



# Youth key persons' digital discipleship process during the pandemic and post-pandemic era



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Discipleship is a responsibility of the Church. It is an outlet in which the regeneration of Church leadership to the younger generation is conducted. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, discipleship and mentoring of youth leaders, especially key persons of GKII (Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia) youth were provided by means of in-person activities. During the pandemic, digital media has been utilised for various church activities, including mentoring these key persons. Hence, this research intends to explore: (1) the method by which key persons practise digital discipleship and (2) the benefits of digital media in youth discipleship to facilitate faith growth. This research is a qualitative research. Data were collected by means of interviews and observations on several key persons' digital media accounts. The research shows that social media significantly benefits the discipleship process. It was found that digital discipleship was quite often carried out during the pandemic, especially in urban areas, with WhatsApp and Zoom meetings as its two primary means. However, it slightly declined along with the lifting of social gathering restrictions. The main themes explored in the mentoring sessions were discipleship, soteriology, spiritual life, motivational and digital media materials, and youth ministry in the digital era. The discipleship practice used was the NM-SM (Nurtured, Matured, Served, Mission) pattern.

**Contribution:** The results of this research contribute to the development of knowledge, especially in the field of youth discipleship, and digital media-based discipleship. This research also shows that digital media has become an effective theological space during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

**Keywords:** youth discipleship; mentoring; church; digital discipleship; pandemic and post-pandemic.

## Introduction

Church growth is intrinsically linked to ministry optimisation and church leadership regeneration. Prihanto (2018) opined that one of the problems facing the Church is the lack of church leaders with the ability to develop their ministry. Based on this analysis, it is inferred that ineffective leadership plagues churches, causing them to lack leaders with quality. Faced with this condition, the Church needs to regenerate its leadership through discipleship (Prihanto 2018). Youths are expected to continue church leadership in the future which necessitates preparation for them, especially in terms of spiritual growth. According to Panggarra and Sumule (2019), discipleship is the method that can be used to help youths spiritually grow. Discipleship is the process of making all nations disciples by introducing the gospel, baptising and teaching (Darmawan 2019; Sutrisno et al. 2021). Discipleship is also the process of guiding disciples to make others disciples of Christ (Izungo & Muneja 2021). Meanwhile, in developing their leadership skills to facilitate regeneration, good mentoring is needed, as confirmed by the research of Herwinesastra (2019). Darmawan (2019) furthermore stated that by referring to Matthew 28:19–20, the Church needs to practise discipleship and in that process, senior leaders need to mentor their youths to enable their faith growth.

In an effort to raise young leaders for Indonesia, the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA, In Indonesian, Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia – GKII), the GKII Youth Department designs a programme with the intention to raise key persons who facilitate the development of youth ministries at territorial, regional and local church levels, yielding 120 key persons nationally during 2016–2021. The national key persons are important to multiply key persons at territorial, regional and local church levels. In addition, in 2017–2018, the Youth Department held an on-site discipling internship programme in Malang, intended for training key persons in mentoring in a local-church youth ministry setting. The COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia with its resulting social restrictions forced this programme, as well as other church activities, to be halted.

Faced with this condition, the key persons should surely adapt their ways of practising discipleship, especially in mentoring the youth. This is in line with Pillay (2020), expressing that the Church needs to think of new methods for doing its responsibilities during the pandemic.

Confirming Pillay's opinion, several researches have shown that church organisations in Indonesia had innovated in conducting their worship and various other activities. Hutahaean, Silalahi and Simanjuntak (2020) found that the pandemic had encouraged technology utilisation in church activities. Digital technology had become an effective tool for the Church in holding its activities. Then, Widjaja et al. (2020) and Silitonga (2020) found that the pandemic had caused church organisations to utilise digital technologies to enable their congregation to worship at home. Research by Berutu and Siahaan (2020) shows the existence of the Church's adaptation of technology in performing its teaching responsibility. In this research, it was found that the church organisation formed virtual cell groups to facilitate discipleship to its members. Sastrohartoyo et al. (2021) opined that one of the Church's priorities in doing its responsibilities is the maximisation of digital media in its activities, such as missionary work, teaching and discipleship. Then, research by Ekoliesanto, Santoso and Claudia (2022) shows that church digital ministry had a positive impact on the spiritual growth of youths. Darmawan et al. (2021) also voiced similar results, stating that the COVID-19 pandemic had encouraged the church in utilising digital technology. In addition, they also stated that the pandemic had optimised youth participation in Christian ministry.

These results show that the pandemic had caused an improvement of human involvement in virtual spaces. The rise of human involvement in virtual spaces causes unique leadership development challenges in mentoring, guidance and advice-giving (Guthrie & Meriwether 2018). Humans then enter the digital community and provide challenges to church activities that create an urge to progress and adapt. Meanwhile on the other hand, challenges can cause failure in utilising digital media, as found by Hunt (2019). In her research, Hunt found that there has been a failure in dealing with the digital lives of young people and that digital discipleship becomes a solution to this problem. This conclusion is supported by her further research (Hunt 2021), in which she opined that digital discipleship can effectively function to respond to human problems in relation with digital media utilisation. Shirley (2017) explained that digital technology utilisation has significant spiritual benefits. Cox and Peck (2018) supported this, stating that discipleship is a potential solution in solving problems in human life related to the transcendentals.

In the effort to conduct successful leadership regeneration, mentoring is important. It is a part of discipleship that aims to give coaching to produce joint progress, by building an interdependent relationship between the mentor and the mentee(s). Goldner and Ben-Eliyahu (2021) opined that mentoring has an important role in helping mentee(s) grow

into a more mature, emotionally stable person(s) with a positive personality. A Christian leader should be a person with spiritual maturity, stable emotions and a positive personality (Bonhoeffer 2012; Katarina & Siswanto 2018; Ronda 2011). It is evident that digital media has become an effective way to practise youth discipleship during the pandemic. This action was apparently conducted by the key persons of GKII national youth.

Based on the aforementioned explication, it is necessary to study the practice of youth mentoring by these key persons to understand the digital technology utilisation in these practices. The change of behaviour from in-person activities to digital is interesting to study in order to give a scientific contribution to church ministry development. This new habit will ultimately have an impact on youth discipling and leadership regeneration.

This research poses a question: How is the digital media-based mentoring held in discipleship by GKII youth key persons? Based on this question, it is the objective of this research to find the digital media-based mentoring process in discipleship by GKII youth key persons.

## Method

This research is a qualitative research. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research aims to find the meaning of a researched phenomenon.

The primary participants of this research are 60 GKII national youth key persons who had undergone a reduction process to ensure their suitability and relevance to the research issues. Data were collected through interviews to collect information on the technology utilisation in youth mentoring.

Initially, the researchers shared a Google Form questionnaire link to filter participants who practised youth mentoring by using digital media. The researchers directed 120 national key persons to fill out this link to obtain potential participants. The researchers further conducted participant reduction to ensure their suitability and relevance to research issues. In this reduction, only those who conducted digital mentoring in 2020–2021 were further subjected to in-depth interviews on their mentoring efforts in 2021–2022. The selected participants, numbering 60, are the primary sources for this research. Because of the participants' spread across Indonesia, the researcher used Zoom meetings and WhatsApp video calls to conduct interviews.

The researchers also observed some of these participants' social media accounts to collect information related to their mentoring activities.

Collected data were then analysed by using Miles and Huberman model of analysis technique (1994), in which three steps were followed: data reduction by coding, presentation of coded data to find word similarity and conclusion making or verification. Results of the analysis

were then presented in a descriptive manner. In order to ease data presentation, the researchers presented some of the data by using tables and graphs, and in the form of figures.

## Ethical considerations

Ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Simpson Ungaran, Indonesia (reference no. STTS/ETC/001/2023) research registration number (004/P/PAK/1/2022).

## Results and discussion

### Theological foundation of discipleship

Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia National Youth based their discipleship practice at local chapters on three foundational principles based on the Great Commission: the Growth Mandate, the Pastoral Mandate and the Apologetic Mandate. The Great Commission (Mt 28:19–20) is the Church's foundation and mission statement. In it, the Church finds its calling of discipleship, as all believers are discipled to disciple others. Therefore, GKII Youth Department encourages the raising of discipleship movements in its local chapters. Discipling internship was conducted to equip key persons in doing their discipleship duties. In practice, the Great Commission is implemented in youth discipleship by means of gradual mentoring. In this scheme, the Youth Department mentors Bureau committees, then Bureau committees mentor Commission members and finally, the Commission members mentor local youth fellowships. Church instruction was also strengthened by holding various Bible study activities.

The Growth Mandate is related to one of the important and impactful activities for Christian spiritual growth: Bible study. Bible study has long been practised in the New Testament church. Historical records show that the first instance of Bible study in the New Testament was conducted by the Bereans (Ac 17:11) who then experienced spiritual growth. In this regard, Mohler (2019:4) explained that in addition to receiving the Good News from Paul the Apostle, the Bereans also investigated the truth of this News in the Holy Scriptures, and by God's grace, this community experienced spiritual growth because of them finding the truth through these measures. Stassen and Gushee (2016) furthermore affirmed that in later history, Bible teaching was practised by the Puritans to form habits, disciplines and serious efforts to do God's will in the form of discipling the believers. Research by Smith (2004) in its effort to explain the history of psychological biblical criticism as proposed by White in his book *Soul and Psyche* (1960) stated that Bible study becomes a 'habit to the soul' and the way one's soul understands divine revelation and spiritual meaning to be applied in a believer's individual experience. The church as an organisation which facilitates Bible instruction to the key persons in this research plays a significant role in determining their spiritual growth. Its accuracy is supported by research carried out by Lee and Jeong (2022) on the role of personal religious practice and interpersonal trust in the church, which shows that interaction-based trust and institution-

based trust contribute to enhancing personal spiritual experience.

The Pastoral Mandate (1 Pt 5:1–4) refers to the Church's calling as an organisation and as an organism to shepherd God's people. In this matter, the GKII National Youth Department and its key persons are committed to shepherd youths across its jurisdiction. By using various strategies and media and optimising key persons, the National Youth encourages faith preservation efforts for all its members. Realising the difficulty in doing ministry maximally across Indonesia, the Youth Department initiated the Key Person programme which aims to raise key persons with a vision to be involved in the preservation of the Christian faith. Discipleship ministries were conducted in local churches as a form of commitment and preservation of faith. Consequently, discipleship of the youths is a form of pastoral ministry for faith preservation. The pastoral model is a form of ministry applied to the youth to preserve and nurture their faith. This model of pastoral approach is one of the effective models in helping youth spiritual growth (Webber et al. 2010). Sustainable youth ministry, besides leadership and leverage, is only temporary: it focuses on the true eternal treasure that is bearing the gospel to the young generation (DeVries 2010). Evangelism becomes the most important part of a pastoral model which can have the biggest impact on the sustainability of youth discipleship ministry.

Apologetic mandate (1 Pt 3:15) refers to the fact that every Christian should bear the responsibility of their faith. Apologetics is a logical effort in bearing responsibility, stating defence and providing answers to questions on the Christian faith (Stevanus 2021; Tanudjaja 2005). Discipleship is an effort to coach Christians so that they can bear the responsibility of their faith and provide answers to questions on Christian faith. Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia youth are discipled in order to have a solid, Bible-based theological understanding which in turn can enable them to provide accountability on their faith. The present younger generation is very much influenced by technology, and they need to be ministered with ministries emphasising theology by changing the focal direction of ministry from an approach that focuses on technology to one of theology. This paradigm shift will in itself prioritise the function of faith preservation on the younger generation (Root 2014). In this way, the younger generation can provide defence and take responsibility of their faith personally and in the social environment where they live. Organisationally, GKII needs to bring up 'Digital Ecclesiology' and to become a facilitator that provides benefits to communication development, community and digital discipleship activities (Afandi 2018). Therefore, the Apologetic Mandate can be carried out and developed by the key persons.

### Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia youth discipleship process

In essence, GKII in its discipleship to their younger generation strives to build four commitments. The first commitment is

the church commitment. It means the commitment to know Christ. Dedi Sutiadi, Head of GKII Youth Department of 2016–2021 and 2021–2026 explained that the GKII National Youth directs its attention and focus in building church commitment. The Church is the place to learn and grow together in pursuit of knowing Christ. It also becomes a community of growth that fosters mutual encouragement. Through the formation of small groups such as cell groups, mutual growth groups (KTB), prayer groups and other Bible study groups across local churches, youths are guided to know Christ. Small group pattern for coaching proves to be an effective measure which yields prime results. In their research, Objantoro et al. (2022) found that small groups had assisted parishioners in studying the Bible and in growing their faith. Conditions caused by the pandemic which hindered in-person activities did not prevent parishioners from practising discipleship activities through small groups. In several observations and discussions with key persons, the researchers found that local churches became more open in using digital media for discipleship. Local GKII branches had continually used digital media for youth discipleship. For instance, GKII Malang held discipleship activities through Zoom meetings. Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia Alfa Omega Salatiga formed KTB and held its activities in a similar manner. Key persons in local GKII branches of Samarinda region also used Zoom meetings to meet each other virtually and conduct Bible studies.

The second commitment is the commitment of growth in Christ. Christians are coached to grow their faith. According to Marbun (2022), discipleship is a step to cultivate church members that is carried out on an ongoing basis. Based on this definition, the discipleship process conducted by GKII key persons had fulfilled this requirement because of it being carried out in a step-by-step, continuous manner. In their observation on the local branches, the researchers found that the branches conducted their discipleship process by separating youths who were considered to be more spiritually mature and those who had just joined as both groups have different characteristics. Theoretically, sustainable coaching process has an important role in forming Christian character. It is a character and spirituality desired by youths as millennials who want to grow and mature to become like Christ (Han, Mamahit & Panggara 2023). The Church has a responsibility to build habits and characters that facilitate growth, especially for the younger generation in line with its leadership succession (Untung, Tanonggi & Pekuwali 2021:92).

The third commitment is the commitment to the ministry of Christ. The result of the discipleship process is the growth of commitment to serve Christ. In several observations across several youth fellowships and discussions with a number of key persons, it was found that youths with spiritual maturity were more likely to be involved in church ministry as they had experienced transformation to the new life in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) by leaving their bad habits and becoming doers of the Word (Ja 1:22).

The fourth commitment is the missionary commitment, or the commitment to share Christ. Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia youths are generally millennials with prominent activities in social media and familiarity with the digital world. Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia youth who are in discipleship and always be disciplined will be committed to witness Christ. By utilising digital media, the Church can reach out to those in the digital world who have not been reached yet (Tanhidy 2021), especially through the younger generation (Hartono 2018b). Through discipleship, GKII youths are instructed and have their characters formed. With good Christian character, GKII youth will become Christ's witnesses with integrity, influence and effectiveness (Hartono 2018a).

### Schemes of discipleship

In order to successfully proceed with discipleship, GKII Youth Department builds schemes of discipleship. Youth discipleship is carried out by providing a big picture of youth ministry. From a national to regional scope, Leaders' Vision and Youth Vision Retreats are conducted. This is conducted with the aim of developing a vision for youth services.

The first pattern of discipleship service is carried out by sharing a vision. Youth discipleship ministry also requires a standard pattern. At the national youth level, youth discipleship services are carried out by developing standard formats such as refreshing leader vision and discipleship internships. At the regional level, youth commission chairs mentor mentors in local churches. Youth mentors in local churches are human resources who have a central role in supporting discipleship activities. Herwinesastra, Luther and Rostiani (2023) found in one local church in West Kalimantan that maximising human resources could help accelerate church independence. Hence, in order to optimise youth services, human resource empowerment must be done well.

The second pattern is to optimise the role of church members. The large number of GKII youth members requires greater involvement. Every person in the church needs to optimise their role to carry out discipleship in various contexts, situations and communities. In some local churches, there are diverse communities. Each community needs to be optimised to become a community of discipleship without eliminating the previous community. According to the researchers' findings, in local churches such as GKII Malang, there is a multimedia community that regularly holds weekly meetings to study God's word. Meanwhile, in several areas such as Samarinda, Semarang, Salatiga, Jakarta, Surabaya and several other big cities, sports communities have become Bible study spaces. This has encouraged spiritual growth in local churches. Research by Panggarra and Sumule (2019) found that communities have become spaces for Bible study and play a role in spiritual growth.

The third pattern is the formation of a team of mentors or key persons. Youth discipleship services can develop because of the support of key persons who become mentors and a solid

support team. Key persons are church members who are committed to serving youth. They function as pastoral partners in discipling youth. This pattern has been used in other local churches in West Kalimantan (Herwinesastra et al. 2023). With the support of church members who become mentor teams, the reach of discipleship ministry activities can be expanded. Young people who have just joined the church community need support in the form of guidance and mentoring. The formation of a mentor team begins by first creating a community climate that encourages the empowerment of all potential church members.

## Digital media use for youth discipleship

### Digital media use during the pandemic and post-pandemic eras

Based on the analysis of key persons' interview responses, WhatsApp and Zoom meetings were the digital media predominantly used to conduct discipleship. N-Vivo 12 was used by the researchers in obtaining this result in the form of a word cloud, as presented in Figure 1.

During the pandemic, the key persons practised discipleship by using several means: sharing Word of God, conducting online worship services and mentoring. In sharing the Word of God, the key persons shared verses of the Bible to youth members through digital media such as WhatsApp and Instagram. Some key persons informed that they shared devotionals in the form of texts, videos and pictures through WhatsApp groups, Instagram profiles, YouTube accounts and TikTok accounts. During the pandemic, virtual meetings through Zoom frequently became a means to conduct worship and prayer services. Although the number of COVID-19 cases declined, Zoom meeting usage for these



FIGURE 1: Digital media for youth discipleship word cloud.

purposes remained steadily high in 2022. According to the key persons, Zoom meetings helped them greatly in interacting with disciplined youths. Mentoring sessions were held in recognition of the key persons' need to mentor their youth who were considered as spiritually mature in order to involve them in discipleship, pastoralship and apologetics. Discipleship meetings between mentor and mentee(s) were held by virtual means, such as Zoom meetings, Google Meet and WhatsApp video calls. Interview responses show that the key persons were greatly helped by these virtual meeting platforms. These platforms were also used to conduct mentors' fellowship meetings during the pandemic and post-pandemic era as the platforms had greatly addressed time and cost efficiency for both inter-mentor and mentor-mentee meetings.

The processed information obtained from key persons shows that digital media usage during the pandemic was quite high. Ninety per cent of key persons stated that they utilised digital platforms during the pandemic for discipleship. Along with the pandemic protocol relaxation, digital media declined in usage. Quantified qualitative data processing result shows that only 70.1% of the key persons still utilised digital media for discipleship. This decline was caused by key persons serving in rural areas, who limited their digital media interactions and shifted their focus to in-person activities. Meanwhile, the number is still considerably high because of it being sustained by those serving in urban areas.

Analysis shows that before the pandemic, 8.9% of informants did not use digital platforms in practising discipleship; while after the pandemic, this number grew to 28.9%. There are three reasons causing this trend: (1) the relaxation of crowd limits which was visibly apparent to key persons serving in rural areas, (2) the greater advantage of in-person meetings in terms of scheduling and producing better social interactions, and (3) the inefficiency of the Internet in supporting digital platform usage as long-term media of discipleship.

At the same time, digital platforms were still in demand for key persons serving in urban areas because of several reasons. Firstly, urban youths had a higher presence and activities in social media such as Instagram and TikTok, which in turn assisted key persons to realise interactions not limited by place and time. WhatsApp usage also considerably supported key persons in communications, including communicating the gospel (Zaluchu 2023; Zaluchu et al. 2023). The sharing of the Word of God, either in the form of Bible verses or devotionals will help discipleship effort unrestricted by time. This finding is in line with previous researches. Research by Nalle et al. (2022) shows that WhatsApp can become an effective platform in learning the Word of God. By sharing devotionals and eliciting responses from group members, discipleship process can continue unrestricted by time. Every member of a WhatsApp group can interact anytime. This is in line with the research by Nggebu, Buyung and Wood (2023) that WhatsApp groups can become a useful digital platform in spiritual-building

interactions. Secondly, youths have unique characteristics. According to Han et al. (2023), the spiritual formation of the youths needs to be conducted in a manner relevant to youth contexts. One of these contexts is the utilisation of technology in ministry. The Church presently faces an abundance of easily accessible digital technology. The younger generation, as a digitally native generation, takes great interest in digital spaces. Therefore, the usage of digital platforms as media of discipleship is unavoidable, and needs to be optimised instead.

### Key persons' effort in maximising digital media for discipleship

On the question of the key persons' effort to maximise digital media for discipleship, three main themes were found in their answers: (1) facilities and infrastructure, (2) digital media optimisation and (3) digital media management. Concisely, the thematically analysed results of the Google Forms open interview are presented in Table 1.

Data in Table 1 show that the key persons tried to optimise and maximise digital media. Optimisation was carried out to deliver instructions, either in video or in PowerPoint presentations and in virtual meetings. As some local churches saw the use of digital media as novel in their case, the key persons initiated digital media management by involving experts, forming multimedia team, and training youth fellowship members to join the said team.

During the pandemic, churches in Indonesia transformed themselves into digital media-based churches. In order to become a church contextual with technology advancement, digital media utilisation to support ministry is important. Darmawan et al. (2021) explained that the pandemic had prompted the use of digital media in various forms of ministry. Progress in youth discipleship ministry in the digital era cannot happen without the strong support of the church organisation. Data presented in Table 1 shows that the local churches observed supported their digital media-based endeavour by providing supporting infrastructure such as an Internet network, multimedia tools and

instruments, and virtual meeting accounts. The research informants of pastoral backgrounds (pastors and ministers) were found to most dominantly explain their support in providing multimedia tools and instruments.

These pastors obtained financial support and facilities from the local churches they served, especially during the pandemic. By facilitating discipleship activities through digital facility provision, the Church as an organisation had involved itself in digital ministry, which in turn can help it spread its influence and play its role wider in reaching out to the digital community, especially through its youths.

### Digital discipleship material

Material is one of the main components in discipleship practice. Interviews show that there are five main themes arising in discussions during discipleship by the key persons: Jesus as Saviour, spiritual life, motivational materials, digital media-related materials, and youth ministry in the digital era. The first material regarding Christian salvation became the central theme discussed by the key persons. In it, they discussed about salvation and the works of Jesus that gave remission of sins to those who believe. Spiritual life, especially spiritual formation, was the second theme discussed by the key persons, intended to encourage and lead youths to experience spiritual revival and growth. Some key persons also gave motivational material to encourage youths to remain steadfast in their ministry, as the pandemic and its problems discouraged youths from serving. In this manner, the key persons, acting as mentors, motivated their mentees through online meetings. Digital media and their usage were also discussed by the key persons, especially on the principles of healthy digital media usage based on Christian values. The fifth material concerns youth ministry in the digital era. In it, principles, forms and strategies of digital-era youth ministry were discussed. These themes were essentially linked to the real actions of disciplined youths. One of the themes discussed in key person meetings across bureaus and nationally was 'Arise and be light for nations'. This shows that the discipling process practised by key persons starts from the right understanding of Jesus to spiritual life and participation in the ministry. By knowing Jesus, youths can be aware that they are called to be involved in the ministry of God's kingdom.

It is better for materials for youth discipleship to contain biblical principles related to the foundations of becoming Christ's disciples to enable their faith to take root, be nurtured and be strengthened in Christ which enables discipleship to take place. Discipleship will also help youths to mature in the knowledge of the Word of God, to be actively involved in serving their brethren in Christ as the body of Christ and to become witnesses of Christ by doing missionary works, reaching out to the younger generation and wider community. NM-SM (Nurtured, Matured, Served, Mission) pattern can be used in the discipleship process (Hartono & Hendra 2020).

**TABLE 1:** Digital media infrastructure support by local churches.

Themes	Activities
Facilities and infrastructure procurement	Internet access provision by youth fellowship in the church Procurement of multimedia tools and gadgets Provision of Zoom meeting account
Digital media optimisation	Creation of WhatsApp group as a digital discipleship community Preparation of teaching material by PowerPoint presentation Creation of instructional video Maximisation of social media for dissemination and preaching of the gospel Usage of Zoom meeting and Google Meet rooms, and Instagram and Facebook live streams for worship services and prayer sessions
Digital media management	Experts' involvement Formation of multimedia team Training of youth fellowship members to use multimedia tools and gadgets

## Conclusion

Digital media-based mentoring processes in discipleship activities by GKII Youth key persons during the pandemic were found to be carried out quite a lot, especially in urban areas. However, these activities slightly declined along with the gradual lifting of pandemic-era restrictions, especially restrictions on social gathering. The high frequency of these activities in urban areas was caused by the prevalence of social media use among youths there. Some platforms found to be frequently used to facilitate the mentoring process were WhatsApp and Zoom meetings. These findings show that social media are able to bring significant benefits to practising discipleship. In the mentoring process, the main themes discussed were Jesus as Saviour, spiritual life, motivational materials, digital media-related materials and youth ministry in the digital era. The discipleship practice used was the NM-SM pattern.

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## Competing interests

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## Authors' contributions

I.P.A.D. conceptualised and designed the study, acquired data, performed the statistical analysis and drafted the manuscript. J.T. and Y.D. participated in the data analysis and article writing.

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## Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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