



Analysis of Smartphone Usage on the Spiritual Growth of the Youth at GKPPD Sanggaberu

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of smartphones in relation to the spiritual growth of the youth at GKPPD Sanggaberu. The research employed a qualitative method with interview techniques. The findings of this study reveal that smartphone usage influences the spiritual growth of the youth in several ways. The first aspect concerns the use of applications that can foster spiritual growth among the youth. Applications are software programs designed to perform specific tasks on smartphones. Applications that promote spirituality include religious applications and social media platforms. In the context of GKPPD Sanggaberu, the youth have utilized religious applications effectively, as well as applications that enable them to offer assistance to those in need. This engagement contributes to the deepening of their spiritual growth. The second aspect is the positive impact of smartphone usage on spiritual development. Smartphones serve as tools for communication and as a medium for personal entertainment. They can foster spirituality by facilitating good relationships through effective communication with others. Based on the interviews conducted by the researcher, it was found that the youth at GKPPD Sanggaberu use smartphones to communicate with their families, relatives, and other individuals. Through such communication-especially with their parents-spiritual growth can be strengthened. The third aspect concerns the negative impact of smartphone usage on spiritual development. It was observed that many youths struggle to control their smartphone use, particularly during church services. Some tend to use their smartphones to overcome boredom while listening to sermons. Similarly, the youth at GKPPD Sanggaberu were found to use their smartphones during worship, which disrupts their focus on the Word of God.

Keywords: Usage, Smartphone, Growth, Spirituality

INTRODUCTION

A good young generation consists of individuals who grow and develop into excellent and independent persons capable of carrying out their responsibilities. Youth is a period filled with various emotional and personal challenges, both internal and external. During this stage of life, young people undergo significant psychological (mental) changes and face

numerous challenges-such as how to build a bright future, relate to their surroundings, behave in daily life, and confront struggles of faith. They also experience doubt, uncertainty, and anxiety about an unknown future. A young person is an individual in the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. This period is marked by rapid development that, within a relatively short time, transforms a child into an adult. The spirituality of youth develops alongside their cognitive growth, moral reasoning, and faith, progressing gradually rather than instantaneously. This growth can be stimulated through positive external influences, but it cannot be forced by anyone. Therefore, the guidance of young people must be characterized by patience. The development of youth spirituality is more effective when young people are accompanied with love, appropriate methods, and correct orientation. They need to be guided by adults who genuinely understand their condition, love them, serve as role models, and have the ability to encourage their progress. In nurturing the spirituality of young people, parents, the community, families, and particularly the church must all be involved. There are four essential elements in developing children's spirituality: (1) Teaching in the church must be centered on the Word of God. (2) Worship means humbling oneself before the One who is worshiped-it is the highest form of reverence given to the Almighty. (3) Fellowship is a community that requires good cooperation and a shared understanding of faith in God. (4) Service or evangelism is a calling to salvation, accompanied by both rights and responsibilities-the right to become children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the responsibility to maintain faith and spread the good news to those who have not yet known Christ. In the dynamics of life experienced by young people, they need serious attention and guidance to develop strong motivation, character, and spiritual growth. However, this has become a challenge among the youth of GKPPD Sanggaberu. Based on observations and interviews conducted with the congregation and youth members of the church, several issues have been identified: (1) many young people prefer to play games during worship services; (2) while elders or church leaders deliver sermons, some youths are engrossed in social media; (3) elders often pay little attention to youth fellowship; and (4) smartphones influence the spiritual growth of the youth. These behaviors have affected their spirituality, leading them toward negative habits-one of which is excessive smartphone use. During worship, many youths prefer to use their gadgets rather than focus on the sermon, showing that they have not yet learned to control themselves in this era of rapid smartphone development. The increasing use of smartphones among young people has brought various behavioral and attitudinal changes-such as indifference toward their surroundings, introversion, and loss of empathy for others nearby. Teenagers now prefer to communicate with friends within the same online community rather than engage with those physically around them. In Indonesia, young people spend an average of five to seven hours daily interacting with their devices, one of the highest rates in the world. The relationship between youth and the digital world should be viewed as a hybrid media space, an intersection between virtual and physical social worlds. Thus, even though youth spend much of their time online, they still seek physical encounters, especially with influencers and content creators, through conventions, meet-and-greet events, and other gatherings. This same space is also being explored by various religious groups. In human life, smartphones are considered essential tools for daily activities. Technology provides significant convenience by offering unlimited access to information and facilitating communication. Smartphones and social media have become inseparable

from modern society's activities. Among young people, smartphones have become indispensable. Essentially, smartphones were designed to simplify communication, but today, smartphone addiction has become detrimental to the millennial generation. In the past, smartphones were used primarily for text messaging and phone calls. However, with the advent of social media applications, users can now send pictures, videos, and even conduct video calls through built-in features. The advancement of technology and the sophistication of devices have indeed placed the world within one's grasp. Smartphones have also made young people increasingly reluctant to interact with others, to study, or to pursue their needs actively. As written in Proverbs 6:9-11, "*How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.*" This verse teaches that laziness leads to the absence of a better future. The advancement of smartphones can weaken the spirituality of young people if they fail to distinguish between sound and unsound teachings. The spirituality that young people must cultivate includes being diligent in prayer, for prayer strengthens one's spirit and directs one's life toward what is good. Moreover, they must be faithful in reading and listening to the Word of God, so that their faith may continue to grow. A spiritually mature youth is one who bears fruit wherever they are and lives in Christ.

However, the spiritual life of the youth at GKPPD Sanggaberu has not yet reflected strong spirituality, as many have not yet lived in Christ nor demonstrated a personal relationship with Jesus. Youth spirituality should be expressed in a genuine awareness of God's presence in their lives-manifested through daily interactions with others, the courage to bring about positive change, and the maturity of their spiritual growth.

METHODS

The qualitative method is a research process and an interpretive approach based on methodologies that explore social phenomena and human issues. In this approach, the researcher develops a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, provides detailed reports from respondents' perspectives, and conducts studies in natural settings, as emphasized by Creswell. Bogdan and Taylor, in their book *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Phenomenological Approach*, state that qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observed behaviors. This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. According to Suharsimi Arikunto, the descriptive approach is research intended to investigate particular situations, conditions, or phenomena, with the results presented in the form of a research report. In descriptive research, the phenomena may include forms, activities, characteristics, changes, relationships, similarities, and differences between one phenomenon and another. As stated by Sugiyono, the qualitative approach is a research method used to study natural conditions of the object (as opposed to experimental conditions), where the researcher acts as the key instrument. Data collection techniques are conducted through triangulation (a combination of various methods), data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and the results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. Therefore, it can be concluded that descriptive qualitative research is a method that describes phenomena through narrative descriptions expressed in natural language. The descriptive approach aims to observe,

understand, and describe social symptoms or phenomena by classifying various variables related to the unit of study and presenting a comprehensive description of the social situation. The goal is for the research to explore and explain events occurring within social contexts. This model seeks to obtain data based on factual and objective conditions, emphasizing both the meaning and outcomes of the findings rather than numerical generalizations. Every study must have a predetermined research site. For this research, the author selected GKPPD Sanggaberu as the research location. The research was conducted from January 2025 to September 2025.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The English term *spirit* derives from the Latin word *spiritus*, meaning “breath, soul, life, or vital essence.” The word *spiritual* (Greek: *pneumatikos*) refers to that which is related to the spirit-spiritual persons, spiritual matters, or gifts pertaining to the human soul, mind, and inner being as integral parts of the body. The spirit is also the essential principle that gives life to the body. Therefore, spirituality can be defined as the state or condition of one’s spiritual life—in this case, specifically referring to Christian spirituality. Spirituality points to pure inner life, where spiritual affection draws individuals closer to God. Spirituality can also be described as the principles that inspire, enliven, guide, and direct human life and all its actions. In the context of spiritual growth, spirituality encompasses everything one does to build a personal relationship and fellowship with Jesus Christ. This relationship is made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit, who renews the heart. True spirituality is not merely about knowing God intellectually but about cultivating a genuine relationship with Him. Richards defines spirituality as the part of the self that provides meaning and purpose in life, offering experiences of personal transcendence and connection to the universal order. Spirituality is related to a person’s orientation and experiences concerning elements of transcendence or existence—such as meaning, direction, purpose, and connectedness. The highest spiritual quality is transcendence, a term theologians and religious communities often use to describe what exists beyond the physical world. One way to understand spirituality is through transcendence, the highest stage of human development. It drives individuals to seek meaning and purpose in life, represents the uniquely human capacity that distinguishes people from other beings, and reflects the dimension of humanity that can indicate one’s level of mental and emotional health. Spirituality is often associated with religiosity. However, according to Miller and Thoresen, *religiosity* generally refers to one’s faith, intuition, and religious practices, while *spirituality* refers to the inner sense of connection with God and harmony with one’s social environment. Carlozzi categorizes spirituality into three main components: (1) belief in a transcendent being and the actions that bring one closer to that being; (2) the pursuit of meaning and purpose in life; and (3) a sense of unity, belonging, and connectedness with all living things. Isgandarova adds that spirituality involves an awareness of a transcendent entity—recognized as God—who possesses supreme authority over human life. This divine presence provides balance and security, making individuals feel whole and integrated with God in every aspect of their lives. Isgandarova further notes that spirituality is dynamic—it develops through learning, reflection, faith, and profound life experiences, including physical and psychological growth. Consequently, spirituality shapes one’s character and identity. Francis of Assisi, as cited by J. B.

Banawiratma and Hendri M. Sendjaja, emphasizes that spirituality is not a doctrine that can merely be spoken; rather, it is the Gospel itself-embodied in the person of Christ, the Son of God who became human and, through His Spirit, walks with all creation. From this, it can be concluded that spirituality involves a relationship with the transcendent being (God) and actions directed toward closeness with Him. It also represents the pursuit of life's purpose and the desire for unity and interconnectedness with all living beings.

Description of Youth Spirituality

Youth spirituality refers to a young person's awareness and experience of God's presence in their life, which is manifested through daily interactions with others and the courage to enact positive change. This concept is closely related to cognitive development-the mental growth that shapes understanding and reasoning. Cognitive development arises from two biological functions: organization and adaptation. Organization refers to the mental structuring of processes such as memory and perception, helping individuals interpret and adjust to new realities. Adaptation refers to the capacity to adjust effectively to life's daily challenges and continuously integrate new information into one's understanding of reality, resulting in conceptual growth. A lack of spiritual values-specifically a personal encounter with Jesus Christ-among Christian youth is often referred to as *spiritual thirst*. This spiritual thirst is characterized by the need for emotional healing, inner peace, self-control, and harmonious relationships with others and the environment, alongside a deep longing for God. As youth mature spiritually, they require leaders with spiritual integrity who serve as role models. Spiritual growth among youth is more likely when there are good leaders capable of guiding them toward spiritual maturity. Thus, there is a direct relationship between church leadership and the spiritual development of youth. The church plays a vital role in nurturing and guiding the spiritual lives of young people.

Aspects of Youth Spirituality in the Church

Spiritual growth can be observed in how youth live their daily lives-through their consistency in reading and reflecting on God's Word and expressing their faith in tangible ways that reflect Christ's character. According to Piedmont, the following are key aspects of youth spirituality:

1. Religious Experience, this refers to the sense of joy, happiness, and personal engagement experienced by youth during worship. They gain strength and encouragement from their participation in spiritual practices.
2. Universality
This aspect reflects the belief in the unity and purpose of life-a sense that all living beings are interconnected, accompanied by a desire to share responsibility toward all of creation.
3. Connectedness
This represents a personal sense of responsibility toward others, encompassing both vertical (relationship with God) and horizontal (relationship with others and the community) commitments across generations.

Positive and Negative Impacts of Smartphones in Worship

Smartphones, with their wide range of functions, bring both positive and negative impacts to their users.

- a. Positive Impacts, according to Gunawan, the positive effects of smartphone use include: 1) Facilitating access to digital applications such as the Bible and church hymnals. 2) Increasing youth knowledge of technological advancements. 3) Expanding social networks and friendships.

- b. Negative Impacts

However, when used unwisely, smartphones can lead to several negative consequences (Gunawan): 1) Disrupting youth concentration due to various distracting features such as cameras and games. 2) Reducing interest in worship activities. 3) Decreasing focus and concentration. 4) Exposing users to radiation risks. 5) Increasing vulnerability to cybercrime. 6) Negatively influencing students' attitudes and behaviors. 7) Promoting wasteful habits. 8) Creating unhealthy social environments. 9) Damaging moral integrity.

Kasingku and Sanger add that smartphones offer significant benefits, such as facilitating communication, providing easier access to spiritual materials, and helping organize religious activities. They argue that smartphones can enhance the efficiency of religious engagement. However, uncontrolled smartphone use may disrupt worship focus, reduce attention to God's Word, and destabilize spiritual balance, as users may become more absorbed in digital content than in spiritual matters. Therefore, wise management of smartphone use is essential to maintain spiritual discipline and worship quality. According to Gulo, excessive smartphone use can negatively affect worship in several ways: (1) it can reduce the depth and quality of spiritual experience; (2) it can diminish focus on God's Word and other religious activities; and (3) it can lead to spiritual imbalance by prioritizing digital activities over spiritual growth. Hence, it is crucial to manage smartphone use wisely to maintain equilibrium between worldly and spiritual pursuits. Although technology offers various benefits, it also introduces challenges-particularly in maintaining focus during worship. Smartphones often serve as distractions due to constant notifications, social media, and instant messaging. These interruptions not only disturb individual concentration but also affect the surrounding congregation. According to a study by Limbong (as cited by Adri Valdo), many adolescents use smartphones during worship for unrelated activities such as gaming or social media browsing. While smartphones offer numerous conveniences and technological advantages, their overuse can result in harmful effects. Excessive dependence on these devices can diminish one's spiritual focus and hinder personal growth.

Ways to Foster Youth Spirituality through Smartphones

An individual's spirituality grows when their relationship with God remains unbroken through consistent spiritual discipline. Spiritual discipline consists of daily habits that draw one closer to God. Through various smartphone applications, youth can gain instant access to religious materials, including sacred texts, sermons, literature, and educational resources. According to Risdayana Rudding, applications that can foster youth spirituality are those related to faith and religious platforms. Examples include digital prayer apps, Bible and hymnbook applications, and online worship tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms allow youth to engage in worship and acts of service flexibly, unhindered by time and place. Citing Stig Hjarvard, Andri Vincent

Sinaga explains that applications like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram can promote spiritual growth by providing spaces where individuals can listen to or share sermons through live streaming or recorded videos posted by religious leaders. Youth spirituality can be cultivated through the use of religious applications-such as Bible and hymnbook apps-and social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, which share faith-based content. When used wisely, these platforms can enrich the spiritual lives of youth and strengthen their relationship with God.

Smartphone Applications that Foster Youth Spirituality

Smartphones are equipped with various applications that can help young people nurture their spirituality, particularly through religious applications. These applications enable youths to listen to sermons and read the Word of God anytime and anywhere, unrestricted by place or time. Based on interviews conducted with the youth at GKPPD Sanggaberu, respondents SM and RT stated that smartphone applications have a significant positive influence, especially on young users. Within smartphones, there are several religious applications that make it easier for youths to access Scripture and sing hymns through available apps such as the Bible App and YouTube. Similarly, STM, RM, AB, MB, BLG, and BM expressed that smartphones can foster spirituality through religious platforms. Besides the Bible App and YouTube, social media platforms such as Instagram have also become spaces where pastors and ministers share sermons or short devotionals. When young people take time to read or watch these devotionals, they often feel motivated in their daily lives. Furthermore, TikTok has become another platform where short reflections and spiritual songs are widely shared, helping nurture the spiritual growth of the youth. According to LP and PM, spirituality can also grow not only through religious platforms but also through charitable acts. Applications that allow donations, such as Dana and similar platforms, can cultivate compassion and empathy among young people when used sincerely to help those in need. However, donations should be given with genuine sincerity, driven by empathy and care rather than by a desire for recognition or reward. When giving comes from a pure heart, it becomes an act that enhances one's spirituality. Thus, the use of smartphones can indeed nurture spirituality when directed toward positive purposes. Applications that encourage spiritual growth include religious apps and donation platforms that facilitate helping others. Religious apps allow users to read or listen to God's Word without limitations, while digital platforms like YouTube and TikTok provide access to sermons and worship content that enrich spiritual life.

The Positive Impact of Smartphone Use on Youth Spiritual Growth

In the past, especially among young people, communication with others was commonly conducted through letters. However, as time has progressed, smartphones have become the main medium for communication. They have become an essential part of daily human life due to their diverse functions-enabling communication, providing access to information, entertainment, and supporting productivity. According to interviews conducted with eight informants (SM, RT, STM, RM, AB, MB, LP, PM, BLG, and BM), smartphones serve as tools for both communication and entertainment. The presence of smartphones has made it easier for youths to stay in touch with family members, relatives, and others. Therefore, the positive use of smartphones lies in fostering communication. Smartphones offer various communication features such as voice calls,

text messaging, social media apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram, Email), all of which provide convenience and satisfaction to users. Moreover, entertainment platforms such as TikTok allow youths to relax through creative and engaging content. Hence, the positive impact of smartphone use on spiritual development lies in building good communication and providing healthy entertainment. Through smartphones, young people can establish harmonious relationships with others, which in turn strengthens their sense of connectedness and spiritual growth.

The Negative Impact of Smartphone Use on Youth Spiritual Growth

Despite its benefits, the abundance of smartphone features often leads to overuse, resulting in negative effects on spirituality. Based on interviews with eight informants, five of them (RT, STM, RM, AB, LP, PM, BLG, and BM) revealed that many young people struggle to control their smartphone use, particularly during Sunday worship services. Instead of focusing on listening to the Word of God, they are often tempted to use their phones for watching videos on TikTok, playing games, and other activities. Furthermore, SM, MB, and AB noted that this lack of self-control extends to other church activities such as youth worship gatherings. During these moments, youths are often more interested in accessing social media rather than participating in prayer and worship. This behavior not only distracts their attention but also diminishes their spiritual focus and devotion. It can be concluded that the negative impact of smartphone use on youth spirituality occurs when smartphones are misused during worship. Many youths prefer to engage with their devices to relieve boredom rather than listen to God's Word, which ultimately hinders their spiritual growth. A smartphone is a mobile device that functions similarly to a computer, equipped with advanced features that appeal to people of all ages and backgrounds. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) in 2018, there were 371.4 million smartphone users in Indonesia. This widespread usage is due to the wide range of prices and versatile features offered by smartphones, making them accessible to nearly everyone. Smartphones have both positive and negative impacts depending on how they are used. Based on interviews conducted by the researcher regarding smartphone use and spiritual growth among youths, several key findings emerged. First, smartphone applications can foster spiritual growth when used properly. Applications are software programs designed to perform specific tasks, ranging from simple tools like calculators to complex data processors and games. Among these, religious applications play a crucial role in supporting spiritual development. These include Bible and hymnbook apps, which can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Additionally, social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram provide spiritual content shared by pastors and ministers, making the Word of God more accessible. Second, smartphones positively influence spirituality when used as communication tools. They enable effective interaction with family members, relatives, and friends. As Carlozzi asserts, spirituality involves developing a sense of connectedness with others. Thus, when young people use smartphones to maintain close relationships—especially with parents—their spirituality can deepen. Third, smartphones also have negative consequences when misused. Many young people fail to control their use, especially during worship or prayer. Instead of focusing on spiritual activities, they are distracted by social media and entertainment. This habit divides their attention and weakens their relationship with God. Smartphone use can foster spirituality when

directed toward positive and meaningful purposes, such as engaging with religious content or supporting others in need. However, when used excessively or inappropriately-especially during worship-it can hinder spiritual growth and diminish one's focus on God.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, the researcher concludes that spirituality can be defined as the set of principles that motivate, inspire, guide, control, direct, and shape a person's life and all actions or efforts undertaken. In contrast, a smartphone is a small electronic device with specific functions, including models such as the iPhone and BlackBerry, as well as notebooks, which combine the portability of a computer with internet connectivity. The study found that the use of smartphones in fostering spirituality primarily involves religious applications available on these devices. Such applications, including digital Bibles and platforms for listening to sermons shared by pastors, allow young people to engage with the Word of God without limitations of time or place. This accessibility contributes significantly to the spiritual growth of youths. Moreover, smartphones can have a positive impact on spiritual development when used as tools for communication and entertainment. They enable youths to build and maintain relationships, particularly with family, thereby supporting social and spiritual connectedness. However, smartphones can also have a negative impact on spiritual growth. During Sunday worship, for instance, many youths tend to use their smartphones instead of fully participating in religious activities, which can hinder their spiritual development.

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