

Overbusy Schedule in Family Wholeness: A Study of Selected Families

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Abstract

Research has shown that the use of home electronics can be of good or bad effect in the wholeness of the family. Intimacy gap as a result of these technologies have become a pressing issue in the togetherness of the family and this has resulted to broken homes and disorderliness in the family. The aim of this study was to look at the impact of home electronic devices in our families and the attendant effects. The method adopted for this research was a descriptive survey involving the use of questionnaire and personal interviews. A sample size of 200 families picked at random were used during this research work. The result showed that despite the good deed of home electronics, if there is no policy and co-operate usage in a family results to intimacy gap. In conclusion, It was observed that majority of individuals within the age bracket of 31-40 years with 10 years of marriage experience are getting more involved in marriages of these days. Some of the couples spend more time with the home electronic devices than their spouse and this has a large tendency of resulting to intimacy and communication gap.

Keywords: Family Wholeness, Intimacy gap, Overbusy Schedule, Communication gap and Technology.

1. Introduction

Our world and homes have become technologically driven, with technology playing and sometimes substituting the roles of individual members of the family. For example through cell phones, we are able to maintain contact throughout the day even though we might be separated by geographical distance thus, one can say that technology has made life robotic.

Technology has become the tool of interaction, involvement and participation for members of the family today. For example, rather than discuss issues on face-to-face basis, couples resort to using text messages, voice calls, children prefer to remain connected with their parents via telephone, connectedness through technology has become the order of the day.

The reasons for these are not far fetched, the economic challenges of the global competitive economy and the demand for a better life for the family has now forced parents to take up jobs with better pay and a wholesome welfare package. But these jobs are taking away the precious time that could be spent with their families. These days, parents spend longer hours at work and fewer hours with their children and families at home. Fathers are no longer the 'super hero' and mothers are no longer the 'guardian angel' of their children again, these roles have been taken over by electronics and 'aunty'-their teachers in school.

These developments have created problems in the family, affecting the wholeness of the family. The increasing rate of divorce, anti-social behaviour of children, aggression among couples and children alike and many other negative factors affecting the family cannot be separated or excluded from lack of wholeness in the home today. Couples are no longer spending quality time together, family dinner and time out are becoming outmoded and children have become more alienated from their parents and glued to their electronic world.

Poor quality time among spouses in a family has been a challenging factor that can affect the wholeness of the family. Research has shown that the use of home electronics can be of good or bad effect in the wholeness of the family. According to Meszaros, the maximum absorption of homes with technology has drastic influence in family communication, this in turn have major implication in intimacy development. Thus, this study seeks to take a look at the impact of home electronics (Computers, Television sets, Radio set etc) in the family wholeness. The aim of this research is to investigate the implication of over busy schedule with home gadgets in the family wholeness.

2. Literature Review

Family is an object of the society. According to White (2008), Society is composed of families and its picture is what the head of families make it to look like. Every human being possess a heart and outside their heart is the societal life. The life of a community, church or nation depends on the totality of families. This implies that the nature of a particular society all depends on the household. In essence, the well being of a community or society all depends on the household.

From the context, one can simply look at a family as a small community in a society with a defined purpose where its object is the individual minds. In essence, the combination of positive minds results to an

objective family which in turn results to the well being of a society.

Every family or home is meant to be a small heaven (White, 2008). This is so because since family is built through marriage, and marriage is an institution of God, families are expected to rest on the solid foundation of Christ. A family that allows the will of God to prevail in their life, will experience peace, love, trust and confidence in the wholeness of the family.

Wholeness in a family is a oneness of hearts, hearts aiming at achieving a goal. Wholeness in God is achieved through holiness. (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:7; Hebrews 12:14). It is in the accord that man and woman should be linked as one in his work and to carry it forward in wholeness and in holiness. [AH 101.4]. This means that for a society to be built on God, it requires a home and family in wholeness and in holiness with Christ.

Our moral understanding of life, plays a major role in the wholeness of the family. Every individual has his/her own moral obligations that is not as a societal one and such is known as moral imperatives. Warner and Terrance (n.d) states that such moral imperatives do not necessarily mean that we do what others expect us to do rather, we do that which pleases our conscience. It is based on these moral imperatives, when introduced within couples, that faults that may lead to issues may be controlled, personal things like undivided attention to some home electronics such as TV set, personal computer, handsets etc. occupying one's time while at home resulting to self-centeredness can be avoided. The Overbusy personal schedule can lead to poor communication in a family, lack of agreeable family policy, isolation from one another, gender inequality perspective etc.

Robila (2010), looked at Marriage as one of the aspects of family policy in relation to childrearing, financial support and family care. The paper addressed the importance of marriage stating that family in a society should be recognized through provision of family life education, promoting gender equality and eliminatinatig domestic violence.

Family problems and well being can be ascertained through family policies which entails the goal of family policies (Zimmerman, 2001).

Hill (1971), in his study Family system theory suggest that no individual can be studied/understood in isolation from each other since families are system of interconnected individuals. Feminist theory considers gender as a social structure and a fundamental basis for social inequality and its hierarchy been viewed as a power relations with women been subordinated to men and as such promoting a gender equality perspective (Osmond and Thorne, 1993).

New theory and research (n.d) sees the family system theory as focusing on a system rather than individuals. It views system as interrelated parts or members which interact in persistent, enduring ways. Also, a system should be regulated for it to be a system. The theory also looked at wholeness of a family as a system that involves interaction, creating a uniqueness that is beyond just the sum of each individual member. The theory looked at rules as a strong tool to family wholeness. Stating that rules regulate behaviors. A family system is active, when there is a pattern governing the interaction of members i.e. patterns are being created through rules.

For a family system to stand active, intimacy must be in existence. One of the major duties of young adulthood or young couples should be intimacy development (Erikson,1959). Intimacy and link with other individuals should be an integral need for all people. This implies that intimacy is one of the key successes in life (Bowlby,1969).

Kerr & Bowen (1988) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the factors that determine whether individuals are at a distance in their relationship or are able to build close connections. Bowen came up with interpersonal changes that takes note of the context for identity and intimacy development (example- family origin experience, relationship interactions and socialization).

In America, the use of media and technology are legalized lifestyle for every American adolescent and young adult (Roberts, Foehr & Rideout, 2005). Meszaros (2004) says the maximum absorption of homes with technology has drastic influence in family communication, this in turn have major implication in intimacy development. Home electronics can be highly instrumental in building relations or it can be highly destructive in the wholeness of a family, it all depends on the usage.

Henline (2006) carried out a study to assess individual differentiation of self, personal access, uses of technology and the types and level of intimacy within their committed relationships using 323 individuals in committed relationships as a case study. The study implies that a greater differentiation of self is related to lower amounts of both solitary and conjoint technology use as well as with higher levels of emotional, social, sexual, intellectual and recreational intimacy. Again, higher amounts of solitary technology use are associated with poor intimacy in committed relationships. At the conclusion of the work, it was observed that technology has a positive effect in family intimacy.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The assumptions and propositions of the general system theory provides the theoretical foundations for this study. General System Theory (GST) proposes that every system has a set of elements existing and interacting within a

boundary that separates them from the environment. According to the assumption of the theory, every system benefits from both negative and positive feedback, inputs and outputs for survival.

The critical system concepts include:

- *Elements*, existing and interacting within a boundary- individuals within the family unit;
- *Concepts*- the complexity or simplicity of a *concept*- what are the factors and elements within the family system;
- *Holism*: every system has sets of elements that work as a whole, which is more than the sum of its parts. The wholeness of a family -the father, mother and children;
- *Synergy*: The combination of two parts of a system (Father and mother) produces better result- children;
- *Hierarchy*- every system has order- father, mother, children; husband, wife etc;
- *Negentropy*: every system is sustained by tallying of inputs and bringing outputs through processing to enhance rejuvenation and forestall death and degradation;
- *Purpose*: every system has a purpose, a goal that it set to achieve;
- *Equifinality*: is the manifestation of differences in outputs of a system despite similar inputs- students receiving same lectures, answering the same question but ended up with different results;
- *Feedback*- every system sends information to its various elements to know success or failure of information sent. Every system benefit from negative feedback.

GST is a contributive general theory that can be used to explain communication- the principle vehicle of human communication.(Baran & Davis, 2012; Littlejohn & Foss, 2008).

3.0 Research Methodology

The survey method was adopted for this study. It was employed to investigate the social, demographic and behavioral characteristics of respondents. It was also designed to measure and explain the influence of over reliance on electronics on family wholeness.

The purposive sampling technique was employed as the sampling procedure for the administration of the survey instrument. Since the target of study was well defined, the choice of this procedure was also influenced by the need to avoid extraneous factors that may impair sample selection (Babbie, 2005; Berger, 2000; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

The survey instrument was administered among selected families in Lagos, with respondents selected by the interviewer based on personal judgement and willingness of respondents to participate in the survey.

A total of 200 respondents were interviewed by the researchers. The self report technique was adopted as the procedure for survey instrument administration. This approach guaranteed 100% return rate.

4.0 Data Analysis and Presentation

This part focused on the analysis, presentation and interpretation of data. It is divided into Four sections. Section one focused on the analysis of data on demographic profile of respondents; section two focused on analysis of data on Electronics resources access/ ownership, section three focused on analysis of data on Electronic devices usage in the family and section four focused on analysis of data from unstructured questions and will be used for the summary of researchers’ observation.

Section One: Demographic profile

This section focused on the analysis and interpretation of data on demographic profile of families in Lagos, using the variables of sex, age and years of marriage.

Sex distribution of respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	120	60
Female	80	40
Total	200	100

Above shows the frequency table of sex distribution of respondents, where 60% are male, and 40% are female.

Age group distribution

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
21-30 years	40	20
31-40 years	90	45
41-50 years	70	35
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents (45%) are within 31-40 years category. Meaning that more marital couples are within the above mentioned age bracket.

Years of marriage distribution table

Years of marriage	Frequency	Percentage
1-10	150	75
11-20	40	20
21-30	10	05
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 3 shows that we have more fresh marriage within the year bracket of 1-10 years.

Section Two: Electronics resources access/ ownership

This section focused on the analysis of electronic devices (computers, television sets, telephones and internet access) present in homes.

Computer system ownership distribution table

No of Computers	Frequency	Percentage
1	80	40
2	80	40
3	40	20
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 4 in terms of computer system ownership, majority of the respondents (60%) have at least one to two computer systems in their homes.

TV sets distribution table

Number of TV sets	Frequency	Percentage
1-2	160	80
3-4	30	15
5 and above	10	05
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 5 in terms of television set, majority of the respondents' (80%) own a minimum of two television sets in their homes.

Mobile phone distribution table

Number of phones	Frequency	Percentage
1-2	90	45
3-4	70	35
5-6	30	15
7 and above	10	05
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 6 in terms of home use phones, majority of the respondents' (55%) own a minimum of 3-4 mobile phones in their homes.

Home Internet Access distribution table

Yes	150	75
No	50	15
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 7 in terms of Internet access at home, majority of the respondents' (75%) have internet access at home.

Music Player distribution table

Music player ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	170	85
No	30	15
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 8 in terms of music player at home, majority of the respondents' (85%) have music player at home.

Personal digital assistants distribution table

PA ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	40	20
No	160	80
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 9 in terms of Personal digital assistants, majority of the respondents' (80%) do not have access to PAs.

DVD player ownership distribution table

DVD Player	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	190	95
No	10	05
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 10 in terms of DVD player ownership, majority of the respondents' (95%) have it at home.

Video games

Video games	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	130	65
No	70	35
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 11 in terms of video games access, majority of the respondents' (65%) have it at home.

Cable/satellite access

Cable/satellite	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	120	60
No	80	40
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 12 in terms of Cable/satellite access, majority of the respondents' (60%) have and use it at home.

Section Three: Electronic device usage in the family.

This section focused on the analysis and interpretation of data on the electronic device usage pattern among respondents.

TV programmes/movies viewing pattern of respondents

TV program viewing	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	20	10
Occasionally	80	40
Regularly	100	50
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 13 in terms of television programmes and movies viewership pattern, majority of the respondents' (50%) view television programmes and movies regularly.

Music listenership pattern of respondents

Listenership pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	50	25
Occasionally	40	20
Regularly	110	55
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 14 in terms of music listenership pattern, 55% of the respondents listen to music regularly.

Internet home usage pattern of respondents distribution table

Internet usage	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	30	15
Occasionally	50	25
Regularly	120	60
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 15 in terms of internet usage, 60% of the respondents make use of it at home regularly.

Instant Messaging – (Whats app, Nimbuzz, Facebook etc) usage pattern of respondents

Instant Messaging	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	70	35
Occasionally	40	20
Regularly	90	45
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 16 in terms of instant messaging (Whats app, Nimbuzz, Facebook, chat etc), majority of the respondents' (45%) use it regularly.

Chat rooms/online groups communication distribution table

Chat room usage	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	130	65
Occasionally	30	15
Regularly	40	20
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 17 in terms of Chat rooms/online groups' communication, majority of the respondents' (45%) rarely use it.

The Use of computers at home outside working hours

Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	50	25
Occasionally	40	20
Regularly	110	55
Total	200	100

Analysis of Table 18 shows that 55% of the respondents use computer for personal works at home

Section Four : **Analysis of data from open-ended/unstructured questions**

Two fundamental questions were raised.

- **How can family benefit from the use of technology?**
- **How can the use of technology be a bane to marital wholeness?**

4.1 Summary

From the general comments of the respondents, it was observed that technology can be of good or bad benefit depending on the usage. Some of the ways by which it can be of good benefit are- it increases and strengthens the knowledge of the family as a whole through educative and gospel programs. While it can be of negative impact when it is being used for selfish interests. Also, it was observed that some of these technologies and its usage such as chatting phones, internet services, DVD sets etc, are introduced to our various homes not just for ownership reasons but as a means of occupying one's time when there is intimacy gap in the family.

5.0 Conclusion

The focus of this study at inception was to find out the implications of electronic devices on interpersonal relationships existing among couples.

The technological advancements in the area of electronics- TV, radio, multimedia phones, ipads and ipods coupled with the internet and the advent of social networking sites of facebook, badoo, yahoo messenger, plus the substitution of post-mail with e-mail, instant messaging from phones have all changed the landscape of relationship existing within and outside the family. Today, these are what we use to connect with one another, friends, colleagues and families alike. We live in global world localized by technology.

These devices have infiltrated our homes and have become part of our daily living and shared experiences. However, the inappropriate use of these devices can affect the love, peace and harmony that exists in homes. "What God has joined together, let no one (technology, electronic devices, people, family...) put asunder". Technology is good, electronic devices are lawful but not at the expense of the wholeness of the family. And as Professor Paul concludes "all things are lawful but not all things are expedient" (1 Corinthians 10: 23).

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