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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENCE ARTS AND COMMERCE PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL ERA. A CASE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN NAIROBI, KENYA

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Abstract

Media has huge impact on youths and their family, and the environment of media use can be effective to children. Media devices and technologies are growing rapidly; they impact family in some ways. Whenever there are new technologies coming out, families seem to be adapting with it quickly, and it soon becomes engaging with families. It is interesting that these new technologies can get families to use it and even later on they cannot live without (Bo Peng,2014). The lines of communication within families, although declining in face-to-face interaction, have actually increased via social media. Parents and children connected on social media are 'chatting 'more than they would if they were in the same room (Seddon,2012). Social media are internet-based applications that build on web technology and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. This study focuses on the different ways family members communicate on social media and how the frequency of their social media use influences the way they relate. The objectives of this study were to establish whether there are differences in what the family members communicate, how they communicate and for what purpose. Castell's theory of network society and Time displacement theory informed this study.

The findings of the study are expected to improve quality of social media communication and avert decrease in face-to-face interactions as well as adding to the body of knowledge on social media communication. Purposive sampling was used to get the respondents. Qualitative methods were used to analyze the data. The potential impact of conducting this research is to enhance face to face interactions and positive social media communication among family members.

Key Words: *Family relationships, Communication, Media, social networking sites, social media.*

INTRODUCTION

The popularity of social media greatly influences   the modern society and the behavior of young people particularly in a family set up. It is necessary to understand the major differences between parents and children because they perform   different roles in different interconnected   social networks. Social media are platforms that allow common persons to create and publish contents. Two worldwide popular social media websites, Twitter and Facebook, demonstrate its explosive growth and profound influence. Both Twitter and Facebook are in the top ten most-visited websites in the world according to Alexa ranking [2011]. Facebook has more than 800 million active users, and by March 2011, on Twitter, there were about 140 million information pieces created and transferred daily. There are other specialized social media that are focused on entertainment, sports, finance and politics. Social media comprise platforms to create and exchange user-generated content. Sometimes social media are called consumer-generated media (Jowal,2011). They are different from traditional media, such as newspaper, books, and television, in that almost anyone can publish and access information inexpensively using social media. In contrast, traditional media (which is also referred to as old media or legacy media) requires significant resources to publish contents. There are many forms of social media that include blogs, social networking sites, virtual social worlds, collaborative projects, content communities and virtual game world.

Family communication refers to the way verbal and non- verbal information is exchanged among family members and their ability to pay attention to what each one of them thinks and feels**.** Family interaction includes face to face contact, telephone calls, emails, letters and attendance at routine activities. From previous studies on social media, not many families often used media technologies like television or internet when they just appeared, but later it became part of family that they cannot live without (Stewart et al ,2013). They found out that families which spend more time together with media will be better and have better family relationships. This study focused on why these media technologies were used and how they affect family and family relationships.

This being the 'digital era' the main consideration had to do with what the family members share on social media, with whom and the impact it had on family relationships. Data gathered from a study by Booth (2010) reported that most youths rely on saying hello's and hi's to their loved ones through social media rather than making effort to visit them in their houses which is the way they would appreciate them most. The study also reported that most parents seemed not to know what information their young adults were accessing on Social Media. With so much time spent on social media by the younger generation, parents were denied a platform upon which to communicate family values and societal norms to their children. Findings from another study by Lee & Sun (2009) reported that when social media sent unseemly images right to children's phones, it becomes harder to protect those who are still under-age. Booth (2010) also adds that

trust has become a bigger, not smaller, part of parent-child relationship as it becomes harder to keep technologically apace of youths (Booth,2010). This seems to be of great concern to most families in the present generation.

Social Networking Sites and cyber technology are having a negative effect on family structure and it has replaced the intimate interactions which used to occur within most American families as noted from a study by Schlesinger (2013). Her study indicates that young teens are most affected by the growing trend; that while social networking is not bad in itself, allowing the cyber relationships to replace true family interaction is dangerous. Although social networking sites facilitate social interaction and sharing, many have found that it often leads to unexpected alienation. Face to face human interaction has largely been replaced with interaction on social networks. It has also become common to admit being 'addicted' to WhatsApp, Facebook or Twitter which may in turn be a source of distraction from important happenings in real life interaction. However, social networks have allowed people to extend their existing networks in real life as well as in the digital realm. This allows them to connect with like-minded individuals that they would otherwise never have come across in real life. Family members and friends who live far apart can now be just a little 'closer' and are able to share images and experiences from their life (Dye,2007).

It is against this background that this study sought to investigate influence of social media on family relationships.

Communication is the process of sharing information/ideas among two or more people through a certain sign, symbol or behavior. The communication process involves a message moving from the creation stage to the feedback stage; thus, the receiver knows what the sender wants him to know effectively. (Ronald B et al, 2013). Social media is appealing for the simple reason that the speakers are not constrained to using a particular language idiom or lexicon (Ferrari,2003). This therefore means that a speaker on social media can always tap into all available lexicons and be able to express themselves What they communicate, how they communicate and for what purpose are what amounts to the family relationships formed as a result of social media use by the family members.

Literature Review

According to Langtagne (2014) Media plays a large role in creating social norms, because various forms of media, including advertisements, television and film are present almost everywhere in current culture. Family relationships exist mainly because society as a whole chooses to accept them, since this was the basis on which social norms, morals and values were instilled in the children. Family relationships, like those portrayed in media have a powerful influence on how we express ourselves and understand others. Whether or not we know it, we all use relationships to simplify the otherwise complex things that we encounter every day. For instance, each individual is unique and complicated, so to make it a bit easier to form opinions about other people or groups, we operate to a certain extent on relationships in order to form a basic understanding of each other or group of people (Eimler ,2015). Most researchers have

looked into how people represent themselves in person but very little if any has been done on the online realm, especially social media. Interaction between the production and the perception of behavior offline is well researched comparably little is known about these processes online (Eimler,2015). It is against this background that this study sought to investigate family relationships and how they manifest due to the influence social media, a scenario that should be studied with regard to particular families. Of concern to the current study is the influence of social media on relationships between parents and children with special focus on Nairobi County, Kenya. This study sought to find out the effect of social media on social set ups, family bonding, family roles, physical contact with family members, family values, interfamily relations and activities done to enhance family communication and for what purpose.

METHODOLOGY

The research was qualitative in nature and it was carried out in Nairobi County. The study used Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews as data collection instruments from families and members of specific churches in Nairobi County. The research population consisted of 20 families and two hundred and seventy members of nine churches. Purposive sampling was used to pick the respondents. Ten families, who did not form part of the sample of 100, were interviewed to corroborate the information in the questionnaires. The ages of the young family members ranged from 9-25 years and they were from the nine different sub counties within Nairobi County of Kenya while the parents in the sample ranged between the ages of 35 to 65. Castell's theory of social networks informed this study, according to which it is not purely the technology that defines modern societies, rather, cultural upbringing, religion, political and economic factors and social status all make up the network society. Family communication is thus part of the network society.

Users and gratification theory also informed this study since it proposes that people use media for their own need and satisfaction when the need is met This theory informs that media users seek out the media source that best fulfills their needs. The theory also assumes that the audience chooses what it wants to consume for five reasons: information and education, entertainment, personal identity, integration and social interaction and escapism. This study considered this theory in terms of media usage and its effect on family relationships. Social media users choose to use social networking sites depending on the needs they have and how they wish to gratify these needs. This theory was therefore suitable for this study since it was used to explain the findings from the respondents and the effect of social media on the respondents. Fawkes & Gregory further added to the uses and gratification theory by saying that the level of gratification depends on the level of the need or interest of the individual (Fawkes & Gregory,2001). They believed that an individual's knowledge, experience and cultural background also play an important role in communication. Individuals from diverse cultures, religion or background tend to interpret the message in different ways. In this study, the responses from the respondents were, grouped according to the objectives of the study, analyzed and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher sought to evaluate the influence of social media use on relationships between parents and children in families. To establish this relationship, the researcher had to find out to what extent social media use had an influence on various aspects of the relationships between parents and children in families. The findings of these aspects were summarized in the table below:

Aspects of family relationships	None	Low Extent	Somewhat Extent	Moderate Extent	High Extent
Social set ups	13%	15%	19%	20%	33%
Family bonding/Family time	11%	17%	22%	24%	26%
Family roles	8%	13%	22%	21%	36%
Physical contact with family members	6%	11%	23%	25%	35%
Family values	9%	15%	21%	23%	32%
Interfamily relations	8%	13%	22%	24%	33%
Activities done to enhance family communication	7%	11%	18%	23%	41%

Table 1: Influence of social media use on relationships between parents and children

Social Set ups

These were further represented in figure below:

Figure 1 Impact of social media use on relationships between parents and children-social set ups.

Extent to which social media affects Social set-ups between parents and children.
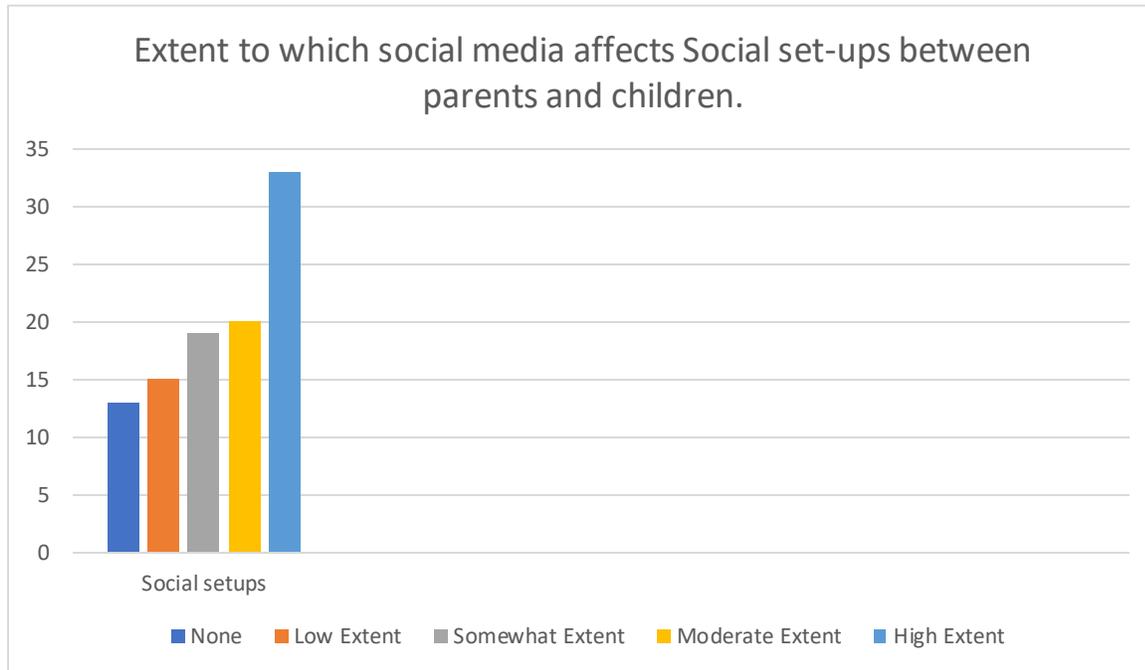
The results thus revealed that the effect of social media on social set ups in the family relationships was high as represented by the highest percentage of 33%. This was confirmed by findings from five of the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) by parent respondents who agreed that social media had contributed to negative exposure of the family social set ups. One of the participants said that:

> *"Through Facebook, twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp, the family members are able to post stories about their families and their siblings thereby exposing them. This is an invasion of family privacy and personal space; everything in the family is broadcast on social media, the good times, the bad times and all the happenings in the family."*

Another participant from the Focus Group Discussion responded that:

> *"Social media is not good because it has contributed to the exposure of families. Some family members enjoy posting all the happenings in the family, both good and bad moments, hence there is no family privacy like there used to be in the past with our grandparents. By doing this, personal space of family members is violated especially on Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram which even becomes a source of conflict."*

Family Bonding/Family Time

The Findings from the respondents revealed that 11% of them said that the extent to which their use of social media affected their Family bonding was none.17% of the respondents said that the effect was to a low extent,22% said it was to a somewhat extent,24%said it was to a moderate extent and 26% said that the effect of their social media use to family bonding was to a high extent. This is well presented in figure 2 below

Figure 2. Impact of social media use on Family bonding

Extent to which social media affects Family bonding

Family bonding

■ None ■ Low Extent ■ Somewhat Extent ■ Moderate Extent ■ High Extent
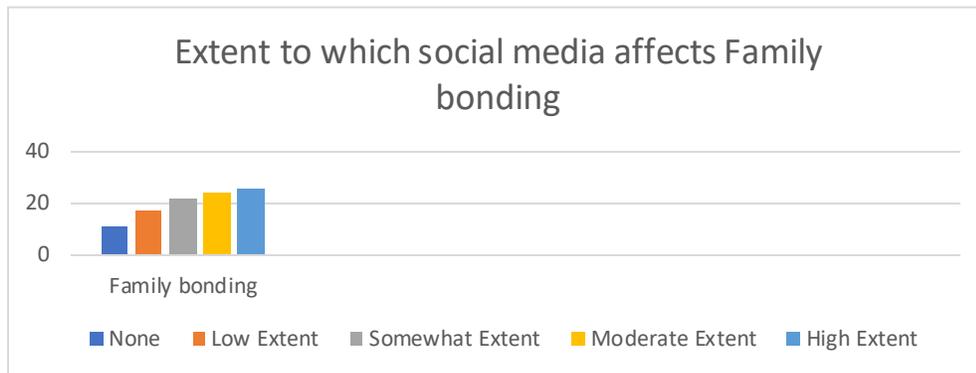
The results therefore revealed that social media use has an effect on family relationships but to a varied extent as presented in the figure 4. above. These results were confirmed by findings from the Focus Group Discussions. One of the respondents in the FGDs said that:

> *Social media has had a great effect on relationships in our family in that they have enabled family members to communicate with each other more efficiently though we do not meet to interact face to face in quite a while.*

Another of the participants said that:

> *"Social media has enabled me to communicate to family members who are far from me in real time."*

Another of the respondents said that social media enabled them to stay in touch with their loved ones who were in other towns or other countries. He said:

> *"Social media has really helped me to stay in touch with my loved ones, I am able to communicate with them on a daily basis and at a cheaper cost even though I am not able to feel the warmth of a face to face conversation I probably would have with them"*

In another Focus Group Discussion, one of the participants also responded that social media had a high effect on their family bonding in that it enabled them to get more information on professional advice and were able to share with others including family members who were their friends on social media such as on Facebook or WhatsApp. This was reflected as:

> *"Social media is good because it helps me get information and professional advice and I am able to share with others including my family members as they too share with me on topics that affect me. This works well for me because it gives us opportunities to bond online considering the fact that my parents and us the siblings each arrive home late and tired hence we do not have time for family bonding face to face"*

Another respondent in one of the FGDs by parents reported that social media had a great effect on family bonding in that they were also perceived to be a source of family conflict. He said that:

> *"These Social media have a great effect on family bonding in that they are a great source of conflict in the family. This is because each person is suspicious of the other in that one is never sure of what the other genuinely thinks and comes up with after*

accessing certain information on social media. They can be a big source of conflict in the family and influence family bonding negatively if not well used."

The Findings also revealed that one Focus Group Discussion (FGD) by youths was in agreement that social media had a high effect on family bonding in that it was so addictive that even when they had family gatherings, such as ceremonies, celebrations or even at meals times media family members would be busy browsing on their phones, tablets or computers. This denied them the opportunity to have family bonding and as such they remained as strangers and very reserved towards each other.

One of the respondents said that:

"The effect of social media on Family bonding is to such a high extent that even when we gathered as a family for my cousin's graduation party, very little of the time we were together was spent on family bonding. This was because most of the family members were busy on their phones either chatting, updating their profiles, browsing or sending photos and videos to their Instagram and Facebook pages. Some of the family members were even commenting on the day's activities on the family social media wall instead of engaging in face to face interaction much as we were all at the same venue."

Family Roles

The findings from the respondents indicated that 8% said the extent to which social media use affected family roles was none,13% of them said the extent was to a low extent,22% said the extent was to a somewhat extent,21% said it was to a moderate extent and 36% said the extent was to a high extent. From the discussions by the parents, Social media has been a major concern for families especially in relation to stages of family life, peer relationships and family roles. One of the respondents said that:

"Social media is changing the way in which our adolescents behave and relate to each other. This has also created conflicting views about their impact."

Another respondent reported that:

"The spread of social media use has resulted into new ways of communicating and also brought about redefinition of roles among family members. To some social media have turned out to be a higher social support by contributing to collective family efficacy. To others, social media have brought about lower family cohesion including isolation of family members within the same house."

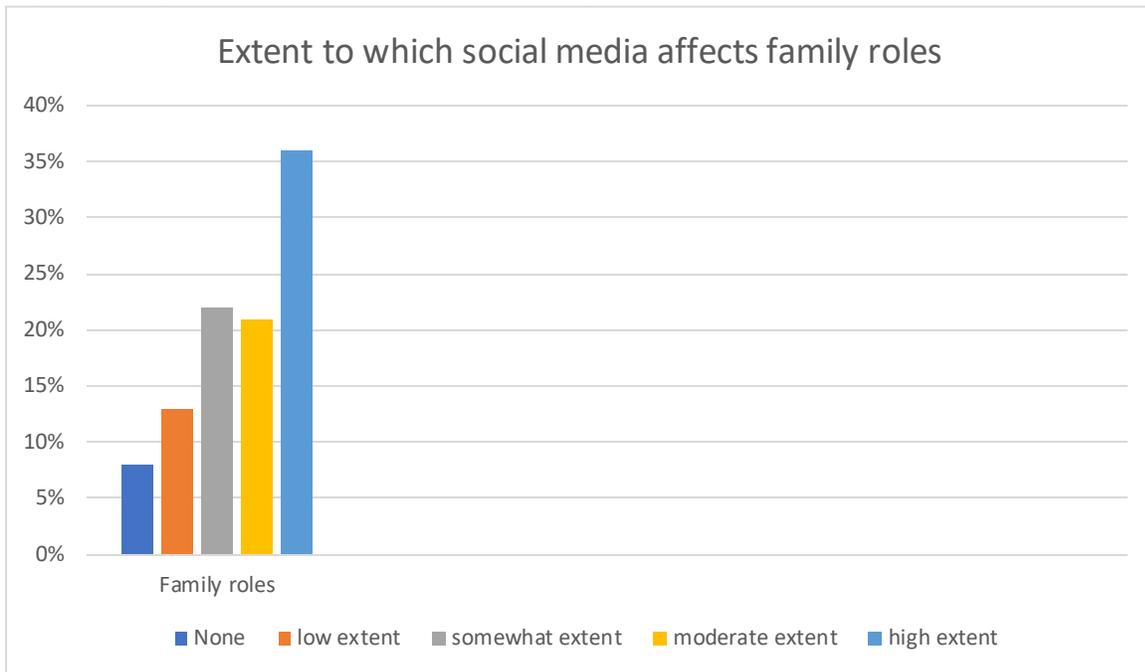Another respondent reported that:

"Family roles have been adversely affected by wide use of social media among families and even instilling these roles in them is a big challenge. One for instance sees nothing wrong in ignoring another in a social environment by paying attention to mobile devices instead. He comfortably checks for messages or even watching a video while at table or in the same room with another sibling or parent."

One other respondent reported that:

"Family roles have been impacted greatly by social media. Parental guidance and mentoring for instance have been left to social media. Even simple tasks like cooking or house chores are learnt on social media instead of being taught by the parents. No wonder there is conflicting perceptions about gender roles among family members."

These findings are clearly presented in figure 3 Below:

Figure 3. Impact of social media use on Family roles

Physical Contact with Family Members

From the findings , 6% of the respondents reported that the extent to which social media use affected their physical contact with family members was none , 11% reported the extent was to a low extent,23% said it was to a somewhat extent , 25 % said it was to a moderate extent and 35 % of the respondents reported that the extent to which social media use affected the physical contact with family members was to a high extent . This is clearly presented in figure 4 below:

Figure 4 Impact of social media use on Physical contact with family members
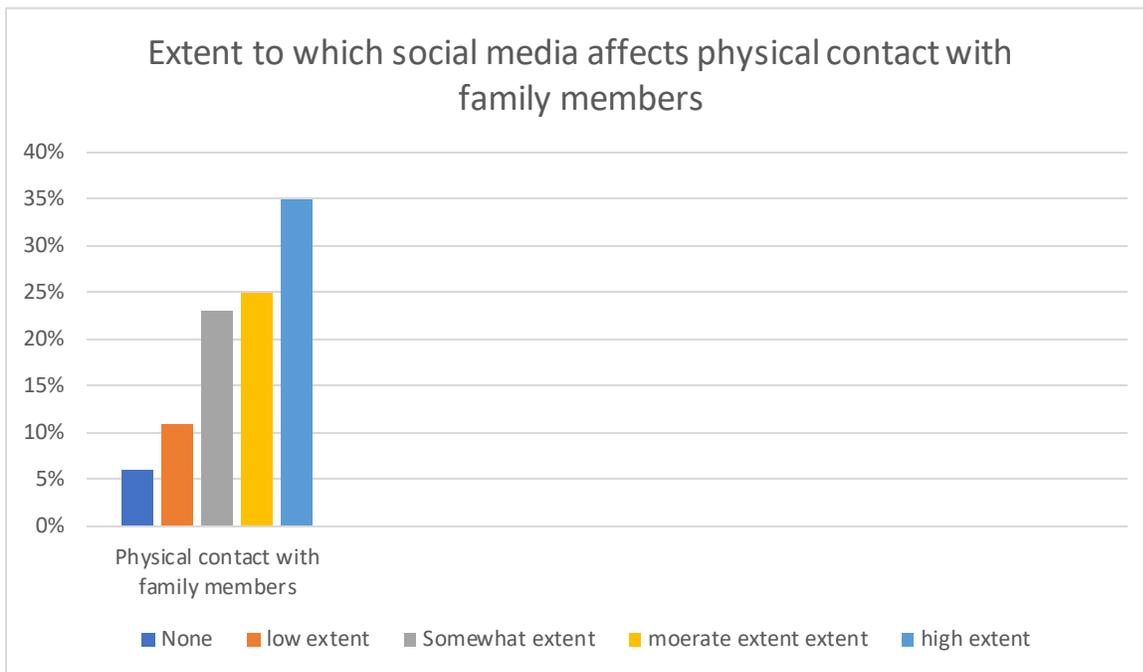
The members of the discussion groups generally agreed that social media was a good thing to use in communicating among family members, but it had also affected how they related interpersonally. That one generally needed to know how to strike a balance between when to engage through social media and when to meet up with family members to engage face to face. Social media could therefore become a hindrance to interpersonal relationships if not well regulated among family members.

Consequentially,77% of the respondents felt that the use of social media as a mode of communication had led to a steady decline in allocation and participation of family time/ family communication. They agreed that there seemed to be a reduced number of face to face encounters and live discussions among the family members.

One of the participants indicated that

> *"Frequency of social media use has contributed in keeping us away from family members; and has created distance between family members. Rather it has fostered effective communication for us through avenues such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram which simply enhance isolation of individuals within the family sphere."*

The findings further indicated that the cost-effective nature of WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram was highly attributed to the fact that it was easier and chats could be as lengthy as one wished without extreme expenses being incurred. Results therefore indicated that the younger participants sampled confirmed that social media had contributed in keeping them away from family communication. This was because of overindulgence in social media and the portable gadgets that facilitate the same, which made many rarely find time to participate actively in

family communication. They also agreed that addiction to social media had become a trend on the rise among family members leading to breakdown in actual communication and limited time allocated for interpersonal communication across the actual social spheres.

<u>Family values</u>

On Family values, reports from various Focus Group Discussions indicated that there was erosion of values concerning a number of issues. One of the participants from the FGD by Parents said that:

"Moral values have been greatly eroded, especially regarding sexuality among children. Presently, a child as young as nine or ten years comfortably watches videos about sexuality on social media and even tries to imitate what they see during their play time with other children. This contributes to very lose morals being inculcated in many children."

Another participant reported that:

"Social media have played a big role in decay of morals among our youths. There are so many cases of homosexuality and lesbianism in our society today, no wonder there are even debates about gays openly in social media. This leaves a number of our youths confused and those who fall victims no longer care about what is morally acceptable in society."

One other participant added that:

"The marriage institution is also facing so many challenges as a result of social media influence. The rate at which couples are divorcing currently is so high compared to what there was before the social media inception. Too much time spent on social media negatively affects marriage relationships. This brings about jealous and suspicions, infidelity for dissatisfied partners and even violence due to mistrust. Social media if not used well serves as a destruction from focusing on interactions that nature relationships."

A parent participant reported that there were more negative than pros with regard to the effect of social media on dating and relationships. He reported that:

"Social media have made many and varied options available regarding dating and relationships. One has no fear of failure or even rejection since there are alternatives to fall back to. Connections have made it easier for them to stay connected and they can even stalk one another's profile. There is a lot of jealousy and insecurity in relationships today."

Data from the respondents indicated that 9% said the extent of social media use on family values was none, 15% said it was to a low extent,21% said it was to a somewhat extent,23% said it was to a moderate extent and 32% of the respondents said the effect was to a high extent. This is well presented in figure 5. below.

Figure 5 Impact of social media use on Family values

Extent to which social media affects family values
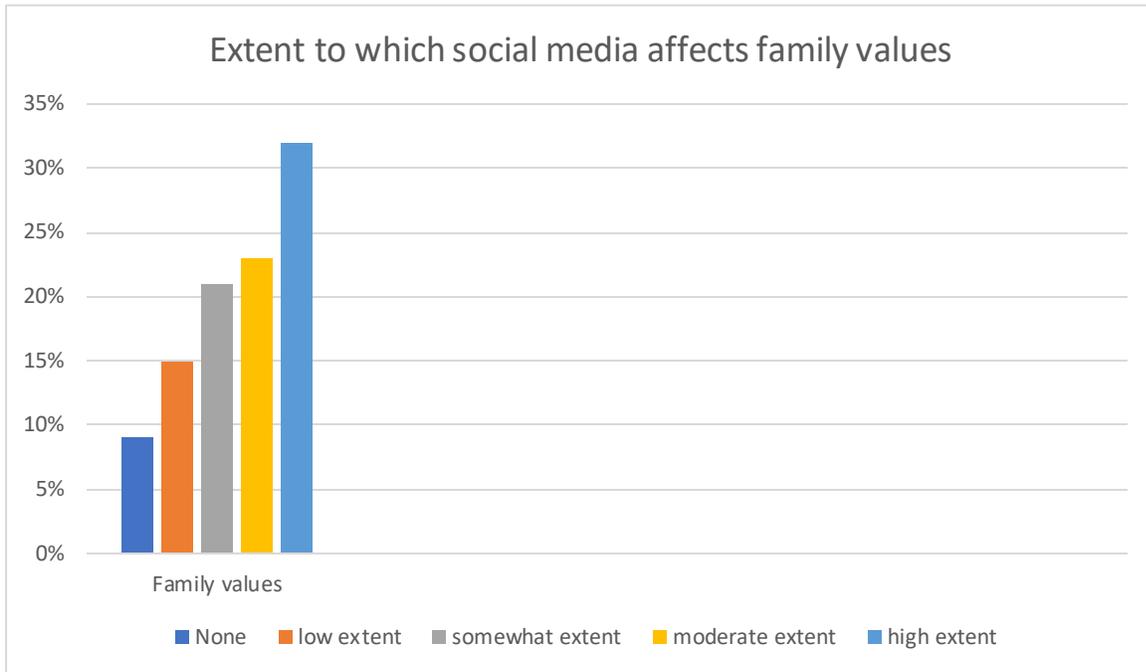
Interfamily Relations

The researcher sought to find out to what extent social media had an effect on interfamily relations through structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Findings from the family members who were interviewed revealed that 8% of the respondents said the effect was none ,13% said the effect was to a low extent ,22% said the effect was to a somewhat extent ,24% said the effect was to a moderate extent and 33% said the effect was to a high extent. This was well presented in the figure 6. Below.

Figure 6. Impact of social media use on Interfamily relations

extent to which social media affects Interfamily relations
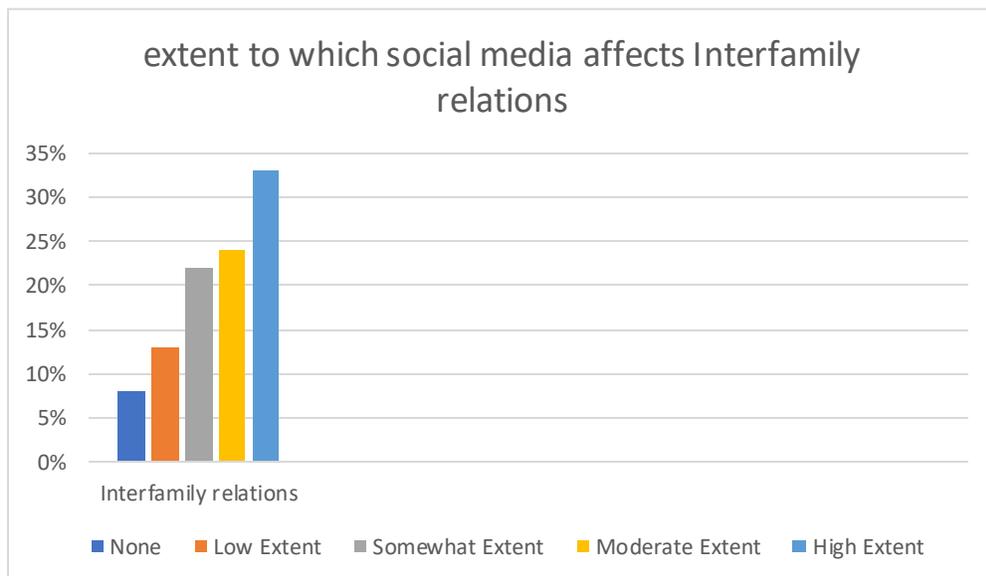
The results thus indicated that social media has an effect on interfamily relations in the families of the respondents apart from 8% of the respondents. These results were confirmed by the findings from the Focus Group Discussions. These discussions involved youths and parents selected to participate in the study by the researcher. The findings from the respondents in one of the FGDs revealed that the respondents unanimously agreed that social media helped them hold discussions with their family members easily without having to travel to where they were. That social media to them had made it easier to link up with other members of the family who lived in different geographical locations with a lot of ease. That this saved on time wasting and travelling costs. That according to the respondents in this FGD, social media made it quite convenient for them to get in touch with their family members. One of the participants in the FGD said:

> *"With Facebook, I am able to post on my status, what I am going through and my feelings then members of my family who follow me on Facebook are able to comment on the status and encourage me. Their responses are sometimes so instant that it makes me feel as if I am there with them as am sharing my feelings."*

Another respondent said that:

> *"social media has made it easier to for me to link up with other members of the family who live in different geographical locations with a lot of ease, we update each other of our encounters so easily and remain in touch all through ".*

Another participant also added to the fact that social media had made it convenient for them to communicate with friends and family. She responded that:

> *"WhatsApp is just the best thing that ever happened to us as a family. We have formed a group and added members of the family to the group. Every member is able to receive a message posted on the group and can respond to it in real time. When we have to discuss or address an issue, we simply post it on the WhatsApp group and wait for the other members to react to it by commenting and posting. We can take photos and post and sometimes we make decisions based on our discussions on the WhatsApp group. Our communication has really become convenient and less of a hustle."*

Another Respondent said that:

> *"Social media has been good for us in communicating but it also has brought about some issues. For instance, my siblings seem not to have time anymore for us to sit down and chat face to face in fact they prefer that we interact online instead. I requested my sister for a lunch date sometime back, but she said she doesn't have much time, instead she sent me money to go enjoy my lunch and in case I had a pressing issue then I could contact her. Meeting up has become a situation that exists just because but is not a necessity anymore".*

Social media has thus made people generally less social ironically. People can be online silently the whole day yet be unable to hold a substantial conversation face to face. This is therefore affecting how interpersonal relationships are being formed and maintained currently. More of them are formed online and less time is spent on face-to-face conversations to strengthen the family relationships. This was a report given from one of the focus group discussion by parents. One of the participants said that:

"Even during meals time especially dinner time, we are expected to meet and share a meal as a family, but we always find ourselves sited at the dining table eating but all of us are chatting with other friends online. We simply respond to questions in monotones or engage with other members of the family minimally. This is because we are so engrossed on the phone or tablet chatting. The speech is usually limited until one day my dad scolded us. Instead of meeting up and chatting as we eat, we were too engrossed with our phones. I remember he even threatened to snatch our phones from us."

The Data from the youth and parent respondents indicated that the participants placed centrality of social media in their lives with it being the center of information gathering and sourcing, socializing platform, source of entertainment and education, effective and efficiency in communication, advertising and marketing of goods and services with immediate feedback, e-business, acquisition of dispositional and propositional knowledge and even center of e-learning. Social media is therefore a source of information, a platform to socialize, a place for entertainment and acquisition of knowledge generally among all the family categories sampled for the study.

Family Activities organized to enhance family communication

The researcher sought to find out the extent to which social media use affected family activities organized to enhance family communication. To answer this, data from the respondents indicated that the participants 7% said that the extent was none, 11% said the extent was low,18 % said the extent was somewhat,23% said it was a moderate extent and 41% said it was a high extent. This is clearly presented in figure 7. below:

Figure 7. Impact of social media use on Family activities
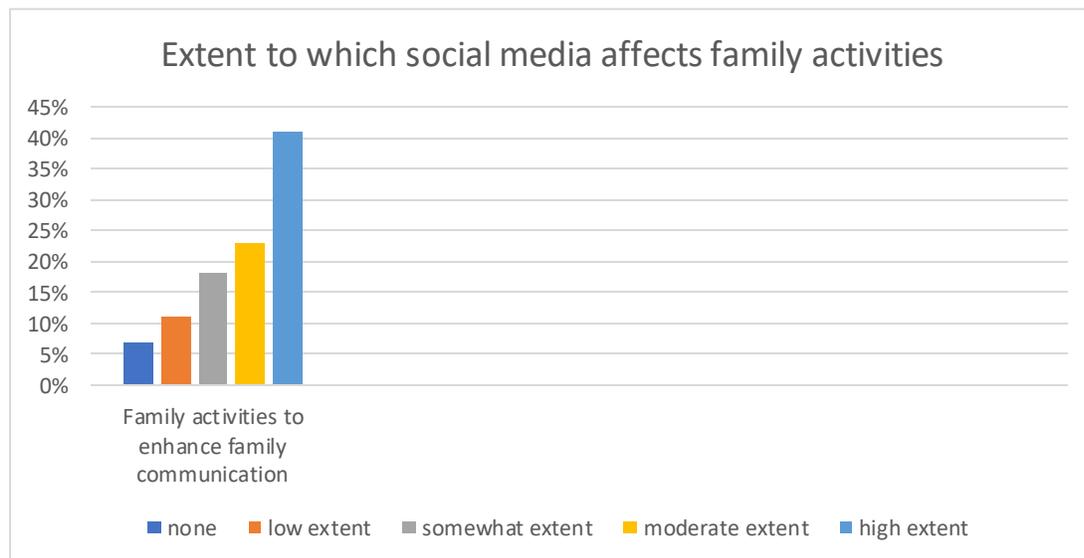
These findings were confirmed by data from the focus group discussions. Data from a focus group discussion by youth participants indicated that the quality time spent on their use of social

media did affect their family communication whenever they had family activities organized to enhance family communication. One of the participants said:

> *My cousins, uncles, aunts, even nephews and nieces kept fiddling on their gadgets such as phones, tablets and computers chatting or browsing on social media platforms even during such meetings instead of engaging in face-to-face interaction with the rest of the family members.*

Data from a focus group discussion by parent participants indicated that the time spent on use of social media greatly affected the family activities organized to enhance family communication. One participant said that:

> *During family activities such as family get togethers, the children and youths gather themselves in various groups according to age or interests to either watch videos or chat on social media platforms instead of having face to face interaction. Parents on the other hand keep making calls and sending emails to their workplaces and business associates. This definitely leaves them with very little time for face-to-face interaction with other family members.*

Data from the Focus Group Discussions by the parents also indicated that the participants agreed to have created WhatsApp groups, Facebook and Twitter accounts on social media specifically for family communication and were friends with the other family members on this social media sites. This ensured that adequate channels were available to facilitate family communication through social media by family members. With this, there was minimal face to face interactions among the family members since social media was easier, faster, time saving and most convenient.

Data from the participants in another Focus Group Discussion by parents indicated that social media should have sites with activities that will involve family members to engage constantly. He said:

"*These websites should be friendly to family set up and be the ones that spur family members to better connect and interact as a unit.*" The sites could be those that encourage family values among the participants. These sites should also be ones that are interactive in nature. The social media sites should be used to pass information on better relationships within the family set up. They should be used for family communication positively to enhance relationships among family members and not to be used to replace the warm environment at the home but rather just an avenue of communication when far from other family members.

These sites should also have various information learnt to help family members to communicate better with enough content hence enlightening them on various aspects that affect their lives without necessarily replacing the face-to-face interaction that exists among the family members. This would call for the family members to use social media in moderation especially when engaging in an environment where they were accompanied by the family members or by their friends. This would also reduce the cases of addiction of social media sites which can result into conflicts among close relatives and friends.

Social media should also have family groups that are active for instance the WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups and Instagram. Through these groups, family members will be able to constantly interact with each other freely. The findings from the focus group discussions indicated that the family should not be against the use of social media but rather be able to retailor conversations among members of the family so as to use social media effectively and appropriately. The social media family groups need to have an administrator who would be able to moderate the kinds of information shared or disseminated through the media. This should also be able to keep the members active always.

Findings also indicated that the social media could be used to disseminate various information that can be learnt on social media which help family members communicate better with each other and, hence enlightening them. The respondents indicated that for social media to be used more effectively in the family set up, they needed to decisively agree on the effective ways of using social media in family communication. The study further found out that the family members can come up with groups that can be used actively for example family WhatsApp groups that are active.

One of the participants in a focus group discussion by parents said that:

> *"For effective use of social media for family communication, the family members need to also create rules pertaining to the use of social media use. These rules should address the dos and don'ts of social media use when together as a family and during family activities organized to enhance family communication. The members should therefore agree on the best way to engage using social media. Family time should then be agreed on and negotiated so that social media use does not affect the amount of time spent to on interpersonal communication among the family members. The rules would also help address the questions on the effective use of social media such as regularizing how to use social media during family time"*

DISCUSSION

Family communication builds who a child is because a child is first socialized in the family by the parents and grandparents (Arnold,2018). Fitzpatrick (2000) in his study found that families are formed through social interaction and any time family members communicate, they send information to each other as well as enact relationships. Based on the findings of these studies by Arnold (2018) and Fitzpatrick (2000), my study sought to evaluate the influence of social media use on relationships between parents and children in families. Findings from the study indicated that, social media use brought about misunderstanding between children and their parents who were on social media especially when the children were attached to unacceptable sites, did not want to be sent by their parents due to addictiveness of social media or lacked concentration whenever their parents tried to engage them in a face-to-face interaction.

The study findings still revealed that the addictiveness due to the great frequency of access to social media affected the understanding of the children since they were always preoccupied with whatever information they accessed on social media, or trying to develop and maintain friendships on social media. This affected their level of concentration whenever their parents tried to engage them in a face-to-face interaction such that their understanding was interfered with contributing to wrong answers or no answer at all from the children. It is therefore hoped that findings of this study will create awareness to the social media users and social media providers so that they can come up with information and activities that will enhance positive interactions between parents and children.

Findings from the study also revealed that most of the social media users had a high extent of influence on aspects of family relationships such as social set-ups, family bonding, family roles, physical contact with family members, family values, interfamily relations and family activities. Through the social networking sites, the family members were able to post stories about their families thereby exposing their family members. This was an invasion of family privacy and personal space since they broadcast on social media all the good times, the bad times and all the happenings in the family. This becomes a source of conflict between children and their parents.

The findings also affirm what Orleans and Laney (2000) in their study found, that children were generally independent in their use of the computer and little social conversation was reported between them and their parents (Orleans & Laney,2000). In this study the frequency of social media use by most of the participants was to a high extent. This suggests that social media has a great influence on relationship between parents and their children. In African society, children were mentored by their parents who exposed them to what they thought was right for them and acted as advisers to their children. Today, children rely on social media for advice and mentorship which exposes them to several versions of information conflicting with the advice given to them by their parents, as a result the desired effect is interfered with. This suggests that social media has taken up the role of parenting and resulted in one's isolation since they could get all solutions on social media. They also attached this to a level of poor family communication or indifference. These results affirm what White,2007 finds in his study that the internet watered down parent's influence on their children, lengthening their world views and producing teenagers less bound by the parochial constraints of their time and place. At a younger age kids would have seen the world through the eyes of their parents or that of the specific media that the parents or guardians had subscribed to have delivered to their homes (White, 2007). The current research conveyed diminishing children-parent face to face communication yielding to the situation as proposed by White. The parents reported to issues of immorality and vulgarity among their children which was as a result of constant online interactions. Most of the parent participants also blamed social media for the erosion of values on issues that touched on sensitive areas such as sexuality among the children, dating styles and approaches among the youth, homosexuality and lesbianism issues and marriage issues among the couples emanating from the use of social media. This came with the internet carrying vast and dynamic information resources that could negatively affect the morals of family members and society at large. Many

of the parent respondents also brought to light the issues of pornography and exposure to nudity that was common on some social media sites. They further indicated that Social media had usurped the role of parenting since their children googled and learnt everything on social media as opposed to asking for direction from their parents. Most of the parent participants on the other hand said that they were also too engulfed on social media and barely had time/ spend quality time with their children. This therefore resulted to negative impact of social media on the relationship between parents and children.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the findings of the study indicated that social media allowed family members to post good and bad stories about their families thereby exposing them. Young members of families consumed most of their time on social media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube. This was because social media offered freedom of expression and no one cared what one said on social media. Invasion of family privacy and personal space due to broadcast of family on Social Media at times was a source of conflict in families. Family bonding was however done more on Social Media though it contributed in keeping family members away from each other physically and created distance. It can also be concluded that relationships among family members have been affected by social media use both positively and negatively in that there is negative exposure to family setups, isolation and source of family conflict due to less interpersonal communication between family members. Social media has generally been perceived as a hindrance to face to face communication in the family though it still has several benefits to family members.

Recommendations

Policy makers and network providers should look into possibilities of coming up with activities on social networking sites which enhance positive interactivity among family members. They should be formulated in a way that will encourage parent-child communication so that parenting and mentorship is still centered around the parent. This will ensure that family members are exposed to information that will impact them positively and parents will instill the right values and morals in the children since it is the family that builds who a child is.

Families need to be taken through a sensitization program on positive usage of social media to avoid addictiveness that leads to time wastage and irresponsible behavior. For posterity, the use of social media should clearly identify the different needs of communication and have them used where they best suit without necessarily distorting the social order. In cases where social media is deemed to be more harmful than useful, it should be discarded, and emphasis be made where it is deemed more useful.

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