
**INFOXICATION ONLINE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE FREQUENCY
OF FAMILY FACE TO FACE INTERACTION: A CASE OF SOCIAL
MEDIA USE IN NAIROBI, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study sought to examine the content most frequently accessed on social media by family members and its impact on the frequency of face to face family communication.

Statement of the problem: Extensive online information seeking, internet dependence, and the need to remain constantly updated may reduce face-to-face interaction among family members. The study therefore examined how infoxication associated with social media use affects family communication in Nairobi County.

Research methodology: The study employed a mixed-method research design and targeted parents and children residing in Nairobi County who used social media. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were applied, and data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, then analysed qualitatively and quantitatively.

Findings: The findings showed that infoxication influenced family communication both positively and negatively. Excessive engagement with online content contributed to reduced face-to-face interaction, while social media also provided information and topics that could support family discussion.

Conclusion: The study concludes that infoxication has a substantial influence on family communication and the frequency of face-to-face interaction. Its effects depend on how family members access and use social media content.

Recommendations: The study recommends that content developers should create attractive, family-friendly content that encourages constructive engagement. Families should also adopt responsible social media practices that protect time for face-to-face communication, while relevant authorities and practitioners should promote informed and balanced use of online content.

Keywords: *Infoxication, digital media, content, family interaction, frequency, face-to-face communication*

INTRODUCTION

Digital media is a prominent mode of communication, especially within the family, and it is changing how family members communicate. The increased use of social networking sites has become a global phenomenon in recent years. What began as a hobby for some computer-literate individuals has become a social norm and a way of life for people around the world (Boyd, 2007). Teenagers and young adults have embraced these sites as a way to interact with peers, share information, reinvent their identities, and showcase their social lives (Boyd, 2007). Increased use of technology for communication has contributed to the popularity of the internet because social networking has become an activity conducted primarily online (Coyle et al., 2008). There is a clear relationship between social media use, infoxication, and the way family members communicate. Messages can reach audiences and target groups in real time and can generate changes and trends.

Today, young family members, especially those in Nairobi County, grow up with extensive exposure to different forms of social media. They readily acquire digital literacy and live in a digital world in which many adults are only naturalized citizens. Livingstone (2008) focused on how young people use social networking sites for intimacy, privacy, and self-expression. The study mainly examined risky forms of youth content creation through social media. However, Livingstone did not specifically address the use of social media in communication among family members. The current study extends beyond teenagers and focuses on both parents and children because social media use has become widespread within families.

Livingstone and Bober (2005) found that modern technological developments have contributed to the democratization of the family, especially in countries that are pioneers in information and communication technologies. They also contrasted anxieties about the solitary nature of new media use with concerns about the loss of community traditions and values. However, their work did not examine concerns about infoxication and its effect on face-to-face interaction, exposure to unwanted information, risky online behaviour, or the broader impact of online interaction on family communication. This study sought to address this gap by providing evidence on online infoxication and its impact on the frequency of face-to-face family interaction.

Social networks for families, neighbours, and selected groups of relatives and friends have expanded in recent years (Kate F., 2013). A growing number of individuals appear to prefer more intimate online sharing experiences through social networks because they have direct

control over the information they access and how and with whom they share it. According to Mehta Ajay (2014), connecting with family on Facebook may result in limited face-to-face sharing among family members. The presence of younger family members can influence what relatives share online, while younger users may restrict family access to their Facebook content even after accepting relatives as friends. Social media has therefore changed communication among family members, making it an important area for research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technologies described as new media are digital, networked, interactive, and increasingly integrated into everyday communication. Their convergence with established communication systems has reshaped how individuals access information, participate in communities, and sustain interpersonal relationships, including those within families. Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, and Smallwood (2006) observed that socially interactive technologies were redefining young people's social networks by enabling fast and inexpensive communication, while Ofcom (2008) noted the growing frequency of visits to social networking sites. Earlier media, especially television, had already occupied an influential position in family life by entertaining, informing, socializing, and shaping perceptions of relationships. Bryant and Bryant (2001) argued that media convergence blurred traditional distinctions between television, computers, and other platforms, creating a foundation for understanding today's increasingly connected family communication environment.

Traditional media research also demonstrated that media content could influence how families understood roles, relationships, and social expectations. Singer and Singer (2001) showed that portrayals of minority families were often distorted or stereotypical, while Bryant and Bryant (2001) documented how television historically represented both supportive and conflictual family relationships. These portrayals were significant because repeated exposure could shape viewers' perceptions of normal family life. Although such studies focused mainly on television, their implications remain relevant to social media because contemporary platforms similarly circulate powerful representations of identity, behaviour, and relationships. The important shift is that digital users now select, share, and repeatedly encounter content individually. This greater personal control potentially intensifies exposure while reducing shared viewing experiences that once created opportunities for direct family discussion and collective interpretation.

The literature further suggests that digital communication may alter the emotional quality of family interaction. McKenna and Bargh (2000) argued that internet communication can become an impoverished form of social exchange when compared with direct face-to-face interaction, with possible consequences for loneliness and weakened community bonds. Hafner (2003) similarly noted that negative perceptions of internet use discouraged some older adults from adopting online communication, potentially widening intergenerational gaps. Bower (2005) explained that computer-mediated communication lacks nonverbal cues such as tone, gestures, posture, and facial expressions, making some messages difficult to interpret. Marche (2013) added that social media may expand the breadth of relationships without necessarily strengthening their depth. Together, these studies indicate that digital connectivity can increase contact while simultaneously weakening emotional richness in family communication.

Turkle (2009) extended this concern by arguing that individuals may increasingly confuse constant digital contact with authentic interpersonal communication and may prefer texting to face-to-face interaction. Such behaviour can reduce opportunities for sustained conversation even when family members remain connected online. Research on television offers additional theoretical insight into how media exposure shapes behaviour. Bandura (1977) proposed that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and identification, while Gerber and Gross (1976) argued that repeated media exposure can cultivate particular perceptions of social reality. Signorielli (2000) further demonstrated that heavy television exposure could influence beliefs about gender roles and family life. Although these studies preceded contemporary social media, their central argument remains useful: repeated exposure to media content can influence attitudes, expectations, and patterns of interaction within families.

Parental mediation research provides another important perspective on how families regulate media consumption. Bryant and Bryant (2001) identified co-viewing, rulemaking, and interaction as central mechanisms through which parents attempted to influence children's media experiences. Van Evra (1998) reported that a substantial proportion of children's television viewing occurred with family members, although Singer and Singer (2001) later observed that co-viewing was often incidental rather than deliberately instructional. Singer (2001) also noted that older siblings could influence younger children's viewing preferences and interpretations. These findings are relevant to social media because regulation is more difficult when media consumption becomes individualized, portable, and continuous. Unlike shared television viewing, smartphone-based communication allows family members to access

content privately, which can reduce opportunities for parental guidance, joint interpretation, and face-to-face engagement.

Family communication research also emphasizes that media use must be understood within broader relational patterns. McLeod and Chaffee (2008) described family communication through dimensions involving harmony, obedience, negotiation, and self-reliance, illustrating how communication styles shape family interaction. Gardner and Cutrona (2004) further linked family communication with social support, reassurance, comfort, and problem solving. These perspectives suggest that the consequences of social media depend not only on time spent online but also on the communication climate within the household. Mowlana (2008) emphasized the importance of language and cultural systems in communication, while Arnold (2002) highlighted the broader social role of culture in shaping knowledge and values. Accordingly, the effects of infoxication should be interpreted within cultural and relational contexts rather than as purely technological outcomes.

Studies on social media use show that individuals access online platforms for diverse informational, social, and entertainment needs. Park et al. (2009) identified information and leisure as important motivations, while Valkenburg et al. (2006) emphasized socialization and a sense of community. Lenhart and Madden (2007) similarly showed that young people use online platforms to maintain contact with friends. These motivations differ according to individual circumstances and social context. Hofstede (2001) demonstrated that cultural orientation can shape communication preferences, while Kim et al. (2011) found that users in collectivistic and individualistic settings may seek different gratifications from social media. This literature supports the view that online behaviour is dynamic and socially embedded, making it necessary to examine how specific patterns of content consumption influence family communication.

The uses and gratifications tradition provides a strong framework for understanding why family members repeatedly engage with online content. Katz et al. (1973) and McQuail (2000) identified information, personal identity, social interaction, integration, and entertainment as major motivations for media use. These needs influence both the type of content selected and the amount of attention users devote to particular platforms. The document further notes platform-specific patterns associated with entertainment, fandom, chatting, and self-presentation (You Tuber et al., 2015), while McCrindle (2015) described differences in how young people use social media for communication, humour, dating, trends, and school-related

purposes. Taken together, the literature suggests that varied and continuous online content may satisfy important needs while also competing with time available for direct family interaction.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research approach and was conducted in Nairobi County. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to collect data from families and members of selected churches in Nairobi County. The study population consisted of 20 families and 270 members of nine churches. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents. Ten families who were not part of the sample of 100 were interviewed to corroborate information obtained from the questionnaires. The young family members were aged 9 to 25 years and came from nine sub-counties in Nairobi County, while the parents were aged 35 to 65 years. Castells' Theory of Social Networks informed the study by emphasizing that modern societies are shaped not only by technology but also by cultural upbringing, religion, political and economic factors, and social status.

Family communication was therefore considered part of the network society. Uses and Gratifications Theory also informed the study because it proposes that people use media to satisfy specific needs. Media users seek sources that best fulfil their needs, including information and education, entertainment, personal identity, integration and social interaction, and escapism. The theory was suitable for explaining participants' media choices and the effects of social media use on family relationships. Fawkes and Gregory (2001) further argued that the level of gratification depends on an individual's level of need or interest and that knowledge, experience, and cultural background influence communication. Responses were grouped according to the study objectives, analysed, and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Access to Content on Social Media

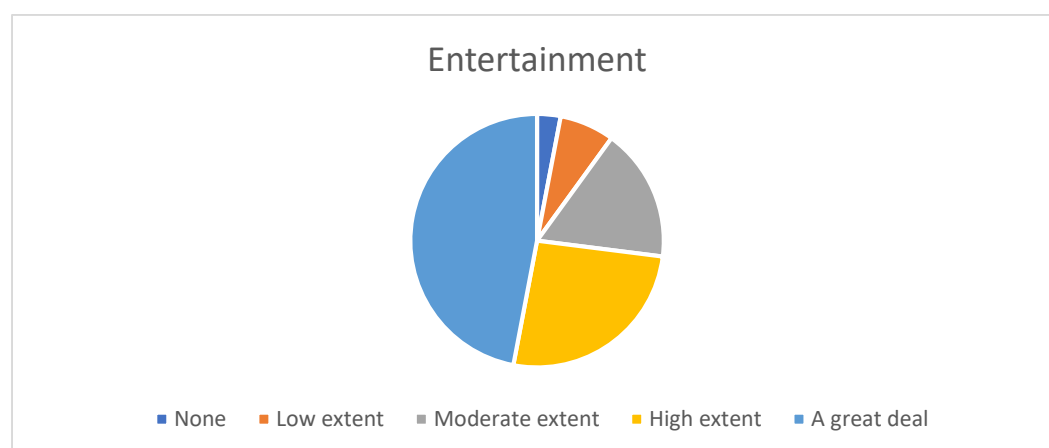
In response to the question on the extent to which respondents accessed the listed content on social media, participants reported accessing various types of information. Structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to establish these patterns. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Content Accessed on Social Media

Content	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
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%

Content on Entertainment

In response to the question on the extent to which entertainment content affected the frequency of family communication, 3% of respondents reported no effect, 7% reported a low effect, 17% reported a moderate effect, 26% reported a high effect, and 47% reported an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 1.


Figure 1: Extent to Which Entertainment Content Influences the Frequency of Family Communication

These findings were supported by the focus group discussions. Participants reported that entertainment content had substantially affected the frequency of communication among family members. This view was unanimously expressed by the parent participants in the focus group discussions, who described entertainment content as broad, varied, addictive, and captivating.

Data from the parent focus groups also indicated that entertainment content had greatly influenced the frequency of communication with their children. One respondent stated:

My son is always with ear phones either listening to music or watching movies on social media which makes it difficult for him to have time for interpersonal communication, let alone pay attention to anyone talking to him. At times I am forced to take away the phone from him for him to pay attention when I want to have serious talk with him.

Another respondent said that:

Our children especially the youths have adopted strange behavior from the entertainment they access on social media sites and this also influences the frequency of their communication with family members.

Another respondent reported that:

The type of language and vocabulary used by young people today is as a result of the content they access on entertainment through social media. Unfortunately, some parents do not comprehend this language and vocabulary so young people get bored when they have to engage their parents in a face-to-face interaction which therefore affects the frequency of family communication.

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 young people revealed that young people 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.

Content on Business

In response to the question on the extent to which business content influenced the frequency of communication among family members, 11% reported no effect, 13% a low effect, 19% a moderate effect, 29% a high effect, and 28% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 2.

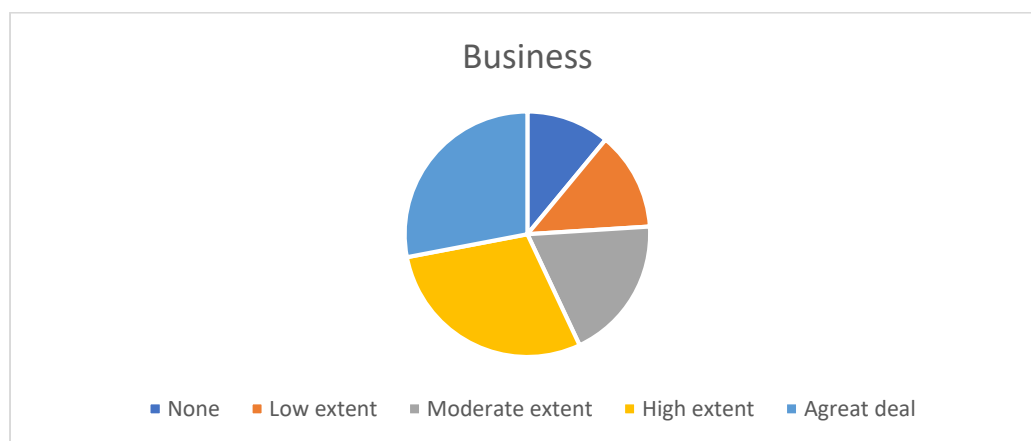


Figure 2: Extent to Which Business Content Influences the Frequency of Family Communication

Focus group discussions indicated that social media enabled participants to market and order items online and receive immediate feedback from customers interested in their products. A seller could photograph a product and advertise it on a social media page, after which interested buyers could post comments and request additional details.

Data from the focus group discussions indicated that through social media the participants were able to market and order for their items on social media and receive feedback instantly and directly from the customers interested in the products. All one needed to do was to take a photograph of the product on sale and then advertise it on their social media page. After that, there would be interested buyers would post comments on the item enquiring on the details.

This would then lead to a successful transaction on the item for sale. Through this, the family members would conveniently shop for items that would interest them on social media page. The feedback also showed that 54% of the respondents had in one way or another at least advertised for a product online or sold a product online through social media while 46% reported that they had not advertised or sold any product online. They had however seen many advertisements on social media that persuaded them to enquire more on a product or even ended up purchasing the product.

Content on Trends

Regarding the extent to which content on trends affected the frequency of communication among family members, 7% of respondents reported no effect, 11% a low effect, 18% a moderate effect, 29% a high effect, and 28% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 3.

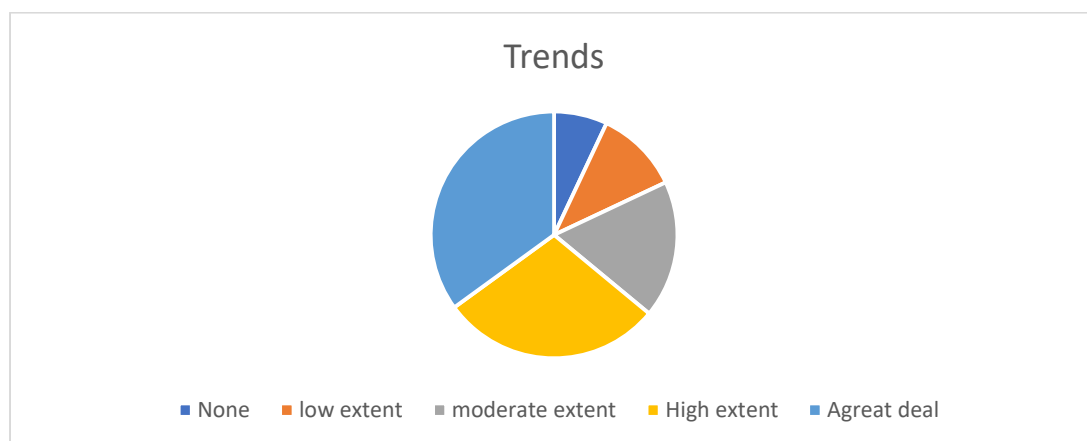


Figure 3: Extent to Which Content on Trends Influences the Frequency of Family Communication

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 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.”

Social media was also reported to help create awareness through themes on trends in the society. The participants reported that social media helped them to get in touch with their friends and family more conveniently and easily. They were able to get the latest trends on social media sites that they had access to. The students reported that they were able to know what was new and in style simply by logging onto social media and accessing the latest in fashion. This would affect how they dress for instance. Social media was also reported to be a source of various kinds of news like social news, educative news, entertainment news, business ideas, a source of creative ideas and business ideas.

Social media became a reliable source of information on the trends. Twitter was cited as the best trend setter. The respondents also indicated that through Twitter, they were able to know what was trending in terms of news and the happenings around the world. One of the respondents indicated that:

“On Twitter, I am able to know what is trending at any particular moment. I am able to know what is happening in any place in the world by simply checking the trending topics or stories. This keeps me informed and makes me participate by giving my input on the stories that are trending. I can also get this information then retweet it to the family members and friends on my social media pages. This makes us generally more informed on the happenings around us.”

Social media also played the role of creating awareness to the respondents in terms of entertainment news, connectivity with friends and family and awareness on lifestyle, family, academic issues health issues, fashion trends, celebrity, gossip, political issues, dating and educative issues. These topics were commonly identified by the respondents as the ones where they could get information and use it for discussion with friends and family. There was information online on various events that were taking place and members could be able to tap in and listen to the happenings. Social media was an instant media thus its use in creation of awareness was good. The posting of the stories and the posting of the feedback was also instant in nature. This makes social media well suited for the creation of awareness among family members and friends.

Social media also helped the students inform adolescents on the challenges they were experiencing and share information on how to address the challenges experienced by the peers. This is mainly because on social media, the users were able to form peer groups, or groups of

friends who seemed to have issues in common. These would then be able to ask each other areas of concern and also help each other solve problems. The youths were specific that they used social media to ask their friends for advice on the issues that they were going through. These advice would come in handy and instantly from the friends. Friends would be able to share experiences that they had and also learn from each other's experiences. One of the respondents reported that:

“Social media has helped us to share our situations with our friends and family thus allowing them to advise us on issues that disturb us. We have WhatsApp group made up of my friends who are my peers, we share freely and advice each other on the various life skills. We are also able to solve our problems or fix our challenges through interaction on WhatsApp group.”

Content on Lifestyle

Responses on the extent to which lifestyle content affected the frequency of communication among family members indicated that 8% reported no effect, 9% a low effect, 19% a moderate effect, 28% a high effect, and 36% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 4.

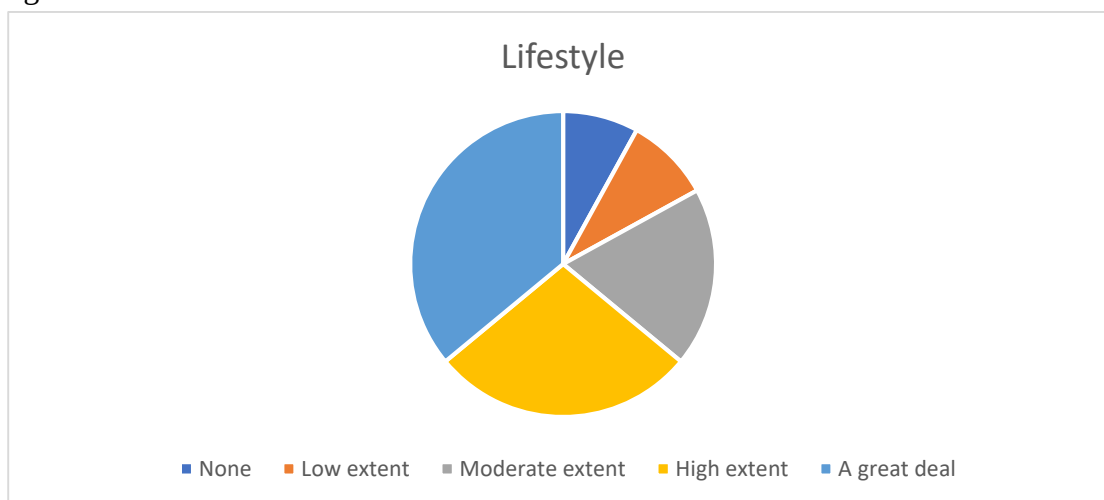


Figure 4: Extent to Which Lifestyle Content Influences the Frequency of Family Communication

Content on Advertisements

Findings on advertisement content and its effect on the frequency of communication among family members indicated that 6% of respondents reported no effect, 16% a low effect, 21% a moderate effect, 26% a high effect, and 31% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 5.

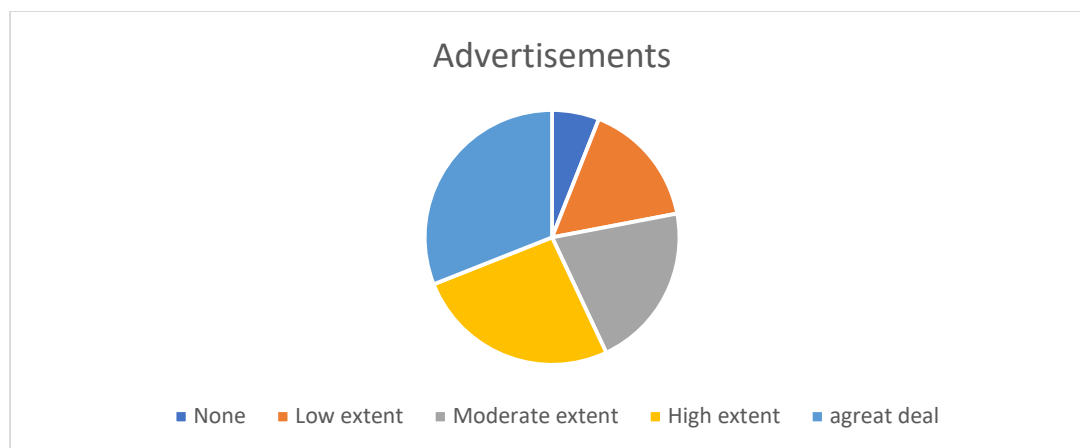


Figure 5: Extent to Which Advertisement Content Influences the Frequency of Family Communication

Educational Content

Findings on educational content and its effect on the frequency of communication among family members indicated that 3% of respondents reported no effect, 7% a low effect, 22% a moderate effect, 24% a high effect, and 44% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 6.

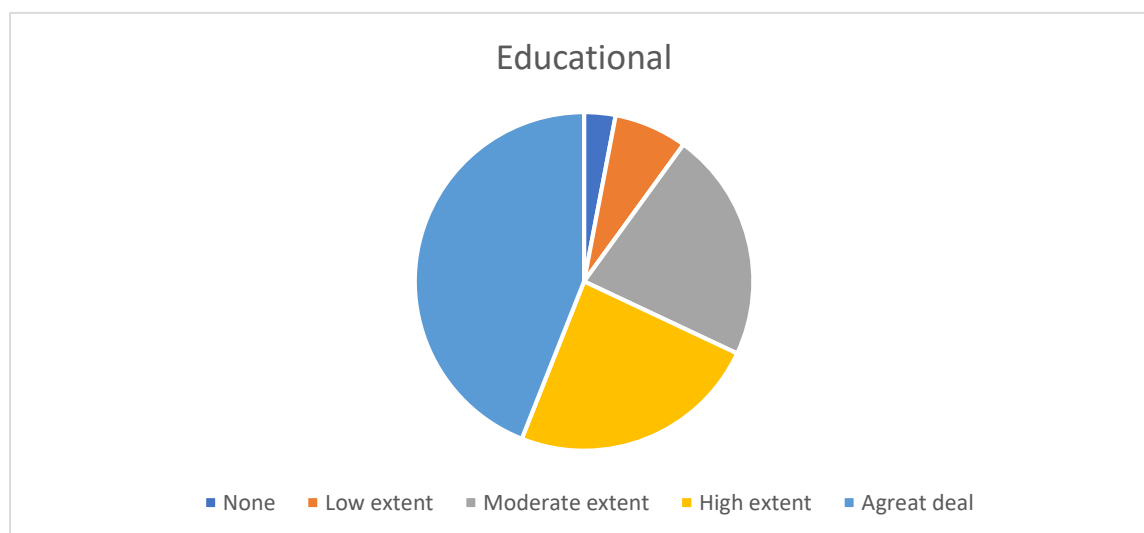


Figure 6: Educational Content

Love and Courtship

Responses on the extent to which content on love and courtship affected the frequency of communication among family members indicated that 11% of respondents reported no effect, 13% a low effect, 16% a moderate effect, 16% a high effect, and 44% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 7.

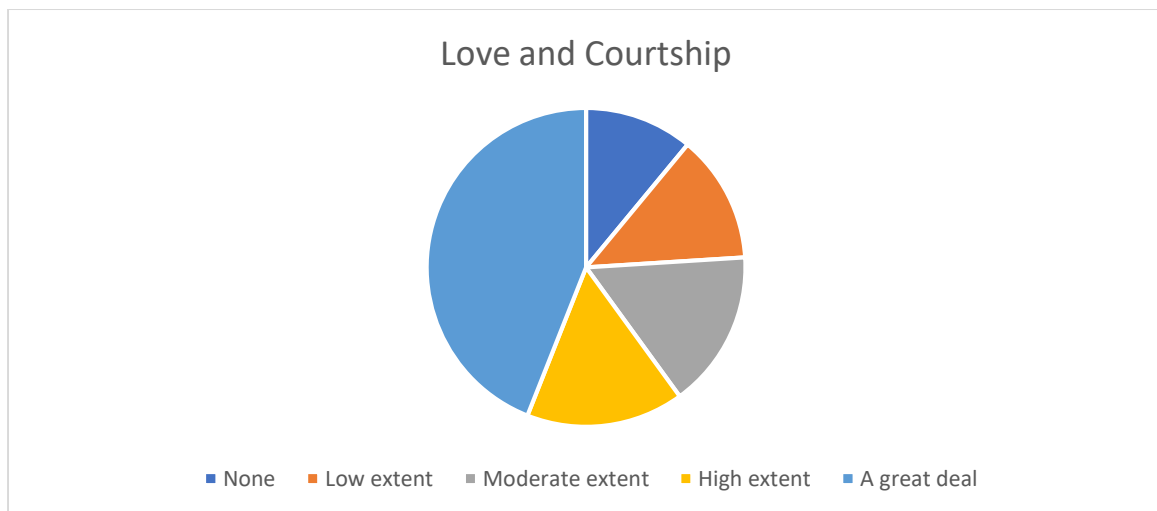


Figure 7: Love and Courtship

Politics and Current Affairs

Findings on political and current affairs content and its effect on the frequency of communication among family members indicated that 3% of respondents reported no effect, 11% a low effect, 19% a moderate effect, 29% a high effect, and 38% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 8.

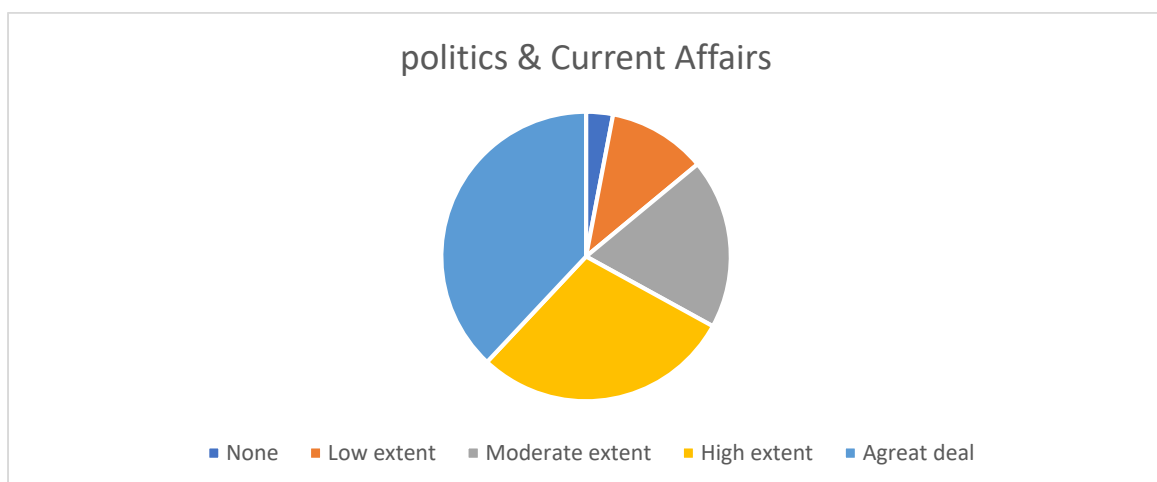


Figure 8: Politics and Current Affairs

Health

Findings on health content and its effect on the frequency of communication among family members indicated that 11% of respondents reported no effect, 13% a low effect, 21% a moderate effect, 26% a high effect, and 29% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 9.

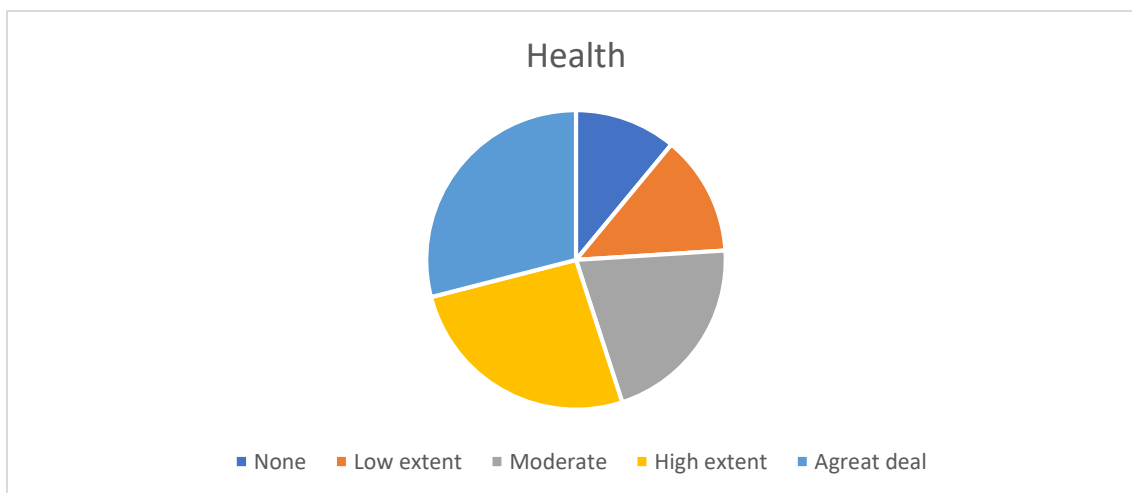


Figure 9: Health

Parenting

Responses on the extent to which parenting content affected the frequency of communication among family members indicated that 13% of respondents reported no effect, 18% a low effect, 19% a moderate effect, 21% a high effect, and 29% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 10.

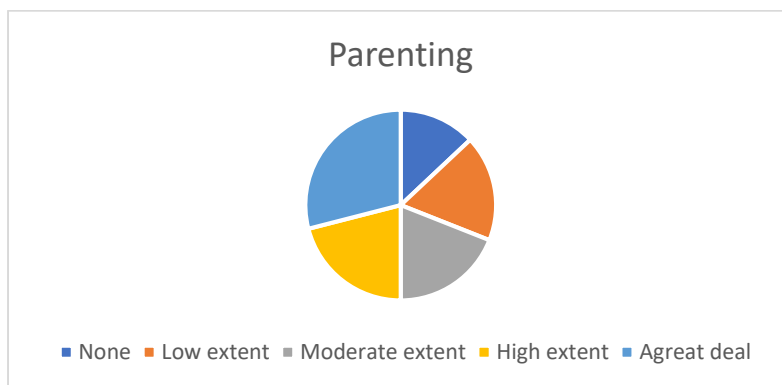


Figure 10: Parenting

Careers

Findings on career-related content and its effect on the frequency of communication among family members indicated that 3% of respondents reported no effect, 7% a low effect, 19% a moderate effect, 23% a high effect, and 48% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 11.

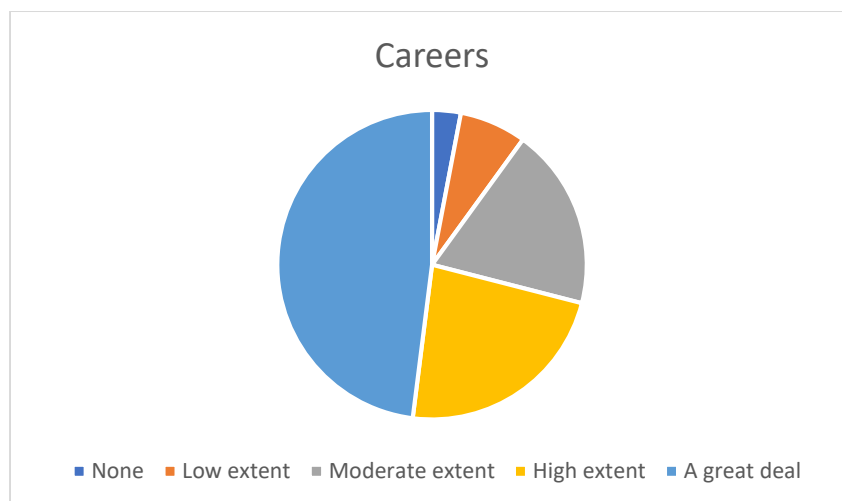


Figure 11: Careers

Drug Abuse

Responses on the extent to which drug-abuse content affected the frequency of communication among family members indicated that 9% of respondents reported no effect, 11% a low effect, 18% a moderate effect, 27% a high effect, and 35% an effect to a great extent. These findings are presented in Figure 12.

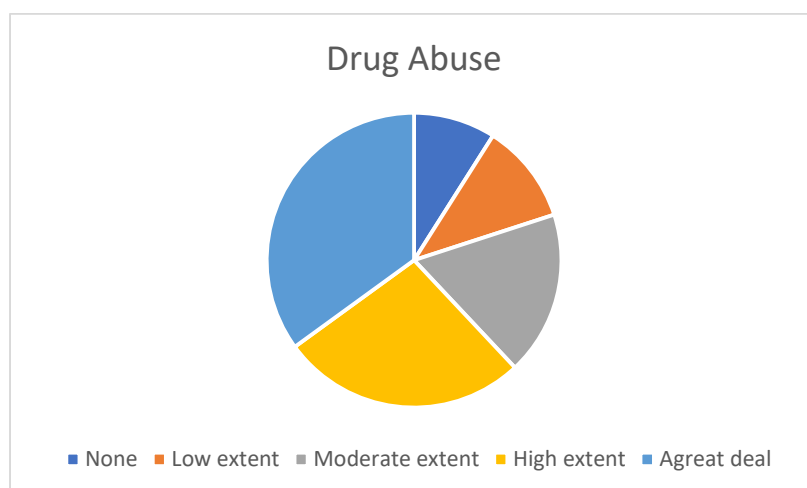


Figure 12: Drug Abuse

Effect of the Themes on Family Communication

To establish the influence of content accessed on social media on the frequency of family communication, the researcher used objective-oriented structured interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher sought to determine the extent to which social media content affected different aspects of respondents' family communication. These aspects are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Effect of Themes on Family Communication

Aspects	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Social interactions	8%	18%	23%	29%	31%
Intimate interactions	10%	16%	21%	23%	30%
Shared discussions	11%	16%	22%	27%	34%
Family activities	6%	17%	26%	24%	36%
Conversation orientations	13%	15%	25%	24%	33%
Poor communication	8%	18%	27%	25%	31%
Conformity orientation	8%	11%	33%	24%	24%

Respondents reported sharing information about themes of interest from social media with family members, which then became topics of discussion during family time and could promote greater cohesion. For example, humorous themes presented in videos or memes could create shared light-hearted moments within the family. Social media discourse therefore contributed to communication within the family context by stimulating discussion of subjects and current trending issues. Data from the focus group discussions on time spent using social media without affecting family communication indicated that maintaining a healthy balance was challenging. Participants found it difficult to stay away from their devices because they frequently returned to them to obtain information, communicate, and keep up with trends. The addictive nature of social media and information overload made it difficult to balance family communication with time spent online. However, avoiding social media during family time, such as mealtimes, could create more opportunities for effective family communication.

Data from the focus group on time spent on social media use without affecting family communication. indicated that it is rather challenging to ensure quality time spent on their use of social media without affecting their family communication because however much they try it is hard to keep off these gadgets and often times it requires that they refer back to them so as to get information, communicate and keep tabs with what's trending at all times. The addictive nature of social media and the overload of information makes it quite hard to strike a sane balance between the family communication and quality time on social media. However, forfeiting the use of social media while at home and especially during family time such as meal time could help create time for effective family communication.

From the focus group discussion, the 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 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 respondents 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.”

Social media became a reliable source of information on the trends. Twitter was cited as the best trend setter. The respondents also indicated that through Twitter, they were able to know what was trending in terms of news and the happenings around the world. One of the respondents indicated that:

“On Twitter, I am able to know what is trending at any particular moment. I am able to know what is happening in any place in the world by simply checking the trending topics or stories. This keeps me informed and makes me participate by giving my input on the stories that are trending. I can also get this information then retweet it to the family members and friends on my social media pages. This makes us generally more informed on the happenings around us.”

Social media also played the role of creating awareness to the respondents in through themes of entertainment, news, connectivity with friends and family and awareness on lifestyle, family, academic issues, health issues, fashion trends, celebrity, gossip, political issues, dating and educative issues. These topics were commonly identified by the respondents as the ones where they could get information and use it for discussion with friends and family. There was information online on various events that were taking place and members could be able to tap in and listen to the happenings. Social media was an instant media thus its use in creation of awareness was good. The posting of the stories and the posting of the feedback was also instant in nature. This makes social media well suited for the creation of awareness among family members and friends.

Social media also helped the family members through themes on lifestyle. For instance, they inform adolescents on the challenges they were experiencing and share information on how to address the challenges experienced by the peers. This is mainly because on social media, the users were able to form peer groups, or groups of friends who seemed to have issues in common. These would then be able to ask each other areas of concern and also help each other solve problems. The youths were specific that they used social media to ask their friends for advice on the issues that they were going through. These advice would come in handy and instantly from the friends. Friends would be able to share experiences that they had and also learn from each other's experiences. One of the respondents reported that:

“Social media has helped us to share our situations with our friends and family thus allowing them to advise us on issues that disturb us. We have a WhatsApp group made up of my friends who are my peers, we share freely and advice each other on the various life skills. We are also able to solve our problems or fix our challenges through interaction on the WhatsApp group.”

The study further sought to establish the content accessed by family members on social media and its impact on family communication. The findings indicated that family members accessed themes such as gaming, health, trends, entertainment, education, politics, lifestyle, business, courtship and marriage, and advertisements. These themes were associated with reduced face-to-face communication because information overload kept social media users engaged online for many hours, leaving limited time for direct interaction. The themes also set agendas for family discussion but could contribute to discourtesy, violation of personal space, exposure to inappropriate content, and reduced seriousness when users focused heavily on jokes, celebrity content, or criminal behaviour. In the long term, such exposure may negatively influence users' development.

On the other hand, the findings indicated that social media themes also affected some participants positively. Different themes attracted users according to their needs and desired gratifications. One child participant 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

This result supported Uses and Gratifications Theory, which proposes that media are used according to how well they meet and gratify users' needs (Blumer & Katz, 1974). The findings showed that respondents accessed varied social media content to gratify different needs; consequently, they did not all seek the same content. The findings also supported McCombs' (1992) Displacement Theory because technology-based activities can displace time from other communication domains. Participants spent less time in physical interaction because they spent more time on social media sites accessing content that met their needs. Morgan and Signorelli (1990) noted that cultivation theorists argue that viewers "watch by the clock," an idea reflected in the amount of time participants spent consuming social media content.

The findings may contribute to policies that encourage positive and responsible use of social media and support families in preserving face-to-face communication as a means of transmitting values to children. In traditional African family settings, parents spent substantial time with their children and face-to-face communication was a primary mode of engagement. This opportunity is becoming more limited as young people spend substantial portions of their time on social media. Displacement Theory may therefore help policy makers understand how excessive internet use can replace other activities and reduce opportunities for face-to-face family interaction.

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. The majority of child participants reported that the networking sites were used as platforms for socializing, networking, dating, getting updates on news and current affairs, keeping tabs with what was trending both locally and globally, marketing and advertising, to listen to music, watch movies, fashion, documentaries in sites such as YouTube and for escapism. However, the most commonly sought for information by young participants included 43% on trending music and fashion styles, 38% on places to tour on holiday, 27% on health information, 26% on the advertisements on social media, 78% on the status updates by friends, 22% on the researcher also sought to find out the kind of information mostly consumed on social media by young participants.

Most respondents reported that they depended on social media for advice on various issues because online content covered a wide range of themes. They described social media as a source of mentorship that fulfilled their needs but could also reduce interaction with parents

and other family members. The results therefore showed that content accessed on social media had a substantial influence on the frequency of family communication.

CONCLUSION

Infotaxation on digital media was found to influence face-to-face communication within families. However, social media also made communication among family members faster, more convenient, and less costly, enabling relatives to remain in contact and discuss issues online. Excessive exposure to content on health, trends, politics, lifestyle, business, advertisements, and other themes affected family communication both positively and negatively. Information overload could keep users online for many hours and reduce opportunities for face-to-face interaction. At the same time, online themes could provide topics for family discussion. The findings also indicated risks such as discourtesy, violation of personal space, exposure to inappropriate content, and reduced seriousness when users focused heavily on jokes, celebrity content, or criminal behaviour.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Families should be sensitized on responsible social media use to reduce addictive patterns, time wastage, and irresponsible behaviour. The findings may also inform policies that promote appropriate online content and encourage the use of social media to strengthen family values and communication. Social media use should be guided by clear communication needs so that each platform is used where it is most suitable without unnecessarily disrupting family interaction. Where specific patterns of social media use are more harmful than beneficial, families should limit them and emphasize more constructive forms of communication.

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