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## EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON FAMILY COMMUNICATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Social media has a lot of influence on family interaction. There, are however, issues of concern which include internet addiction and concurrent sleep deprivation resulting from long hours of internet use leading to minimum family communication. The study focused on the influence of social media on family communication. The general objective of the study was to establish the influence of social media on family communication. Specifically, the study sought to determine the various types of social media commonly used in families and how they affect personal space of family members, and content accessed on social media and their effect on communication among family members. The study was informed by Uses and Gratification Theory and Time Displacement Theory. The study employed a descriptive survey research design which involved observing and describing the behavior of the subjects without influencing them. Purposive sampling and snowballing techniques were used to come up with the sample size. The population targeted was families, specifically parents and children residing in Nairobi County and using social media. A sample of three hundred and seventy respondents was targeted. In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used as tools to collect data. Fifteen families were interviewed and fifteen Focus Group Discussions were also conducted. Snowballing technique was used to get these participants. The data collected was analyzed qualitatively. Findings of the study indicated that younger participants preferred to communicate on social media than have physical interaction since it was less involving and allowed one to share freely. They depended on social media for advice, mentorship, entertainment and even gave up their privacy for personal space. The findings revealed the challenges that impede proper communication and interaction among family members and provided to the relevant authorities and policy makers greater insight into ways and means of making use of social media more effective in contributing to interactivity among family members. Results of this study have provided insight into family communication for family communicators, provided knowledge for family therapists that will help settle family communication discourses, and also added to the knowledge of research on family communication.*

**Key words:** Social media, family, family communication, personal space, communication,

### Introduction

Social Networking Sites have become the most widespread online destinations in recent years. One of the main concerns over the use of social networking sites is that as people

spend more and more time communicating online and handling their daily tasks in cyberspace, it may be that they spend less time interacting with one another in the physical world. A previous study by (O’Keeffe et al., 2011) found that Social media platforms provide great chances for getting in touch with people who have similar interests. They also noted that some sociologists feared that the spread of Internet technology would lead to increased social isolation and that social media users would suffer internet addiction leading to minimal family interaction. This means good and effective family communication is paramount for any meaningful interaction. This was thus the motivation for the researcher to carry out this study since family is the crucible of society, to a large extent, this vital social entity is defined by the way its members interact .With the increased use of social media, an interest in its impact on everyday life has developed .This study endeavors to investigate whether there is any relationship between social media use and family communication among family internet users of Nairobi County.

Initially, with traditional media, parents used to be the direct recipients of information then they would pass it on to their children knowing what would be of benefit to the children and what would be harmful to them. Children knew only what they were exposed to by their parents, this way, parents were able to instill values in the children, establish various roles in the family members and even shape individuals throughout their lives. Today, children know what they are exposed to through social media since they access information directly. Earlier, interpersonal communication was most practiced among family members and they would even gather to share ideas, information or rejoice together. Social media is a popular trend of communication among a number of families today. Messages can reach audiences and target groups in real time and they can create changes and predispositions. Family members repossess information directly through social media and this in turn influences the way they communicate.

This study therefore examines the influence of social media on family communication with a special focus on Nairobi County, Kenya. Specifically, this research sought to analyze the influence of social media on families and how they affect personal space among family members. Family communication in this study means the way verbal and non-verbal information is exchanged between family members and their ability to pay attention to what others are thinking and feeling. Family in this study narrows down to parents and children.

Fitzpatrick (2000) in his study discovered that families are formed through social interaction and any time family members communicate; they send information to each other as well as enact their relationships. Through communication families are defined and members learn how to organize meanings. They are also able to observe and maintain rules set in the family concerning various issues such as conflict and personal space (Noller, 2002). Communication enables family members to create mental pictures of life. These pictures may last for long and over generations (Ganong et al, 2001).

Forester (2011) in his study says that Social media enables users to interact one with another and take charge of their own information and data as well as being able to collaborate and exchange ideas .That they are considered among the most creative users of Social Networking Sites having been brought up exposed to digital technology . The fact that individuals are interlinked worldwide through social media is of great concern since there is information overload with no restrictions of access (Ahn, 2011). This concern emanates from

the fact that a number of studies have found associations between increased social media use and depression, social isolation, sleep problems, anxiety, low self-esteem, eating concerns and even suicide risk. Families are exposed to the same information overload on social media which has changed the way they communicate. In the same breath, this study sought to evaluate influence of social media use on relationships between youths and parents in families.

(Ukpe et al., 2013) in her study on social media examines the relation between social media and its impact on behavior change of the youth. The study focuses on the use of social media in the lives of university students and their implication on their behavior. Findings from Njoroge's study show that 60.3% of the youth in Kenya spend two to five hours a day on the computer surfing and that 86.3% were on social media with Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter topping the list (Ukpe et al., 2013). What the children learn at the early stages runs through to adulthood. In traditional media, interpersonal and small group communications were the common modes of communication used among family members. This in turn contributed to the transfer of morals and values among family members since the family was considered to be the first institution for teaching morals and values in society.

In Kenya today, technology forms an integral part of life for most individuals especially through the use of social media. Kids as young as four or five up to elderly people are now tangled in some way, shape or form. Almost a third of people are now using mobile phones, email and even social network websites to talk to their loved ones, instead of sitting down to have a face to face talk. One in five only gets to know what a certain family member is doing by checking online (Mwanyua, 2015). Social media is one big basis that can give you an advantage or disadvantage to having a relationship with your child. Most adolescents and teenagers today use Facebook. Some adolescents and teenagers would say that they are hooked on to it. Social networking is everywhere and can be gained access to from just about anywhere. Children as young as nine and younger are linked to the global technology. Social networking is a link that just can't be broken. It tends to pull people away from the real world. Many people focus on social media to divert them from their real-life problems. Doing so it has caused people to care less for personal relationships with their friends and family, it is an opening for people to leave the real world. Social networking allows people to disregard their feelings, and responsibilities to the people around them (Twenge & Campbell, 2008).

Social media statistics in Kenya indicate 100% social media usage. This is summarized as follows: Facebook usage 92.44%, Twitter 5.29%, Pinterest 1.16%, Tumblr 0.38 %, Stumble upon 0.16%, Reddit 0.04%, You tube 0.07% and Google + 0.42% (Ukpe et al., 2015)

Kenyan on Twitter (KOT) cumulatively command a following of 120,199,588 followers and cumulatively follow 49,539,705 users. The average Kenyan follows eighty-nine users and has two hundred and fourteen followers. The growth of Twitter peaked between 2012 & 2013. Kenyan on Twitter (KOT) in Nairobi was seventy four percent while KOT outside Kenya were eleven. Approximately three hundred million tweets have been posted to date (2015). Facebook (FB) is the largest social media network with 3.8million users in Kenya. LinkedIn comes in second with over 1million users and Twitter is third. Twitter mobile applications are now more popular than web-based apps. Twitter for Android is, by far, the most popular mobile application. LinkedIn has the highest number of inactive users. Google+ and Twitter

follow in that order respectively (CAK, internetworldstats.com, Facebook.com and Google plus data, 2015).

As has been the case with the introduction of each new medium, the internet has also elevated what some might call “moral panics” about possible ill effects on users (Wartella & Robb, 2009). Even as the internet and other newer media provide new opportunities for adolescents’ identity survey and social and civic development, several trends have troubled teens’ parents and caregivers. In fact, parents of teens were less likely to say that the internet was a good thing in 2006 than two years earlier (Ukpe et al., 1987).

This study therefore focused on how communication in the family has changed and what options could be offered so as to enhance effective family communication; with an attempt to establish how social media use which is integral to our society today could be appropriately integrated to aid and conform to the standards of socialization accepted in our society. Conversation is the core of family communication which is a vital part of our everyday life, yet we possibly hardly think about the way in which we interact with other individuals. Understanding media influences, and how to use the media beneficially, may thus be an indispensable tool for those who advocate for children, young people, and their families (Brawley, 1995).

The purpose of this investigation was to come up with solutions of how social media can be of positive influence in families and enhance family communication. The family was the first major agent of communication for most individuals (Horst, Irwin, Healey, & Hagendijk, 2007). It helped children to internalize culture and develop a social identity. They also provided an ascribed social status to its young members. Family was the basis from which one was introduced to norms, interpersonal relationships, beliefs and opinions. There is therefore need for social control so as to regulate the behavior of members of a family. This helps to prevent juvenile delinquency; it socializes a child into the culture of his/her society and ensures that family communication is taking place (Samiah, 2014). This was very well adhered to initially with African tradition where parents were the direct recipients of information and children knew only what they were exposed to that would be of benefit to them. Today, social media is a popular trend of communication which allows messages to reach individuals directly and in real time, hence, now children know only what they are exposed to through social media and not only by their parents. The other versions on social media may be conflicting with the information given by the parents which makes the desired effect interfered with. The level of concentration depicted by the children whenever they are addressed by their parents while they are on social media also seems to interfere with the children’s understanding such that they may either give wrong responses or no response at all. Social media seem to be the center of mentorship for families today. This raises great concern since there are no longer restrictions on what information each family member accesses on social media and how much time they spent on social media; which is likely to influence the way they behave and interact with family members.

In Nairobi County, a number of families embrace use of social media as evidenced by wide internet connectivity in their homes and ownership of smartphones by family members. An average family in Nairobi has eighty five percent of the members using social media since even the cell phones are internet enabled (CAK, internetworldstats.com, 2015).

Thus, a large part of families' social and emotional development is occurring while on the internet since most of their time is spent there. The end result is often a knowledge and technical gap among family members, particularly between parents and their children. The information and even language used among the children due to exposure to social media may be strange to the parents creating not only change in their behavior but also in the way they communicate. This study therefore sought to examine the influence of social media on family communication in Nairobi County, Kenya.

## **Materials and Methods**

Qualitative research design was employed and it was a descriptive survey research . This was informed by the fact that qualitative research is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena and patterns of behavior . (Denscombe,2003) Influence of Social Media on family communication was seen as a pattern of behavior and a social problem. The population of this study comprised of parents and children. Participants comprising two estates from each sub county, members of nine churches from the nine sub- counties within Nairobi County. They were drawn from estates of high population of families that have internet connectivity and churches with highest population of members cutting across each sub county. Uses and gratification theory informed this study since it states that media users seek out the media source that best fulfills their need. Fawkes & Gregory add that the level of gratification depends on the level of the need or interest of the individual (Fawkes & Gregory,2001).Time displacement theory also informed this study. This theory defines how as individuals only have so much time in their lives that can communicate. In the case of this study, new activities that cause time displacement were technology based, specifically internet. Participation in one communication field takes away from others, so when a new communication technology is made known to users, then less time is left for other communication activities which was the case with face to face interactions among family members. The analysis was done qualitatively.

### **Specific objectives.**

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To establish the various types of social media commonly used in families and how they affect personal space of family members in Nairobi County.
2. To examine the content mostly accessed on social media by family members and their influence on frequency of family communication.

## **Findings and Analysis**

### **Results and Discussions**

Social media is the integration of digital media including combinations of electronic texts, graphics, moving images and sound into a structured computerized environment that allows people to interact with the data for appropriate purposes. Engaging in social media use is an activity that has been reported to benefit children and adolescents in families by enhancing communication, social connection, and even technical skills. Most of the young respondents

in this study noted that the use of smartphones to get access to internet had already surpassed the use of computers since smartphones were portable, social media could be accessed easily and at any time.

Social media was seen as a stage for one to express himself or herself freely especially by those who used it to communicate. The study also established that children use social media to share interests, explore individualities and grow relationships with family and friends. This is because they found it less time consuming, instant and it did not require one to travel.

According to Arnold (2018), in the past young adults looked to their parents and grandparents for any information or advice. From the findings, most of the young participants rely on social media for mentoring, advice and even solving any challenges they encounter. They also reported that they use social media for seeking out for emotional and social support from peers and even strangers who follow them or are friends on social media.

### **Social Media and Their Effect on Personal Space of Family Members**

In this study, personal space was seen as the area surrounding an individual which they regard as psychologically theirs and encroachment can feel threatening or uncomfortable. People value their personal space and feel discomfort, anger or anxiety when it is invaded. Allowing one to enter personal space and entering someone else's personal space is an indicator of perception of the relationship between the individuals, it could indicate familiarity and at times of intimacy. The intimate zone is meant for lovers, children and close family members. There is another zone for conversations with friends, associates and group discussions. Social media seems to be changing personal space among family members. Self-disclosure is one way of ensuring privacy in family communication, it primarily concern information about the person doing the disclosing. Private information is any information that people believe they have the right to control personally.

A boundary between parents and children is only one example of family personal space boundaries. **In establishing the influence of social media on personal space, the researcher sought to find out to what extent the use of social media impacted on various aspects of the respondent's personal space. The findings were summarized as below:**

Table 4.2. Influence of Social Media Types on Personal Space:

Aspects of your personal space influenced by social media	None	Low extent	Somewhat	Moderate extent	High extent
Access to your personal information by family members on your social media	11%	15%	18%	27%	29%
Access to your psychological space on social media by family members	10%	16%	20%	24%	30%
Access to your intimate zone by family members	8%	11%	33%	24%	24%
The boundaries you keep between yourself and your siblings	13%	15%	26%	23%	33%

/parents/children					
Interior and exterior boundaries among family boundaries	11%	16%	22%	27 %	34%
Permeability to your personal space	8%	18%	23%	29%	31%
Sharing of a family bond	6%	17%	26%	24%	36%
Sharing and keeping of family secrets	8%	14%	27%	22%	29%

From the findings, in response to extent to which social media impacted on the aspect of access to your personal information by family members on your social media, twenty-nine percent of the respondents reported that the extent of social media impact was a high extent. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents reported that the impact was to a moderate extent, eighteen percent of the respondents acknowledged that the extent of the impact was somewhat extent, fifteen percent of them reported that the impact was to a low extent and eleven percent of them said that the impact was none. This is clearly presented in figure 4.8. below:

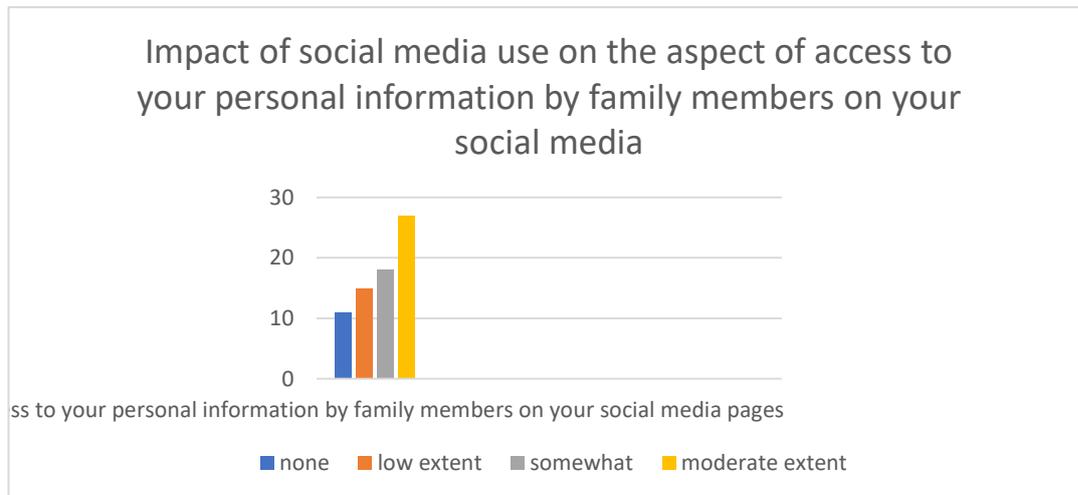


Figure 4.8. Impact of social media on access to personal information by family members

Findings from the Focus Group Discussions reported that children use social media to share freely what pleases them without caring about who accesses their personal information. One of them said that:

*These sites have made me give up my right to privacy and so I no longer care what I share on social media since each user has the freedom to share what she or he pleases. Access to personal information by family members on social media has therefore become common because of this freedom to share any information as a way of expressing one's feelings. Social media has therefore decimated the notion of personal space.*

Another respondent in the Focus Group Discussion said that:

*There is a lot of personal information posted on these social media sites since users have no boundaries of what they should share and what they should not share. This personal information shared on social media invite attacks and controversy from not only family members who access it but also unknown persons.*

#### ***Access to your psychological space***

In response to the aspect of access to your psychological space on social media by family members, thirty percent of the respondents reported that the impact of social media use on this aspect of their personal space was to a high extent. Twenty-four percent of the respondents said the impact was to a moderate extent, twenty percent of them said the impact was to a somewhat extent, sixteen percent of them said it was to a low extent and those who said the extent was none were ten percent. This is well presented in figure 4.9. below:

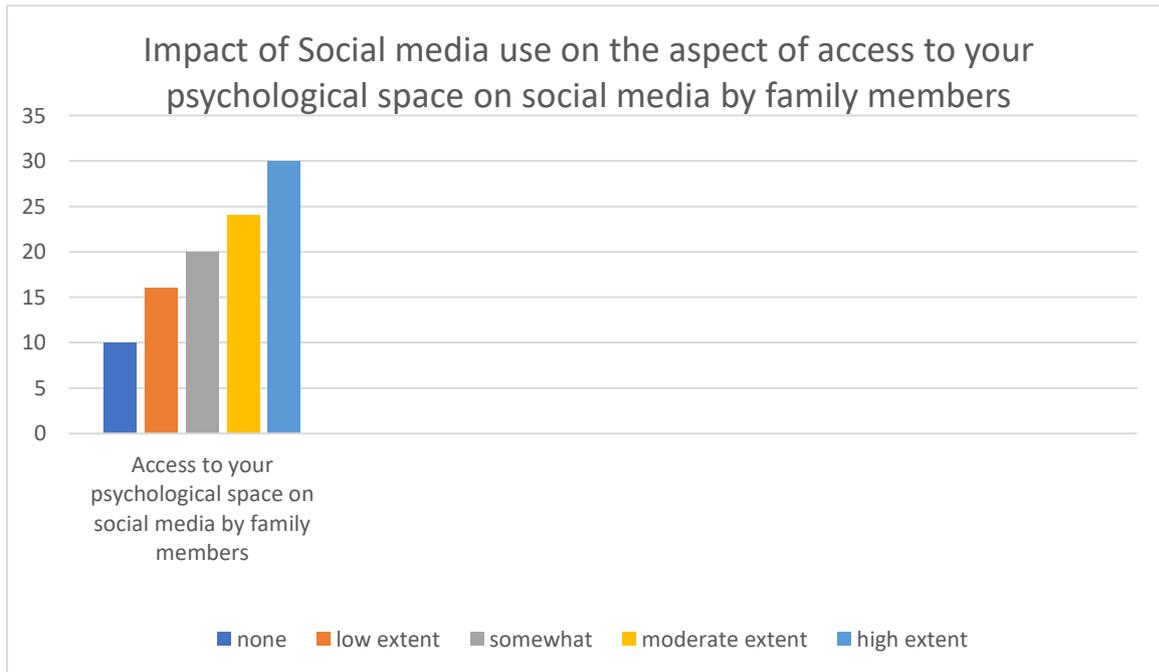
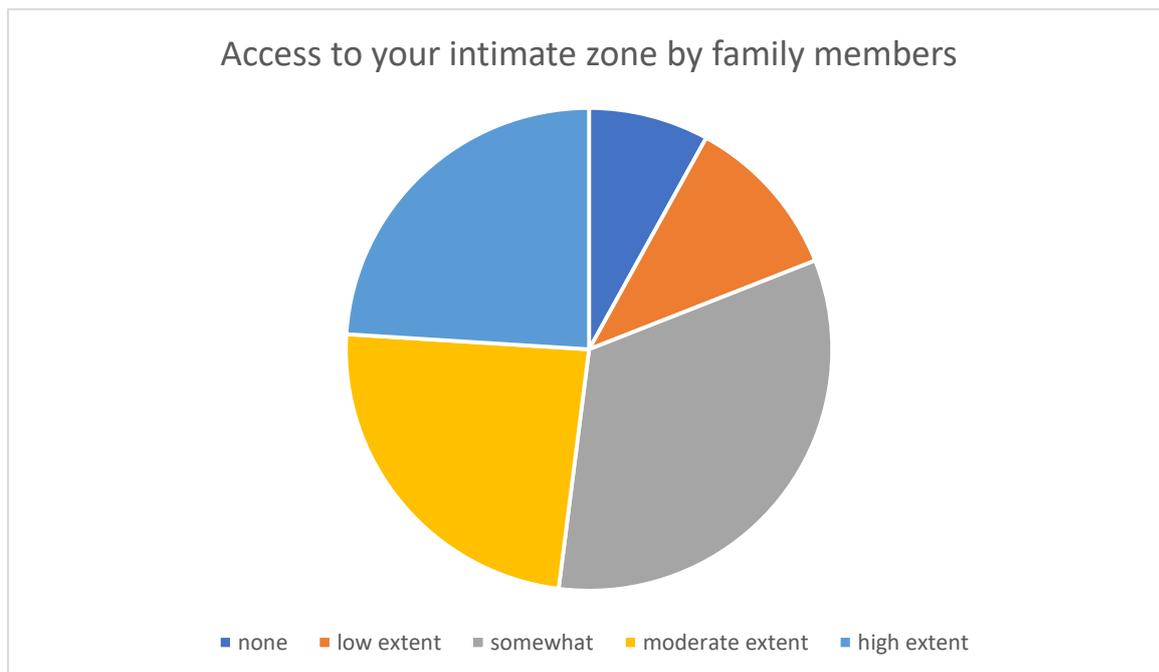


Figure 4.9. Impact of social media on access to your psychological space

***Access to your Intimate Zone***

From the results, in response to the impact of social media use to the aspect of access to your intimate zone by family members, twenty-four percent of the respondents reported that it was to a high extent. Twenty-four percent of the other respondents said that it was to a moderate extent, thirty-three percent of them said it was to a somewhat extent, eleven percent of them said it was to a low extent and eight percent said the extent was none. This is well presented in figure 4.10. below:



## Figure 4.10. Effect of social media on intimate zone by family members

Apart from the findings from the families through the structured interviews, findings from the FGDs indicated that most of the respondents no longer care about each other's intimate zone and lack etiquette in their lifestyle. Findings also revealed that in African tradition children knew only what they were exposed to by their parents and grandparents but now they rely on what they are exposed to through social media which give other versions that are conflicting hence the desired effect is interfered with. This reflects what a previous study by Arnold(2018) revealed that in the past young adults looked to their parents for any information or advice but today 71% of the young generation rely on social networking sites for advice and insights. Findings also indicated that even strangers on social media violate the space of others by posing as too intimate or even judgmental which adds to the confusion in the mind of the children. one of the respondents in the Focus Group Discussions commenting on the aspect of access to one's intimate zone by family members said that:

*Social media users on these sites violate the space of others and presume to be too intimate, very rude and even combative. These sites make individuals have no etiquette in their lifestyle, no courtesy and no boundaries. Family members are therefore no exception since social media allows them to access your intimate zone just like other users.*

***Boundaries you keep between yourself and your parents/siblings/children***

In response to the impact of social media on the aspect of the boundaries you keep between yourself and your siblings/parents/children, thirty three percent of the respondents reported it to be to a high extent, twenty three percent of the respondents said the impact is to a moderate impact, twenty six percent said the impact was a somewhat extent, fifteen percent said it was to a low extent and thirteen percent of them said the impact of social media use to this aspect of personal space was none. Findings also revealed that the boundaries kept between parents and children result from the much concentration given to social media by the children such that they even feel offended when they are sent by their parents so they avoid their parents. Findings in this study also revealed that the children concentrate so much on the risky youthful content creation discussed via social media so that at times they even misunderstood what their parents say to them due to lack of concentration towards what the parent tells them.

This is well presented in figure 4.11 below:

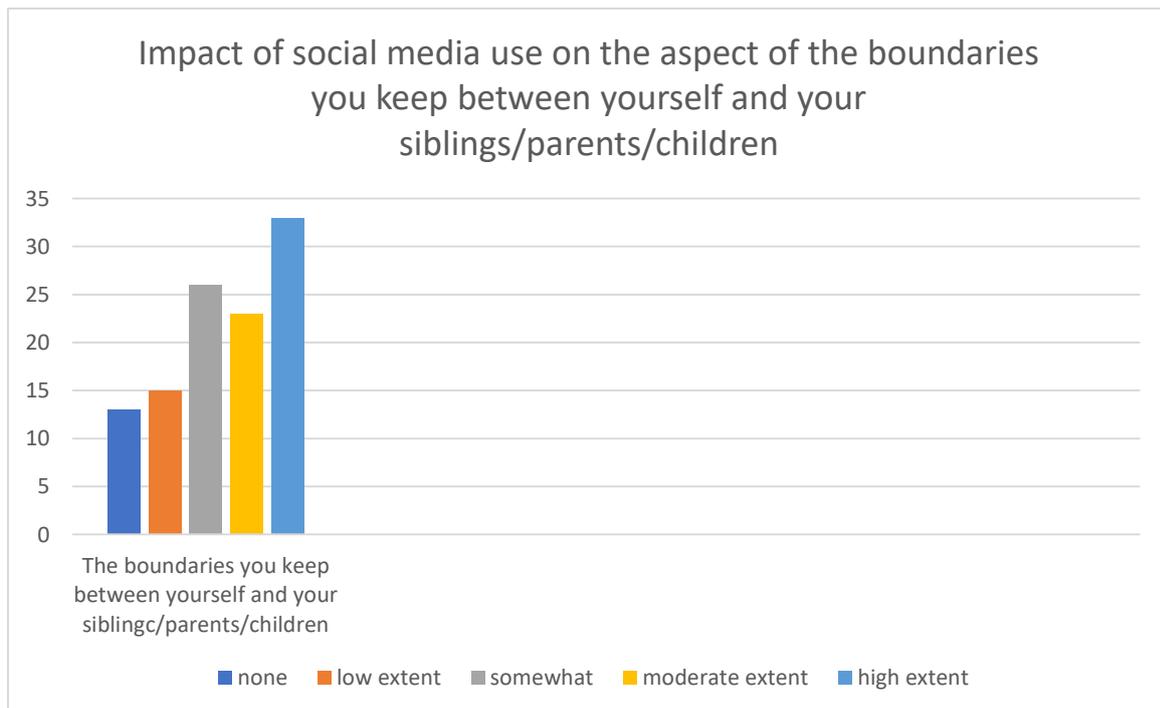


Figure 4.11 Impact of social media on boundaries between parents/ children/ siblings

**Interior and exterior boundaries among family members**

In response to the impact of social media use on the aspect of interior and exterior boundaries among family members, thirty-four percent of the respondents reported it to be to a high extent, twenty-seven percent said the impact was to a moderate extent, twenty-two percent of them said it was to a somewhat extent, sixteen percent of the respondents said it was to a low extent and eleven percent said the impact was none. This is well presented in figure 4.12 below:

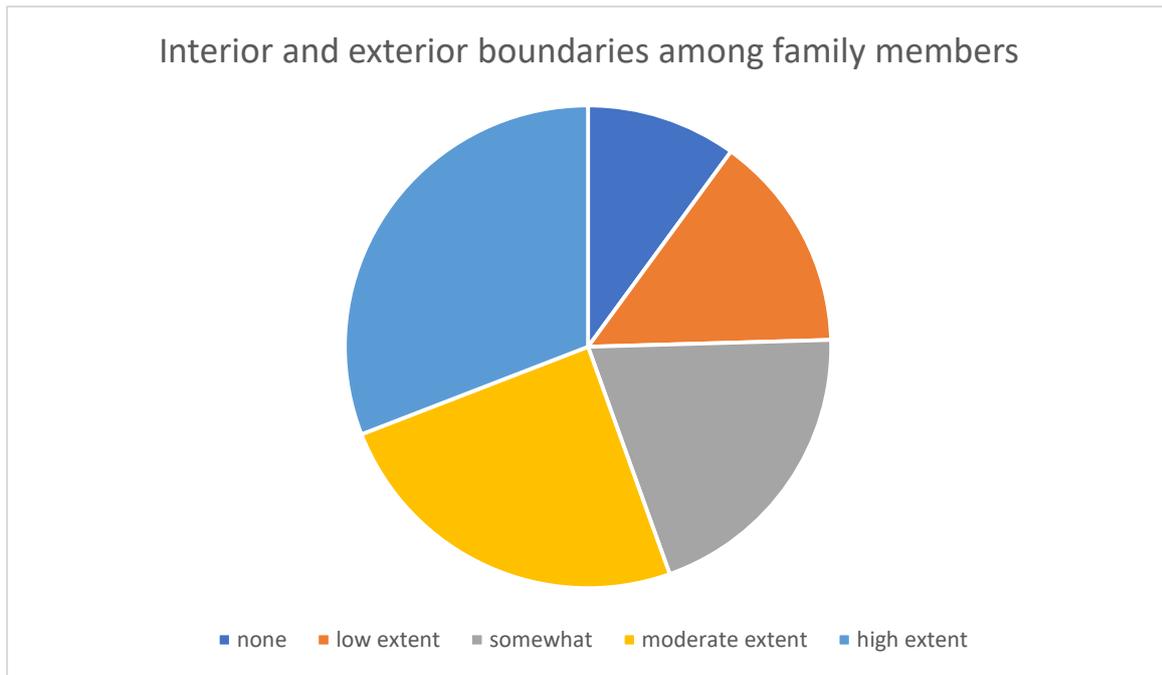


Figure 4.12 Impact of social media on Interior and Exterior boundaries among families.

#### ***Permeability to your personal space***

From the results, in response to the question of the extent of the impact of social media use on the aspect of Permeability to your personal space, thirty one percent of the respondents reported that it was to a high extent, twenty nine percent said it was to a moderate extent ,twenty three percent said it was to a somewhat extent ,eighteen percent of the respondents said it was to a low extent and eight percent of them reported that the extent was none. This is well presented in figure 4.13. below:

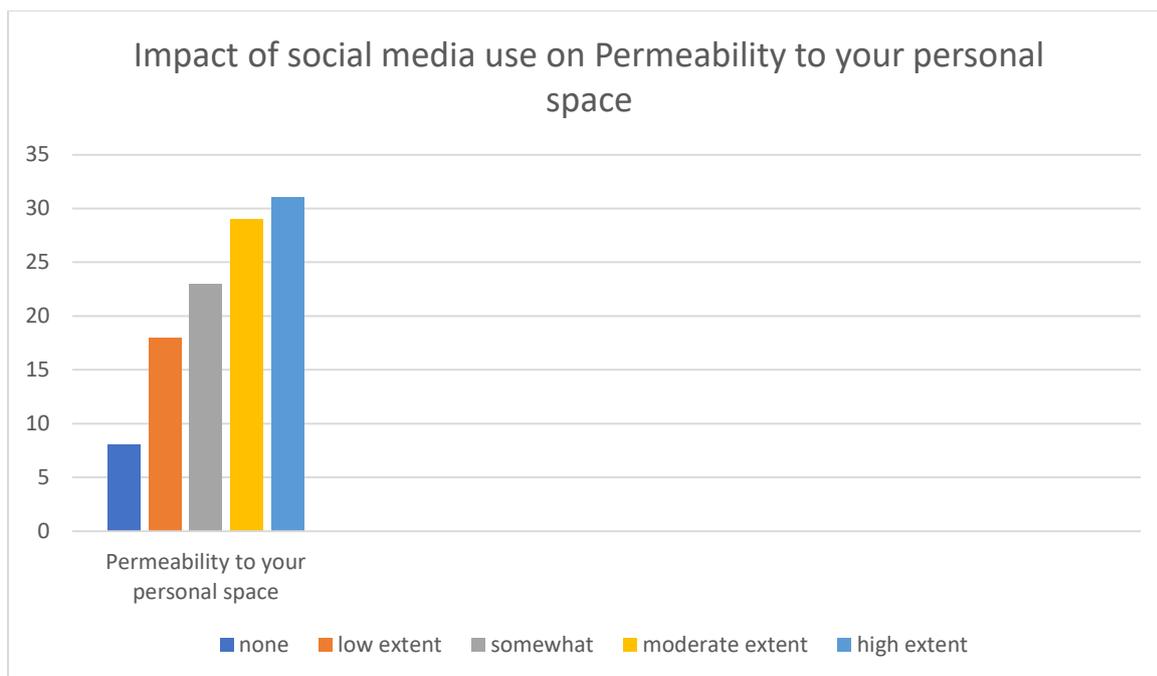


Figure 4.13. Impact of social media use on Permeability to your personal space

On the same aspect of impact of social media use on permeability of one’s personal space by family members one of the respondents in the Focus Group Discussions said that:

*These sites expose one to inappropriate contact and harassment. This makes him or her bitter, frustrated and anti-social.*

Another respondent from one of the parents’ said that:

*these sites have exposed my nephew to drug abuse and contributed to his low self-esteem. He is more comfortable chatting with strangers who share their plight as a result of drug abuse. In fact, he spends very little time chatting with family members who only condemn him every now and then.*

### Sharing of a family bond

From the results, in response to the question of the extent to which social media use impacts on the aspect of sharing of a family bond , thirty six percent of the respondents reported it to be to a high extent , twenty four percent reported it to be to a moderate extent , twenty six percent of them said it was to a somewhat extent ,seventeen percent of the respondents said it was to a low extent and six percent of them said the extent of the impact was none. This is well presented in figure 4.14below:

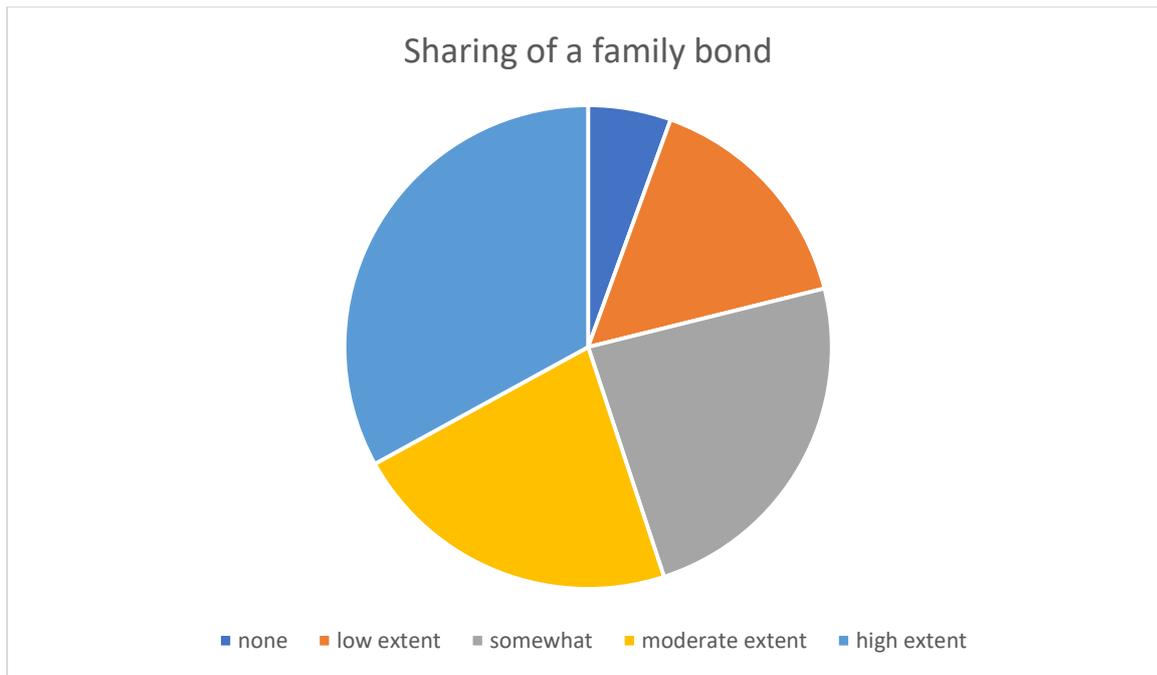


Figure 4.14. Impact of social media on sharing of family bond

This gave a similar reflection as what was reported by the Focus Group Discussions whose findings revealed that use of these social media types leads to low emotional bonding among Family members. A sample of the responses from the FGDs are presented below. A respondent in one of the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) said that:

*use of social media opens up an individual to very many opinions and comments. These varied opinions and comments can allow one to access unnecessary information that may not impact positively to his or her personal growth but instead result in a low emotional bonding among the family members.*

Another respondent said that:

*social media is addictive and a time waster. I spend too much of my time accessing these social media sites and find myself left with very little time to spent on communication with my family members which leads to low emotional bonding.*

### ***Sharing and Keeping Family secrets***

From the results, in response to the question of the extent to which social media use impacts on the aspect of sharing and keeping of family secrets, twenty nine percent of the respondents reported the impact to be to a high extent .Twenty two percent of them said it was to a moderate extent ,twenty seven percent said it was to a somewhat extent , fourteen percent said it was to a low extent and eight percent of the respondents reported that the impact was none . This is well presented in figure 4.15. below:

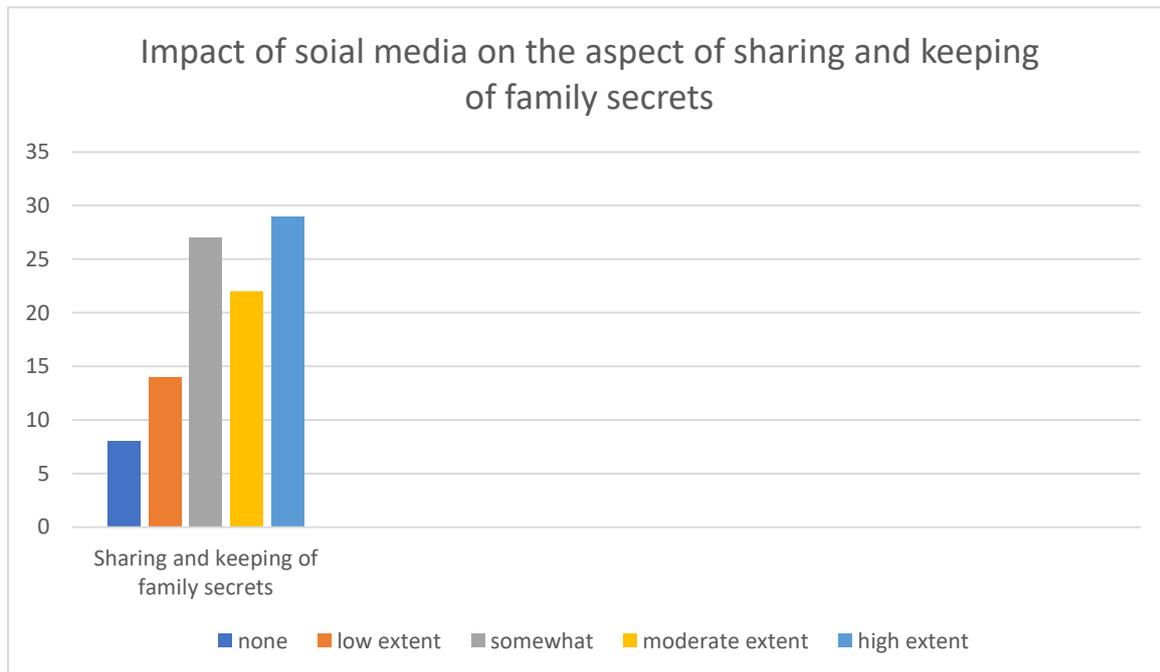


Figure 4.15. Impact of social media on sharing and keeping of family secrets

Related to these findings were reports from the Focus Group Discussions. One of the respondents said that:

*My access of these social media sites has exposed me to unwanted advice and messages from people I did not know. These social media sites have also allowed me to share personal information and feelings which is accessed by individuals who don't even mean anything to me. In so doing, I find myself sharing some of the family secrets unintentionally especially when it is related to the information being discussed by the unknown people in social media. This gives an opportunity for uncalled for judgement from these strangers.*

**Access to the content from social media**

In response to the question of extent to which respondents accessed the listed content from social media, Data from the participants revealed that through social media they were able to access various types of information. The researcher used structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions to establish this. The findings are summarized in table 4. below:

Table 4.6 Content in Social media

Content	None	Low extent	Moderate	High	A great
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			extent	extent	deal
Entertainment	3%	7%	17%	26%	47%
Trends	7%	11%	18%	29%	35%
Lifestyle	8%	9%	19%	28%	36%
Advertisements	6%	16%	21%	26%	31%
Business	11%	13%	19%	29%	28%
Educational	3%	7%	22%	24%	44%
Politics & Current affairs	3%	11%	19%	29%	38%
Love & courtship	11%	13%	16%	16%	44%
Drug abuse	9%	11%	18%	27%	35%
Health	11%	13%	21%	26%	29%
Parenting	13%	18%	19%	21%	29%
Careers	3%	7%	19%	23%	48%

Another respondent said that:

*Whenever we have family gatherings, my children, nephews and nieces and even grandchildren are busy on their phones listening to music, watching videos or games such that they have no time for face to face interactions. They even find it a bother when their parents, uncles or aunts try to engage them in a conversation. Funny enough they prefer to chat on their Facebook, Twitter or WhatsApp even when seated next to each other.*

Data from the focus groups by the youths revealed that the youths find entertainment on social media so interesting, captivating and fulfilling that they can never get bored. They prefer to occupy themselves with these entertainments than engage themselves in physical interaction. One of the respondents said:

*I find quite a wide variety of entertainment on social media which keeps me so occupied and fulfilled that engaging in physical interaction is a bother to me. In case of any communication with my family members I prefer to chat through Facebook, Twitter or WhatsApp since I can multitask by listening to the entertainment as well as chat at the same time.*

From the Focus Group Discussions, participants indicated that they were able to learn from the trends that were displayed on social media from groups and friends they had followed on the social media. This was a way of keeping them busy but also a way of distracting them from face to face interaction with other people in constant contact with them. The participants indicated that social media kept them good company even when they were in the company of friends and family members. One of the participants indicated that:

*“Social media has made us occupied almost all the time. We are not bored because even if you are alone, you are not really alone. You simply need to have bundles for you to go online and see what is happening there. You can also go online to check the latest news and the trends that will appeal to you. The goodness with this is also that you can be with someone physically but you are online checking stuff and interacting with*

*others. One can therefore be distracted by social media from engaging with friends and family members face to face.”*

## **Discussion**

Types of Social Media Commonly Used in Families and how they Affect Personal Space of Family Members.

The first objective sought to establish the types of social media commonly used in families and how they affect personal space of family members. Findings of the study revealed that the social media types commonly accessed by the respondents included Facebook which was visited by the highest number of respondents, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp , LinkedIn and YouTube . This findings are also an affirmation of what Giddens (2006) reveals from his study that Social networking sites have become the most widespread online destination in recent years .The Uses and Gratification Theory (U&GT) which informed this study is also affirmed to be true since it informs that the audience is assumed to be active and goal directed depending on how their needs are met and how the media gratify those needs ( Blumer &Kartz ,1974 ).From these findings , Uses and Gratification Theory can be a basis of improving on the social media types so that these sites are used to gratify the needs of the users positively. This can be informed by what Fawkes and Gregory added that “the level of gratification depends on the level of need or interest of the individual (Fawkes & Gregory,2001 p 120).

Concerning the effect of social media on personal space, it was evident that most of the social media sites identified by the respondents had a great deal of effect on their personal space. Some of the respondents who access WhatsApp reported that WhatsApp had a great deal of effect on their personal space. Most of the respondents who access YouTube also reported that it had a great deal of effect on their personal space. A large number of those who access Facebook and majority of those who access Twitter also reported that these social media sites had a great deal of effect on their personal space. These findings implied that the effect of these types of social media on the personal space of family members was to a great deal of extent. This affirms what Giddens (2006) in his study on social media says that one of the main concerns over the use of social networking sites is that as people spend more and more time communicating online and handling their daily tasks in cyberspace, it may be that they spent less time interacting with one another in the physical world .

In establishing the influence of these social media types on various aspects of personal space, findings indicated that social media had a high extent of impact on several aspects of personal space. Findings indicated that social media had a high extent of impact on the aspects of access to the respondents’ personal information by family members on their social media and that personal information had become common because of the freedom to share any information as a way of expressing one’s feelings. Social media users no longer cared about etiquette in their lifestyle and so any user could easily access and comment on another user’s personal information. Findings on the extent to which social media influences the aspect of access to their psychological space on social media by family members were also revealed to be to a high extent. These findings were the same as the findings on the extent to which social media influences the aspect of one’s intimate zone and the boundaries they keep between the

parents and children. The findings thus revealed that family members on social media violate the space of others by presuming to be too intimate, very rude and even combative. Other aspects of personal space that findings indicated social media had a high effect on were permeability to their personal space, sharing of family bond and sharing and keeping family secrets.

The study also sought to find out how these social media types affected personal space among family members. The major impacts stated included low emotional bonding, violation of the space of others by presuming to be too close, rude and hostile, allowing for unwarranted opinions, harassment and judgment from strangers, allows for posting personal information which is consumed by strangers thereby inviting attacks and controversy and also makes one forego the right to privacy and courtesy by not caring what they post in social media. This excessive sharing can thus impact on an individual's future by exposing them to unnecessary information that may affect their future negatively instead of contributing to their personal growth. Time displacement theory by Maxwell McCombs affirms these findings very well by informing that participation in one communication domain takes away from others, hence, when a new technology is introduced then we have less time for other communication activities (McCombs,1992). This therefore confirms the fact that excessive use of social media by family members can have detrimental impacts to their communication and even the family set up. This also confirms the Users and Gratification (U& G) Theory by Blumer and Kartz (1974) which states that the audience choose media to satisfy their own needs and that media is only used depending on how the needs are met and how they gratify those needs. There is need for the study findings based on the Uses and Gratification theory to help social media users, particularly family members to move away from excessive use of social media and seek to use the media for positive effects.

The study findings indicated that family members accessed various themes on social media among them gaming, health, trends, entertainment, educational, politics, lifestyle, business, courtship and marriage, and advertisements. The effects of these themes on family communication indicated that they result in limited physical interaction among family members .This was due to overload of information which keeps the social media users glued to these sites for many hours in a day allowing them no time or minimal time for physical interaction. The themes also set agenda on topics for discussion, limited face to face interaction among family members, lack of courtesy and violation of personal space, immoral behavior due to exposure to wrong themes such as pornography and lack of seriousness due to watching themes on jokes, celebrities and criminal behavior. This may in the long run influence their future growth negatively.

The findings from the study indicated that the themes on social media mostly interested the various users depending on their needs and gratifications. Data from one of the children participants reported that:

*majority of the themes of, friendships, entertainment, love and courtship, educational, news, politics, celebrity lifestyles, other cultures, comedy, movies, fashion, advertisements, relationships and inspirational themes are so captivating to most of the young people because they satisfy their needs and kill their boredom*

From the findings, respondents access the varied content on social media to gratify their needs, that is why they do not all go for the same content because their needs to be gratified are not common to all. The participants spent less time for face to face interactions because they spent more time on social media sites accessing the varied content cited by the respondents to gratify their needs. In the African traditional set up, parents had time with their children and face to face communication was the primary mode of engaging with children; this opportunity is getting less and less as youths use a substantial portion of their time on social media. The Displacement Theory can be used by the policy makers to ensure that the internet users spend less time online and strengthen face to face interaction among family members, using it as a replacement of other activities that serve similar functions such as gaming, chatting with friends and even accessing varied content online that gratifies their needs.

Data from the focus group discussions by the parent participants indicated that they consumed information mostly on the themes of, friendships, parenting, entertainment, news, education, politics and current affairs, celebrity, lifestyles, other cultures, comedy, movies, fashion, advertisements, relationships and inspirational themes. However, the most commonly sought for information by young participants included trending music, fashion styles, places to tour on holiday, health information, advertisements on social media and status updates by friends. They referred to social media as their source of mentorship which fulfilled their needs and kept them away from their parents and family members. Results therefore revealed that content accessed on social media by family members had a great influence on family communication.

## **Recommendations**

1. This study proposes that content developers come up with a very attractive, highly affinitive and child friendly SM platforms that will make children run to them as opposed to other SM platforms with negative influence. These programs should be censored and ensure content that is of positive influence.
2. To avoid the decline of face to face communication in the family, communication specialists and researchers should look into possibilities of coming up with activities emanating from SM that will compel children to rely on parents and continue enjoying the platforms. They should recommend best strategies that will compel children to consult parents on several issues just as it is happening in the new Competence Based Curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

Regarding the objectives of the study, it can be concluded that social media had a major influence on family communication as indicated by the respondents. Children (younger family members) spent most of their time daily (multiple times in a day) on social media and less time in a day on family communication. This has greatly impacted on the notion of personal space resulting in low emotional bonding, exposure to unwanted advice and messages from strangers and even posting personal information on social media which is consumed by even strangers inviting unwarranted judgment from strangers. Social media make them forego right to privacy and civility. It makes individuals violate the space of

others by presuming to be too close, hostile or even rude. The various themes accessed on social media by family members also impact on family communication in that due to information overload they spent more time in an attempt to access as much information as possible that will satisfy their needs. The themes also set agenda on topics for discussion and result in limited face to face interaction among family members. They also contribute to lack of courtesy and violation of personal space, immoral behavior due to exposure to wrong themes such as pornography and lack of seriousness due to watching themes on jokes, celebrities and criminal behavior. This may in the long run influence their future growth negatively.

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