

Mobile-Phone-Driven Communication Patterns and Family Functionalities Among Selected Families in CITAM Ngong, Kajiado County

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Abstract

The rapid integration of mobile phones into family life has significantly transformed communication patterns within households worldwide. While mobile phones have enhanced accessibility, coordination, and convenience, excessive and unregulated use has increasingly raised concerns about their impact on family relationships and overall family functioning. This study examined how mobile phone-driven communication patterns shape family functioning among selected families within Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM) Ngong in Kajiado County, Kenya. Guided by Family Systems Theory, Technological Determinism Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study adopted a mixed-methods research design that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The target population comprised 836 married couples registered under the CITAM Ngong Marriage Care Ministry, from which a sample of 271 respondents was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS version 26, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that mobile phone-driven communication patterns significantly influence family functioning in both positive and negative ways. Mobile phones enhanced coordination, instant communication, and accessibility among family members, particularly in work-related and emergency situations. However, excessive phone use during meals, family gatherings, and shared activities reduced face-to-face interaction, weakened emotional intimacy, increased misunderstandings, and contributed to fragmented communication within households. The study further established a significant relationship between communication patterns and family functionality, with families reporting improved cohesion and stronger emotional connection when deliberate phone-use boundaries were implemented. The study concludes that while mobile phones remain essential communication tools, intentional regulation and balanced usage are necessary to preserve healthy family interactions. The study recommends adopting family digital-use policies, promoting device-free family moments, and implementing sensitization programs on healthy communication habits within households.

Keywords: *Mobile phone use, family communication, family functionality, communication patterns, family cohesion, parental engagement, CITAM Ngong.*

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1. Introduction

Mobile phones have become an integral part of modern life, reshaping social interaction, communication practices, and family dynamics across the globe (Vanden Abeele, 2020). Technological advancements have transformed mobile phones from simple communication devices into multifunctional digital tools that support social networking, entertainment, education, work, and information sharing. According to global digital reports, mobile phone ownership continues to grow rapidly, with smartphones becoming deeply embedded in everyday life. The growing dependence on mobile devices has significantly altered interpersonal relationships, especially within family settings.

The family is widely recognized as the primary social institution responsible for providing emotional support, fostering communication, shaping identity, and socializing (Walsh, 2021). Family functionality refers to the effectiveness with which family members relate, communicate, solve problems, and support one another emotionally and socially. Healthy family communication patterns contribute to emotional closeness, mutual understanding, trust, conflict resolution, and stronger family cohesion. However, the increased use of mobile phones within homes has introduced new communication behaviors that may either strengthen or weaken family interactions.

Although mobile phones facilitate convenience and connectivity, excessive dependence on these devices has increasingly reduced meaningful face-to-face communication among family members (McDaniel, 2020). In many households, physical presence no longer guarantees emotional availability. Family members may share the same space while remaining mentally absorbed in digital interactions. This phenomenon has gradually contributed to reduced attention during conversations, interruptions during shared activities, weakened emotional intimacy, and declining family engagement.

Globally, scholars have documented growing concerns regarding the influence of mobile phone use on family communication patterns. Studies conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, China, South Korea, and several African countries have shown that excessive phone use contributes to reduced family interaction, poor listening habits, increased misunderstandings, emotional distancing, and weakened family relationships. Parents and adolescents increasingly report conflicts stemming from phone use, especially around screen time during meals, family gatherings, and important conversations.

In Africa, mobile phone penetration has risen significantly over the past decade, reshaping traditional family communication structures. In countries such as South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, researchers have noted that mobile devices increasingly compete with traditional family interactions, including storytelling, communal meals, and shared activities. Kenyan urban families, particularly in Nairobi and surrounding regions, have experienced notable shifts in family communication patterns due to increased smartphone use. Family members often prioritize online engagement over interpersonal conversations, resulting in reduced emotional bonding and declining communication quality.

Faith-based communities such as Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM) emphasize strong family values, healthy relationships, and intentional communication within households. Despite these values, mobile phone use continues to influence communication behaviors among families in such communities. Understanding how mobile phone-driven communication patterns affect family functioning within a faith-based context is therefore essential for promoting healthier digital habits and preserving family relationships.

1.1 Problem Statement

Family communication remains a critical component of healthy family functioning. Effective communication enables families to share emotions, solve problems collectively, maintain emotional intimacy, and strengthen interpersonal relationships. However, the rapid increase in mobile phone usage has altered communication behaviors within households. Family members increasingly spend more time engaging with digital devices than interacting with one another physically.

Research has shown that excessive mobile phone use reduces face-to-face interaction, disrupts family routines, weakens emotional connection, and contributes to communication breakdown within households (Anderson & Vogels, 2020; Radesky, 2021). Parents and children often experience distraction during conversations due to phone notifications, social media engagement, or work-related communication. In many homes, family meals, gatherings, and shared activities are frequently interrupted by mobile phone use, leading to reduced communication quality and weakened emotional presence.

Although previous studies have explored the effects of mobile phone use on social relationships, limited research has examined how mobile phone-driven communication patterns shape family functioning within faith-based communities in Kenya. Most studies have focused on general populations without considering the unique relational and moral expectations associated with religious family settings. Consequently, there is a contextual gap in understanding how mobile phone communication behaviors influence family interactions within CITAM Ngong.

This study, therefore, sought to evaluate how mobile phone-driven communication patterns shape family functioning among selected families at CITAM Ngong in Kajiado County.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study contribute significantly to the growing body of literature on technology and family relationships. Families may benefit from understanding how communication behaviors associated with mobile phone use influence emotional connection, interaction quality, and household relationships. The study also provides useful insights for counselors, church leaders, educators, and policymakers involved in family support programs.

Faith-based organizations such as CITAM may utilize the findings to develop family enrichment programs that encourage healthy digital habits and strengthen interpersonal communication. Mental health professionals and family therapists may also use the findings to design interventions addressing technology-related communication challenges within families.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Family Systems Theory

Family Systems Theory, developed by Murray Bowen, views the family as an interconnected emotional unit in which the behavior of one member affects the entire system (Bowen, 1978). According to the theory, family members are interdependent, and changes in one individual's behavior inevitably influence family relationships and overall functioning.

Within the context of mobile phone use, Family Systems Theory explains how communication disruptions resulting from excessive phone use affect emotional connection, family interaction, and relationship stability. When one or more family members become excessively engaged with mobile phones, communication patterns within the family shift, potentially leading to emotional detachment, misunderstandings, and reduced family cohesion.

The theory further emphasizes that healthy family functioning depends on balanced communication, emotional responsiveness, and shared interaction. Persistent digital distractions, therefore, weaken family interaction patterns and reduce the quality of interpersonal relationships within households.

2.1.2 Technological Determinism Theory

The theory of technological determinism argues that technology significantly shapes human behavior, social interaction, and societal development (McLuhan, 1964). The theory suggests that once technologies become integrated into society, they inevitably influence how individuals communicate, relate, and function.

Mobile phones have transformed communication by increasing speed, accessibility, and convenience. However, the same technology has altered traditional family interaction patterns by reducing direct conversations and increasing digital dependency. Within families, mobile phones increasingly mediate communication behaviors, influencing emotional presence, attention, and relationship quality.

The theory is relevant to this study because it explains how mobile phone technology actively shapes family communication patterns and influences family functionality.

2.1.3 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory explains that individuals actively use media and technology to satisfy personal needs such as entertainment, information, social connection, relaxation, and convenience (Katz et al., 1973). Family members use mobile phones for different purposes, including communication, social networking, work, learning, and entertainment.

Although mobile phones satisfy these needs, excessive engagement may interfere with family interaction and emotional connection. The theory, therefore, helps explain why individuals prioritize mobile phone use even when it disrupts family communication.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Mobile Phone Use and Family Communication

Family communication is fundamental to healthy family functioning because it facilitates emotional support, trust, conflict resolution, and relational closeness (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 2020). Scholars have consistently argued that communication quality influences the strength and stability of family relationships.

Recent global studies have shown that mobile phone use significantly affects communication patterns within households (Kushlev et al., 2020). In the United States, researchers found that excessive mobile phone use among parents and adolescents reduced meaningful family conversations and increased emotional disengagement. Similarly, studies in the United Kingdom found that mobile phone use during meals reduced the quality of conversation and weakened emotional connections among family members.

Research conducted in South Korea found that excessive smartphone use was negatively associated with the quality of family communication. Families characterized by heavy phone use experienced increased emotional stress and reduced interpersonal interaction. Similar findings were reported in Pakistan, where overuse of mobile phones during family gatherings disrupted conversations and weakened family engagement.

African studies have equally highlighted the influence of mobile phone use on family interaction. In South Africa, many families reported reduced face-to-face communication due to excessive phone use among both parents and children. Studies in Uganda and Tanzania showed that mobile phones are increasingly replacing traditional family interactions such as storytelling, communal discussions, and shared activities.

In Kenya, urban families have experienced growing communication challenges associated with mobile phone use. Researchers observed that family members increasingly prioritize online communication over in-person interaction, contributing to reduced emotional closeness and weakened family relationships.

2.2.2 Face-to-Face Communication and Emotional Presence

Face-to-face communication remains essential for emotional intimacy, empathy, and relationship maintenance within families. Non-verbal communication cues such as eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language strengthen interpersonal understanding and emotional connection.

However, mobile phones often interfere with emotional presence during conversations. Family members may appear physically available while mentally distracted by online interactions, social media notifications, or digital entertainment. Such distractions reduce attentiveness, listening quality, and emotional responsiveness.

Researchers have introduced the concept of “technoference” to describe interruptions in interpersonal interaction caused by technology use (McDaniel, 2020). Technoference has been associated with increased conflict, emotional distance, frustration, and reduced relationship satisfaction within families.

2.2.3 Mobile Phones During Family Activities

Shared family activities such as meals, worship, conversations, and leisure activities contribute significantly to family bonding and cohesion. However, mobile phone use during these activities increasingly disrupts family interaction.

Studies show that many family members frequently check their phones during meals or conversations, reducing the depth of communication and participation. Children and adolescents often report feeling ignored when parents prioritize phones during family time. Similarly, spouses may interpret excessive phone use as emotional withdrawal or relational neglect.

Although mobile phones facilitate coordination and accessibility, excessive dependence on them during family activities reduces emotional engagement and the quality of interaction.

2.2.4 Positive Contributions of Mobile Phones to Family Communication

Despite the negative effects associated with excessive use, mobile phones also contribute positively to family communication in several ways. Families use mobile phones to coordinate schedules, share updates, maintain contact during travel, and provide emotional support during emergencies.

Mobile phones enable parents to monitor children's safety and maintain communication when family members are geographically separated. Couples also use phones to express affection, exchange supportive messages, and strengthen emotional connections.

The influence of mobile phones on family functionality, therefore, depends largely on usage patterns, boundaries, and intentionality.

2.3 Research Gap

Although previous studies have explored mobile phone use and interpersonal relationships, little research has focused specifically on mobile phone-driven communication patterns within faith-based family settings in Kenya. Existing studies largely focus on general populations and urban environments, without examining how communication behaviors affect family functioning within religious communities. This study, therefore, addressed this contextual gap by examining communication patterns among families at CITAM Ngong.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The mixed-methods approach was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive data regarding communication patterns and family functionality.

Quantitative methods provided measurable evidence regarding the prevalence and influence of mobile-phone-driven communication behaviors, while qualitative methods provided deeper insights into participants' lived experiences and perceptions.

3.2 Study Location

The study was conducted at CITAM Ngong in Kajiado County, Kenya. CITAM Ngong is located within a rapidly urbanizing environment characterized by increasing technological exposure and changing family lifestyles. The church comprises families from diverse

socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, making it an appropriate setting for examining communication behaviors within households.

3.3 Target Population

The target population comprised married couples with children who were registered under the CITAM Ngong Marriage Care Ministry. The total target population consisted of 836 couples.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The study used Yamane's formula to determine a sample size of 271 respondents. Stratified sampling was used to categorize participants by years of marriage, while simple random sampling was employed to select respondents within each stratum.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and focus group discussion guides.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data on communication patterns, mobile phone use, and family functioning.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions enabled participants to provide detailed explanations regarding how mobile phone use influenced communication and relationships within their families.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

The instruments were subjected to pilot testing to establish validity and reliability. Expert review ensured content validity, while Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were used to assess reliability.

3.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS version 26. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional review bodies. Participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This section presents findings on how mobile phone-driven communication patterns shape family functioning among selected families at CITAM Ngong.

4.2 Mobile Phone Use and Communication Patterns

The study established that mobile phones are heavily integrated into daily family routines. Most respondents indicated that mobile phones were frequently used for communication, social media engagement, work-related interactions, entertainment, and coordinating family activities.

Table 1: Response to the Effect of Communication on Family Functionality (n=241)

Statements	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	Mean	Std Dvt
	F	F	F	F	F		
Our family conversations are meaningful and uninterrupted.	18 (7.5%)	27 (11.2%)	65 (27.0%)	78 (32.4%)	53 (22.0%)	3.48	1.08
In our family, excessive mobile phone use often leads to misunderstandings due to reduced face-to-face interaction.	12 (5.0%)	21 (8.7%)	58 (24.1%)	88 (36.5%)	62 (25.7%)	3.72	1.03
Mobile phone distractions hinder open communication, making it challenging to resolve family conflicts effectively.	14 (5.8%)	28 (11.6%)	54 (22.4%)	86 (35.7%)	59 (24.5%)	3.68	1.06
Mobile phone use contributes to isolation among family members, as we are often physically present but emotionally disconnected.	11 (4.6%)	19 (7.9%)	59 (24.5%)	91 (37.8%)	61 (25.3%)	3.74	1.00
Due to mobile phone distractions, I find it challenging to express my emotions and needs face-to-face, which leads to poor communication.	13 (5.4%)	22 (9.1%)	51 (21.2%)	87 (36.1%)	68 (28.2%)	3.80	1.05
Mobile phone use has impacted on our ability to make decisions together due to reduced shared communication.	17 (7.1%)	29 (12.0%)	60 (24.9%)	82 (34.0%)	53 (22.0%)	3.57	1.09
I believe mobile phone use in our family has weakened our bonds by replacing meaningful interactions with digital distractions.	12 (5.0%)	21 (8.7%)	55 (22.8%)	89 (36.9%)	64 (26.6%)	3.76	1.03
Mobile phone use in our family has eroded trust due to perceived neglect or distraction, affecting our communication.	14 (5.8%)	20 (8.3%)	52 (21.6%)	90 (37.3%)	65 (27.0%)	3.78	1.05
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						3.71	1.04

Participants acknowledged that mobile phones improved accessibility and convenience within families. Spouses could easily communicate during work hours, coordinate responsibilities, and respond quickly during emergencies. Parents also used phones to monitor children's movements and communicate school-related information.

However, respondents also reported that excessive phone use increasingly disrupted family interaction. Many participants admitted to checking phones repeatedly during conversations, meals, and family gatherings. Such behaviors often reduced attentiveness and meaningful engagement.

One participant stated:

“Sometimes we are all seated together, but everyone is on their phone. Physically, we are together, but emotionally, everyone is elsewhere.”

Another respondent explained:

“Phones help us communicate when apart, but when we are together, they sometimes create distance because attention shifts away from each other.”

These findings suggest that mobile phones simultaneously support and disrupt family communication depending on how they are used.

4.3 Reduction in Face-to-Face Communication

The study revealed that excessive mobile phone use significantly reduced face-to-face interaction within families. Respondents indicated that family conversations were frequently interrupted by notifications, social media browsing, or work-related communication.

Several participants acknowledged that family members increasingly preferred digital interaction over physical conversation. Children and adolescents were particularly reported to spend significant time on social media and entertainment platforms, reducing opportunities for family engagement.

Parents also admitted struggling to maintain quality communication due to work-related phone demands.

One focus group participant observed:

“Even when families gather for dinner, many people are distracted by their phones. Conversations end quickly because everyone keeps checking messages.”

Another participant noted:

“There are moments when children want to talk, but parents are busy scrolling through phones. Eventually, children stop trying to communicate.”

These findings align with previous studies indicating that excessive phone use reduces meaningful family interaction and weakens the quality of communication.

4.4 Emotional Disconnection and Fragmented Communication

The study established that persistent phone distraction contributes to emotional disconnection within families. Participants reported that interrupted conversations reduced emotional intimacy and weakened relational satisfaction.

Table 2: Response to the Effect of Family Bonding on Family Functionalities (n=241)

Statements	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	Mean	Std Dvt
	F	F	F	F	F		
We regularly engage in activities without phones.	22 (9.1%)	35 (14.5%)	60 (24.9%)	78 (32.4%)	46 (19.1%)	3.38	1.16
Mobile phones interfere with our family shared activities (eg, meals, games, outings)	8 (3.3%)	15 (6.2%)	40 (16.6%)	104 (43.2%)	74 (30.7%)	3.92	0.95
I feel emotionally distant from my family members due to excessive phone use.	12 (5.0%)	24 (10.0%)	45 (18.7%)	93 (38.6%)	67 (27.8%)	3.82	1.05
Family bonding is stronger when we establish “no phone” times.	7 (2.9%)	14 (5.8%)	38 (15.8%)	99 (41.1%)	83 (34.4%)	4.00	0.92
When I put away my phone, I feel more connected to the family.	9 (3.7%)	16 (6.6%)	41 (17.0%)	97 (40.2%)	78 (32.4%)	3.91	0.97
I feel emotionally distant from family members who are often on their phones.	11 (4.6%)	20 (8.3%)	46 (19.1%)	95 (39.4%)	69 (28.6%)	3.79	1.03
Due to mobile phone use in our family, it is difficult to maintain strong emotional bonds, which impacts our overall family functionality.	13 (5.4%)	26 (10.8%)	52 (21.6%)	88 (36.5%)	62 (25.7%)	3.67	1.08
In our family, the use of mobile phones has diminished our ability to provide mutual emotional support, which is weakening our family ties.	10 (4.1%)	23 (9.5%)	48 (19.9%)	93 (38.6%)	67 (27.8%)	3.76	1.03
I believe mobile phone use in our family has created a sense of isolation, reducing opportunities for shared experiences and bonding.	8 (3.3%)	18 (7.5%)	44 (18.3%)	98 (40.7%)	73 (30.3%)	3.87	0.98
Mobile phone use has led to a decline in family traditions and rituals, which are essential for maintaining strong family bonds.	14 (5.8%)	28 (11.6%)	55 (22.8%)	86 (35.7%)	58 (24.1%)	3.61	1.10
Mobile phone use in our home has led to a decline in shared laughter and joy, negatively impacting our family's overall well-being and bonding.	11 (4.6%)	25 (10.4%)	50 (20.7%)	90 (37.3%)	65 (27.0%)	3.72	1.06
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						3.77	1.03

Many respondents reported that excessive mobile phone use led to feelings of neglect, particularly among spouses and children. Participants noted that emotional availability had declined as attention became increasingly divided between family interactions and digital engagement.

One participant explained:

“You may be speaking to someone, but they are only half-listening because their attention is on the phone. It makes people feel ignored.”

Another respondent shared:

“Children notice when parents are distracted. They sometimes complain that phones are more important than they are.”

The findings demonstrate that emotional presence remains critical for healthy family communication.

4.5 Communication Conflicts Arising from Mobile Phone Use

The study further found that mobile phone use contributed to family conflicts and misunderstandings. Arguments frequently arose about excessive screen time, delayed responses in conversations, and phone use during shared activities.

Some spouses expressed concerns about the secrecy associated with mobile phones, especially prolonged engagement on social media platforms. Others reported frustration when family members prioritized online communication over family interaction.

One participant stated:

“Sometimes conflicts arise because one person feels the other is always on the phone instead of paying attention to family matters.”

Another explained:

“Phones have introduced communication barriers because family members become unavailable emotionally.”

These findings indicate that unmanaged mobile phone use contributes to communication strain within households.

4.6 Positive Contributions of Mobile Phones to Family Communication

Despite the negative experiences associated with excessive use, respondents acknowledged several positive aspects of mobile phone communication.

Participants reported that mobile phones improved family coordination, facilitated emergency communication, strengthened long-distance relationships, and enabled rapid information sharing.

Parents particularly appreciated the ability to easily contact their children during emergencies or school-related activities.

One respondent observed:

“Phones make coordination easier. You can quickly communicate about schedules, emergencies, or family plans.”

Another participant stated:

“When used responsibly, phones help families remain connected, especially when members are away from home.”

The findings therefore suggest that balanced and intentional mobile phone use can positively support family communication.

4.7 Inferential Findings

Inferential statistical analysis established a significant relationship between communication patterns and family functionality. Families characterized by healthier communication practices reported stronger emotional connection, improved understanding, and higher levels of family cohesion.

Conversely, families experiencing excessive phone-related interruptions reported weaker communication quality, emotional distancing, and reduced relational satisfaction.

The findings indicate that communication patterns significantly influence family functionality within households.

Table 3: Correlation Between Communication Patterns and Family Functionality (n = 241)

Communication Variable	r	p-value	Interpretation
Frequent phone use during family time	-0.41	0.001	Significant negative relationship
Checking phone during meals	-0.38	0.002	Significant negative relationship
Phone as primary communication tool	-0.29	0.005	Significant negative relationship
Messaging and social media use	-0.33	0.004	Significant negative relationship

5. Discussion

5.1 Mobile Phones as Double-Edged Communication Tools

The study demonstrated that mobile phones function as both facilitators and disruptors of family communication, supporting the findings of Lee and Kim (2022) that mobile devices simultaneously enhance accessibility while weakening interpersonal engagement. On one hand, phones enhance accessibility, coordination, and information sharing. On the other hand, excessive use reduces attentiveness, emotional presence, and interpersonal engagement.

This dual role supports Technological Determinism Theory, which argues that technology significantly shapes human interaction and social behavior. The findings suggest that mobile phone technology has fundamentally altered communication habits within families.

5.2 Decline in Face-to-Face Interaction

The reduction in face-to-face communication observed in this study aligns with global findings indicating that excessive phone use undermines direct interpersonal engagement.

Family Systems Theory emphasizes the importance of emotional responsiveness and communication in maintaining healthy family functioning. When family members become distracted during conversations, emotional bonds weaken and communication effectiveness declines.

The study further revealed that digital distraction affects both parents and children. Adolescents increasingly prefer online interaction, while parents remain engaged in work-related communication and social media.

5.3 Emotional Presence and Family Functionality

The findings highlighted the importance of emotional presence during family interaction. Although family members may share physical space, emotional disconnection emerges when attention remains focused on digital devices.

Participants frequently associated excessive phone use with feelings of neglect, frustration, and relational dissatisfaction. These findings support previous studies linking technoference to emotional distancing and communication breakdown.

Healthy communication requires intentional listening, emotional attentiveness, and active participation in conversations. Persistent digital interruption, therefore, compromises the quality of relationships within families.

5.4 Communication Conflicts and Relationship Strain

The study established that unmanaged phone use contributes to conflict within families. Spouses and children often interpret excessive phone engagement as emotional withdrawal or relational neglect.

Conflicts associated with phone use included arguments regarding attention, delayed responses, reduced participation in family activities, and excessive social media engagement.

The findings suggest that mobile phones increasingly compete with interpersonal relationships for attention within households.

5.5 Positive Communication Benefits of Mobile Phones

Despite the challenges associated with excessive use, the study also confirmed that mobile phones contribute positively to family communication when used intentionally.

Phones improve coordination, facilitate emergency response, support long-distance relationships, and enable rapid information sharing. Families, therefore, benefit when mobile phone use remains balanced and regulated.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory helps explain why individuals continue relying heavily on mobile phones despite relational consequences. Family members use phones to satisfy social, informational, and emotional needs. However, the study suggests that healthy family functioning requires moderation and conscious communication habits.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that mobile phone-driven communication patterns significantly shape family functions among selected families in CITAM Ngong, Kajiado County. Mobile phones have become indispensable communication tools that enhance accessibility, coordination, and connectivity within households. However, excessive and unregulated phone use increasingly disrupts face-to-face interaction, weakens emotional presence, contributes to communication breakdown, and strains family relationships.

The findings demonstrate that healthy family functionality depends not merely on communication frequency but on communication quality, attentiveness, and emotional engagement. Although mobile phones facilitate connection, they can simultaneously reduce meaningful interpersonal interaction when overused.

Families that intentionally implemented phone-use boundaries reported stronger emotional connection, healthier communication patterns, and improved family cohesion. The study, therefore, emphasizes the need for balanced and intentional mobile phone use within households.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. Families should establish clear digital-use boundaries, particularly during meals, conversations, worship, and shared activities.
2. Parents should model healthy communication behaviors by minimizing phone distractions during family interaction.
3. Faith-based organizations such as CITAM should develop awareness programs on healthy digital habits and family communication.
4. Counselors and family therapists should incorporate digital communication management into family counseling programs.
5. Families should intentionally create device-free moments to strengthen emotional connection and interpersonal engagement.
6. Parents should encourage open conversations regarding responsible mobile phone use among children and adolescents.
7. Further studies should explore the long-term psychological and relational effects of mobile-phone-driven communication patterns within African family contexts.

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