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SCREEN TIME VS FAMILY TIME: A CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION IN MULTAN CANTONMENT HOUSEHOLD

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the influence of smartphones on the parent-child relationship within the home and family environment. To fully evaluate how smart phones have changed parent-child relationships within the home and family environment, a literature review using an integrative, thorough analysis was performed on many different types of literature sources. The research's conclusion is that usage of smart phones strongly impacts parent-child relationships in the home and family environment. Uncontrolled usage of smartphones is reducing parent-child quality time, but, if used appropriately, smart phones can serve as an excellent educational resource. Smart phones, and other forms of advanced technology made available by cellular companies, have greatly changed society through these devices over the last twenty years. Most of the task society must perform can now be completed on smartphones. Fast and effective communication on many different websites and through social media with smartphones provides society with immediate, real-time, global communication capabilities. The usage of smart phones has made it feasible for users to access information at an increased level of convenience, without having to rely on separate tools or software. The effective management of family smart phones has become very important in achieving this balance, thereby maintaining a high level of responsibility as parents need to take an active role in the educating of their children on how to responsibly use and ethically behave with respect to their use of smart phones. Families can achieve a balance that encourages the positive development of children and their well-being by following reasonable and responsible methods for using smart phones and making sustainable decisions about their use.

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INTRODUCTION

A family is made up of at least two individuals who live together and are connected to each other through blood as well as through marriages that have taken place. Family interaction involves not just understanding how families adapt to the demanding task of raising children but also how family members influence one another through their interactions with one another.

This research focused on the screen timing and family interaction. Screen timing is the length of time a person spends in front of a screen (television, video game console, computer) and is generally undertaken while sitting with little to no movement. Family time consists of a designated period that families spend together, typically intended to create emotional attachments, facilitate communication, and build family unity. It is a practice that occurs in space and culture; families generally try to have "togetherness" within the home using a spatial structure determined by adults so as to create strong family bonds, be busy residing with one another, and share common values. Family time is an important means to building relationships and creating a sense of connection and belonging within the family unit. Family time goes beyond just physically being together, it involves planned activities that build emotional attachment, such as (but not limited to) eating meals, playing

games, or having conversations that create emotional attachments. The sharing of family time supports the building of trust, communication skills, and value-based behavior that helps mold individual character. Additionally, spending family time together provides stability, comfort and helps family members to feel supported during difficult times, and celebrated during joyous times. Family time is considered to be an essential part of passing on cultural traditions from one generation to another, while also ensuring that family bonds are maintained regardless of the challenges presented by busy schedules and outside distractions.

The use of smart phones, if excessive, can negatively impact parent/child interactions, which therefore may lead to a potential loss of productivity and socialization among our children when they grow up. The changes that occur in parent/child interactions through the use of smart phones are representative of changes happening across our society as a whole (Naz, 2025; Qandeel, Iklas, & Zulfiqar, 2025).

Charles Horton Cooley introduced the looking-glass self (1902) to describe how a person's sense of self grows out of interactions with others, and he proposed a threefold process for this development: 1) we see how others react to us, 2) we interpret that reaction (typically as positive or negative) and 3) we develop a sense of self based on those interpretations. "Looking-glass" is an archaic term for a mirror, so Cooley theorized that we "see" ourselves when we interact with others.

Family communication has been drastically changed by the presence of technology in our lives. Kim, LaRose & Peng (2009) suggested that people that have unhealthy communication skills end up using an internet-regulated application that has a negative effect on its user. Additionally, it is found that massive usage of cell phone calls interrupts physical communication resulted in a significant reduction of face-to-face communication (Turkle, 2008). Galvin, Braithwaite and Bylund (2015) suggested that the relationship within the family is maintained through communication by sharing feelings and experiences. The new technology is expected to affect the relationship between parents and children (Dalsgaard, Skov, Stougaard & Thomassen, 2006). Although, smartphones have extended our social interaction but have also negatively affected its users (Ling & McEwen, 2010). Busy parents provide their children with smartphones. The overuse of smartphones leads to addiction in young children (Park & Park, 2014). Similarly, Haug et al., (2015) explored that smartphone addiction is more prevalent in young adolescents than young adults. Although, teens felt the mobile technology as a medium to stay in touch with their parents and other members of their social circle (Ling & Mcewen 2010). Furthermore, McDaniel & Coyne (2016) added that massive usage of cell phones among romantic couple leads to less communication that ultimately causes lower life satisfaction. Although, mobile telephones have contributed towards micro-coordination i.e., changing last minutes plans via message or a phone call, etc., and has resulted in increase efficiency in the daily lives of people (Castells, Fernandez-Ardevol, Qiu & Sey, 2009). However, it may have caused incapacitating the conventional roles of parental authority and also towards premature social and psychological liberation of young adults (Castells et al. 2009, p.90). Further, mobile phones have negatively affected the students. As now they are more dependent on their phones and are much inclined towards procrastination (Liu, Gao-Min, Yue & Cheng, 2018.) which has resulted in changes in their communication behaviors.

In addition, studies have revealed that overuse of mobile phone communication leads to mental health problems i.e., depression, anxiety, poor sleep quality, loneliness etc. Smartphone addiction is closely associated with internet addiction. The social function of the internet results in problematic internet use than the information function of the internet (Li & Chung, 2006). They added that problematic internet use leads to internet addiction. Likewise, parental education and parental involvement also affect internet addictive behavior (Tsitsika, Janikian, Schoenmakers, Tzavela, Olafsson, Wójcik & Richardson, 2014). Parents' higher education and higher involvement in adolescent lives lead to lesser internet addictive behavior than those parents who have low education and less involvement in adolescent lives. Moreover, parents are able to keep check on their children and monitor their whereabouts through cell phones (Weisskirch, 2009). These technologies are altering our relationships with one another. Also, socioeconomic status affects mobile usage in families (Clark, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to examine how smartphones affect family interaction in terms of screen time as compared to family time. Each study is unique in its purpose. An exploratory study tends to be carried out in a field where little data has been obtained; the present study is just such a study. This study is aimed at acquiring insights and developing a theoretical framework within the context of Pakistan, particularly Multan Cantonment, thus enabling

researchers to conduct a more profound study later on. The sampling technique was convenience sampling because the term explains itself: the samples taken are those which are easily available. This means samples of people who are easily accessible such as friends or family or random people on the street or even customers at a nearby supermarket. Convenience sampling can also be known as opportunistic sampling. The researcher's biases can also affect the sample selection even if he or she is not aware of it. I chose my sample from smartphone-using families in the Multan Cantonment area where I live. I prefer studying with the help of convenience sampling regarding the various aspects of my research issues in greater detail.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: *Frequency and percentage of respondents by their use of smartphone per day.*

Categories	Frequency	Percent
1 - 3 hours	46	23.0
4 - 6 hours	48	24.0
Less than 1 hour	36	18.0
More than 6 hours	70	35.0
Total	200	100.0

As shown in Table No.1, responses provided by respondents about their employment status, came up with exact reflection of researcher's locale i.e. Multan Cantt. In Multan Cantt the frequency of respondents using smartphone from 1-3 hours is 46, 4-6 hours is 48, Less than 1 hour is 36 and more than 6 hours is 70. As shown in Figure, 23.0% of respondents use smartphone 1-3 hours, 24.0% use smartphone 4-6 hours, 18.0% use smartphone Less than 1 hour and 35.0% use smartphone More than 6 hours.

Table 2: *Frequency and percentage of respondents by their use of smartphone affect face to face communication.*

Categories	Frequency	Percent
No	43	21.5
Yes	157	78.5
Total	200	100.0

As shown in Table, responses provided by respondents about their face-to-face communication, came up with exact reflection of researcher's locale i.e. Multan Cantt. In Multan Cantt the frequency of respondents who respond no is 43 and who said yes is 157. As shown in Figure, 21.5% of respondents said no whilst 78.5% said yes.

Table 3: *Frequency and percentage of respondents by their use of smartphone how much face-to-face communication effect.*

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Highly effected	91	45.5
Moderately effected	49	24.5
Slightly effected	60	30.0
Total	200	100.0

As shown in Table, responses provided by respondents about their how much face-to-face communication, came up with exact reflection of researcher's locale i.e. Multan Cantt. In Multan Cantt the frequency of respondents who is highly affected is 91, who is moderately affected is 49 and who is slightly affected is 60. As shown in Figure, 45.5% of respondents was highly affected, 24.5% was moderately affected and 30.0% was slightly affected.

Table 4: *Frequency and percentage of respondents by their family members about smartphone usage.*

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Always	53	26.5
Frequently	43	21.5
Never	48	24.0
Occasionally	56	28.0
Total	200	100.0

As shown in Table, responses provided by respondents about their family members concerns about smartphone usage, came up with exact reflection of researcher's locale i.e. Multan Cantt. In Multan Cantt the frequency of respondent's family members concerns about smartphone usage always is 53, Frequently is 43, Never is 48 and occasionally is 56. As shown in Figure, 26.5% of respondent's family members concerns about smartphone usage, 21.5% frequently respondent's family members concern about smartphone usage, 24.0% never respondent's family members concern about smartphone usage and 28.0% occasionally respondent's family members concern about smartphone use.

Table 5: *Frequency and percentage of respondents by their activities with family.*

Categories	Frequency	Percent
No	57	28.5
Yes	143	71.5
Total	200	100.0

As shown in Table, responses provided by respondents about their activities with family, came up with exact reflection of researcher's locale i.e. Multan Cantt. In Multan Cantt the frequency of

respondents who respond no is 57 and who said yes is 143. As shown in Figure, 28.5% of respondents said no whilst 71.5% said yes.

Table 6: *Frequency and percentage of respondents by their level of engagement.*

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Highly	68	34.0
Moderately	62	31.0
Slightly	70	35.0
Total	200	100.0

As shown in Table, responses provided by respondents about their level of engagement, came up with exact reflection of researcher's locale i.e. Multan Cantt. In Multan Cantt the frequency of respondent's level of engagement highly affected is 68, moderately is 62, slightly is 70. As shown in Figure, 34.0% of respondents feel highly level of engagement, 31.0% feel moderately level of engagement and 35.0% feel slightly level of engagement.

Table 6: Case Processing Summary.

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
How many hours per day do you use your smartphone * Do you feel that smartphone use has affected face-to-face communication with family members	200	100.0%	0	0.0%	200	100.0%

Table 7: Use of smartphone X Face to Face communication with family members.

How many hours per day do you use your smartphone * Do you feel connected with your family due to smartphone usage Crosstabulation

			Do you feel connected with your family due to smartphone usage		Total
			No	Yes	
How many hours per day do you use your smartphone	1 - 3 hours	Count	23	23	46
		Expected Count	25.5	20.5	46.0
	4 - 6 hours	Count	14	34	48
		Expected Count	26.6	21.4	48.0
	Less than 1 hour	Count	29	7	36
		Expected Count	20.0	16.0	36.0
	More than 6 hours	Count	45	25	70
		Expected Count	38.8	31.2	70.0
Total		Count	111	89	200
		Expected Count	111.0	89.0	200.0

Chi-Square Tests

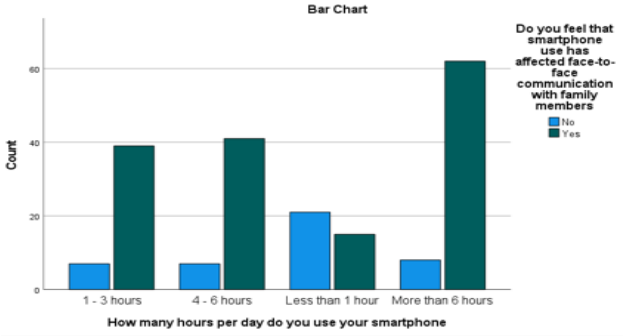
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35.582[a]	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	30.433	3	.000
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.74.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.389	.000
N of Valid Cases		200	

Graph No. 1



Calculated value of chi-square (X^2) = 35.582

Table value of Chi-Square at 3 df and 0.05 level of Significance = <.001

Contingency Coefficient = .389

Likelihood Ratio = 30.433 at 3 df = <.001

The calculated value of chi-square (X^2) is greater than the Table value of chi-square at 3 df and 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the original hypothesis i.e. "Use of smartphone varies inversely with face-to-face communication with family members is proved and null hypothesis is disproved. Hence the original hypothesis is accepted while null hypothesis is rejected. It means that highly use of smartphone had low face to face communication with family members. The Contingency Coefficient (coefficient of correlation) is 0.389 which shows moderate relationship between both variables.

Table 8: Use of smartphone X Disconnection with family members.

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
How many hours per day do you use your smartphone * Do you feel connected with your family due to smartphone usage	200	100.0%	0	0.0%	200	100.0%

How many hours per day do you use your smartphone * Do you feel connected with your family due to smartphone usage Crosstabulation

			Do you feel connected with your family due to smartphone usage		Total
			No	Yes	
How many hours per day do you use your smartphone	1 - 3 hours	Count	23	23	46
		Expected Count	25.5	20.5	46.0
	4 - 6 hours	Count	14	34	48
		Expected Count	26.6	21.4	48.0
	Less than 1 hour	Count	29	7	36
		Expected Count	20.0	16.0	36.0
	More than 6 hours	Count	45	25	70
		Expected Count	38.8	31.2	70.0
Total		Count	111	89	200
		Expected Count	111.0	89.0	200.0

Table 9: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25.379[a]	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	26.402	3	.000
N of Valid Cases	200		

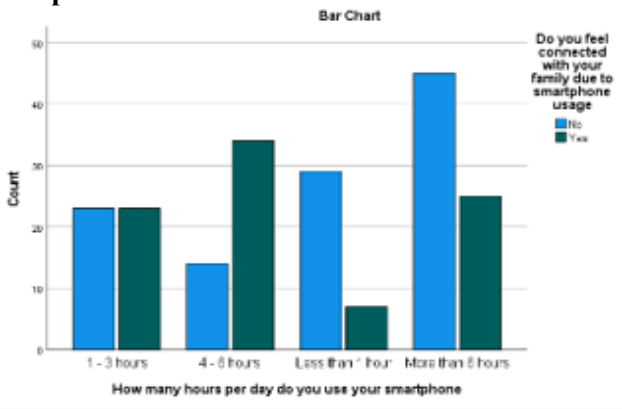
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.02.

Table 10: Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.336	.000
N of Valid Cases		200	

c. Correlation statistics are available for numeric data only.

Graph No. 2



Calculated value of chi-square (X^2) = 25.379
Table value of Chi-Square at 3 df and 0.05 level of Significance = <.001
Contingency Coefficient = .336
Likelihood Ratio = 26.402 at 3 df = <.001
The calculated value of chi-square (X^2) is greater than the Table value of chi-square at 3 df and 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the original hypothesis i.e. "Use of smartphone varies directly with disconnection with family members is proved and null hypothesis is disproved. Hence the original hypothesis is accepted while null hypothesis is rejected.
It means that highly use of smartphone had high disconnection with family members. The Contingency Coefficient (coefficient of correlation) is 0.336 which shows moderate relationship between both variables.

Table 11:

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
How many hours per day do you use your smartphone * Have you noticed any changes in family communication patterns due to smartphone use	200	100.0%	0	0.0%	200	100.0%

Table:12: Use of smartphone X Changing communication patterns in family.

How many hours per day do you use your smartphone * Have you noticed any changes in family communication patterns due to smartphone use Crosstabulation

			Have you noticed any changes in family communication patterns due to smartphone use			Total
			Highly	Moderately	Slightly	
How many hours per day do you use your smartphone	1 - 3 hours	Count	14	32	0	46
		Expected Count	15.4	16.1	14.5	46.0
	4 - 6 hours	Count	14	22	12	48
		Expected Count	16.1	16.8	15.1	48.0
	Less than 1 hour	Count	14	0	22	36
		Expected Count	12.1	12.6	11.3	36.0
	More than 6 hours	Count	25	16	29	70
		Expected Count	23.5	24.5	22.0	70.0
Total		Count	67	70	63	200
		Expected Count	67.0	70.0	63.0	200.0

Table 13: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	61.019[a]	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	82.508	6	.000
N of Valid Cases	200		

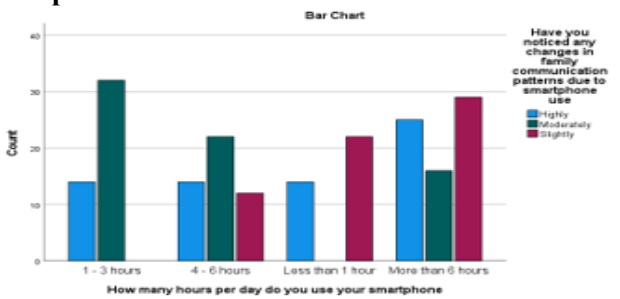
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.34.

Table 14: Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.483	.000
N of Valid Cases		200	

c. Correlation statistics are available for numeric data only.

Graph No. 3



Calculated value of chi-square (X^2) = 61.019
Table value of Chi-Square at 6 df and 0.05 level of Significance = <.001
Contingency Coefficient = .483
Likelihood Ratio = 82.508 at 6 df = <.001
The calculated value of chi-square (X^2) is greater than the Table value of chi-square at 6 df and 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the original hypothesis i.e. "Use of smartphone varies directly with changing patterns of communication in family is proved and null hypothesis is disproved. Hence the original hypothesis is accepted while null hypothesis is rejected.
It means that highly use of smartphone had high changing patterns of communication in family. The Contingency Coefficient (coefficient of correlation) is 0.483 which shows moderate relationship between both variables.

CONCLUSION

The current study assessed the impact of smartphone screen-time on family relationships in Multan Cantt. Results indicated that smartphones have the capacity to improve communication and maintain the connectivity among family members. However, excessive screen does negatively affect face-to-face communication. According to statistics reported, 35 per cent of respondents used smartphones for more than six hours daily, while 78.5 per cent of respondents thought that smartphone usage was affecting their face-to-face communication and 45.5 per cent of respondents stated that smartphone usage has great impact on family communication and interactions. Although majority of respondents (71.5%) confirmed that they took part in family activities despite using their smartphones too often, excessive smartphone usage might have consequences.
All in all, the research results suggest that moderate use of smartphones can be beneficial for family relationships.
Based on the collected data, the following findings were identified that 35% of respondents use smartphones for over 6 hours daily, while only 18% use them under 1 hour; 78.5% agree smartphones affect family face-to-face communication, with 45.5% reporting a high negative effect; 76% report that family members express concern over screen time (always, frequently, or occasionally); while 71.5% still participate in family activities, 66% report only slight (35%) or moderate (31%) engagement during those interactions. Heavy smartphone use reduces the frequency and quality of family communication, though devices remain valuable for staying connected when used responsibly. It is recommended that Set daily screen-time limits,

establish "phone-free" zones (especially during meals and bedtime), and prioritize device-free activities to encourage face-to-face connection. Track and regulate personal usage using built-in screen-time monitoring tools. Conduct awareness programs to teach healthy digital habits and help families balance technology with quality time. Launch public health campaigns to promote digital well-being and responsible smartphone use at a societal level.

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