



## **Prevalence of Social Media Use among Consecrated Religious women in Karen, Langata Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The rate at which social media has risen has changed the modes of expression. Catholic consecrated religious women are not left out of these changes as they too grow and live in this same society, where social media use dominates their community activities and community living. The objective of the study was to examine the prevalence of social media use among the consecrated religious women in Karen, Langata Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study employed descriptive research design. The study had a target population of 300 Catholic consecrated religious women residing in communities within Karen. Through simple random sampling, a sample size of 145 participants was selected to participate in the study. The study utilized Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS) to collect data. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and particularly frequencies and percentages with SPSS version 23. The results showed that there was moderate prevalence of social media use 79 (56.4%) among the consecrated religious women in Karen, Langata Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. In addition, the results showed that 66 (43.6%) of participants had low prevalence use of social media. The study recommends that Catholic consecrated religious men to be encouraged to balance between the use of social media and prayer life which is their primary calling.

**Key Words: Prevalence; Social Media Use; Catholic Consecrated Religious Women**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Technological advancement has been a welcome development in the society today that it almost seems that almost everything imagined can be achieved. Not only has it made life easier, and convenient, it has also shaped the notion of the world as unified attainable (UNCTAD, 2020). This has been through the inventions of communication tools and gadgets where the vast universe has been made so small such that the different continents seem like a village, thus expanding virtual communities. This came to be from the era of telephones to mobile phones and now smart phones that have the tendency to establish connection with individuals all over the world through social media. Like every other developing technology, social media has transitioned into a necessity today with regards to speedy and efficient communication between and among users. Through these means of communication, there is the possibility to have content creation, dissemination, or sharing of political and social information for entertainment and relaxation and retrieval of this information. The use of social media today is gaining more popularity and usage because of the low cost, speed, and efficiency in sending information (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015).

Social media use has seen tremendous growth over the past two decades as more and more people are benefiting from its richness. Today, social media is used for educational purposes, political purposes, sensitization and outreach programs, entertainment, religious purposes, and for informational purposes (Green, 2019). Consequently, it cuts across different age groups, and occupations. Social media according to Etrara et al. (2021), is basically, the different systems of electronic transmission which includes internet sites for social networking, blogging established by online users to distribute data, thoughts, personal information, or letters, emails, and various thoughts, materials, and ideas. It also involves online or virtual interaction which involves a virtual society or group or association. Social media is composed of so many sites and applications which include game sites, video and picture sharing applications, business communications, reviews, and other social applications (Dollarhide, 2021).

In the United States of America, statistics show how much influence social media has on individuals at different ages including stages and the progression it has recorded over a period of some years. According to Statista (2022), over 70% of Americans have at least an active social media account. In 2005, 5% of adult Americans indulged in social media but only a few years ago, in 2011, the statistics rose to 73% (Pew Research Centre, 2021). In fact, as of 2020, there were about 223 million social media users. In the year 2022, reports have shown that there are about 296 million social media users. This implies an increased rate of social media users. Further studies report that young people spend over 9 hours on SM sites. This explains the magnitude with which social media has taken over activities and the importance of face-to-face relationship as it is experienced today (Famemass, 2021). Additionally, the European Union presents a data for the high rate of social media usage and reports a drastic rise in users' numbers and the social media participation among people of ages 15 and 73 from 36% in 2011 to 57% in 2020 by the users. According to statistics, Denmark had the apex rate of social media statistics with 84%, Cyprus 77%, and Hungary 73% (Eurostat, 2021). The more people get abreast with social media utilization, the more exists

an evident change in the methods of interactions leaving a gap in the face-to-face relationships (Barniwal, 2018). It is very possible that this attachment to social media has infiltrated the convents since it is from these same societies that vocations are recruited, and the Consecrated women live and work.

According to Chaffey (2022), the sum total of global social media users was estimated at 4.2 billion in January 2021. Further research had revealed that 58% people in the world use social media. In 2022, 5 billion people worldwide use social media and there have been 424 million new users online in the last year (Chaffey, 2022). Moreover, there are 2 billion Instagram users, and 3 billion Facebook users (Barnhart, 2022). In America, social media use is on the high side. The research indicated that in 2021, 82% of the North American Population was connected to some online site or more which shows an increment in the statistics of the previous year (Dixon, 2022). Additionally, in the United States, reports show that there are 158 million social media users and those who access Facebook are 141 million.

Generally, the most accessed and active social network is Facebook. A study conducted by Primark et al. (2017), in the United States of America, among respondents between ages 19–32, where the young adults who extensively use social media appeared to have a greater feeling of isolation when compared with their peers who spend less time. Moreover, in another study carried out by Christensen (2018), among 627 respondents between the ages of 18–62, most of the respondents 441 (70.3%) stated that they engaged with social media three times or more daily as the high frequency, moderate frequency recorded 131 (20.9%), while the low frequency was recorded at 55 (8.8%).

In January 2021, Facebook had 3 billion accounts, followed by YouTube and WhatsApp with roughly 2 billion users respectively (Statista, 2022). In Europe, research has shown that Malta has the highest social media use with 91%, followed by Cyprus 83% and Iceland 82%. While countries like Gibraltar 77% and the Faroe Islands 78% also recorded a significant increase in their social media use. The United Kingdom recorded an increment in the number of Facebook users more than other sites 77% with over 37 million users (Statista, 2020).

Africa has not been left out of the infiltration of technology as social media users are on the increase too. In recent studies have shown that Northern Africa had over 90 million social media users, in Algeria, 38 million social media users, and Morocco amounts to over 68% of the population on average. Other countries like Egypt, Nigeria, Congo, and Ethiopia recorded over 150 million social media users on average which consists of over 70% of the population (Internet World Stats, 2021). With this, it is evident that an upward online population in this continent exists, such that the more people engage in the usage of gadgets, the shorter the time spent with others physically. According to Aririguzoh (2018), this is evident with the rate at which people prefer to remain behind their gadgets rather than enjoy the usual one-to-one conversations and interactions. The reality is affecting the community values as lived in the traditional African society of communion, love, togetherness, and unity.

Many African Consecrated women are affected by this today as the phone and personal gadgets have become their closest companions rather than their fellow sisters in the community. While the Internet and the social media have helped some persons to network, they have also caused the dearth of interpersonal communication, as most people prefer to spend long hours hiding behind their personal computers and other gadgets that they use to communicate on-line than having face-to-face communication. With the computers and cell phones becoming ubiquitous, more people are further retreating in front of their screens to hide from real personal interaction. Burgoon (1976) describes this as unwillingness to communicate or a chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication.

The use of social media in Kenya has also increased. Research has shown that there was an escalation among those who inhabit these sites between the years 2020 and 2021. Kenya recorded a huge number of 11 million social media users in 2021 (Kemp, 2021). Studies have been carried out on how social networking platforms have changed the dynamics of interpersonal relationships among teenagers and students (Mwangi, 2013). Social media use has affected the rate at which the Consecrated women share their experiences and have deep conversations. Rather, they are very shallow, cold and superficial discussions. It has caused a gap in deep social connections (Chan, 2019). The meetings are not left out, rather than concentrate, the sisters are sometimes are busy with their phones. Mealtimes, moments of sharing, and being together have been overtaken by the use of gadgets. This has compromised face-to-face relationships. These distractions are a challenge of commitment to the vowed life leading to a disconnect among the sisters (Koessmeier & Buttner, 2021). All these would in one way, or another affect the psychological well-being of the sisters, leading to loneliness and frustration in the community. Studies concerning the different challenges of living the community life, interpersonal relationships, and the challenges of living the vowed life have been carried out (Ogu et al., 2022). However, there is an absence of research concerning the prevalence of social media use among Consecrated women.

From the reviewed literature, research shows that globally, regionally and locally there has been a tremendous rise in social media users today than ever before. Every year there is an exponential increase. The virtual communities are dominating the physical communities because of the number of new users that statistics have recorded, globally, regionally, and locally that have accessed the social media sites. However, the gap is that there is no statistical data about Consecrated women and how they are affected or influenced by social media is a research gap.

The Consecrated women are called from different backgrounds and cultures to share in the unity of Christ through the bonds of fraternity as they make Christ known through their different apostolate (Ogunu, 2018). The sisters are expected to share everything in common which includes the joys, pains, and their life as it was from the beginning of Consecrated life. However, in recent times, there has been a change in this lifestyle due to the rise of communication technologies which includes social media. According to statistics, the count of active social media participants worldwide grew between 2017 and 2022, from a total of 2.9 billion to 4 billion users (Statista, 2022). Hereby putting a challenge on the quality of human relationships today (Majeti, 2020). There is an increased rate of social media use among Consecrated women in Karen Nairobi which could impede their ability to relate and interact healthily at community meals, meetings and recreational activities which formerly enhanced a time for sharing. These core aspects of communal living among religious women could be eroded by the increased usage of social media and therefore, the objective of this current study was to examine the prevalence of social media use among the consecrated religious women in Karen, Langata Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design. It was a suitable design for this study because it aimed at describing the prevalence of social media use among the Catholic consecrated religious women. The study was conducted in Karen, Langata Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. This is an area occupied by about 31 different Institutes of Consecrated religious women. Some of them are running schools, hospitals, working within the sphere of social communications, teaching, carrying out hospitality services as well as primary evangelisation. The sisters through their ministries have a very strong presence in Karen which justifies my reason for choosing Karen as the location of the study.

The target population was 300 Consecrated religious women residing in Karen in different communities. The participants were from age 21 and 85, perpetually professed and temporarily professed sisters excluding those who are in initial formation. Through simple random sampling, a sample size of 145 participants was selected to participate in the study. The data was collected using Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS). The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the demographic section that captured the demographic information of participants such as age, educational level, religious status and the nationality of the participants and section two of the questionnaire collected data on the social media use. The SMUIS was developed by Jenkins-Guarnieri et al. (2013). The SMUIS consists of 10 questions in a Likert structure scale that has two sub scales: "Social Integration and Emotional Connection (SIEC) with six items and Integration into Social Routines (ISR) presented with four items" (Tamia, 2017). The prevalence scores is as follows: 1-16 (low prevalence), 17-32 (moderate prevalence), 33-50 (high prevalence). It is represented through a "Likert scale in which 5 = strongly disagree, 4 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 2 = agree, 1= strongly agree". The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and particularly frequencies and percentages with SPSS Version 25.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was set to examine the prevalence of social media use among the Catholic consecrated religious women in Karen, Langata Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The social media usage scale reported a reliability of  $\alpha = 0.828$ . This finding suggests that the measurement tool recorded Cronbach alpha values exceeding 0.7. This indicates that the items in the study exhibited a high level of internal consistency, as a dependability coefficient of 0.7 or higher which is widely considered to be appropriate (Kline, 2000).

### Demographic Details of Participants

The demographic information of the participants were analysed through descriptive statistics. The demographic information was age, educational level, religious status and nationality. According to the analysis, of the 145 participants, 71.1% were aged between 20 to 40. 20.7% were between 41 and 55 years. 6.9% were between 56 and 70 years and 0.7% between 71-85 years. Majority of the participants' age between 20-40 years followed by 41-55 years, 56-70 and 71-85 years. Of the total respondents 145 (100%), 14 (9.7%) were form IV leavers, 70 (48.3%) of the respondents were Certificate/Diploma holders, 43 (29.75%) were Bachelors Degree holders, 17 (11.7%) had a masters degree and lastly, 1(0.7%) of the respondents had a Doctorate Degree. While most consisted of perpetually professed sisters, totalling 73 participants (50.3%), the remaining participants were those in temporary profession 72(49.7%). The majority consisted of Kenyan Consecrated women, 88 (60.7%) participants; the other participants were non-Kenyan consecrated women 57 (39.3%).

### Prevalence of Social Media Use among Catholic Consecrated Religious Women in Karen, Nairobi County

Descriptive statistics was run to examine the prevalence of social media use among the Catholic consecrated religious women in Karen Langata Constituency, Nairobi, Kenya.. A Likert scale with 10 statements and range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used. The lowest score a respondent could get was 1 while the highest score a participant could get was 50. The scores between 1-16 (low prevalence), 17-32 (moderate prevalence), and 33-50 (high prevalence). The results are presented in table 1.

**Table 1**

*Prevalence of Social Media Use among Consecrated Religious Women in Karen*

Social Media Use	Frequency	Percentage
Low	5	3.3%
Moderate	61	40.3%
High	79	56.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>100%</b>

Results from table 1, indicated that 79 (56.4%) of the participants recorded a high prevalence of social media use, 61 (40.3%) of the participants were at moderate prevalence of social media use while 5 (3.3%) were at a low prevalence of social media use. The results show that most of the consecrated religious women in Karen, Langata Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya use social media. The results about use of social media among consecrated religious women were consistent with other populations. For instance, the European Union reported high rate of social media usage among people of ages 15 and 73 from 36% in 2011 to 57% in 2020 by the users. According to statistics, Denmark had the apex rate of social media statistics with 84%, Cyprus 77%, and Hungary 73% (Eurostat, 2021).

Though the study did not establish the effects of use of social media to Catholic consecrated religious women, studies have shown that excessive use of social media can have negative effects to lives of people. For instance, a study that was conducted in USA by Primark et al. (2017), among respondents between 19–32 years showed that young adults who extensively use social media appeared to have a greater feeling of isolation when compared with their peers who spend less time. The current study reported most frequent use of social media (56.4%) which is above the average according to the number of total respondents which could be an indication that the respondents feel more inclined to communicating to those who are distant than their immediate community members. To some extent this could have negative implication to vocation of sisterhood and especially in areas of prayer life, community life and apostolate.

In addition, the excessive use of social media can lead to poor interpersonal relationship among the consecrated religious women which is in line with findings of Christensen (2018), who indicated that individuals with excessive internet usage reported a reduction the quality of their offline relationships. Therefore, people who are into virtual relationships have the tendency of having challenges with offline, personal inter-personal relationships. In all these, there is indeed evidence that social media is even now a more influential factor that can change relationships of consecrated religious women with those around them.

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## CONCLUSION

Most of the consecrated religious women in Karen, Langata Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya use social media. Though the study did not establish the effects of use of social media to Catholic consecrated religious women, excessive use of social media can have negative effects to their lives. The current study reported most frequent use of social media which is above the average according to the number of total respondents which could be an indication that the respondents feel more inclined to communicating to those who are distant than their immediate community members. To some extent this could have negative implication to vocation of sisterhood and especially in areas of prayer life, community life and apostolate. Superiors of different congregations need to organize workshops and seminars to encourage their members on proper use of social media and overcoming challenges that come with use of it. The Consecrated religious women should be encouraged to esteem and value prayer life which can enhance their relationship with God and presence of one another in the community through meal time encounters, apostolate and recreation. The Consecrated women who use or record high frequency of social media use may need to make conscious effort to balance their online relationships and the relationships with those around them.

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