

DISTRACTED PARENTING: EXCESSIVE PARENTAL UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

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Abstract

The present research is an attempt to explore the topic “Distracted Parenting: Excessive parental utilization of social media and its impact on the communication and the relationship between parents and their children.” The research was conducted having an objective which was to analyze “Impacts of excessive parental utilization of social media on the relationship and communication between the parents and their children.” The research was exploratory in nature. Phenomenological approach of qualitative research was used to carry out the current research. The population of the research was all those parents who excessively utilize social media and other technological devices or gadgets. In this study purposive sampling was used. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher for the purpose of data collection. Data collected by the researcher who conducted semi-structured interviews from 10 participants that were those parents who have technological devices and use social media for specific period of time (as both researcher and the supervisor set the criteria that the data was collected from those parents who utilize social media for minimum 4-5 hours per day or maximum from this as “The 2018 Rescue Time study of 11,000 users showed that average smart-phone usage is 3 hours and 15 minutes.” In a survey conducted by Edison Research “The mean count for the hours respondents spent on browsing social media is 3.6 hours.” Both male and female contributed in data collection. Demographic characteristics like gender, age and occupation were also included. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the current study. After data collection, researcher transcribed the interviews and then created codes, categories and themes from that transcription.

Keywords: Distracted parents, School media, communication, Parent-Teacher Relationship

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies that involves user-created data or interaction are referred as social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Terry, 2009). Despite research findings on the utilization and impacts trailing behind their velocity of adaptation, modern mobiles and digital devices like smart-phones, I-pad, laptops and other handy or moveable gadgets are now frequently integrated into the routines of the youngsters and their household (Radesky, Schumacher, & Zuckerman, 2015).

With the unrestricted access to internet material or data, social relationships, professional responsibilities, data, private details, these multifunctional gadgets have transformed how individuals engaged with advances and programmatic technologies and with one another (Campbell, Ling, & Bayer, 2014; Katz, 2002). Although individuals gain numerous benefits from the utilization of technology like increased public assistance (McDaniel, Coyne, & Holmes, 2012) and capacity to do remote work (Chesley, Slibak, & Wajcman, 2013). 7

Because of the time someone spent on their phones and the information and communication they are having on social media, there is a situation which is defined as “Absence Present”, its an act of corporeally or bodily present but distracted somewhere else (Gergen & Gergen, 2002) accompanied by the description of emerging customs or traditions

enabling portable device occupation into personal and private space (Campbell & Park, 2008; Okabe & Ito, 2005). Regular disruption in personal interaction while sending time together caused by the usage of mobile phones and technological devices termed as “Technoference” (McDaniel, 2015; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). These kind of disruption can occur during face to face interaction at the meal times or play time. Screen technologies particularly mobile devices, have been labeled as “Technoference” a source of distraction from interpersonal tasks (McDaniel & Radesky, 2018).

As most of the parents own and use touch phones and other digital or electrical gadgets all over the day, the scenario of advanced parenting has transformed (Pew Research Center, 2019; Rainie & Zickuhr, 2015). Researchers have started to investigate the causes of parental phone usage and its potential repercussion over their children (McDaniel, 2019; Radesky et al., 2016; Wolfers, 2021). However, in the field, the valid measurement of parent’s distraction using these gadgets is required. It is critical to get a verified and authentic measurement of parent’s distraction with mobile phone because this distraction is frequent and can have harmful effects on parenting quality that the child experience (Hiniker et al., 2015; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; Radesky et al., 2014).

Connecting with others, seeking information, escaping and reducing stress are the reasons behind the parental mobile phone utilization during parenting (Radesky et al., 2016; Torres et al., 2021; Wolfers, 2021). Families may get addicted or dependent on mobile phones and other social networking sites leading to a lack of interaction among the members of the family (Ling et al., 2019). According to a study conducted by (Adler, 2014), substantial rise in the amount of time people spend on social media and people spend less time with each other and there is less or no attention in face to face interaction is the reason of technological innovation (Sharaievskaa & Stodolskab, 2017). According to Padilla-Walker, et. al (2012), if the members of the family utilize the social networking sites together then it can be helpful for them to maintain the close relationship.

Further developmental and emotional issues later in life caused by the negative bond between the parents and the children at young age. Turner (2011), asserts that for the lifelong fundamental development, the nature and caliber of interaction among the newborn and the caretaker, emerging from conception and driven primarily by the kid’s wish for security and comfort is essential. Haphazard or uneven parent’s monitoring or attention is caused by the excessive utilization of social media which leads to the collapse of “solid bases of the attachment connection” (Turner 2011, p. 33). Further, Bowlby (2005) believed that a child must be reliant in the availability and protection of their primary caregiver in order to become able to examine or analyze his/her surrounding with boldness and fearlessness.

It is obvious that the parent’s capacity to attend their children is adversely affected when they are engaged in their mobile devices (Boles & Roberts, 2008; Hiniker et al., 2015, 2016; Moser et al., 2016; Oduor et al., 2016; Radesky et al., 2014). Moms diverted by their phones and with their kids they had minor or smaller rate of linguistic and non-linguistic interaction as

compared to those moms who were not distracted or involved in any gadget discovered by Radesky et al. (2014) in a planned assignment of analyzing snacking or eating behavior of 6 year old. When children introduced with an unknown and untried or unfamiliar dish, mother-child relation were most significantly disturbed, in these kind of cases, children were less inclined to try new meals after receiving less guidance or support from their busy or diverted mothers (Radesky et al., 2014). On developing child's psychological and physiological condition, eating together as a family at mealtime and having proper conversation and interaction with the family have significant impacts. Eating as a family has a favourable impact on the health of both the kid and the parent (Larson & Hannan 2007).

Mobile phones have been the cause of friction in some homes, particularly when used in front of their family. While interacting with the parents when children engaged in their phones, some parents feel so irritated (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Hiniker et al., 2016; Qualcomm, 2013; Yu, 2015), and some kids react in the same way for their parental utilization (Sharaievska & Stodolska, 2016). In some situation, children criticize their parents on disobeying their home gadget usage guidelines and request their parents to switch off their smart-phones and spend more time together as a family (Oduor et al., 2016; Yu, 2015). The parenting quality of the parents may deteriorate when they cognitively and behaviorally distracted by their mobile device. Parents have difficulties in multitasking between the utilization of mobile phone and their children (Radesky et al., 2016), which may reduce the timeliness and overall quality of parent responses to kid requirements.

We must first comprehend the causes or reasons that may encourage individuals in general to use their phone to properly comprehend why parents engaged with their phones while interacting with their children. Mobile phone or smart phone is a versatile, multifunctional technology with a variety of appealing functions for its users like people can contact and communicate with others through phone calls, messages, social media, check and reply the emails, listen music and watch and read news and much more. These instances shows that how rapidly our lives get entwined due to the utilization of mobile phones such that we are so much reliant on our phones that they become the integral part of our lives (Belk, 2013; Campbell & Park, 2008; Carbonell, Oberst, & Beranuy, 2013; Srivastava, 2005).

In recent years, usage of social media and mobile phones has become an issue due to its tendency to replace traditional human interaction with communication via technology. The following chapter will describe the problem of social media usage as it relates to a parent's ability to bond and spend time with their children. The usage of online forms of media has many benefits for socialization and support; however the focus of the study is to identify how its usage affects parenting skills, parent-child attachment, and whether social media usage is replacing or diminishing valuable quality time between parents and their children.

The further chapter will discuss the issue of the utilization of social media as it regards to a parent's capacity or capability to make a healthy bond and relationship with their children. The consumption of online channels of communication offers substantial advantages for interpersonal

communication and encouragement; nevertheless, the research's emphasis is on determining how it impacts parenting abilities, parent-child bonding, and if social media addiction replaces or diminishes important quality time among parents and their children. Given the frequency of social media use among parents and the rising number of hours most people invest on their gadgets (Ray & Jat, 2010), knowing the negative consequences of its consumption will support parents in learning to devote their support and energy to their children.

Doing research in this context because most of the time people talk about the excessive utilization of social media and mobile phone devices by the children only but now there is a need to talk about the excessive parental utilization of social media and other technological or digital gadgets and their impact on the relationship and communication with their children.

2. Statement of the Problem

In modern era the utilization of social media has skyrocketed. Now interaction is done through online without any physical contact or link which was formerly done in person or via mobile phones. In order to communicate with others, share their everyday lives and learn new things, individual spent numerous hours of their life hooked with the technology. In order to invest longer period of time while using social media and other networking sites, many of these people ignore other factors of their life. Now parents and children are too much engaged in their phones even if they are just little away or at the same place they text each other instead face to face conversation. To express their grievance and connect or engage with others in similar circumstances all around the world, individuals utilize social media as an outlet. For these reasons, mobile gadgets like smart phones and I-pads have grown universally or everywhere and is an indispensable factor of individual's socializing (Blake and Wrothen, 2012).

Many communication processes which are required to form a strong connection between the parents and their children may reduced by the excessive utilization of social media. Because of the massive amount of time which parents spent on their gadgets or devices, they may be present physically but may be emotionally distracted or disengaged, neglecting everything but the most significant needs of their children. According to many scholars, a major harm to the health of children is "distracted parenting" as the caretakers or parents are totally engrossed with their gadgets and spend more time on them as compared to supervising and overseeing their children. Statement of the problem is "Distracted Parenting: Excessive Parental Utilization of Social Media and Its Impact On the Communication and Relationship Between Children and Their Parents".

3. Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to analyze the "Impacts of excessive parental utilization of social media on the relationship and communication between the parents and their children".

4. Research Questions

To develop better understanding of relationship distraction present between parents and their children because of the utilization of social media and mobile phone devices and its impact on the communication with their children, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- When the parents are with their children why do they utilize their mobile phones?
- 2- What are parents' thoughts on using mobile and social media devices during parent-child interactions?
- 3- How do kids react to the utilization of social media devices by their parents, During parent-child interactions?
- 4- Why does cell phone use have an impact on parenting quality?
- 5- What effect does excessive parental social media use have on parent-child relationship and communication?

5. Significance of the Study

This research concentrated on the parental excessive utilization of social media devices by the parents and its impact on their parenthood specifically the kind of connection/relation they have with their children. Parents may begin to neglect essential conversation which is required for the balanced relationship when they begin to spend massive time on social devices. Parents are more probably or inclined to have cases when they pay any attention to their children's requirements or needs when they spend one or two hours on social media per day or whether the kid has ever experienced an event or accident that may have been averted had those parent who paid keen or close attention or care (Morrongiello et al. 2006).

This study will be helpful for those parents who are more distracted and give almost no attention to their children and also for those who are continuously engrossed with their gadgets. According to many scholars, a direct threat to child's welfare is "distracted parenting" as parents are totally engrossed with their devices or gadgets and spend more time on them as compared to supervising and overseeing their children. According to Bowlby (2005), "infants whose mothers responded sensitively to their signals throughout the first year of life not only cry less during the second half of that year as compared to the newborns of less receptive moms, but are more inclined to fall in line with their parents' preferences."

6. Research Methodology

In this study the qualitative research method was used because it allows to acquire in-depth knowledge of the study participant's different incidents and behaviors. A kind of social science research which aims to get and deal non-arithmetic data to extract or get sense from it that help us to truly comprehend socio-cultural existence through the analysis of particular communities or areas (Punch, 2013). It's the monitoring and analysis of people's perception

of variety of incidents and also captures the glimpse of people's perception in natural and realistic context (Gentles et al., 2015).

7. Research Design

The current research is phenomenological research. The phenomenon is defined as an individual's consciousness or awareness. Respondents in phenomenology are asked to explain the events and thoughts as they perceived them. About their experiences they may write, but the majority of the data is gathered with the help of interviews.

8. Population

Population of the study are all those parents who excessively utilize social media and other technological devices or gadgets.

9. Sampling

In this study purposive sampling will be used. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, is the deliberate collection of a respondent in accordance with the characteristics of the particular topic. Creswell (2002) suggests that qualitative researchers (a) do ethnographic research on one cultural-sharing group, (b) conduct case studies on three to five instances, (c) conduct grounded theory research on 15-20 persons, and (d) conduct narrative research based on one person's fictional or anecdotal stories. Creswell also advised that for conducting phenomenology research interview with up to ten people and grounded theory study interview or communicate with 20-30 persons.

10. Data collection Tool/Instrument

In this research data will be gathered with the help of semi-structured interview. According to Dörnyei (2007), qualitative data are "most frequently" obtained by researchers using interviews and questionnaires. Because qualitative researchers aim to provide detailed descriptions of individuals and occurrences in their real circumstances, interviews have traditionally been recognized as a fundamental component of study design. Interviews, as opposed to surveys, are more successful at gathering descriptive or narrative data, granting permission to the researchers to delve into the perspectives of the individuals. (Kvale, 2003).

Interviews are the cornerstone of acquiring original data in qualitative research. In qualitative approaches, interviews are the foundation of primary data collecting. Unlike quantitative approach, the framework of a qualitative research is connected to the goal of exploring and arguing why a particular occurrence is the way it is (Stewart, Gill, Chadwick & Treasure, 2008). Consequently, appropriate first-hand data collection approaches are required, with the method of interview at the root of them. Interview is a vital instrument in qualitative healthcare research (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). Interviews are clearly adaptable

and appropriate with either an experimental or phenomenological research paradigm (Aliyu, Bello, Kasim & Martin, 2014).

11. Data Analysis

For the analysis of the current study thematic analysis will be used. A technique for detecting and assessing meaning patterns in a dataset is known as (TA) Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is considered to be the greatest option for any investigation attempting to discover through insights. It implies that data analysis should be structured. It allows the researcher to link a descriptive analysis of a subject to one of the full translation. This increases the researcher's legitimacy, diversity, and entire tone or sense. Qualitative research necessitates an understanding of the collection of many aspects and data. Thematic Analysis broadens the scope of any issue's potential. (Marks & Yardley, 2004).

12. Data Analysis and Results

Utilization Of Technological & Social Media Devices During Parent-Child Interaction Effect The Parent-Child Relationship

In the formation of child's upbringing, intellectual abilities, literacy development, and interpersonal interactions to the values and traditions of their environment, Parent-child interaction is critical. Such interaction starts from birth and is essential for children's growth throughout their formative years. But in this technological era, during parent-child interaction both parents and children use their phone and not give proper attention to each other which effects their relationships. Actually communication or interaction are the basic of every relationship but now due to the utilization of social media and technological devices everyone is busy and distracted on their phones and not interact or communicate in an effective manner are around and parents are not paying proper attention to them then obviously relationships effects as Participant 1 shared his opinion in this regard; *"The advent of social media and the usage of these gadgets affected the parent and children relation a lot because the time, the quality time that parents used to spent with the children now they are spending with the gadgets."*

In this current situation parents and children both need space and they want that no one interrupt them during their phone use then the healthy attachment lacks. According to attachment theory, the emotional intimacy between children and the initial individuals in their life (e.g., parents and other caretakers) fosters a feeling of self-esteem and self-restraint. The amount to which children respond to individuals and the efficiency of the socialization are affected by emotions of affection, comfort, and responsiveness in their relationships with their parents Participant 10 also revealed that; *"Obviously it affects if we are using social media and not giving proper time and attention to our kids then the healthy attachment and bond which is the most important thing in parent-child relationship will not develop in that way. Sometimes I feel that the bond and attachment which we have with our parents that type of bond is absent now that kind of respect, that kind of affection, that kind of obedience there is nothing like before."*

Basically at this stage we can't totally ban the usage of social media because now it's a need and we can't deny its important but we can manage the utilization according to specific limit as One of the participant took our attention to a new point that in this technological era where parents as well as children both are busy on their devices and not spending time and sharing things with each other which effect the parent-child bond in many ways, it also effects the development of the children. So basically she suggested to the parents that if they involve their children with them while using phone it can bring a lot of improvement in their relation and parent-child bond as she said *““Definitely it affects if the parents utilize their mobile phone by avoiding their children then definitely it affects a lot and if the parents involve their children in such a way as I told you that I use for the educational purposes of my daughter's work sheets and I involve them in this and I set a specific time for the children that on the daily basis I do not give them cell phone but if they done something good then as an appreciation I give them and to get my desired task from them like if you will do this then I'll give mobile for some time.”*

Utilization Of Social Media Took The Loved Ones Away From Each other

Today as we all know that social has an important place in our lives that if we can't use social media for some reasons then we feel like something is missing or something is wrong as we are so much addicted now that if someone interrupt during our phone use become aggressive sometimes and the behavior of the children also changed as Participant 9 explained that; *“Yes definitely because when we all are sitting together even at that time everyone is busy on their phone and no one is talking in-person then it feels that it has disturbed our lives to be honest yes sometimes I feel it took us away.”* Substantial rise in the amount of time people spend on social media and people spend less time with each other and there is less or no attention in face to face interaction is the reason of technological innovation.

Because of social media we are not giving proper time and attention to our children as well as our family members and vice versa. Families are getting addicted or dependent on mobile phones and other social networking sites leading to a lack of interaction among the members of the family. Participant 1 evaluated *“Social media what it does, our tuck time, our sitting time, our enjoying time, our outing time, our movie time all has come to an end. So now we do not sit in the family and watch dramas or movies because we have these movies in our mobile phones. We do not go for the outing because we are busy on the You-tube, the Netflix things.”*

On the other hand, families and friends are dependent on digital interaction to maintain their connection, when they are not able to spend time with each other because of the restriction of time or geographical proximity. Email, messages, and interacting on social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter maintain connections alive and provide another alternative route for continuous interaction. Electronic communication is simple, portable, and inexpensive. Social media provides an easy approach to stay in contact with and sustain connections with individuals who are not in direct range for regular conversation. Social media is frequently used to bring families together Participant 2 shared her views regarding this that; *“No I don't feel that social*

media took us away because according to me we all are connected and communicated with each other through social media.”

Criticism Parents Get While Using Social Media Rather Than Giving Attention To Their Children

Mobile phones are constantly present in public and private environments or contexts due to their extensive accessibility, as well as during close and informal engagements. Indeed, we have grown so connected with mobile gadgets. Phone usage may reduce parental attentiveness, which may have a detrimental influence on healthy child development. When parents are using their phones, children experience more emotional turmoil. So in this context, sometimes parents being judge or face criticism because of their distraction rather than giving attention to their children from their elders or the other members of their family as Participant 7 shared her experience regarding this situation; *“So much criticism I have faced regarding this because I almost all the day utilize mobile phone especially my mother criticizes me a lot that you are always busy with your phone please keep is aside.”*

In Joint Family System Criticism Is More

Our elders (Parents and Grandparents) who haven't invest their time on social and spend most of their time with their family and with their children they feel a lot that today's parents are not giving proper time and attention to their children so, they criticize the utilization of social media and other technological devices but some participants took our attention on a new point that those mothers who are living with their in-laws get more criticism as compared to those who are living separate as Participant 2 revealed that; *“Actually I do not live in a joint family system and this kind of criticism are basically done in joint family so as I live separate from my in-laws that's why this kind of thing has not yet happened to me.”*

Fathers Utilize More Mobile & Social Media As Compared To Mothers

As parents it is equally important for both mothers and fathers to give proper time and attention to their children and make a healthy bond with them but today it is a mindset of many people that mothers are more responsible for the upbringing and development of the child as compared to fathers but no both are equally responsible as participant 6 explained *“We females like if our children and our husbands are around us then mostly we try to focus on them and try to give proper time to them not to our phones but if we talk about the husbands they are like now we are free so let's use the mobile phone.”*

Social Media Decreases the Communication Between Parent & Their Children & Other Family Members

Internet utilization is reducing family and parent-child spare time while also keeping people "having to plug in" more frequently, resulting in less face-to-face contact. These essentially result in lower levels of enjoyment and self-confidence for the individual, which may

then have an impact on their connections with others and the nature of their time with their children. Even when parents and children both are present at one place, they both are distracted on their devices and don't talk to each other because of the utilization of social media as Participant 9 shared " *Yes social media decreases our communication because when we all are sitting together even at that time everyone is busy on their phone and no one is talking in-person then it feels it has disturbed our lives to be honest yes sometimes I feel it took us away.*" Almost all the participants told the same.

Children Becoming Aggressive, Loud And Mentally Disturbed

Parents distraction has very harmful effects on the behavior as well as on the mental health of the children. Today parents are planning that their children disobeying them and not giving any response when they are talking to them it's all because of the parent's distraction when they don't give proper time and attention to their children and the children feel ignored that their parents are not giving any attention and time and not listening to them then they obviously become loud and aggressive as participant 5 told; "*kinds become annoy and start to scream*"

Phone usage may reduce parental attentiveness, which may have a detrimental influence on healthy child development. When parents are using their phones, children experience more emotional turmoil. When parents use their phones in front of their children and avoiding or ignoring them then they feel this distraction and even it has harmful effects on the mental health of the children. Participant 3 who is a mother and a teacher by profession and she also a keen interest in psychology shared how this parental distraction effects the mental health of the children "*Yes definitely it affects. Being a mother I think that children suffer from inferiority complex and they used to say that "your mobile is more dear to you or your work has more value to you" beside whatever you are doing like you are doing any assignment or task they use to say " you are stuck in it and not listening to me and you are not giving any time to me" Actually their behavior has changed and they become rude and the reason behind this is actually the reaction of your distraction which they feel and suffer from inferiority complex.*"

Social Media Is A Need

As we all know that the present era is the technological era and technology is so much involves in almost every field of life because now it has become a need. We need social to communicate with our friends and family members who are away from us, we use to take help regarding our studies, teacher need to use this for the educational purposes, it is sued in offices, businesses, hospitals, schools like now everywhere and we can't deny from its important as well One of the participant told "*Yes to some extent because there are some things which we are sometimes not aware of so social media help us in this way to provide us that information.*" Almost all the participants shared the same.

13. Discussion

In this study it is concluded that due to spending more time in the utilization of social media and other technological devices, parents, children as well as family members spending less time with each other or not giving proper attention and there is almost no interest in communicating to each other even when they all are present at same time or place and this study is in line to a study conducted by (Adler, 2014), substantial rise in the amount of time people spend on social media and people spend less time with each other and there is less or no attention in face to face interaction is the reason of technological innovation. Current research is in line with the research indicates that parental mobile device use (i.e., tablets or phones) around children is equally linked to lower parent–child interactions (Radesky et al., 2015), lower parenting quality (Hiniker et al., 2015), and child behavioral issues (McDaniel & Radesky, 2018).

A study conducted by Stepanikova et al. (2010), depending on how Internet usage affects the interpersonal processes that are related to mental health, the connection between Internet use and psychological health may be either beneficial or harmful is similar to the finding of current study that there are both negative impacts (affecting parent-child attachment, communication gap has developed, children has become aggressive and rude and many more) as well as positive impacts (stay connected with others, getting information, getting help for educational as well as work purposes) of utilizing social media. Numerous additional studies, like McDaniel (2012), claim that there are advantages and disadvantages to using social media more often.

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