

ONLINE OR OFFLINE:
A COMPARATIVE SURVEY ON THE EFFECTS OF ONLINE FELLOWSHIP
ON THE SPIRITUAL MATURITY OF THE YOUTH OF CEBU GOSPEL CHURCH

By

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A Capstone Project Presented to the Faculty of the
Cebu Graduate School of Theology
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Divinity Major in Pastoral Studies

Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines

May 2022

Capstone Proposal¹

Faculty you have consulted for this project:

Dr. Boyet Lisbe, Dr. Ricky Recodo and Dr. Robert Long

List the courses you've taken at CGST that you will be integrating into this capstone project:

OT studies; NT studies; Principles of Leadership and Management; Organizational behavior and development; Proverbs and Leadership; DigiGen Ministry; Evangelical Theology.

Capstone Description (350 words):

In the space below briefly describe the key question/issue your capstone project will address:

With the growing trend of the internet and the looming idea of a meta verse being a reality in the future, is it safe to say that church must evolve with the times? As with all things, this pandemic has had its ups and downs. The lack of physical interaction has led people to the use of online services such as Zoom, Facebook, YouTube and Microsoft teams to conduct church services and fellowships. Meetings have become less personal, schools are no longer face to face and church service are now 24/7 and at the convenience of a person. But the question stands: Are headed to a more internet reliant world that no longer requires the need for physical fellowship? Has physical worship outlived its purpose for more convenience and easier accessibility? Have we reached a day and age where ministry is only able to move forward when we utilize technology at its fullest or should we be weary of our reliance to it? This study will also indirectly answer the question whether or not we are able to achieve a level of maturity regardless of platform or is the essence of maturity in the faith inextricably linked to physical

¹ This format has been adapted from San Francisco State University's MA TESOL Capstone Proposal sample.
https://english.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Capstone_Proposal-Sun.pdf
(accessed 13 Aug. 2021).

church. Should online fellowship become an afterthought once the pandemic is over, or will it become a foundation tool that the church must use? The time in this pandemic showed the churches and the youth especially that we are capable of being in communion with each other despite the lack of the physical aspect.

At the core this study aims to aid us by seeing the trend and adapting to it, rather than giving up all that we have accomplished before and the traditions we have upheld, we want to see the reality of this new digital age. Does it promote laziness due to the convenience or does it enable the youth and their ministers' better opportunities? We as ministers only want to further the kingdom of our Lord, and thus we this study will aid the ministers in their goal of being salt and light to this earth.

Approach and/or Methods (350 words):

In the space below, articulate the approach and/or methods you will use to complete the capstone project:

The use of survey/interview explanatory method will be employed in this project, in which a question or problem will be seen through and answered from the lens of those that have experienced it, namely the youth. The main idea that they will try to answer is: Whether online fellowship is new step forward in the church? It will also try to answer the question: how do leaders adjust to this method? And if the consensus is that the online fellowship is merely the product of today's circumstances, does it have a use going back to the offline way? Will it be a viable tool or an afterthought once the pandemic is over? I will be seeking a specific sample size of youth to answer a questionnaire, followed by interviews with specific youth leaders and mature youth on whether the online fellowship has garnered positive effects on their relationship with Christ or was it detrimental to their faith? The interview and survey will also see that youth offer their suggestion on what could be done better to ensure that this tool might be utilized to its fullest potential or does it need to be limited in its use. The idea of the study is to enlighten the ministers on the potential good or harm of online fellowship to their church. It would be wise to be cautious and see it through the lens of their members rather than accept hearsay from first-world countries. The study will then culminate in a short film that will consist of the overall consensus, testimonies and suggestions of those that go through it, and be presented at the end of the project. The study will also include the ministers' point of view on this matter. Whether they

have seen growth or unexpected problems that only served to hinder or improve the experience of fellowship. In the short film we will get to see how the youth react to the questions as well as to their own personal experiences.

Timeline

Create a timeline, in list format, that maps out what you will do and when you will do it.

Consider the overall amount of time you have to complete the capstone project, from start date to conference presentation, and uploading to your professional portfolio. Your timeline should provide a biweekly or monthly overview of the steps you will take to complete your project and prepare the final capstone paper.

Task	Goal	Time
Set a number of subjects that will take survey and survey questions	To ensure that sample size is diverse enough.	1 week
Make survey for general population of the youth and distribution of survey	To ensure the question covers all potential need of the project.	2 months
Tabulation and encoding of survey responses	To ensure transparency and validity of the surveyors	1 weeks
Make questions for interview of youth leader, youth and Pastors Start video taking suitable candidates and youth leader	To be able to get first-hand accounts of those that have been affected, their honest opinions and suggestions.	1 week
Compilation and editing of video	In compliance of completion for the final output	1 month
Finalization of report and written output	Ensure quality of final report	2 weeks

Outline

1. Introduction

On or off? Are we headed to the direction of change or has this only furthered the need for a sincerer kind of fellowship? Despite the answer the project might uncover, we as ministers must be open to the times. We must never be set in stone with the methodology only what is being taught stays the same. In this digital age we have reached a point where distance is no longer a problem. Communication has now become even more readily available to all people, hence what is the need for the physical contact? Churches have remained relatively the same, the routine of it all has left many youths the wrong impression that it is solely a cultural thing or a traditional thing rather than it being structured or formative. This study hopes to shed light on whether or not this digital era the next step of the ministry or is it what kills it? Has technology moved forward enough that we can experience Christ and fellowship without the need for physical contact or has technology only furthered to chain us?

This study will aim to explore what the youth of today's generation have to say about fellowship as we were thrust into the online due to the pandemic.

2. Background

When we look at the history of Christianity, every so often in about 500 years there always occurs a massive shift or change (Pillay 2020). Some 500 years ago we had the Reformation, another 500 years a break or the Schism of east and west, rewind another 500 years and you would have the rise of power of the papacy, the dark age, or the end of the Roman empire and if we wind back another 500 years further then you would have essentially arrived at the beginning of the Christian movement (Pillay 2020). This century now sees a complete reliance on technology, where the dissemination and procurement of information occur in seconds. Communication and relationships are no longer bound by distance. Everyone can be together and also be apart. The Online world has now become oxygen to this new generation, the new trend that we so desperately want to be part of; it has integrated itself into all facets of our everyday lives (Lohrmann 2008, 97; Sweet 2012, 93-96) and is now the new normal. Should the church take this as a sign to join the digital age?

For years now, the Church has been breaking ground in the digital world (Pillay 2020). There is an excess number of sermons, theological essays, and religious discourses found

everywhere. The Church has adapted (Pillay 2020) and yet still stayed the same. Churches are now equipped with the latest sound system, light fixtures, and operating systems that money could buy. However, they stay relatively the same (Carson 2005, 12). Still a giant cross dead smack in the middle, kneeling pads, hymn books, hard wooden pews for chairs, and most importantly the unchanging Word of God. The concept of the Church may have remained essentially the same for thousands of years, however, the mode, method, and means have been greatly altered by the times (Pillay 2020). Though the church in its very nature does not want to adapt or acclimate to the world's standard of living (Rom. 12:1-2), our mission is to preach, teach, and disciple (Matt. 28:19-20) people of this world with the good news of Christ in whatever platform that may be (Lohrmann 2008, 161-162), and as far as generations go, this generation can only be reached through the use of the digital platform. So, the question now would be: At what lengths should we change? There is this need for the church to be trendy and relevant, wanting to be unique and desired can quickly turn into compromise (Sweet 2012, 65-66). Because of this pandemic, the Church had to change (Pillay 2020) but did not necessarily want to. However, we are aware change is uncomfortable, but those who do not accept it will eventually be rolled over by it (Sweet 2012, 95). The Church should adapt but at what point should we stop? We are changing but we were forced to because of the pandemic (Pillay 2020), does that mean we revert to the old ways when this is over?

To have a better grasp of the effects of the online fellowship it would be best that we look to the institution that dealt a heavy blow and whose sole purpose it is to prepare the next generation for life. Let's see what the school system has to say about it.

In recent studies from the west, it shows that remote schooling or complete online classes are more effective for older students seeking for higher levels, such that of a master's degree of education found online more effective due to their desire for more autonomy, better scheduling, and privacy (Naveen 2022). However, studies on younger students, ranging up to the bachelor's degree, show that remote schooling doubles the number of absents, lower performance scores, increased incomplete assignments, and had a difficult time dealing with a task that was not an issue for those that were having physical classes the year prior (Cellini 2021). These studies have pinpointed the major cause of this was due to the lack of accountability, feedback, decreased motivation, lack of pressure, and a poor environment for learning (Cellini 2021; Michelle 2021). Teachers have also reported that they are unable to instruct their students properly and were

unable to cover most of the material in the given time (Thiers 2021). What was even worse was that they found that the grades of those who were fully online had decreased significantly compared to those in physical or hybrid classes (Thiers 2021). Imagine if the first-world countries were having these kinds of results from online schooling, how would third-world countries fare? The answer is quite simple, abysmally worse. The number of illiterate children has risen from 53% to 70% during this pandemic (Guzman 2021). It is listed that about 4 million students in the Philippines were unable to enroll in this new remote setup due to the lack of internet connections or just slow internet (ChildHope 2022, Guzman 2021). Those that manage to enroll have also reported that they were at a disadvantage and learned less (Guzman 2021). The students are no longer motivated, they do not participate, they let their parents answer having their critical thinking skills diminished (ChildHope 2022), and as some youth would add they are trapped in their homes.

Whether it is because we have not unlocked its boundless possibilities or whether our lack of technological understanding hinders us from its benefits. However, despite that, there are plenty of benefits that both the church and students can attest to. For starters those who are abroad can enroll with ease, students and churchgoers can save money, there is less danger from traveling, it is in all sense of the word it is accessible despite our varied schedules, and it is difficult to be late (ChildHope 2022; Managuelod 2021).

From the perspective of one who was able to enroll in online classes, there is a bright future to this platform, especially when it pertains to individuals who actively choose that model of learning. However, it cannot always be said for the Church. Studies show that the major draws of viewers from Church services are usually when the service is aired live. Despite the fact of its accessibility and convenience, most still prefer to have a church with everyone else (Managuelod 2021).

With those same metrics, it isn't far to come to the same conclusion that what is happening in school is also happening in the church. From a more local perspective, there is the truth that those who are of more advanced age tend to benefit more from the online platform than the younger youth. This is seen in how the number of participants in our college fellowship (ages 19-23) has doubled compared to when we were offline and had transitioned well even when we resumed our face-to-face worship. However, the same cannot be said for our HS-SHS (ages 13-17) fellowship where there is a clear lack of motivation from the participants and absent outward

pressure causing the slow decline of youth from averaging 80 to around 55 per week. There is hope, however, as one study notes that there were better levels of performance for schools that utilized a hybrid model of teaching, performing slightly better than that of just the offline model (Thiers 2021), which might mean that the church may indeed benefit more when we utilize both the online and offline together and to their fullest potentials.

3. Body

Spiritual maturity can be defined as the aspect of living more like Christ (Ward 1989, 19). Exhibiting key characteristics that allow us to mirror Christ and reflect Christ-like characters. Certain criteria to gauge one's spiritual maturity are to showcase as well as bear the fruits of the Spirit (Ward 1989, 20) and other such attitudes that greatly glorify God and show forth sincere love for others.

To gauge Spiritual maturity during the online era of fellowship, a survey was conducted using Google Forms to find an objective figure out the validity of online fellowship and its effects on the spiritual growth or maturity of the youth, specifically the youth of Cebu Gospel Church. The age of the surveyors ranged from ages 10-24 years-old and consisted of 23 questions ranging from subjective to objective metrics to gauge their spiritual growth during this online era of church fellowship. A total of 40 responses were gathered. The survey questionnaire is as follows:

Survey:

Link to Survey: <https://forms.gle/m6Avwe5nf3pYb2xT6>

Survey Questions:

* Required

Age*

Mark only one oval.

10 - 13 years old

14 - 17 years old

17 - 21 years old

22 and up...

1.) How many ministries were you a part of before the start of the pandemic? (Bible Studies, fellowship, etc...)*

Mark only one oval.

0

1-2

3

4

5 or more...

2a.) How many ministries were you a part of during the pandemic?*

if less please proceed to 2b.

Mark only one oval.

0

1-2

3

4

5 or more....

2.b) If there were less ministries being joined during the pandemic, was it due to:

Check all that apply.

Lack of ministries being offered

Poor internet

Assignments/school

Family matters

Waste of time/boring or just did not want to join

Other:

3.) If someone were to ask you to help them understand the Bible or about God, from 1-10 how

well do you think you could answer their questions on the topic?*

Mark only one oval.

Least

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Most

4a.) If i could ask those closest to you, would they agree that you were able to exhibit more Christ like attitude during the pandemic?*

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No (please proceed to 4b.)

4b.) What do you think might be the cause of that problem?

5.) What is your greatest motivation in life? In other words, what is your greatest driving force? (e.g. Family, money, reputation, fame, knowledge etc..)*

6.) What particular sin were you getting caught up the most during the pandemic? (e.g. lust, anger, impatience, disobedience, lies etc..)*

7.) Have you exhibited more aspects of the fruit of the Spirit during the pandemic?*

LOVE

Mark only one oval.

LEAST

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

MOST

JOY*

able to find happiness despite being in dire and unpleasant situations

Mark only one oval.

LEAST

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

MOST

PEACE AND PATIENCE *

able to stay calm and composed in the midst of unforeseen circumstances

Mark only one oval.

LEAST

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

MOST

KINDNESS AND GOODNESS*

seeking the wellbeing of others and exuding love through acts

Mark only one oval.

LEAST

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

MOST

FAITHFULNESS*

able to stay truthful and honest in keeping your word, promises and oaths

Mark only one oval.

LEAST

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

MOST

GENTLENESS*

being soft spoken and reasonable despite tense situations

Mark only one oval.

LEAST

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

MOST

SELF-CONTROL*

able to hold emotional or physical responses in not so ideal situations.

Mark only one oval.

LEAST

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

MOST

8.) What is something that confuses you about the Bible or God? and what do usually do when there is confusion? (e.g. ask help, forget about it, avoid answering it, etc...)*

8b.) If you could ask God one thing and He would give you the answer, what would you want to ask?

19.

9.) How would you explain to someone why sin is wrong? *

10.) If you are upset, hurt or sad what do you do to cope with these kinds of feelings? (e.g. music, friends, read, distraction, reflect etc...)*

11.) Do you think the online fellowships you joined has help you know more about God?*

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Maybe

11.b) Did knowing more about God helped you become closer with him?*

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Maybe

12.) Were your spiritual needs met during the pandemic? If they weren't, what are some of the things you would have liked us to have addressed?

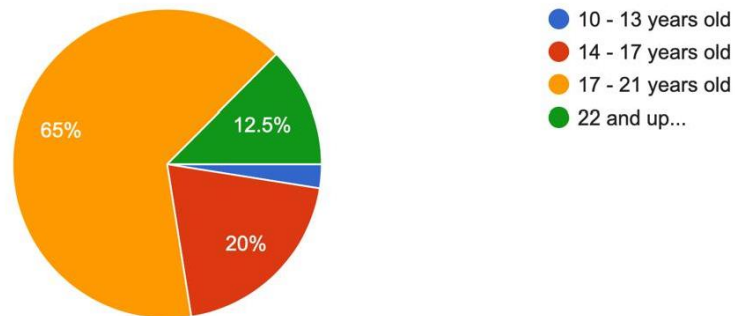
You can answer with a Yes or No (any detail would be appreciated)

13.) How can we improve our online fellowship?

Results of the survey aids us in gauging the idea

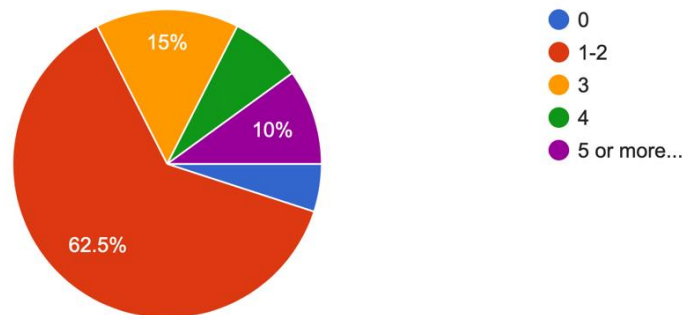
Age

40 responses



1.) How many ministries were you a part of before the start of the pandemic? (Bible Studies, fellowship, etc...)

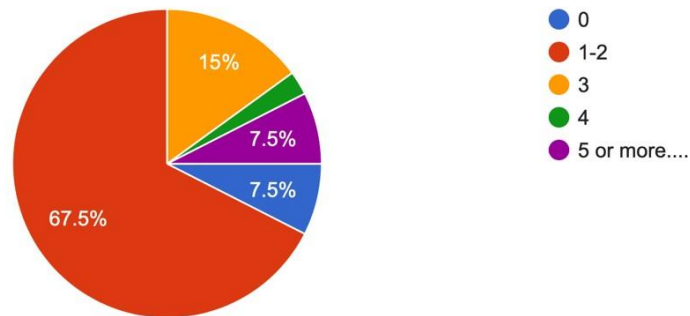
40 responses



Rationale: This was used to gauge if their spiritual maturity was dependent on the ministries they attended and did the online fellowship offer enough ministries for them to be a part of.

2a.) How many ministries were you a part of during the pandemic?

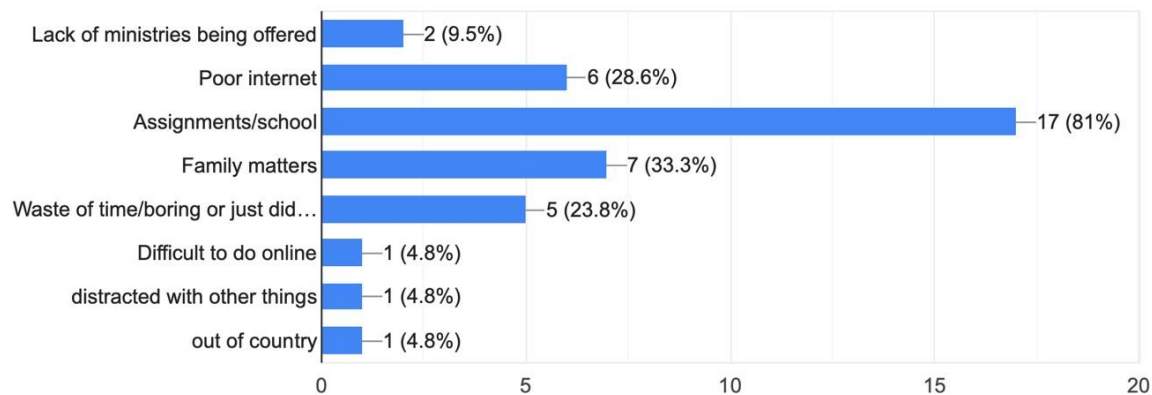
40 responses



Rationale: This was to highlight whether the church had provided ample ministries but also if they were willing to join.

2.b) If there were less ministries being joined during the pandemic, was it due to:

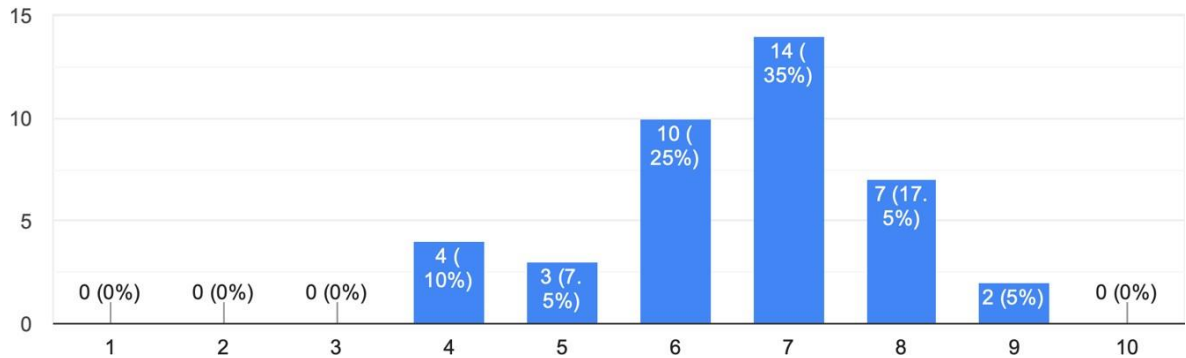
21 responses



Rationale: This question was to figure out the main reasons for the decrease in ministries joined despite the convenience of it being online.

3.) If someone were to ask you to help them understand the Bible or about God, from 1-10 how well do you think you could answer their questions on the topic?

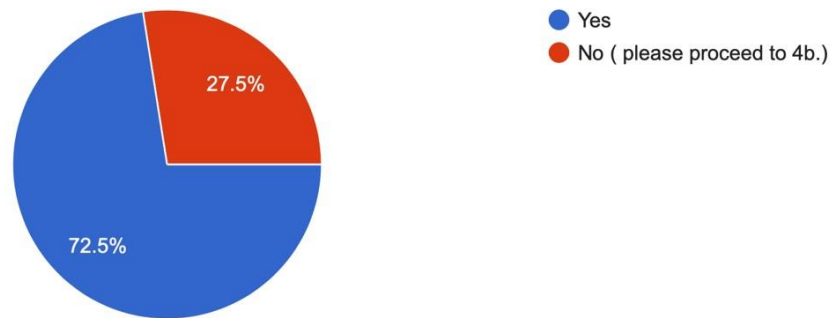
40 responses



Rationale: This was to show their general understanding of God’s word. The question shows a fairly high number of the respondents are capable presenting God and His word properly.

4a.) If i could ask those closest to you, would they agree that you were able to exhibit more Christ like attitude during the pandemic?

40 responses



Rationale: This question was design to probe whether those closest to them would agree to their Christ-like nature. This question and the previous one highlights the responder’s understanding as well as their application of God’s word.

4b.) What do you think might be the cause of that problem?

12 responses

The 12 that responded with no list these as their primary reason:

- Friends and family do not support Christianity
- Lazy
- Poor implementation or lacking consistency
- Comfortability
- Change in attitude with strangers
- Impatient
- Easily influenced
- Distracted

5.) What is your greatest motivation in life? In other words, what is your greatest driving force? (e.g. Family, money, reputation, fame, knowledge etc..)

40 responses

Out of the 40 responses these are their general responses for their greatest motivation:

- 14 responded that Family and friends were their greatest motivation
- 12 responded that Success, wealth, money or possession was their greatest motivation
- 7 responded that bettering oneself was their greatest motivation (pursuit of knowledge or passion)
- 5 responded that serving Christ or God was their greatest motivation
- 1 responded that survival was his/her greatest motivation
- And 1 responded with “I don’t know yet...”

Anxiety and times of depression

6.) What particular sin were you getting caught up the most during the pandemic? (e.g. lust, anger, impatience, disobedience, lies etc..)

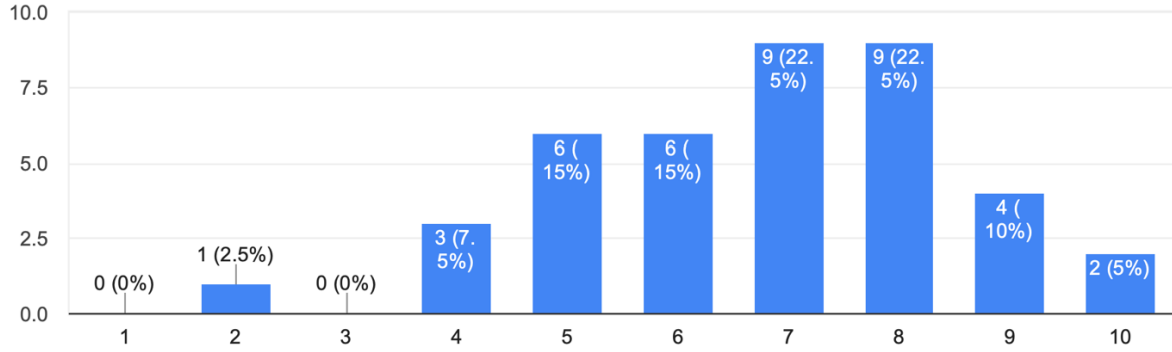
40 responses

Out of 40 responses these were their general responses:

- 12 responded that impatience, anger or rage was the sin they were most likely caught up in
- 8 responded that lust was the sin they were most likely caught up in
- 8 responded that laziness, procrastination or idleness sin they were most likely caught up in
- 6 responded that lying or foul language was the sin they were most likely caught up in
- 5 responded that disobedience was the sin they were most likely caught up in
- 1 responded that he/she was getting caught up by all kinds of sin

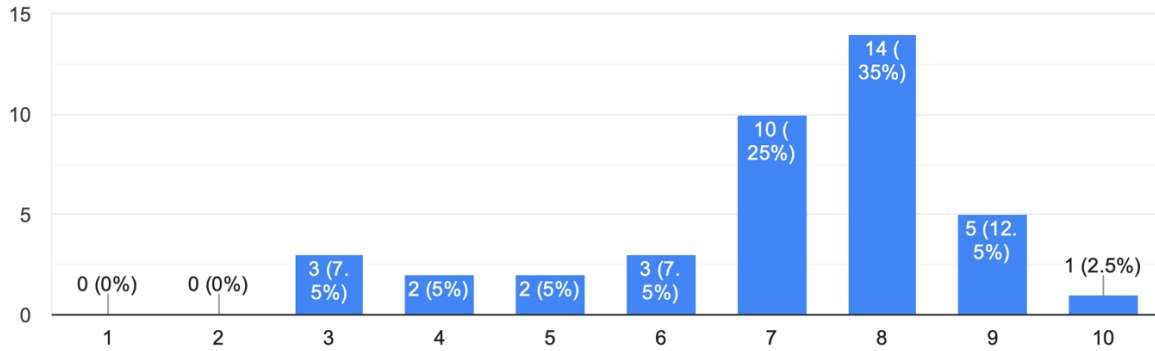
7.) Have you exhibited more aspects of the fruit of the Spirit during the pandemic?

40 responses



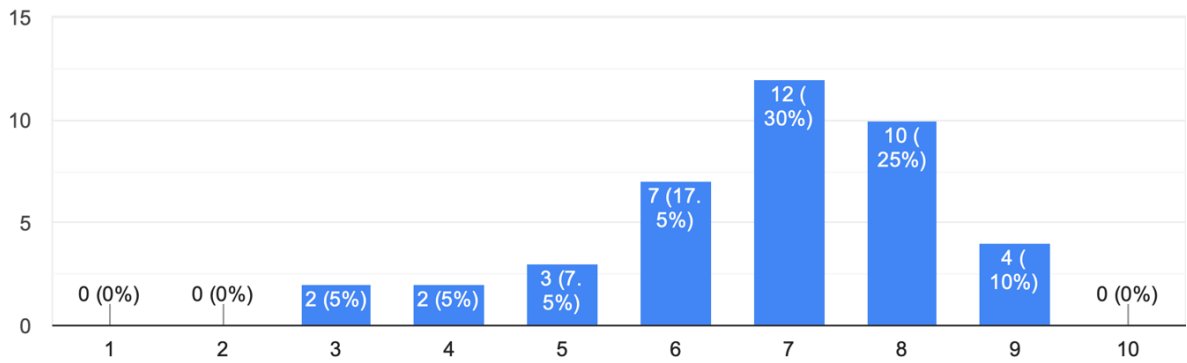
JOY

40 responses



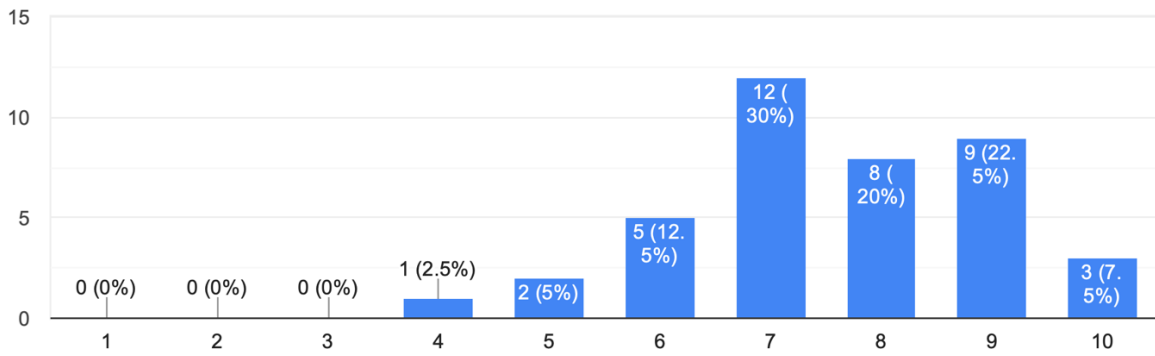
PEACE AND PATIENCE

40 responses



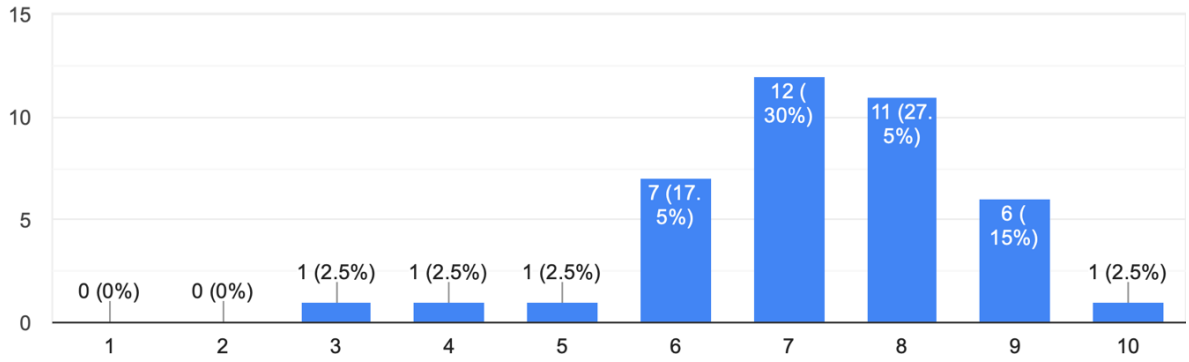
KINDNESS AND GOODNESS

40 responses



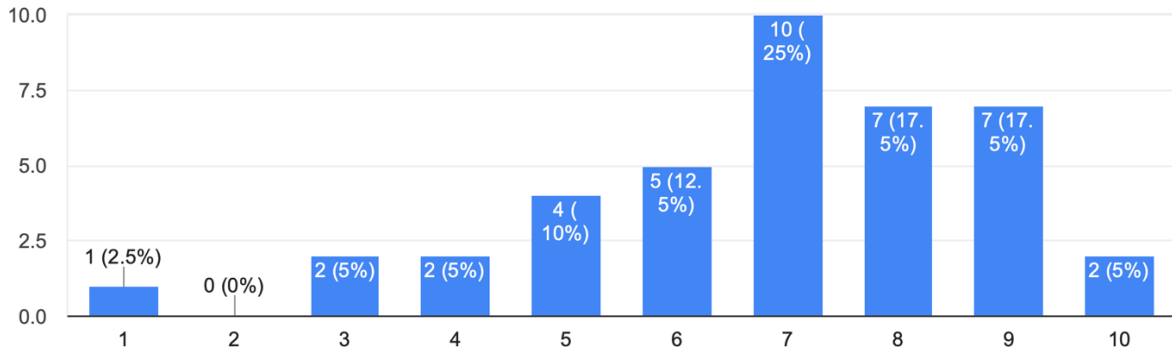
FAITHFULNESS

40 responses



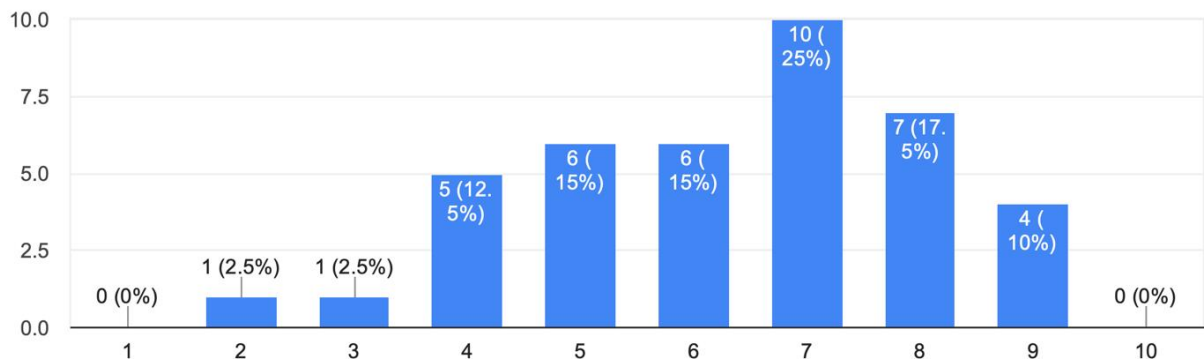
GENTLENESS

40 responses



SELF-CONTROL

40 responses



Rationale: These sets of scales regarding the fruits of the spirit gauge the general Christ-like characteristics that the respondents have. Given that most would never place a 10, 8 would be the highest, having most of the respondents score an average of 6-8 on all metrics of the scale this does show they were able to exhibit Christ-like attitude in the course of the pandemic. Thought we do have a comparison towards their character pre-pandemic this is still a good indicator that the online presence of the church can be visibly seen in their character (might place this in the conclusion)

8.)What is something that confuses you about the Bible or God? and what do usually do when there is confusion? (e.g. ask help, forget about it, avoid answering it, etc...)

Out of 40 responses these were what confused them the most:

- God's love, knowledge, and Power
- How God actually speaks today and why did he really create the world?
- On Trinity
- Complexity of the Bible, Context of the Bible, Old Testament,
- Human will, what is our true purpose, what does following God mean at the end

Out of 40 responses this is how they try to find the answers:

- Google or commentaries
- Pastors
- Ignore
- Parents

- Patience
- Prayer

8b.) If you could ask God one thing and He would give you the answer, what would you want to ask?

Out of 34 responses these were their general inquires:

- About the future
- Self (e.g. am I going to heaven, purpose, etc.)
- What does it feel like to be God
- How to understand God better
- Second Coming
- Why obey God?
- Suffering and Sin

Rationale: this set of questions gauges their understanding as well as the level at which they understand God. Whether they still ask simple questions or more complex questions tells us their level of inquire and curiosity. This also helps us to see how they deal with things they normally do not know

10.) If you are upset, hurt or sad what do to cope with these kinds of feelings? (e.g. music, friends, read, distraction, reflect etc...)

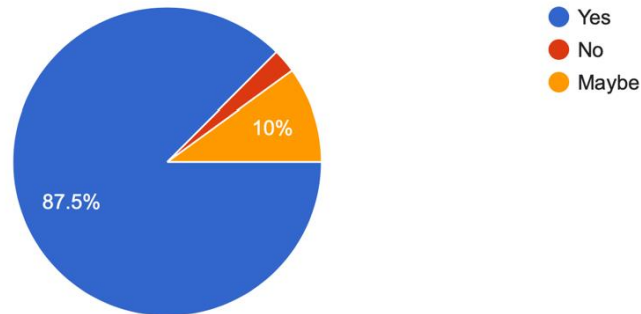
Out of the 40 responses only 2 respondents had the same answer and the other 38 varied from:

- Crying
- Music
- Praying
- Going out
- Games
- Sports
- Animals
- Reading etc...

Rationale: This question was to figure out the ways these young people cope with problems when they are stuck at home

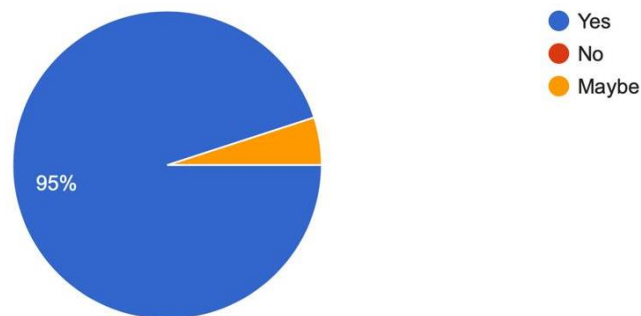
11.) Do you think the online fellowships you joined has help you know more about God?

40 responses



11.b) Did knowing more about God helped you become closer with him?

40 responses



12.) Were your spiritual needs met during the pandemic? If they weren't, what are some of the things you would have liked us to have addressed?

37 responses

Out of 37 responses:

- 55% were positive of the online fellowship
- 34% had a negative response to it
- And 11% were unsure of its usefulness.

13.) How can we improve our online fellowship?

36 responses

Out of 36 respondents, these were their general answers:

- 5 responded that we allow more time to adjust
- 6 believed that there was no need for improvements
- 6 responded that it was much better than they expected
- 4 responded that there should be more time for group discussion
- 2 thought there should be grades for Bible study as incentives
- 5 thought that there should be more varied activities
- 4 responded that there should be more interaction on everyone
- 2 responded that the time should be changed
- 2 responded that the older students should also join in

Due to the possibility that these questions were answered with haste or without much thought I thought it would be wise to interview a few of the youth to see their take on the whole online fellowship. These were the questions asked:

or interview:

- 1.) Do you think Online fellowship was helpful to your growth and of the church?
 - a) Did the online aspect affect your mental health?
- 2.) Do you think the local church was able to utilize the online platform well during the pandemic?
- 3.) Which do you prefer online or offline fellowship?
- 4.) What were some benefits and problems of the online fellowship that you noticed?
- 5.) Do you think Online fellowship has a role in the future of the church?
- 6.) What would you suggest to help it become better for future uses??

Video Presentation:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAFAZhFCo0A/fAMqfneSn9Y8cFnkcUxikQ/watch?utm_content=DAFAZhFCo0A&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink

4. Conclusion and Final Reflections

From the survey and interview these are the conclusion that can be drawn:

1.) Their Christ-like attitudes range above average. If 8 were the highest then the average of the 40 respondents would be a 7.

2.) 21 respondents had a significant change in the number of ministries they participated in. There was also an increase of respondents who did not join any ministries by 2.5%, the number of those joining 5 or more ministries decrease by 2.5% and the number of those joining only 1-2 ministries increased by 5%.

3.) From the survey and interview, it is clear that the online fellowship was indeed useful and pivot for their continual spiritual growth during the pandemic.

4.) There was a significant decrease in participants as well as a decrease of ministries joined, this was mainly because they are already at home and could easily choose to do something else rather than join the fellowship. A lack of outside pressure could also be a factor.

5.) It is made abundantly clear that the online fellowship does have a role in the future of the church. However, from the interviews conducted all participants will agree that they prefer the Face to face fellowship.

6.) Many of the youth are also shown to have had a negative response to the online fellowship, and also have been affected mentally. Surprisingly, many did think it was done well and had the positive effect of being an escape from their “prison”.

7.) From both surveys and interviews conducted, the consensus is that the online fellowship does have a role in the future, however, they also seem to agree that we have only scratched the surface and require more training to utilize it better.

8.) The consensus of this study is that online fellowship more accessible, less pressure and has a wonderful future if we learn to utilize it better. The study can also conclude that the spiritual maturity may have been affected, however, their average scores on the metric shows that it had positive effects.

This whole study shows a wonderful contrast that despite the online being more accessible, comfortable and easy there were fewer people joining ministries, perhaps less growth because of lesser participants, and an increased desire to have physical fellowship. The online fellowship as per some respondents did very well and those out of Cebu benefitted from it greatly. With that said it is clear that the online fellowship does have a

massive role to play in the future and it just does not seem like we have reached the fullest potential as of this moment.

It is a scary thought that if the church does not change with the times then it will be left in the annals of history (Lohrmann 2008, 21), steamrolled by the changing times. With the emergence of online services, you would think that the number of participants would be in the thousands. From the local church's perspective, Cebu Gospel Church has posted a sermon on both YouTube and Facebook since mid 2020. Allowing its videos to be seen across the world. As a local church numbering around 300 members with its 200 members in Cebu and hundreds across the world having the accessibility of these sermons, you could surmise that this would garner viewers close to or more than a 100. However, weekly Sunday services only average around 100 views or close to 150 views and maybe up to 300 if it is a special service. Looking towards other churches that number thousands or even millions of subscriptions their views still round up to a fraction of those subscribed. When the church is placed in this online medium, it is easily distracted by everything else that is on the platform. The key thing regarding the church's problem of quantity and quality was never about its accessibility, the church could pay you to go and it still wouldn't have people filling the pews. At its very core whether it be on or offline the sincerity of one's heart is and will always be the matter at hand.

On a more personal note, I had been doing an online fellowship very early at the start of the pandemic. At first, there were times when we realized just how far and how amazing technology had reached. The more I did it, however, the more I craved physical fellowship. The things I once thought were the hassles of the physical aspect of worship such as: being on time, dressing up, interacting with others, eye contact, silent nods, and the noise from the background were all part of the experience and made physical fellowship all the better. When you ask the youth about physical worship, having done it all their lives they had no comparison to make, now with the online aspect staying indefinitely the youth and I can honestly say that nothing can beat the real thing. The silence in the online aspect is deafening, the anxiety that you do not know who is watching is suffocating, and the idea that it can last forever on the internet is maddening. I do see the potential of the online fellowship, having many youth join regular bible studies who reside and study abroad have told me that it is incredibly important that they feel a semblance of home and unity. But to be

frank, the cost of it and the stress because of its unfamiliarity in my humble opinion will cause ministers more trouble than it is worth. Given ample time and training perhaps it could be a means to better the church, but I doubt that it could ever replace the long held tradition of meeting each other face to face.

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6. Appendices

The particular limitations of this study are shown by its number of respondents. Initially, there was a thought of having 70 or more to have a better understanding of the general landscape of our youth. However, despite the continuous advocacy and insistent nudging to our youth to participate, only a fraction had answered the survey and only 14 would commit to having an interview. The study is also limited by the usage of its metrics to gauge spiritual maturity. A further study could be made to figure out and promote a better and more objective method to observe spiritual growth. It is also only limited to Cebu Gospel Church, mainly to the Filipino-Chinese community, and may not be as effective or have a similar outcome to mega-churches or Filipino Churches. The results of the survey and interview were also limited to the fact that online fellowship has only been around for 2 years and face to face fellowship is slowly being reintegrated into the church, I am unaware of their answers would be much different if online fellowship would be around for another 5 years.

Though the study shows that the youth's spiritual growth, did not seem to have been affected by the online aspect as much as anticipated. That may be the result of a lack of more in-depth, objective and specific metric to gauge their spiritual maturity. With the survey conducted it is clear that there is much room for improvement and one key aspect of that may be having a specific point person or 3rd person party handling the in's outs of the fellowship. It is also made abundantly clear that a problem of the online fellowship is the lack of interaction among those joining. With muted mics and blackened screens, the lack of physical presence seems as though caused many to be deterred from joining. Though accessibility does not seem to be a problem anymore the increased likelihood of laziness is quite evident. The problems at home and poor internet were also a factor in the decreasing numbers. There was also an increase of ministries available to them yet many still did not seem to join, which means that much of the online fellowship loses out on participants since there is no outward pressure from others to join unlike that of the offline fellowship. Thus, a future study could be made from the suggestions and improvements that the youth answered. Having a 3rd party group handle the online fellowship or better training for the youth may lead to an overall increase in the church's performance. This could also perhaps lead to an increase in the quality and quantity of participants. The study

would center on the cost of the training and or 3rd party group, its effectiveness as well the materials needed for it to succeed, and the overall method at which to implement such things. This could also cover the study on how to disseminate information properly to ensure more people will join, and also to figure out a better means for the participants of online fellowship to interact more.

The utilization of a hybrid fellowship may also be a good study when the churches open their doors once more. Does the hybrid format of fellowship aid in the continual growth of those who are not able to join the physical, would having a hybrid format encourage laziness from those who can join, or would it promote a better experience for the church?



Student Signature

____May 13, 2022____

Date

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Date Received: ____/____/____

Approved by: _____