

NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: A PANACEA OR A WALK ON THE PATH OF A TORNADO?

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Abstract

The world has in recent years started experiencing fundamental disruptive forces to our Social relationships as people. One such disruption emanates from the acceleration of technological change and its concomitant overuse of computer networks and the vitality that comes with living in an increasingly connected world. Underpinned by the theory of New Media Ecology, the objective of this study was to establish whether or not new media technologies have any effect on human social relationships, and if so, to determine ways and means through which such effects could be eased. A semi-structured interview method was used to gather data for this study and informants were chosen through a purposive sampling procedure to ascertain inclusion of only the needed types of relationships. Despite the many accolades about new media technologies, this study has unearthed an increasing disruption of social relationships by the penchant use of computer networks, especially social media.

Key words: New Media Technologies, Media Ecology, Relationships, Social Media

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1. Background

There is one uncharacteristic thing that I observed happening in my family home one fateful day. Just after breakfast, my wife, daughter and I sat quietly in the living-room and my son went to his bedroom. No sooner had he left us than I started hearing the sound of his television set reverberating in his bedroom. I could tell that he was playing his computer video games. Quite inadvertently, I took my smart phone and logged in to my Facebook page. A while after “drowning” myself into Facebook, I glanced at my wife and daughter and I realized that their eyes were “glued” on their phones as well. At that particular moment, the three of us were like strangers living under the same roof. There was no word from or to each other. Everybody was just too busy with their phones.

Out of curiosity, I asked my wife what she was doing on her phone and there came a hasty response: “*I am on WhatsApp Messenger, why?*” Without responding to her discourteous, but seemingly innocent answer, I redirected the same question to my daughter whose answer was “*I am chatting with my friends on Instagram*”. I left the living-room and went into my son’s bedroom where I confirmed that the noise which I had heard just after he entered his bedroom was actually caused by him playing a PS4 game.

This experience got me thinking deeply about the possible impact of media technologies, especially online social media, on my family and indeed other people’s social relationships. I kept thinking that it was absurd that instead of chatting as a family on a weekend, especially that we barely had the chance to sit together during weekdays due to our busy work and school schedules, we were busy with online social media and computer video games. The following week, I shared my experience with my colleague with whom I co-authored this paper and she immediately reminisced and lamented on how the penchant use of new media technologies, and its associated “protuberant” online social media, seemed to be disrupting familial cohesion, relationships and even learning. It is this shared experience that led to the conception of this research study. Thus, this paper is an outcome of a strongly held hypothesis that new media technologies or computer networks, are affecting our relationships as people.

The observed penchant use of online social media platforms that use computer networks, seem to resonate with Hoskins and O' Loughlin (2010)'s assertion that human society is living in an era of new media ecology (media in relation to the environment) which has effects on human social interactions and sharing of information. The story of a family in the brink of being communicatively and interactively dysfunctional owing to the indiscriminate use of, and inevitable impact of new media technologies, attests to Hoskins and O'Loughlin's assertion above. The same story also seem to validate the hypothesis alluded to above that computer networks have occasioned negative changes to our social relationships. These changes are manifested in our everyday lifestyles and means and media of communication. In the light of this, this study was underpinned by the theory of "new media ecology". Its sole objective was to find out whether or not people in diverse relationships ever experienced the disruptive forces of new media technologies and to report the findings through multiple narrative layers. Thus, this paper revolved around the following two questions:

1. What impact do new media technologies have in human relationships?
2. How can we as individuals and as a collective mitigate against the disruptive forces of new media technologies in our relationships?

The last question would pertain only if the answer(s) to the first one were that media technologies indeed impacted on people's relationships. The significance of this investigation lied in the fact that it would contribute to knowledge about the impact of new media technologies not only on families and households, but on human relationships in general. As the chapter on the findings (Layers of Narratives) show, this study provides an insight into how human society works following the introduction and penchant use of new media technologies. As can be gleaned from the following two sections, this study has a direct bearing on the pronouncements that have been made by many new media technology' theorists regarding the transformations the world has experienced as a result of the indiscriminate and penchant use of new media technologies. It is hoped that the understanding about the impact of new media technologies in relationships that has been generated by this study would enable new media technologies' users to control their profound proclivity to use computer networks, and the conditions under which they use such technologies.

Many studies that speak to the adverse impact of computer networks concentrate on the misuse of social online media such as offensive memes posted. To the best of our knowledge, there is no study that addresses the issue of new media technologies as contributing to communication individualism and diminishing personal interactions between people in relationships based on the context of Botswana. This makes this study timely and novel.

2. **New Media Ecology.**

Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2010) acknowledge that media whose popularity began in the twentieth century have heralded significant societal transformations. They state that since the development and inception of new media technologies, human society is now living in a knowledge-based environment called "new media ecology". According to Hoskins and O'Loughlin's (2010), we are now living in new media ecology (media in relation to the environment) which has effects on the recipients of the information. Our experiences as the authors of this paper attest to the fact that living in media environment where almost all forms of communication are mediated has effects not only on recipients of information, but also on sources (initiators) of information.

As Livingstone (2008) declares, in the new forms of communication "everything is mediated". Thus, mediation of everything has, and is still a primary impetus through which human society has been transformed. That new media technologies have transformed the society makes McLuhan in Griffin's (2009) statement that we can only understand the social and cultural changes in our society if we understand how the media work plausible. It also validates the hypothesis of this study that the pervasion and penchant use of computer networks are having an adverse impact on our relationships as people. Lister et al (2003) provides a summary of how new media technologies have transformed the society by enumerating the following changes: shift from modernity to post modernity; intensification of globalization; replacement of industrial age by a post-industrial information age in the west; and a diminishing power and control by the West due to dispersed networks of new communication media. As authors of this study, we held that they have also brought communication individualism and anti-social tendencies which have a profound adversarial impact in human relationships.

By probing the interplay between human activities and media technologies to explain and describe societal transformations, Hoskins and O'Loughlin are inadvertently embracing the problem that the authors of this paper outline in the background section of this study. Their statement also accords with McLuhan in Griffin (2009) who contends that any understanding of societal changes is impossible without the knowledge of how media work as environments. McLuhan in Griffin (2009) also claims that media should be understood ecologically, and that changes in technologies alter the socially constructed world view, and that they shape our perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and behaviors.

By arguing that media should be understood ecologically, McLuhan and Hoskins and O'Loughlin are subtly suggesting that media are everywhere in our environments, and have become integral part of everyday human activities. Indeed our home environments as depicted in the background section of this paper have changed. Online social media which use computer networks have become an integral part of everyday human activities and communication in our homes. This suggestion is in synch with Livingstone's (2009) claim that new and more interactive networked forms of communication influence many aspects of modern life. To fully understand the New Media Technologies theory, it is worthwhile to discuss it with these two questions in mind: What are new media technologies? In what way(s) have new media technologies transformed the human society?

Many new media theorists contend that new media have become the integral part of human existence. In talking about media as the integral part of human activities in the modern world, Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2010) and Livingstone (2009) specify that they refer to the new media, not just media in general. In fact, Livingstone (2009) when discussing this issue makes it very clear that he is not referring to the traditional mass and interpersonal forms of communication. Rather, he is bringing in new and more interactive networked forms of communication. Stewart and Kowaltzke (1990) concur with Livingstone when they argue that new media are computer-based and they allow enhanced complex patterns of interaction between producers and consumers, and between consumers themselves. On account of their ability to enable multifaceted interaction between many people at both production and consumption levels, Stewart and Kowaltzke also refer to new media as "many-to-many media."

Flew (2008) states that new media involve the use of: Computing and Information Technology Communication networks and digitalized media and information content that arise out of convergence. Flew (2008) contends that digital media are new media whose content combines varied texts, sound and images which are stored in a computer hard drive and are distributed through different networks. This explains why Flew (2008) also refers to new media as digital media. As can be noted, all the cited theorists entirely agree that new media are computer based, and that they allow for intervention and manipulation by users. It is for this reason that in this paper the concepts of “new media” and “computer based communication technologies” are loosely used interchangeably.

There are debates surrounding distinguishing between new and old media technologies. It should be noted that although Livingstone (2009), Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2010), Stewart and Kowaltzke (2008) and Flew (2008) advance the same arguments with regard to what new media are, there is still some difficulty and confusion in distinguishing between “old” and “new” media. O’Shanghnessy and Stadler (2006) opine that media continually change as new forms and technologies are developed, and this inevitably poses difficulty in defining media. In fact, Schirato et al (2010) posits that at some point all media technologies were “new” and were surrounded with hype and thrill of innovation and better promises when they first evolved and appeared in the public stage. If defining media is as difficult as O’Shanghnessy and Stadler claim, then defining new media, and distinguishing them from old media should even be more difficult. Stewart and Kowaltzke (2008) contend that the difficulty in distinguishing between “old” and “new” media emanates from the fact that new media are loosely defined, and that they change constantly. In short, what may be a new medium today may cease to be new the following day. Flew (2008), Kaid and Holtz-Bacha (2008) and Axford and Huggins (2001) agree with Stewart and Kowaltzke on this point. Flew (2008) argues that the mistake that people make in determining why some media are said to be old while others are said to be new, is listing the latest developments in media technologies, and referring to them as new media.

Kaid and Holtz-Bacha (2008) argue that new media technologies could be “new forms of media technologies” or “new applications of existing media technologies”. Axford and Huggins (2001) argue that “given the pace of technological change, any attempt to provide a timely list of new

media technologies is doomed to a short life”. At another extreme level, which is also wrong according to Flew (2008), newness in media may be determined by variations on long established entities such as a new model vehicle, or a new model mobile phone that has many and advanced features that the current ones do not have. Flew (2008) further argues that any approach to new media should be concerned with questions about the contexts of their use, and their social and cultural impacts. Simply cataloguing what one considers new media, fails the test of “why there is a need to look at new media in the first place” (Flew 2008).

Notwithstanding the debates surrounding the definition and explanation of new media, there is a consensus among new media theorists that new media communication technologies have pervaded and transformed the human society. This is where this study comes in. We are of the opinion that what is paramount is to understand the concepts of “mediation” and “mediatization”, which are wholly responsible for these transformations. The term “mediation” known in English to mean to pacify and resolve conflicts has been repurposed by Livingstone (2009) to mean the use of the media. In the context of this study, mediation means the dissemination and sharing of communication messages through new media technologies. Krotz in Livingstone (2008) define “mediatization” as changes that have occurred or are presently occurring owing to the use of media communication technologies and the outcome of those changes.

According to Livingstone (2009), new information communication technologies now mediate everything, every dimension of the society. This is so because “everything is mediated”. Livingstone (2009) further argues that “societies world over are now being shaped, for better or for worse, by changes in the global media and information environments”. It is our position in this paper that new media have communicatively reconfigured human social relationships. This is the main idea of this paper, and Livingstone’s (2009) idea of mediated world shows the relevance of the concept of “the new media ecology” as a theoretical basis of this study. We concur with the theoretical pronouncements that are made in this section that personal communication has become increasingly reliant on new information and communication technologies. This change mirrors the change that Livingstone (2009) alludes to when he asserts that mediation of everything has resulted in all influential institutions being transformed, reconstructed and refashioned by contemporary processes of mediation.

To show the extent to which new media has pervaded our everyday lives, Flew (2009) argues that to people who were born in the 1980s, the world without the internet, mobile phones, email, digital camera, computer games and instant text messages is simply inconceivable. As the authors of this paper, we held that the reason why people who were born in the 1980s would not imagine the world without new media technologies is because they were born in a heavily mediated world. We therefore acknowledge through this study that new media are everywhere in our environments, and that they have and continue to bring social and cultural changes to human communication. We also acknowledge that new media, with their inherent sense of “new times” “newness” “innovation” and “new eras” have even pervaded personal communication in families and intimate relationships, and ordinary friendships; hence this study.

3. From Theory to Empiricism

There is a vast body of literature that point to the impact of new media technologies in the society. The ones closest to this study are McGrath (2012), Twenge (2017) and Seru and Magogwe (2016). McGrath (2012) explored the role of new media technologies in everyday life in the society and he makes a two-pronged and ambivalent observation: While he praises new media technologies for having revolutionized household communication in terms of facilitating and perpetuating interaction amongst families and bringing generations and family members together, he also condemns it for encouraging privatization within family life. Encouragement of privatization in this context represents a situation whereby family members increasingly use technology independently and privately rather than as a collective (McGrath 2012). It is the latter observation that profoundly informed this study.

According to McGrath (2012), families who spend time together in shared meals, games and chatting enjoy a higher quality of interaction and communication. The lack of communication between families would therefore have far reaching consequences in terms of affecting family leisure and functioning. However, the introduction of new media technologies have led to a process that is referred to as ‘domestication’ which means the use of domestic technologies which aid in the everyday functioning of household (McGrath 2012). These technologies also alter household cultures and interactions. On account of this domestication, new media technologies have now become a part and parcel of daily domestic routines in the contemporary

family life. Seru and Magogwe (2016) concur entirely with McGrath (2012) on the question of encroachment of new media technologies into people's domestic daily routines. They observe that due to globalization, whose resultant influence has penetrated every Facet of human life, online communication culture has significantly intensified.

The impact of the intensified online communication culture on the quality of human relationships, interactions and communication is the emergence of, and promotion of unsociable world of technology which promotes privatization within household life (McGrath 2012). Twenge (2017) explicitly captures the impact of new media technologies on human life when they say that:

the twin rise of the smartphone and social media has caused an earthquake of a magnitude we have not seen in a long time, if ever. There is compelling evidence that the devices we have placed in young people's hands are having a profound effects on their lives.

Even though Twenge (2017) is specifically talking about the impact of technological devices on young people, McGrath (2012) and Seru and Magogwe's (2016) accounts show that the impact of new media technologies is widespread and it cuts across all technologically inclined generations. McGrath's (2012) sentiment on the impact of technologies on the quality of very day relationships, interactions and communication resonates with Twenge's (2017) contention that unlike in the olden days when children would spend time in the evening "tying up the family landline with gossip", nowadays children spend evenings on snap chats sending pictures and videos to their friends. They spend time hanging out alone in their bedrooms with their smartphones. Seru and Magogwe (2016) observe that the online construction and presentation of the self is endemic in the contemporary world. Although Seru and Magogwe (2016) do not focus on the impact of new media technologies on social relationships, their contention that the online construction of the self has become a general cultural practice resonates with McGrath's (2012) argument that new media technologies have become a part of everyday interactions and communication. Also, although not explicitly stated, Twenge (2017), in the same vain as McGrath (2012) decries that new media technologies have facilitated a transition to individualism.

If not used privately by family members, new media technologies can enhance interactions amongst families by bringing generations and family members together (McGrath, 2012). These would inevitably result in narrowing generational and digital divides in families (McGrath 2012). It must be noted, however, that the role of new media technologies in bridging the generational and digital divides can only be achieved in families where all members are technologically literate. This then begs the question: what would be the impact of new media technologies in families and relationships where there is a sharp digital divide? The digital divide is very prominent in many families especially in the majority world (third world countries) where technological development and competence are tilted towards younger generations and the educated elite. This indeed confirms the pronouncement in the past immediate section that people who were born in the 1980s cannot imagine the world without the internet, mobile phones, email, digital camera, computer games and instant text messages. This same sentiment is shared by Twenge (2017) when they assert that millennials have assumed different beliefs and behaviors and are individualistic consequent to the encroachment of new media technologies into their everyday lives.

McGrath (2012) and Seru and Magogwe (2017) assert that new media technologies have led to drastic changes to human societies in a number of ways and they have become the basis for change in social behaviors. McGrath (2012) argues that one of the positives of new media technologies is the fact that they have reduced the effort needed for tasks and work related activities and this allows households to engage in many non-task activities. While the authors of this paper are agreeable to the fact that new media technologies have reduced the effort required to perform task-and work related activities, they were not too certain that the increased leisure time would allow for increased interpersonal engagements and participation. The authors hypothesized that new media technologies have led to increased privatization in relationships not just in the household as McGrath (2012) points out. This hypothesis was an outcome of the realization that indeed we are now living at a time where social interactions are “mediated” by portable technological devices. This hypothesis was influenced by the lead researcher’s experiences with his family as shown in the introductory section, and the pronouncement by Bovill and Livingstone (2001) that new media technologies stimulate bedroom cultures.

Bedroom culture here refers to a situation whereby people would spend more of their leisure time at home privately using technological gadgets than in “communal or family spaces”.

Method

A semi-structured interview method was used to confirm or refute the validity of the hypothesis stated in the background section of this paper. As succinctly stated in that section, the authors of this paper hypothesized that the pervasion of, and penchant use of computer networks to disseminate and share information have a profound negative impact on human social relationships. As a result, the focus of the interviews was on people’s perceptions on the impact of the penchant use of online social media platforms and computer games (aptly referred to as new media technologies or computer networks) on social relationships.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the relevant stakeholder groups such as married couples, unmarried couples, teachers, and clergy men or women. The main questions that participants were asked included: Do you use social media? What is the impact of social media on your relationships? Do you intend to withdraw from using social media in the future? What can be done to offset the impact of social media on relationships? The recruitment processes for interview participants began with meetings with potential participants where explanations in plain language about the purpose of the study were given. Participants’ responses are reported in multiple layered narratives in the following section.

The first layer captures an interview with a married woman who was married to a pastor and had two children. The second layer captures an interview with an unmarried young man who was in an intimate relationship with a young lady who lived elsewhere. The third layer represents responses of a temporary employed youth who is also in a relationship. The fourth and last layer reveals responses by a professional teacher who although not married, she was cohabiting with another professional teacher.

4. Layers of Narrative

1st Layer

Indeed I use social media. I use WhatsApp because it is somehow free. It allows users to contact people anytime of the day. Whether they are true or not, I like the messages, pictures and stories I receive from my contacts. I always find myself laughing when reading most of them. Of course I also share stories and messages through short message services (SmS's). But with the WhatsApp platform, I get to know where other people are and where I can get services. Like somebody was saying, "hei, I want an electrician for my fence", she just put it on our WhatsApp group and we gave her the information. This shows how important WhatsApp is. But electronic gadgets also fail us. By far the most negative thing about new media technologies is the "killing" of quality time at family level. We do not have time for our families anymore. Nowadays, during times when families are supposed to sit together and share daily experiences, each one of the family members would be busy with their phones and other electronic gadgets. Whenever I come home after a busy day at work, this one (pointing to grandson) takes my phone and goes on Facebook. If my husband is not on WhatsApp, he goes to that corner for YouTube (points where the computer is) to check on church activities. This shows that electronic gadgets have literally killed family time. Children are worse. They wake up at night every day and start logging in to their electronics. It distresses me because sometimes I feel they are neglecting. There is a group of parents that I meet with time and again and they are always complaining about social media and that children neglect their school work because of social media.

Despite all the disadvantages, I am not in a position to stop using social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp. If I stop using social media, I will lose a lot of friends because a lot of people are on social media. I will also miss out on the gossips and information sharing that is done on social media.

It appears like social media are here to stay. In fact it appears more are likely to come. But there is a need for us to do something about their penchant use. We need to talk about how to use them and when to use them so that we can create time for each other. We need to devise strategies for using them properly and not abuse them.

2nd Layer

I use Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and LinkedIn. Every day I go into my Facebook page to read people's posts, comment on them if necessary and post whatever is in mind at that moment. I also use WhatsApp, but only when there is a message alert or when I want to text someone. I use YouTube to download music and watch videos. I use LinkedIn very infrequently to connect with other professionals and prospective employers around the world.

I use social media a lot now because my girlfriend has recently transferred to another town, so we no longer live together. However, when she is around, I try to spend quality time with her. I don't use social media when I am with her except in cases when I receive WhatsApp messages, and I have to respond to the messages. But even then, I still give her attention. So, social media do not have any negative impact in my relationships. If anything, social media help to strengthen my relationships with other people.

There is no possibility of me withdrawing from the use of social media. Why would I leave social media when they do not negatively impact on my relationships? You don't fix that which is not broken. No, I don't see myself withdrawing from using them. There are many advantages of using social media. For instance, Facebook helps me to meet a lot of people: old classmates, friends from childhood, former work colleagues, friends and family members who live in different parts of the world. You know, we are living in a social mediatized world. We use social media to communicate with other people, and for entertainment purposes. So, it is the in thing to communicate using social media.

3rd Layer

I use social media especially Facebook. I spend most of my time on Facebook communicating with friends and family. As soon as I start work I login to my Facebook page and when I leave the office I logout. When I get home I login to Facebook. I am always on Facebook the whole day. It is like an addiction. Another social media that I use mostly are WhatsApp and YouTube. I use WhatsApp very often to communicate with relatives and friends. I use YouTube mostly to refresh. Like when I am tired I watch videos or I play music. Also, I use it for research by listening to some lessons from it. LinkedIn is one particularly social medium that I use rarely. In

the rare occasion that I use it, I use it for job searches since I am still looking for a permanent job. It helps me to connect with a lot of people who help me look for a job because some organizations and institutions advertise on LinkedIn.

Social media have a two-pronged impact. The use of social media is beneficial when it comes to communicating with friends and family. They help to strengthen relationship with friends and family. Despite this important benefit, my boyfriend is always complaining that I ignore her. But, the fact of the matter is that I would be trying to talk to those that are far and then he would perceive that as neglect.

I see myself using social media more in the future than I am doing now. This is because social media are used for a lot of things. As technology advances, a lot of things are being developed. It is for this reason that I foresee myself getting even more involved in the use of technology, especially social media. This perception is informed by how we live in the contemporary moment, where the use of technology and its related tenets, has become an integral part of human existence. For example, we now interact with our friends and families through technological gadgets. We now do shopping and banking from the comfort of our homes or offices.

4th Layer

I use Facebook a lot-I sleep it, I dream it. Call that addiction- that is what it is! Facebook helps me to connect with my friends both locally and abroad and share with them my stories and life events in general. It also affords them opportunities to share their life stories and events with me. I also use Skype but to a lesser extent. I use it only to communicate with friends who are outside the country. I got interested in using it when I was engaged in a project where I was investigating how it can be used in classroom instructions. I don't use it very often

That notwithstanding, I think Facebook has a negative impact on relationships. There are times when me and Joe (Joe is the name of the interlocutor's live-in boyfriend) look like we are strangers living under the same roof-me on Facebook and him sulking because I am not giving him attention. Even when I am with my friends, we sometimes momentarily forget ourselves and

get drowned into Facebook and not talk to each other even though we would be together. So, I think it does kill family and couples' quality time in a big way. There is also a case of my partner becoming suspicious about what I post or read on Facebook. You know, when you share your life with somebody, naturally they may want to know what you are doing when you are ignoring them. There are times when my boyfriend would ask: "What are you posting on Facebook?" When he asks, I give him my phone to see that there is nothing sinister that I am doing on Facebook

I will never stop using Facebook. Facebook is funny. How can I stop using it when it is the in thing? To start with, there is nothing bad that I do on Facebook. Even the conversations that I have on Facebook with other people are straight forward, so there is nothing that I hide.

5. Brief Appraisal of Results and Discussion

Data shows that participants' responses have validated and confirmed the initial experiences of the authors of this paper and the hypothesis formed thereof. It should be recalled that this study revolved around only two broad questions, namely: what impact do new media technologies have in human relationships, and how can we as individuals and as a collective mitigate against the disruptive forces of new media technologies in our relationships?

The data that was generated by the first question depicts that the use of online social media, which as stated elsewhere in this paper use computer networks, has brought significant changes in the relationships of many couples, friends and general acquaintances. This data thus confirms Seru and Magogwe's (2016) assertion that transitions in human communication have always been a feature of human existence, but none has been as intense and as fast as the use of online social media for interaction and sharing of information. Based on this data, it could perhaps be added that none has been as debilitating to human relationships as the use of online social media. As can be gleaned from the four narratives above, the entire contemporary moment is experiencing a widespread use of computer networks, especially online social media. The surprising thing is that despite the conspicuous weakening effects of new media technologies on social relationships, all participants vowed never to terminate or withdraw from the use of computer networks.

On the question of what can be done to mitigate against disruptive forces of new media technologies in human relationships, data shows that none of the participants was able to put forth succinct and potentially workable ways through which the impact of new media technologies on social relationships can be curtailed. A closer look at participants' responses actually reveals that this question was incredibly avoided. It is only in the first narrative layer that an attempt to answering this question is seen. In answering this question, the participant indicated that people involved in relationships need to talk about how to use and when to use online social media so that time for communicative interactions can be created. It is doubtful that this can work, bearing in mind the apparent "addictive" nature of computer networks. As one participant acknowledged, it is a challenge to divide time between the use of online social media and friends or family. The participant added that due to Facebook's "addictive" nature, there is always an urge to login to it when users are with family and friends to check what other users are saying or check responses of people that have been contacted. Maybe that can work for some and not for others. In any case, there is no universal or a "one size fits all" solution to problems.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study have confirmed that new media technologies have transformed the world as we know it. They have enabled connections with friends and families and have brought humor to our lives. But like anything else, there is a dark side to them, and that, they have and continue erode our social fabric by encouraging communication individualism, privatization and diminished interaction between people in relationships.

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