

Emerging Technology via Family Communication

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Abstract

Family communication is at the heart of the family and its functioning. It is a two-way process in which family members create, share, and regulate meaning. Advances and dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are constantly changing the way families communicate. However, little is known about the use of different family communication styles and their impact on family well-being. Family communication through verbal and non-verbal interactions play a central role in maintaining family relationships and improving family well-being. It provides family members (who are related through biological, marital, cohabitation and/or emotional relationships) the basis for sharing meaning, connecting, flexibly changing family rules, finding fulfilment and expressing themselves, and sharing attitudes, values and beliefs. Family communication includes the content (verbal and non-verbal), frequency, and nature of family interactions that define the family and build family relationships. The main goal of this study is to look at the link between communication technology and family relationships, to understand whether family interactions are affected when the usage of communication technology increases.

Keywords: Family, Communication, ICT, Relationship, Wellbeing

Introduction

Technological advances have an increasing impact on adolescents and children. Adolescents' attachment to mobile devices and gaming systems affects relationship style. According to Silver (2019), with over five billion people possessing mobile devices and 58% of the world's population actively using the internet, there is no doubt that technology is eclipsing other commonplace household items in terms of utilisation. ICT is also creating a new landscape for family communication; individuals are now able to perform multiple media tasks and interact with multiple people at once. Compared with traditional communication methods, ICT can break down the barriers of time, space, space and space, making virtual communication accessible, feasible and efficient. In fact, the rapid development of ICT has changed and will continue to change the way families interact and communicate.

In addition to traditional means of communication such as face-to-face and phone calls, new information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as instant messaging (IM), social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and email allow individuals to communicate and interact with each other. Each medium has unique characteristics and offers advantages over other means of communication. Face-to-face communication has non-verbal elements, immediate feedback, full recognition, and real-time interaction. The phone, while lacking visual communication cues, provides instant feedback and real-time interaction over a wide geographic area. IM and e-mail enable the asynchronous exchange of text (and now photos, videos, and audio clips) between individuals and family groups. Social media sites are interconnected and provide a way to share text, photos and videos.

Although a growing body of research examines communication behaviours (such as ICT patterns, frequency and use) as well as interpersonal and family functioning, it is uncertain whether ICTs strengthen or weaken family relationships. The use of ICT can increase the time families spend together, strengthen family bonds, improve family communication and maintain family ties. Other studies have shown that the quality of family time has been significantly reduced, and that excessive ICT use can lead to isolation and inability to express properly, affecting the quality of family relationships.

Research Objectives

- To look at the link between communication technology and family relationships.
- To understand whether family interactions are affected when the usage of communication technology increases.

Literature Review

Some people believe that ICT have a detrimental effect on family togetherness. According to McDaniel (2015) when technology comes in between of relationships, it cause damages. On top of that, Taylor (2013) believes that the more time individuals spend on technology the farther away they get from their family life.

In addition, according to Lappe (2015), as parents increase screen time, so do children. Children imitate what they are taught. She added, children are more likely to participate in harmful behaviours when their parents use ICTs when they are sitting with them at a playground. While Lyons (2019) emphasised that due to technology, people speak more frequently with their family and friends, yet type and style of communication may be weaker.

Despite the worries of some researcher that technology splits families apart, McDaniel (2015) emphasised that with the advancement of technology, they are able to get connected and coordinate their lives as well as sharing moments. There are certain advantages for family life associated with this increased connectedness through technology. People who use the most technology, for instance, are more likely to share moments with family members online and to engage in certain types of family communications, such checking in with other family members and planning activities.

Furthermore, application programmes known as social media are used to interact, share information, and create content (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). While according to Whiting and Williams (2013), across the globe, the majority of people claim that using social media is

primarily motivated by the need to connect with family. Social media continues to influence families (Tariq, 2022).

Those days, Long-distance families have used a range of methods like letters and phone calls to carry on their family routine. While social media might be seen as an advancement of these media technologies, the portability of smartphones has revolutionised long-distance family practises and people now make shorter, more frequent, and less formal expressive gestures as a result of the widespread use of smartphones (Schrock, 2015). Hence according to Carvalho et al. (2015), given the variety of family structures, research on the impact of mediated communication on family functioning and behaviours has produced contradictory findings.

Methodology

A set of questionnaire was distributed to 400 respondent (household within Bukit Katil residence area, Melaka with children 5 years of to 24 years old). Data collection was based on family wellbeing set of questionnaire (*FACE: Family and Community Empowerment*) designed by the National Population and Family Development Board, Malaysia. Each interview lasts approximately 30 minutes. Collected data were then analysis using SPSS.

Results and Discussion

Respondents Profile

Table 1

Respondents' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	215	53.8
Female	185	46.3
Total	400	100.0

As shown in table 1, 215 respondent (53.8%) are male while 185 respondents (46.3%) are female.

Table 2

Respondents' Race

Race	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Malay	382	95.5
Chinese	10	2.5
India	8	2.0
Others	0	0
Total	400	100.0

As shown in table 2, there were 382 respondents (95.5%) are Malay, 10 respondents (2.5%) are Chinese while 8 respondents (2.0%) are Indian.

Table 3

Respondents' Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Islam	380	95
Hindu	9	2.3
Buddhist	7	1.8
Christian	4	1
Others	0	0
Total	400	100.0

As shown in table 3, there were 380 respondents (95%) are Muslim, 9 respondents (2.3%), are Hindu, 7 respondents (1.8%) are Buddhist while 4 respondents (1%) are Christian.

Table 4

Respondents' Number of Family Members

Number of Family Members	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2	4	1.0
3	59	14.8
4	82	20.5
5	109	27.3
6	66	16.5
7	43	10.8
8	18	4.5
9	9	2.3
10	5	1.3
11	5	1.3
Total	400	100.0

As shown in table 4, 4 respondents (1%) consist of 2 family members, 59 respondents (14.8%) consist of 3 family members, 82 respondents (20.5%) consist of 4 family members, 109 respondents (27.3%) consist of 5 family members, 66 respondents (16.5%) consist of 6 family members, 43 respondents (10.8%) consist of 7 family members, 18 respondents (4.5%) consists of 8 family members, 9 respondents (2.3%) consists of 9 family members, 5 respondents (1.3 %) consists of 10 family members, 5 respondents (1.3%) consist of 11 family members.

Table 5

Family Influenced by Communication Technology

ISSUE	Strongly Agree & Agree (%)
The usage of communication technology causes us to rarely communicate face-to-face with family members, which makes our kids feel excluded.	85%

Based on the findings, communication technology has a negative influence on the relationships of a family. This can be seen when 85% of respondents opted the option of “strongly agree and agree”, in that the usage of communication technology causes them to rarely communicate face-to-face with their family members, which makes their kids feel excluded (see Table 5). This situation is very worrying because family members will gradually feel a distant from each other, which over time might make them feel like strangers and not part of the family.

In addition, this situation will make family members lose faith in their own family and start looking for other people as a place to depend on. From the point of view of children’s development, attention from parents is very important in ensuring that children grow up normally. Children need the touch, attention, and love and affection of their parents in guiding them to face the outside world. If face-to-face interactions rarely occur with parents, these children will feel as if they are marginalized and unloved by their parents. Studies showed that lack of time with parents is one of the factors that caused children to easily believe the persuasion of unknown individuals on social media, which ultimately causes them to do negative things, such as running away from home (Sham, 2017). Besides, this finding could lead to one of the examples when family members are randomly interrupted by the mobile phone while having dinner together. In fact, family members tend to entertain their mobile phone rather than interacting with one another.

Table 6

The Usage of Communication Technology

ISSUE	Strongly Agree & Agree (%)
Communication technology makes it easy for us as a family to communicate and connect with each other.	86%

Based on the findings, 86% respondents stated that communication technology makes it easy for them as a family to communicate and connect with each other (see Table 6). It is evident that the transformative aspect from traditional forms of communication (face-to-face) towards using ICTs among the family members is seen as a form to communicate. This situation shows a positive development in the world of human communication, but it should be used as best as possible to avoid various negative things that will happen if communication technology is misused. The misused of communication technology will affect family relationships in terms of trust, sense of belonging, and sense of dependence.

According to Patel (2021), technology affects communication because it is a part of our everyday lives. As we discover technological advances, new trends in communications emerge and often become the norm. Besides, Patel also mentioned that technology affects communication by making it easier, quicker, and more efficient.

Table 7

The Purpose of using Communication Technology

ISSUE	Strongly Agree & Agree (%)
To plan for a family gathering	91%
To monitor the children	95%
To inform and update the activities carried out every day	95%

The findings of the study found that there are three main purposes for the use of communication technology by respondents (see Table 7). First, to plan for a family gathering (91%); followed by monitoring the children (95%); and third, to inform and update the activities carried out every day (95%). This finding also showed that respondents use communication technology for good purposes. The use of communication technology in the respondents' lives is intended to facilitate their daily affairs as well as making the most of the available communication technology.

According to Rogers (2019), communication technology like the Internet has had a revolutionary impact on communication, including the rise of near-instant communication by electronic mail, instant messaging, voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone calls, two-way interactive video calls, discussion forums, blogs, and social networking. We may now communicate more quickly and easily online, connecting with individuals wherever they are and at any time. Through social media, YouTube, and "memes", these have enabled people to express themselves. Like nothing before, the Internet has brought us together and torn us apart.

Table 8

Parental Control over Communication Technology Tools

ISSUE	Strongly Agree & Agree (%)
We have specific family rules regarding the use of communication technology.	69%
We monitor our kids' use of communication technology tools on a regular basis.	66%

Based on the findings, respondents mentioned that they control the usage of communication technology among their children. There are two ways they control their children's use of communication technology: through specific family rules regarding the use of communication technology (69%), and by monitoring their kids' use of communication technology tools on a regular basis (66%). By monitoring child's communication technology tools, parents lower the likelihood of children engaging with harmful activities.

According to Ismail (2018), communication technology has recently received more advancements, and this is a complement to access the world without borders, but the facility is seen to be misused by young individuals to create negative social problems. The use of gadgets, such as smart phones and so on, is the main medium of communication in this era, but uncontrolled and unsupervised usage can lead to negative implications for users, especially children, if misused.

Conclusion

Access to technology has become easier, and exposure to technology has had a major impact on technology use and separation from family members. Home surveillance practices may affect tech-inclined users (Livingstone, 2017). The use of technology affects family leisure, family connections and family communication. The results show that the use of technology in the home is very high and the greatest daily communication takes place through technology. Family leisure, offline family connections and communication are impacted by technology use. Technology in today's world offers numerous opportunities for effective communication, keeping every member of the family connected. From text messages, webcams, Facebook, Twitter and email, communication has never been easier. However, sometimes one-to-one communication between people falls short, and technology can take control of a family. The effects are both positive and negative. Technology has improved the communication process between families, allowing us to interact virtually instantly with family members and cause negligible harm. The positives of the communication technology element overshadow the negatives very much depends on how we use technological means of communication for good purposes and not misuse technology for malicious motives. If that happens, technology will then prove to be a complete boon to mankind. Without technology, we would have a difficult time connecting with the long-distance family members on a regular basis. Overall, the results of this study prove that technology can be a double-edged sword. Because it relies on how individuals utilise it, both positive and negative outcomes could result. Technology can be beneficial if used properly and sensibly, but if used improperly, it can be destructive. There are several recommendations for future research. First, a detailed study should be conducted throughout Malaysia to determine how communication technology has an impact on a family's relationship. In addition, it is suggested to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in obtaining research findings. The study sample should cover every layer of society in Malaysia, regardless of religion, race, education level, and social status. In addition, special emphasis should be given to children because they are a group of people who are easily influenced by the use of communication technology.

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