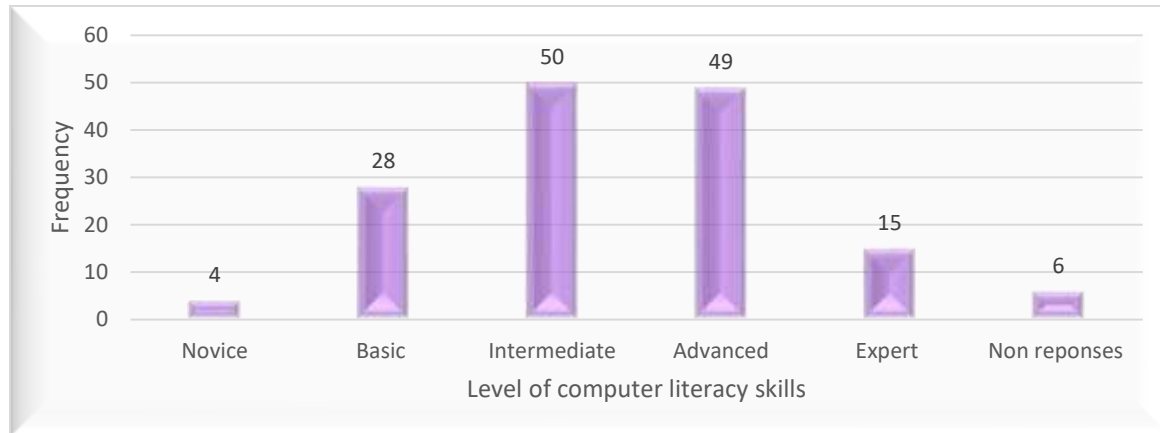
Figure 3: Respondent's level of computer literacy skills

It can be seen from Figure 3 that 50 (33%) respondents rated themselves as intermediates, followed by 49 (32) who indicated they were advanced, whilst 28 (18%) indicated they were basic. Also, 15 (10%) and 4 (3%) rated their levels as experts and novices respectively. It can be deduced from these results that the majority of the church members possessed enough computer literacy skills to enable them to use electronic devices to surf the internet and to use social media platforms as the church expected.

4.3 Training provided for church leaders on the use of social media" platform

Sufficient training on the use of an electronic platform is a crucial factor to determine a user's perception and level of usage. Respondents were asked to affirm if their churches provided training for church leaders on the use of adopted social media platforms. Figure 4 presents the responses obtained.
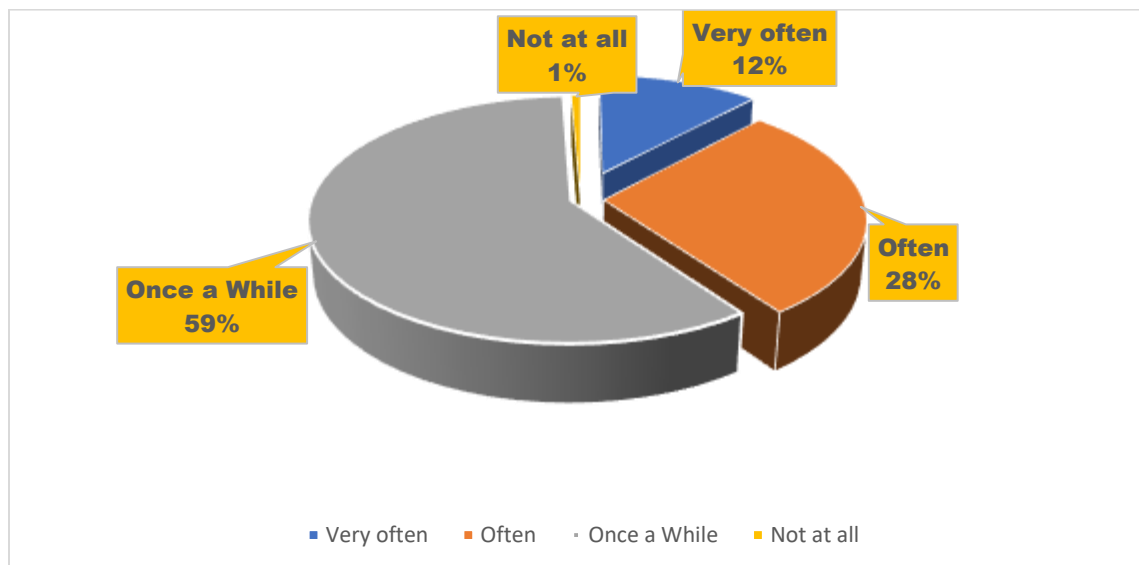

Figure 4: Training provided for church leaders

As shown in Figure 4 majority of the respondents totaling 90 (59%) indicated that they did receive training once in a while, followed by 43 (28%) who indicated that they received training often and 18 (12%) received training very often. Only one 1 (1%) respondent indicated not having any

training. It can be inferred from the results that the level of training given to church leaders on the use of social media platforms was good.

The researcher further sought to find out how often the churches provide training on the use the social media platforms as far as the goal of the churches were concerned. The head pastor of MHCI responded as follows:

> "*We frequently organize general training for the church since it is now our strong pillar to reach out to our members and others*"

From CEM, the head pastor said:

> "*From time to time, when the need arises or when we realize that the church has grown in size, the IT department comes out to educate the members on how to access some of the church's social media platforms like the podcast, and also how to register, how to receive alerts on our live streaming sessions and all that*"

The two churches hold the importance of training for church members in high esteem.

The study found that the majority of the church members possessed at least some basic computer skills to access electronic devices which enabled them to navigate on social media platforms adopted by the church. This finding confirmed those of Okyere, Agyapong, and Nyarku (2011) which found that to properly and effectively use social media platforms, it is imperative for church members, leaders as well as pastors to possess at least some basic knowledge in computer literacy. The findings are also consistent with the findings of Mateus (2017). In his research, Mateus (2017) found that the majority of the respondents possessed at least some basic skills in computing such as the ability to browse and surf the internet, and the ability to retrieve information and communicate with friends, colleagues and church members on social media. The findings also corroborate the works of White, Tella and Ampofo (2016) who conducted a study on the use of social media (Facebook) by some Ghanaian Pentecostal Pastors. They found out that the majority of the pastors and members at least had some basic skills in computing which enabled them to access social media platforms adopted by the church with ease. The findings can be attributed to the fact that training programmes on social media use were organized by the churches which enabled members to obtain these skills.

With training, this study found that once in a while the churches organised training programmes on the use of social media platforms for members. These findings are consistent with those of McKinney (2014) who found that training played a critical role in the use of social media for church activities. Mckinney (2014) further stressed that training was a very cardinal factor when it came to the use of an information system like social media. Training enables users to obtain basic skills which aided them in the use of social media platforms for church businesses. Similar findings were found in the works of Lacy (2021) and Asamoah-Gyadu (2007) who emphasized that training was a compelling factor that contributed to the extent of use of social network platforms adopted by churches.

4.5 Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of social media platform

This section analyses the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of social media platforms by the churches by the church leaders.

4.5.1 Perceived ease of use of social media platforms

Perceived ease of use refers to how users find it easy using a system. As theorized in TAM, perceived ease of use of a system affects the user's attitude which in turn affects actual system use. Respondents were asked to indicate how easy they perceived the use of social media platforms. Responses are as shown in Table 1

Table 1: Respondents' perceived ease of use of social media platforms

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I find it easy to use social media platforms.	69 (45%)	33 (22%)	21 (14%)	14 (10%)	15 (10%)
Social media platforms do not require any special computer literacy skills to use them.	38 (25%)	49 (32%)	30 (20%)	20 (13%)	15 (10%)
I found it easy to learn how to use the social media platforms	52 (34%)	55 (36%)	21 (14%)	13 (9%)	11 (7)
I learned how to use social media on my own	56 (37%)	42 (28%)	23 (15%)	14 (9%)	17 (11%)
Social media platform interface is user-friendly and flexible to use	47 (31%)	56 (37%)	30 (20%)	9 (6%)	10 (7)
My interaction on the social media platform is clear and understandable	62 (41%)	39 (26%)	28 (18%)	12 (8%)	11(7%)
I found it easy to chat with church members and friends using the social media platform	58(38%)	46 (30%)	24 (16%)	15 (10%)	9 (6%)

As can be seen in Table 1, 69 (45%) respondents perceived the use of social media platform as easy, agreeing strongly, 33 (22%) agree, whilst 21 (14%) were undecided on the statement. On the other hand, 14 (10%) and 15 (10%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that the platform was easy to use. Also, it is evident from the above Table 4.9 that, 49 (32%) respondents agreed to the statement "social media platform does not require any special computer literacy skills to use them. Further, 38 (25%) strongly agreed and 30 (20%) were neutral. However, 20 (13%) and 15 (10%) respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. With the statement "I found it easy to learn how to use the social media platform", 55 (36%) of the respondents agreed, 52 (34%), strongly agreed and 21 (14%) were neutral. Nonetheless, 13 (9%) of the respondents disagreed. Only 11 (7) of them strongly disagreed.

Additionally, the following statement was put to the respondents: "I learned how to use social media on my own". In response, 56 (37%) strongly agreed and 42 (28%) agreed, whilst 23 (15%) remained neutral. However, 14 (9%) and 17 (11%) disagreed and strongly disagree respectively. To the statement "Social media platform interface is user-friendly and flexible to use", 56 (37%) agreed, 47 (31%) strongly agreed and 30 (20%) felt uncertain. On the flipside, 9 (6%) and 10 (7%)

were opposed to the statement by indicating disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Also, in terms of interaction on the social media platforms, respondents were asked to react to the statement "My interaction on the social media platform is clear and understandable" by indicating their perceptions. A sizeable number of 39 (26%) respondents strongly agreed, 39 (26%) agreed and 28 (18%) couldn't take any stand. On the other hand, 12 (8%) disagreed and 11(7%) strongly disagreed. Again on the statement "I found it easy to chat with church members and friends using the social media platform", 58(38%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 46 (30%) agreed whilst 24 (16%) were neutral. On the contrary, 15 (10%) and 9 (6%) disagreed and strongly agreed respectively.

Further, the head pastors were asked if they thought their members found it easy to use the social media platforms that had been adopted by their church?

A response from the MHCI pastor *was that:*

> *"Yeah, because of their responses and contributions on postings by the church".*
> *A pastor of CEM pastor said:*
> *"Yes so far so good. We haven't had any serious complaints but those who even have little challenges, when they contact the IT department, they give them the necessary training/information on how to resolve the problem. For example: How to download messages, store and see videos and audio content"*

It can be deduced from the responses of the pastors that church members, as well as workers, did find it easy to use the adopted social media platforms. This goes to complement the results from the quantitative study. It is evident from the results that the church leaders of both churches have positive perceptions towards the use of social media platforms for running the day-to-day activities of the church. This is deduced from the fact that a large proportion of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the use of social media.

The study found that the leaders of both churches had positive perceptions towards the ease of use of social media platforms for running the day-to-day activities of the church. This finding has a relationship with an earlier one which indicated that church leaders engaged in training on the use of social media platforms. This finding is in tandem with that of Brooks (2013) who indicated that respondents found the use of social media websites easy to use. This, he pointed out eventually positively affected the extent of its use. A similar finding was also recorded in the study of Asur and Huberman (2010) in which it was found that the perceived ease of use of social media platforms positively affected churches' growth exponentially. On the contrary, the findings of the study did not support those of Lane and Coleman (2017) who undertook a study on the technological ease of use of social networking media. Users found the social platform difficult to use. This ultimately had an impact on the intensity of use of social networking media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram etc. The findings did not also support the works of Heijden (2004) who contended that even though his study found that the ease of use was an important consideration when examining technology usage, for instance when considering the extent of use of social media, it was unlikely to be a direct predictor of usage since no matter how easy it was to use a system, it would not be used if the users did not like and enjoy using it.

4.5.2 Perceived usefulness of social media platforms

Perceived usefulness refers to the degree to which users believe that using a system will heighten their job performance (Davis, 1989). Across the many empirical tests of TAM, perceived usefulness has consistently been a strong determinant of usage intentions and actual use of a system. Concerning these studies, if the church leaders perceive that the use of social media platforms for running church activities will be useful, then they will be propelled to use them.

Respondents were consequently asked to react to statements indicative of the perceived usefulness of social media to their churches. Their responses are captured in Table 2

Table 2: Perceived usefulness of social media platform by respondents

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Using social media platforms helps me in Public awareness and education about the church	59 (39%)	50 (33%)	27 (18%)	7 (5%)	9 (6%)
We have been able to reach out to more members using social media	54 (35%)	48 (32%)	19 (13%)	20 (31)	11 (7%)
I believe that social media platforms keep me updated about the information about the church.	58 (38%)	50 (33%)	21 (14%)	14 (9%)	9 (6%)
I can easily follow church activities on the social media platforms	52 (34%)	49 (32%)	29 (19%)	12 (8%)	10 (7%)
Through social media platforms, the church communicates effectively to its target audience	53 (35%)	50 (33%)	26 (17%)	14 (9%)	9 (6%)
Social Media increases the accessibility of the church to its members	56 (37%)	50 (33%)	21 (14%)	18 (12%)	7 (6%)
I believe that social media platforms help disseminate church information and activities very easily.	54 (36%)	53 (35%)	19 (13%)	17 (11%)	9 (6%)
The use of social media sets this church apart from other churches in the area	48 (32%)	45 (30%)	36 (24%)	10 (7%)	13 (9%)
Through social media platforms, the church identifies with its youthful leaders fully	52 (34%)	48 (32%)	23 (15%)	23 (15%)	6 (4%)
Social media platforms help us to respond promptly to customer queries	38 (25%)	49 (32%)	34 (22%)	21 (14%)	10 (7%)
We can engage our members and they can voice their opinions freely so we meet their pastoral need fully through social media	44 (28%)	59 (39%)	26 (17%)	15 (10%)	8 (5%)
We can offer adequate membership information through a social media platform	41 (27%)	51 (34%)	28 (18%)	23 (15%)	9 (6%)
There has been improved youth and children retention in the church through the use of social media platforms.	41 (27%)	38 (25%)	45 (30%)	21 (14%)	7 (5%)
Social media has helped improve relationships with fellow members	38 (25%)	49 (32%)	34 (22%)	21 (14%)	10 (7%)
Engaging with the church through social media makes it possible for my voice to be heard regarding church decision-making	44 (29%)	46 (30%)	35(23%)	17 (11%)	10 (7%)

From responses as shown in Table 2, 59 (39%) respondents strongly agreed to the fact that using the social media platform helped them in public awareness and education about the church, 50

(33%) whilst 27 (18%) were neutral. Nevertheless, an insignificant number of 7(5%) and 9 (6%) respondents disagreed and strongly disagree respectively. It can be deduced that social media performs a key role in creating awareness about the churches as the majority agreed and strongly agree. In response to the statement "we have been able to reach out to more members using social media", 54 (35%) respondents strongly agreed, whiles 48 (32%) agreed and 19 (13%) were neutral. On the flipside, 19 (13%) were opposed to the statement by indicating that they disagreed and a few of them strongly disagreed. This is an indication that indeed, social media platforms played cardinal roles in public awareness and education in the churches.

Further, a large number of 58 (38%) respondents strongly agreed that social media platforms kept them updated on information on the church, 50 (33%) of them agreed and 21 (14%) were uncertain about the assertion. Also, 14 (9%) disagreed and 9 (6%) strongly disagree. It can be inferred that social media keeps church members posted about the activities of the churches. Further, with the statement "I can easily follow church activities on the social media platforms", 52 (34%) strongly agreed, 49 (32%) agreed, 29 (19%) were neutral, 12 (8%) disagreed and 10 (7%) strongly disagreed. This result is an indication that church members can easily follow the activities of the churches with the aid of a social media platform without being left behind.

In another breath, 53 (35%) respondents strongly agreed that through social media platforms, the churches communicated effectively to their target audience, 50 (33%) agreed, and 26 (17%) were neutral. On the other hand, 14 (9%) disagreed and 9 (6%) strongly disagreed. Again, in terms of social media increasing the accessibility of the churches to their members, 56 (37%) indicated their strong agreement 50 (33%) chose to agree whilst 21 (14) did not take any stand. On the opposing side, 18 (12%) and 7 (6%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Also, in the statement "I believe that social media platforms help disseminate church information and activities very easily." 54 (36%) respondents strongly agreed, 53 (35%) strongly disagreed. Others were as follows; neutral 19 (13%), disagreement 17 (11%) and strongly disagreement 9 (6%).

Again, it is evident from Table 4.10 that a sizeable number of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement "Use of social media sets this church apart from other churches in the area". In all, 45 (30%) respondents agreed and 36 (24%) were neutral to the statement. Further, 10 (7%) disagree and 13 (9%) strongly disagreed. Further, 52 (34%) respondents strongly agreed to the fact that through the social media platforms, the churches identify with their youthful members fully, 48 (32%) agreed, 23 (15%) were neutral, 23 (15%) disagreed and 6 (14%) strongly disagreed. In terms of church leaders responding to church members, 38 (25%) and 49 (32%) respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively. On the other hand, 34 (22%) respondents did not take any stand whilst 21 (14%) disagreed, whiles 10 (7%) strongly disagreed.

About the statement, "We can engage our members and they can voice their opinions freely so we meet their pastoral need fully through social media", 59(39%) respondents reported they agreed, 44 (28%) strongly disagreed whiles 26 (17%) were neutral. Also, 15 (10%) disagreed and 8 (5%) strongly disagreed. To the statement "We can offer adequate membership information through social media platforms", 41 (27%) indicated that they agreed, 51 (34%) strongly agreed, 28 (18%) were neutral, 23 (15%) disagreed and 8 (5%) strongly disagreed. This result is an indication that social media platforms help churches to gather information about their members.

Respondents were required to take stands on the statement "There has been improved youth and children retention in the church through the use of social media platform" From the results, 45 (30%) of them took a neutral stand, 41 (27%) strongly agreed and 38 (25%) agreed. On the flipside,

21 (14%) disagreed and 7 (5%) strongly disagreed. Further, it can be observed from the table that 49 (32%) respondents were neutral on the statement "social media has helped improve relationships with fellow members". This was followed by 38 (25%) who agreed and 34 who (22%) strongly agreed. On the contrary, 21 (14%) disagreed and 10 (7%) strongly disagree.

Finally, social media ensures that church members' voices are heard and recognized in the decision-making process of the church. This is evident from Table 4.10 whereby a sizeable number of 46 (30%) respondents agreed to the statement "engaging with the church through social media makes it possible for my voice to be heard regarding church decision-making". Another, 44 (29%) strongly agreed, 35 (23%) were neutral, whilst 17 (11%) and 10 (7%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

Besides, respondents were asked to indicate how social media platforms had contributed to the growth of their churches

The Head Pastor of MHCI shared a refreshing observation by saying:

> *"It has contributed to the growth of the church because we can reach many souls out there. It also helps us to get feedback or their contributions on certain issues"*

Also, a pastor of CEM detailed as follows:

> *"Massively, I must say. Because, at first, if people do not attend a particular service or programme, they lose out on the service unless they come and buy the recorded CDs but now wherever they found themselves in the world, they can access live service because of social media platforms. Also, they can connect to our live services. For example, if due to work schedules and maybe travelling outside they are unable to attend, they can know what message was preached, what prayer topics to follow and many more. It has helped and made things easy for church members. They do not lose out on some of the services."*

The responses have revealed that the church cannot do without social media platforms currently due to current trends in society. There is no gainsaying the fact that the use of social media platforms has contributed tremendously to the growth of the church.

Respondents were asked, to comment on the extent to which social media platforms affected brand visibility in their churches.

Responses from the respondents were as follows:

From MHCI:

> "*Because of these platforms, our brand is well seen among all brands. It is noticeable."* a*nd from CEM:

> *"It has helped us because as I said, people on business trips log on and they watch our services. Some colleagues they are with also happen to listen to it and sometimes they fall in love with our church, our settings, how we do our things and they get blessed with some of the messages and the programmes that we hold in the church so through it some people have also become members. Because they enjoyed some of our services and programmes through members logging on and watching it in their offices or on campuses or social gatherings."*

It can be observed without any shadow of a doubt that social media platforms adopted by churches have really strengthened the brand of the churches and thereby pulling more people to their churches to fellowship together. Respondents were again asked to comment on the extent to which social media marketing affected church members' satisfaction.

The Head Pastor of MHCI said:

> *"Social media platforms can help members in such a way that whenever there is a programme, they can know the details without necessarily having to be in church. They get to have first-hand information on programmes and activities".*

A pastor of CEM had this to say:

> *"It gives the church a certain image and then also, we use social media for publicity of our programmes, adverts, and other things. Members are happy because they are reminded of upcoming events. They get the details of programmes of yearly activities /programmes so they do not lose out or they can plan to be part of those programmes so it's very good for them. In the past, we used handbills, posters, and sometimes when it rains, the downpour gets them off the walls but with social media, you can always open to it and you will get the information."*

From the responses, even though not coming directly from members of the church, the pastors have made it clear that social media platforms had contributed to a positive satisfaction of church members as far as church activities were concerned.

The study found that the majority of church leaders had a positive perception of the use of social media platforms for church activities. For instance, the majority of respondents affirmed that social media platforms made it easy to follow church activities. They further confirmed that social media enabled the church to communicate effectively to its target audience, increase the accessibility of the church to its members and disseminate church information and activities very easily. Again, through the use of social media platforms, the church identified with its youthful members fully, the church engaged their members and they were able to voice out their opinions freely as they could meet their pastoral needs fully through social media. Not only that, social media platforms helped the churches to respond promptly to members' queries and many more.

 Other pointers to the usefulness of Social Media as revealed by the findings of the study were the fact that social media gave the churches positive images and publicity for their programmes, adverts, and other activities. Church members were happy because they were reminded of upcoming events through the use of social media platforms. These attest to the fact that indeed, social media platforms contributed profoundly to the running of the day-to-day activities of the churches. The findings support the findings of a study by Burnett (2013) in which it was revealed that social media was perceived as useful to the church because it made announcements very cheap and easy. The findings also support those of Badmos (2014), which pointed out that the use of social media had enabled churches to reach a large number of their members as well as the public as a whole. Similar findings were found in works of Donath and Boyd (2004); Munt, Basset and O'Riordan (2002) Valkenburg, Peter and Schouten (2006); Vosko (2011); Aduloju et al. (2009); Gould (2013); Lacy (2021); Akanbi and Adeyeye (2011) and Asamoah-Gyadu (2007).

The findings of the study also point to a high level of use of social media in the performance of church-related activities. For instance, church leaders and IT personnel expressed their excitement

for enjoying programmes of their churches anywhere they found themselves and anytime. Some were also able to check up on their friends through the church's platforms.

5.0 CONCLUSION

To draw down the curtains, it can be observed that, social media platforms have become invaluable tools for churches to survive in this technological age. As the world has witnessed a great shock due to the novel COVID-19, the church has swiftly made social media platforms indispensable platforms to carry out its activities in order not to be left behind. The study has brought to the realization that at least church members possess some basic skills which enable them to follow church activities via social media platforms. The study also arrived that it is very cardinal for church members to receive constant training on the use of social media platforms since updates on social media is on the rise. This move will help the church to keep pace with updates on social media use. The instrumental contribution of social media to the churches was evident as the study revealed positively perceived usefulness of the social media platforms and this can also be attributed to the fact that perceived ease of use was directly influenced by the basic skills that the church members possess confirming what Davis (1989) postulated in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

6.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

i) Training

The church should provide adequate continuous training for leaders since the functional features of the version of the social media platforms keep changing. Much emphasis should be put on the interface, and functional features of social media platforms of the churches that will be required by church leaders and members to access church programmes. This will ultimately enable users to be conversant with the tools as well as helping them to navigate the adopted social media platforms with ease. Also, IT personnel of the churches should be given the needed training to guide church members on how they can utilize the social media networking site adopted by the churches. Thus, basic computer training should be organized for all church members, paying attention to the older ones since they are mostly considered as technostress and this will help provide a level playing field as far as the use of social media platforms for church activities are concerned.

ii) Infrastructure

There should be a provision of strong internet connectivity. Internet is the gateway to access social media platforms. Church leaders should be provided with strong and reliable internet access for them to assist church members and also keep monitoring the activities of the churches on social media platforms. Also, the churches should prioritize the importance of a functional Help Desk to assist church members in using the churches' platforms. Again, there should be the provision of power surges, stabilizers, plants or generators to supplement the national electric power source to ensure constant power supply to ensure continuous access to social media platforms.

iii)Policies

There should be continuous education on policies regarding the use of social media platforms, enforcing members to be abided by them and as well, emphasizing its importance to the church. The policies should encapsulate the dos and don'ts which must be explained to church members. This will help them understand and to appreciate the need to be abided by the churches policies. In effect, this will guide them to be cautious of what to post as the churches are operated by the standard of the Holy Bible.

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