

## Effects of Communication Technologies on Family\*

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### Introduction

The advances of communication technology result in changes among members of the communities, including families. Communication technology (CT) which include hardware and instrument as well as messages that are communicated through technology system (has been found to have cognitive, affective as well conative effects on individuals (Severin et al. & Tankard, 1997). According to Mirabito et al. (1997) the new information and communication technologies have profoundly affect the social structure since there is a growing interdependency between technology, information and society. As such the use of communication technologies may result in the reduction of other forms of interpersonal communication or it may enhance other communication processes occurring in the family.

### Materials and Methods

The study was conducted nation-wide using a multi-stage stratified cluster random sampling method. The stratification was based on urban and rural families while multi-stage cluster random sampling was carried out according to regions (4), state (3 per region) and finally districts (2 per state). The delineation between urban and rural is based on the predetermined criteria set by the city municipality. A total of 720 families were interviewed and information on respondent's background, ownership and use of communication technologies, family interpersonal communication, family decision making, and family communication was gathered from either husbands (father) or wives (mother) and their secondary school children. Each group of respondents was interviewed separately. Data were analyses using SPSS to obtain mean, percentages; scores and other relevant

statistics to answer the objectives of the study.

### Results and Discussion

The top five communication technologies owned in descending order were radio cassette, telephone, video cassette recorder, walkman and computer. Ownership of multimedia facilities were negligible. Knowledge regarding particular technologies was higher among children than parents and their knowledge about computer related communication technologies was less compared to TV or radio based technologies. Children also spent more time than their parents using particular communication technologies. Generally communication technologies were used for entertainment except for computers, which were used for educational purposes while telephones were used for personal communication. It was found that most of the technologies were used by the family members together. The relationship between duration of communication technologies used and family interpersonal communication was positive which means that the longer the use of the communication technologies results in more frequent family interpersonal communication. Duration of family interpersonal communication shows a positive relationship with the time spent with communication technologies. In a way, new communication technologies strengthen and intensified the family interpersonal communication. This reflects a positive effect to the integrity on the family institution with the help of new communication technologies. The findings also showed that families were able to combine the use of certain types of communication technologies with mass media use. Communication technologies such as radio cassette, telephone, video cassette player, hi-fi set and

video disc player were positively related to the use of radio and TV indicating that mass media use enhances the use of communication technologies. It also found that the use of radio cassette and telephone were correlated with certain aspects of decision making. The use of telephone was positively related to amount of information sought and the importance of decision pertaining to education. The use of telephone was also related to the satisfaction with decision regarding recreation, importance of decision pertaining to social, and amount of information sought pertaining to social. The uses of radio cassettes were found to be negatively related to amount of information sought regarding media decision. As such, the use of communication technologies for decision-making was found to be lacking. Families prefer interpersonal sources of information.

### Conclusions

Knowledge and use of computer related technologies must be improved among family members so as to enable them to keep pace with development in information technology. Communication technologies were mainly used for entertainment but it promote positive impact family institution in Malaysia since communication technology enhance and strengthen family interpersonal communication and relationship as well as mass media use. Thus in its own way new communication technologies helps the family to keep up with the changes in the environment.

### Benefits from the study

Seminar papers and initiate further research.

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