

Exploring Social Media as a Communication Tool for Student-athletes and their Formators

Joram Kim B. Corcuera

University of Santo Tomas, Philippines

jbcorcuera@ust.edu.ph

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7095-1085>

Abstract: *What roles do social media play in the formation of student-athletes? To answer this question, 20 formators, including professors, coaches, and athletic directors from the University of Santo Tomas (UST), San Beda University (SBU), and Philippine Normal University (PNU), were interviewed about their views and opinions on the use of social media as a communication tool in shaping the character of student-athletes. Using Blumler, Gurevitch, and Katz's (1973) uses and gratifications theory (UGT) as a conceptual framework, this study explored how student-athletes and their formators use social media to meet and satisfy their needs. The theoretical framework of the study was based on the core values of three carefully chosen educational institutions. The interview transcripts were then analyzed using typological analysis in accordance with Hatch (2002)'s protocols. The study revealed that formators at UST, SBU, and PNU use social media to instill positive morals and virtues into student-athletes of strong character. Results also revealed that formators in select institutions use social media to provide human needs in accordance with the UGT typologies of media use (Katz et al., 1973), which are cognitive, affective, personal integrative, integration and social interaction, and escapism. The study's findings can be used as a foundation for developing modules and policies on social media education that enable social media users to maximize the benefits while minimizing the risks.*

Keywords: *Formation, student-athletes, education, social media*

1. Introduction

The use of social media has increased throughout the world (Bireline, 2014), and the rise of the digital age has opened opportunities for people to connect with each other (Orlanda-Ventayen & Ventayen, 2017). The rise of new media in the field of communication has been getting more attention from practitioners in recent years (Thoene, 2012), as it has become one of the most used communication and information methods for people of all ages, genders, nationalities, and religious beliefs (Bartlett, 2013).

In the 21st century, social media has shifted the way people communicate. People already prefer mediated communication, rather than face-to-face communication (Booth, 2013), and this is reflected in the number of social media users in the Philippines. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of messages and information to take place. Social media encompasses all forms of digital technology that allow human beings to communicate and share information or content with each other using the Internet (Poore, 2012). In fact,

almost all the digital tools that human beings use in their everyday work, study and social lives can be described as social media (Poore, 2016).

Undeniably, understanding the roles of social media has become a challenge and an opportunity because of its popularity (Qualman, 2011), particularly in the field of education not only as an educational tool, but also as tool for character formation, which pertains to the practice of developing positive morals in an individual (Wycliffe, 2016). Character formation refers to different activities inculcating positive social dispositions in an individual (Wycliffe, 2016) that begins with a proper understanding of the heart and the soul (Jung, 2015).

Many people believe that character formation can only happen inside a brick-and-mortar classroom set-up where teaching and learning take place face-to-face (Jung, 2015), but with the use of technology, character formation can already be delivered online (Zondervan, 2015). Character formation occurs most effectively when there is a good relationship between the learners and their formator. With this, identifying the roles of social media in the formation of student-athletes can lead to a better relationship between student-athletes and their formators, since communication plays a foundational role in the development of any healthy relationship.

Furthermore, considering that social media applications are highly utilized by students for non-educational purposes, these applications may badly affect students' academic life and learning experiences (Kuppuswamy & Narayan, 2010). Indeed, the Internet and new technologies have a positive impact on students, but also cause distraction (Gafni & Deri, 2012).

1.1 Social Media and Formation

Student-athletes are already considered public figures, and this puts greater responsibilities on their shoulders because they are expected to project a public image that embodies the core values of the institutions of which they are a part (Bireline, 2014). The life of a student-athlete is never easy as they need to balance their academics and athletics at all times (Love, 2018). Because of these challenges, it is a must for them to embody morals that will allow them to have a strong character (Arnold, 1999) for these morals will surely increase their potential to become better students and athletes (Dada, 2016). This is also the reason why athletic departments and sports organizations must have well-developed character formation programs. Character formation is the act of instilling positive values (Wycliffe, 2016) that determine the way a person normally responds to desires, fears, challenges, opportunities, failures, and successes (Josephson, 1999).

However, the media, including social media, can prey on student-athletes (Ott & Van Puymbroeck, 2008) since today's generations grow up having great contact with different kinds of social media (Njoroge, 2011) that can influence their attitude and behavior (Bartlett, 2013). In a world where the use of digital technology is prevalent, it is inevitable for student-athletes to suffer from the repercussions of irresponsible social media usage (Miller, 2016) because what they do, how they perform, and what they post online instantly attract public interest. In addition, since student-athletes carry the names of their schools and universities, their formation becomes very crucial (Bernfeld, 2014). With this, they must be aware of what they are doing, and they must learn how to be more responsible, especially in choosing how to behave online (Miller, 2016). Their character, together with their image, must be formed with values that will help them grow, and this formation can be done through the use of social media (Jung, 2015).

Even if majority of people think that the traditional way of communication, which is face-to-face communication, is still more effective, a large of number of people have already seen the significance of mediated communication in terms of character formation (Shannon, 2012). Research has shown that today's youth believe that social media can improve parent-child (Simonpietri, 2011) and student-teacher

relationships (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007). The youth are more comfortable expressing their ideas online (Berson & Berson, 2005), and they socialize using social media where they create a new language and practice multicultural values (Tappscott, 1998).

Social media has the potential to bring out the best among student-athletes, and at the same time, it can also be a medium that can negatively affect their academic and athletic performance, including their attitude and behavior (Harms & DeBrevi, 2018; Ott & Van Puymbroeck, 2008).

1.2 Social Media and Athletics

The use of social media has been dominant in the field of athletics as well. Its emergence brought significant changes with the delivery and consumption of sports (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015), and played a significant role in the sporting world (Pegoraro, 2010). A study by De Shazo (2016) found that Facebook (97%), Twitter (84%), Instagram (89%) and Snapchat (93%) have established themselves as the big four platforms on which student-athletes are active.

Because student-athletes consider the use of different social media platforms as one of their preferred ways of communication and gateways of expression (Gangdharbatla, 2007), social media has now become a new concern for collegiate athletic departments, as it creates a direct connection between the players and the online community (Boissonneault, 2015) and allows players to connect with friends, get their news, consume entertainment, and tell their stories (Bireline, 2014). Social media is also a venue for student-athletes to openly communicate with their fans (Pegoraro, 2010), allowing them to promote their games and consequently increase game attendance and donations (Fisher, 2011; Schaferhoff, 2015; Wirth, 2014).

Social media can help student-athletes improve their athletic skills and elevate their public image by creating a strong brand image (Parganas, Chadwick & Fenton, 2018). However, social media may also serve as an instrument for destroying their public image and reputation (Ambron, 2016), for it allows its users to highlight the achievements and/or failures of the student-athletes (Hundley & Varner, 2014).

2. Literature Review

Exploring the impact of character formation on individuality, researchers such as Kretschmar and Tuckey (2016), Montonye et al. (2013), and Thompson (2002) have delved into the ways it contributes to the development of young learners. They acknowledged that character education and moral formation help young learners to become motivated and engaged in developing the right attitude and behavior of a matured individual. Notably, the role of formators, as emphasized by Wycliffe (2016) and Abu et al. (2015), has been identified as crucial in this process. In addition, these studies also show that formators, specifically teachers, must be creative and innovative in choosing the pedagogies, strategies, and approaches that they will use to form and develop the character of their students. However, a gap remains in understanding why character education should be an integral part of school and university curricula. To address this, further research is warranted, with a proposed focus on exploring the reasons behind the integration of character education in different educational institutions.

On another note, Keating (2016), Martin (2016) and McCurry (2014) also found that athletic departments and sports organizations play a significant role in the character formation of their athletes, since they design sports programs not only to enhance the skills of their players, but also to help them develop leadership skills and positive attitudes that will make them better professional athletes in the future. It has also been discovered that intercollegiate athletics allow student-athletes to develop traits and attributes like sportsmanship that will help them become successful in life (Camiré & Trudel, 2010; Dressler, 2014). However, despite the emphasis on character development within sports programs, some studies suggest that athletes may still exhibit deficiencies in moral character traits (Dieckman, 2009;

Dada, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative to undertake additional research in order to comprehend the elements that contribute to the perception that sports programs are ineffective at molding the character of athletes. Specifically, the effects of having coaches teach morality should also be explored, particularly on building a strong character among the student-athletes that is inculcated with their institution's core values.

2.1 Social Media as a Tool for Character Formation

Social media is a powerful platform with the potential to shape the behaviors and attitudes of student-athletes, contributing to their moral development, as highlighted in previous research (Bicen & Kaya, 2016; EdComs, 2010; Jung, 2015; Njoroge, 2011). The prevalence of social media use among student-athletes is not only attributed to their status as digital natives but also to its role in nurturing and enhancing relationships. For many, social media serves as an emotional outlet, allowing formators, particularly coaches and teachers, to gain insights into the athletes' feelings and perspectives.

However, the dual nature of social media is evident, as it poses risks and dangers that can potentially lead to the permanent damage of relationships if used irresponsibly (EdComs, 2010; Bicen & Kaya, 2016; Shannon, 2012). To comprehensively understand the impact of social media on the character of student-athletes, further research is also warranted. Analyzing the intricate dynamics between social media and the character development of student-athletes can provide valuable insights into the positive and negative aspects of this influential platform.

Moreover, in terms of using it in the field of education, prior research (Andersen et al., 2013; Casto-Romero, 2014; Deka, 2015; Kitchakarn, 2016; Orlanda-Ventayen & Ventayen, 2017) has delved into its multifaceted roles. It has been observed that social media can be used as a complementary tool to improve learning and to enhance the prescribed curriculum that will make learning more fun for the students. In addition, the use of social media in educational institutions is indeed beneficial for it can also result to a change of attitude, skills acquisition and knowledge construction. McCarthy & McCarthy (2014) also mentioned that social media is used for academic reasons because of its usefulness, accessibility, reliability, and compatibility.

However, technology integration was also found to potentially serve as a distraction for the students (Orlanda-Ventayen & Ventayen, 2017; Deka, 2015). It was also discovered that too much reliance on technology can also affect the pronunciation and grammar of the students that may result in poor academic performance. These show that further studies must also explore on how social media can bridge the gap between the student-athletes and their formators, specifically their professors, coaches and athletic directors. Furthermore, additional research exploring the relationship between the learner's course grade, the learner's course satisfaction, and the use of social media would be helpful to strengthen and deepen the understanding of the roles of social media in the field of education. Such studies would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the diverse roles social media plays in the field of education, thereby strengthening the foundations for effective integration in learning environments.

2.2 Social Media as a Tool in the Field of Sports and Athletics

Social media has been identified in previous research (Vale & Fernandes, 2016; Smallwood, 2011; Wang et al., 2014) as a significant factor influencing the athletic performance of professional athletes in a positive manner. This influence extends beyond the athletes themselves, as fans and followers utilize social media platforms to stay updated and connected with their favorite teams and admired professional athletes.

Furthermore, Burns (2018), Mayo (2017) and Miller (2016) have also discovered that athletic departments and sports organizations use social media for information dissemination, fan engagement,

branding and promotion. These organizations also use social media to monitor the behavior of their athletes and to provide the best interventions for their athletes to do better. Other research (Bireline, 2014; Miller, 2016; Stoldt, 2012; Hooper, 2017) also cited that social media significantly affects the collegiate athletic programs. With this, it is believed that athletic departments and sports organizations must include social media education in designing their programs and that there must be common social media policies among sports organizations and athletic departments that will help their players know what to do, especially in times of crisis to prevent devastating repercussions from taking place.

On the other hand, social media also has its negative effects in the field of intercollegiate athletics, as it was found that athletic administrators and sports directors consider social media to be less accurate, less credible, and less trusted (Anderson, 2012; Synder & Navarro, 2015; Stoldt, 2012). It was also mentioned in these studies that the use of social media can lead to emotional attachment and time management issues that may result in a negative performance. The relationship of the athletic performance of student-athletes and their public image in the different social media platforms must also be explored, as this would help in determining the roles of social media in intercollegiate athletics.

Indeed, social media is always changing (Csutoras, 2008), and this means that there is a need for studies to be repeated from time to time in order for them to be able to monitor the changes in the social media world and for the data to remain valid, reliable and relevant. Further research should also consider involving several institutions so that the data of the study would not be affected by the practices, approaches and pedagogies being used in a specific institution. Results of these further studies can be used in forming and designing effective character formation programs, which would be implemented using social media.

3. Research Questions

This research examined the use of social media as a communication tool among student-athletes and their formators, specifically their teachers, coaches, and athletic directors. In particular, this research investigated the roles of social media in the formation of the student-athletes. This research answered the following questions:

1. What motivates the formators to use social media in forming the character of the student-athletes?
2. What gratifications are the formators seeking and receiving from using social media?
3. What role does social media play in the formation of student-athletes?

4. Conceptual Framework

4.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications theory (Blumler, Gurevitch & Katz, 1973) was used in this study as a paradigm for exploring the roles of social media in the formation of student-athletes. The questions were not formulated solely around UGT, rather they were based on the core values of each university, which were designed specifically for their student-athletes, so that the study would be able to address the differences present among the universities. However, the researcher applied the UGT typologies of media use in interpreting and analyzing the data of the study, since these typologies would still come out in the answers of the participants to the interview questions. Doing this made the study more focused, concentrating on the concept of formation that is more consistent with the theory and paradigm surrounding it.

UGT describes why consumers use a particular medium and what functions the medium serves for them (Katerattanakul, 2002). It centers on the consumer or the audience member, rather than the message (Littlejohn, 1999). Instead of being used by the media, people select and use media to satisfy felt needs

and desires (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973). UGT also gives emphasis to human needs, especially on the social and psychological origins of needs that create the expectations of the mass media or other sources (Katz et al., 1973). The proponents of UGT believe that people use media that fulfill their needs and that lead them to ultimate gratification (Lariscy, Tinkham & Sweetser, 2011). With this, people engage themselves in different patterns of media exposure that help them gratify their needs (Katz et al., 1973).

In this research, the theory was used as a framework to explore how the formators of the student-athletes, specifically coaches, professors, and athletic directors use social media and how the use of social media fulfills and satisfies their needs. These formators were selected because they help the student-athletes form a strong character that enables them to create and strengthen the moral virtues governing their actions (Özen, 2011). They help the student-athletes develop desirable and valuable qualities (Njoroge & Bennaars, n.d.), allowing them to have a sense of direction (Wycliffe, 2016). In addition to the typologies of UGT, the researcher explored how social media is used to inculcate each university's core values among the student-athletes. The typologies of the theory, along with each university's core values, were thus used to create interview questions.

4.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory and University Core Values

Uses and gratifications can be classified into five categories related to five groups of human needs, also known as the five typologies of media use. These are: cognitive needs, affective needs, personal identity, integration and social interaction, and escapism (Katz et al., 1973). In this research, all participants regardless of their location and rank were asked questions pertaining to these typologies.

Cognitive needs are defined as the need to explore and acquire information and knowledge to better understand our social environment (Katz et al., 1973). In this study, participants were asked about how the use of social media helps in knowledge construction and skills acquisition.

Affective needs refer to aesthetic and emotional experiences, emotions, pleasures and feelings (Katz et al., 1973). In this study, participants were asked about how they satisfy their emotions and gain pleasure through the use of social media.

Personal identity, or personal integrative, is defined as self-confidence, personal stability, integrity, social status, and the need for self-respect (Katz et al., 1973). In this study, participants were asked how the use of social media helps them enhance and improve their self-confidence and self-esteem.

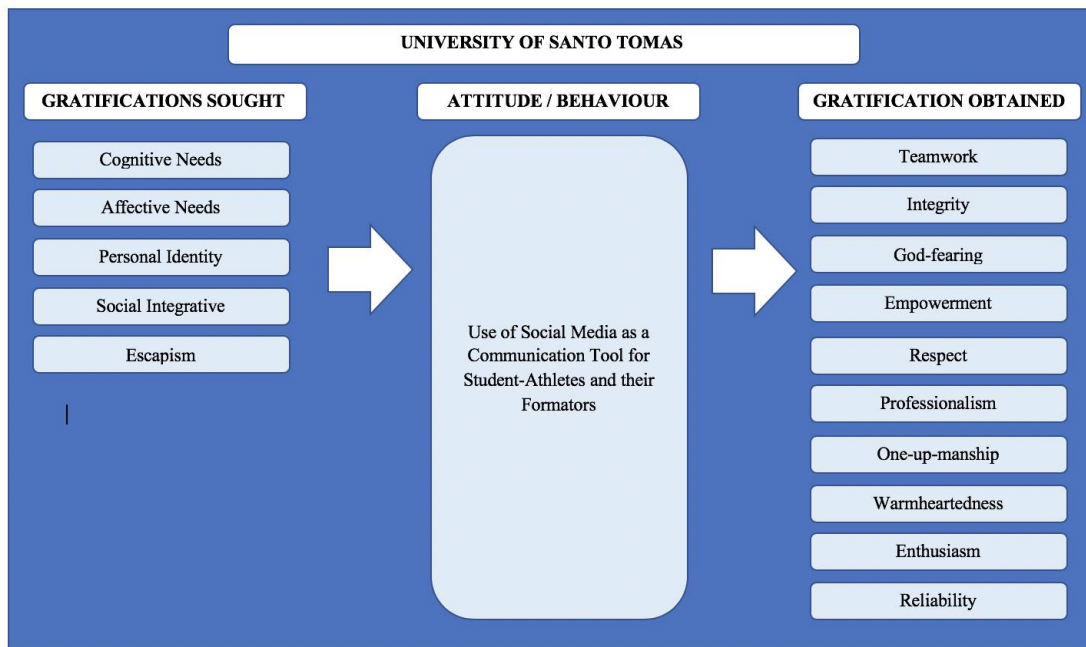
Integration and social interaction, or social integrative, refers to family relations and friendships, connections with the outside world, and the need for affiliation (Katz et al., 1973). Participants of this study were asked about how helpful social media is to them in building, sustaining, and maintaining their relationships with other people, specifically in interacting with their colleagues, friends, and families

Escapism is defined as tension release or the need to escape by shifting attention from the unpleasant to the pleasant (Katz et al., 1973). In this study, participants were asked how the use of social media helps them to divert their attention away from stress resulting in tension.

Since the participants of the study came from three different institutions, the researcher used three sets of interview questions based on the core values of the said institutions to determine the motives of the formators in using social media to form and develop the character of the student-athletes.

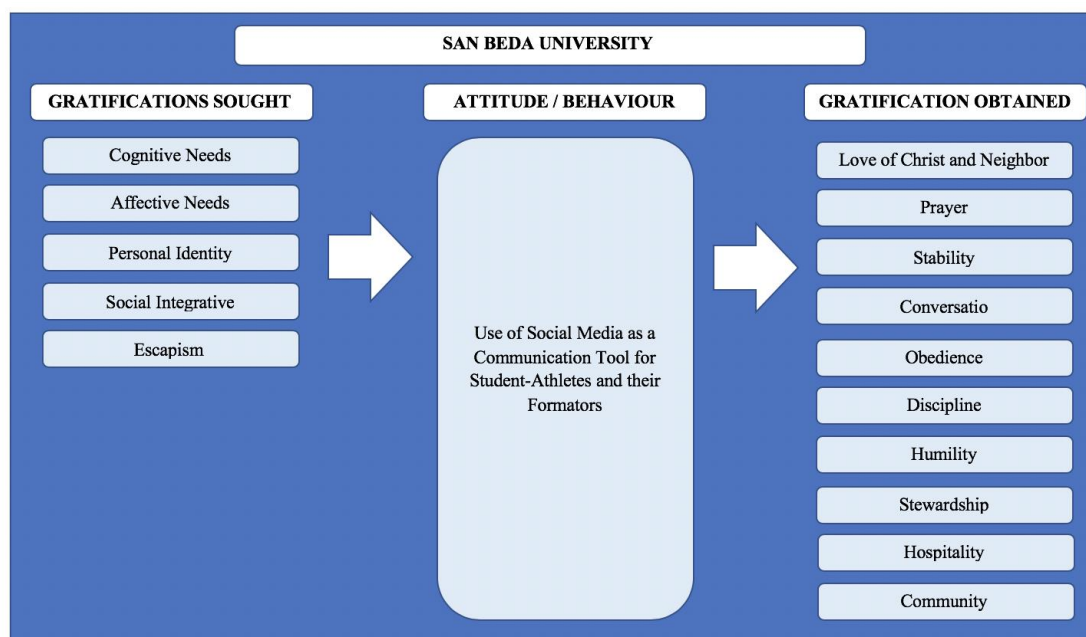
For the participants from the University of Santo Tomas, the interview questions aimed to measure how social media meets their needs in forming their student-athletes under their core values, which are teamwork, integrity, God-fearing, empowerment, respect, professionalism, one-up-manship, warm-heartedness, enthusiasm, and reliability (UST, 2016).

Figure 1
Uses and Gratifications Theory and Core Values of University of Santo Tomas



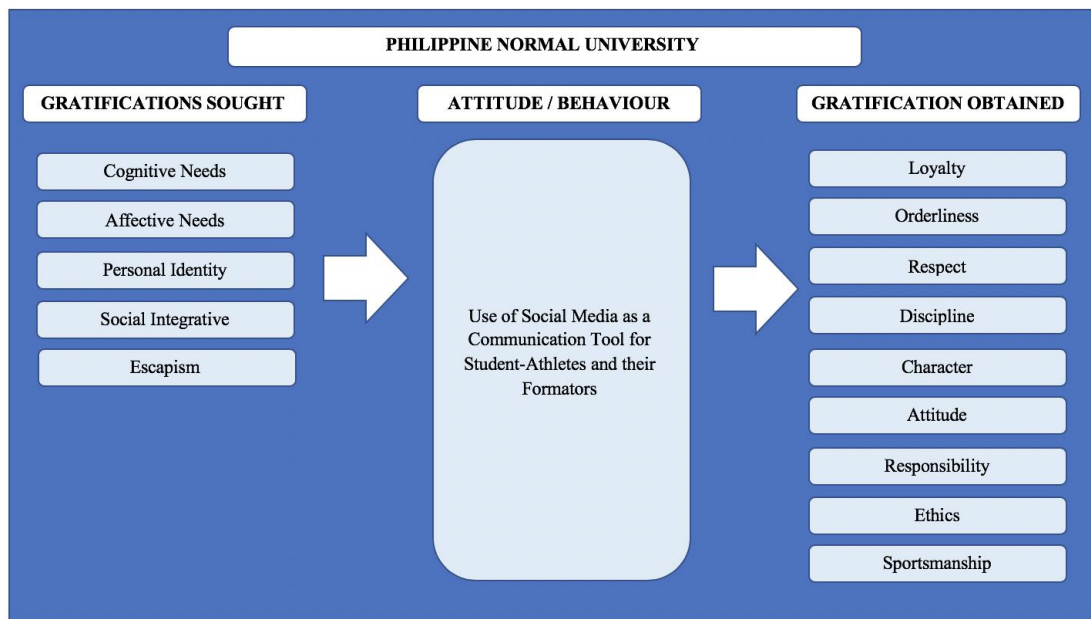
Meanwhile, the participants from the San Beda University were asked the questions to measure how social media meets their needs in forming their student-athletes under the 10 hallmarks of Benedictine education, namely: love of Christ and neighbor, prayer, stability, conversatio, obedience, discipline, humility, stewardship, hospitality, and community (SBU, 2018).

Figure 2
Uses and Gratifications Theory and Core Values of San Beda University



Finally, the participants from the Philippine Normal University were asked questions that measure how social media meets their needs in forming their student-athletes under their core values, which are loyalty, orderliness, respect, discipline, character, attitude, responsibility, ethics, and sportsmanship (PNU, 2018).

Figure 3
Uses and Gratifications Theory and Core Values of Philippine Normal University



5. Methodology

The study aimed to explore the roles of social media in the formation of student-athletes by describing why student-athletes and their formators use social media as a communication vehicle, how social media satisfies their human needs, specifically Blumler and Katz’s (1973) five typologies of media use, and how social media helps them develop the core values of the universities where the participants of the study belong. The research design of the study was exploratory, since the researcher explored the social media phenomenon rather than offering final and conclusive solutions to existing problems (Dudovskiy, 2013).

5.1 Sampling Technique

The researcher used non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, for this study. Purposive sampling entails selecting participants based on pre-set criteria, which allows the researcher to ensure that each participant will provide unique and rich information of value to the study (Etikan, Abubakar, & Alkassim, 2015).

In this study, the researcher selected three universities: the University of Santo Tomas because it has proven to be one of the strongest teams in the University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) as it took home its 42nd general championship trophy for the seniors’ division for the third straight year during the closing ceremony of the UAAP Season 80; San Beda University because it dominated the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) as they secured a grand slam win after emerging as the overall champions from Season 91 to Season 93 (SBU, 2018); and the Philippine Normal University because it is where majority of the teachers, who would be serving as future formators in the country are trained (PNU, 2018). Gathering data from these three universities is enough given that in qualitative

research aims to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness (Polinghorne, 2005). Moreover, this study is not primarily concerned with numbers but instead prioritizes depth.

With this, the researcher chose tenured professors, coaches, and athletic directors of each university as participants of the study. Tenured professors are usually better on many dimensions than a non-tenured professor (Dubner, 2013), as there is also a greater possibility that tenured teachers will experiment and use new teaching methods because, unlike probationary teachers, they are able to practice more their academic freedom (Fenster, 2014). Just like the teachers of the student-athletes, their coaches also play an integral role in their formation, as they teach not only athletic skills, but also life skills (Lyness, 2015), and serve as role models for the behavior and the skills that are needed to be victorious not just inside the court, but also in other aspects of life (Johnson, Wojnar, Price, Foley, Moon, Esposito & Cromartie, 2011). Meanwhile, athletic directors and moderators provide guidance and direction to their players and coaches and ensure that there is always a balance between academics and athletics (Angst, 2019).

The researcher submitted a letter addressed to the athletic directors asking for their approval to be part of the study. Then, the athletic directors were asked to give names of the potential participants that fit the criteria given by the researcher. The researcher contacted these potential participants through an email where they agreed on a common time for an interview.

5.2 Data Gathering

Conducting interviews is the most practical technique in getting the story behind the experiences of the participants (McNamara, 1999) since interviews seek to understand the meaning of what the participants say (Kvale, 1996). In this study, interviews were done to discover how people think and feel about using social media to fulfill their human needs.

The researcher interviewed participants from UST, SBU, and PNU. The researcher met all participants in person to give them a copy of the informed consent form and to explain to them their roles in the conduct of the study. Then, the participants attached their signatures in the said form to show their approval to be part of the study.

The researcher interviewed the student-athletes' formators, specifically their teachers, coaches, and athletic directors of their respective universities. The interviews were conducted one-on-one in person to allow more meaningful conversations to transpire and to gain deeper insights to specific answers (Marshall, 2016). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full. The list of interview questions used in this study is found in appendix A. As per request, the researcher allowed the interviewees to share off the record responses and to terminate the interview whenever they wished.

All information given by the participants of the study were kept confidential. No personal questions were asked, and no identifying information was shared. The researcher asked all the participants to suggest a pseudonym for themselves to be used to identify them in the final document and in all written reports that arise from the study. Only the researcher had access to the raw interview data.

5.3 Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using typological analysis following protocols from Hatch (2002). The researcher studied each university as a specific case and started the analysis process by dividing the overall data set into categories or groups based on predetermined typologies. The researcher used predetermined typologies in this study following Hatch's (2002) typological analysis. The typologies used in this study were based on Blumler and Katz's uses and gratifications theory, together with the core values of UST, SBU, and PNU that were specifically designed for their student-athletes. These predetermined typologies were used to form the code book in analyzing the data of the study.

The researcher read the entire data set with each specific typology in mind. The researcher marked entries that were connected to the said typologies, and data excerpts were copied to separate word processing files. After that, the researcher focused on the data gathered within the predetermined typologies by writing the main ideas of each excerpt or entry on a summary sheet, with one summary sheet corresponding to one typology unique to each university.

Using the summary sheets, the researcher searched for meaning in the language used by the participants by identifying hypothetical patterns, relationships, and themes within each typology. Patterns are regularities, and they come in several forms such as similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondent, and causation (Hatch, 2002). Relationships are links that can be useful in identifying connections between data elements. Examples of these semantic relationships are strict inclusion, rationale, cause-effect and means-end (Spradley, 1979). Themes are abstractions from the data that encapsulate deeper ideas found in the statements (Hatch, 2002), and are integrating concepts that can be defined as recurring statements that are found in most of the pertinent data (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner & Steinmetz, 1991).

The researcher then returned to the original data and coded and categorized ideas and concepts according to the patterns identified. Records containing the codes and the categories were made for the data to be more organized and more accessible (Hatch, 2002). In addition, the researcher also ensured reliability and validity in the data analysis.

One sentence generalization that expressed the relationship between two or more concepts found in specific contexts under investigation were also constructed by the researcher before going back to the data to look for powerful examples that could be used to support the generalizations of the study. Using these quotations, the researcher was also able to do a final checking of the analysis. If the researcher found many good examples to cite, then this indicated that the results of the study were well supported. However, if the researcher had difficulty looking for quotations that would strengthen the generalizations, then the researcher repeated the analysis process to ensure that the results of the study were accurate, valid, and reliable.

The researcher also checked for researcher's effects by looking at the age, gender, education, background, and language differences between the researcher and the participants, for these things could have affected the outcome of the interview (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It was also equally important to consider the effects of the background variables like the time and the place where the interviews were conducted (Ezzy, 2002).

After this, the researcher searched for possible and plausible explanations of the findings by making a summary of the findings that arose from the data analysis process. After analyzing the data, the researcher stored the raw interview data electronically without identifiers. Only the researcher had access to the said storage.

6. Results and Discussion

In this study, the researcher used a different set of typologies based on the core values of the select institutions and the UGT typologies of media use for each school. After analyzing the data thoroughly, the researcher found that social media performs different roles in the formation of student-athletes per university. In UST, the researcher found that social media has different roles in the formation of Thomasian student-athletes. First, formators believe that social media plays a crucial role in enhancing teamwork, fostering improved collaboration among student-athletes, and contributing to their development as better team players. Additionally, they also perceive social media as a platform that cultivates moral uprightness among student-athletes, particularly in the online realm, where their posts

reflect not only their individual personalities but also the image of the university they are associated with. Furthermore, formators also think that social media is a tool for instilling piety and religious earnestness in student-athletes.

Moreover, formators believe that social media empowers student-athletes, fostering confidence and self-reliance. They see it as a valuable tool for teaching recognition of others' abilities, qualities, and achievements, inspiring student-athletes to cultivate a more respectful demeanor. Additionally, formators posit that social media aids in the development of conduct, behavior, and attitudes characteristic of skilled and trained individuals. This is achieved through encouraging critical thinking and responsible use of social media.

Furthermore, formators also assert that social media contributes to the competitiveness and superiority of student-athletes by enabling them to enhance both their athletic and academic skills. They view social media as a tool that facilitates the expression of sympathy, affection, and kindness among student-athletes. In addition, formators believe that social media stimulates eagerness and interest among student-athletes in fulfilling their responsibilities, ultimately contributing to their overall sense of responsibility and reliability in various aspects of their lives.

Meanwhile, in SBU, the researcher also found that social media has various roles in the formation of the Bedan student-athletes. The study discovered that formators consider social media as a crucial tool for student-athletes to nurture and sustain relationships with peers and others, as it functions as a communication platform that allows student-athletes to interact with each other and the broader community. Additionally, formators view social media as a space for student-athletes to express their devotion, faith, and spiritual life, contributing to the dissemination of inspiration among their online networks.

Moreover, formators also see social media as instrumental in fostering collective commitment to seeking God among student-athletes. They perceive it as a monitoring tool, providing insights into the emotional expressions of student-athletes online, offering formators opportunities for immediate correction and guidance. Likewise, social media, according to formators, also plays a role in enhancing the listening skills of student-athletes.

Furthermore, formators believe that social media contributes to the development of discipline, both on and off the court, among student-athletes, as it serves as a tool for self-assessment, enabling student-athletes to recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, formators assert that social media fosters awareness among student-athletes about their roles within a larger ecological context, emphasizing responsibilities beyond their roles as students and athletes. Consequently, formators conceive social media as a tool for promoting open-mindedness among student-athletes, teaching them the power of acceptance and the importance of addressing ignorance. Lastly, formators consider social media as a connecting link, facilitating the integration of student-athletes into broader communities beyond their immediate circles.

Finally, in PNU, the researcher found that similar to UST and SBU, social media also has various roles in the formation of the PNUan student-athletes. In fact, it was found that their formators strongly advocate the belief that social media serves as an influential platform in teaching student-athletes to place trust in their team and teammates and in fostering the development of strong relationships among team members. Additionally, formators see social media as a tool with the capacity to enhance the behavior of student-athletes both on and off the court. By promoting heightened awareness of university rules and policies, social media contributes to a more disciplined and rule-abiding demeanor among student-athletes.

Furthermore, formators contend that social media plays a pivotal role in instilling respect in student-athletes towards others. This, in turn, aids in the improvement of their overall behavior and discipline, creating a positive impact within and beyond the sporting arena. According to formators, social media contributes significantly to character development by teaching student-athletes the importance of acting with a high level of integrity. Moreover, formators believe that social media is instrumental in fostering a positive attitude among student-athletes, influencing how they interact with others and respond to adversity. This is because the platform is seen as a means to develop responsible individuals, as student-athletes learn to navigate the ethical considerations of online interactions by drawing insights from shared experiences. For the formators, social media contributes to the cultivation of genuine sportsmanship, further enhancing the holistic development of student-athletes.

To sum up, the researcher found that social media is being used to train the student-athletes to become competent, compassionate and committed individuals in UST. In SBU, the researcher found that social media is being used for the student-athletes to learn how to live a life inspired by their university's patron, St. Benedict. Social media is also used by the Bedan formators to empower the spiritual life of the student-athletes. In PNU, the researcher found that social media is used to let the student-athletes to realize the things that should be done and that should be avoided since these PNU student-athletes are future teachers.

For the major commonalities, the researcher found that even if each institution has a different set of core values that are used in forming the student-athletes, student-athletes and formators from UST, SBU and PNU still use social media for the same reasons. Social media is used in UST, SBU and PNU for information dissemination by both student-athletes and their formators. Social media help the student-athletes and their formators to be aware and to be updated of the things that they need to know to be able to come up with better decisions and sound opinions. Student-athletes and formators from the select institutions also use social media to communicate and to interact with one another which allows them to sustain and to maintain their relationship with other people despite being distant with one another. Social media is also being used by the formators to give reminders to the student-athletes about their obligations and responsibilities as students, and as athletes. UST, SBU, and PNU student-athletes also use social media to get confidence from their fans and supporters who express their appreciation online. The formators also believe that these student-athletes use social media as their emotional outlet, and this is where they post their inner sentiments and thoughts and release the things that they cannot tell in person. With this, their formators use social media to know them better and to assess and to monitor their character and behavior. Lastly, social media is used to in all the select institutions as a tool to influence good manners and right conduct which would allow them to build a strong character inculcated with positive morals and virtues.

In connection to the UGT typologies of media use (Katz et al., 1973), which are cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative, integration and social interaction, escapism, the researcher found that social media is used to address all those needs in UST, SBU and PNU. Student-athletes and formators from the select institutions use social media to acquire the information and knowledge to better understand what is happening around them. They also use social media to express and to satisfy their emotions and to enhance and improve their self-confidence and self-esteem. Not only that, they use social media to remain connected with their friends, loved ones and families, too. Finally, although this was not explicitly seen in the data compared to the other typologies, student-athletes and their formators also use social media to shift and divert attention from something unpleasant to pleasant.

For the major differences, the researcher found that each institution has their own focus in the process of forming the character of their student-athletes and in inculcating among them the core values of each institution. In UST, the researcher found that social media is being used to train the student-athletes to become competent, compassionate and committed. For competence, Thomasian student-athletes and formators use social media for the student-athletes to be competitive and superior and to be

empowered. For compassion, Thomasian student-athletes and formators use social media for the student-athletes to become God-fearing individuals who are known for being respectful. Lastly, for commitment, Thomasian student-athletes and formators use social media for the student-athletes to become morally upright individuals who are professional, credible and reliable.

In SBU, the researcher found that social media is being used for the student-athletes to live a life inspired by the university's patron, St. Benedict. The most unique findings and results that arose from the data shared by the participants from SBU are mostly related to the empowerment of the spiritual life of the Bedan student-athletes. This is because three of their core values, namely: Love of Christ and Neighbor, Prayer: A Life Marked by Lectio, Liturgy and Mindfulness, and Stability: Commitment to the Daily Life of this Place, Its Heritage and Tradition, are focused on strengthening the relationship of the student-athletes to God. No wonder, the Bedan student-athletes have a stronger faith, and connection to God because everything that they do in their institution is inspired by the Benedictine way of life. Bedan formators use social media to help the student-athletes to glorify and to honor God in everything that they do. This can be seen with how they propagate social awareness, how they spread positivity, and how they share their spiritual life practices to other people.

In PNU, the researcher found that social media is being used by the formators to influence the behavior and attitude of the student-athletes. The researcher found that social media is used to let the student-athletes realize what should be done and what should be avoided since these PNU student-athletes are future teachers. The core values of the institution are focused on forming student-athletes who can serve as role models to other people since they are being trained to become loyal, orderly, respectful, disciplined, and responsible individuals who have a pleasing attitude and strong character inculcated with positive morals and virtues. Indeed, social media is helpful in achieving these goals since it helps the formators in monitoring the behavior of the student-athletes, and it also aids the formators in reminding the student-athletes of their duties and responsibilities not just as students, and as athletes, but also as future teachers.

7. Conclusion

Formators believe that student-athletes use social media primarily because they want to release their inner thoughts and emotions. In fact, student-athletes use social media as their emotional outlet, and there are a lot of things that the student-athletes cannot tell in person that they can express online. Moreover, social media is also used as a reference by student-athletes and their formators where they can get information to learn new things. They use social media as their surveillance that will make them feel better by having the feeling that they know what is happening and what is going on around them. Social media offers them information and news that make them feel more secure and safe.

Social media is also used for communication purposes, and it allows the formators, together with the student-athletes, to remain connected to their families, friends and loved ones. In addition, formators also use social media not just to monitor the whereabouts of their student-athletes, but also to control the behavior of their players since it provides them easy access to the things that the student-athletes post online.

On another note, the study showed that when the student-athletes and their formators use social media, they receive empowerment and inspiration that come from their families, loved ones, friends and followers online. They also become empowered and inspired because of the support and the appreciation coming from other people that are being expressed in social media.

Furthermore, social media connects the formators and the student-athletes to a bigger world, and this allows them to boost their self-confidence and self-esteem. Student-athletes can also become instant celebrities because social media offers them popularity. Indeed, social media exposes their faces and their

names to the public, and these things also help in making the student-athletes more motivated to do better.

Social media also helps the formators in reminding the players of the things that they need to know. It provides the formators information on how the formators can help the student-athletes improve and develop, and it also allows the formators to monitor the behavior of the student-athletes and to correct the misdeeds and wrongdoings of their players. This leads them to have a better relationship with the student-athletes because social media gives them a better understanding of who their players are. Not only that, formators also use social media to resolve misunderstanding and to avoid miscommunications. Social media also helps the formators to build and establish emotional connection among their players.

There are also unique gratifications that formators from the select institutions get from using social media. In UST, social media allows the formators to help their team demonstrate superiority, and at the same time, show respect to their rivals. In SBU, social media is used by the formators propagate social awareness among their student-athletes and to inspire their player with their spiritual life practices. In PNU, social media helps the formators to remind the student-athletes of their behavior since they are not just students and athletes, but they are also future teachers.

8. Implications

The results of this study explored the roles of social media in the formation of student-athletes. These findings have several significant implications about social media. Social media serves as a communication tool that connects student-athletes to their formators. The benefits of social media for student-athletes and their formators are massive. Social media can be used as a tool not just for knowledge construction, and skills acquisition, but also for behavior change. Social media does not only present the formators how the student-athletes behave, but it also shows the needs of the student-athletes that should be addressed.

Student-athletes' lives are never easy for they have a lot of responsibilities and obligations that they need to fulfil. Therefore, their formation is very significant. There is an implication on the existing character formation programs in the select universities that are involved in this study. In UST, formation focused on forming student-athletes who are compassionate, committed and competent. In SBU, formation focused on empowering the spiritual formation of student-athletes. In PNU, formation focused on producing student-athletes who know what is right and what is wrong since these student-athletes are future teachers. Overall, the character formation program of each university focuses on different core values. However, all the select universities, namely: UST, SBU, and PNU aim to form student-athletes with a strong character.

9. Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify the roles of social media in the formation of student-athletes. To achieve this goal, interviews were conducted by the researcher with the formators of the student-athletes, specifically professors, coaches and athletic directors. However, there are other formators in the university that can also be involved and be interviewed as participants of the study. Other formators in the school may be the school principals, vice principals, head teachers, subject area coordinators, librarians, guidance counselors, and homeroom advisers. In addition, conducting interviews with student-athletes might also give the researcher a deeper understanding on how social media affect their formation and on how social media fulfill its roles in forming their character.

The study involved only coaches from the Men's and Women's Volleyball teams of the three universities that are involved in the study despite the number of sports being played in the said universities. Involving

other teams in the study might give the researcher new findings that will uncover the different roles of social media in the formation of other student-athletes.

On another note, the researcher focused mainly on the motivations of using social media in forming the character of the student-athletes, so the results cannot be used to identify the reasons of using social media in other areas.

Finally, data gathered in this study could be used as basis of crafting modules and policies on social media education that will allow social media users to maximize the benefits of using social media, while minimizing the harm. This study may also be used by different universities as a guide in coming up with an effective character formation program that fits the learning style of student-athletes. Since the study highlights the role of mediated communication in character formation, the findings may also help formators such as athletic directors, coaches, and professors have a deeper understanding of the roles of social media in behavior change that can be used in enhancing the relationship between student-athletes and their formators.

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BIONOTE:

Mr. Joram Kim Corcuera is a graduate of the Philippine Normal University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in Secondary Education, major in English in 2011. In 2019, he advanced his education and finished his Master of Arts, major in Communication from the Ateneo de Manila University. Currently, he is taking his degree of Doctor of Philosophy, major in English Language Studies at the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Graduate School, where he is writing a dissertation on the intricate field of sports linguistics. He also serves as an assistant professor at the University of Santo Tomas and as an educational consultant at Vibal Group Inc. In addition, he is also a licensed professional teacher and an accredited speaker of the National Educators Academy of the Philippines. His research interests include sports linguistics, sports communication, stylistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis.

Appendix A

List of Interview Questions

University of Santo Tomas

Teamwork

How do you train your student-athletes to be a team player? Does social media play a role in this specific kind of training? What role does it play?

Integrity

What do you do to mold your student-athletes to become morally upright individuals? Does social media help you in addressing this need? How does it help you in developing their integrity and in molding them to be morally upright individuals?

God-fearing

What kind of training do you conduct for your student-athletes to become pious and earnestly religious? Is social media helpful in addressing this need? What role does it play?

Empowerment

How do you train your student-athletes to be confident and self-reliant? Does social media play a role in this specific kind of training? What role does it play?

Respect

How do you train your student-athletes to see the value of recognizing someone's abilities, qualities and achievements? Does social media help you in addressing this need? What role does it play?

Professionalism

What kind of training do you conduct for your student-athletes to develop the conduct, behavior, and attitude of a skilled and trained individual? Is social media helpful in addressing this need? What role does it play?

One-up-manship

How do you train your student-athletes to see the importance of being competitive and superior? Does social media play a role in this specific kind of training? What role does it play?

Warm-heartedness

What kind of training do you do for your student-athletes to show acts of sympathy, affection, and kindness? Is social media helpful in addressing this need? What role does it play?

Enthusiasm

What kind of training do you do for your student-athletes to be more interested and eager in fulfilling their responsibilities? Is social media helpful in addressing this need? What role does it play?

Reliability

How do you train your student-athletes to become trustworthy and reliable? Does social media play a role in this specific kind of training? What role does it play?

San Beda University

Love of Christ and Neighbor

How do you train your student-athletes to be committed to the well-being of others? Does social media have a role? What role does it play?

Prayer

What training do you conduct to make your student-athletes committed to God's presence? Is social media helpful in achieving this need? How?

Stability

What do you do to make your student-athletes committed to seeing God together? Does social media help you in addressing this need? In what ways does it help them to pursue their heart's deepest desire in daily interactions with one another in good and bad times?

Conversatio

How do you train your student-athletes to learn how to let go of their own predilections and false securities? Does social media have a role? What role does it play?

Obedience

What kind of training do you conduct to make your student-athletes see the value of listening? Is social media helpful in addressing this need? In what ways does it allow them to see the importance of being obedient?

Discipline

What do you do to make your student-athletes see that learning doesn't take place without discipline? Does social media have a role? In what ways does it help them strive to be zealous and passionate in developing their crafts fully?

Humility

How do you train your student-athletes to learn how to acknowledge their faults and weaknesses? Is social media helpful in addressing this need? In what ways does it assist them to recognize their own gifts and the gifts of others with gratitude?

Stewardship

What do you do to mold your student-athletes to foster awareness that they are part of a larger ecology? Does social media have a role? In what ways does it help them to understand the essential interdependence of the human community and the natural environment, encouraging the sustainable use of resources and just distribution of the fruits of human labor?

Hospitality

How do you train your student-athletes to become open to being transformed by the other – be it an idea, a person, or an experience? Does social media play a role in this kind of training? What role does it play?

Community

What kind of training do you conduct to connect your student-athletes to the community? Is social media helpful for you in addressing this need? How?

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Loyalty

How do you train your student-athletes to believe in the capacity of their teammates and of their coaches? Does social media play a role in this specific kind of training? In what ways does it help them in keeping team issues within the team and in putting their team above personal glory?

Orderly

What do you do to mold your student-athletes to become observant to the rules and policies of the university? Does social media help you in addressing this need? How does it help you form student-athletes who care for the equipment and facilities of the university?

Respect

What kind of training do you conduct for your student-athletes to speak with officials, coaches, referees with kind words and respect? Is social media helpful in addressing this need? How?

Discipline

How do you train your student-athletes to avoid profanity, obscene gestures, offensive remarks, trash-talking, taunting, boastful celebrations or other actions that demean individuals or team's behavior as a whole? Does social media play a role in this kind of training? What role does it play?

Character

What do you do to mold your student-athletes to act with a high level of integrity, and to treat others with respect even when they disagree with their views? Does social media help you in addressing this need? How?

Attitude

What kind of training do you conduct for your student-athletes to have a positive attitude in interacting with others, and in responding to adversity in a healthy manner? Does social media have a role? In what ways does it help them to interact and to respond in a healthy manner?

Responsibility

How do you train your student-athletes to become responsible individuals? Is social media helpful for you in achieving this need? In what ways does it help make them accountable for their actions?

Ethics

What kind of training do you conduct for your student-athletes to develop an ethical behavior that promotes the goals of the university's sports educational programs? Does social media have a role? What role does it play?

Sportsmanship

What do you do to mold your student-athletes to become generous, fair and courteous individuals, and cheerful losers, who are observant of sports rules? Is social media helpful for you in achieving this need? In what ways does it help you make them see the value of sportsmanship?