# Social Solidarity Influence of Social Media: An Analysis of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa Gaba Community, Eldoret Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

In the contemporary society, solidary may be well achieved through the use of social media. Since the advent of social media platforms, scholars have been fascinated by the wanton enticement of these platforms of millions of users globally. Different platforms among others Facebook; Instagram; YouTube; WhattsApp; X (formerly Twitter); TikTok; Snapchat; LinkedIn; and Pinterest are connecting people from all around the world. Many studies have investigated the relation between social media and the church, how this type of media could affect the church and whether the use of social media would impact the growth of the Church or not. However, few reports examine the association of social media and solidarity social teaching (SST) of the Catholic Church. The purpose of this study was to investigate the link between diverse features of social media and SST among the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) community at Gaba Campus in Eldoret. The study adopted cross sectional research design, involving mixed method approaches to collect primary and secondary sources of data. The main source of quantitative data collection was the survey of members of the congregation, while the qualitative aspect of data was largely through desk and internet reviews. Random sampling technique was used to establish a 70 sample size of respondents from 234 CUEA Gaba community involving the Gaba Catholic students, Small Christian Communities(SCCs) and staff. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression and Chi Square models. Majority (31.43%) of respondents' age was in the range of 18 – 44 years, most (90%) of whom were ardent users of WhattsApp (57.14%), Facebook (24.29%), and TikTok (8.57%). Regression results revealed a significant association between social media and social solidarity (R=0.537; $R^2$=0.289), and Chi Square test on all predictors of social media showed a significant association with Social media: Social relations [$X^2$=28.048, DF=7; P<0.001]; Sense of belonging [$X^2$=55.149; DF=7, P<0.001]; Inclusion [$X^2$=26.090, DF=6; P<0.001]; Participation [$X^2$=89.217, DF=8; P<0.001]; Diversity [$X^2$=45.235, DF=9; P<0.001]; Personal Outlook [$X^2$=55.388, DF=7; P<0.001]; and Peace and security [$X^2$=81.143, DF=9; P<0.001]. Based on study results, the constructive effects social media have on the advancement of social solidarity haven been identified. As more and more people join social media platforms, the study justifies Catholic Church exploitation of the opportunities to reach a wider audience and build deeper relationships with its congregation.

**Key Words:** Facebook; WhatsApp; TikTok; Social Relations, Sense of Belonging, Inclusion; Participation; Diversity, Personal Outlook.

## INTRODUCTION

The key concepts in this study are social media and solidarity. In the contemporary society, solidary is well achieved through the use of social media. Social media is a phenomenon which has become very common in our

times. It is the group of IT tools used in the Internet for dialog and communication [1]. According to [2] it is "a group of internet-based application solutions that rely on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content". There are many different types of social media used globally and have enhanced solidarity in the society as will be discussed in the next session.

Global Overview Report [3] shows a high presence of social media in the lives of human beings. The number of active users of social media is growing every year. The report shows there are currently 4.76 billion active users of social media in the world. It implies almost 60% of global population is under the influence of social media [4]. Data also indicate that in 2015, the ratio of active social media users versus global population was 23%. In 2019 and 2020, it increased to 45%, and 49% respectively, and 53.6% and 58.4% in 2021 and 2022 respectively [5,6]. The statistics indicate how social media is an agent of socialization which enhances solidarity in the society as well as a tool for the mission of the church in evangelization and enculturation.

[7] accurately reports that from its etymology, the word "solidarity" comes from "solidus", which meant an accounting unit in ancient Rome. It became merged with the French "solidaire" (interdependence) and later into English, meaning agreement, support, and bond of unity. [8] describes solidarity in the following ways: likeminded feeling, people of common interest living and being/acting together, unity to achieve common interests for the benefit of all, social values that foster cooperation, cohesiveness, harmony, cohesion, and team spirit; sharing helping and supporting one another, belongingness. Therefore, solidarity is an act of coming together to do things together.

[9] stated that solidarity derives from the testimony of the biblical tradition. It does not begin with ecclesial teaching. It flows from the Judeo-Christian scriptures. God creates human beings in divine solidarity to share in the life and mission of the blessed Trinity. The scriptures are a communitarian book, not an individualistic book. God expected Cain to show concern for his brother when he asked: "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" Genesis 4:10) [10]. Abraham is called to be the father of the nations and to be a blessing. Joseph is sent to Egypt a foreign country to save the whole world. God says to Israel at Mount Sinai, "All the earth is mine", Exodus 19:5[11]. Israel is commanded to show solicitude to the poor, the stranger. Leviticus 19 says: "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" Leviticus 19: 33-34[12]. Moses is called to fight and struggle against Pharaonic oppression and bondage, and so forth. Jesus is a man of solidarity. He stood in solidarity with humanity. Hence, there is need for Christians to embrace solidary in their daily life as portrayed in the Holy Scripture.

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1 Wicińska K.(2017). Media społecznościowe jako narzędzie rozwijające działania marketingowe przedsiębiorstw. *Człowiek na rynku nieruchomości*, .2017 3(24), ss. 115- 121. In: http://bazekon.icm.edu.pl/bazekon/element/bwmeta1.element.ekon-element-000171503683

2 Haenlein M., Kaplan A.M.(2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media, "Business Horizons", nr 53. 5

3 Digital Report (2023). We are Social and Meltwater. Global Overview Report. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-global-overview-report

4 Digital Report (2023). We are Social and Meltwater. Global Overview Report. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-global-overview-report

5 Digital Report (2015). Digital, Social, and Mobile in 2015. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2015-global-digital-overview

6 Digital Report (2022). Global Over Report. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report

7 Ladha, A. (2020). What is Solidarity? Kosmos: Journal of global transformation, https://www.kosmosjournal.org/kj_article/what-is-solidarity/

8 IGI Global. (2023)What is solidarity? https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/solidarity-    rapport- social-interaction/27751

9 Ikeke, O. (2023). Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching and Its Implications for Creating an Authentic Human Self East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion, 2023 ,6(1), 65-74. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajtcr.6.1.1285

10 English Standard Version Bible. (2001). ESV Online. *https://esv.literalword.com/*

11 English Standard Version Bible. (2001). ESV Online. *https://esv.literalword.com/*

12 English Standard Version Bible. (2001). ESV Online. *https://esv.literalword.com/*

In Catholic Social Teachings, solidarity is a virtue and a moral requirement. [13] reported that: "Catholic social teaching (CST), a branch of moral theology, addresses contemporary issues within the political, economic, and cultural structures of society. The threefold cornerstone of CST contains the principles of human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity". It is not optional to have and live in solidarity. By the very fact of being a human being, you are to live in solidarity. According to [14] Paul teaches: Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all". This calls upon all Catholics to be each other's keeper.

"Today's media environment is so pervasive as to be indistinguishable from the sphere of everyday life" [15]. In his message for World Day of Social Communications on January 24th, 2019, Pope Francis underlined the omniscience of the media in our lives nowadays while stressing the value of dialogue and the importance of meeting with others. In fact, recent years have witnessed an "explosive growth" in the use of social media in particular as a mean of communication [16]. Social media are defined as websites that allow users to create a profile and share relationships with other users within the system [17]. In their efforts to gain audiences and stay profitable, traditional media have shifted their focus towards social media. This phenomenon is also called the "social media revolution" [18]. These shows there is a strong connection between social media and solidarity.

Social solidarity is closely related to social cohesion and is the idea of a well-integrated functioning society where all members have been socialized into its shared norms and values [119]. Solidarity can only be achieved through communication, and social media gives the platform for communication. The objective of this study was to analyze the influence of social media on social solidarity based on Catholic Social Teachings. Specifically, the study investigated social media influence on Social relations; Sense of belonging, Inclusion, Participation, Diversity, Personal Outlook, Peace and security among the Catholic community at the Catholic University of Eastern, Gaba Campus in Eldoret Kenya.

**Methods and Data**

The study relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data comprised information collected from communities that use social media to answer the objective of the study. In order to collect data within a short time of duration, we adopted a cross sectional survey. The study focused on Gaba Campus CUEA Catholic community in Eldoret during the month of February, 2024. The sample size of the study was determined in line with [20] who reported that for a population of less than 10,000, a sample size of between 10% and 30% is a good representation of the target population. Therefore, a sample size of 70 respondents representing 30% was adequate for analysis. The sample included Catholic Student Association members (15), Small Christian Communities (SCCs) group members (20), Catholic staff members (22), and API members (12) that are part of the Gaba CUEA community who were considered from a large population of 234.

13 Wright, K.S.(2017). *The principles of Catholic social teaching: A guide for decision making from daily* clinical encounters to national policy-making. Linacre Q 84(1): 10–22. doi:10.1080/00243639.2016.1274629

14 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (PCJP). (2004).Compendium of the social doctrine of the church. Nairobi: Pauline Publication Africa.

15 Francis. (2019). Pope's Message for World Day of Social Communications 2019 released. Vatican News. 2019. Retrieved from https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-01/pope-s-msge-for-world-day-of-social-communications--released.html.

16 Gupta, C. (2015). GPU. Accelerated Analysis and Simulation of Large-Scale Networks. Large Scale Complex Network Analysis: LSCNA 2015, p. 61-62.

17 Boyd, D. M.; Ellison, N. B. Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 2007. v. 13, n. 1, p. 210–230, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x

18 Harper, R. A. (2010). Social Media Revolution: Exploring the Impact on Journalism and News Media Organizations. Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse, v. 2, n. 3, 2010. Retrieved from http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=2020

19 Larsen, C.A.(2013). The Rise and Fall of Social Cohesion. The Construction and De-construction of Social Trust in the USA, UK, Sweden and Denmark. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013

20 Mugenda A & Mugenda ,0. Research methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches. Acts Press. 2013

Questionnaires were administered online via ODK platform to the seventy respondents by trained research assistants. The survey focused on perceptions of community on the issue of social media use and its influence on the catholic social teaching in terms of solidarity. Observations helped to determine the influence of social media use on solidarity teaching under social teaching of the Catholic Church.

As an open source application, ODK allows the questionnaire form to be uploaded, filled out on a mobile phone or tablet running the Android operating system and stored. The quantitative aggregated information was viewed on a central server and retrieved in an aggregated data form that allowed use of computer for analysis. Closed-ended questions were analyzed using nominal scales into mutually exclusive categories and frequencies by employing descriptive statistics using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS V 22.0) and MS Excel. Analysis involved the production and interpretation of frequencies counts and tables that described and summarized the data through graphs, charts, and reports. Collection of secondary data was obtained through desk research, which was either from internal or external sources. The external source included publication press, newspapers, libraries, and various research related organizations. The study also applied means, correlations and factor analysis to provide conclusions and comparisons on the variables. Hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square.

**Analysis**

**Descriptive Statistics**

The first part of the findings involved descriptive statistics. On gender representation, 50% of each gender (35 male; 35 female) respondents were studied. The majority of respondents were staff (31.43%), followed by Small Christian community members (28.57%), Catholic Student Association members (21.43%), and API (17.14%), see table 1.

Table 1: The group that the respondent belongs to

| Value | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Staff (ST) | 22 | 31.43 |
| Small Christian Communities (JUM) | 20 | 28.57 |
| Catholic Student Association (CSA) | 15 | 21.43 |
| Amecea Pastoral Institute (API) | 12 | 17.14 |

Source: Survey Results, 2024.

The study results on the age of the respondents indicate the majority of the respondents were aged between 35 and 44 years and the rest were aged 17 years and below, see table 2.

Table 2: Age of the respondents

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 17 years | 1 | 1.43 |
| 18-24 years | 13 | 18.57 |
| 25-34 years | 16 | 22.86 |
| 35-44 years | 22 | 31.43 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 45-54 years | 11 | 15.71 |
| 55-64 years | 4 | 5.71 |
| Over 65 years | 3 | 4.29 |
| Total | **70** | **100.0** |

Source: Survey Results, 2024.

Respondents were also asked which of the social medial they use most. Table 3 shows WhatsApp (57.14%) is the most common platform, followed by Facebook (24.29%) and TikTok (8.57%).

Table 3: Social media accounts mostly used

| Social media account | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Whatsapp | 40 | 57.14 |
| Facebook | 17 | 24.29 |
| Tiktok | 6 | 8.57 |
| Twitter | 2 | 2.86 |
| Instagram | 2 | 2.86 |
| LinkedIn | 2 | 2.86 |
| Google+ | 1 | 1.43 |
| Total | **70** | **100.0** |

Source: Survey Results, 2024.

The study results (Table 4) show majority (78.8%) of respondents had graduate and postgraduate qualifications and the remaining (21.2%) was the proportion of respondents with secondary and other levels of education.

Table 4: Level of Education

| Education level | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Secondary | 12 | 17.14 |
| Graduate | 43 | 61.43 |
| Post graduate | 12 | 17.14 |
| Others | 2 | 2.86 |
| Total | **70** | **100.0** |

Source: Survey Results, 2024.

Majority (Table 5) of the respondents (over 65%) use social media on a daily basis, while 17.14% reported to use social media on an hourly basis, 12.86% use social media after 2-3 days and only 2.86% use it on a weekly basis. Results in Table 6 show that 35.71% on average spend 1-2 hours on social media in a day; 32.86% of respondents spent 2-3 hours; 17.14% spend more than 4 hours and 11.43% less than 30 minutes.

Table 5: How often they check their social media account

| Checking social media | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Hourly | 12 | 17.14 |
| Daily | 46 | 65.71 |
| 2-3 days | 12 | 12.86 |
| Weekly | 2 | 2.86 |
| Total | **70** | **100.0** |

Source: Survey Results, 2024.

Table 6: Average time spent on social media in a day

| Average time | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 30mins | 8 | 11.43 |
| 1-2 hours | 25 | 35.71 |
| 3-4 hours | 23 | 32.86 |
| More than 4 hours | 1                2 | 17.14 |
| Total | **70** | **100.0** |

Source: Survey Results, 2024.

In the last part of this study, respondent perception on the influence of social media use on each of the solidarity elements was measured on 1(disagree) and agree (5) scale. Results are indicated in Table 7.

The first element that was measured involved effect of social media on social relationships. Results in Table 7 indicate that respondents agreed and strongly agreed with over 70% i.e. increased strength of social networks (84.3%); enhanced interpersonal trust with other people(72.8); and levels of solidarity enhanced(81.4). The effect on sense of belonging of the respondents of social media was also measured. Results show over 80% agreed or strongly agreed to indicate a strongly relationship in terms of increased values/norms sharing with members (91.5%); commitment to social group (85.7%); and sense of belonging/inclusion (87.1%). Also respondents (over 75%) agreed or strongly agreed that their sense of inclusion had been enhance because of perceived promotion of socioeconomic support (income assistance) (85.7%); enhanced economic opportunities and participation (91.4%); and promotes perceived fairness (77.5%). When asked about the influence of social media and participation as an element of solidarity, respondents affirmed to the same effect. Over 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed participation in decision-making has increased (91.4%); participation in elections increased (76.4); and contact with representatives increased (82.9%). Diversity as an aspect of solidarity was also studied. Respondents (over 70%) reported that social media has led to the reduction of discrimination (71.5%); enhanced feeling of acceptance by others (84.3%); and that social distance (intergroup communication, inter-marriage, friendships, and relationships) decreased (81.4%). On personal outlook social

media effect, results show over 75% respondent approval of relationship visa viz level of happiness increased (87.1%); future personal economic outlook brightened (77.2%); and personal wellbeing enhanced(87.1%) as a result of social media engagement. Finally the study tested respondent peace and security of social media. Results (Table 7) indicate an overwhelming affirmation of over 70% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed. 85.7% of respondents said they were satisfied with conflict mediation from social media; abiding by the rules due to the use of social media(71.4%); and 74.3% reported to be free from threats of social voice as result of use of social media.

Table 7: Perceived Effect of Social Media on Social Solidarity Dimensions

| Solidarity Dimensions | Rating scale | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1=Strongly Disagree | | 2=Disagree | | 3=Neutral | | 4=Agree | | 5=Strongly Agree | |
| **Social Relationships** | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| 1. Strength of social networks increased | 1 | 1.4 | - | - | 7 | 10 | 39 | 55.7 | 20 | 28.6 |
| 2. Interpersonal trust (other people) increased | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5.7 | 13 | 18.6 | 32 | 45.7 | 19 | 27.1 |
| 3. Levels of solidarity (helpfulness, common good) increased | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2.9 | 5 | 7.1 | 35 | 50 | 22 | 31.4 |
| **Sense of Belonging** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Share values/norms with members | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.4 | 4 | 5.7 | 41 | 58.6 | 23 | 32.9 |
| 5. Commitment to my social group has increased | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.4 | 8 | 11.4 | 39 | 55.7 | 21 | 30 |
| 6. My sense of belonging/inclusion has increased | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4.3 | 3 | 4.3 | 42 | 60 | 19 | 27.1 |
| **Inclusion** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. Promotes socioeconomic support(income assistance) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2.9 | 7 | 10 | 41 | 58.8 | 19 | 27.1 |
| 8. Enhances economic opportunities and participation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7.1 | 42 | 60 | 22 | 31.4 |
| 9. Promotes perceived fairness | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2.9 | 12 | 17.1 | 33 | 47.1 | 21 | 30 |
| **Participation** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10. Participation in decision-making increased | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 8.6 | 33 | 47.1 | 31 | 44.3 |
| 11. Participation in elections increased | 2 | 2.9 | 2 | 2.9 | 12 | 17.1 | 37 | 52.1 | 17 | 24.3 |
| 12. Contact with representatives increased | 1 | 1.4 | 2 | 2.9 | 8 | 11.4 | 37 | 52.9 | 21 | 30 |

| Diversity | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Discrimination/stereotypes reduced | 3 | 4.3 | 1 | 1.4 | 14 | 20 | 27 | 38.6 | 23 | 32.9 |
| 14. Feeling of acceptance by others enhanced | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 14.3 | 38 | 54.3 | 21 | 30 |
| 15. Social distance (intergroup communication, inter-marriage, friendships, relationships) decreased | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5.7 | 7 | 10 | 31 | 44.3 | 26 | 37.1 |
| **Personal Outlook** | | | | | | | | | |
| 16. Level of happiness increased | 1 | 1.4 | 1 | 1.4 | 7 | 10 | 36 | 51.4 | 25 | 35.7 |
| 17. Future personal economic outlook brightened | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 20 | 38 | 54.3 | 16 | 22.9 |
| 18. Personal wellbeing enhanced | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.4 | 6 | 8.6 | 39 | 55.7 | 22 | 31.4 |
| **Peace and Security** | | | | | | | | | |
| 19. Satisfaction with conflict mediation | | | 3 | 4.3 | 7 | 10 | 48 | 68.6 | 12 | 17.1 |
| 20. Abiding social rules | 1 | 1.4 | 1 | 1.4 | 18 | 25.7 | 38 | 54.3 | 12 | 17.1 |
| 21. Free from threats of social violence | 2 | 2.9 | 6 | 8.6 | 10 | 14.3 | 39 | 55.7 | 13 | 18.6 |

Source: Survey Results, 2024.

**Inferential Statistics**

Based on the data used in this study, regression and Chi Square analyses were applied to measure the significance of the relationship between social media and solidarity.

**Regression Analysis**

Regression analysis was found to be reliable method of identifying how social media variables impacted on the social solidarity factors. Regression model used was $Y = a + bX + E$;

Where Y= Social media variables

a= Constant; X=Social Solidarity Variables; b= coefficients; E=residual error.

Overall regression outputs are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Regression Analysis

| Model Summary | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |

| 1 | .537ª | 0.289 | 0.178 | 0.58048 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Peace and security, social relations, participation, personal outlook, sense of belonging, diversity, inclusion | | | | |

Source: Survey Results, 2024.

The value of R represents the correlation between social media and all the social solidarity predictors. A score of R of 0.537 shows positive correlation between the predictors and the dependent variable. And $R^2$ of 0.289 means that approximately 28.9% of the variation in social media can be explained by the predictors included in the model. The results indicate an overall positive correction between social media and all the predictors of peace and security, social relations, participation, personal outlook, sense of belonging, diversity, and inclusion.

**Chi Square**

Chi Square model: $\chi^2 = \sum(O_i - E_i)^2/E_i$ ; was used to test the relationships, where $O_i$ is the observed value and $E_i$ is the expected value. Chi Square test was used to test the relationship between social media and all the social solidarity predictors. Results are shown in the Table 9 below.

Table 9: Chi Square Test

| | Social media | Social relations | Sense of belonging | Inclusion | Participation | Diversity | Personal Outlook | Peace and security |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-Square | .514ª | 28.048ᵇ | 55.149ᶜ | 26.090ᵈ | 89.217ᵉ | 45.235ᶠ | 55.388ᶜ | 81.143ᵍ |
| df | 1 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 9 |
| Asymp. Sig. | 0.473 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 |

Source: Survey Results, 2024.

The study findings indicated that a chi-square test was conducted on all the predictors, and the resulting p-value is less than 0.001 (<0.001). A p-value less than 0.001 indicate strong evidence against the null hypothesis, suggesting that there is a significant relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable.

# DISCUSSION

Descriptive results indicate that 100% of respondents use social media. Overall, results in Table 8 indicate positive relations between social media and solidarity predictors (R=0.537; SE= 0.58048; $R^2$ = 0.289). Specific influence of predictors is indicated the sections below. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and others have allowed for different forms of communication. Instead of being able to connect with someone only by a phone call, we can use email, text messages, Facebook Messenger, tweets, Instagram tagging, FaceTime, and other platforms to interact with new people.

**Social Media and Social Relations**

Results in Table 7 show over 70% of respondents agreed on the influence of social media on social relations. Chi square results (Table 9) indicates a significant relationship between social media and social relations($X^2$=28.048, DF=7; P<0.001). Results show that social media enhances increased strength of social networks; enhanced interpersonal trust with other people; and levels of solidarity enhanced. Studies show that social media can affect interpersonal relationships both positively and negatively. Social media use can negatively impact interpersonal relationships due to distraction, irritation, decreased quality time, frustration,

depression, and social comparison. However, on the positive side it assists people to stay connected to long-distance friends and family members or improve communication with their partners, children, and healthcare professionals [21]. The study shows the opportunity the Catholic Church has to exploit alternative avenues of solidarity teachings through strengthened relationships.

## Social Media Effect on Sense of Belonging

Results (Table 7) further indicate an affirmation of over 80% of respondents on the relationship between of social media and sense of belonging, and by Chi square results (Table 9) ($X^2$=55.149; DF=7, P<0.001). This finding demonstrates there is increase in values/norms sharing with members, commitment to social group and sense of belonging/inclusion can result from social media use. Researchers also have discovered that high engagement with the "social contribution features" of Facebook – posting status updates and photos, commenting on other users' statuses and photos – was associated with lower levels of social loneliness. For instance, [ii22] reported that social networking sites such as Facebook allow people to extend their offline friendships into an online environment. But that study also found that users who had stronger preferences for "passive consumption" (groups, games, fan pages) reported higher levels of social loneliness.

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, give people on demand access to reminders of their social relationships and allow them to communicate with others whenever they desire. Our findings suggest that it is communication, rather than simple use, that is key in producing a sense of belonging. When sharing or feedback is restricted, belonging suffers, hence the role of social media and sense of belonging are a key component of solidarity teachings.

## Social Media Effect on Inclusion

Table 7 indicates over 75% of respondents agreed that the relationship between social media and inclusion was positive. A strong relationship is confirmed by Table 9 Chi Square result ($X^2$=26.090, DF=6; P<0.001). Results indicate an enhanced sense of inclusion resulting from social media use because of perceived promotion of socio-economic support; economic opportunities and participation, and perceived fairness. This is because inclusion initiatives support the realization that everyone is different. Social media reinforces this fact, demonstrating that we are more connected and have more in common with each other as we communicate using different platforms [23]. It is an opportunity for individuals to connect with people of all different backgrounds (to find commonalities) to share experiences, and to solve problems in new ways. The Church can therefore use social media to promote inclusion that is a key element of solidarity teaching.

## Social Media and Participation

Results in Table 7 indicate over 75% of respondents confirmed the relationship between social media and participation. To determine the strength of the relationship, Chi square results (Table 9) show a strong positive relationship($X^2$=89.217, DF=8; P<0.001). The implications of these findings is that social media platforms have increased participation in decision-making increased, and elections; and contact with representative leaders. Previous studies have consistently found that people who consume more news media have a greater probability of being civically and politically engaged across a variety of measures [24]. Researchers have also produced studies assessing the relationship between social media use and participation in civic and political life. [25]

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[21] Boyd, D. M. and Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 2007. v. 13, n. 1, p. 210–230, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x

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reported results of a meta-analysis of research on social media use and participation, and demonstrated a positive relationship between social media use and participation. Therefore, the Catholic Church in its endeavor to promote participation in its solidarity teaching may exploit the opportunities social media has to offer.

## Social Media Effect on Diversity

According to results in Table 7, over 70% of the respondents agreed that there was a relationship between social media and diversity. Chi Square results (Table 3) indicate the strength of this relationship as strong ($X^2$=45.235, DF=9; P<0.001). This implies the reduction of discrimination, enhanced feeling of acceptance by others, and led to decreased social distance (intergroup communication, inter-marriage, friendships, and relationships). Previous studies [26] have shown that all cultures may have access to information and knowledge from all over the globe thanks to social media, something that is having a significant consequence of the transformation of identity. Social media platforms form a type of communication that has extensive reach across oceans and continents, which could alter an entire culture. A study that examined various media consumption and usage in Spanish speakers found that social media differed in that the frequency of primary-language usage on social media platforms was significantly lower compared to other communication avenues[27]. The study likely attributed this to the perception of group-inclusiveness and self-preservation, particularly within English-dominant environments online. Social media has proven to be a powerful tool in social movements and information dissemination, and the Catholic Church has a chance to ride on this findings to enhance its diversity teaching for solidarity.

## Social Media and Personal Outlook

Table 7 Results demonstrate that over 75% of the respondents approved the positive relationship between social media and personal outlook. Chi Square test results in Table 9 show that this relationship is strong($X^2$=55.388, DF=7; P<0.001). This outcome means that through social media, respondents' level of happiness increased, their future personal economic outlook brightened, and personal wellbeing enhanced as a result of social media engagement. A study by [28] revealed a positive correlation between social media engagement and social relationships based on personal wellbeing, with level of happiness emerging as a crucial moderator in this dynamic. Level of happiness or trust positively moderates the connection between social media engagement and social relationships. One of the key teachings of solidarity is to promote a positive personal outlook and therefore social media platforms are relevant to the solidarity teaching in the Catholic Church.

## Social Media and Peace and Security

Respondents as shown in Table 7 confirmed a positive relationship between social media and peace and security by over 70% approval rating. The strength of the relationship was established using Chi Square. Results (Table 9) demonstrate strong positive association ($X^2$=81.143, DF=9;   P<0.001). The implication of these finding is that the use of social media has led to increased conflict mediation, adherence to the rules due, and reduced threats of social voice as result of use of social media.  According to [29], if leveraged properly, social media technologies can bring significant efficiencies and opportunities to the mediation effort and expand possibilities for the mediator's ability to understand the nature of a conflict and the shifting dynamics of a negotiation and to engage with the conflict parties. Peace and Security is a key tenet in the Catholic Church teaching of solidarity. Therefore, social media offers modern possibilities to resolve conflicts that are mediated by the Church leaders.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To sum up, social media gives a platform for communication. Communication creates shared meaning and culture through creation of a sense of belonging, inclusion, participation, diversity, personal outlook, peace and security among the Christians. Therefore, social media as a tool of communication in the ministry of the church offers insurmountable opportunities for the Catholic Church social solidarity teachings. We recommend the Catholic Church to consider the adoption of social media in its social solidarity teachings of social relations and sense of belonging; diversity and inclusion; participation and personal outlook; and peace and security.

Therefore, based on the findings, there is need for the Catholic Church in CUEA Gaba to embrace social media in its mission. The church can adopt an integrated approach in evangelization and enculturation to cope in the modern times where people are used to modern technology in communication.