

Impacts of Communication Technology on Family Relationship and Interaction in Ado- Odo Ota Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This paper explores how technology has influenced interactions among family members in Ado Odo Ota Local government area of Ogun State. The study adopts convenience sampling with both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The study discovered that most members would rather prefer to have face to face conversation rather than using text messages, whatApps, Facebook etc. Apart from these, participant observed that new technologies have also created conflicts between couples and also parent-child sometimes as a result of excessive use. Parents observed that controlling what children do with technology can be quite challenging. Parents also noted that children are exposed to unacceptable behaviours. The study recommends that parents needs to find a means to regulate their children's use of social media and place boundaries on specific sites and keep check on their children without given prior information.

Keywords: *Communication, Technology, Family, Relationship, Nigeria*

1.0 Introduction

Social media has brought about numerous changes in relationship globally. Hence the family is not spared of the impacts digitalization have on communication and interaction among family members. In recent times, the impact of the advancement in communication through the internet can be felt in almost if not all aspect of human experiences which include but not limited to social, economic and health. Social media has brought about changes in the way we talk, (communicate), think, interact with people as well as the extent to which we make new friends and also keep or leave existing friends. It is also affecting individuals and group's identity formation. With the increase in diversity in communication, life seems to have changed from being seemingly slow to being fast paced and almost everybody is caught up in it (Subranian,

2017). Nelson, (2012) in her discourse stated that new methods of communication via internet has influenced people's experiences because it has helped people to communicate in a way that was not possible before and has continued to speed up communication and people can now experience events as they happen. The speed at which information spread now is amazing as so many people can be reached at the same time. Even when an individual thinks he or she has been able to keep information between few persons it may surprisingly get to the reach of over a hundred persons within the same period of time. Hence, information that is meant to be private may gradually become publicly known.

It is also very interesting to note that in the past before the introduction of the social media, what connects people to the outside world were television, radio and the traditional phones usually domicile in the house or in a stationary place. Soon came the invention of mobile phones which enabled individuals who could afford it hold their phones where ever they went. One major feature of these mobile phones was their ability to perform limited functions. This did not last for long as there came drastic advancement in technology. The world became digitalized and there came the opportunity to perform unbelievable tasks that can be accessed through the internet using mobile phones or laptops or other devices at home with social network sites. Social media is now the most popular means of communication system that has brought about a remarkable change in the mode of communication from the traditional to the web-based model – and it is not limited by time or location (Nyangeni, Du Rand and Van Rooyen, 2015). The objective of this study is to examine the impact of communication technology on family interaction and intimacy in Ado-Odo local government of Ogun State in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of problem

The social media has become a necessary evil leaving researchers with so much to do. This is because digitalization much more than ever before is having so much impact on almost everyone in the society. The multifaceted development in communication in its different phases and faces and the complexity of its impact on man has been well documented in the field of communication (Pulido, Redondo-Sama, Sorde-Marti & Flecha, 2018); psychology (Clark, Algoe & Green, 2017; Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad, 2017); Health, (Keles, McCrae and Grealish, 2020; Nyangeni, Du Rand & Van Rooyen, 2015); education (Akubugwo & Burke, 2013). Facebook has been found to be one of the most widely used social networks sites with both negative and positive impacts on family relationship. Clement, (2019) reported that Facebook has about 2.45billion active users worldwide. Though social networks sites allows family members get in touch with distant family members, increase interaction among family members, share vital information it has been found to be having detrimental impact on family relationship and interaction. Social media sites like facebook have been found to be a major source of conflict in the families especially spousal and parent child conflict. A number of young people also learn antisocial behavior like watching of pornography, unacceptable sexual behavior and slangs which are sources of concern for parents. It also an established source of depression and isolation. It is also makes family members who live together feel living apart. This study therefore seeks to explore the impact of social media technologies on relationship and interaction within the family.

2.0 Literature Review

2.0.1 Digital Communication Technology and Change in Family Connection

Extant literature show that social media has positive impacts such as increasing and facilitation of information, exchange of romantic messages among couples and also creating opportunity to speak with distant relatives. It is paramount to state here that in the past members of a family seek and crave for physical presence of their loved ones where they could express warmth, holding to each other in acceptance and appreciation of one another. This face to face communication is what is known to deepen and strengthen relationship in families. But with digitalization this has given way to virtual communication and interactions and it is not only reducing face to face communication but also widens the gap among individuals by reducing the time they spend together (Khalid, 2017). Hence, Subranian, (2017) puts it that social interactions have become mere impersonal, through mobile phones and other electrical gadgets. The development of social media network is very important in family arena. It matters for the family because the emerging changes in interaction in the modern society influence what happens in the home. It can either improve relationship and interaction or cause fragile families to break down. Ngonidzashe, (2016) citing the work of Mesch (2006) emphasized that families who have more time together in common activities enjoy better quality of communication which is what keep the family on. But this has been undermined by reliance on electronic communication thus making the modern family individualistic.

2.0.2 Social Media and Human Interaction

Man is a social being, hence the need to constantly interact. Subranian, (2017) noted that humans interact in order to fulfill their social needs. Thus Nyangeni, et al, (2015) define social media as a set of tools designed online intended for social interaction. Hence the advent of the social media has brought about changes in the mode of interaction and communication among individuals. Social Media include a variety web-based technologies and service. The first recognizable social network site is 'Six Degrees.com' (Salgur, 2016). Social network sites include Facebook, twitter, instagram, personal blogs, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, youtube (Nyangeni, et al, 2015). It is amazing that of all social network platforms, the facebook has been reported to be the most widely used (Jan, Soomro, & Ahmad, 2017; Pulido, Redondo-Sama, SordeÂ-Martõ & Flechal, 2018 ;Clark, Algoe & Green 2018).

Subranian (2017) succinctly submitted that the preferred means of interaction now is the social media and interestingly the family is not left out. The family is the first agent of socialization and a domain where interpersonal interaction takes place from cradle to adulthood so whatever goes on at this level is very important. Moreover communication plays a vital role in transmitting the right values as it used to be in traditional families. If a child does not grow up in a family that instills the right values which makes a person acceptable in the society that child will be a problem to the society.

2.0.3 Effects of technology on family relationship

It has been established earlier that technology has found its way into the sharpening of man and his interactions with other people. However the impact of social media depends on how it is used. In fact, Keles, McCrae, and Grealish (2020) refer to social media as a double “edged sword”. Findings from Diomidous, Chardalias, Magita, Koutonias, Panagoitopoulou, and Manta (2016) showed that social media facilitates communication and also gives quick access to information but concluded by emphasizing that it is dangerous for young users.

Quite a number of researches show a positive impact of social media on family relationship and interaction. Sharaievska, (2012), in her study on family satisfaction and social networks found out that most family members in her sample felt that social network provides relaxation. This suggests that family members could get themselves relaxed after the day’s job while chatting with friends on line. One major thing that we need to understand is that the brain is actually engaged in thinking and is still actively working. Hence some research has shown that social networks engagement could actually cause distraction for people that should be resting after a very busy day. Valenzuela, Halpern, and Katz (2014) found that social network sites like Facebook provides emotional support for those going through troubles in their relationship. Interestingly family members can now have conference talk in a situation where a family member or a spouse is separated by distance; they can interact simultaneously and enjoy one another’s company. Ngonidzashe, (2016) argued that families members who have been pushed apart as a result of jobs or other socioeconomic reasons are able to keep communication line open as a result of social network sites.

2.0.4 Social Networks and Family Interface

A number of studies suggest that social network sites have detrimental impact on family relationship and interaction. Sultana, (2017) in her study discovered that young people who had low cohesion with their parents were those who were high users of social network while those who had higher cohesion were low users. It was also found out in this study that one major factor contributing to a decline in family relationship in Bangladesh is social network sites. The result of this study is in tandem with the research carried out by Valenzuela, et al (2014) who found out from the result of their survey in United States that social networks sites has a positive correlation with couples experiencing trouble in their relationship and subsequent divorce. These authors also found out that social network sites reduce wellbeing of marital relationship through habituation and addiction. Facebook one of the social network sites which has been found to be the most widely used has been reported to be a source of unhappy family life and divorce as it increases opportunity for conflicts in the home. Results from the study of Clayton and Smith, (2013) showed that Facebook changes people’s interpersonal relationship. Family members also neglect interacting with each other as they are engaged on social media sites. Thus there is a reduced time for engaging in quality facial communication. Nelson, (2012) noted in her study that though technology has given people opportunity to connect through various means that were not possible before , it has also deprived people the advantages of face to face communication.

Apart from the above Romero-Ruiz, Sanchez, Pena-Plata, Vasquez-Giraldo, Aguilera-Cardona, Herazo-Avandano, Valencia-Arias and Bran-Piedrahita (2017), suggest from their study that communication technology increases individualization which is not too good for a nuclear family as virtual communication inhibits physical interaction. Romero-Ruiz, et al, (2017), also collaborating this view stated that family members when physically present together may not interact well because they might each be engrossed with interacting with other people on the social media; hence family members tend to perceive those around them as distant. They also asserted from data gathered that virtual communication can be misunderstood than verbal exchange. For Dragon, (2015) rapid expansion of technology is negatively affecting people's interaction as people have become more reliant on using technology to discuss with family and friends and they are neglecting to engage personally with friends and relatives. He further stated that the rate at which people use phones and other devices even when they are physically with friends and relatives is a cause for concern. The use of technology has driven families apart as they rely heavily on the use of this gadget and neglect to have intimate or face to face communication that was widely used before the existence of these technologies.

3.0 Methodology

In order to achieve the objective of this research, both quantitative and qualitative design was adopted. The participants were drawn from Ado Ota local government Area. They were made up of those who have formal education. A total of 150 questionnaires were administered and interview guide was also used to elicit information for the qualitative data. Convenience sampling was used. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptively while qualitative data was thematically analyzed.

4.0 Results of findings

4.0.1 Analysis of Responses Collected

Part 1

Table 1.1: Respondents Gender Distribution (N=150)

Gender	Frequency/respondent	Percentage
Male	68	45
Female	82	55
Total	150	100

Source: Author's Field survey, 2019

Table 1.2: Respondent's Marital Status

	Frequency	Percentage
Married	36	24
Unmarried	114	76
Total	150	100

Source: Author's Field survey, 2019

Table 1. 3: Type of Communication Technology Used More by Respondents (N=150)

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Email	9	6
Whatsapp	71	47
Twitter	43	29
Facebook	27	18
Instagram	0	0
Youtube	0	0
Total	150	100

Source: Author's Field survey, 2019

The table 1.1 on gender distribution of respondents revealed that females were 82% as against males were 18%.

The most utilized social network sites used by our respondents as indicated on Table 1.3 are whatsapp. This is not consistent with existing work like Saleh and Muktar 2015 and Subranian (2017) who in their study found Facebook most used. The result showed that in usage was as Whatsapp 47%, Face book has 18%, twitter 29% and others had 0%. About 6% of our respondent indicated that they would rather send email than use any of the social media network sites. What could have accounted for higher usage of whatsapp in our sample could be because most of the respondents were drawn from academic environment that may be too busy to spend time on face book.

Part 2

Table 2.1: What Extent are the Following Factors Important to Build and Deepen Family Relationship

Factor	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Time	102	30	0	18
Openness	62	79	0	9
Truthfulness	89	36	18	7
Mutual respect	98	43	0	9
Not comparing	53	52	9	30
Face to face communication	62	27	52	9

Source: Author's Field survey, 2019

The result in Table 2.1 show that communication, time, truthfulness and not comparing are important factors in building and deepening family relationship. More than 70% of respondent either strongly agreed or agree to these factors, while it can be observed that face to face communication is also an important factor but not like the other factors because 59% either strongly agreed or agreed.

Part 3

Table 3.1 Social Media Technology Impact Negatively on Family Relationship and Interaction

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	80	53
No	70	47
I don't know	0	0
Total	150	100

Source: Author's Field survey, 2019

Table 3.1 on the impact of social media on relationship, 53% answered Yes while 47% answered No. This suggest that more respondent believe that social media has negative impact on family relation and interaction.

Table 3.2.If You Are in Conversation With Someone and Your Phone Rings Which of These Will You Do?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Quick response to the phone call without necessarily taking permission	18	12
Check who is calling before responding	71	47
Keep looking at your phone while you keep on with your conversation	7	5
Try to send a message as you keep talking	36	24
Request permission to pick your call	18	12
Ignore the call while you keep on with your conversation	0	0
Total	150	100

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2019

Table 3.2 represents the rate at which face to face conversation is disrupted. The result above showed that 47% will respond to phone conversation while in discussion with any family member. Surprisingly no respondent will ignore if their phone rings while in serious conversation. This could be a source of conflict due to inattentiveness.

Table 3.3 When Eating With Your Family Will You Respond To Phone Calls, Keep Your Phone With You, Surf The Internet

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	123	82
No	27	18
Total	150	100

In table 3.3 on what respondent do when eating with family members, it can be deduced that 82% of respondent will engage in phone conversation, surf the internet while 18% will do neither phone conversation or surf the internet while at meal table with family members. This suggest that even at meal table members may hardly really interact as each is engrossed with one activity or the other on the phone, so at meal time almost all heads are turned towards phone and not even the food or any member of the family.

Part 4

Table 4.1 Social Media Technology Has;

	Yes	No	I don't know
Increased the quality of time I spend in talking with my family members.	113	28	9
Increase level of intimacy between spouses	107	43	0
Made family members who are far look as though very near	132	18	0
Helped me to know my family member's social network	141	9	0
Made some of my family members social network my friends	141	6	0

Helped me reach family members when in dear need	132	18	0
Created gaps between among family members	18	88	44

Table 4.1 on the positive impact of social network sites, the result showed social media has increased the quality of time in talking and interacting with family members as 75% said Yes to this factor. Other factors like increased intimacy between spouses, made family members who are far look as though they are very near, helped to know family members social network, made some of my family members social network my friends, helped reach family members when in serious need 71%, 88%, 94%, 94%, and 88% respectively. It is noteworthy here to state that about 71% respondents either strongly agreed or agreed to the factor that social media is creating gaps among family members. This is surprising also because most respondents agreed that social networks sites has overall positive impacted on family relationship.

Table 4.2. To What Extent Do The Following Factors Result To Conflict Within The Family Due To Social Media?

Factor	Respondent			
	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
When a spouse hides information on the phone from the partner	45	44	9	52
When a partner spends too much money on accessing social media	36	53	9	52
When a partner makes derogatory comments about the spouse on social media spouse	62	36	16	36

When a partner has intimate conversation with opposite sex on social media	71	27	9	43
When a partner compares spouse with another person on the social media	71	36	18	25
Lack of attention during interaction	71	43	36	0
When children don't reveal their access to social network profile	61	62	9	18
privacy of social network profile	36	53	18	43

Table 4.2 Shows that there are a lot of factors that has contributed to conflict among family members due to the use of social media. The result showed that when a spouse hides information from the partner there would be dispute because a total of 59% respondent either strongly agreed or agreed to this factor. Apart from this when a spouse spends too much money on accessing social media, when a spouse has intimate conversation with opposite sex on social media or when spouse compares a partner with another, lack of attention during face to face conversation, when children don't reveal their access to social network and the desire to maintain privacy of social network sites was reported by our respondent as important sources of conflict within the family because 69%, 65%, 71%, 71%, 76%, 82%, and 59% either strongly agreed or agreed to these factors respectively.

4.0.2 Interview Findings

The interview conducted also showed that social media technology provides avenue for family members to be abreast with firsthand information from family members on certain issues. Two of the respondents who were interviewed also suggested that parents can promptly get to know the need of their children in schools far away from home. They also said that children in school can be monitored especially when the location on their phones is turn on. On social media improving interaction within the family a respondent stated thus; ’

“Communication technology has really enhanced my interaction and relationship between myself and my family members. I make video calls with my brother in the U.S. and I can communicate with my wife any time I want”

Another respondent also said;

“I get informed about what is happening to any member of my family through whatsapp. In fact we created a family group chat. Just recently a family member was delivered of a baby and it was shared on the platform”

On the negative impact of communication technology a respondent stated that;

“Social media technology can cause divorce because it increases the likelihood of conflict as each partner may want to know who the partner is chatting with and on getting to know that it is intimate conversation with someone there would be serious fight.” It is also a cause of serious disagreement in families over boundaries or how far a spouse can go”

Another respondent, a student stated that;

“Social media has a huge negative impact and a source of conflict between children and parents. As youths we can learn to smoke and do so many bad things by watching videos on how to do them. In fact I can say it has serious detrimental influence on us young people”

Also a respondent commented that;

“It can destroy emotional feelings between husband and wife. If either of the spouses is engaged in watching pornography, he /she may be satisfied sexually and may not want the sexual and emotional satisfaction from his or her spouse.

Other negative impacts noted are that young people watch pornography and learn some social vices which are not healthy for the society, a respondent noted that within a space of one week that he gave his son a phone he had over 300 pornographic videos so he had to cease the phone from his child. Other respondent also noted that because of addiction to social networks sites most young people want to live isolated /individual lives and they as well do not do things with consciousness .Hence the respondent commented that ;

“My sister in-law boiled water in the pot until it dried up thinking she was cooking food (indomie noodle) so if she had poured the indomie it would have burnt and turned black because she was busy with facebook things.”

Another respondent also said;

“I forgot my change which was huge with a bus conductor while engrossed with my phone”

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The study explored the impact of communication Technology on family relationship and interaction and it was discovered from our sample that many believe that social media technology has facilitated communication and brought about reconnection to some family members and this assertion is in agreement with some previous studies (Sharaievska, 2012 & Valenzuela, et al 2014). As good as social media networks is, it is still a source of concern as it was also observed by our respondent that it is creating gaps among family members as members prefer to get engrossed with interacting with friends on the social media, engage in virtual communication, rather than have some quality moments of interaction with family members. This finding is in congruence with the result of the study carried out by Clayton and Smith, (2013). Hence, addiction to social network site can facilitate individualism and isolation. It was also discovered that social network constitute a challenge for parents who find it difficult to regulate their children on its use. Apart from this it is a serious source of conflict between spouses and subsequent separation or breakup.

The study recommends that parents needs to find a means to regulate their children's use of social media and place boundaries on specific sites and keep check on their children without given prior information. There should be ground rules between spouses on SNSs usage like sites to visit when to stop for the day and people they will not want each other to engage with on social media.

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