Intentions for Mothers' Involvement in Social Media Use with their Children

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Abstract

In spite of the remarkable importance of the Internet and social media for society at large and children in particular, the increasing concern about the excessive use of social media remains an issue of academic discourse. Premised on this, a study was undertaken on Nigerian mothers. The aim of this study was to ascertain the rationale for mothers' involvement in social media use with their children, specifically on Facebook, X, and Instagram. An online questionnaire was adopted from Ryan et al. (2019) to obtain data from a purposively selected sample of 384 mothers who served as respondents. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Results indicated a significant relationship in social media use between mothers and children, and that mothers predominantly use WhatsApp for several purposes. Findings further indicated mothers' preference of conversation pattern to conformity pattern of interaction with their children. The study concluded that social media serves as a platform that helps in sustaining the bond between mothers and their children. It, however, recommended the moderate use of social media that is briskly supplanting physical mother-child interaction.

Keywords: children, conformity pattern, conservation pattern, social media

Introduction

Mothers play an effective role in a family setting and are regarded as highly valued personas in raising their children and taking care of the household along with many other responsibilities. They are responsible for the passionate parenting and nurturing the psychological growth of their children, among others. Gezova (2015) is of the view that the two most important roles of a mother include taking care of her children and husband. Even with the waning male chauvinism where the hitherto exclusive preserve of nurturing children was for women, they still are inclined to

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discharging what appears to be their traditional functions. Perhaps, this inclined Aziza (2020) to argue that, although both parents play vital roles, mothers play an overriding role in educating, nurturing, and honing the characters of their children. This is common in Africa. In United States of America and Europe, too, despite the fading belief of socially discriminatory roles between fathers and mothers where feminist agenda is in the vanguard of equality, mothers are ascribed the role of rearing and upbringing their children.

The roles ascribed to mothers are not distributed to burden them which explains why roles are decentralized. For instance, some roles, such as leadership, provision of money required by the family, upholding relationships among family members and with respect to extended family, acquaintances, and those proximate to them as well ensuring general proper conduct are assigned to fathers, depending on societies. Role distribution, according to Gezova (2015), is the responsible fulfilment of roles to address, not only the physical needs of children, however, their psychological and positive emotional development as well.

An inescapable aspect underscoring the interaction between mothers and their children is interpersonal relationship to accomplish inextricable bond. Interaction and message-sharing is basically verbal and non-verbal characterized by face-to-face interaction. Munz (2017) elucidated that communication between parents and children takes place in written and unwritten forms at various stages of the child's development. The closeness between mothers and children reinforces the natural attachment between the two. However, the emergence of the Internet and social media has introduced a new dimension on how members of the family generally interact with each other and beyond the family circle. Commonly used social media include, but are not limited to X, Facebook, Instagram, Google, WhatsApp, Snapchat and YouTube.

Social media provides several benefits, for instance through social media, people effortlessly maintain their relationships and get awareness related to events due to a variety of networks (Kircaburun et al., 2020). According to Bryan et al. (2019), social media is used to access information about children's health and development. These advantages are not possible without the unique features that each social media platform possesses.

As social media are being glamourised due to their efficacy, one does not lose sight of their flip side. One of the excesses of social media is that they are briskly supplanting physical interaction. Social media is also believed to be perpetuating misleading information as well as promoting prurient content and abusive language. Moreover, social media is also held responsible to exacerbate emotional and psychological apprehensions, especially among children. This is because children's excessive use of social media affects them in multiple ways, for instance their brain functioning, behaviors, as well as leads towards online harassment. According to Brittany (2017), social media places children at a higher risk of acquiring unwholesome internet behavior, such as it exposes them to lascivious content and disclosure of their personal information, thereby making them vulnerable to cyberbullying. To further expand the perimeters of social media, Uhls et al. (2017) opined that the excessive use of social media could be responsible for the weakening of ties between mothers and their children; a bond that could only be sustained through various communication processes.

Since social media has become an inseparable feature of human existence, avoiding its use would disenfranchise children from connecting not only with their mothers and family members but also with the whole world. This amplifies the reason for mothers to intentionally engage themselves with their children and monitor their usage of social media. This will privilege mothers to guide their children about social media content while they engage in it.

Statement of the Problem

In view of the importance attached to the relationship between mothers and their children and their communication patterns viz-a-viz social media usage, researchers have attempted to explore the relationships through studies of varying dimensions. For instance, Horstman et al. (2018) conducted a study with a view to expand theoretical and empirical frontiers of family communication patterns. Moon et al. (2019), undertook a qualitative study on how mothers perceive the Internet and social media as sources of parenting and health information. Xu's (2022) study focused on motivations that serve as driving forces for people to use social media irrespective of age and gender. While, the study conducted by Aziza (2020) aimed to explicate the significant role of mothers in family settings, particularly pertaining to care-giving. Furthermore, Moghe and Laavalek

(2013) investigated the differences in perceptions about parenting styles and the most preferred style of communication. On their part, Yusuf et al. (2020) conducted a literature review on single parenting to determine the role played by single mothers in child-rearing. A related literature review was conducted by Dennen et al. (2021) which aimed to ascertain the impact of social media on parenting support.

A scan at the extant literature indicates that while some of the studies are conceptual, others that are empirical, deal with the issue of perception rather than the behavior of mothers. Most of the studies were conducted in foreign countries than in Nigeria. Almost all the studies were conducted based on mixed or qualitative methods. These studies rarely dealt with the single strand of quantitative method using online questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. This creates both geographical and methodological lacuna which this study sought to fill.

Objectives

The study aimed to address the following research objectives which included to:

i.   Determine the level of social media use for communication between mothers and children.

ii. Investigate the intentions for mothers' involvement in use of social media to communicate with children.

iii. Examine the communication patterns mothers use social media to interact with children.

Literature Review

The word 'mother' is referred to as the female parent who gives birth to their children and raises them. They are typically responsible for caring and nurturing a child. By virtue of their role of raising children, there is a strong emotional attachment that strengthens the bond between mothers and children. Accordingly, Koerner and Schrodt (2014) noted that the family provides the primary avenue for children to socialize and get emotional and psychological support. Thus, the mother, more than any other member of the family, has this shielding psychological trait that allows her to defend her children. Hurst et al. (2021) linked this psychological condition with other mammals. Their study elaborated that a mammal protects its child/offspring from harm. Moreover, a mother can go as far as negating

and destroying everything that has the potential of causing harm to her children. Accordingly, this study takes recourse to Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT) which presupposes that family members develop relational schemas (i.e., mental representations of the self, others, and relationships) from recurrent and consistent family interactions. These schemas direct individuals to manage their personal and social interactions and relationships. Thus, this theory has been used to explain a multitude of communication behaviors and psychosocial outcomes of family members.

Family Communication Patterns

According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2018), it is difficult to conceptualize family communication due to its simultaneous dependence on communication processes within and outside of self. In other words, the meaning is embedded in an individual who relies on deposit of principles that shape a family system. Thus, to clearly explain family communication, one needs to realize the fact that both intersubjectivity and interactivity play considerable roles (Koerner & Fitzpatric, 2018). Intersubjectivity refers to the assignment of communicative behaviors to family members depending on their disposition to relate with others. On the contrary, interactivity denotes the extent each family member creates and interprets symbols interdependently to understand easily. Therefore, mothers' communication competence effects children's beliefs about the extent to which open and controlled communication are valued (Ningxin et al., 2019).

In a family, there are two patterns of communication which play significant roles. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2018) named these patterns as 'conversation orientation and conformity orientation'. The former implies open and unrestricted communication among family members on broad spectrum of issues. Whereas, the latter refers to the extent children are obliged to communicate on issues likewise their parents. These patterns lead to four family communication styles proposed by FCPT identified as consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire highlighted by Hurst et al. (2021). Thus, a consensual family highly engages in both conversation and conformity. This implies the type of communication that is not secretive, regular, and unrestrained. Children are encouraged to express themselves freely, however, at the same time, they should be motivated to follow and acknowledge their parents' views as well. Pluralistic families are high in conversation and low in conformity. This means that children in pluralistic families have the latitude to express themselves freely even

without the structure that defines families recognizing parents as heads, while children are regarded as sub-ordinates. With this communication style, children are not obligated to key into the ingrained beliefs of their parents. Protective families are low in conversation and high in conformity. This way, restricted and irregular communication characterize the interaction between parents and children. This style creates a climate of children obeying their parents' perspective. Lastly, laissez-faire style is characterized with low conversation and conformity. However, instances exist where children have the latitude to engage in open conversations but with a measure of subtle coercion to conform to parental values.

On their part, Hurst et al. (2021) conducted a study to examine the relationship between family communication patterns and adolescents' 1) sexual self-efficacy, 2) intentions to communicate about sex with partners, and 3) intentions to use condoms. Participants comprised 452 U.S. adolescents (Mage=15.06; 59% girls; 35% White, 33% Latinx, 25% Black). Findings indicated a relationship between conversation and conformity orientation and adolescent sexual self-efficacy and intentions to communicate about having sex with partners. Furthermore, there were disproportionate results between conversation and conformity among families which were high and low, respectively. There was also a statistically significant higher sexual self-efficacy among adolescents as compared to other family communication patterns.

Social Media

Social media is defined as the combination of digital media comprising electronic texts, graphics, moving images, and sound into an organized automated environment that enables users to utilize data for various purposes (Mulugeta, 2019). Moreover, social media has evolved to become an indispensable means to not only acquire, however, also spread information in numerous ways. Its attractiveness cannot be detached from its economy of use as well as the ease to receive or create and share messages. This makes social media highly fashionable, especially among children who spend considerable time on it daily.

Overtime, mothers have perceived that social media performs various functions. Most of these functions are helpful for their children. However, there are times when a mother starts experiencing emotional detachment from their children. When children excessively indulge in social media use,

they develop a paranoid, irrational, apprehensive, angry, and even hostile tendency (Bilgin, 2018). All these effects of social media addiction are clearly disastrous. Conceiving the disastrous effects of social media use, mothers develop interest and start crafting ways to end its dominance over their children.

According to Kennedy-Lightsey and Frisby (2016), the way people generally develop communication abilities about potentially difficult situations is a product of their family members' communication and socialization abilities. This suggests an association between the orientation of mothers and their children's decision on certain issues. Hence, mothers mediate between conversation and conformity orientation when communicating with their children. Olasinde (2014) found a relationship between the general use of social media for communication and other uses of social media. Furthermore, a study by Vackle and Bergson (2011) showed that 37% of the parents remained present during their child's internet surfing and 56% used filter software. In contrast, most of the children (86%) recalled that they had free access to the Internet and they used it independently; 13% affirmed being guided by their parents to use the Internet. The findings by Jacob (2015) showed that 61% of parents attested that they monitored their children and 38% of children also confirmed that they were being monitored by their parents. However, the bottom line is that children reported being less monitored as compared to reports by parents who claimed monitoring them.

In a study conducted by Wang et al. (2011), findings indicated that 71% of mothers believed that the use of social media plays a role in the decreased conformity orientation in Chinese families. Specifically, mothers who used social media more frequently reported lower levels of adherence to family norms and values (68.3%). Mesch et al. (2012) found that a relationship exists between social media use and decreased family communication and increased conflicts. Specifically, 74% of their respondents reported having fewer conversations with their family members and experiencing more conflicts.

Intentions of using Social Media

Different reasons account for why people use social media. To investigate the association between how and why parents monitor their children's use of social media for their mental health and self-perception,

Barry and Kim ([2023](#)) used three dimensions. These dimensions included control, open communication, and following. Findings suggest that a relationship exists between open communication and lower child-reported loneliness. An association was also found between parental control linked to higher child self-admiration. In addition, the extent to which parents monitored their children did not affect how youngsters use social media for mental health neither did it moderate the way adolescents perceive themselves. The study agreed with possible benefits derived from unrestricted communication among adolescents. Moreover, it also recommended to conduct further studies in order to explore the role of parents in children's growth as well as in monitoring how they use social media with moderation. On perceived merits and demerits of social media as a means by which parents access health information about newborns, a study was conducted by Moon et al. ([2019](#)). The study showed that mothers appreciated social media for providing them with an opportunity to rapidly get limitless information without disclosing their identity. However, trustworthy sources should be identified and used cautiously to gather the desired information. In their study, Hampton et al. ([2015](#)), stated that mothers have more tendency than fathers to use social media for social support; 81% of mothers received support from their social media networks as compared to 71% of fathers. The extant literature provided following three hypotheses:

H_1: There exists a relationship between social media use and conversation orientation in family communication.

H_2: There exists a relationship between social media use and conformity orientation in family communication patterns.

H_3: Intentions to use social media are multidimensional.

Research Questions

The current study aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the level of social media use for communication between mothers and children?

RQ2. What are the intentions for mothers' involvement in use of social media to communicate with their children?

RQ3. What are the communication patterns mothers use social media to interact with children?

Methodology

A survey was conducted using online questionnaire adopted from Ryan et al. (2019) to obtain the data. The study population comprised Nigerian mothers who had children and were the active users of social media platforms, specifically Facebook, X, and Instagram. The population for this research was infinite due to the non-availability of adequate data providing the population of Nigerian mothers. Nevertheless, relying on Casagrande's et al. (1978) formula for computing sample size, the study used a 95% confidence level, a +/- 5% margin of error as allowed in social sciences research and a standard deviation of .5 that is, a value which ensures that sample would be large enough. The z-score is 1.96 with a 95% confidence level which matches *z*-score as presented in the formula below:

Sample size required= (*z*-score)

1*StdDev*(2-StdDev) / 2*StdDev*(1-StdDev) / (Margin of error)

2s(1.96)

.5(.5)/.5(.5)/.5(.5)/.5(.5)/.5 (.05)

384.16 = (3.8416 x.25) /.0025 =.9604 /.0025 = 384.16

Based on the formula above, the sample size of the study was 384. In order to ensure that exact sample was obtained, an online questionnaire was configured after recording the exact responses. Any subsequent response was barred. Purposive sampling technique was used and data harvested was analyzed using SPSS version 21 application.

Results

Table 1

Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20-29	79	20.5
30-39	94	24.4
40-49	133	34.6
50-59	75	19.5
60-69	3	0.7
Total	384	100

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Occupation		
Unemployed	44	11.4
Self-employed	93	24.2
Private Sector	76	19.7
Civil service	171	44.5
Total	384	100
Religion		
Islam	211	54.9
Christianity	173	45.0
Total	384	100
Marital Status		
Widowed	28	7.2
Divorced	35	9.1
Married	321	83.5
Total	384	100

In terms of age, most respondents were within the age bracket 40 and 49 which accounts for 34.6% ($n = 157$). Next age bracket was 30-39, representing 24.4% of the respondents ($n = 94$). Occupationally, most ($n = 171$) were in civil service, accounting for 44.5% of the total respondents. Table further shows that 54.9% ($n = 211$) of the respondents were Muslims and most of them were married, that is, 83.5% ($n = 321$).

Table 2

Frequency of Social Media Use

Daily Social Media Use	Frequency	Percentage
Below 5 hours	166	43.2%
5 hours and above	218	56.7%
Total	384	100

Table 2 reveals social media usage period of the respondents. Results show that the majority of respondents spend less than 5 hours every day which constitutes 43.2% of the total number of respondents ($n = 166$), while 56.7% of the respondents spend 5 hours and above daily ($n = 218$).

Table 3

Type of Social Media Usage

	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook		
Yes	93	24.3
No	291	75.7
Total	384	100
Instagram		
Yes	52	13.5
No	332	86.4
Total	384	100
WhatsApp		
Yes	367	95.5
No	17	4.4
Total	384	100

Table 3 shows that most of the respondents ($n = 367$), translated to 95.5%, use WhatsApp for family communication. Whereas majority of them ($n = 332$), translated to 86.4%, do not use Instagram. In the same vein, most respondents ($n = 291$), translated to 75.7%, use Facebook.

Table 4

Intentions for Social Media Usage

Intentions	Level of Usage							Overall
	1	2	3	4	5	*M*	*SD*	%
Limiting children on period of use.	17	15.3	30.5	26.3	11.0	2.99	1.24	59.8
Counselling my children.	.8	5.5	20.5	25.3	48.0	4.14	.977	82.8
Communicating with my children.	6.8	7.8	19.8	28.8	37.0	3.82	1.25	76.4
Knowing what children engage in.	.3	6.0	8.5	25.5	59.8	4.39	.894	87.8
Connecting with my children.	2.0	4.0	18.5	31.5	44.0	4.12	.977	82.4
Knowing what is going on.	2.5	3.3	18.8	27.8	47.8	4.15	1.00	83
Observing children's mood.	22.3	23.0	30.0	9.8	15.0	2.72	1.32	54.4

Intentions	Level of Usage							Overall
	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	%
Observing children's behaviour.	4.5	12.3	43.5	18.8	21.0	3.40	1.09	68
Overcoming boredom.	12.0	12.8	33.0	20.3	22.0	3.28	1.27	65.6
Communicating with my children.	3.3	3.3	21.5	30.8	41.3	4.04	1.03	80.8
Sharing news or updates with my children.	5.5	7.3	17.8	35.0	34.5	3.86	1.14	77.2
Planning children's events or activities.	8.5	11.8	27.3	26.8	25.8	3.50	1.23	70
Discussing family issues.	13.8	16.3	32.3	16.0	21.8	3.16	1.31	63.2
Seeking opinion of my children.	13.0	28.5	21.3	16.0	21.3	3.04	1.35	60.8
Staying updated on my children's activities when I am away from home.	7.5	13.0	19.5	31.0	29.0	3.61	1.24	72.2
Maintaining a relationship with my children.	3.8	7.3	20.8	34.5	33.8	3.87	1.08	77.4
Expressing affection or appreciation to my children.	2.3	8.5	32.5	20.0	36.8	3.81	1.09	76.2
Getting support.	2.8	12.5	22.3	30.5	32.0	3.77	1.13	75.4
Expressing my feelings to my children.	5.3	14.0	27.3	24.8	28.8	3.58	1.19	71.6
Learning new things from my children.	1.5	5.0	13.8	28.8	51.8	4.24	.968	84.8
Total						3.69	1.08	79.2

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree

Data in Table 4 indicates five significant intentions of mothers to involve with their children in social media interaction. These include knowing what children engage in ($M=4.39$), learning new things ($M=4.24$), knowing what is going on ($M=4.15$), counselling ($M=4.14$), and connecting

with their children (*M*=4.12). Results further showed that at the lower rung, the intentions included expression of feelings to children (*M*=3.58), discussing family issues (*M*=3.16), seeking opinions of children (*M*=3.04), limiting children's duration of social media use (*M*=2.99), and observing children's mood (*M*=2.72).

Table 5

Conversation Orientation Pattern

Items	Level of Agreement							Overall
	1	2	3	4	5	*M*	*SD*	%
In our family, we often talk about our feelings and emotions.	2.5	9.5	12.8	41.3	34.0	3.95	1.04	79
I ask for my children's opinion when we are having a discussion.	.3	4.5	5.8	51.0	38.5	4.23	.770	84.6
I encourage my children to challenge their ideas and beliefs.	.8	6.5	12.5	45.8	34.5	4.07	.892	81.4
I usually tell my children what I am thinking about.	3.5	10.0	13.8	49.5	23.3	3.99	3.11	79.8
I can tell my children almost anything.	3.3	13	11.0	43.3	29.5	3.83	1.09	76.6
I encourage my children to express themselves.	1.5	1.8	8.3	48.0	40.5	4.24	.797	84.8
In our family, we often talk about our plans and hope for the future.	1.0	3.3	10.0	45.3	40.5	4.21	.826	84.2
I tell my children how much I love and care about them.	.5	4.8	7.3	34.3	53.3	4.35	.848	87
Total						4.2	1.8	84

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 5 demonstrates descriptive analysis of communication patterns existing in families among respondents. The results of (*M*=4.35), (*M*=4.24), (*M*=4.23), and (*M*=4.21) show mothers' expressions of love and care for

their children, how they encourage children to express themselves, how mothers incline to their children's opinions on issues as well as involvement of their children to discuss family expectations (*M*=4.21).

Table 6

Conformity-oriented Family among Respondents

Items	Level of Agreement							Overall
	1	2	3	4	5	*M*	*SD*	%
I expect my children to respect my opinion without questioning. whenever anything important is involved.	12.3	18.5	17.3	28.3	23.8	3.33	1.343	66.6
I feel it is important for my children to see me as the authority figure.	10.0	9.8	9.5	44.0	26.8	3.68	1.246	73.6
I expect my family members to respect my rules.	5.5	4.3	9.5	55.0	25.8	3.91	1.006	78.2
I expect my children to respect my ideas.	2.8	1.0	12.3	50.0	34.0	4.12	.859	82.4
I am always irritated with views that are different from mine when I have a conversation with my family.	46.5	26.0	10.5	11.0	6.0	2.04	1.246	40.8

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 6 shows that mothers expect their children to respect their ideas (*M*=4.12) and rules (*M*=3.91). Moreover, they also feel that it is important for their children to recognize their authority over them (*M*=3.68).

H_1: There is an association between social media use and conversation orientation communication pattern

Table 7

Conversation Pattern

Model	B	SE	β	t	p
CONSTANT	3.742	.285	-	13.123	.000
SMU	.234	.180	.065	1.298	.195

Note. $F_{(N=400, df=1)} = 1.685$, $R^2 = .004$ Adj $R^2 = .002$, $p = .195$

The results in Table 7 indicate a statistically insignificant regression model and the coefficient for social media use is also not statistically significant. This suggests an insignificant association between social media use and conversation orientation in family communication. The results also show 0.4% variance ($R^2 = .004$, $p = .195$) which indicates a weak relationship between social media use and family conversation orientation in family communication patterns. Generally, the results indicate that there is no significant association between social media use and conversation orientation in family communication patterns. Hypothesis 1 is, therefore rejected.

H_2: There is an association between social media use and conformity orientation between mothers and children.

Table 8

Conformity Orientation Pattern

Model	B	SE	β	t	p
CONSTANT	3.162	.318	-	9.945	.395
SMU	.171	.201	.043	.852	

Note. $F_{(N=400, df=1)} = .725$, $R^2 = .002$ Adj $R^2 = .001$, $p = .000$

The results in Table 8 show 0.2% variance ($R^2 = .002$, $p = .395$) which indicates a weak association between social media use and family conformity orientation in family communication patterns. Additionally, the p value (0.395) shows an insignificant relationship between social media use and conformity orientation in family communication patterns. Hypotheses 2 is, therefore rejected.

H_3: The intentions with which mothers get involved with their children in social media use are multi-dimensional.

Table 9

Multi-dimensional Intentions of Mothers

Factors	1	2	3
Factor 1: Communication/Information			
Sharing news updates with my children	**.705**	.114	.154
Planning children's activities	**.799**	.089	.039
Discussing family issues.	**.089**	-.044	-.073
Seeking the opinion of my children	**.627**	181	-.016
Staying updated on my children's activities when I am away from home	**.787**	.026	.098
Maintaining a relationship with my children	**.737**	.040	.294
Expressing affection or appreciation to my children	**.627**	-.111	.444
Factor 2: Escape			
Observing children's behavior.	.168	**689**	.003
Expressing my feelings to my children.	.105	**.782**	.059
Overcoming boredom.	.073	**.783**	.222
Getting support.	.048	**.557**	.303
Factor 3: Purpose			
Knowing what my children engage in.	.068	.468	**.639**
Connecting with my children.	0.33	.302	**.693**
Learning new things from my children.	.311	.234	**.606**
Eigenvalue: F1(5.29), F2(2.45), F3(1.45).			
Variance Explained: F1(31.11), F2(14.43), F3(8.52), Reliability: F1(.871), F2(.734), F3(.567).			

To determine the multi-dimensional intentions for using social media with children for communication purposes, 14 items were used to measure the hypothesis which were subjected to principal component analysis. Based on eigen value >1 and factor loadings of .089 and above, 3 factors emerged. Seven items labeled *communication/information,* loaded on factor 1, based on closeness of the items. The loadings ranged from .089 to .799 and explained up to 31.11% variance, with reliable Cronbach alpha .871. Four items labelled *Escape,* loaded on factor 2, based on affinity of items. The loading ranged from .557 to .783 and explained up to 14.43% variance, with reliable Cronbach alpha .734. Three items labelled *Purpose,* loaded on factor 3, based on affinity of items. The loading ranged from .606 to .693

and explained up to 8.52% variance, with reliable Cronbach alpha .567. The results showed that the intentions of mothers to involve in social media use for communication with their children are multidimensional. These intentions can either be to communicate or get information. Moreover, it could also be a means of escapism and to fulfil a purpose at a particular time.

Discussion

The findings provided significant understanding about social media usage patterns in relation to intentions among mothers in the context of family communication. Apparently, mothers use various social media platforms but their frequency of use and the purposes for which they use social media vary.

Incontestably, social media constitutes an integral aspect of human survival. Nearly, half of the respondents spend more than five hours daily on various platforms as shown in Table 2 where WhatsApp emerged as the dominant platform for both personal and family communication, underscoring its widespread adoption in this demographic. While Instagram also enjoyed a considerable popularity and Facebook had a relatively smaller user base among mothers. This goes in line with a study carried out by Jan (2020) which reveals that incipient children simultaneously and frequently use numerous social media platforms for about 6 hours daily.

The intentions of mothers' engagement with social media encompassed different purposes including entertainment, information-seeking, stress reduction, and notably, family communication. This finding goes in line with a study by Olasinde (2014), which indicates the general use of social media circles around communication as well as other uses of social media which are interwoven and dependent on the usage. However, results indicate a nuanced perception of social media's impact on family communication. While a majority expressed a positive outlook, recognizing its potential to strengthen family bonds and resilience, concerns about addiction loomed. This result supports the assertion made by Panek (2013) that the increasing admiration of social media has caused parents to progressively develop interest pertaining to what their children do online, thereby mapping up ways of check-mating them. This amplifies the consensus on the importance of social media education for effective family communication.

The examination of communication patterns within families has unveiled an environment characterized by openness where mothers frequently shared their feelings, encouraged their children to challenge ideas and readily shared thoughts and future plans. Expressions of love and care were common, fostering an atmosphere of warmth and connection. Surprisingly, the study challenged traditional conformity-oriented family dynamics, as a significant portion of mothers did not expect unquestioned respect for their opinions in important matters. The notion of being the ultimate authority figure was not strongly endorsed and irritation with differing views during family conversations was rare. This asserts findings by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2018) which show how a worthwhile relationship among family members could influence not only the members of that family, however, society at large.

Conclusion

The current study concluded that mothers, who are the adept users of social media, are comfortable with the conversation pattern of interaction with their children. This suggests that mothers' use of social media to interact with their children may strengthen their bond. Despite the reservations that people have pertaining to social media, such as it is considered as a means of disconnecting people including family members as well as its excessive use leads towards emotional and psychological challenges, the derivable benefits of the Internet and social media outweigh these challenges.

Recommendations

Consequently, the study recommended that since mothers use social media with their children, they should do this with moderation to avoid getting to a stage where physical interaction would be subdued. Additionally, mothers should continue encouraging the conversation pattern of communication with their children. Through this approach, their children would not conceal their feelings, however, would freely express themselves.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data used for this study would be provided by the corresponding author if the need arises.

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