The Use of New Media Technology in Families and Its Impact on Intimacy

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Abstract

This study aims to find out how the presence of new media technology affects the communication intimacy between children and parents. Applying a qualitative approach, the empirical data for this study were collected through interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials in two smartphone user families in Java, Indonesia. This study finds that the presence of new media technology has affected the intimacy of family, both in the aspects of communication, trust, and alienation. The use of smartphones can widen the communication distance between parents and children.

Keywords: *new media technology, family intimacy, communication, trust, alienation.*

Introduction

Intimacy comes from the Latin is *intimus* which means deepest. Orlofsky defines intimacy as the ability to form and maintain an intimate or intimate relationship. This relationship is seen in the form of closeness, respect for individuality, openness, communication, responsibility, reciprocity, commitment, and sexuality (Marcia, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky 1993, in Monggilo, 2018, p. 74). Sexuality in this case does not only refer to the intimacy of sexual relations but focuses more on the satisfaction felt by individuals when interacting with other people, including family members.

Mesch (2006, p. 119) illustrates that the introduction of new technologies such as the internet into households has the potential to change the quality of family relationships. Marsh et.al., (2017) stated that parents play an important role in shaping children's digital media experiences (Zaman & Mifsud, 2017).

The very rapid development of technology cannot be separated from the human need for that technology. Smartphones are a form of technology that continues to develop rapidly. This technology is not only accessible to adults, children can enjoy it too. Research from the survey institute The Halifax Insurance Digital Home produced 1/3 children aged 7-8 years, 2/3 of children aged 9-11 years, and nearly 9/10 children aged 12-14 have smartphones. However, 60% of parents feel that the amount of time their children spend on technology impacts the time they should be able to spend with family and friends. These results refer to the 1000 families that have been

sampled in the 2014 Halifax press (Eri, Nurhadi & Atik 2017).

James, et al (1998) regarding Beck's (1992) theory states that many phenomena are seen in which parents free their children to use gadgets regardless of the time and age of the child, thus causing a shift in the role and function of the real family. Ogburn in Khairudin (1997, p. 49) states that historically the family has eliminated the characteristic functions that serve its members and society. In fact, the family is the first and most important agent of socialization in the process of human development (Berns, 2011).

With the existence of technological media, especially social media that uses the internet, it raises questions about the impact it can have on the family so that it requires studies to obtain a correct understanding. Shiobhan (2012) argues that modern society has raised the complexity and diversity of personal relationships, thus raising questions about the future of the family structure (Cheal 2002: 35). Scott (in Shiobhan, 2012) argues that there has been a decline in traditional families because many people are more individualistic, resulting in a lack of time with family (1997).

Quoting the statement of psychologist Rosline Verauli in the BKKBN research (Saragih, Media Indonesia, 29 June 2019), today's families are very easily divided, young people are easily pitted against each other, and many divorces occur due to lack of communication and time to talk with family, even just for the sake of eating together. A study conducted by Ibrahim (in Triananda, 2015) shows that the culture of gathering such as eating together with family members has begun to disappear with a presentation of 20% of 1,165 respondents saying that eating with family in a house is rare (Saragih, Media Indonesia, 29 June 2019). According to data from Safer Internet Day 2017, approximately 75% of children aged 10-12 years in Indonesia have used smartphones and have personal social media (Press Release of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 2019). In this regard, it can be imagined that many families use smartphones and are more concerned with their devices than communicating with families. In fact, in a family, communication is very important. Without communication, the family will feel empty, as a result, the vulnerability of relationships between family members is difficult to avoid (Djamarah, 2004: 38)

This research will answer one important question, namely how the existence of communication technology, especially smartphones, affects the intimacy of family communication? Does the existence of smartphones make it easier and closer to family communication that occurs between parents and children so that the relationship between the two becomes more intimate? or otherwise, actually smartphones widen the communication distance between parents and children because each is personally involved and intimate with their respective gadgets?

This study is important because the impact of technology use on intimate family communication is not well documented and the consequences of this impact can follow children throughout their development (Subrahmanyam, Kraut, Greenfield, & Gross, 2008). Research conducted by Huisman, et.al (2012) found that continuous technological evolution and change will play a role in the conflicts that individuals and families face for years to come. The use of appropriate technology for children, safe use of the internet and social media, and balancing work and family time will play an important war in the welfare of individuals and families (Huisman, et.al 2012). Welfare is also meant in terms of communication between family members. Prabandari & Rahmiaji (2019)

research results show that the use of smartphones by children reduces the effectiveness of communication, seen from changes in intensity, two-way communication, listening attitudes, empathy, and attention. Horrigan (2002, p. 15) states that there are elements that influence internet usage habits, namely the frequency, duration, and where people access the internet.

Intimacy, which means the attachment is a strong emotional relationship through interactions between children and people who have special meaning in their lives, usually parents (McCartney & Dearing, 2002; in Ellraga, 2011). Thus, to determine the level of intimacy in the family, researchers used the quality of attachment theory by Armsden and Greenberg (1987), which is divided into three aspects. The first aspect is communication. By communicating well, it can create strong emotionality between parents and children. The second aspect of belief. The trust aspect is defined as a feeling of security and the belief that other people will help or meet individual needs. The third aspect is alienation. Alienation is closely related to avoidance and rejection.

Method

This research applies a qualitative approach, especially with constructivist paradigm. This research develops subjective meanings from the informant's experience or meanings directed at a particular object or object. The social constructivism paradigm uses broad and general interview questions so that meaning can be created in discussions or interactions with other people (Creswell, 2014, p. 33).

The ethnographic fieldwork took place from September to April 2019. The research location was at the residence of the informant or both families. The first family was located in Gedongkuning, Banguntapan, Bantul. The second family resides in Sukoharjo, Ngaglik, Sleman. Both families consist of families who are actively using technology media such as smartphones or high intensity of use, which have middle to upper social class. Then the family with the criteria of using media or smartphone technology with low intensity and middle to lower social status. In this study, researchers pay attention to the intimacy of communication that occurs between the two families so that they can compare the intimacy of communication between family 1 and family 2 with the presence of media technology in this modern era.

Research data collection techniques refer to qualitative data collection procedures by Cresswell, (2014, p. 222), covering four types of strategies, namely observation, interviews, document studies, and audio and visual material. Researchers conducted interviews face to face well as made observations. However, with limited conditions, the research interviews were conducted by telephone, chat, and email. To obtain supporting data, this research was also conducted through document studies or those derived from secondary data. The documents in this study were photos, while the audiovisual material that the researchers used was the informants' social media pages.

Data analysis techniques used Creswell (2014: 254-261) suggestions, which are divided into six, namely organizing data; reading and composing memos; describe, classify, and interpret data into codes and themes; classify data; interpreting data; and present, visualize data.

Shifts in Using Media in Two Families

In the days of conventional media, family 1 made watching television with the family apart from knowing the latest

information and entertainment as well as a moment to interact. However, nowadays, television is only an audio medium without being seen visually by family members even though it is turned on all the time. In family 2, since 2013, doesn't have private television in the house. This is because they feel that television broadcasts in Indonesia are not very supportive of children's education. However, that does not mean that family 2 forbids watching television. They can see the TV while at your house for a duration that has been mutually agreed upon. This happened with the presence of new media technology so that conventional media began to be abandoned.

The presence of smartphones is a communication medium that is now favoured by all people, including families. In family 1, all family members have their smartphones. He has owned the smartphone since he was in elementary school. The duration and frequency of smartphone use in their families were more dominated by children with more than 5 hours of use. This also happens by her husband or father of children, while the mother uses smartphones with time management settings. Mothers can use smartphones while doing their daily activities, and at bedtime they don't forget to control their device because this technology is also a sleep lull. According to research from the University of Oxford, online activity with any technological media such as an ideal smartphone is 4 hours 17 minutes per day no more. If more, it can have an impact on various things (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017, p. 208) so that the use of devices in family 1 can be said to be high.

The results of this interview are in line with the results of the researchers' observations on the social media accounts of family members 1. The Instagram social media accounts that are owned are monitored actively and there are always the latest notifications every week. It is undeniable that this can occur because of the influence of the facilities in the house, namely in the form of wifi. With attractive smartphone features as well as adequate facilities, its use can consume time and attention from the environment. If someone has entered his world, it is as if there are no other people around him, like when he is playing device in his room, it cannot be disturbed.

Not like family 1, smartphone ownership in family 2 is only owned by the parents. Children do not have their smartphones because according to the perspective of parents they are still not old enough and there are negative impacts caused by gadgets so that children can only play devices using their parents' smartphones. Of course, the use of smartphones by children is still accompanied by their parents so they don't choose the wrong program to watch. The frequency of using smartphones by children only at certain times, not every day playing gadgets and for the duration has been limited by parents to about 1 to 2 hours. Parents in family 2 use smartphones intensively. Internet access in family 2 is not like family 1 which has private wifi, internet use in family 2 can only be accessed when the data quota package is still available. In using the smartphone in one's own room in family 2, it is in line with the results of the researchers' observations. Researchers see every update on the Whatsapp status of family informants 2 in the form of news that occurs both domestically and abroad, which are always followed by developments. If there is any strange news, the informant will explore the news until it is proven to be true and then upload it on social media to keep the WhatsApp story in a row. Also, informant family 2 often upload islamic quotes and event posters. The use of this technology has an impact on the time and space to communicate with family members. In families 1 and 2, the level of use of media

technology is indeed different, but this has an impact on family communication. In the public sphere of communication, it is reduced because family members focus on their respective devices. That is why family communication has decreased after the arrival of new media. The findings described above are in accordance with the theory cited from Dave's Page for Technological and Media Determinism (in Ratmanto, 2005, p. 46). In this case, the theory of technological determinism must be juxtaposed with the theory of social determinism or social shaping theory. Social aspects that affect the use of technology include gender, ethnicity, politics, culture, economic factors, and power relations (Priyatna, 2013). In family 1, it appears that gender does influence the use of media technology. Mothers with two daughters are more active in playing social media or are more present. This can be seen from their uploads on their Instagram social media accounts, while their father and son actually have their own social media accounts and rarely upload their activities. No different from family 2, the mother is also more active in playing social media than the father. Father used his dominant device to communicate only about work and family.

Economic factors also affect the level of smartphone usage. In family 1, there is a high-speed internet connection installed inside the house so that it can be shared, namely Wi-Fi, which can be used 24 hours non-stop with a capacity of approximately 300 gigabytes a month. However, when outside the home, family members have a data quota to be able to connect to the internet. Meanwhile, family 2 does not have Wi-Fi installed, they only buy package quotas per month to connect to the internet. Apart from data quota, the smartphone brand used by family members is also an economic factor that can affect the use of technology.

With the factors that affect the use of smartphones, it can have an impact on social interactions in the family. This is following the theory expressed by (Venkatesh and Vitalari 1985: 3) in the journal The Impact of New Media Technologies on Social Interaction In The Household: "The impact on social interactions that occur due to new media technology consists of several things including patterns, allocation of time, choice of social functions, delivery of cultural values, and overall human behavior."

Impact on family social functions. Family members have their respective responsibilities for their duties. The father as the head of the household generally has the main obligation to earn a living to meet family needs. Mothers have a very important role as caregivers and educators for their children. As well as children who have a role according to their level of development. With the presence of smartphones in the family environment, these roles are carried out well or they are neglected because family members focus on their respective devices. In family 1, social functions or duties as Father and Mother can run simultaneously with the use of smartphones. This can happen because the father's work information is on the smartphone and the mother is a housewife who lives at home, so the smartphone becomes the second friend in her activities. Father's use of gadgets does not diminish his duties as a breadwinner or work because smartphones are a field of work but eliminate time at home. Meanwhile, the continuous use of smartphones by children can delay the obligations that should be done. Whereas in family 2, as already explained, smartphones are the only means of communication in family 2.With all its charms, sometimes it can make you forget the time so that the task that should be done is forgotten.

Technology greatly influences the pattern of human life today. Cultural values can change in line with changing times. With the presence of increasingly sophisticated technology, humans are indirectly required to learn about changes in it, as in the past, people's curiosity can be searched for information through books, but now with the presence of interesting media features in smartphones such as Google, it can become a center of knowledge human. Then with features that make it easier for humans in various ways can change the way of sending culture. With this smartphone, family 1 welcomes the changes positively, however, they still have to filter out something bad, while in family 2, in terms of culture, like usually children playing outside with their friends is still often done compared to just playing with gadgets at home. They will easily get bored. This also has an impact on the delivery of cultural values such as discussing education through watching films.

Basically, the smartphone itself is a human-created tool to help humans in which the use of smartphones is controlled by humans themselves, if they cannot control, then changes in humans can occur. Technology can also be able to influence humans as a whole if the media is not used properly. In family 1, where smartphones have become a priority media to dependence if the smartphone is not in his hand he will feel lost. Changes in children's behavior in line with changing times. Whereas in family 2 that when the smartphone was present in the family, behavior changes were true, children became more emotional when the smartphone was not given. This behavior change does not only happen to children but also parents. When a parent is using the device, the child will express his anxiety if he doesn't even play on the smartphone like his parents. Behavior change can be a positive thing if the family realizes and

makes the best use of smartphones but will be negative if the family cannot control it.

After the presence of smartphones in the family, the differences in communication through direct media or smartphone media were clear. communication after the presence of smartphones in family 2 has a greater effect than when it was still conventional media. This is because smartphones are more attractive than television, so of course the impact is greater.

Smartphone and Family Intimacy

In this section, researchers will discuss family intimacy by measuring the effectiveness of communication that occurs in the family, the trust that is built in the family, and the isolation that occurs before and after the presentation of new media. Before exploring the results of this study, the writer will rethink the notion of intimacy. Intimacy can be defined as an attachment, which is an emotional bond through interactions between children and people who have a special meaning in their lives or with their parents.

The intensity of the use of technology media can affect the communication process. Effective communication has a significant positive relationship with attachment. When effective communication is high, attachment is also high. If communication is low, the stickiness will below. Good communication can create strong emotionality between parents and children.

In the era of conventional media technology, family 1 felt that communication was more real when compared to today. This is because communication within the family is still more dominant in face-to-face or direct communication. When interacting directly, the communicator can see directly the communicant's response. Likewise with the

response of parents to children when interacting. Before the arrival of smartphones, direct responses could bring back reciprocity until the interaction was over, therefore the interaction felt more natural.

This is different from the experience in the family of 2. There is a different experience. According to informant 1 in family 2, the presence of conventional media can make communication not run smoothly. This is because the media has an audio-visual stimulus that can distract the other person. However, this is in contrast to the delivery of informant 2 to researchers. Communication can occur in conventional times and will be smoother when the family is watching television because parents will provide highlights about ongoing programs to children.

Communication before the arrival of smartphones is believed to affect the duration and frequency of communication between families. In this case, the duration of communication experienced by families before the existence of smartphones is usually longer and can indicate how close the family members are. In family 1, in the dominant old media era, direct communication was common because family members did not have anything to do with it, like now which makes brief meetings at home just pass you by. In family 2, there is always an effort to make communication activities between family members occur. Communication occurs mostly in the afternoon when the child has returned from school until the night before bed.

With the findings above, it can be said that before the arrival of smartphones, the communication aspect that occurred in the two informant families was still dominated by face-to-face communication, and closeness was felt to be better. This is because communication takes place reciprocally, there is minimal difference in perceptions because it is still

dominant in communicating directly, as well as being open to one another so that communication between parents and children is good. Ahira, (2013) in this case said, "Family communication is the readiness to discuss openly every topic in the family, both happy and sad, and ready to solve family problems with talks that are carried out in patience and honesty and openness."

Face-to-face communication in the family can be more effective because we can see the body's movements, facial expressions, and intonation of the opponent's speech. That way, it can grow the measurement of trust because a belief can affect the quality of attachment between family members. The belief referred to in this study is a feeling of security and the belief that other people or the interlocutor will help or meet individual needs.

In family 1, communication during the conventional media period will be fulfilled by looking at the situation and conditions of the communicant. If the situation and conditions are right then communication can run well until confidence in each other appears. However, if the situation and conditions are not right then communication is hampered or not fulfilled so that trust is not formed. While in family 2, during the conventional media era where communication was dominated by speaking directly, the trust would be built when the communicator saw the communicant's facial expressions directly. Therefore, with communication, our needs will be met. Communicating in person can reduce the appearance of miscommunication. Also, intensive face-to-face communication can foster a sense of trust.

Family attachment is also measured by the presence of a family member. An alienation is closely related to avoidance or rejection. When children feel that their parents are not present, either by their side or accompanying

them in activities including interacting activities, it can result in the quality of attachment or intimacy.

In family 1, during the conventional media period parents often accompanied children to watch television, this activity fostered intimacy between parents and children so that when the child felt that the parents were not present with him the child would make a rejection. In family 2, because they do not have a private television the children like to be accompanied by their mother and father in activities such as reading books and telling stories so that if the parents are not present with the child, the child will feel sad until expressed through his anger.

Table 1. Intimacy before the presence of new media

Aspect	Family 1	Family 2
Communication	Communication feels more natural although it doesn't happen often.	Direct communication becomes routine.
Trust	Trust is easy to build depending on the situation and conditions.	Confidence arises because of intensive face-to-face communication.
Alienation	A child feels safe in the company of his parents watching television because otherwise it will create rejection.	Parents accompany children in activities so that they can feel love for them.

By the time smartphones have arrived in family life, the three aspects of attachment that previously occurred have changed. Communication can be likened to the key to all human social needs. This is because it is from that communication that humans can interact as a basis for fulfilling human needs for this life. One of the communication element is the need for media or a place to convey the message to be given to the communicant. With the development of media technology, it can support communication activities. The transformation of conventional media into new media also changes public communication media. Smartphones are now a medium of communication that the entire community uses, including families.

Family communication 1 when the smartphone is in family life is considered reduced. This happens because of the activities of different family members so that gathering together rarely occurs as well as communication activities. When they are far away, they feel close thanks to a smartphone, when they meet each other every day, they seem like they are far from being blocked by a smartphone. Based on the observations of researchers, it is true that family members 1 have little time to get together. When the researchers visited the residence of family 1 several times, only the mother was at home, the children still worked as well as the father who worked outside the home so that activities to gather with the family to establish communication rarely occurred.

Communication that occurs when the presence of smartphones in family 2 is more destructive or can destroy communication between family members, such as when a mother calls a child, but the child is focused on playing with the smartphone. So, the call is ignored, and vice versa. When the kids want to interact with the mother, but the mother focuses

on the device so that the smartphone takes her world away.

The duration and frequency of communication using new media technology with family members affect the relationship between the effectiveness of communication in the family. In family 1, because they rarely get together with family members, smartphones help when distances separate family members to keep in touch even though they are no longer together. However, it is not uncommon when you are at home with your family that you can communicate via a smartphone so that the dominant communication is through a smartphone. In family 2, the duration as well as the frequency of communication depends on the distance. When the distance separates, communication via smartphone will be more frequent.

Intimacy is also greatly influenced by the trust. In family 1, a belief sometimes grows or nothing. This is because activities to help parents become obstructed, and information from smartphones that can be manipulated makes trust difficult to build. In family 2, a belief that was built when the new media was present was actually below the level of trust in the conventional era. This is because

smartphone communication can be done without seeing the communicant's form so that the communicator does not know the communicant's condition.

In the new media era, the presence of smartphones that could replace direct presence with the presence of cyberspace, the attachment between family members increased or vice versa. The presence or isolation is not only when the child is separated from the parent, but also regardless of the parents' attention.

In family 1, the aspect of alienation or parent's absence increases due to the busyness of parents and children, both work and busy in cyberspace. Even though the child does not make rejection, there are times when the child feels the parent's absence when needed, it makes the attachment between the child and the parent lower. In family 2, children will feel sad and angry when they find out that their parents are not there. Children can also feel disappointed if the link is ignored by parents. Sometimes these expressions of disappointment are in the form of uncontrolled speech and discouragement. Expressions in the form of speech that most often occur in children in family 2 because the child easily expresses what he feels does not fit with him.

Table 2. Intimacy after the presence of new media

Aspect	Family 1	Family 2
Communications	Communications are reduced due to the busyness that comes from their respective smartphones.	Communication is more destructive if smartphones are not used wisely.
Belief	Believe not.	Confidence level is lower than when communicating directly.
Alienation	Busy parents make children not feel their presence.	Parents ignore children when playing smartphones until children express themselves about the loss of attention.

This is relevant to Mesch's (2006: 124) theory. He said that families who spend time together in daily activities have a higher quality of communication. However, the presence of devices that increase isolation between family members results in family intimacy based on the three aspects that have been explained to be reduced or tenuous. Thus resulting in reduced communication interactions as well.

Intimacy greatly affects the closeness between them, from their communication, the trust that is grown, and the effect of their presence when the presence of a smartphone in the family environment. Family 1 considers family intimacy to be more tenuous when smartphones appear in the family so that it can be appreciated if there is communication in the family. Just like family 1, the intimacy that occurs in family 2 is felt more tenuous with the presence of smartphones. Family 2 immediately realized when this was happening to the maximum extent possible to maintain family intimacy by minimizing the use of smartphones when together. When using a smartphone is not wise, it widens the communication distance between children and parents. In this way, intimacy is tenuous and family communication is reduced.

Dimaggio et al. (2001) (Mc Grath, Siobhan, 2012) found that the internet is a way of increasing interaction with family members and closeness with friends. This is not consistent with the findings of the researchers. In fact, the existence of the internet and other modern facilities that support the use of the internet can increase the frequency and duration of media technology usage which results in a decrease in the presentation of communication between family members. As the theory expressed by Mesch (2006: 122), the frequency of daily use of the internet by adolescents plays an important role in the quality of their relationships with parents and friends. Based on

this theory, the level of use of internet-mediated technology affects the level of intimacy of family members. Based on the research results, the use of media technology in family life has an impact on reducing intimacy between family members, thereby reducing communication intimacy.

Conclusion

This study gets an overview of the type of family communication by knowing how to make decisions in the family. In family 1, it is included in the protective communication type. This is due to the busyness of family members and the lack of openness so that the low discussion orientation is more dominant in conformity orientation. In family 2 it is included in the consensual type of communication. This is because parents always strive for discussion and fathers still have the highest control in making family decisions.

Family intimacy in the era of conventional media and after the presentation of new media in household life has changed. In the communication aspect, which was originally classified as effective and open communication. However, currently the communication between the two families is starting to be eroded due to the unwise use of smartphones. In the aspect of trust, in the past it was easy to build trust through intensive communication. However, currently the confidence level is lower. The alienation aspect occurs due to the loss of attention or absence of parents towards the child. One of the factors this happens because parents and children focus on their devices so they forget about their surroundings.

The frequency and duration of family 1 smartphone users are higher than family 2. However, these both have an impact on family communication space and time, social functions, delivery of cultural values, and overall behavior.

Social factors that influence the use of technology include gender, ethnicity, politics, culture, economic factors, and power relations (Priyatna, 2013). Based on these findings, the existence of smartphones in married life affects family intimacy. High and low smartphone use can widen the communication distance between parents and children. So that the intimacy of family communication is reduced or increasingly tenuous.

The suggestions given in this study for students in further research may be able to increase the number of informants studied, preferably using a long time to dig deeper information to get the expected results, and be able to further expand the research results, and anticipate the number of drawbacks of this study. For the community, it is hoped that parents will become good listeners, invite children to communicate more, be open to one another, to foster a good intimate relationship between parents and children, and parents are expected to be able to control the use of children's media technology well.

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