

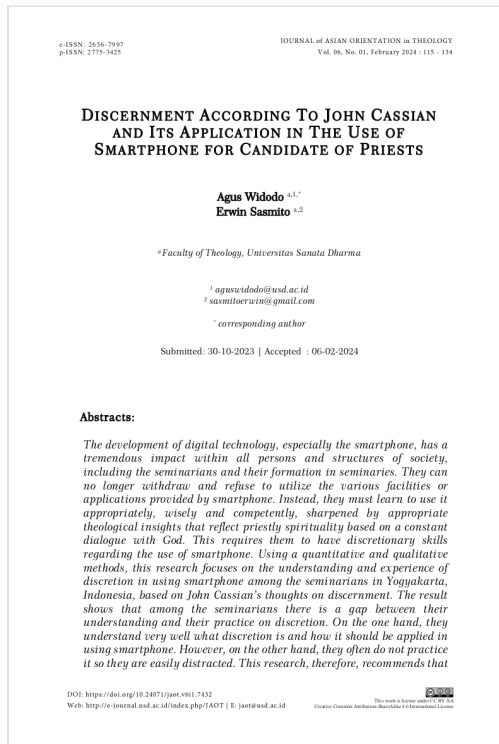


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Discenrment According to John Cassian

by Agus Widodo

DISCERNMENT ACCORDING TO JOHN CASSIAN AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE USE OF SMARTPHONE FOR CANDIDATE OF PRIESTS

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Abstracts:

The development of digital technology, especially the smartphone, has a tremendous impact within all persons and structures of society, including the seminarians and their formation in seminaries. They can no longer withdraw and refuse to utilize the various facilities or applications provided by smartphone. Instead, they must learn to use it appropriately, wisely and competently, sharpened by appropriate theological insights that reflect priestly spirituality based on a constant dialogue with God. This requires them to have discretionary skills regarding the use of smartphone. Using a quantitative and qualitative methods, this research focuses on the understanding and experience of discretion in using smartphone among the seminarians in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, based on John Cassian's thoughts on discernment. The result shows that among the seminarians there is a gap between their understanding and their practice on discretion. On the one hand, they understand very well what discretion is and how it should be applied in using smartphone. However, on the other hand, they often do not practice it so they are easily distracted. This research, therefore, recommends that

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digital discernment skills among seminarians, both personal and communal, need to be continuously improved during their formation years.

Keywords:

Technology, Digital, Discernment, Formation, Seminary

INTRODUCTION

In this digital era, smartphone, that is “a cell phone with a large number of computer functions, with a touchscreen interface, internet connection, and an operating system that can run and download advanced applications,”¹ are no longer a luxury but have become a staple among seminarians. Moreover, smartphone is becoming increasingly necessary during the covid-19 pandemic, when learning and teaching activities, even religious celebrations, must be carried out online. Seminarians who were previously wholly restricted to have and to use smartphone, during the pandemic period were given more freedom to use it. Those who previously did not have one then must have it in order to be able to attend lectures well. Besides being indispensable in learning activities, smartphone is also handy for seminarians to carry out pastoral services. All pastoral activities, such as teaching, giving recollections, and even leading worship, are carried out online.

When the pandemic became endemic and various activities that are mass gatherings are recommenced, including lectures and pastorals, smartphone remain a necessity. This is not only because seminarians are used to using it but because there are many positive benefits of using

¹ “Smartphone as the Most Important Digital Device in the Next Few Years,” Retrieved October 12, 2023, from <https://www.insighttycoon.com/smartphone-as-the-most-important-digital-device-in-the-next-few-years/>

smartphone in daily life and in pastoral missions. Digital technology is “a sensitive and important pastoral field, which provides new possibilities for priests in carrying out their pastoral ministry for and for the Word,” as stated by Pope Benedict XVI.² Furthermore, Pope Francis said that the pastoral mission to be witnesses of Christ “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1.8) must be understood anew. “Keeping the doors of our churches open also means keeping them open in the digital environment so that people, whatever their situation in life, can enter, and so that the Gospel can go out to reach everyone.”³ Because “the ends of the earth” have expanded through mass media and social networks, an arena from which pastors cannot close themselves off, both during formation and in their later ministry.⁴

However, it must also be realized that there are unavoidable risks from using digital technology, such as various forms of abuse and addiction (pornography, online games, various kinds of social media, online shopping and others). Recognizing the necessity of using digital technology and its various positive aspects as well as being aware of the unavoidable risks from its opposing sides, *Ratio Fundamentalist Institutionis Sacerdotalis* “The Gift of the Priestly Vocation,” no. 97-99, also emphasized that since the formation period, seminarians must learn to use this digital technology appropriately, wisely and competently, sharpened by appropriate theological insights and reflecting priestly spirituality based on a constant dialogue with God.⁵ One of the most important ways and means to help

² Benedict XVI, “The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World: New Media at the Service of the World,” *Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the 44th World Communications Day*, 16 May 2010, Retrieved January 6, 2022, from https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20100124_44th-world-communications-day.html

³ Francis, “Communication at the Service of an Authentic Culture of Encounter,” *Message of Pope Francis for the 48th World Communications Day*, 1 June 2014, Retrieved January 6, 2022, from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20140124_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html

⁴ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Ratio Fundamentalist Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (Vatican City: L’Osservatore Romano, 2016).

⁵ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, 43-44.

seminarians in using digital technology appropriately, wisely and competently is “digital discernment”.

Based on observations and experiences of living together with seminarians, both in seminaries and on campuses, it appears that they have and use smartphone. Some of them use it all the whole day (24 hours), and others with certain restrictions. Considering many facilities and benefits provided by smartphone, on the one hand, and the negative impacts that may occur if it is not used wisely, on the other hand, a hypothesis is raised that discernment is a very important to do in using smartphone. This hypothesis is then examined and being proofed with these two research questions. *First*, do the seminarians understand the meaning of discernment and the importance of discernment in using smartphone, namely digital discernment? *Second*, how do they apply discernment in using smartphone so they can attain as much as benefit while avoiding its negative effects?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research on digital discernment for candidate of priests or seminarians uses a theological approach based on John Cassian’s idea of discernment. Cassian was born probably in Provence around 360 AD, and most likely assumed the name “Iohannes” (John) when he received baptism or embraced monastic life.⁶ Born in the West, Latin was probably his mother language. However, he spent most of his life in the East, where he gained his perspective on monasticism. Therefore, most of his thought was influenced by Greek writers. He spent many years as a monk with his companion, Germanus, in Bethlehem Palestine and various places in Egypt with the desert fathers before they transferred to Constantinople. There, he studied under Bishop John Chrysostom, until the bishop was expelled

⁶ Edgar Charles Sumner Gibson, “Preface to The Works of John Cassian,” in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser., vol. 11, ed. Philip Schaff (Rio, WI: AGES Software, Inc., 2000), 375.

from Constantinople. Eventually Cassian moved to Massilia (present-day Marseilles, France). There, he founded new monasteries and developed his monastic life as well as dedicated his life in writing theological and spiritual tractates.⁷ He died in his monastery in Massilia in 435.

Although the life and work of Cassian comes from the IV-V centuries, his thoughts on discernment are still very relevant to serve as a theoretical basis for studying digital discernment among these candidates of priest. In the context of the monastic life, his thoughts on discernment were always considered necessary. In the rules of monastic life (*Regula Benedicti*), Saint Benedict of Nursia recommends Cassian's thought as a reference for the practice of discernment.⁸ In fact, with his idea of discernment, Cassian is the only Latin writer to be included in the *Philokalia* (a collection of texts written between the IV and XV centuries, primarily by writers of the Eastern Orthodox spiritual tradition) and the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (a classic text containing sayings of the Desert Fathers).⁹

At the time of Cassian, there was no digital technology like today. However, his idea of "middle things, neutral or indifferent, can also be applied to digital technologies.¹⁰ Digital technology, as it is found in smartphone, can be categorized as "middle thing". It must be used with discernment in order to be able to attain as much benefit as possible and avoid the dangers and adverse effects it may cause.

Cassian's idea on discernment is also valuable because it is the first systematic theological thought on discernment. In the collection of his *Conferences* provided to the monks, he dedicates a chapter, the is Book II,

⁷ Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5.

⁸ Frederick Aquino, "Spiritual Formation, Authority, and Discernment," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, ed. William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 162.

⁹ Frederick Aquino, "Spiritual Formation, Authority, and Discernment," 162.

¹⁰ Kevin Lenehan, "Living Faithfully 'Where Danger Threatens': Christian Discernment according to John Cassian and René Girard," in *Violence, Desire, and the Sacred*, Vol. 2, eds. S. Cowdell, C. Fleming, and J. Hodge, J. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014): 161–172.

to dealing specifically with discernment.¹¹ Writing as the Western Roman empire underwent significant changes in social and cultural life, Cassian outlines the discernment process by drawing on materials from the praxis of monastic life in Egypt and a collection of Jesus' words in extra-canonical writings from the 2nd century, and is referenced by many classical and modern theologians.¹² Waaijman, in his study published in *Discernment: Its History and Meaning*, also places Cassian's thought on discernment as the first of systematic idea on discernment.¹³

In his *Conferences*, Cassian asserts that discernment "is no minor virtue, nor one which can be seized anywhere merely by human effort. It is ours only as a gift from God and we read in the apostle that it is to be numbered among the most outstanding gifts of the Holy Spirit," (*Conferences* II, 1).¹⁴ He analogized discernment with the "eye and the lamps of the body," which has function to "see through all the thoughts and actions of a man, examining and illuminating everything which we must do. ... It keeps him from veering to the right, that is, it keeps him from going with stupid presumption and excessive fervor beyond the boundary of reasonable restraint. It keeps him from going to the left to carelessness and sin, to sluggishness of spirit, and all this on the pretext of actually keeping the body under control," (*Conferences* II, 2).¹⁵ In fact, discernment is not only "the lamp of the body," but is also called "the sun" and "the guide of our life", for "wisdom, intelligence and understanding lie hereabout. ... Discernment is the mother the guardian, and the guide of all the virtues," (*Conferences* II, 4).¹⁶

¹¹ This article uses The Classic of Western Spirituality edition, John Cassian, *Conferences*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985). Hereafter: Luibheid, *John Cassian Conferences*, followed by the pages of the book.

¹² Michael Joseph Buckley, "Discernment of Spirits," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 274–281.

¹³ Kees Waaijman, "Discernment: Its History and Meaning," *Studies in Spirituality* 17 (2007): 5–47. Retrieved January 3, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.2143/SIS.7.0.2004119>.

¹⁴ Luibheid, *John Cassian Conferences*, 60.

¹⁵ Luibheid, *John Cassian Conferences*, 62.

¹⁶ Luibheid, *John Cassian Conferences*, 64.

Following the systematics of Waaijman, Cassian describes four essential things that must be considered in discernment, which are very relevant to be applied in digital discernment.¹⁷ *First*, distinguishing between good and bad/evil. To clarify the characteristics of good and bad, Cassian uses the categories “fruits of the Spirit” and “works of the flesh” as described by Paul in Gal. 5:19-24.

Second, understanding the concrete and actual situations (*hic et nunc*, here and now) in the light of God’s will. For Cassian, this is a hermeneutical process that follows a fundamental distinction between good and evil, aided by authentic interpretation of the Scripture. Here, one learns to understand in the light of God’s will: events, circumstances, and things as “neutral” or “indifferent” or “middle things” according to Cassian’s terminology. Inherently, these events, circumstances, and things are neither good nor bad. In this case, smartphone with its all facilities is neutral. It will be good and valuable for human life if it is used according to God’s will, for good purposes, and produce good impacts too. To use worldly goods according to God’s will, first of all, it is required a deep relationship with God.¹⁸ Discernment, therefore, includes “mundane decision-making” as well as an action “where prayer and action come together”.¹⁹

Third, taking a moderate attitude and mutual consideration. Through this procedure, Cassian asserts that discernment is always moving to avoid two extremes, either too much or too little or even a complete rejection (*Conferences* II, 16).²⁰ The measure of this moderation is

¹⁷ Kees Waaijman, “Discernment: Its History and Meaning,” 5–47.

¹⁸ Merrie Schoenman Carson, “Together, Full of Wisdom and the Holy Spirit: A Paradigm for Congregational Discernment and Decision Making” (*DMin dss*, Goerge Fox University, Oregon, 2013), 100. Retrieved January 6, 2022, from <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/52/>; Steven M. Nolt, “You Hold the Whole World in Your Hand” Cell Phones and Discernment in Amish Churches, in” *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 16, no. 2 (2015): 27–37. Retrieved January 3, 2022 from <https://press.palni.org/ojs/index.pSmartphone/vision/article/view/153/111>.

¹⁹ Denis J. Horton, “Discerning Spiritual Discernment: Assessing Current Approaches for Understanding God’s will,” *Journal of Youth Ministry* 7, no. 2 (2009): 7–31, Retrieved January 6, 2022, from <https://www.academia.edu/15587676>; Edward Collins Vacek, “Discernment within a Mutual Love Relationship with God: A New Theological Foundation,” *Theological Studies* 74, (2013): 683–710, Retrieved March 8, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056391307400307>.

²⁰ Luibheid, *John Cassian Conferences*, 76.

according to need, not satisfaction (*Conferences* II, 22).²¹ This is the standard of wisdom in discernment. In addition, it is also emphasized that this reasonable measure is formed in interactions with other people in the community. A choice and decision never only concerns oneself but also the life of the whole community. Thus, it is not enough for us to do only personal discernment but also communal discernment.

Fourth, realizing identity and using it as a reference for choosing and making decisions. For Cassian, in the praxis of discernment, it is essential to realize our identity as the image of God. Moreover, in doing discernment, we must examine our actual situation along with the choices and decisions we have to make, whether it further clarifies our identity as the image of God or even obscures it. In the context of digital discernment for seminarians, we must examine whether they use smartphone in line with their identity as candidate of or not.

METHOD

This study uses a mixed sequential explanatory method to obtain quantitative and qualitative data related to understanding and experience of discernment in using smartphone among the seminarians.²² The data collection and analysis were carried out in two stages, that are quantitative through a survey using Google Forms and qualitative through direct interviews with ten respondents based on purpose sampling.²³ The interview transcripts were then interpreted and integrated to support and enrich the data results from quantitative research in the first stage. This study uses Creswell's six steps of qualitative data analysis to identify emerging themes. The results of this qualitative analysis process strengthen

²¹ Luibheid, *John Cassian Conferences*, 77.

²² John Ward Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (California, London, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2018).

²³ Lawrence A. Palinkas, S. M. Horwitz, C. A. Green, J. P. Wisdom, N. Duan, and K. Hoagwood. "Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research," in *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research* 42, no. 5 (2015): 533–544. Retrieved February 7, 2022 from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>.

and clarify the results of the quantitative data analysis in the first stage, which is a priority in this research.

The survey method in the first stage of this study used a measuring instrument in the form of self-administered questionnaires by translating four steps or discernment procedures from John Cassian's thinking in the context of smartphone use among the seminarians. The four essential things in discernment are (1) distinguishing between good and bad/evil; (2) understanding concrete and actual situations in the light of God's will; (3) taking a moderate attitude and mutual consideration; and (4) realizing identity and using it as a reference for choosing and making decisions. Each item is rated on a 4-point scale: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study departs from the hypothesis that discernment in using smartphone among seminarians is very important and essential. This hypothesis emerges from the fact that digital technology offered in smartphone's applications provides many facilities and benefits for them. However, at the same time, it also possesses negative impacts that may occur for them if they use it unwisely. Regarding the first important thing in discernment, according to John Cassian, which is capable to distinguish "good and bad," the seminarians understand that digital technology, in this case, smartphone, is neutral: its benefits as well as its bad effects depend on how it being used (strongly agree 78%; agree 21.7%). In the interview, informant 8 clarifies:

The positive (effect) is for communication. Very helpful for the need of the study. Exploring yourself. If we can bring a smartphone, we can post content. Fourthly, it can be used for entertainment, YouTube and others. The negative (effect), it engages us to have more emotional

relationships with people outside the seminary. ... we can also be attached to smartphones, games, pornography. The last one is consumer culture, so I like to eat snacks, online shopping.

The second important thing in discernment is to act according to concrete and actual situations. An action can be judged as good or bad depends on the concrete situation. Regarding the use of smartphone, the need can be used as the criterion its judgment. As already said, smartphone provides many benefits if one uses it to support and fulfil his or her needs in communication, study, information, etc. If seminarians use smartphones in the first place to meet these needs, it can be said that they have applied this second aspect of discretion. Their primary consideration in using smartphone is a necessity (strongly agree: 44.5%; agree 50%). This was confirmed by informant 2 by saying:

I brought the smartphone because of necessity ... Yes, of course the main thing is for communication. Communication with family, friends, and also for now, during a pandemic, is very helpful in the learning process.

Furthermore, other seminarians mentioned that these necessities include communication, especially with their family (informants 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9), for studies requirement because smartphone are beneficial in the learning process, such as to have and to read online resources and material, to upload assignments, to attend online class, etc. (informants 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9), for pastoral cares which at certain times require online coordination and are carried out virtually via Zoom, Google-Meet, Microsoft-Teams, Skype, and other platforms of online meeting (informants 1, 3, 10).

The third important aspect of discernment is meeting the needs in moderation, neither excessively nor scarcely. There are two limitations that can be used as a measuring tool, namely using a smartphone at the right place and time. The findings of this study indicate that the seminarians consciously use smartphone only in certain places (strongly agree: 58.2%; agree: 40%). Likewise, concerning time, seminarians can determine the

right time to use smartphone (strongly agree: 52%; agree 45.2%). This finding was confirmed in interviews with the informants who clarified that they limit to use their smartphone, or even in the public places and during community meetings, such as in the dining room, in the hall during conferences, and obviously in the chapel, they do not use smartphone at all. In this case, informant 1 said:

I only use my cellphone when there is a need. ... I realized that I came to community meetings to meet the people who were there. Not the people on my smartphone contact list.

In line with this argument, informant 8 also confirmed:

When I am at a community event, and when I am talking (with you) like this, I rarely use my smartphone. I mean while scrolling. ... As much as possible if it's not important, I won't use it and won't take it to the dining room. ... I try not to interfere the togetherness or social interaction with people.

Moreover, to limit the excessive use of smartphone, informant 2 said:

I downloaded the screen-time application to be my alarm when using my cell-phone. For example, when playing games and playing social media. Later in the settings, for example, I can limit the usage of my phone until a certain time. If you have reached the specified time, you have to stop.

Meanwhile, informant 6 said:

I also set a certain duration in the setting in which I can't use my phone, such as at the spiritual hour from 5pm to half past 7pm which I can't use it at all. Then in the afternoon, and evening at 11pm to half past 5am. Then the alarm is set, otherwise, you can't wake up. The positive (thing) is that it can also be an alarm.

To determine this reasonable limit, communal discernment, which is manifested in the form of community rules or agreements, is recognized as an effective tool by seminarians. They stated that community's regulation based on the mutual agreement in using personal smartphone needs to be

regulated (strongly agree: 44.7%; agree: 44.2%). In fact, community's rules help them to make discernment (strongly agree: 45.6%; agree: 46%). This is reinforced by the statement of informant 2, who said:

The smartphone usage rules in my community help me to be wise and make discernment. ... Having rules for living together can minimize these negative impacts.

Reinforcing this statement, informant 9 also said,

For the formation, mutual agreement is very important; and those rules must be clear from the start: What is it intended for, and when to use it. It was very helpful and gave me guidance. ... The children nowadays cannot be assumed knowing by themselves like that. So, it is necessary for me, (rules) as clearly as possible, intact, in detail.

Regarding the fourth important aspect of discernment, namely being aware of the identity and using it as a reference for choosing and making decisions, the seminarians are aware of and consider their identity as candidate of priests (strongly agree: 49.3%; agree: 45.2%). In addition, they also always think about and consider anything they posted on social media (strongly agree: 64.5%; agree: 33.2%). Both points were clarified through interviews with them. They said, among other things:

Informant 4: Now I am a seminarian, so I have to be wise in posting something... if you post something, you have to think about it first.

Informant 8: I am a friar and I'm a candidate for priesthood. After 10pm onward, I stop to receive or make any phone-calls r chatting, except it is very important and urgent, and with my family.

Informant 10: If I post (in social media), I will filter it: does it fits my identity as a seminarian?... I usually thought a long time before I write a comment. I keep my boundaries.

Discussion

The finding that can be used as material for discussion is the tension or gap between the understanding and the practice of digital discernment in smartphone use. Among seminarians, there are inconsistencies and gaps between knowledge or values they believed and their daily life. They experience a value-action gap or knowledge-attitude-practice gap because there is a mismatch between what is understood and believed to be the right and good thing and what is being done. Although the seminarians correctly understand that discernment is the ability to distinguish between good and bad and to choose the good (66.9% strongly agree; 30.9% agree), they do not always succeed in applying it. They realize that digital technology is neutral because its benefits or bad effects depend on how they use it (strongly agree 78%; agree 21.7%), but they do not always succeed in avoiding its bad effects. The ten informant-seminarians in the interview, stated that they had often failed, both in using smartphone according to their need only and in applying moderate limits. As a result, they often distracted because of being engrossed in playing games, chatting, watching YouTube, watching the news, scrolling, and others, as it was experienced by informant 7, who said:

I feel biased, meaning that I can't focus in doing my thesis. I'm currently working on a thesis and it has turned to watch YouTube, TikTok. ... These past 2 years, and once again, huh, it's become very different. In the past, it was 50:50 between the phone and for doing tasks, but this one is different. I even think that it seems this phone has become a friend. ... I am looking for an escape from duty.... So, I can say that, logically, I know what the discernment is. ... The logical level is easy, but this is something I don't know.

Likewise, informant 9 also experienced more or less the same thing,

When I was here (in the seminary) on vacation, such as Christmas break and semester break, when I was going to enter the sixth year in seminary, I planned to focus on the proposal of my thesis. But because

it's still holiday, I installed 6 games on my cell-phone. There are racing games, war games, except Mobile Legend because my phone is not good enough. Well, I hadn't had done anything when it's already the second day of holiday.

In addition, the survey results also show that there are still quite a number of seminarians who open and enjoy pornographic content (stories, pictures/photos, videos) that are not worthy of them as candidates of priest (strongly agree 38.2%; agree 11%). The results of interviews reinforce this data. For example, informant 8 said:

Oh, it's obvious (laughing). For me, I prefer proxies, out of curiosity, you know. In Indonesia, why is everything blocked? If we watch porn, that's fine. As long as it doesn't bother other people, why not? I finally found out how to open it, one of them was using a proxy and it opened it all.

Similarly, informant 7 said:

TikTok has 18+ content, right? Yes, as a normal guy, I am also interested, right? Now it's easier to use Yandex, instead of using VPN. I don't understand (using VPN). Once in 2 weeks maybe, yes, I access (pornographic content).

This finding is interesting to discuss because discernment is not only about understanding or knowledge but it is more about skills and praxis. John Cassian himself asserted that “this is how it is practiced. If our thoughts suggest something to us to be done, we must handle it with the utmost scrupulosity. It must be placed on the scales of our heart and weighed with the most exacting care,” (*Conferences* II, 21).²⁴ Why do seminarians who understand the importance of discernment in using smartphone, they do not always apply it consistently? The gap or inconsistency between knowledge-believed values or intentions with actual behavior or actions in everyday life is often called the value-action gap or

²⁴ Luibheid, *John Cassian Conferences*, 77.

attitude-behavior gap, intention-behavior gap, knowledge-attitudes-practice gap, and belief-behavior gap.

This inconsistency can occur because (1) a person is not able to process and internalize his knowledge into values that are believed and fought for; (2) a person is unable to translate the values he believes into the intention/intention to take action; (3) a person is easily distracted by various challenges/offers from outside himself so that his actions are far different from the values and intentions he believes in.²⁵ A study among seminarians showed a gap or inconsistency between their understanding of the importance of physical health with intentions and patterns of healthy living behavior.²⁶ The findings of this study add to the inconsistency among seminarians, especially related to the understanding of discretion with discretionary practices in the use of smartphone during the formation process at the seminary.

CONCLUSION

Various kinds of facilities provided by smartphone have a tremendous influence on all levels of society, including the house of priesthood formation. There are many positive benefits of using smartphone in daily life and pastoral missions. Smartphone, with its applications and facilities, provides new possibilities for seminarians in carrying out their study and pastoral ministry. However, smartphone also provides various negative impacts if it is not used properly. Therefore, seminarians need to have the discernment knowledge and skill to use smartphone appropriately and wisely so that they can attain the maximum benefit and avoid its negatives effects.

²⁵ Paschal Sheeran and Thomas L. Webb, "The Intention-Behavior Gap," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 10, no. 9 (2016): 503–518. Retrieved October 13, 2023, from <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12265>.

²⁶ Erin F. Johnston, D. E. Eagle, A. Corneli, B. Perry, and R.J. Proeschold-Bell, "Seminary Students and Physical Health: Beliefs, Behaviors, and Barriers," in *Journal of Religion and Health* 61 (2022): 1207–1225. Retrieved March 22, 2022 from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01480-7>.

The research findings using John Cassian's theory of discernment show that seminarians already understand well about what discernment is and why it is important to be practiced in using smartphone. However, there are also gaps or inconsistencies between their understanding and their practice of discernment. Although they understand that they should use smartphone appropriately and moderately, they are not always successful in practice. As a result, they are often distracted because of spending too much times playing games, chatting, watching YouTube or enjoying pornographic and other contents that are inappropriate to their identity as candidate of priests.

Given these gaps and inconsistencies, digital discernment skills among seminarians need to be continuously improved. External assistance is needed because they are still weak and poor in internalizing his understanding, so that they also lack the strong will to make it happen in their real and daily life. In this case, communal discernment, manifested in the community rules based on mutual agreement, is very essential and important. The community rules, created through the communal discernment process, are very helpful for each seminarian to make personal discernment. In addition, to improve their skills in personal discernment, it is also necessary the personal assistance from the formators to each seminarian.

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