

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Social Media Use and Its Effects on Family Communication in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The rise in social media usage has continually reshaped the way family members communicate daily. This study investigated the effect of social media use on family communication among households in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The research focused on how regular engagement with social media platforms influence face-to-face interactions, emotional bonds, and the transmission of social values within the family unit. The study looked at how often family members in Yenagoa use social media; examined how social media use affects family conversations, and identified ways social media influence family closeness and relationships. The study was anchored on the Technological Determinism Theory, which argues that technology shapes human behaviour, interpersonal relationships, and drives social change. Using a descriptive survey design, the study employed structured questionnaire to gather data from parents, teenagers, and young adults living in family settings across Yenagoa. Findings revealed that excessive social media use reduces both the frequency and quality of family conversations, potentially weakening family bonds. The study hopes to contribute to ongoing

discussions on social norms, digital habits, and family dynamics in developing societies like Nigeria.

Introduction

Social media have taken over daily life in the current digital era, revolutionising communication, connection, and information sharing. Users of various ages and social backgrounds are drawn to platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp because they provide quick communication and simple access to content. Social media have sparked worries about its effects on close-knit relationships, especially among families, even while it improves worldwide communication (Akintunde & Adamu, 2022). The depth and calibre of face-to-face family conversation can occasionally be replaced by the convenience and quickness of Internet communication.

Maintaining emotional ties, settling disputes, and transferring cultural norms all depend on family communication. In the past, in-person contacts have aided in the development of family support, trust, and understanding. However, it seems that these conventional modes of contact are being disrupted by the increase in screen time brought on by social media use. Research indicates that family members, particularly teens and young adults, frequently value online interaction over face-to-face interactions with members of their own household (Okoro & Omotayo, 2021). Consequently, the time and focus that were formerly allocated to family discussions may now be focused on Internet platforms and mobile devices.

This expanding trend is reflected in the circumstances in major cities such as Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Many residents use social media often, frequently at the expense of family time, as a result of having easier access to smartphones and the Internet. Children and young people are increasingly engrossed in virtual connections, whereas parents report fewer meaningful exchanges (Ibrahim, 2023). This change may erode the emotional bonds that keep families together in addition to impairing communication quality. These shifts merit more investigation in an area renowned for its robust communal culture.

Furthermore, communication barriers within the family are frequently exacerbated by the age differences in media preferences and digital proficiency. Younger members who spend a lot of time online may make older folks feel excluded, or make it difficult for them to interact. In certain households, this disconnect may result in miscommunication, emotional detachment, and even conflict. Sometimes parents struggle to keep an eye on, or participate in their childrens' Internet activities, which results in less oversight and less parental influence. Social media's continued influence on communication patterns makes it critical to comprehend how this change impacts the composition and operation of the family.

In addition, the growing centrality of social media in everyday life has repositioned the family within a wider digital ecology where communication is no longer bounded by physical proximity. Scholars have noted that digital communication technologies introduce new

rhythms of interaction, altering when, how, and with whom family members communicate (Castells, 2015). These changes are particularly significant in urbanising African cities such as Yenagoa, where traditional communal values coexist with rapid technological adoption.

Social media platforms function not merely as communication tools but as social environments where identities are constructed, norms negotiated, and relationships maintained (boyd, 2014). As family members increasingly inhabit these environments, the potential exists for both enrichment and erosion of familial communication. On one hand, platforms such as WhatsApp may facilitate coordination and emotional support among family members who are physically apart. On the other hand, excessive immersion in online spaces may reduce attentiveness to co-present family members, thereby reshaping everyday interaction patterns.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate how family communication in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, is impacted by social media. It sought to determine the frequency of social media use by family members, the ways in which it affects in-person interactions, and the ways in which it molds emotional bonds within families.

Statement of the problem

Social media have grown in popularity as a communication tool in recent years, particularly among adults and young people in cities like Yenagoa. Although there are numerous advantages, including maintaining relationships with friends and having access to information, it is also changing the way families communicate with one another. Nowadays, a lot of families spend less time in person, and more time on their phones. Emotional ties may be eroding as a result, and meaningful family conversations are declining. Due to social media use, parents, kids, and other family members are frequently in the same room, yet separated. Research on the impact of this tendency on family communication in Yenagoa is lacking, despite the mounting concern. The purpose of this study was to investigate how usage of social media is altering the communication, relationships, and bonding patterns of families in Yenagoa.

Despite increasing scholarly attention to social media effects globally, empirical studies focusing on medium-sized Nigerian cities such as Yenagoa remain scarce. Much of the existing literature concentrates on metropolitan centres like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, often overlooking contexts where communal traditions remain strong. This gap limits the generalisability of findings and underscores the need for locally grounded research. Without such evidence, policymakers and family stakeholders may rely on assumptions that do not accurately reflect lived realities in Yenagoa. The study's objectives were:

To examine the extent to which social media usage influences face-to-face communication among family members in Yenagoa.

1. To assess the level social media, affect emotional bonds and the quality of interpersonal relationships within family units.

2. To investigate if social media play significant roles in shaping the transmission of social values and norms within families in Yenagoa.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this study is the Technological Determinism Theory, which was popularised by Canadian media scholar Marshall McLuhan. The theory explains how technological advancements impact human behaviour and shape societal development. The theory emphasises that people's interactions and communication are largely determined by the type of technology they have access to, and that technology, particularly communication tools, is a driving force behind changes in culture, values, and interpersonal relationships (Chandler, 2020).

According to this theory, technology use can alter interpersonal relationships and communication styles in the context of family life. As a result, it provides a valuable perspective for comprehending how digital technology is affecting the evolving dynamics of family communication. As a byproduct of contemporary communication technologies, social media platforms are affecting how families engage and sustain relationships. This is explained by the theory in the context of this study.

Families' communication habits shift when they use new social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, the idea claims. Less in-person interaction, less emotional attachment, and a change in the transmission of social beliefs and customs from one generation to the next could result from these changes.

The Technological Determinism Theory is pertinent to this research because it offers a framework for analysing how social media affects family communication. It lends credence to the theory that weakened interpersonal ties within families could be largely caused by the pervasive use of digital platforms. The study used this approach to investigate if technology is merely improving family life or if it is gradually displacing more conventional means of communication and bonding in Yenagoa families.

Discourse on Social Media

One way that people can communicate with one another is through social media, where they can develop, share, and exchange ideas and information on online groups and networks. Social media connect online information collectively by combining technology, social engagement, and content creation. Within their personal networks, people can exchange ideas, events, activities, and hobbies through social networking sites. People can upload videos, talk, upload photos, connect with friends, do business, and receive the most recent information on fashion, music, and movies.

Social media websites have proliferated in recent years, providing young people in particular with a new means of communication with the outside world and with each other. Guanah (2020) mentions Facebook, Instagram, Blogs, SoundCloud, Hulkshare, YouTube, Yelp, Sarahah, X (formerly known as Twitter), 2go, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Evernote, Vimeo, Flickr, Foursquare, Google+, Tumblr, MySpace, Instant messaging, Snapchat, YouTube and Sarahah as some social networking sites. Among the others are Myspace, Skype, Google Talk, Yahoo Messenger, and Blackberry Messenger (BBM).

Social media are so important that students can hardly do without them, for both social and academic needs. Social media provide a variety of options for academic involvement, such as cooperation on academic projects, communication with classmates and teachers, access to educational resources, and participation in online learning communities (Guanah, Njemanze & Isa Derefaka, 2023). Furthermore, university students are increasingly using social media for academic purposes in recent years (Guanah et al., 2023). Students use social networking sites not only for leisure and personal socialisation, but also as a platform for more serious and meaningful discussions.

Social Media Use and Face-to-Face Family Communication

The term "face-to-face communication" describes direct, in-person interactions in which people use body language, gestures, eye contact, voice, and facial expressions in addition to verbal clues. It continues to be one of the best ways to communicate, particularly in families, since it fosters emotional ties, comprehension, and quick responses (Walther, 2020). Over time, family ties are strengthened, and trust is developed through this kind of engagement. Face-to-face communication has always been essential to daily living in Nigerian homes. In order to strengthen family relationships and cultural identity, families frequently participated in group activities like storytelling, dinner parties, and mealtime gatherings (Adewale & Ojo, 2021). Through these exchanges, parents and elders were able to mentor their children, provide support, and settle disputes in a meaningful and organic way. However, these face-to-face connection moments are progressively disappearing due to the extensive use of digital technologies and social media platforms. Even while seated in the same room, many families today spend more time on their phones and less time conversing. Concerns over diminished emotional intimacy and weakening interpersonal ties within the family have arisen as a result of this change (Ibrahim, 2023).

Face-to-face communication remains a fundamental component of effective family interaction, fostering emotional closeness, trust, and mutual understanding. Scholars argue that physical presence enables non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, tone, and gestures, which enrich interpersonal communication (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2016). However, the increasing penetration of social media has altered communication patterns within households. Several studies have found that excessive engagement with digital platforms reduces the time available for meaningful family conversations, leading to fragmented interactions (Turkle, 2017; Akintunde & Adamu, 2022).

Beyond reducing time spent together, social media may also alter conversational quality. According to Turkle (2017), digital multitasking encourages "continuous partial attention," where individuals are physically present but psychologically absent. In family settings, this may manifest as distracted listening, shortened conversations, and reduced emotional responsiveness. Such patterns can subtly undermine relational satisfaction even when families continue to spend time together.

However, cultural context mediates these effects. In collectivist societies like Nigeria, shared meals, communal storytelling, and extended family obligations continue to structure daily life (Akinwale, 2019). These practices may buffer families against the isolating tendencies of social media, reinforcing face-to-face engagement despite technological distractions. Thus, social media's impact on family communication should be understood as negotiated rather than deterministic.

In Nigerian, Okoro and Omotayo (2021) observe that youths often prioritise online engagement over family discussions, particularly during shared family times such as meals and leisure periods. This shift can gradually weaken conversational depth and shared experiences within families. Conversely, Adewale and Ojo (2021) argue that in many Nigerian homes, strong communal traditions still moderate the disruptive potential of social media, allowing families to retain regular face-to-face communication despite technological advancements. These divergent findings suggest that the effect of social media on family communication is context-dependent and influenced by cultural norms, parental regulation, and usage patterns.

Transmission of Social Values

The process by which family members, especially parents and elders, transmit cultural norms, beliefs, and moral principles to younger generations is known as "social value transmission." These principles form the basis of social interactions, identity, and behaviour. Families are thought to be the most important institution for teaching kids' responsibility, discipline, and respect (Udo & Okon, 2020). This transmission typically occurs during regular family contacts, religious celebrations, and group activities in Nigerian culture. Elders assist younger family members in understanding their duties and responsibilities within the family and the larger community by means of storytelling, proverbs, and correction (Nwachukwu & Adeola, 2022). These customs sustain cultural identity and social order. However, as social media's reach grows, many young people now acquire behavioural and moral signals from peers, influencers, and celebrities online, often without parental supervision. Indigenous cultural norms may be weakened, and parental authority compromised by this exposure to foreign and contradictory beliefs (Okoro & Omotayo, 2021). As a result, the family's ability to instill values and character is steadily declining.

Social Media, Emotional Bonding, and Family Relationships

Emotional bonding refers to the affective ties that connect family members and sustain intimacy, empathy, and support. Researchers have established that consistent interpersonal communication influences how family members understand, interact and support each other (Avitasari & Sulistyarini, 2024); these strengthen emotional bonds within families. However, the emergence of social media has introduced competing emotional investments, particularly among adolescents and young adults, who may seek validation and emotional support online rather than within the family unit (Ling & Nordin, 2023).

Emotional bonding within families is also influenced by power relations and generational dynamics. Parents often perceive social media as threats to authority, while younger family members view it as a space for autonomy and self-expression (Livingstone, Stoilova, Nandagiri, 2019). This divergence can generate tension, but it can also prompt renegotiation of family norms. When parents engage constructively with digital culture, emotional bonds may be preserved or even strengthened through shared understanding.

Empirical studies present mixed outcomes regarding social media's impact on emotional bonding. While some scholars argue that heavy social media use contributes to emotional detachment and reduced family cohesion (Turkle, 2017), others suggest that moderate use does not necessarily erode emotional ties, especially when families establish boundaries around screen time (Kabiru & Alabi, 2024). In African societies characterised by extended family systems and collective living, emotional bonds may remain resilient despite technological disruptions (Ukaegbu, Nengi, & Ibiene, 2022). This study therefore situates itself within this debate by examining how social media affect emotional bonds within families in Yenagoa.

Theoretical Framework: Technological Determinism and Family Communication

This study is anchored on Technological Determinism Theory, which posits that technological innovations shape social organisation, cultural values, and interpersonal relationships (Chandler, 2020). From this perspective, communication technologies such as social media are not neutral tools but active forces that influence how individuals interact and relate. In the family context, technological determinism suggests that increased reliance on digital platforms will inevitably restructure communication patterns, emotional bonds, and value transmission.

Critics of technological determinism argue that human agency and cultural context mediate technological effects (Williams, 2016). This study adopts a moderate deterministic stance, recognising that while social media exert strong influence, families retain the capacity to negotiate and adapt their communication practices. This theoretical lens provides a useful framework for interpreting the empirical findings of the study.

Empirical Review

Kabiru and Alabi (2024) in their study titled "The Impact of Social Media Use on Familial Connections in Abuja, Nigeria" examined how social media affect family bonding and face-

to-face interaction. The broad objective of the study was to assess the extent to which increased social media utilisation influences family communication and cohesion. To achieve this, two research questions and corresponding hypotheses were formulated. The Taro Yamane sampling method was used to determine a sample size of 171 respondents from a population of 300 individuals selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and its reliability was ensured before distribution. The researchers analysed the responses using SPSS and employed basic regression techniques, maintaining a significance level of 0.05. The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between social media usage and both family bonding and in-person interactions. As a result, the study recommended that families should regulate the time spent on social media, and prioritise direct communication, to foster stronger emotional ties and more effective family relationships.

Ukaegbu, Nengi and Ibiene (2022) conducted a study titled "The Effect of Social Media on Family Bond and Cohesion: A Study of Port Harcourt Residents, Rivers State." The broad objective of the study was to determine how social media usage influences family bonding and cohesion among residents of Port Harcourt. The study was guided by the Technological Determinism and Rational Choice Theories. It adopted a survey research design, and utilised the Taro Yamane formula to determine a sample size of 400 from a total population of 3,171,000. The researchers employed purposive and multi-stage sampling techniques to select participants, while a structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument.

The objectives of the study included identifying the extent of social media exposure among Port Harcourt residents, examining the most commonly used platforms for fostering family bonds, and investigating the factors that hinder effective family bonding through social media. The study found that residents are significantly exposed to, and actively engage with social media, which facilitates regular family interactions that enhance bonding and cohesion. However, challenges such as bad network and poor electricity supply were identified as some obstacles to effective social media use. WhatsApp and Facebook were found to be the most widely used platforms for family interaction. Based on the findings, the study recommended that families be cautious about the kind of information they share online to avoid security risks. It also advised, encouraging residents to explore other platforms like Twitter and Instagram for family bonding. Moreover, the study called on the government to improve electricity supply to support continuous digital communication among family members in Port Harcourt.

Ling and Nordin (2023) conducted a study titled "The Impact of Social Media Usage on Family Communication among Chinese Adolescents." The purpose of the study was to explore how frequently Chinese adolescents use social media, and how it affects their communication with family members. The researchers employed a qualitative research design, collecting data through in-depth interviews with seven Chinese adolescents. The data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes. The study found

that most Chinese adolescents spend more time interacting with friends and engaging with online networks than communicating with family members. Many of the participants reported turning to online peers for emotional support, advice, and personal discussions, rather than confiding in their parents or siblings. Also, it was observed that the adolescents' personalities, such as introversion or emotional withdrawal, contributed to communication barriers within the home, and that social media use often amplified these tendencies. The findings suggest that social media have a significant negative impact on face-to-face family interaction among adolescents. As digital engagement increases, meaningful family discussions tend to decrease. The study concluded by recommending further research that includes parental perspectives in order to gain a balanced understanding of the dynamics at play. The study emphasised the need to address these changes to preserve strong, healthy family relationships in the digital age.

Methodology

The survey design used in this study is descriptive. The study's goal of collecting information from a representative sample of Yenagoa families in order to ascertain the impact of social media on family communication guided the design choice. This approach enabled the researchers to characterise, examine, and interpret the relationship between social media use and the type of family relationships. The residents of Yenagoa Local Government area made up the study's population. According to the Macrotrends.Net (2025), the population of Yenagoa is 524,400. The Taro Yamane statistical tool was used to determine the sample size, which came out to be 400.

$$\text{Formula: } n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n= the sample size

N = the study population

E = Level of significance or limit of tolerable error i.e. 0.05

1 = Unity (a constant)

Therefore,

$$n = \frac{524,400}{1 + 524,400(0.0025)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{524,400}{1 + 798}$$

$$n = \frac{524,400}{799} = 400$$

A multi-stage sampling technique was used in the investigation. The first step was to identify important, digitally active residents in Yenagoa via purposive sampling. After that, respondents were grouped according to their age and role in the family (parents, youth, and teenagers) using stratified sampling technique. Lastly, people from each stratum were chosen by simple random sampling. The primary tool for gathering data was a structured questionnaire. In order to collect data on the frequency of social media use, its impact on in-person communication, emotional bonding, and the transmission of values within families, the questionnaire contained both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. To guarantee that the answers are accurate and comprehensive, the copies of the questionnaire were self-administered by the researchers. Out of the 400 copies administered, only 363 copies (90.75%) were retrieved, and found useable. Tables, frequencies, and simple percentages were used to analyse the data got from the field.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Extent to which social media usage influences face-to-face communication among family members in Yenagoa.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Very Great Extent	49	12.47
Great Extent	66	18.83
Very Low Extent	185	49.37
Low Extent	74	16.79
Total	363	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data in Table 1 reveal that a majority of respondents perceive social media as having minimal influence on face-to-face family communication. Specifically, 49.37% reported a very low extent, while 16.79% indicated a low extent. Collectively, this suggests that over two-thirds of respondents believe social media do not substantially disrupt direct family interactions. This finding implies that families in Yenagoa may still prioritise in-person communication despite widespread social media usage.

However, the 31.3% who reported great or very great extent signal a notable minority for whom social media poses a challenge to direct interaction. This indicates emerging communication gaps that could widen if social media use becomes more intense. The implication is that while traditional communication remains dominant, preventive measures are needed to ensure that digital engagement does not progressively erode face-to-face family interactions.

Table 2: Level social media affect emotional bonds and the quality of interpersonal relationships within family units.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	46	12.30
High	71	18.98
Very Low	65	17.38
Low	192	51.34
Total	363	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 shows that 68.72% of respondents perceive social media as having low or very low effects on emotional bonding within families. This suggests that emotional ties in Yenagoa households remain largely intact, possibly due to strong cultural emphasis on family cohesion. Emotional bonds appear to be sustained through shared living arrangements and communal activities.

Nevertheless, the combined 31.28% who perceive high or very high effects cannot be overlooked. This proportion suggests that social media can negatively affect emotional closeness in certain households, particularly where usage is excessive or unregulated. The implication is that emotional resilience exists but is not universal, underscoring the need for family-level digital literacy and emotional communication strategies.

Table 3: social media play significant roles in shaping the transmission of social values and norms within families in Yenagoa.

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Agree	280	76.92
Agree	22	6.04
Undecided	9	2.47
Strongly Disagree	34	9.34
Disagree	19	5.23
Total	363	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3 presents a strong consensus among respondents, with 82.96% agreeing or strongly agreeing that social media significantly influence the transmission of social values and norms. This indicates that digital platforms have become powerful socialising agents within families, often rivaling or surpassing parental influence.

The implication of this finding is profound: while families may retain emotional closeness and face-to-face interaction, their traditional role as primary custodians of cultural and moral values is increasingly being shared with, or displaced by, social media. This raises concerns about cultural dilution and value conflict, especially among younger family members exposed to globalised content.

Discussion of findings

The primary aim of this research was to ascertain the degree to which social media affect in-person family communication. The majority of respondents said social media only had a very low or low effect on in-person family contacts. This finding is contrary to common global/Nigerian studies that find stronger negative effects. Table 1 illustrates that a large proportion of respondents (49.37%) believe that social media affect face-to-face communication within the family to a very low extent; while 16.79% think the effect is low. Only 12.47% and 18.83% of respondents say that social media affect face-to-face communication to a very great extent, and great extent, respectively. This preference may be due to the strong communal culture in Bayelsa State, where social media are being moderately, and not excessively used; added to this is the conscious family boundaries that exist.

This differs from what is tenable in a place like Abuja where Kabiru and Alabi (2024) opine that there is a statistically significant relationship between social media usage and both family bonding and in-person interactions. Likewise, according to Ukaegbu, Nengi and Ibiene (2022), the residents of Port Harcourt are significantly exposed to, and actively engage with social media, which facilitates regular family interactions that enhance bonding and cohesion. The Technological Determinism Theory, which maintains that technology, especially communication tools, profoundly changes interpersonal dynamics, is in conflict with this finding (Chandler, 2020). It does, however, support Adewale & Ojo (2021), who contend that many Nigerian families continue to use traditional forms of communication like storytelling and group dining in spite of the introduction of technology. Social media seem to be mostly viewed in Yenagoa as an adjunct to face-to-face interactions rather than a replacement for them.

A sizable portion of respondents also acknowledged a low, or very low, influence of social media on interpersonal connections and emotional bonding within families. Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents (51.34%) believe social media have a low effect on emotional bonds and interpersonal relationships in the family, while 17.38% indicate a very low effect. On the other hand, only a small proportion, 12.30% and 18.98%, perceive a very high, or high effect respectively.

This implies that, although social media could take up time, family relationships are not always negatively impacted by it. This insight is consistent with the empirical findings of Kabiru and Alabi (2024), which discovered that families can maintain emotional intimacy by consciously establishing limits and placing a higher value on physical presence, even in the face of growing social media usage. It differs, although, from Ling and Nordin's (2023) study of Chinese teenagers, which found that social media distraction significantly reduced parent-child emotional communication.

The third objective of this study looked at how social media contribute to the family's social ideals being passed down. The data in Table 3 confirm that a significant majority of respondents (76.92%) strongly agree that social media play a major role in the transmission of social values and norms within families. Only a minority (14.57% collectively) disagreed, or strongly disagreed. These show there is broad consensus that social media have a big impact on how norms and values are passed down in Yenagoa households.

This finding is consistent with Okoro and Omotayo's (2021) caution that youngsters who rely too much on digital platforms are exposed to outside influences that frequently conflict with their indigenous cultural views. Similar to this, Udo and Okon (2020) emphasised the importance of the family in transferring societal ideals, a function that is increasingly being shared by, or taken over by peer networks and Internet influencers. Therefore, this result aligns strongly with the Technological Determinism Theory, showing that communication technology is not just a passive tool, but an active agent in cultural change and value transfer.

The findings of this study reveal a nuanced relationship between social media use and family communication in Yenagoa. Contrary to dominant narratives that portray social media as inherently disruptive to family interaction, the results indicate that face-to-face communication and emotional bonds remain relatively strong. This supports Adewale and Ojo's (2021) assertion that Nigerian families often integrate new technologies without completely abandoning traditional communication practices.

However, the strong influence of social media on the transmission of values aligns with Technological Determinism Theory, which posits that technology actively shapes social structures and cultural norms (Chandler, 2020). Social media platforms expose family members, particularly youths, to alternative value systems that may conflict with indigenous norms (Okoro & Omotayo, 2021). This corroborates Turkle's (2017) argument that while technology may not always sever relationships, it subtly reshapes priorities, beliefs, and identity formation.

The findings also resonate with Ukaegbu et al. (2022), who note that African families exhibit resilience in emotional bonding but are increasingly vulnerable to external cultural influences mediated through digital platforms. Thus, social media in Yenagoa appear to function less as a barrier to interaction and more as a transformative force in value orientation.

Extending these findings, the study demonstrates that social media's most profound impact lies not in disrupting communication frequency but in reshaping the symbolic content of family interaction. While families continue to talk and relate, what is talked about—and whose values dominate these conversations—has changed.

The findings further challenge deterministic assumptions that technology uniformly weakens family ties. Instead, they align with adaptive models of media use which emphasise negotiation, boundary-setting, and cultural resilience (Livingstone, 2019). Yenagoa families appear to selectively appropriate social media, maintaining emotional closeness while gradually absorbing external value systems.

Conclusion

According to the study, social media have limited negative impact on face-to-face interaction and emotional bonds in Yenagoa families, suggesting resilience in traditional communication practices. However, its strong role in transmitting social values (Table 3) raises concerns about external cultural influences. The data in Table 3 confirms that a significant majority of respondents (76.92%) strongly agree that social media play a major role in the transmission of social values and norms within families. This suggests a growing influence of digital platforms in shaping values, especially among the younger generation.

Overall, the study underscores a paradox: families in Yenagoa remain emotionally and communicatively resilient, yet increasingly vulnerable to external cultural influences mediated through social media. This suggests that the future of family communication will depend less on reducing social media use and more on guiding its integration into family life. It also has implications for Policy and Practice

For policymakers, the findings call for the inclusion of family-focused digital literacy programmes in national communication and education policies. Such programmes should equip parents with skills to engage constructively with children's online activities rather than relying on restrictive measures alone. Government agencies and educational institutions should promote responsible social media use that aligns with cultural values.

Parents and family stakeholders should be encouraged to actively engage with children's online activities, fostering open discussions about digital content and reinforcing indigenous values. Religious and community leaders can also leverage social media positively to promote cultural and moral education. Educational institutions should integrate media literacy into curricula, emphasising critical consumption of online content and respect for cultural values. Religious and community organisations can leverage social media positively to reinforce moral teachings and communal identity.

Telecommunications regulators and social media companies should collaborate to promote family-friendly digital environments, including content filters and usage monitoring tools that support healthy communication practices. They should collaborate to provide culturally

sensitive content moderation and family-oriented digital tools that encourage healthy usage patterns.

Recommendations

1. Family members should learn more on how to use less of the social media when they are gathered, especially during family meetings and family meals. These are rare occasions that bring family members together, hence, they should be well utilised as means of knitting families together, and bringing about organic bonding of family member.
2. There should be an enhancement of the components of the African societies characterised by extended family systems and collective living, and the reduction in the frequency of social media use by family members, so as to beef up in-person interactions, mold emotional bonds, and strengthen emotional bonds within families
3. The use of social media should be emphasised in enhancing the transmission of the lacking and dwelling social values and norms, which tend to being eroded by the social media which are quick and effective in spreading damaging popular culture

Areas for Further Studies

Future research should explore longitudinal changes in family communication as social media penetration deepens. Qualitative studies using interviews and ethnography would provide richer insights into everyday family negotiations around technology. Comparative studies across different Nigerian states and cultural groups would also enhance understanding of contextual variations. Additionally, platform-specific analyses could reveal how different social media applications uniquely influence family dynamics.

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