INTERROGATING YOUTH’S MOBILE PHONE APPROBATION IN THE
CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN MVITA SUB COUNTY

by

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APPROVAL

INTERROGATING YOUTH’S MOBILE PHONE APPROBATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN MVITA SUB COUNTY

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INTERROGATING YOUTH’S MOBILE PHONE APPROBATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN MVITA SUB COUNTY

I declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit.

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All said and done, all the glory is to God for I truly confess that thy steadfast love oh Lord extends to the skies, thy faithfulness to the clouds. (Psalms 36:5)
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# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>AfDB</td>
<td>African Development Bank</td>
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<td>UNECA</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Africa</td>
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the youth’s uses of mobile phones and how this use impacted on communication in the family. As an agent of socialization, the family is the custodian of values, beliefs and practices. The study examined the technology’s impact on youth’s everyday communication with their parents and the relationship between the use of mobile phones in the sustenance of family values and relationships in the family. Guided by the Symbolic Interactionism Theory which emphasizes that people’s behavior is based on personal social constructs, the study examined how selected individuals in Mvita Sub County in Mombasa County responded to the meanings they constructed as they interacted using mobile phones. Using the Phenomenology research design, the study purposively sampled 12 households comprising of 13 youth respondents and 15 parental figures who were subjected to in-depth interviews whose data was analyzed qualitatively. The findings revealed that most youth preferred mobile phone communication with their families demonstrating decreased desire for the face to face interaction. Most youth in this study revealed that they were freer in communicating with their parents on phone as opposed to face to face. A majority of the parents stated that mobile phones had a deleterious effect on family ways of life. The youth conveniently and deceptively used technology to an extent of generating certain negative interactive behaviors. The study diagnosed such negative behaviors from this disruptive technology as symptomatic of ‘Mobileosis’ which is characterized by a layered dialectical tension among the users-the entrapped enamored youths and their almost clueless parents who were silenced in expressing their disapproval of the impact of the phone usage practices.

Key Words: Mobile Phone, Youth, Family Communication, Family Values, Parent–youth relationships
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents. My father, the late Wilson Menza Mwaringa (Buda) and my mother, the late Beatrice Mwaka Mwaringa (Misty). You were my first teachers and from you I draw my inspiration. I shall forever be indebted to you for being who I am today.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study took cognizance of the fact that mobile telephony is a rapidly accelerating communication technology whose adoption rates worldwide continue to soar due to social, individual and corporate purposes. The mobile telephony ascendancy has gained momentum becoming the defining communication technology of the time as evidenced from the mobile subscriptions that run into billions worldwide (International Telecommunication Union, 2018). The data on mobile phone subscription rates from the International Telecommunication Union (2018) indicated that the world’s subscription rate was at 5.3 billion. This accounted for 4.4 billion and 900 million in the developed and the developing world respectively. Africa as a subscriber, accounted for 18.5% of the total global subscriptions.

Nonetheless, from the literature review provided in this study, perceptions that embracing this communication technology contributed to obstructive social consequences, among them, rising tension among relationships within the family emerged. In a study conducted in Indonesia, Yu, Anaya, Miao, Lehto, and Wong (2018) lamented about the disruptiveness of the communication technology on family quality time, as reflected from the study findings. Even when family members were together, some members regularly continued to use their mobile phones at the expense of the traditional bonding accorded to regular conversations. This negative trait was discerned to hamper quality face to face interactions (Yu et al., 2018).

Consequently, this study undertook the Phenomenology approach to examine the youth’s approbation of the mobile phone as a phenomenon and its bearing on the communication system within the family. The Phenomenology approach was best
suited for this study as seen from Creswell’s (2013) description of its tenets as an approach that focused on the commonality of a lived experience within a ‘particular group’. The fundamental goal of the approach was to arrive at a description of the nature of a particular phenomenon which was the ‘use of the mobile phone’ as a communication device in the family. The study focused on the family as one of the ‘particular groups’ whose members experienced the ‘use of the mobile phone device’ and which is the smallest unit of human organization. The specific interest in communication in the family was prompted by the understanding that it is at the family level where initial socialization took place. Oduor et al. (2014) underscored that the ideal family communication focused on the socio economic support and well-being of others.

The justification for the adoption of the Phenomenology approach is in line with Creswell’s (2013) perspective that views Phenomenology as a philosophy of ‘experience’, stating that the ultimate source of all meaning and value is the ‘lived experience’ of human beings. Creswell further inputs that all philosophical systems, scientific theories, or aesthetic judgments have the status of abstractions from the ebb and flow of the lived world. Since the youth constitute family membership, this study examined the communication behaviors emanating from the youth’s approbation of the mobile phone from their parents’ perspective and the youth’s personal experiences with the communication device. This experience was analyzed to examine its implications on the nature of communication in the family. The sampled respondents from both the parental figures and the youth voluntarily and freely narrated their personal experiences with the communication device which informed this study with reference to the study objectives.
1.2 Background to the Study

Consensual families, as viewed by Oduor et al. (2014) are marked by both conversation and conformity orientations. Such families traditionally value conversations. An insight on the conceptualization of the role of communication in parenting identifies an important influence on family members’ communication development. Oduor et al. (2014) emphasized that family communication environments differentially fostered the development of various functional communication skills. Leshtarova (2017) concurs with Oduor et al. (2014) citing family communication exposed children and youthful members of the family to a set of consistent interaction patterns and strategies, depending on their own family’s communication climate. It is through this conduit that norms and patterns are established, sustained, and modified.

In this study ‘the family’ provided a conceptually useful lens by which to view mobile communication, particularly from the youthful members of the family’s perspective. The analysis of communication technologies as a phenomenon is important to understanding family communication, not only because of the youth’s approbation but also because of their influence on communication behavior. This study explored the contextual influences of mobile telephony on family conversations and the communicator styles suggesting that the affection and inclusion of others in the daily conversations was more personal. Leshtarova (2017) documented that parents communicated with their youthful members as a way of demonstrating relationally-oriented motives that displayed affection and positive feelings. Besides, these parents upheld positive communication characterized by conversations and value conformity from the socialized value system handed over from generation to generation.
However, a nonconformity that informed this study was a broadcast feature titled ‘Ifikie Wazazi’ (Let it reach the Parents) on ‘Youth Pornography’ that was aired on the Kenya Television Network (KTN) and the Citizen Television of the Royal Media Services on the 12th April 2018. The feature exposed how the youth willingly exchanged nude photos through their phones, thus exposing the ‘erotic’ youth’s misuse of social media. The feature aimed at exposing the parents’ oblivious to the youth’s vice that left them shocked and traumatized after seeing the nude ‘selfies’ or photos of their youthful members of the family. The incident spawned a debate over the Kenyan media, demonstrating parents’ gross ignorance of their youth’s mobile phone activities in the confinement of the youth’s privacy.

Besides the feature, an article published in the Standard Newspaper on the 5th December 2016 termed the arrival of mobile phones in Kenya as a blessing and a curse to parents. The article demonstrated that busy parents found it easier to monitor their children and the youthful members of the family at a click of a button thereby increasing parenting efficacy. Nonetheless, the same article reported that the mobile phone use among the youth could be a drawback to parenting if not closely superintended. The lack of a safeguard against youth exploitation and a lack of a means to help parents monitor strangers who could harm the youth was a concern. The general tone in the article advocated for the mobile phone use controls. It is for this reason that this study interrogated the youth’s approbation and use of mobile communication and how this constructed the nature of communication in the family.

Mobile Phone Approbation

The youth’s mobile phone approbation in this study is interpreted from their appropriation of the communication device. Scholars like Elsobeihi and Naser (2017) who showed an interest in the study of mobile phone appropriation, observed that the
mobile phone technology is so coveted that it has almost become a cultural symbol of the contemporary times, accelerating and sweeping social and cultural changes. The use of this communication technology is believed to have reconstructed social relationships and could serve as a framework for examining these relationships. Mobile phones are personalized devices, implying that users continue using them individually compared to the ancient fixed telephone line that was almost communal and mostly in an open place.

Elsobeihi and Naser (2017) and Goswami and Singh (2016) behold that the multiple use of the mobile phone makes the device attractive. Users are adopting the technology; changing the way they initially interacted with others making Elsobeihi and Naser (2017) discern communication technology as a revolution. These scholars affirmed that the society was undergoing a revolutionary development in mobile technologies as developers and innovators compete to attract the increasingly growing wide section of mobile users to fulfill users’ demands.

Goswami and Singh (2016) and Rice, Haynes, Royce, and Thompson (2016) acceded that digital communication technologies allowed users ease and frequent access to mobile phone services such as the social media. Rice et al. (2016) paid particular attention to social media whose popularity soared from the accelerated handset ownership. Access to mobile phones that supplicated the latest applications was significant and appealing to the youth. Elsobeihi and Naser (2017) justified the youth’s high approbation level of this technology from the perceived privacy the technology accorded. The youth were freer in carrying out social relations essential in their lives.

The youth’s belongingness to a world of their own seemed to restructure communication in the family. The study by Yu et al. (2018) commented on the impact
of mobile phones on family vacations, revealing the frustration experienced by family members whose strong desire to interact more with family members during vacations was futile. The study cited the respondents’ lamentation about the many instances when other family members spent a substantial amount of time on their mobile phones instead of family bonding.

Gapsiso and Wilson (2015) conceded that the use of mobile phones had substantially reduced the youth’s desire for face to face communication with their family members. Oduor et al. (2014) corroborated that listening is a significant integrant in family interactions as it provided opportunities for expression of thoughts and feelings, besides being an enhancement of the face to face interaction. Oduor et al. (2014) viewed face to face communication as the most convalescent and impactful way in any interaction countenances.

VGoswami and Singh (2016) found mobile phone usage so strongly integrated into the youth’s behavior that symptoms of behavioral addiction were elicited in their day to day activities. Goswami and Singh (2016) equated mobile phone addiction to that of drug abuse, claiming that mobile phone addiction had become one of the most prevalent non-drug addictions. Some users were more dependent on their mobile phones than they themselves were aware. The youth, instead of interacting with family members, indulged in mobile phone communication activities or practices such as being members of group chats on social media, uploading ‘selfies’ or personal pictures or photos of events.

In Africa, the fear over the use and growth of mobile technology also prevails. Mobile phones are considered a recipe for social problems among the youth. A study in Tanzania by Kihwele and Bali (2013) on parents’, teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the effects of students’ access to mobile phones on students’ learning
performance concluded that these devices were disruptive in schools. The study revealed that despite their usefulness the mobile phones were being misused leveraged by the lack of a regulatory framework. The same study disclosed that most students spent most of their time chatting, recording fights and violence and watching pornography. Another survey done by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008) in the United States of America reported that out of five youth who had mobile phones, one had exchanged a sexually explicit image with others.

Citing the varied scholars’ perspectives, the youth’s use of the mobile phone was likely to create tension in the family. Among the justification for the perceived tension is that the mobile phone creates limited opportunity for parental supervision as the youth enjoy their autonomy. Before the invasion of the mobile phone, the fixed telephone line provided better opportunities for parental control because the gadget was typically in an open space. In this new era however, notable tension has emerged between the two generations; the contentions being parents are not privy to how the youth use their mobile phones or who they are interacting with over the phone.

This study interrogated how the youth’s approbation and use of the mobile phones contributed to familial tensions and how this led to certain types of miscommunication in the family. Other altered aspects were family values and relationships which are extensively discussed in detail in chapter 4 under data analysis and interpretation of the findings.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The proliferation and access of the mobile phone in the society has shown a very high adoption rate of the technology among the youth. As a result of this access, the youth are documented to have used the mobile phone to structure their social developments among their peers at the expense of their family domestic ties.
Wadende, Oburu, and Morara (2016) acknowledge that strength of the African cultural setting is in its cohesiveness and its ability to express itself in diverse forms of oral interactions which include face to face interaction, performance of songs and dance, storytelling, constructing witty tongue twister and proverbs etc. All these forms of oral arts were communally owned and orally handed over from generation to generation in a bid to reinforce the society’s value system. However, the invasion of new communication technologies such as the mobile telephony seems to be altering the entrenched socialized oral culture.

With the high approbation rates from the youth, certain communication behaviors are emerging. Aishwarya and Vinod (2017) reckon that the youth have designed communication forms and patterns that distinguish the peer from the parents. The youth have given a unique attention to their social networks, clearly demarcating insiders from outsiders. As a result, Aishwarya and Vinod (2017) lament about the present generation’s dependence on online communication that has made them loose the ability and value for face to face communication.

Since mobile telephony is a reality, a majority of the users acknowledge its role in modern society. It could be argued that this technology could disintegrate or strengthen families as units of social organizations. This is why this study investigated how the use of mobile telephones constructed family communication where cultural communication values and other values and relational norms such as ‘family identity’ and ‘good relations’ are already established but are being disrupted. However, this is largely depended on how one perceives and interprets the interactions and functionality of mobile telephony.
1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the youth used their mobile phones and how this usage constructed the nature of communication in the family.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

i. To investigate how the youth used the applications or features in their mobile phones.

ii. To examine how the usage of mobile telephony designed the way the youth interacted with their parents in everyday communication.

iii. To find out the relationship between the use of mobile phones and the sustenance of family values.

iv. To investigate how the use of mobile phones had affected relationships in the family.

1.6 Research Questions

The study aimed at answering the following research questions:

i. For what purposes did the youth use the applications or features on their mobile phones?

ii. How did the use of the mobile phone technology design the way the youth communicated with their parents in everyday communication?

iii. What was the relationship between the use of the mobile technology and the sustenance of family values?

iv. How did the use of mobile phones affect relationships in the family?

1.7 Justification for the Study

Kenyan WallStreet (2016) put the mobile phone subscription rate at 37.8 million which accounted for 88.1% of the local penetration rate in Kenya. Going by
these subscription statistics, it was evident that the demand for mobile phone services continued to escalate as indicated by the prepaid subscription rate of 36.8 million, accounting for 97.3% of the total subscriptions. The post-paid subscriptions rates were recorded to have gone up to 989,889 from the previous subscription rate of 963,684 in the previous quarter. On voice call services, the local mobile traffic recorded a significant increase of 18.2% representing 10.8 billion minutes up from the previous 9.2 billion minutes posted in the previous quarter (Kenyan Wall Street, 2016). Further statistics from the Authority indicated that on average each subscriber talked for 95.8 minutes per month, compared to the 84.9 minutes in the previous quarter.

Another justification was the everyday emergence of new phone models uploaded with new applications or features that continued to appeal to the youth. Adoption of every feature provided a social platform for discussion of eminent dangers facing the family unit which was previously held together by open dialogue amongst its members.

With such a huge rate of mobile communication subscription and a proliferation of new appealing phone models it was justifiable to study the impact of the technology on communication and family relations.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study ventured into the youth’s outlook in family relationship building and at the same time the parental perspectives on how mobile telephony reconstructed communication within the family. The study’s findings are intended to benefit Kenyan families as they continue to interact with each other using mobile phones. It was therefore envisaged that the findings in this study would enhance further knowledge on the management of communication in the family owing to the fact that
there will always be a generational gap as demonstrated in the adoption of mobile technology. When the two generations better understand each other, possible problems could be alleviated, hence create further avenues of resolving any emerging communication problems within the family.

The data accrued from this study could be utilized for appropriate guidance and counseling aimed at strengthening the family as a social unit in the attempt to uphold positive family values. Besides, it was anticipated that it would provide a deep understanding and avenues for building and contributing further to theories of communication for scholars in the field. This knowledge could further be a source of information for those engaged in youth mentorship programmes in both formal and informal settings.

It was anticipated that the findings in this study would promote the need to reinforce societal literacy on current communication technologies to help avert social communication problems affecting the family and beyond.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The study made the following assumptions:

i. The target population of both the youth and their parents would have personal mobile phones.

ii. The youth used mobile phones primarily for interpersonal communication.

1.10 Scope of the study

The study was conducted in Mvita Sub County within Mombasa County and it targeted households having youth who were still living or staying with their parents in the same household. At the time of the study Mombasa County had a total of six Sub Counties characterized by varied socio economic and ethnic population. The
justification for Mvita Sub County as the preferred sub county for this study was because it was within the island and had a more cosmopolitan population than all the other sub counties.

Going by the ethnic-socio demographic statistics provided by the Mombasa County (2018) Kisauni Sub County in the north had more Mijikendas in its habitat, mostly from the northern Coast, which was more than the other members in the community. Likoni Sub County in the South Coast was dominated by the Digo and Duruma, sub groups of the Mijikenda community. Changamwe Sub County from the west had mainly the Luo and the Kamba communities, while Jomvu Sub County was dominated by the Jomvu, a sub group of the Swahili origin. Meanwhile, Nyali Sub County had a mixture of them all but the most affluent population in the County. With reference to this study, Mvita was the preferred sub county since it eliminated the bias of data collected from one predominant type of a given demography.

1.11 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study being phenomenological demanded for honest mobile communication experiences from the participants. It was envisaged that the respondents were likely to conceal the real and personal experiences on their use of the technology. This would have been a major setback since the research was pegged on that very experience to determine the communication that emerged in the family as a result of the adoption and use of the mobile telephony.

The study had anticipated that the youth would shy away from fully disclosing how they used the mobile phone as a safeguard measure to their perceived ‘privacy’ from the communication technology. However, most of the youth’s responses reflected sincerity since the confidentiality of their responses to the study had been guaranteed.
As for the adult figures, it had been anticipated that they would overtly exaggerate the positive relations they shared with the youth so as to portray ‘excellent’ parental figures. Nonetheless, just like the youth, their responses were quite sincere and informative reflecting the reality. This was achieved through strict adherence of research ethical considerations that gave assurance to all respondents that any information freely volunteered would be treated with the confidentiality it deserved. The responses would only be used for the purpose of this study.

It was anticipated that some families in the households would be very strict on opposite gender interactions during data collection since the main researcher was male. This limitation was overcome by engaging both male and female research assistants in the data collection exercise. Nonetheless in all the sampled households the families were comfortable with the data collectors regardless of the gender.

The study being in a predominantly ‘Swahili’ speaking region, the use of English language during data collection was foreseen as a possible exigent to some respondents. To check on this limitation, a professionally translated Swahili version of the interview schedule was prepared and administered to the respondents who wished to respond using ‘Swahili’, which is Kenya’s national language.

1.12 Definition of Terms

Youth: In tandem with Kenyan laws, the National Council for Law Reporting (2010) defined a youth as any person who had attained the age of 18 and was not more than 35 years old. However, in this study the term ‘youth’ referred to persons who were between the age of 18 and 22 years. The rationale for this age bracket was hinged upon the African Development Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, United Nations Development Programme, and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (AfDB, OECD, UNDP, & UNECO, 2012)
economic report on employment that most youth beyond the age of 23 were likely to be economically engaged, thus enjoying independence from their parents. This study targeted the youth who lived with their parents or guardians on an everyday basis in the same household. The study excluded the youth who were members of the same family but were independently living away from their parents.

Mobile Youth Culture: Appelbaum (2014); Castells, Mireia, Jack, Qiu, and Araba (2007); and Rice et al. (2016) referred to the general use of the mobile phone by the youth as the ‘Mobile Youth Culture’. These scholars’ description of the ‘Mobile Youth Culture’ befitted the interpretation that was adopted for this study. This study focused on the youth’s use of the mobile phones, thus it was an intrusion into their communicative culture. This culture included all aspects that defined and described the youth’s use of the mobile phone.

The family: Ocholla-Ayayo (2000) defined the family from an African perspective advancing the view that the family is a people with common ancestors. Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) interpreted the family beyond the nuclear family setting that consisted only of a father, a mother and children. In both definitions and interpretation, the inclusion of polygamous families was implied. This study adopted both interpretations from these scholars but included the single parents’ families which Ocholla-Ayayo (2000) was silent on but had been acknowledged by Madukwe and Madukwe (2012). The study excluded families from the same sex orientation and ‘house helps’ or ‘domestic workers’ who stayed with the family members they worked for.

Family communication: Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) considered the family as a primary agent of socialization where communication was instrumental in building family relations. It was through interaction that human interests and values were
sustained. Ezedike (2009) interpreted good family communication as a value that threw its weight on the way of life that was emphatically centered upon human interests and values. In this study, family communication was viewed or assessed from how members related and how frequently they communicated with each other. The communication avenues at their disposal that were likely to bear an influence on their relationships were examined.

Parental figures: Idang (2015) reckoned hierarchy began with the family. In the African traditional arrangement, each family had a revered head and any dissent over the status quo was considered a taboo. Idang (2015) affirmed that it was natural to have respect for institutions such as the family and its leaders. Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) however, defined a parent from the African context as any person who was a custodian of the youth. It could have been a father, a mother, a relative or any person with a sense of authority taking care of the family which includes the youthful members. Idang’s (2015) definition hinged on respect for the elderly or family authority while Madukwe and Madukwe’s (2012) definition of parental figures was centered upon ‘custody’. Both definitions fit in the framework of this study which included biological and or parents who had adopted children, significant relatives such as aunts and uncles both paternal and maternal and or other adults who had youth whom they had custody upon and were living with them as their own children in the same household.

Family Values: Idang (2015) defined values as beliefs and practices that any society dictated to its members as the acceptable way of its routine life. The values varied from religious, moral, political and so on. This study was keen on the impact of mobile phone communication on family values and other relational norms such as: (i)
Family identity (ii) Good relations (iii) Sense of time for family; (iv) Respect for family authority, which guided the study.

Household: Uwezo Kenya (n.d.) defined a household as a group of persons who normally lived together and took their meals from a common kitchen unless the exigencies of work prevented any of them from doing so. Members or persons in a household could have been related or unrelated or a mix of both. However, if a group of unrelated persons lived in a census house but did not take their meals from the common kitchen, they were considered not to be a constituent of a common household. In that case, each person was treated as a separate household. In this study, a household constituted members of the same family who were blood related or through adoption and were living in the same household on a daily basis.

1.13 Summary

Chapter one has generally explained the main research problem as an assessment of the communication in the family that results from how the youth use their mobile phones. This was placed on the background that the mobile communication continues to play a central role in communication as seen from the adoption and subscription rates. The chapter has given an insight on the statement of the problem as the rising tension in the family that results from the youth’s crave for autonomy as they used mobile phones. The youth used the mobile phone to structure their social developments among themselves and their peers at the expense of their family domestic ties. The technology accorded them the desired privacy. The chapter has provided the purpose of the study, the objectives and research questions, as well as the justification and significance of the study. It went ahead to discuss the assumptions and highlighted the scope, the limitations and the delimitations of the study and the study’s operational terms.
The next chapter will present the study’s literature review through an elaborate deliberation on the theoretical framework that informed the study. It will provide a general and empirical literature review and then explain the conceptual framework for the study.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review that gives insights on the youth mobile phone culture perceived to affect interaction and communication in the family. The chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study mainly based on the Symbolic Interactionism Theory. The Technological Determinism paradigm, the Family Systems theory and the Cultural Onion Model were used to complement the discussions on the use of mobile communication technology in the family and the possible communication behavior outcomes resulting from the use. The chapter then proceeds to give a detailed general discussion on the growth and adoption of communication technologies and its impact on society, while highlighting aspects of disruptive technologies and the rise of social media. It then discusses family communication and values. The chapter then presents the empirical literature review, citing a few studies across the globe on mobile phone communication technology. It finally outlines the conceptual framework. This chapter generally demonstrates the interrelatedness of all these aspects and how they built or contributed towards the objectives and the research questions of the study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Symbolic Interactionism Theory’s tenets. The phenomenon investigated in this study was the ‘use of the mobile phone’ as experienced by the youth and how this use impacted on family communication. For a deeper understanding of the theory, it was important to delve into a detailed historical
background of the Symbolic Interactionism Theory while demonstrating how it contributed to this particular study.

Symbolic Interactionism Theory

This study was informed by Herbert Blumer’s Symbolic Interactionism Theory’s tenets which interrogated the human process of interaction. As humans interact, they engage in the formation of meanings through group life and conduct. Individuals form human groups through ‘action’ and from it ‘act’ towards the interaction process. It is through their actions that common symbols of meanings are derived at. Social relations result from communication with others and the family in general.

The background of the symbolic interactionism theory

The symbolic interactionism theory stemmed from the micro interactionist tradition, an American interpretive sociology. Most of the notable contributors and developers of this Tradition extended from Charles Horton Cooley, W I Thomas, Charlers Pierce Sanders, George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer and others. Schneider (1963) pointed out that all these scholars of the time built upon a sociology that sought to understand human beings from the social world out of human consciousness. This tradition or idealism’s main proponent was Immanuel Kant who influenced others such as Georg Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer and Wilhem Dilthey and whose school of thought was generally referred to as the ‘German Philosophy’ (Schneider, 1963).

The development of the ‘German philosophy’ was documented to have greatly influenced the American native sociology since most of the American philosophers had studied in German in the late 19th century (Schneider, 1963). During that time, American colleges were being reformed into graduate research universities, using the
German universities which had already undergone a revolution 75 years earlier, as the yard stick for the academic change. Thus the 1940’s and the 1950’s witnessed a great intellectual influence in America, stemming from the German philosophy. This scholarship wave gave rise to ‘Symbolic Interactionism’, ‘Ethnomethodology’ and ‘Phenomenology’.

With reference to this research, the study investigated family communication that emerged as the youth used their mobile phones. Through relationships, the mobile phone had the ability to create a social world through discourse. Although this communication device is consciously and individually used, it provides an opportunity for people to relate in diverse ways. This technology’s provision of participatory communication among its users could be traced back to Dewey’s (1922) observation and contribution on the sociological interpretation of the mind of the individual. Dewey (1922) argued that the individual was not an isolated observer of the physical world but a participant in human society whose mind was filled up through the medium of language.

The origin of the symbolic interactionism theory can be traced from the contributions by Charles Sanders Pierce who founded ‘Semiotics’, the science of signs. Pierce’s main contribution to the tradition was reflected in his interest in knowledge which had a scientific inquiry. His philosophy proposed a science that was founded in the processes of the human mind. Schneider (1963) also recounts Pierce as having broadened the method of logic not just to include science and philosophy but to become a theory of the mind in all activities.

The development on the studies of the ‘mind’ was further advanced by other scholars like Charles Horton Cooley whose contribution was based on his observation of children who always had imaginary playmates, even though they were physically
alone. Cooley (1906) observed that children were always preoccupied in the imagination of being in the presence of others and these children silently carried out imaginary conversations within them. Cooley (1906) advanced that children initially learnt to talk and talking with imaginary playmates was an intermediate stage for children to internalize talking.

Cooley (1902) also observed that adults perceived other people from the way they presented themselves during interaction, mostly from what they said and how they said it. Cooley (1902) declared that people’s association with others evidently consisted in the relation between people’s ideas of them and the rest of the mind. In this sense, Cooley proposed a kind of phenomenological empiricism. One only encountered other people’s ideas but not the people themselves. Cooley’s essence of sociology refuted that one could learn from weighing or measuring people’s physical traits that gave clue to their true personality. Cooley (1902) affirmed that it was only through observation of the true fact of society which consisted of imaginations that people had of one another.

Cooley’s (1902) ideas greatly influenced George Herbert Mead whose entry point in the tradition was to distinguish between the ‘self’ and the ‘body’. Mead (as cited in Morris, 1934) argued that humans ‘bodily parts could run without the humans’ conscious control. When people were completely absorbed in doing something there was no element of the ‘self’. Mead (as cited in Morris, 1934) discerned that there were many experiences of the self without reference to a body: in thinking, imagination or in memory. Mead (as cited in Morris, 1934) took the ‘sociology of the mind’ further than Cooley (1902), since Mead’s perspective demonstrated that people had multiple selves which meant individuals had different
relationships to different people and were one thing to one person and another thing all together to someone else.

The rise of symbolic interactionism theory

Herbert Blumer developed Mead’s sociology further after Mead’s death in 1931. Blumer (1934) coined what had been started by Mead, as ‘Symbolic Interactionism’. He advanced that people had a perspective of ‘quality’ in social life, and if they found something to be prestigious, they would adopt that quality of life. If the quality was defined otherwise, there would be a rejection of the same since it would be considered socially deviant. Blumer (1934) further stated that institutions such as the state, the family or the economy only existed as people who came together in certain situations or circumstances. People acted and constructed actions together. Blumer (1934) saw the society not as a structure but a process emerging from continuous negotiation of perspectives. Blumer (1934) implied ‘reality’ was socially constructed and any institution could change. It was this thinking that motivated the investigation of the quality of relationship that resulted from the adoption of mobile phones.

In understanding the world around us Blumer (1934) disputed the quantitative approach to inquiry of knowledge, arguing despite its popularity as a quantitative survey method, it had lost the essence of social life. He condemned questionnaires that only answered about one’s attitude and were a mere way of talking to the interviewer but had nothing to do with how people behaved in various situations. The approach to understanding ‘truth’ was to take what he called the ‘insider’s’ approach to situations.
The position taken above was backed by the phenomenological approach research undertaken in this study (Husserl, 1950). Phenomenology as developed by Edmund Husserl, just like Blumer (1934) rejected empirical evidence to inquiry of knowledge and instead embraced an inquiry where no experiment or scientific observations approved or disapproved people’s lived experiences. Both the Symbolic Interactionism Theory and the Phenomenology approach were associated with anti-positivism which embraced the interpretive approach into inquiry of knowledge which was relevant to this study.

Carter and Fuller (2015) coincided with Blumer (1934) who opined that Symbolic Interactionism Theory thrived on the perspective of ‘Roles’. Social institutions are made up of roles into which individuals fit. The family has a role of a father, mother, children, sibling etc. Fusun and Sebnem (2015) observed that these roles preexisted rather than negotiated by participants. They stated further that these roles linked up the functionalistic view of the society, especially when the society was described as being made up of institutionalized norms and values. This is to say that one individual could simultaneously be a wife to her husband and a mother to her children, the same person could be a daughter to her parents or an employee to her boss. The questions that arose then were on how people dealt with the conflict among different parts of their role set and how the ‘self’ was embedded in social role. In this study, among the questions, was on how the youth communicated with peers as they communicated with their parents. These were some of the pertinent concerns in this study.

Application of the symbolic interactionism theory

In the symbolic interactionism theory, Blumer (1934) viewed an individual as a subject with a social position who was also responsible for designing the
communication context identity. The Symbolic Interactionism Theory over a period of time gave prominence to the interaction process making the theory very important in communication studies. Carter and Fuller (2015) also believed that this theory advanced the view that the ‘mind’, ‘body’, and ‘conduct’ were intertwined units. It was easy to resonate with all these scholars, thus making the theory very pertinent to this study since an individual could be examined from his or her interactional level.

Carter and Fuller (2015) and Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) depicted the family as a unit of interacting personalities. In family interactions, human behavior was understood from symbols which emerged through human interaction. With relevance to this study, the new media and communication technologies built upon the concept of interactionism, while promoting interaction and active participation. In this research the mobile phone user was both the sender and the recipient at the same time, completing the cycle in the interaction process. Mobile telephony was argued to change the nature of communication through its services such as e-mail, chats, voice calls and message texting (Drago, 2015). This is why this study examined how the youth used the applications or features on their mobile phones.

The Symbolic Interactionism Theory interrogated three core principles; ‘meaning’, ‘language’ and ‘thought’. Blumer (1934) advanced that these three principles gave a better insight in understanding the creation of a ‘person’s self’ and ‘socialization’. Nonetheless in this study, support stemmed only from the two principles: ‘meaning’ and ‘language’. Blumer (1934) explained that ‘meaning’ was reflected on the ability of human beings to act towards people and things based on individual meanings assigned to those people or things. Miller (2005) viewed ‘language’ as significant symbols that people assigned shared meanings within the society. She affirmed that ‘meaning’ in any language arose out of interaction and
within the social context of the society or the interacting parties. In this study, the mobile phone as experienced by the youth resulted in mutual or different communication relationships, depending on how they were interpreted. Both Herbert Blumer and George Mead believed assigning meaning resulted from people engaging in speech with others in identifying meaning and development of discourse (Blumer, 1934).

The strength of the theory was on its heavy reliance on the ‘symbolic meaning’. Fusun and Sebnem (2015) concurred with Blumer (1934) that people developed and relied on ‘symbolic meanings’ as they engaged in the interaction process. In this study the family interactions and the ‘individual’ and ‘personal meanings’ that members within families imposed on objects, events, and behavior was examined. The study investigated the personal meanings that resulted from the use of the ‘mobile phone’ as an ‘object’ in a bid to understand communication in the family.

In the Symbolic Interactionism Theory, Blumer (1934) advanced the perspective that human intelligence lay in the human society and that there was a link between the ‘mind and ‘conduct’. The support base in Blumer’s (1934) theory was on the strong emphasis that people behaved based on what they believed in and their personal social constructs. It is for this reason that this study answered the second research question which was on how the use of the mobile phone technology affected the way the youth communicated with their parents in their everyday communication.

In contemporary technological developments, Fusun and Sebnem (2015) observed that communication advancements to new digital levels had removed the traditional barriers and limitations that were related to social context. Blumer (1934) discerned that the world was socially constructed and the meaning of objects, events,
and behaviors came from the interpretation people assigned. For example, in this study, a ‘parent’ who was less frequently ‘voice’ called by his or her youth, may have wondered why the ‘youth’ were not frequently calling him or her. This was a source for worry. On the other hand, a youth that was frequently ‘voice’ called by the parent negatively interpreted it as being ‘micro’ managed. Thus a ‘genuine’ concern became a source of conflict. Nonetheless, this study also revealed positive family relationships where both parties related well and called each other thus reinforcing the family values of kinship. It was for this reason that this study examined the relationship between the use of the mobile phone and the sustenance of family values.

Blumer (1934) explained that Symbolic Interactionism Theory oriented itself to the principle that individuals responded to the meaning they constructed as they interacted with one another. Carter and Fuller (2015), while in agreement with Blumer (1934), not only viewed individuals as active agents in the social world influenced by culture and social organization, but also were instrumental in producing the culture, society and meaningful conduct that influenced them. It is in this vein that this study answered the fourth research question which was on how the use of mobile phones had affected relationships in the family.

Technological Determinism Paradigm

Understanding technological determinism

Since this study was to seek an insight on the use of mobile communication technology and how it affected communication and family relationships, it was prudent to examine the aspects of technology that helped explain how technology was utilized by the society through a reflection on the Technological Determinism paradigm.
McLuhan (1964) opined that human beings dominated the natural world through their desire to enhance communication. Just like the way vehicles were seen as an extension of people’s feet and telescopes their sights, the written word was an extension of the spoken language, thoughts and feelings through time and space. McLuhan (1964) advanced an argument that a medium was a people’s extension of ‘themselves’ bearing a psychological and social consequence. McLuhan (1964) also viewed the content of any emerging medium as one that borrowed from the previous one. For instance, the content of film was that of photography, while the content of television was essentially film. The internet was an amalgamation of television, photography, and text. The advent of new media that was associated with innovations like the internet and its offspring of social networking, brought what McLuhan referred to as ‘cool media’ (McLuhan, 1964).

McLuhan’s (1964) allusion to the eventual “cooling down” of media was a spot-on prediction. He juxtaposed the level of audience’s participation with a medium to his metaphor or analogy of “hot - cold”. What McLuhan (1964) described as ‘hot’ was the ‘hands off’ media of the television and the film, since the consumers or the audience of the media could not do much to add to the communication experience but remain a ‘passive’ audience. On the contrary, McLuhan (1964) viewed a ‘cooler’ medium as one that consumers could “touch,” or influence through feedback and even actively participate in. The mobile phone communication provided such a platform.

This study envisaged understanding of the mobile phone communication technological environment and its consequences on the family setting. The purpose was to probe the use of the mobile technology and examine its consequences. In using the Phenomenology approach advocated by Husserl (1950) there were no laid
expectations but to engage in deep and personal individual insights of the respondents’ relationships with others as they used the mobile phone.

The mobile phone communication technology was a people’s extension of themselves that manifested itself in personal time and space. In most cases users were unconscious of the effects of the technology they used since they took it for granted. Roncallo-Dow and Scolari (2016) advanced the view that new communication technologies were applications of scientific knowledge put to work in the world and whose effects were seen as the primary mechanism that shaped the society.

In mobile communication, the youth were at liberty to interact freely resulting into a culture which Castells et al. (2007) referred to as the ‘mobile youth culture’. This culture disregarded physical space and resulted into social networking amongst peers. This thinking motivated the investigation of the youth’s uses of the features or applications on their phones.

McLuhan (1964) stated that extensions mirrored the human body. In his contribution to the paradigm, McLuhan (1964) saw vehicles as an extension of people’s feet, while machines an extension of people’s hands. The television and film became an extension of the eye and the radio the people’s voices. In this study, it was appropriate then to allude from McLuhan’s argument that the ‘mobile phone’ indeed was an extension of the ‘mouth’ and the ‘ear’.

Impact of technology on society

Communication technologies such as the mobile phone, whose adoption rates have generated a new age, created complex patterns of understanding and interaction. Mamman-Muhammad and Ogbru (2018) observed that the expansion of communication technologies continued to marvel users. However, Mamman-Muhammad and Ogbru (2018) posited that the new communication technology either
by content or by infrastructure was shaping people’s perception of their immediate surroundings and relations. This adoption accelerated the fading aspects of people or societal cultural heritage while opening new frontiers of communication, understanding and shared experiences. Oduor et al. (2014) proposed that technological development determined social change and argued that technology changed people’s thinking and their interaction with others.

Mobile phones are pure interactive technologies especially between the ‘user’ and the ‘content’ and also between the ‘user’ and the ‘medium’. This study focused on the fact that users generated content influencing cultural values. According to Mamman-Muhammad and Ogbu (2018) this interplay reduced humans to caricatures; a view shared by Norman (2015) who discerned that the initial intention of the new communication technology was to unify humanity but instead it ruined cultural institutions. This study investigated the relationship between the use of the mobile technology and the sustenance of family values prompted by the fact that communication technologies had become attractive to users. Besides, these technologies gave the users an opportunity for user interactivity.

Technological determinists Smith and Marx (1994) posited that technology as a whole was the key mover in social change. No one could fully understand a medium until it was seen through the lens of the new dominant medium. The advancement and the adoption of a new medium usurped the previous dominant medium. Communication technologies had an impact on people’s relations for instance the adoption of ‘silence’ as a way of life in television viewing. Nguru (2014) was skeptical over television viewing which was initially considered a family activity but had been constructed in a manner that minimized human interactions. Families watched television together, while saying very little to each other. The use of the
mobile phone which is a communication device that was initially expected to build stronger relationships became disruptive in nature.

These observations are debatable and therefore called for an interrogation on the influence of mobile phones on family ties and relations that was influenced by the youth’s cultural habits of the mobile phone use. Mamman-Muhammad and Ogbu (2018) described the youth as rebels in the society with a particular cultural identity that would resist any forms of domination. This was backed by Castells et al. (2007) who saw the youth’s use of mobile phones as one that created new meanings and relations at family levels. It was for this reason that this research investigated how the use of mobile phones affected relationships in the family.

Divergent Agencies of Technology

Smith and Marx (1994) explained the Technological Determinism as a paradigm that thrived on the view that technology as a whole was the key mover in social change. These scholars posited two major ideas concerning Technological Determinism:

a. The development of technology itself followed a predictable, traceable path largely beyond cultural or political influence.

b. Technology in turn had effects on societies that were inherent, rather than those that were socially conditioned or produced.

Whenever a technology was introduced in the society, the latter organized itself to support and develop it further. Smith and Marx (1994) argued that technology could be seen as a basis for all human activities and that its influence did not necessarily differ based on how much a technology was or could be used. In other words, they suggested that ‘technology’ was the key governing instrument in the society. With reference to this study and depending on the perspective taken, it could
be argued that the mobile telephony had a great impact on people’s activities and relations. In other words human agency seemed minimal.

Beard (1927) another technological determinist also suggested that technological development not only determined social change but also changed the way people thought and how they interacted with others. Beard (1927) believed that social progress was driven by technological innovation, which in turn followed an inevitable course. Beard’s (1927) idea of ‘progress’ was centralized around the idea that social problems could be solved by technological advancements which moved the society forward. The implication was that it was difficult to stop progress or control technology. Technological Determinists Green (2002) and Smith and Marx (1994) suggested that the society was somehow powerless since it allowed technology to drive social changes. This view subtly suggested that the family as an institution was likely to be altered by the proliferation and adoption of the mobile communication technology.

Croteau and Hoynes (2003) adjoined that as technology was stabilized, its design tended to dictate users’ behaviors, consequently diminishing human agency. Nonetheless, this stance ignored the social and cultural circumstances in which the technology was developed. Croteau and Hoynes (2003) characterized Technological Determinism as an external force introduced into a social situation that produced a series of effects. However, Postman (1992) disputed this thinking acknowledging that a society or culture interacted with the technologies it used and even shaped them. Postman (1992) held the view that the uses of technology were largely determined by the structure of the technology itself.

Nonetheless, there were divergent technological determinists who considered technology as neutral. These argued that technology was neither good nor bad and
what mattered was how the technology was utilized. Among them, Green (2002) believed that technology was neutral only if it had never been used before, or if no one knew what it was going to be used for. Green (2002) drew the analogy of ‘guns’ and posed the argument that they could be classified as ‘neutral’ if the society was not aware of their existence and functionality. Green (2002) further argued that society was drawn into social progression only after it became knowledgeable about technology.

In a conflicting idea on the use of technology, Winner (2004) wondered whether or not people were simply unconcerned over the knowledge or how they interacted with technology. Winner (2004) believed that people could take control of the direction in which technology was driving them; however, it required the society not to passively consume it but actively transform it. The knowledge of how to create and enhance technology and how to use it was a socially bound knowledge. This view strongly supported the human agency aspect of the interaction with the mobile phone communication since users independently and individually made use of it.

In another vein, Williams (1974) criticized Technological Determinism by advancing that social movements defined technological processes. With regard to communication, Williams (1974) asserted that users’ played a great role in determining the progression of any technology as opposed to technology driving the society. This view resonated with Winner’s (2004) thus putting a stress on people’s supremacy over technology, making it the people’s subject. This was the very essence of this study that examined how the youth used the mobile communication technology.
The Family Systems Theory

Having given details on the relevance of the Technological Determinism paradigm in complementing the main Symbolic Interactionism Theory in this study, the Family Systems Theory was also very important to this study as it explained the family interaction component. The mobile communication was seen to disrupt the nature of communication in the family resulting from its adoption. Haefner (2014) reckoned that the Family Systems Theory was developed by the late American Psychiatrist Dr. Murray Bowen between 1913 and 1990. The theory about relationships provided a paradigm for conceptualization of human behavior and an insight to treatment of human problems. Instead of seeing individuals as an emotional unit of their own, or as a separate entity, the individual was to be understood in the context of his or her functional relationships with others.

Haefner (2014) espied that the Family Systems Theory evolved from the knowledge of natural sciences, evolutionary biology, and research on families. It is a natural systems theory where Bowen (1976) viewed the human family system like any other living form. The human family system was equated to nature and was governed by the relationship processes similar to other forms of life on earth. It claimed that a change in any part of the system would automatically entail compensatory changes in other parts of the system. Whittney (2014) decried that the face to face communication had drastically been replaced by the mobile phone. According to the Family Systems Theory, the mobile phone use translated into an emotional process which transcended cultures and regulated the functioning of different social groups. Bowen (1976) outlined four foundation concepts that the theory thrived upon:
The anxiety foundation

Anxiety is seen from an important variable in the functioning of individuals, families and organizations in response to real or current threat. Bowen (1976) outlined two kinds of anxieties in this foundation: ‘acute anxiety’ and ‘chronic anxiety’. Acute anxiety occurred when the threat was real but short-lived. However, much of the people’s problems were affected by their chronic anxiety which lingered on even when the threat seemed to have subsided. Chronic anxiety is about people’s reactions to other people’s reactions to stress. Haefner (2014) described chronic anxiety as the fear of what might happen which could be long-lasting and transmitted from earlier generations. It resulted in exaggerated responses, sustained wariness, suspicion, physical tension and ailments, fatigue and irritability. Anxiety played an important role in people’s emotional health and adaptability. The use of mobile phones was seen as a new chronic ailment that was disrupting family relations as it brought the death of face to face interactions, yet Acacio (2012) declared the face to face interactions as the most suitable method for resolving problems and contentious issues in the family.

The two basic life forces foundation

In the Family Systems Theory every organism or system is governed by two counterbalancing life forces: the force towards ‘togetherness’ and the force towards ‘individuality’. Bowen (1976) explained that the force towards togetherness drove people’s need for social support, affection and love. While people in the family strived to be together as a need, the tendency to expect self and others to be alike, to think alike, to act alike, and to feel alike grew. When chronic anxiety was high Acacio (2012) coincided with Bowen (1976) that the force towards togetherness was strong, and symptoms emerged.
On the other hand, Whittney (2014) acknowledged that people were also driven by the need to be unique, thus eliciting their ‘individuality’. Such people had the capacity to stand on their ground, act on good principles and be responsible for themselves while being in a meaningful relationship with the people they considered important. With reference to this study, Burke, Segrin, and Farris (2018) suggested that the youth had adjusted to new social communication environments and expectations giving them increased independence. This phase involved changes in family relationships and dynamics particularly in terms of the renegotiation that occurred in parent–youth relationships. Burke et al. (2018) underpinned that whereas some youth continued to invite their parents’ participation in or management of routine aspects of their lives, other youth deemed this involvement unwelcome. These perceptions were described as the relational turbulence resulting from the youth’s desires to identify themselves with their individuality mirrored from the significant others as they facilitated each other’s daily goals through the use of the mobile phone.

The emotional system foundation.

The third foundation is the emotional system that was based on human functioning, both in individuals and families. Bowen (1976) referred to the innate or instinctual guidance system of an organism which was shaped by evolution. It included mechanisms for driving and guiding the organism through life. The responses involved both reflex-like, automatic responses as well as learned responses which had become automatic. Haefner (2014) observed that this guidance system operated in all living things in which many of the biochemical and mechanical processes were similar. Bowen (1976) opined that humans were regulated by the emotional system to a far greater extent than they realized. While the emotional
system was the only guidance system available to animals, human beings possessed both the feeling and the intellectual systems.

The feeling system appeared to be the link between the emotional system and the intellectual system yet it was the cognitive or conscious expression of emotion which was generally not felt. The intellectual system comprised the ability to comprehend and to communicate complicated abstract ideas which Haefner (2014) denoted, served as a second guidance system for the individual. Both guidance systems, the emotional and the intellectual, were useful, depending on the conditions facing the person. The ability to separate and choose between the emotional and the intellectual system to guide behavior was an important asset.

Burke et al. (2018) hinted that most families were well equipped to navigate the developmental challenges of the youth, but the argument advanced was that the parents and the youth did not necessarily share the same emotional and intellectual capacities as their youth. The youth pursued different goals regarding their autonomy giving possible rise to communication difficulties. Families differed widely to an extent of perceiving youth autonomy as deleterious and negatively affecting the parent–youth interactions.

The family as an emotional unit foundation.

Bowen (1976) viewed the family as an organism whose properties were greater than the sum of its individual parts, and that each part was emotionally dependent on each other. A change in the system would automatically bring forth changes in the other parts of the system. The family system was characterized by automatic, instinctual, reflex-like processes which evolved over the generations. It pointed to the fact that peoples’ functioning in families was emotionally influenced by one another and that the people were emotionally interdependent more than they
realized. Symptoms in individuals’ e.g. physical, emotional and social dysfunction were conceptualized as reflective of the intense emotional process in the family and not as pathology in the individual.

Contribution of the family systems theory

This section will look at how the Family Systems Theory contributed and complemented the main Symbolic Interactionism Theory. Whittney (2014) accounted for the value of mobile phone communication in people’s everyday life and especially in the family. This scholar asserted that this communication technology was used by people of all age for interaction and other purposes. The youth were no exception; since most of them used it for communication and access of the internet. Nonetheless, Whittney (2014) was skeptical about the use of mobile communication devices which she viewed as disruptive, cautioning parents that this technology could negatively affect the youth. This caution was reinforced in the study findings that revealed there were high levels of mobile phone addiction among the youth. The parent figures respondents in this study, contrary to Rodgers (2011) who advocated for more vigilance on youth mobile use, found themselves helpless in the bid to increase control over the youth’s use of the mobile phone fearing for the autonomy it accorded them. This brought about the chronic anxiety that the Bowen (1976)’s Family Systems Theory identified.

While the mobile phone gave opportunities for families to coordinate well, it heightened the tensions resulting from the youth’s desire to be free from their parent’s authority. The youth regarded their handsets as ‘private gadgets’ and received most of the incoming calls away from their parents. The study revealed a general tension and mistrust between the two generations. Awiti (2011) referred to this as ‘dialectical tension’ resulting from the friction of the two generations within the family. Much as
people belonged to a family they remained distinct individuals with varied psychological and emotional appeals, a reality Awiti (2011) affirmed was inevitable.

Goswami and Singh (2016) identified that the adult’s uses of the mobile were reneged to general communication activities; the study revealed that the youth were more inclined towards using the mobile phones for activities other than communication. Some youth respondents felt that the type of handset was more important as it gave them social status among their peer. Besides, it gave them ample opportunities to upload pictures on social media and general updates about their day to day lives. The youth were more flexible and versatile to the reception of new innovations in the mobile phone, rendering them more technological savvy. According to Goswami and Singh (2016) this created certain behavioral disorders. The study findings showed most parents were worried that the youth were probably navigating immoral prohibited sites and expressed their frustration for not being in control. Other contentions included the youth’s emphasis on mobile phone interaction to maintain peer-group networks than family interaction which was a recipe for tension in the family.

Citing generational conflicts within the family group, Goswami and Singh (2016) and Ling, Bertel, and Sundsoy (2012) viewed the mobile phone as the contemporary and peculiar ‘digital’ umbilical cord that tied parents with their children. Parents were happy buying phones for their youthful members of the family to monitor them. They interpreted the mobile phone as a security device keeping the youth safe. The argument advanced herein was whether the extreme high parental zeal marched the surveillance of the virtual space where the youth navigated. It was then easy to hypothesize that parents were worried about the ‘physical space’ of their youth but not about the ‘virtual space’ where the youth navigated. On the contrary,
this study revealed that parents were indeed more worried about the ‘virtual space’ than the youth’s ‘physical space’.

Parents initially thought that the mobile phone gave them control of the youth, but they realized their youthful members of the family were freer. Rice et al. (2016) observed that the mobile phone accorded the youth some sense of autonomy. Among the many reasons for mobile phone adoption was the ability to access social media through the phone which had the opportunity for self-directed nature where users produced their own unregulated content. The youth participated and used social media without any control or input from adults. This self-directed nature also meant that the youth could seek information for themselves, enabling them to be the new forms of agency.

As parents used the mobile phone for parenting purposes, the youth’s time was focused more on peer group interaction. Despite parents buying their youth mobile phones for safety reasons or for wanting to have some control over them, the youth’s key desires were to stay in contact with their peers. Nonetheless, Castells et al. (2007) and Rice et al. (2016) coincided that much as the youth yearned for their independence from their parents, the youth were still dependent and would continue to stay in touch with their parents; however, still detesting their parents’ interest in their personal and social space. This was seen from the study findings that whenever the youth had personal problems they preferred to have a face to face interaction with their parents.

Burke et al. (2018) identified ‘over parenting’ as one of the reasons for the tension mentioned above. They described ‘over parenting’ as the parents’ inappropriate over involvement in the lives of their youthful members of the family which inhibited the youth’s autonomy. This was reflected in Bowen (1976)’s second
foundation of the two basic forces in the Family Systems Theory where parents wished that their children and youthful members of the family would be like them. Burke et al. (2018) shared the same view as Schiffrin and Liss (2017) that the individual characteristics, such as self-efficacy and depression, acted as conduits through which problematic communication behaviors associated with over parenting were transmitted.

Darlow, Norvilitis, and Schuetze (2017) observed that over parenting was accompanied by parental uncertainty and concern over possible hazards the youth were likely to experience. In this study, the fears were over the use of the mobile phone. The communication gadget was seen as a relational turbulence with perceived interference and facilitation of deviant communication behaviors. It was for this reason that this study investigated how the usage of the mobile phone affected the way the youth communicated with their parents in everyday communication.

The Family Systems Theory’s emotional system foundation alluded that there was an innate or instinctual guidance system of an organism which evolution shaped (Bowen, 1976). Since the youth had adjusted to new social communication environments, Burke et al. (2018) suggested that the youth were demanding their autonomy. This phase involved changes in family relationships especially between the parental figures and the youth. Burke et al. (2018) observed that the youth detested parental involvement in their activities. The use of the mobile phone gave them a platform for the perceived rebellion.

Burke et al. (2018) were skeptical that much as the mobile phones were useful gadgets for parental control, the youth defied this control in various ways. Among the techniques the youth used were not being truthful about their whereabouts or had their phones switched off and gave excuses of a dead battery, or claiming they had left the
phone charging unattended. This was evident too in this study. The youth tried all means to resist the nature of parental control and the mobile phone provided opportunities for this relational transition. This was a source of emotional stress and instability in the family resulting from the perceived disruptive technology.

In order to understand the concept of ‘over parenting’ in the family environment, it was valuable to highlight its associations and the salient interpersonal and family constructs. Burke et al. (2018) claimed that ‘over parenting’ was associated with several perceptions of quality family communication through parents’ expectations of the youth’s behavior that elicited parents’ anxiety resulting from youth’s distancing of themselves. The youth equally had their own perceptions of their parents’ anxiety and emotional criticism. Burke et al. (2018) advanced that it was not surprising that the youth experienced these undesirable outcomes, as over parenting was also associated with authoritarian parenting behaviors and family communication patterns reflecting conformity both of which inhibited coping and adjustment. Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield, and Weber (2014) concurred with Burke et al. (2018) suggesting that this had made the youth seek greater independence. That is why this study examined the ability of the mobile phone in sustaining family values.

A further observation of the youth’s independence by Burke et al. (2018) was from the view that most parents were unfamiliar with the persons their youthful members of the family were communicating with. As a result, parents found it difficult to understand what went through the minds of the youth, their worries or relations. In family relations, the youth distanced themselves; while at the same time began new relationships, although based on virtual contact and communication. The study findings revealed the tension between the two generations citing parenting
challenges as a result of modern communication technologies. The family system as a unit was suddenly being disrupted.

Rodgers (2011) aligned the possible tension to the moral panic literature that portrayed the youth as potential victims and perpetrators of family defiance resulting from mobile telephony. In the review of the media representations of the youth, Rodgers (2011) concluded that mobile telephony was equally receiving negative publicity, as was with the case of the media’s perceived negative influence on its audience. The argument posed was that mobile phones enabled the youth to interact with anyone at any time, even in supervised spaces. Besides, the literature depicted the youth as having negatively embraced digital technologies which gave them access to millions of digital spaces. This negative review of mobile telephony was perceived to create tensions among the two generations.

Critical scholars decried the deconstruction of the youth. Campbell (2008) and Ling et al. (2012) shared the same view that as the youth developed, the media portrayed them in some negative light, a view that Giroux (2003) and Mazzarella (2003) strongly supported. They decried the popular acceptance that demonized the youth as a people with impulsive urges, sexual insatiability, readily open to seductive market forces or peer pressures and generally a breed to fear for (Giroux 2003; Mazzarella 2003).

In another dimension, Herring (2008) considered narratives that viewed the internet through an adult perception. The internet and other mediated communications were labeled as ‘erotic’ gaining popularity among the youth. With access to the mobile phone which accommodated the internet, social media and other digital based applications, the youth were perceived to possess a new medium which parental
figures viewed as a source of mayhem. This was the reason why this research investigated how the use of the mobile phone affected relationships.

The Cultural Onion Model

Analysis and application of the cultural onion model

The Cultural Onion Model that was originally developed by Gerard Hofstede made reference to symbols, heroes, rituals and values that had culminated into practices. Hofstede’s (1980) model identified and described the first layer around the core as ‘rituals’. For instance, these rituals could be exemplified in the ways of personal hygiene, giving examples of the Asians who showered in the evening, while the Europeans in the morning. Hofstede (1980) described the German as a people who liked to shake hands often, while the Malay tenderly touched the fingertips and then pointed it to the heart. Nonetheless, Hofstede (1980) observed that these rituals were slowly changing.

Hofstede (1980) identified the second layer around the core in the model as ‘heroes’ where a ‘hero’ was described as a factious person who influenced the culture. Such heroes included national heroes, photo-models or scientists or all people, who played a role-model in that society. Lastly, Hofstede (1980) highlighted the third layer as ‘symbols’ which appeared as brands, explaining that these symbols usually moved according to the momentary fashion.

In applying Hofstede’s (1980) Cultural Onion Model, Donald Smith portrayed an analogy of a typical ‘cultural onion’ that sought to explain different cultures. This model was relevant in this study as it complemented the Symbolic Interactionism Theory by helping in data analysis since the researcher dichotomized, described and analyzed the different communication cultures and values that resulted from the use of
the mobile phone in the family. Smith (1992) equated ‘culture’ and an ‘onion’ in the following ways:

i. The onion was multi-layered but these layers were often inseparable from the next.

ii. The outer layer shaped the invisible layer underneath.

iii. The value and substance of the onion was in the underneath layers, not in the visible skin.

iv. The core which was the center could re-create the whole.

The model demonstrated a picture of an onion made of layers whose traits were contained in the onion’s core. Every culture was depicted to have a different worldview with layers created by its experience, authority structures and behavioral norms. These layers were as varied as people’s experiences and authority structures. In the model, Smith (1992) outlined four layers of culture; the core, the experience, the authority and the behavioral.

In Smith’s (1992) analysis the ‘core’ was the heart of the culture that determined the shape of the layers and of the culture itself. It was from this core that a system of values was created from the accumulation of personal experiences about the world. Smith (1992) advanced that the worldview’s values, informal beliefs and assumptions existed at the core level. Claudio and Dominique (2012) defined values as deeply rooted, complex and patterned principles that provided guidelines for the way a society was expected to behave. With reference to this study, the core was equated to the youth mobile phone usage which affected the nature of communication in the family. The research made reference to family values that were either strengthened or weakened by the use of mobile communication. With reference to chapter one, Yu et al. (2018) documented the negative aspects of mobile technology
where family values were disrupted. While families which were on vacations aimed at having quality time for the family, some family members persistently used their mobile phones in solitary frustrating family bonding opportunities.

A parallel could be drawn between the core in the Cultural Onion Model and the space characterized by contemporary communication mobile networks. The existence of media convergence and improved communication technologies made the contemporary space reside within mobile phones. The youth viewed themselves from the lenses of peer identity while coming up with their youth mobile telephone culture (Ling et al., 2012). Mobile phones provided a great opportunity for the sustenance of this peer relationship but had other harmful effects such as family alienation. In investigating how the youth used the applications or features in their phones in their private spaces, the findings denoted that new negative cultural values emerged. These values were dichotomized and analyzed in detail in the analysis and interpretation of the findings in chapter 4.

Smith (1992) identified ‘experience’ as the other layer in the model, describing it as being made up of collective and personal experience. The model identified this level as being very close to the core of a culture that shaped it at a deeper level. Personal experiences that validated a person’s world view were revealed, alongside their view of authority and place in society (Smith, 1992). Since the youth experienced the mobile phone independently and subjectively, it meant it accorded them privacy and autonomy. The relevance of this level to this study was from Smith’s (1992) assertion that the true individual change took place at this level, as personal experiences lead to a re-assessment of long-held beliefs and values. This change, as found in this study, brought tension in human relationships.
Tension in the family arose from the perspective that the mobile phone influenced behavior and values. Idang (2015) postulated that the family for decades had the responsibility of transmitting norms, values, beliefs, and knowledge and practical skills to its members. It provided a platform for the initial point of interaction for any member of the family. With the advent of mobile communication, this study revealed family relations had been altered. The values that were relayed face to face were increasingly becoming difficult to transmit as the mobile phone had taken up the social space in the family and had greatly altered the face to face interaction. In pursuit of the study’s objectives, the study examined how the use of the mobile phone technology affected the way the youth communicated with their parents in everyday communication and how this impacted on family values. Variables like the frequency and duration of voice calls and face to face communication were examined. These also discussed in detail in chapter 4.

Smith (1992) also identified the authority layer in the model. There were several types of authorities that dictated how people behaved, forcing conformity to the culture’s norm. This study nonetheless only looked at one layer of authority; the social aspect of authority. This type of authority reinforced patterns and standards enforced by peer and societal pressure as seen from one’s desire to remain a part of one’s community. Nonetheless, Kihwele and Bali (2013) were skeptical over the youth as a community and the way they used their mobile phones which revealed were disruptive to learning outcomes in a study conducted in Tanzania. The youth were a community and belonged to their own world. They used the mobile phone whose numerous applications appealed to them such as the Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook etc. This study’s findings proclaim that the mobile communication is vital,
however, if not well used it affected the nature of communication in the family and the sustenance of family values.

Smith (1992) finally gave an insight on ‘behavioral’ layer in his Cultural Onion Model, describing it as the visible outer layer of culture that included patterns of behavior, objects used, language, food, clothes, and so on. There were certain behaviors that were overtly visible influencing peer and individual’s behavior. Ling et al. (2012) presumed that the strength of most individuals was on their personal identification with and within their peers. The individual was known and identified through social networking conveniently provided for by the mobile phone. The social networks dictated the direction for the individual. Idang (2015) postulated that the individual was identified with his or her peer on the social network platform for social discussions. In pursuit of the main objectives, the study examined the peer influence behavior.

In the same perspective, Idang (2015) observed that art had always been considered a human enterprise involving the production of aesthetic objects. People always admired innovative and creative objects, finding the aesthetic value in them which informed them of their sense of the arts and crafts they referred as ‘beautiful’. The mobile phone handsets were the contemporary aesthetic communication technology objects. In this study, the type of mobile phone handset one had determined the social status of the user in the society. The youth preferred showing off their mobile handsets which in their opinion gave them status (Ling et al., 2012). In achieving the study’s objectives, this study investigated how the youth exhibited certain attitudes towards the type of mobile phone handsets they possessed. These are discussed in detail in chapter 4.
Beyond the type of handsets, the research’s interest was on how much face to face communication existed in the family with the invasion of mobile phones. This was a communication behavior that was empirically investigated. Idang (2015) declined viewing ‘time’ from the Western context of ‘clock time’ but from the African perspective, citing meal times among others as very important family social events. They created an opportunity to share about the day’s activities through face to face communication. It was almost a ritual for families to be together during meal times which created a perfect opportunity for family bonding. This behavior was of interest in this study thus it was investigated to assess how families bonded even as they used mobile phone technologies. The study’s interest was in examining how much mobile phone and or face to face communication took place in the family and how this affected the relationship in the family. As stated earlier, chapter 4 will give a detailed discussion on the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

This part of the section has dealt on the theoretical framework that the study adopted. It has shown the interrelatedness of the main Symbolic Interactionism Theory with the complementing paradigm and theories mentioned herein. The next part of the section will give an overview and general discussion on the adoption and proliferation of the mobile telephony.

2.3 General Literature Review

This section presents a general discussion on the study. It discusses the development of communication technologies and the adoption rates of mobile telephony. It goes ahead to discuss the rising tensions in the family resulting from the autonomy the mobile communication accorded the youth. It gives an insight on the nature of disruptive technologies and the impact of social media. Finally, it discusses family communication and values which was a very crucial aspect of this study.
Development and Adoption of Communication Technologies

As mentioned earlier, Rice et al. (2016) acknowledged the society’s transformation to a digital communication world that had enhanced the user’s networking. These scholars’ views echoed McLuhan (1962, 1964) who argued that the society was shaped by the communication technologies of the present time. McLuhan (1962, 1964) gave an account of the development of communication technologies from the era of the print media to that of broadcast media. This development was captured by McLuhan’s (in) famous assertion that ‘The medium is the message’. The era prior to the contemporary personalized communication was characterized by mediated communication which was mostly a one-way transmission. Other early scholars in mobile telephony such as Castells et al. (2007), documented that the communication modes had shifted from the traditional approach to networks that took consideration of shared interests ignoring the geographic space and describing it as the rise of a new network society.

A keen observation on the relationship between communication technology and society revealed a heavy influence from mobile communication devices. The adoption of this technology reorganized human interactions to new levels. The individual person to person communication gained momentum creating a shift from place based communication. The wireless personal communication was the present and the future. In demographics adoption preferences, Rice et al. (2016) cited the youth topping the adoption list.

Rice et al. (2016) observed that the mobile phone helped people to form deliberate communities which were seen as a great social communication opportunity. Alternatively, the already connected communities’ or group relations were strengthened through social media which was converged in the mobile phone. Horst
(2006) documented the African perspective positing that the device was used to keep track of social relations and had become a necessary tool for the expression of identity in Africa. Nonetheless, the expression of identity and negotiation of social relation in social life differed from context to context and also between people.

The mobile phone also helped connect distant family and friends, even those who had never met in person or who had lost touch at some point in the past. Bruijn, Nyamnjoh, and Brinkman (2009) agreed that the mobile phone had compressed the distances between people in Africa, especially members of a family and friends living apart. This connectedness was viewed as an extension of social spaces, suggesting a new sense of flexibility in people’s relations. The mobile phone had made relating over distances easy, though this was not perceived by all as a positive means of communication.

Bruijn et al. (2009) also pointed out that the phone as mediator in society had changed people. The young people in Zanzibar fashioned the phone in different ways from the older generation. The youth in Zanzibar also used it for voice calls and text messages, contrary to West Africa where Burrell (2009) documented the Ghanaian youth as a group that spent their time browsing using mobile phones. The internet defined the youth’s social space, since it was on that platform that relationships were initiated and identities constructed in Ghana.

Much as this technology had been embraced, the implications of mobile phone communication on the amount and quality of human interaction as Drago (2015) observed were profound. The more the members of the family relied on mobile phone interactions, the less they engaged in face-to-face conversations. Drago (2015) lamented about it arguing that it contributed to members of the family being less competent in their communication with others. Drago (2015) was supported by
Whittney (2014) who denoted another negative trait alleging that mobile phone users could easily deceive others without being detected. This is also revealed in this study.

Adinlofu (2009) lamented about the social changes that transformed most African traditional institutions including the family. Adinlofu (2009) observed that the modern communication technologies intruded into the African practices to an extent of enslaving the African society with foreign values. This view could be disputed since ‘technology’ was what formed and informed the world. Adinlofu’s concerns should have been on how people adopted and used these technologies.

The youth viewed the mobile communication technology as a great platform that gave them an opportunity to create their identity. Rice et al. (2016) asserted that communicating with peers or being part of a chat group gave the youth a voice to their identity. According to Drago (2015) a more alarming scenario was that the youth’s deliberate avoidance of their parents. The youth preferred spending more time on their mobile phones accessing social media perceived to be destroying the basic fabric of human society or family relationships.

Drago (2015) expounded that the quality of communication between the youth and parents significantly affected family relationships. Castells et al. (2007) pointed out that the adoption of mobile communication and its social consequences was a daily experience. Ling et al. (2012) posited that the mobile phone allowed the peers to regularly update each other on aspects they considered important to their lives. In the absence of the mobile phones friends reserved bits of information to be delivered at the earliest opportunity availed when they next met. The mobile telephone cleared that backlog of information as peers got instant updates.

Accessing social media through mobile phones served as a way of confirmation and enactment of the youth’s identity which Rice et al. (2016) observe
helped the youth develop and use particular language, iconography and or images. Ling et al. (2012) affirmed that the youth embraced the technology due to the convergence of perceived appealing features in the device they found significant. Mobile phones capable of hosting such features gave them some kind of ‘social identity’.

Castells et al. (2007) and Rice et al. (2016) discerned that utilizing digital communications enabled users to actively share information, generate content, collaborate and interact with each other. These scholars coincided that the mobile phone gave the youth that opportunity for expression in their daily life viewing them as the ‘digital natives’. The youth’s lives were portrayed as those that were pegged on the amount of interaction with others which was a natural part of their everyday world. On the contrary, Appelbaum (2014) deemed the youth’s mobile phone interaction as a waste of time justifying that the youth spent time on social media with people they hardly knew.

McLuhan (1964) foreshadowed that communication technological advances would entirely shift the traditional society to a more personal communication society. This was seen in the widespread adoption of mobile communication that was having an impact on the family as it continued to contribute to new forms of social order. Social networks had become too personalized, consequently generating a worrying trend resulting from selectivity of network that enhanced cohesion in peer groups and or exclusion.

Gapsiso and Wilson (2015) and Whittney (2014) were apprehensive of certain negative social traits emanating from mobile phone use. Whittney (2014) identified the followings adverse effects of the mobile phone use by the youth:
i. Through the mobile phones, the youth engaged in cyber bullying of other youth.

ii. The youth spent many hours on their mobile phones at the expense of spending time with family members.

iii. Exposure of youth to pornography was rampant as they found themselves prey from sexual predators after uploading photos of themselves or discussing sex online with someone they were not acquainted.

The argument advanced in the research was that the new communication technologies continued to shape people’s lives. The society transited from mediated communication to communication technologies that were more personal in nature. The youth as documented by varied scholars, set the pace when it came to adoption of new communication technologies that facilitated the emergence of the ‘mobile youth culture’. The growth and expansion of ‘social media’ and the lack of a regulatory framework became a major concern among adults since the youth continued to structure their social developments among themselves and enjoyed the privacy and autonomy the mobile phone accorded them at the expense of family ties.

Disruptive Technologies

It was increasingly becoming acceptable to use mobile phones and other mobile devices in social situations. People’s view on communication and the appropriateness of certain types of behaviors was fundamentally changing. Yu et al. (2018) observed that a mobile phone was a person’s constant companion throughout their daily life allowing them the convenience of easy communication and access to information. This cultural shift to an “always-on” world brought challenges along with the conveniences. Yu et al. (2018) lamented about the assumptions made. For instance, an attempt to reach someone through their mobile phone was fully expected
that the call would be answered because it was assumed that a mobile phone accompanied a person everywhere, regardless of their location. Even if someone was considered to be having ‘private’ moments or was on vacation, the expectation remained the same. The assumption was that the mobile phone is attached to the person rather than a specific place like a home or office as it was with the traditional fixed telephone landline.

Mobile phones became almost indispensable within the society and were being considered a necessity rather than a convenience. This widespread use of mobile phones and other mobile communication devices brought with it an increasing acceptance of their use in virtually all social situations. Pinchot, Paullet, and Rota (2010) shared that it was no longer a taboo to have the mobile phone ringing during dinner with family and friends, at a sporting event, or even during a church service. Incoming calls were no longer seen as interruptions of the primary activity taking place; instead they were equally treated as important communications. Proximity became inconsequential in terms of social interaction.

Christensen (as cited in Ekekwe & Islam, 2012) observed that with every innovation came a disruption in society. The dilemma was on whether to adopt or discard the technologies. These three scholars made reference to technologies that always infiltrated the market by generating a considerable improvement over the already existing technologies; a view shared by McLuhan (1964). Much as these technologies seemed affordable, they were complicated in nature but remained attractive to users and potential users.

Ekekwe and Islam (2012) noted that the disruptive technologies were basically or essentially disruptive or sustaining in nature. They viewed disruption in the context of technology and innovation that was defined by the changes made to previous
products, services, and processes. Ekekwe and Islam (2012) implied a discontinuity in the previous technologies whose ways of working were no longer viable. The view taken was that disruptions were outcomes measured not just by their process but by both their results and process. The mobile telephony industry was no exception. Mobile phone manufacturers continued to include different features on the mobile phone products in addition to the basic functions of communication which Ekekwe and Islam (2012) observed was deliberately done to sustain the market for their products.

The mobile phone became a gadget with full range of services including basic telephony to business and leisure and entertainment features. Varied performance issues with mobile network services justified a further basis for the multiple SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) acquisition by users, demanding improved access. The factors that led to the multiple SIM innovation were initially linked to poor network coverage and performance, enabling competitive business environment that necessitated the lowering of calling tariffs to attract more consumers to the service. An opportunity was created for a product to satisfy users’ needs. Mobile phone users acquired phones depending on the number of networks to which they were subscribed.

Ekekwe and Islam (2012) alluded that disruption could be driven by a number of factors embedded in the three specific dimensions identified below:

- Cost – New technologies made old ones uncompetitive in terms of production cost. The new ones were relatively cheap, making the old ones unprofitable.
- Quality – New technologies raised the quality of products or services to a level that made the old ones uncompetitive.
• Customers – Significant changes in consumer or business customer preferences made previous products or services unattractive as compared to the new ones.

Nonetheless, Ekekwe and Islam (2012) saw these factors overlapping in practice. For example, the combination of changes in cost and quality could have significantly changed the value for money of existing products or services relative to new ones. The implication was that there would be a much higher quality of the product that came at a little extra cost or much lower cost with some little perceived increased ‘quality’. This was seen in the transforming technologies in the communication industry.

Initially the fixed telephone landline was perceived as a breakthrough in the world of communication that linked people across the globe even though the gadget was at a fixed location or position. Innovation saw other forms of communication technologies such as the internet harboring millions of communication networks. Then the emergence of the mobile phone enabled its users to reach out to other users anywhere and anytime. Other developments in the digital communication technology included convergence of multiple applications or features in one communication device. In the present world, there are television sets that incorporate the use of WI-FI and mobile phones that have convergence supporting applications such as the popular social media. These changes led to further disruption in the communication industry (Ekekwe & Islam, 2012)

Ekekwe and Islam (2012) expounded that ‘disruptive innovation’ and ‘disruptive technology’ needed to be differentiated. In line with widely accepted definitions of ‘innovation’, Ekekwe and Islam (2012) defined ‘disruptive innovation’ as the commercial introduction of products, services or process changes that disrupted
the activities of existing players in an industry or similar organisational system.

Disruptive innovation was manifested at a variety of levels:

i. Industry segment. For instance, in the telephony industry, the industry segment was manifested through the phasing out of the fixed telephone lines resulting from the production of the coveted mobile phones.

ii. Industry structure. The ‘one way’ transmission media structure no longer controlled the distribution of content since transmission was no longer so important as digital generation and download of information.

iii. Social system. This was seen from the ability of mobile phone users to generate their own content through new digital channels and social media, thereby changing the social relationships in the communication industry.

Ekekwe and Islam (2012) therefore looked at ‘disruptive technology’ as one that had the potential to create disruptive innovation at any of these levels. The focus was on the challenge of predicting with a high degree of certainty the emergence, level and timing of disruption, seeing the problem of identifying potentially disruptive technologies as less important. This was backed by two reasons:

i. The future development path of a technology was uncertain, especially in its early stages or if it hit significant problems in its technological development.

ii. Disruptive innovation typically involved many disruptive technologies which together enabled disruption of industry structure, perhaps accompanied by substantial product, service process and or organizational innovation. The impact at the level of the social system required both these and social, political and or cultural factors.

The concern in this study was whether it was possible to identify if a technology was disruptive in practice.
The Rise of the Social Media

One cannot talk of the disruptive technologies as advanced by the mobile telephony and ignore the rise of social media whose access is through the mobile phone. Aishwarya and Vinod (2017) described the social media as the inevitable online network that connected people all over the world. These scholars claimed that the social media played a pivotal role in all spheres of the contemporary times. Nonetheless, Aishwarya and Vinod (2017) observed that over access of social media by the youth was almost becoming a vice. Earlier on people took offense if people intruded on their diaries since they were considered as private documents. On the contrary Aishwarya and Vinod (2017) observed people got irritated in the present times if others failed to notice or comment on their activities published online. The social media was considered a virtual world where the generation of the time hardly looked at each other’s face to interact.

There was a change of communication patterns in the 21st century where new kinds of social order were developed strengthening the public and mass communication which Joo and Teng (2017) observed were weakening interpersonal communication. The social media transformed the contours of social interaction. Emotions like love, friendship, family bonding, intimacy, and language were finding various alternative platforms of expression which Joo and Teng (2017) lamented as the invasion of the traditional communication methods.

Besides, Joo and Teng (2017) discerned that there was an over reliance on the internet as people sought information, reducing creativity, concentration and originality of thought. These scholars were also cautious over the quantity and or quality of communication. Not only was the language affected in terms of spelling and grammar but also Joo and Teng (2017) observed that the youth showcased
themselves by uploading edited photographs or updates which were contrary to the real life incidents. Moreover, some youth found themselves alienated due to lack of knowledge, access or disinterest to the use of social media which caused digital divide.

Aishwarya and Vinod (2017) coincided that the social media created a new kind of social order. While in one way it strengthened the social network, it also weakened interpersonal relations in another. Aishwarya and Vinod (2017) cautioned against the rapid expansion of this nature of technology citing it immersed people into the digital world keeping them away from the real world. Siddiqui and Singh (2016) observed too that people who had conversations in the absence of mobile devices reported higher levels of empathetic concern, while those conversing in the presence of a mobile device reported lower levels.

Nonetheless, Siddiqui and Singh (2016) looked at the positive side of the social media, claiming that the social media was the best tool used for branding and promotion of any products or business. Since the media acted as the fourth estate in the society, Siddiqui and Singh (2016) viewed the social media as an avenue for linking the general public and the government since political affairs and discourse could easily be carried out with the public through social media. Besides, anyone could use it as a platform for any societal discourse. On the contrary, Aishwarya and Vinod (2017) lamented about the users’ over dependence on online communication that made them lose the ability for face to face communication thus weakening communication systems. The youth became addicted to social networking sites and thus got diverted from family social relations. It was for this reason that this study investigated how the youth used the applications or features on their mobile phones.
Family Communication

Since this study was mainly on the impact of mobile telephony technology and its impact on the family, it was paramount to expound on the family. Leshtarova (2017) viewed the family as a unit with the critical role of family upbringing, being the center of the ecological system that acted as a filter between a child and the outside world. The initial practical behavior models that children adopted in the community were initially formed in the family. Promoting interaction between children and family was crucial because family relationships were part of society influenced by socio-economic changes. Leshtarova (2017) perceived each child as having derived from a unique environment, consequently its attitude resonating with the inevitable imprint from family members’ attitudes or people they came in contact.

Leshtarova (2017) emphasized that the family was an important educational institute where parents influenced the development of a child’s personality with their knowledge, system of values and behavior patterns. The parental love and the emotional bond between parents and children were of great importance since they contributed not only to their intellectual and spiritual enrichment of the individual but also to the development of self-knowledge and self-perception of the child.

Leshtarova (2017) concurred with Drago (2015) that healthy family relationships were as a result of effective communication between family members influenced by the type and amount of interaction among them. Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) described the family from the societal growth, development, change and continuity. Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) impugned the nuclear family structure but cherished and recognized the practice of the extended family systems viewing it as a reflection of the traditional African culture, synonymous to Uwezo
Kenya’s (n.d.) definition of a household that affirmed that a household consisted of family members who ate from the same pot.

Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) outlined the following types of African family structures found in the African context: (i) nuclear family, (ii) extended family, (iii) single parental family, (iv) step family, (v) matrilineal family structure (vi) patrilineal family structure (vii) monogamous family and (viii) polygamous family structure. The family systems mentioned above were influenced by social change and existed as exclusive families. All these family structures were acceptable in this study.

Leshtarova (2017) and Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) posited that when families interacted they strengthened their relationships. It was through this interaction that mental models of family life were created and sustained over generations, making family communication the mechanism for most socialization experiences. This thought reinforced the constitutive link between families and communication. This is why Leshtarova (2017) and Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) considered the family as a primary agent of socialization while communication within the family as the most instrumental agent of socialization. Nonetheless, the kind of family structure did not really matter since the common social component in all family structures was ‘communication’.

Much as the mobile communication had widely been embraced, Drago (2015) observed that it did not provide opportunities for face to face interaction. Features of non-verbal communication such as tone of voice, facial expression, and potentially influential interpersonal features such as physical attractiveness, skin colour, and gender and so on were lost. Whittney (2014) also pointed that mobile phone interaction created a deficiency of a rich interpersonal communication resulting from
the absence of these non-verbal features that affected the process and outcome of social interactions in the family.

Face to face communication promoted human development. Oduor et al. (2014) discerned that face to face communication influenced and reinforced control of any undesirable behavior in the family as children grew all the way to being youth. On the contrary, busy parents missed out on the opportunity for establishing and nurturing close relationships as a result of their being busy with their daily economic activities. This gave leverage to the increased rate of mobile phone communication in the family at the expense of the face to face type. This was one of the findings divulged in this study which is discussed in detail in chapter four. Drago (2015) reckoned that face to face communication was very important in physical interactions and had great impact on communication in the family.

Drago (2015) gave an account of scholars of the early 20th century whose interest was in the area of face-to-face interaction. One notable earliest scholar in this field of communication was Georg Simmel, a sociologist who analyzed this type of interaction. Simmel (1908) claimed that the sensory organs played an important role in interaction, especially eye contacts in the human communication behavior. Whittney (2014) concurred, citing face-to-face communication as one of the basic elements of the social system that formed a significant part of an individual’s socialization and experience gained throughout one’s life time.

Ezedike (2009) also gave an insight on family communication lauding the art of dialogue, mostly face to face in human relations which allowed people to freely discuss issues with each other while seeking collective solutions to their problems. Ezedike (2009) viewed the unwillingness to talk or open up as a negative human social trait. Nguru (2014) attributed this negativity to television viewing mannerisms
that accommodated ‘silence’ as a way of life. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, television viewing was considered a family activity in the evening where human interaction was minimized since families were watching television together, while saying very little to each other. The extreme concentration on the personal use of the mobile phone was a prophecy that had come to pass from Nguru’s (2014) observation on the acceptance of the culture of ‘silence’ resulting from television viewing.

Oduor et al. (2014) asserted that there was a positive correlation between effective communication and strong healthy relationships in families. Where weak communication systems existed, unhealthy family relationships were common. Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) confessed that the prevailing situation had led to numerous family problems thus weakening emotional bonding. The nature of communication was associated with reduced or increased risk of behavioral problems in the youth during parenting. Drago (2015) corroborated this view that face-to-face interaction was the most effective form of verbal communication especially in parenting. Acacio (2012) concurred that face-to-face interaction was still considered the most preferred method for resolving problems and contentious issues in the family. All scholars cited above agreed that nothing could replace the value of face-to-face communication in the family. Whittney (2014) outlined the following features that distinguished face-to-face communication from mobile phone communication:

i. There was effectiveness of meaning in face to face communication. For instance, in situations imploring for decision making, face to face interaction provided an enabling environment for people to reach a consensus much quickly than mediated and or other interaction communication technologies, such as emails or mobile phones.
ii. Non-verbal cues sent the correct signals involving the level of involvement in the communication process. For instance, a yawn could indicate boredom or fatigue during interaction.

iii. Face to face interaction enhanced personal touch creating a sense of communal feeling and sense of belonging. Appreciation was expressed with ease through the personal touch.

Nonetheless Kraut, Brynin, and Sara (2008) had a contrary opinion. These scholars documented the positive impacts of the mobile phone on social interaction with family and friends. Kraut et al. (2008) disputed that the number of studies suggesting negative impacts of the mobile phone use outnumbered those that reported beneficial influences. Countering Kraut et al. (2008) positive thinking on the effects of the mobile phone, Drago (2015) negated, contributing that mobile phone use was associated with the decreased desire for face-to-face communication thus impacting negatively on important aspects of people’s lives and family relationships.

As a remedy to the situation described above, Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) suggested that the cultural ideal for parent - youth communication be ‘authoritative’ parenting. Nonetheless, this view could be disputed since parenting modes varied due to the different cultural constructions. Focus on the relatively limited set of endorsed parenting practices could be questioned. Though the importance of parents was not diminished, there was need to examine and understand the characteristics of the youth in particular set of circumstances and advocate for alternative parenting behaviors than those typically endorsed as the cultural ideal.

According to Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) as years went by, significant changes occurred in the communication patterns posing various challenges in human relations. All families experienced the transition of their youth from childhood. It was
at this point that the frequency and content of interactions changed drastically. The youth were no longer free to self-disclosure and sought autonomy and privacy. This was interpreted as a threat to familial emotional bonds, resilience and continuity.

Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) observed that the youth influenced interconnections with their parents based on how much they could gain from them. Poor quality relationships experienced an upsurge in conflict and a decline in closeness between the two groups. Common indicators of closeness included affection, cohesion, companionship, interdependence, intimacy and trust.

As children progressed to their youthful stage, Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) observed a change in the nature of connectedness with their parents. The physical contact decreased, however conversations increased to convey information and feelings as children matured to youth. Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) advanced that parents had great influence on their relationships with their youthful members of the family, since they shaped the most important decisions confronting the youth, even with the limited authority they had over the youth.

Having discussed family communication and its relevance to the study, the next section will highlight family values which were also paramount to this study.

Family Values

The previous section discussed in detail family communication and how the adoption of the mobile telephony impacted on it. It is also important to note that the third research question sought to investigate the relationship between the use of the mobile technology and the sustenance of family values. There were assumptions that families strived to uphold certain family values deemed important to them.

Idang (2015) defined a ‘value’ as something, be it an object or a belief that was upheld for its worth. Just like the way an object was treasured for its value; Idang
(2015) observed people’s beliefs about what was right or wrong were equally
treasured. The scholar explained a value was seen from a point of view or conviction
which people lived with, lived by and could even die for. Meanwhile, Claudio and
Dominique (2012) defined values as deeply rooted, complex and patterned principles
resulting from the interplay of the cognitive, the affective and the directional or
operational elements.

Values were related to the solution of human problems in giving order and
direction to human acts and thoughts affecting all people in all areas of the world.
They provided guidelines for the way a society dealt with the aspects of life (Idang,
2015). In support of this thought, Claudio and Dominique (2012) elaborated that
values permeated every aspect of human life. For instance, these scholars made
reference to religious, political, social, aesthetic, moral, cultural and even personal
values. There are many types and classification of values and these differed from
people to people with regards to their conception of reality. Idang (2015) pointed out
the possibility of one’s values conflicting with another’s. It was a common aspect of
life that made people adopt certain choices or rate things as good or bad based on the
perceived standard of values. Each person is believed to have some sense of values
and there was no society without some value system (Idang, 2015).

Whether consciously or not, Idang (2015) denoted that the society had ways of
reinforcing its values on people about what was good, right and acceptable. People
went on in their daily lives trying to conform to the acceptable ways of behavior and
conduct. Nonconformity to the immediate society’s values invited the society’s
members to intervene to bring a sense of order. For instance, if an individual did not
think it wise to make ‘honesty’ a personal value widely held by his immediate society,
telling or living a lie would get the individual in trouble with other members of his or her society. This evinced that values occupied a central place in a people’s culture.

Through interactions, Adinlofu (2009) denoted that values were handed over from generation to generation and their reinforcement survived or depended on family generations. In the same vein Adinlofu (2009) impugned those individuals who grew up where no proper family set ups existed, claiming that such individuals had tendencies to display deficiencies in family values. The anomaly cited with such cases was that these individuals had missed out on the teaching of a range of human values and potential human behaviors. They were characterized by limited number of values and subsequent behavior patterns considered appropriate to a particular family, as it is the case with the ‘street children’.

Family values differed worldwide. Antia (2005) accounted for the American family value system that was motivated by the drive for achievement, competition, profit and mobility. The drive for security and higher standards of living, fuelled by the expansiveness of the American dream, contrasted the prevailing feeling of fear of failure. This conflict between the drive to achieve and the fear for failure was at the root of many conflicts.

Meanwhile, Clair and Rakusan (2001) shed light on the Chinese values and culture. The Chinese went through a process of social communication and would try at all times to maintain national honour and dignity as enshrined in their ideology, social customs, norms and values. Clair and Rakusan (2001) divulged that this ‘national honour’ was referred to as the ‘Chinese Face’ which controlled all the interactions manifesting itself in political, economic and cultural life. Besides, it was the motivation and the driving force for all their activities.
Chinese values concentrated less on personal fame, dignity, social position, authority and influence but they put an emphasis on national character. Ironically, the Chinese would deliberately tell a ‘lie’ just to save ‘face’, which was acceptable in their value system. They would also be indirect and ambiguous in their communication or simply be non-committal when the situation was quite unfavorable. For instance, if one was invited to a party but had other commitments, they would not decline but made it look like they may or may not attend, yet in the real sense they knew they would not be attending but would not wish to offend the other party. This was one of their values among others such as being modest and overtly considerate.

On African values, Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) observed that Africa had distinct cultural beliefs, values, norms and practices despite its multi-ethnic nature. Africans had a way of life as depicted in their family relations, legal systems, religious, economic and political structures. These value systems were critical in the promotion of social order. Much as it could be argued that the traditional culture and value system had deficiencies, it served its purpose reinforcing some sense of order.

It should be clearly understood that this research was not an attempt to condemn modern communication technologies and globalization but simply an encouragement of the sustenance of the value system in families through communication. The justification was that the family was the central focal point for the reinforcement of values. As stated earlier, Adinlofu (2009) was unhappy with the social changes that had altered most African traditional institutions including the family. The African society had undergone a metamorphosis since it embraced modernity, westernization and globalization. Adinlofu (2009) viewed these intrusions such as the adoption of modern communication technologies as destructive to the African practices.
Values were embedded in the family system. Ocholla-Ayayo (2000) viewed the family from the African perspective advancing that the family, for decades, had the responsibility of transmitting norms, values, beliefs, knowledge and practical skills to its members. It was the family that provided a platform for the initial point of interaction for any member of the family. Idang (2015) extensively outlined five values among them ‘social values’ whose beliefs and practices the society dictated. For instance, the Christians valued the Christmas season that expressed the social values of love, kindness and the spirit of sharing. Apart from ‘social values’, Idang (2015) made reference to the African culture saying it had strong reinforcement of moral values. For instance, cheating, committing adultery, theft and all other types of immoral behavior were condemned.

The mobile phone as a host to the internet was perceived to have great potential of according a pervert to navigate through immoral sites such as pornographic. These sites are outlawed in Kenya through the Media Council Act 2013 which was an ACT of Parliament that gave effect to Article 34 (5) of the Kenyan Constitution. The ACT established the Media Council of Kenya as the body that set media standards to regulate and monitor compliance with those standards (Obonyo & Nyamboga, 2011).

Religious values were also very important in the African society. Umoh (2005) asserted that religion in African societies was the pillar to all mankind. Kenya as a nation upholds them too. This was applicable for both Christians and Muslims, which are the dominant religious faiths in Kenya (Kenya Demographics Profile, 2019). On the African traditional religions, Umoh (2005) expounded that also these hailed the good and bad spirits belief. Kanyinga (2014) cites that Kenya upholds a moral sense of justice and truth and the knowledge of the existence of good and evil.
Another value Idang (2015) outlined was the ‘political’ value, suggesting that political hierarchy began with the family. The traditional arrangement was that each family had a revered head figure before Western colonization infiltrated African societies with the concepts of ‘human rights’. The African society had a chief and council of elders, an arrangement that disallowed any dissent to the status quo terming it a taboo. Hence, it was natural to have respect for local political values, institutions and its leaders. In this research the head figures are referred to as ‘parental figures’.

Idang (2015) also advanced that art had always been considered a human enterprise involving the production of aesthetic objects thus reinforcing the ‘aesthetic’ value. People always admired innovative and creative objects which in a true sense, was the appreciation of the aesthetic value. Viewing art in that light was truly the African appreciation of aesthetic objects. In one way or another, it was an acknowledgement that the African aesthetic value was visibly found in objects characterizing people’s heritage through their arts and crafts that the people perceived as ‘beautiful’ (Idang, 2015). The mobile phone handsets were the contemporary aesthetic communication technology objects. The type of mobile phone handset one had determined the social status of the user in the society. This aspect was investigated in this research and the study findings reflected that the youth indeed valued their handsets which defined their social identity among their peer.

Having outlined the broad values that characterized the African value system, this research largely hinged on the following four specific thematic family values and relational norms that are discussed in turn: (i) Family identity (ii) Good Relations (iii) Sense of time for family; (iv) Respect for family authority.
Family identity

While discussing ‘family identity’ as a value, it must be understood that its strength and value depended on an individual’s personal identification with his or her immediate family. It was through his or her family that the individual was known and identified. Being the custodian of the individual, the family dictated the direction for the individual. Idang (2015) outlined within the traditional family set up that the individual must be identified with the communal family space which was the platform for social, political, judicial and or religious discussions.

A parallel could be drawn between the traditional family communal space and the space characterized by contemporary communication mobile networks. With media convergence and improved communication technologies, the contemporary space resided within mobile phones. The youth viewed relations from the lenses of peer identity while coming up with their youth mobile phone culture. Nonetheless, it was considered a virtue to relate and identify with peers and other family members in a healthy way (Adinlofu, 2009). Mobile phones provided a great technological opportunity for the sustenance of this responsibility. This study revealed a spawn of reactions. The youth related quite well since focus in interactions was more between them characterized by constant communication aimed at creating a sense of identity.

Good relations

Ezedike (2009) gave an insight on ‘good relations’ as a value that threw its weight on the way of life that was emphatically centered upon human interests and values. It was considered a virtue to have good human relationships based on interpersonal communication. This research investigated how open the youth were to their parents and other family members in discussing their personal issues as reflected in the second objective. The study revealed that the youth were quite open with their
parents if they needed something from them. Most of them preferred the face to face communication when addressing their problems with their parents. Nonetheless, a few youth preferred using mobile phone communication avoiding the face to face interactions.

**Sense of time for family**

The ‘sense of time for family’ was another value that Africans upheld over a period of time. Idang (2015) advised the sense of time should not arise in the Western context of ‘clock time’ but in the concept of time socialized within the African culture. In this case, it was not the time as reckoned by events such as sunrise or sunset but ‘family time’ events such as meal-times, among other family social events. For instance, ‘time’ during meal periods did not imply partaking meals only but creating an opportunity to share about the day’s activities. Ezedike (2009) viewed it almost as a ritual for families to be together during meal times which created a perfect opportunity for family bonding and engaging in informal communication. From the African perspective, clearly the concept of time was reckoned in its use. This research investigated how families bonded even as they used mobile phone technologies. The study revealed that most families rarely had value for family time. Parents were busy with their daily economic activities while the youth displayed mobile phone addictive behaviors to an extent of ignoring meal times.

**Respect for family authority**

Ezedike (2009) affirmed that Africans generally had deep respect for family authority which was manifested in parental figures and the elderly. A fact backed by Nguru (2014) who observed that parents were traditionally held in great honour and received a lot of respect for the guidance they gave the youth. Parents were considered to have great wisdom and knowledge of the world, thus, their word was
law in the households. Ezedike (2009) and Nguru (2014) shared a common view that the respect accorded parents and elders had its practical effect in the maintenance of custom and tradition. Parents’ and elders’ instructions were heeded to for the promotion of good behavior among the youth. Spencer (as cited in Awiti, 2012) provided a good Kenyan example of the Maasai people. The Maasai fathers wielded a lot of authority over their families to the extent of viewing women, including their own mothers, as ‘children’. It was in the same context that the Maasai man was expected to look after the family and by extension, take full charge or control (Spencer, 1988). However, this arrangement was debatable in the contemporary times as a result of the several sources of ‘authority’ at ones’ disposal, whether civil, technological or legal. This study revealed that parents found it difficult to be in control resulting from the autonomy and privacy the mobile phone accorded the youth. Details of the study findings are provided in chapter 4.

A follow through of the literature review clearly showed that the adoption of mobile phones was high among the youth and this was believed to have created some sense of moral panic in the parents. Communication between the youth and the parental figures in the family was affected and thus had an impact on family values as given in chapter 4. The next part of this chapter will discuss the Empirical Literature Review.

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

This section presents the empirical literature review, citing a few studies across the globe on mobile phone communication technology. Studies have been conducted on the socio economic impacts and other related aspects confined to mobile telephony. For example, Mwithia (2015) conducted a study in Kibera in Kenya on how the poor in Nairobi domesticated the mobile phone as they integrated it in their
everyday lives. Amongst other findings, the study revealed that the mobile phone had become so important to them and was part of their lives that the security for their handsets was paramount.

In another study on the impact of mobile phones, Drago (2015) revealed the negative impact of this technology on face to face communication. Users of the technology became more reliant on communicating with each other through the mobile technology, neglecting engaging at personal level. Drago (2015) lamented about the degenerating of quality conversations that was worsened by the youth’s use of mobile phones to communicate with friends even the in the presence of other family members during time meant for family interactions and bonding. Most of the youth spent their time on social media and hardly had time for face to face communication with the family.

Syed and Nurullah (2011) conducted a similar study on the use of mobile phones and the social lives of urban adolescents in Malaysia. The study investigated the culture of mobile phones in the emerging societies with a keen eye on the psychosocial aspects of communication technology; patterns of interaction with peers, parents and anonymous others. The study highlighted how the school, the home and public places served as settings for mobile interactions. Nonetheless, the point of departure from Syed and Nurullah (2011) and this study was on the methodology adopted. While this study adopted the phenomenology approach, Syed and Nurullah (2011) adopted the use of ‘previous literature’ in the generation of data.

Wafukho (2010) and Mwangi (2007) conducted studies on the use of mobile phones at Daystar University in Kenya. Wafukho’s (2010) study was on the role of mobile telephony in promoting socio-economic activities in rural areas in Kenya. Though unrelated to this study, the common variable in both studies was the use of
mobile phone and its impact. On the contrary, Mwangi’s (2007) study was on the assessment of the effects of mobile phones on interpersonal communication among university students which found out that the young people used their phones to keep their parents updated with their movements rather than wanting to hear from them. The study also revealed that the type and size of the mobile phone denoted the user’s status. A phone with numerous features and applications also appealed more to university students.

A mixture of perceptions was presented by Bruijn et al. (2009) in a case study of mobile phone use conducted in Khartoum, Sudan. Reflections from the case study revealed that the mobile phone changed, shaped and continued the older forms of social relationships. The study accounted for the reshaping of gender relationships in a Muslim society where men and women were not allowed to freely interact. Despite these normative conditions, the case study proved that the device made it even easier for communication to take place and both sexes easily arranged to discreetly meet at their own convenience. The women were ironically ‘liberated’ as they had opportunities to independently organize their lives, much as they took matters of their religious faith and lifestyle seriously. The study reported that women could call from their houses and meet discreetly and conveniently their male friends. These new practices generated heated discussions in Khartoum society over the advantages and disadvantages of the communication device.

Another study on relationships conducted in Tanzania by Thomas (as cited in Bruijn et al., 2009) revealed that there was lack of trust in a mobile phone relationship. A key informant in the study viewed the use of the phone as a handicap in relations and a clear manifestation of discontinuity of those relationships. The study
concluded that the mobile phone communication fostered continuity or discontinuities in social interactions.

Reference is also made herein to a survey done by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008) that exposed that in every five youths, one had exchanged an explicit sexual image with another youth. On the contrary, a more representative study conducted in 2009, negated and stated that only 4 percent of youth engaged in the immoral behavior, raising doubts about the validity of the media reports. A content analysis of a total of 93 published articles in the major US newspapers was conducted in the US between November 2008 and April 2009 regarding explicit exchange of sex content among youths. The media represented the youth as impulsive, erotic and lacking self-control. The articles also stereotyped parents as ignorant, technologically illiterate and incapable of controlling the youth’s behaviors. The articles derived from The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008) further offered advice on parenting strategies for addressing irresponsible youth behavior in the family, preferring authoritarian solutions.

A study by the Harvard School of Public Health investigated the increased supply and demand of ‘parenting advice’ in the mainstream media citing tension among parents. Campo, Askelson, Mastin, and Slonske (2009) documented a content analysis survey of newspaper articles concerning irresponsible drinking among college students, which disregarded the damaging view of the youth. In the Campo et al. (2009) study, less than 20 percent of the articles addressed ‘parenting strategies’ regarding this undesirable behavior. The findings revealed that parents were left on their own to address the social problems involving their youth after the media sources resorted to misleading presentations.
Campo et al. (2009) analyzed the above scenario further by linking the argument of the panics to youth’s interactions with digital media. As youth were perceived to be the digital generation, parents were portrayed as media complacent on parental advice. Perceived dangers were highlighted and these so called ‘authorities’ from the media, took over the role of parents in trying to avert these ‘dangers’. As a result, tension was generated from the advice on ‘parenting strategies’ which advocated for restrictive measures such as depriving youth of their mobile phones or monitoring their mobile phone behaviors.

Another study on the social impact of mobile phones on teenagers conducted in Western Cape in South Africa by Francke and Weideman (2008) revealed that over exposure to pornography through use of mobile phone was worse than that of users who directly accessed the World Wide Web without using the mobile phone. The study indicated that 82% of the boys and 67% of the girls used their mobile phones to access the World Wide Web and their main interaction activity was the exchange and distribution of pornography.

Walsh and White (2006) alluded to other researches in Australia and overseas on ‘mobile phone use’, whose findings revealed that the mobile phone made it easy for contacting others and social networking. The social networks were significant to the youth since it gave them opportunities to form new relations.

Frändberg, Thulin, and Vilhelmsen (2005) documented a study on mobile phone accesses conducted in 2003 in Sweden. The study revealed that 98% of all young people aged 15–24 years had access to a mobile phone. Meanwhile 86% owned computers while 76% had internet access at home. Sweden was ranked the highest in phone access among the youth in the world.
Other studies on the ‘proliferation of mobile phones’ undertaken included the Galaxy Research (2004) conducted in Australia. This study profiled the youth aged 16 – 24 years as the most prolific users of mobile phones. Despite the disadvantages of the overhead costs of the mobile phone, the research concluded that the youth still made the device very important to their lives.

Much as available literature reported heavy use of texting by youth, Bianchi and Phillips (2005) contradicted the reports in the available literature in a study they conducted. Bianchi and Philips (2005) documented that a significant number of youth were reported not have used a lot of text messages. The studies revealed further that the usage of texting for communication declined among the ‘older’ youth. The findings indicated that male and female responded differently to texting, observing that the female used it more than the male.

Nonetheless, only one study by Liu and Guok (2004) contradicted these findings. Their study discerned that texting was the youth’s preferred mode of contact for nearly all social and communication activities and self-expression. On the gender aspect, these researches explained how the mobile phone leveled the gender differences between male and female precisely by giving rise to ‘gendered’ connotations. The studies indicated that the female used the mobile phone as a tool for communication and maintenance of peer-groups and contacts. On the contrary, the male used it to explore its features.

A further insight on the youth mobile culture, a sense of gratification granted by texting had been investigated. Many studies revealed that the gratification from texting was a way of avoiding ‘unnecessary’ conversations, and calling ‘costs’. Reid and Reid (2004) also deemed it necessary to investigate the hierarchy of youth communication prompting examining preferred ‘players’ in texting communication.
The study demonstrated the hierarchy of people mostly contacted as: boyfriend/girlfriend, best friend/normal friends, acquaintances, parents then relatives. The youth preferred verbal communication when engaging with parents as opposed to texting. However, this view was contradicted by Mante and Piris (2002) who suggested that the youth sometimes preferred short messages with their parents to avoid ‘unnecessary’ conversations with them.

On ‘addiction’ to the mobile phone, Selian (2004) gave an insight on a comparative study of the use of ‘mobile phones’ among youth to ‘smoking’. The driving force behind the ‘youth’ was the quest for an individual identity and peer bonding. This was fulfilled by habits such as ‘smoking’. Nonetheless, it was observed that ‘smoking’ as a habit was being taken over by the youth mobile phone usage. In another analogy making sense of youth mobile phone usage, Humphreys (2003) compared the ‘private talk’ that mobile telephony facilitated in public places to the smoke that ‘polluted’ the public air.

Lobet-Maris (2003) explored the impact of the mobile phone on communication within a community. What was critical in the study was the distinction between basic and peripheral functions of mobile phones. It was observed that the youth used the peripheral features so much at the expense of the core feature of ‘communication’ itself. Lobet-Maris (2003) concluded that an evolutionary trend of the popularity of peripheral features was popular among the youth.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The relationship between the nature of communication in the family and the youth’s mobile telephone culture was conceptualized at a fairly general level, where a set of causal factors impacted on a series of intermediate indicators, which in turn determined the final outcome of communication in the family. It was recognized that
the shift from face to face communication, resulted in quite different outcomes of the nature of communication in the family.

In this study there was a relationship between the mobile communication technology environment as reflected through the mobile phone device, and the resulting types of communication within the family institution. Family members who included both the youth and the parents were active participants in the mobile communication technology environment. Initially, the family as an institution had an entrenched value system free from external influence. Nonetheless, the adoption of mobile communication technology created opportunities for the use of the communication device that allowed family members to make voice calls, send texts or access the internet and social media platforms through the mobile phone. The use of the communication technology was seen to influence the nature of communication outcomes. When there were more voice calls and text messages among family members as the preferred mode of communication in the family, there was the likelihood of reduced face to face interactions which is a way of constructing the nature of communication in the family. In some cases this resulted in family members embracing the culture of silence as a result of the mobile communication technology environment. In this study the youth’s mobile phone use or communication habits designed a culture of less face to face interaction among family members, less time spent on or with family members and strained family relationships.

Behavioral attributes like mobile phone addiction emerged and this was interpreted from the substantial amount of time spent on the mobile phone at the expense of regular conversations in the family institution. The attributes of addiction influencing the nature of communication were seen from the amount of time spent on social media, extensive youth communication with peers among others. These
attributes influenced the interaction accounting for the nature of communication in the family. The mobile phone privacy attribute within the mobile communication technology environment had an influence on family relations. The manner in which privacy was explored and interpreted by users resulted in either favorable or unfavorable communication or weak or strong family relations.

Through the nature of interactions and other use of mobile communication applications, socialized family values were affected. The existence and use of these communication applications in mobile phones such as the social media platforms heightened the tension between the two generations. This was because very little control could be exerted as the youth enjoyed their autonomy, perhaps freeing themselves from parental control.

The conceptual framework put the first and the second research questions into perspective through identification of popular applications or features of the mobile phone and how these constructed the way the youth communicated with their parents. The determinants of the youth’s everyday use of the mobile phone were identified from the ‘voice calls’, ‘texting’ and other mobile phone attributes such use of the ‘social media applications’. Castells et al. (2007) referred to the youth as the digital natives, whose lives were constantly pegged on the amount of interaction with others, giving them an opportunity for expression.

In the same respect, the third and the fourth research questions considered the relationship between the communication technology environment and the family as an institution with a socialized value system. The liberalization of this mode of communication influenced an increase or decrease of openness and interaction in family communication. Other factors that determined the nature of communication in the family were the frequency and the duration of active voice calls between family
members and the use of text messages. The duration of phone calls to friends or peers was longer than the youth’s phone calls to parents. Nonetheless, it was not a guarantee that with the increase of mobile phone communication and the decrease of face to face communication, poor or weak communication relationships emerged. In some families better relationships emerged, owing to the nature of a fast changing communication technological society as McLuhan (1962, 1964) put it in his Technological Determinism paradigm.

2.6 Summary

The chapter has given an insight on the literature review undertaken. The theoretical framework of the study was hinged on the Symbolic Interactionism Theory which interrogated the human process of interaction. When humans interact, they engage in the formation of meanings through group life and conduct. This theory was complemented by the Technological Determinism paradigm, which suggested that technology drove the development of its social structure and cultural values.

The Family Systems Theory that highlighted about relationships in the family provided a paradigm for the conceptualization of human behavior and an insight to treatment of human problems. The Cultural Onion Model described and analyzed the different communication cultures and values.

The chapter has also given a detailed discussion on the development of communication and the adoption of communication technologies that had seen the rising tensions in the family over the adoption the mobile phones.

The chapter also gave an insight on studies previously conducted under empirical literature review and finally it gave the conceptual framework adopted. The next chapter will go through the Research Methodology adopted for the study.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the adopted research design and the population encompassing households in Mvita Sub County. The chapter further gives an insight on the sampling techniques where purposive sampling was used. The research used the Phenomenology approach, mainly in-depth interviews whose data was analyzed qualitatively. It then demonstrates how the pretest was undertaken, and then proceeds to explain the data analysis execution and finally the chapter gives the ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

The Phenomenology Approach

The research design took the phenomenology approach. A detailed explanation and justification of this approach is given in the sections that follow. Phenomenology stemmed from the interpretive theorists whose philosophy hinged on seeking an understanding of how people constructed meaningful worlds through interaction and how they behaved in those worlds they created. Phenomenology as developed by Edmund Husserl rejected empirical evidence to inquiry of knowledge and instead embraced an inquiry where no experiment or scientific observations approved or disapproved people’s lived experiences (Husserl, 1950). The Phenomenology approach is associated with anti-positivism which embraced the interpretive approach into inquiry of knowledge which was relevant to this study.

In the interpretive perspective, both Padilla-Díaz (2015) and Miller (2005) explain the ‘ontological’ position taken by the social constructionists which posited
that social realities existed in multiple mental constructions forms that were socially experientially based. Miller (2005) expounded that these forms were to be viewed from the perspective of the person who held them. The ontological position in the interpretive perspective advanced three implications on ‘reality’:

i. It embraced multiple realities.

ii. Realities were to be understood from the ongoing behavior instead of the static social facts.

iii. Reality could only be understood through a consideration of the mental and social processes that continually constructed that reality.

Padilla-Díaz (2015) proffered further details on the ‘epistemology’ of interpretive theorists which advocated for ‘subjective epistemology’. These theorists implied that there were no universal laws or causal relationships to be deduced about the social world. The theorists instead called for the understanding of specific social collectives and specific events. The implication herein was that reality was ‘socially constructed’ and could only be understood from the ‘actor’s point of view’. The theorists therefore advocated for the distance between what they termed as the ‘knower’ and the ‘known’. In essence the interpretive theorists advanced that research findings in this kind of study should be as a result of the researcher’s interaction with the community, which they referred to as the ‘inquiry from the inside’.

In the ‘axiology’ of the interpretive theorists, both Miller (2005) and Padilla-Díaz (2015) enlightened that the values of the researcher must be divorced from the research community and society. The researcher must set aside any preconceived beliefs and values in the investigation of social life. Weber (as cited in Miller, 2005) referred to this as the ‘objective sociology upon the foundation of subjective meaning and individual action.’
The research design for this study embraced the intertwined theoretical framework adopted. The study was on the understanding of the use of mobile telephony technology which has widely been adopted as seen from the already discussed chapter one and two. The main Symbolic Interactionism Theory in the study was extensively backed by the Technological Determinism paradigm which ventured on examining how the adoption of the mobile communication was affecting communication in the family. The investigative lenses were through the parental figures’ perspective and the youth’s approbation and use of the mobile technology.

The Family Systems Theory also complemented the main theory by explaining how families operated at a social level and how the uses of communication technologies were likely to restructure the social fabric of the family as an institution. The Symbolic Interactionism Theory was further complemented by the Cultural Onion Model which interrogated behavior that resulted from the interaction that existed between the actors in the social communication process.

Miller (2005) explained that the heart of an interpretive study was on the belief that people constructed their world through communicative interaction. The following sections outline the different types of Phenomenology approaches while giving specific details of the type of Phenomenology that was used in this study and its justification.

**Types of Phenomenology**

Creswell (2013) identified two types of phenomenology approaches; hermeneutic, and transcendental while Padilla-Díaz (2015) identified a third one; the genetic or constitutional phenomenology which referred to the analysis of the self as a conscious entity. This type of phenomenology appealed to universal consciousness.
According to Miller (2005) the hermeneutic approach involved the interpretation of texts. Padilla-Díaz (2015) described ‘hermeneutic’ as a research method which involved the descriptions of ‘personal experience’ which required a description or interpretation of the meanings of phenomena experienced by participants in an investigation. Miller (2005) attributed this strand of phenomenology to Wilhelm Dilthey who is said to have provided a methodological path for studying social creations, or the objectifications of the mind.

The hermeneutic phenomenology began with the interpretation of sacred texts from the bible and the analysis involved a consideration of the text in the light of the researcher’s theoretical knowledge and information about the type, the source and the situation in which the text was produced. Miller (2005) explained that the analysis of hermeneutic approach involved a process of tracking or going back and forth between theory and knowledge, as the researcher took on the project while interrogating the textual data. Miller (2005) viewed this approach to have contributed to the interpretive theory in communication through its emphasis on the importance of ‘understanding’ as a goal of social science. Nonetheless, hermeneutic was against explaining, prediction or control. It emphasized the central concept of texts and proposed that a wide ‘variety of actions’ and ‘objects’ created in social life could be regarded as a text.

Unlike the hermeneutic approach, Padilla-Díaz (2015) described the ‘transcendental’ phenomenology as one that focused more on the ‘eidetic’ or ‘essence’. Transcendental phenomenology analyzed the ‘essences’ perceived by consciousness with regard to individual experiences. It dwelt more on the descriptions of experiences of participants and not the interpretations of the researcher. Creswell (2013) explained that researchers in the transcendental approach set aside their
personal experiences and saw things from the perspective of the person or persons experiencing the phenomenon. Miller (2005) concurred with Creswell (2013) in the description of the transcendental phenomenology. Miller (2005) explained that the method in this approach involved bracketing or setting aside one’s personal beliefs and experiences in a bid to understand other people’s point of view or perspective.

Miller (2005) distinguished the ‘transcendental’ and the ‘hermeneutics’ from the argument that hermeneutics did not observe the distinction between the ‘knower’ and the ‘known’ stating that texts and social actions should be interpreted using the experiential and theoretical lenses developed through the personal and professional backgrounds of the researcher.

On the contrary, Padilla-Díaz (2015) interpreted the transcendental approach as one that posited that the true understanding of a phenomenon could be achieved only if personal biases, values, and interests were set aside during the period of investigation. Husserl (1950) referred to transcendental as ‘epoche’, which he described as the exclusion of one’s own personal perspective and turning off the everyday beliefs and assumptions that the researcher had taken for granted. In this approach, the researcher suspended all his or her held factual and empirical claims, as well as informal knowledge, expectations, theories and perceived notions prior to the study. This study used the transcendental phenomenology approach.

Justification for Transcendental Phenomenology

This study was an investigation on how the use of the mobile phone constructed the nature of family communication. It must be understood that the ‘phenomenon’ in question was not the ‘mobile phone’ as a communication gadget but ‘how’ the gadget or the device itself was put into use by the participants in the communication process. The study’s findings were inferred from the narrations from
the parental figures and the youth participants’ personal experiences with the communication device. This gave the study the leverage in gathering first-hand information from the informants’ personal perspectives on the approbation and use of mobile telephony. The mobile phone is a coveted communication gadget whose use is very private or personal, individual and subjective but has an impact in the way one related with others.

The study interrogated the youth on how they used their mobile phones and how this use constructed family communication, values and relations. The justification for the use of the transcendental phenomenology approach as a way of inquiry was because the study concerned itself with understanding how mobile phone users ‘individually’ interpreted the ‘phenomenon’ of ‘mobile phone use’. This was provided for in the study from the participants’ free and voluntary descriptions of their experiences whose findings informed the study.

As explained earlier, Phenomenology stemmed from an interpretive perspective and was developed by Edmund Husserl, a mathematician. Husserl (1950) regarded philosophy as the basis of all knowledge. As the father of ‘Phenomenology’, which was the strong base for the inquiry in this study, Husserl (1950)’s philosophy saw no world out there for one to make observations warranting generalizations.

In other words, Husserl (1950) rejected empirical evidence but embraced getting the true ‘essence’ of things. Edmund Husserl was advocating for an inquiry where no experiment or scientific observations approved or disapproved essences. These essences were people’s personal experience(s) with a phenomenon. For instance, when people were bereaved they experienced ‘grief’ individually and subjectively. ‘Grief’ was the common phenomenon that all persons experienced. However, it was the interpretation of the ‘grief’ and how each individual experienced
it and how they responded to it that differed from person to person. If a study was to be conducted on how people responded to ‘grief’ as a phenomenon, different individual ‘essences’ would emerge. It was the same with the use of the ‘mobile phone’ in the family. Members of the family who own personal mobile phones experienced it as a phenomenon. Nonetheless, actors in the mobile phone communication experience its use individually and subjectively and it is those ‘essences’ from a personal interpretation that this study focused upon. The study invoked first hand personal experiences from the youthful users and their parents’ perspective of the youth’s approbation of the technology to examine the restructuring of communication in the family.

As a way of emphasis, Husserl (1950) discerned that the individual or personal and or subjective ‘essences’ should be observed in what he referred to as ‘epoche’ or ‘bracketing’. Bracketing meant that the investigator would set aside his bias and intrude in the individual participant’s world to understand the participant’s subjective experiences with the mobile phone. This was adhered to through appropriate tools of data collection adopted for the study. Use of in-depth interviews gave the participants an opportunity to reveal their innermost experiences with the mobile phone use without any interference from the researcher. The researcher only sought for clarity to enable him to get the true essences from the participants to avoid misinterpretation.

This study aimed at understanding mobile phone communication from the point of view of family members who were users and described how these members saw things, how they understood the situation and or how they interpreted the communication scenarios in the family. To understand the family members’ world in the study, the researcher set aside his personal views and his personal previous experience(s) on the phenomenon. The study made an interpretation of the meaning of
those experiences as revealed by members of the family with personal mobile phones. Focus was on both the descriptions of the experiences from the participants’ point of view and the interpretive process of the same experiences and not from the researcher’s perspective. Husserl (1950) was emphatic that it was the participants’ pure consciousness with a phenomenon that was paramount. This was adhered to.

Further justification for the transcendental phenomenology approach is that it advocated for objectivity in the inquiry in the sense that the philosopher or the researcher did not know in advance what these essences were. He or she was to find them by bracketing one form of experience after another. The act of bracketing is already explained earlier in this section. Therefore, a phenomenological study described the meaning for several individuals of their experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.

The basic purpose of phenomenology was to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence. The phenomenon in this study was the use of the mobile phone which was an avenue to the human communication experience. The researcher for this study collected data from the participants who were members of the family experiencing the phenomenon and developed a composite description of the essence of those individualized and personal experiences for all the participants in the study. The descriptions consisted of ‘what’ they experienced and ‘how’ they experienced it which was analyzed and organized in themes based on the participants’ revelations.

In elaborating the justification for the transcendental phenomenology approach in this study, it is important to look at the nature of the problem. This approach was best suited for this kind of study where the understanding of family members’ individual’s common or shared experiences on the use of the ‘mobile phone’ came
into play. The mobile phone is a communication gadget that is consciously and subjectively experienced.

Participants in the study fully described their personal and subjective perception of the mobile phone and revealed as much as possible their own honest experiences of the engagement with the mobile telephony. This study provided a rich and complete description of human experiences and meanings. The findings were allowed to emerge, rather than being imposed by the investigator. Besides, the researcher did not delete, add, change, or distort anything originally presented in the initial “meaning units” of the participants’ transcripts.

3.3 Population

The study was conducted in Mvita Sub County which is within Mombasa County. Mvita Sub County comprised six administrative wards. All the six administrative wards were included in the study. The study targeted families having youth who were still living or staying with their parents in the same household. This rationale of insisting on a population that stayed or lived together in the same household overcame the limitation that emanated from the obvious assumptions that mobile phone communication was an ideal technology that bridged the distance between participants in the communication process (Bruijn et al., 2009). It is also for obvious reasons that people who are related in one way or another and were a distant apart would use any available means of communication to remain in touch with their loved ones depending on how they related with each other. The emphasis on this population was to investigate the unique element of how members of the family especially the youth used the mobile phone even as they lived or stayed with their parents or guardians on an everyday basis in the same household.
Justification for Selection of Mvita Sub County

As explained in chapter one and the section above, at the time of conducting this study Mombasa County had a total of six sub counties with varied socio economic and ethnic population. These Sub Counties were Kisauni, Likoni, Changamwe, Nyali, Jomvu and ‘Mvita’ which was the preferred sub county for this study. The justification for its selection was based on certain aspects. Mvita Sub County had a more cosmopolitan population than all the other sub counties. Statistics provided by the Mombasa County (2018) indicated that Kisauni Sub County in the north had more Mijikendas from the northern part of the Coast than other members in the community. Likoni Sub County in the South was dominated by the Digo and Duruma, sub groups of the Mijikenda community, mostly from the southern part of the Coast. Changamwe Sub County from the west had mainly the Luo and the Kamba communities, while Jomvu Sub County was dominated by the Jomvu, a sub dialect of the Swahili people. Nyali Sub County had a mixture of them all. This population was the most affluent, economically and financially endowed in the County. Thus with reference to this study, ‘Mvita’ was the preferred sub county since it eliminated the bias of data collected from one dominant type of the given ethnic sub groups.

3.4 Target Population

According to the Mombasa County (2018) the selected Mvita Sub County at the time of the study comprised six administrative wards namely: Bondeni, King’orani, Majengo, Mwembe Tayari, Shimanzi and Tononoka. All the households in Mvita Sub County were included as the target population in the study. Respondents were drawn from the families in these households. In Chapter Two Madukwe and Madukwe (2012) identified the following types of family structures found in households: (i) nuclear family, (ii) extended family, (iii) single parental family, (iv)
step family, (v) matrilineal family structure (vi) patrilineal family structure (vii) monogamous family and (viii) polygamous family structure.

All the family structures stated above were acceptable in this study. Meanwhile in this study, 5 (five) households comprised the nuclear families while the other 7 (seven) comprised single parental family. Out of these 7 (seven) households one was headed by a single male parent, while the rest were headed by single female parental figures.

Nonetheless, the study did not compromise the criterion for inclusion as pointed out in section 3.2 above under ‘Population’. All the sampled families lived together in the same household and each participant had a personal mobile phone. The youth’s age bracket under investigation was 18 to 22 years and the justification for this age bracket was already given in Chapter One. According to the AfDB, OECD, UNDP, and UNECO (2012) ‘Economic Report on Employment’, most youth beyond the age of 23 were likely to be independent and would not be living with their parents or guardians. Families that did not live together were excluded from the study.

3.5 Sample Size

Martyn (2010) identified three basic approaches to the calculation of the sample size: statistical, pragmatic and cumulative. This study applied the pragmatic approach. Since this study used the non-probability sampling, it did not rely on a statistical calculation of the sample size but instead used judgment based on what was feasible. According to Creswell’s (2013) and Onwuegbzie and Collins’ (2007) guidelines on qualitative research for a Phenomenology study, 6 to 10 in-depth interview schedules on a phenomenon would bring the collected data to a saturation level.
This study being phenomenological, two households from each of the six administrative wards in Mvita Sub County were included to give a total of 12 (twelve) households. The determination of the households for inclusion in the study is explained in section 3.5 on ‘Sampling Techniques’.

This study sampled a total of 13 youth respondents and 15 parental figures from all the 12 (twelve) households. The ‘youth sample’ comprised 7 (seven) male and 6 (six) female. Meanwhile the ‘parental figures sample’ comprised 6 (six) male and 9 (nine) female. Two (2) youth within the prescribed criterion for inclusion were found in one sampled household and both of them were interviewed. In all the other eleven (11) households only one youth was eligible for the study. Others were either below 18 years or above 22 years, while others within the age bracket were out of the household and could not be reached easily. In three (3) households both parents were available and accepted to participate in the study. In another three (3) households only the male parental figures participated while in the remaining six (6) only the female parental figures participated in the study.

Therefore, this study met the phenomenological research threshold as from the guidelines provided by Creswell (2013) and Onwuegbzie and Collins (2007) since it administered a total of 25 (twenty five) in-depth interview schedules, comprising 13 (thirteen) and 12 (twelve) for the youth respondents and parental figures respectively. Besides, there was a favorable gender balance as reflected in the participants’ gender, where 7 (seven) youth respondents were male and 6 (six) were female. The parental figures comprised of 6 (six) male and 9 (nine) female.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

The household sampling procedure involved the assistance from the Ward Administrators. The entry point was through the Chairperson of the Council of the
Administrative Wards in Mvita Sub County, who organized a meeting between the researcher and Ward Administrators. A briefing was done and each Ward Administrator was assigned the listing of ten (10) households that met the sample criterion in his or her Administrative Ward. From the Ward household listing, only 2 (two) households from each Ward were randomly selected through a raffle like method. This gave all the 10 (ten) listed households in each Administrative Ward an equal chance to be included in the sample. This minimized any bias in the selection of households. Since there was a total of six Wards, the sample gave the desired 12 (twelve) households.

For consistency in the data collection at the households, it was a must that all the families within the 12 (twelve) households met the criterion of having at least a youth within the research age bracket. Both the youth and parent(s) had to have personal mobile phones and were staying or living together on a daily or everyday basis in the same household. The rationale for using the 10 (ten) household listing from every Administrative Ward was guided by Creswell’s (2013) and Onwuegbzie and Collins’ (2007) principles on ‘Sample Size’ as explained in the section above.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

All sampled participants were interviewed at the households. The research used voice recorded in-depth interviews method for both the youth and the parental figures. Since the study sampled 13 youth respondents, a total of 13 (thirteen) interview schedules were administered for this group.

Meanwhile, 12 (twelve) interview schedules for the parental figures were administered in the following breakdown: In 3 (three) households, both consenting parents were interviewed together as a couple. In 2 (two) other households, both parents were present during the study but only one of the parents consented. The
remaining 7 (seven) households comprised of single parents, of which 6 (six) were headed by the female and 1 (one) headed by a male parent. All these parents consented.

This study therefore administered a total of 25 (twenty-five) in-depth interview schedules, 13 (thirteen) and 12 (twelve) for the youth respondents and parental figures respectively.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection exercise involved the engagement of research assistants with a Master of Arts Degree in Social Sciences. Two research assistants of both genders were brought on board to take care of the cultural limitation identified in chapter one. The research assistants were engaged on the basis of their occupations since they constituted part of the teaching staff in the Communication Department at the Technical University of Mombasa. At the time when the data collection exercise was being undertaken they had been enrolled for their PhD in Communication programmes, but were still at the coursework level. The research assistants were subjected to a three days training. Day one of the training consisted of going through the data collection instruments. On the second day, each research assistant was assigned two households that had been prequalified for the pilot for internalization of the data collection instruments.

The data collection training exercise was done in Likoni Sub County, in Mombasa County which was randomly selected from the five Sub Counties that had not been earmarked for the actual study. Feedback from the field was given on the third day of training where the instruments of data collection were streamlined in accordance to raised issues or peculiar observations. Section 3.8 on ‘Pre-Testing Research Instrument’ divulges more details.
Research Validity

It is important for any qualitative study to retain dependability. This gives the study its credibility. To avoid bias in the collection and interpretation of data owing to the researcher’s possible preconceived perceptions, the researcher in this study did a voice recording of the respondents which can be replayed over and over to ascertain credibility of what was said before interpretations were made. The transcription was done word for word in the language used by the respondent. Where Swahili language was used, it was transcribed as it was before being translated into English and this rendered a limitation of losing out on meaning in some of the statements made. Nonetheless, effort was done to try as much as possible to retain or capture the intended meaning. Besides, the recorded in depth interview as a method of data collection in itself ensured the study’s validity from the researcher’s ability to maintain neutrality and trustworthiness.

Data Collection Exercise Limitations and Delimitations

In some households the use of the English version of the interview schedule proved a challenge. However, this was overcome by the use of a professionally translated Swahili version. This had been anticipated since the study was to be conducted in a predominantly Swahili speaking region.

Almost all participants were cooperative. Nonetheless, a few participants especially some youth were impatient and seemed to want to rush through the exercise. However, the researcher and the research assistants assured them that the interview would not take much of their time.

One sampled household in Shimanzi Ward declined participation at the last minute forcing a replacement. A random replacement was immediately done from the remaining 9 (nine) households which had been listed by the village administrator and
a new appointment for the new household was scheduled. Nonetheless, the researcher had already incurred costs of hire of a recorder for that day.

Some appointments for some households had to be rescheduled due to the unfriendly weather conditions following the unanticipated heavy rains. The reschedule was prompted by the nature of the Swahili houses’ roofing material which was mostly iron sheets that would have interfered with the audio recording.

In some households due to the convenience and availability of the participants, the data was collected quite late into the night. This posed some risk or threat to the data collectors following the spree of the sporadic vigilante gang attacks at night in Mombasa.

Sometime participants, especially the parents, got carried away and digressed from the main focus of study. Some parents’ responses extended to how mobile phones were ruining marriages, making married couples unhappy. The data collectors prompted them back to the area or focus of the study.

Types of Data

Since the research approach was phenomenological, primary data was relevant and useful. The qualitative data generated respondents’ subjective experiences on the use of their mobile phones. The data generated revealed both the youth’s perspective of the approbation and use of the mobile phones and the parental figure’s perspective of the youth’s usage. Both groups of respondents’ perspectives were analyzed to infer conclusions.

3.9 Pretesting

As mentioned in section 3.6 on the ‘Preparation for data collection’, the researcher did a pretest in Likoni Sub County in Mombasa County. This sub county
was randomly selected. All the names of the Sub Counties in Mombasa, apart from Mvita Sub County, were written down on five different papers and an independent and neutral person was asked to pick one, just like in a lottery. A pretest was done in Likoni Sub County whose name had been drawn. This method of random selection had given all the remaining five Sub Counties in Mombasa an equal chance to be part of the pre-test. Purposive sampling methods were applied to get the 2 (two) households’ families meeting the criterion during the pretest. Based on the findings on the data collection procedures, the interview tools were adjusted accordingly. Samples of the interview schedules are in the Appendix.

3.10 Data Analysis Plan

The audio recorded data was transcribed then coded for analysis. The data collected through the Swahili version was translated into English before it was qualitatively analyzed. The qualitative data analysis was guided by the principles prescribed by Husserl (1950) the father of Phenomenology, Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2013) who coincided that the data analysis in Phenomenology should be characterized by identifying common meanings, essences, textual and structural analysis. The analysis in this study adhered to this conformity.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

A permit to undertake this research was sought from the relevant authorities, notably the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation. Participants’ voluntary consent was sought and participants were made to understand the nature of the research and their involvement. This called for informed consent which was a means by which a respondent’s right was protected. Informed consent sought to incorporate the rights of autonomous individuals through self-determination.
and preventing any assault on the integrity of the respondent and protection of personal liberty and veracity. Participants made informed decisions in order to participate in this study voluntarily. This study had no possible risks and benefits whatsoever.

All participants were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality in the analysis of data collected. This was done by both parties signing an oath of confidentiality and each party retaining a copy of the same. All information collected was purely for the academic purposes of this study. The researcher explained to the participants the language that was going to be used in the analysis that assured them of their anonymity and confidentiality.

To achieve confidentiality and the desired independent and objective results, all the interview sessions for all the participants were privately conducted except in three households where both consenting parents were available and thus were interviewed together as a couple. However, in one household where two youth met the criterion for inclusion, maximum confidentiality was upheld since both youth were interviewed separately despite being siblings. This has been explained in the ‘Data Collection Methods and Procedures’ in section in 3.7. It had been brought to the participants’ attention that they could freely withdraw from the study without any consequences.

During the data collection, sensitive cultural aspects were considered. For instance, the engaging of both male and female research assistants as explained in the ‘Data Collection Procedures’ section. This was done to take care of respondents who would have been uncomfortable being interviewed by someone from the opposite gender. Nevertheless, all households did not render this challenge as they were comfortable with whichever gender of the data collectors.
A debriefing was undertaken at the end of a study which mentioned the exact aim of the study and why the disclosure was not full. The respondents were made to feel at ease and were requested to express their feelings. In the event participants experienced some level of discomfort, they were to be debriefed. However, this was not necessary as participants were content with the process.

3.12 Summary

This chapter on research methodology outlined the Phenomenology Approach as the research design that examined the individuals’ experiences with their mobile phones. The study was conducted in Mvita Sub County in Mombasa County, the target population being families in households that stayed together and whose members had personal mobile phones. The sampling criterion as outlined in details involved only twelve households. The chapter gave an elaborate sampling procedure for the respondents culminating to in-depth interviews conducted in 12 (twelve) households. All the ethical considerations undertaken were explained in this chapter.

The next chapter will give an analysis and interpretation of the data that was categorized in themes and significant statements from the raw data.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents transcribed analyzed data from respondents and presents it qualitatively using descriptive statistics. This analysis captured all the questions from the interview schedule while corresponding to the research questions listed as follows:

i. For what purposes did the youth use the applications or features on their mobile phones?

ii. How did the use of the mobile phone technology design the way the youth communicated with their parents in everyday communication?

iii. What was the relationship between the use of the mobile technology and the sustenance of family values?

iv. How did the use of mobile phones affect relationships in the family?

4.2 Analysis and Interpretation

Phenomenology Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) expounds Phenomenology data analysis constitutes identifying common meanings and essences, textual and structural analysis. This section presents structural analyzed data from significant statements from the raw transcribed data. Structural analysis reflects the intentionality of conscience as a fundamental aspect of Phenomenology. The analysis placed a premium on participants’ descriptions and interpretations from personal expressions. Creswell (2013) pointed out that structural analysis was a fundamental part of Phenomenology since it directed researchers’ approach towards common ‘essences’ and ‘meanings’.

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Participants in this study were at liberty to respond either in English or Swahili. Most respondents opted to use Swahili. The data was translated into English before its analysis guided by Smith and Osborne’s (2003) criterion suitable for phenomenological analysis that considered the following:

i. The elements the respondent unintentionally filtered.

ii. The events evidenced through the stories without the respondent being aware of.

iii. The meaning the respondent constructed within his or her social and personal world.

This study being phenomenological adhered to the prescribed guidelines that considered the transference of explicit information from the participants which incorporated the following:

- How respondents said what they had to say.
- What was behind their narrations.
- The meanings inferred from what was said and told and that which was omitted.

The participants’ responses were voice recorded to retain maximum accuracy in interpretation of what was said or narrated. A description and an analysis of the transcribed data of the text was contextually interpreted and coded in four different themes, derived and organized from the participants’ self-revelations. Special attention was paid to the actual responses, the words and expressions used and how the respondents put across their personal narratives. Consideration was also given to the intense emotions that inherently described their feelings on the phenomenon being studied.
Description of Study’s Respondents

The study targeted members of the family who had personal mobile phones and were living together in the same household on an everyday basis. The specific target was the parental figures and the youth. The laws of Kenya define a ‘youth’ as a person who has attained the age of 18 and is not more than 35 years (National Council for Law Reporting, 2010). In this study, the term ‘youth’ referred to persons who were between the age of 18 and 22, whose rationale hinged on the AfDB, OECD, UNDP, and UNECO (2012) assumptions that most youth beyond the age of 23 were likely to have begun enjoying independence from their parents. Most of them were presupposed to have started working and living independently. The investigation of the use of mobile phones among members of the family living together was paramount to this study in the examination of how usage constructed communication in the family.

As for the parental figures, this study adopted Idang (2015) and Madukwe and Madukwe’s (2012) definition of parental figures. These scholars affirmed that family institutions attracted respect and the head of the family’s intrinsic authority was revered. From the African context, a parent is any person who is a custodian of any youth. In this study, the parental figure included a father, a mother, a relative or any person having a sense of authority and is taking care of the youth and is living with them in the same household.

Coded Themes for Analysis and Interpretation

The participants’ transcribed responses were embedded in the coded themes, while each theme aligned to the corresponding research question and objective. The themes were further broken down to accommodate sub themes that expounded on the
major themes. From the participants’ description of their personal experiences with the mobile phone, the themes were coded as follows:

- Youth Mobile Phone Appropriation
- Type of Communication in the Family
- Mobile Telephony and Family Values
- Youth and Family Relationships.

These themes are analyzed and interpreted in turns in the sections that follow.

Youth mobile phone appropriation

The first outlined theme is the ‘youth mobile phone appropriation’. This theme was derived from the participants’ responses on the mobile phone features that were popular among the youth and how these features were used. The parental figures also revealed their perspective on what they thought were the most popular mobile phone features and usage among their youthful members of the family. This theme took into cognizance of the mobile phone features and communication activities as derived from the responses that helped to describe the youth’s mobile phone activities into a theme. It entails a description of the features mostly coveted, the attitudes towards the features and the functionality of the mobile phone as interpreted by the youth and their parents.

This theme corresponds to the first research objective which was to investigate how the youth used the applications or features in their mobile phones. This objective’s significance to the Phenomenological research design was to allow participants feed the study with the raw data on their real experiences that described the mobile phone features and usage that culminated to the theme of the ‘youth mobile phone appropriation’. The revealed ‘appropriation’ will form a basis for analysis even in the other objectives of the study as it impacts on them as well.
The following sub section gives an analysis of the ‘Youth Mobile Phone Appropriation’ theme through two sub themes; ‘Popular Features / Applications’ and ‘Uses of Mobile Telephony.’

Popular features / applications

The ‘Youth Mobile Phone Appropriation’ as a theme was an intrusion to the youth’s personal and private spaces on their mobile phone use. The findings revealed that mobile telephony is a coveted communication technology that the youth unclasp as distinguished from the multiple applications put into use which described the culture. The youth’s responses portrayed them as versatile to mobile phone innovations whose interests were driven by both the technological and the aesthetic aspects of the handset. The features embedded in the youth’s mobile phone signified their ‘social identity’ among their peers as revealed by one youth, “I love the social media as it gives me opportunities to chat with my friends. I love being online accessing WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram”. This response exhibited the youth whose interest was in the maintenance of virtual groups through emphatic access to applications such as WhatsApp, Messenger among others.

The verbatim quote above reflects the distinction between basic and peripheral functions of mobile phones such as internal storage, memory and resolutions. The youthful respondents revealed that the peripheral features embedded in the handsets superseded the core feature of communication as one disclosed:

It is obvious that with the current trend one cannot go carrying around an old mobile phone model. One has friends and if I have gone somewhere visiting, it is important to take selfies. It will be frustrating if you don’t have a good phone with good camera resolutions.

Another youth resonated with this view saying:

I look at the camera first because I like taking photos and I like my photos very clear. So I look at the camera and the storage capacity. Yeah, the storage
capacity is important because some documents are big. I don’t want something that has insufficient storage or memory.

The youth interested in selfies and photo uploads displayed great admiration for camera resolutions. Nonetheless, not all features were regularly put into use. Mobile money transfer(s), ‘voice’ calls, and texting were undervalued and therefore under-utilized. The youth prized mobile money transfers when it was a privilege to them as illustrated, “The good thing is that it eases communication. You can be sent money in case the police have arrested you.”

The study deliberately inquired from parents the applications or features appealing most to the youth and a parent disclosed, “I cannot possibly know beyond that. All I know is that they chat but for the features I have to inquire from them.” While another one divulged, “It’s hard to monitor because they are always secretive, they have passwords and all, but what I know is that they use those features a lot.” Some parents were oblivious to the features, citing ‘WhatsApp’ as the most popular.

The findings divulged that youth were more receptive to changing fashion trends and style. Unlike their parents to whom sophisticated mobile phone features were inconsequential, mobile phones incapable of hosting latest services and applications were not propitious to the youth. Their mobile phone features’ winsomeness contradicted the instrumental function of the parents’ use as seen from one parental figure who revealed, ‘I use my phone for communicating to my mother or to the very important people in my life…my husband and my children. These are the most important people in my life.’ Parents maximize use of ‘voice’ calls and ‘texting’ facilities for family welfare. The respondent denoted families bonded more with good mobile phone usage. Nonetheless, some youth put a premium on the type of mobile phone they had from a very positive perspective as exemplified by one of the youth:
The make of the phone in my opinion is very important. The less expensive the better it is for me. You can see I have a Nokia E7 which is a good phone. I can use it for a long period. Even when it gets spoilt I do not incur expensive costs of repair. For instance, it will not be expensive to replace a broken screen for this type of phone. It is cost effective as I don’t have money for bundles all the time. I can also charge it anywhere and its power retention is efficient. Despite it being a low cost phone I am proud of it and I am not shy from showing it off to people.

Going by what the youth shared, the numerous features embedded in mobile phones were quite significant, unlike in the parental figures whose interest on the mobile phone was ‘simplistic’. In a bid to comprehend the mobile youth culture, it was prudent to look at how these coveted features or applications were put into use.

Uses of mobile telephony

The youth unlike their parents used mobile phones for numerous communication activities beyond ‘general communication’. However, both groups conceded that the paramount function of the mobile phone was ‘general communication’. A few youth admitted it abetted them in their education pursuits as one youth said, "I use it for making notes and accessing the PDF files. I use the internet to Google questions and answers. Yes, it helps me with the school work.” Another one said, “The phone helps me to do my research. I can navigate through search engines like ‘Google’ to seek knowledge on things I don’t know which will help me in my research.”

In disclosing the mobile phone use among the parental figures, it was clearly evident that most parents used mobile phones for general communication which included voice calls and texts. A parent revealed, “I use it for communications while am on duty, when am communicating with my family and friends and sometimes for research.” This extended to the parents’ use of interpersonal communication consisting of informal communication as one parent said:
I use my mobile phone to communicate. I interact with people just to know how they are faring on and especially my relatives who are so distant from me. Sometimes I receive video clips that are educative. I use my mobile phone to take photographs when I am attending certain functions.

Nonetheless, some youth showed similar usage as the elderly as one youth put it, “It is important because it helps me interact with my friends. If there’s any work somewhere they tell me. It is good for passing information.”

The parental figures used mobile phones for both parenting and work related purposes. Among the parenting purposes was being acquainted with the whereabouts of their children and youthful members of family. On the contrary, the youth’s time was focused more on peer interaction. Embracing the digital communication sanctioned the youth’s frequent and easy access to the internet and the social media.

One of the youth gave a prescription of a desired mobile phone.

I first check the internal storage of the phone, the features and the camera. I look for a phone that has a good internet access plus network. No Facebook for me, just WhatsApp and Instagram. My phone is on ‘WhatsApp’ and ‘Messenger’ [24/7]

Top on the list of the services sought after from mobile phones remained the ‘Internet’ and the ‘social media’. The youth relished them on a daily basis as exemplified by one youth:

When I wake up I first check the time. Then I go through my inbox to see if someone has sent me a text then later on I will get into my email and then after that I will get into social media. Then in between I will have to make some calls.

The youth’s drive to seek ‘social identity’ reflected the tenets of the mobile youth culture. The youth demonstrated an intense admiration for handsets that depicted an appreciation of their aesthetic value. The handsets were the contemporary aesthetic communication technology objects as disclosed:

The make of my mobile handset is really not important. However, to other youth it is very important. If you walk around with the latest model like the
‘Iphone’ or ‘Blackberry’ you are really the envy of everyone. But I am satisfied with my handset. It is still a smartphone and therefore it still gives me status.

The youth exemplified surmised that his handset was ‘not important’, ironically he still prided in his handset that it was still a ‘smartphone’. Handsets determined the youth’s social status whose significance was in the enhancement of their social developments. Consequently, they did not shy away from showing them off.

The youth’s approbation of the digital communication technologies was demonstrated from the ease and frequent access to social media. Perceptions surrounding access to mobile phones with the latest applications supplicated potential appeal to the youth who considered these applications quite significant. For instance, in this study, the youth sought the internet as a communication avenue dominant with a range of services as demonstrated by a youth respondent:

I mostly use my phone for WhatsApp, Instagram, making calls and communicating with my parents because that’s the easy way to communicate with people. In case you send someone a text and he or she does not have the free airtime to reply, you can easily find him or her on WhatsApp.

The study brought out distinct mobile phone use variations between the two generations; the youth and the parents. A closer examination of the two generations in the study disclosed that the older generation was more disposed towards general communication, interpersonal communication, access of information and mobile money transfers. The general communication included ‘voice’ calls and ‘texting’. Other purposes were work related and entertainment. Nonetheless a good cross section of the parent respondents authenticated that they were on WhatsApp, viewing it as a better avenue for reaching out to the youth. The youth’s keeping abreast with social environmental events accounted for their surfing of the internet. The internet
was synonymous to their life defining their actions and social networks. Other youth confessed their admiration for celebrity news which the study inferred as one of the influences of mobile phones that shall be discussed later in this section.

This part of the section analyzed the most popular features or applications in the mobile phones, while interrogating how these applications were put to use and what they meant to the youth. It referred to the uses as the ‘mobile youth culture’. The next part analyzes how these uses constructed the type of communication in the family.

Type of Communication in the Family

The theme of the ‘Type of Communication in the Family’ is a follow up of the first objective that harbors the theme the ‘Youth Mobile Phone Appropriation’. The first objective that examined the popular features and usage of the youth’s mobile phone is a bridge connecting it to the second objective which examined how the usage of mobile telephony constructed the way the youth communicated with their parents in everyday communication. As the first theme outlined the habitual use of social media among other uses, the second theme with reference to the youth’s mobile phone appropriation shall discuss how it is constructing communication in the family. The youth’s mobile phone usage was interpreted from the displayed and observable behavioral aspects. These were inferred from the responses from the individual participants enabling the researcher to generate aspects that described the type of communication that was experienced in families whose members had personal mobile phones. The second objective was quite significant in this study since its aim was to determine how mobile telephony constructed the nature of communication in the family.
It is paramount to emphasize that the family as a center of the ecological system acts as a filter between a child and the outside world. It is a unit with a critical role of family upbringing. The youth belong to the family thus justifying the significance of second research objective which seeks to examine how the usage of mobile telephony had an implication on the way the youth communicated with their parents in everyday communication. The phenomenology approach was upheld in the quest for the answers to the second research question. The findings inferred from the responses were allowed to emerge, rather than being imposed by the investigator. The findings were generated from the initial meaning of units of the participants’ transcripts. Nonetheless, there was a clear link between the interpretation made on the mobile youth culture and how it influenced the type of communication in the family.

The theme is discussed in detail under three sub themes that will digest and contribute to the general understanding of the main theme.

Mobile Phone Addiction

Parents possessed a strong desire to interact with their youthful family members but were experiencing frustrations resulting from the mobile youth culture. The youth spent substantial amount of time on their mobile phones instead of bonding with the family. By design, they were perceived to be distancing themselves from other family members as a parent observed, “He has his bedroom and sometimes even calling him to come and eat is a problem because of his over concentration on his mobile phone. You don’t know who he is communicating with and what he is communicating.”

The verbatim quote above divulged obstructive mobile phone use diminishing the youth’s desire for face to face communication with family members. The mobile youth culture was strongly integrated into the youth’s deportment, signaled from the
symptoms displayed in their day to day activities which turned some into ‘slaves’ of the communication technologies. Some youth were subconsciously dependent on their phones as a parental figure lamented:

Today you will talk to the youth and instead of them looking you up into your face they will be busy concentrating on their phones even as you are addressing them. It has forced us to be tolerant as we accommodate these new habits from them.

Another parent shared about the same vice saying, “Sometimes you are addressing them but instead of paying attention to you they are busy concentrating on what they are doing on their phones.”

Both situations demonstrate parents’ frustrations. In an ideal situation the family anchored its functionality in its interactional abilities among family members since that is where initial socialization takes place. The parent subconsciously laments about the disruptiveness of the communication technology on family quality time. Even when family members especially the parents were eager to engage in face to face interactions with the youthful members of the family, the youth regularly continued to use their mobile phones at the expense of the traditional bonding accorded to regular conversations as another parent disclosed:

When the youth are free they are always on their mobile phones. You may even think they are sleeping but when you when you take a close look, they are chatting behind closed doors. While it is good to chat, the youth overdo it.

Another parent shared an experience on the mobile phone shortcomings.

For the elderly people like us the mobile phones are beneficial. This is not the same for our youthful members of the family. The mobile phones have really spoilt our youth. Sometimes you are addressing them but instead of paying attention to you they are busy concentrating on what they are doing on their phones like you don’t exist. Meanwhile at that moment they are not even accessing useful things like the way we look for news.

An analysis of the situation above can be interpreted that the mobile communication has substantially reduced the youth’s desire for face to face
communication with family members. The parent expresses the frustration as signaled from the choice of words. The statement, ‘…like you don’t exist…’ in the quote is indeed a strong emphasis on the youth’s lack of desire for face to face interaction. Most parents’ skepticism extended to the disruptiveness of the devices fearing for the face to face communication transposition by the mobile phone that was causing severe non drug addiction.

Communication with family members

Over reliance of mobile phone interactions took precedence consequently engaging less on face-to-face conversations. Most of the youth’s responses indicated a diminishing trend on the face to face conversations in the family as one youth lamented, “The only time I get to talk face to face is when I have done something wrong and I am being admonished for it. Otherwise it is very rare.” This concern extended beyond parents and brimmed over to the youth as one youth observed, “People no longer talk with each other. Most people express their feelings in social media instead of sharing them out with their loved ones.”

The frequency of parents’ face to face interactions showed that the proportion of parents who communicated with their youth all the time was slightly low. Many parents’ face to face contact was confined to different timings spread across the day. A few parents found time in the ‘morning’ before engaging in their daily economic activities while a few others in the ‘evenings’ when back. A considerable proportion of parents found time during ‘meal times’. Some parents rarely had any face to face communication. Nonetheless, some families witnessed positive interaction interplay, mostly comprising single parent families. Youth from this group appreciated frequent face to face communication as one youth shared, “If mum is close by we have a lot of
face to face communication, a lot. Like whenever we are at home we just talk. We all make stories.”

In face-to-face communication, indicators of emotions such as facial expressions are mostly subconsciously displayed. Nonetheless, there were families where face to face interactions were rare even within the household as divulged by a youth, “I normally call or send a text. They also call me or send me a text. That is how we communicate.” The genus and proportion of interaction is substantially associated with the influence of effective communication among family members. The maintenance of healthy family relationships entirely depends on mutual communication. Most youth in this study contacted their peers more than their parents as one youth divulged:

It depends on the caller. Let’s say it’s my best friends calling. They might be having a lot of stories that will take time. [If it’s a boyfriend it will also depend]. You may talk for long until at times you miss something to say.

The duration of calls to friends was longer than those to family members as a youth put shared, “Sometimes I can talk for one hour, but only for two minutes if I call my father or mother. But with my girlfriend I can talk for one hour.” This expounds that the duration depended on a number of factors, among them; the nature of contacts, availability of ‘free airtime’ through promotion by service providers as divulged by other youth.

Filial relationship

When facing personal problems, most youth preferred ‘face to face’ communication, while a few youth used ‘mobile phones’ and another few used ‘middle men’. Nonetheless, the youth justified the use of face to face communication when it was to their ascendancy as shared by one youth:
You see not all parents are the same. Like my father is almost going to 60 years. If you send him a text he has no time to read it. So I prefer face to face interaction with him.

This revelation indicated that ‘face to face’ communication was enclasped for convenience. Incidentally, some youth were uncomfortable with both ‘face to face’ interaction and mobile phone communications but chose traditional channels of middlemen as shared by one youth:

I cannot tell my parents any problem. The only person I can tell is my grandmother. She listens to me. I might tell my parents something and instead of listening they dismiss me. My grandmother always listens and advises me accordingly.

These scenarios encoded strong messages that parents ought to listen to their youthful members of the family as a blue print for face to face interaction. This envisaged stimulating the youth to embrace face to face communication, contrary to the use of ‘middlemen’ to communicate problems. Despite the mixed responses, most parental figures advocated for more than just the face to face interaction as prepended by a parent:

We prefer it when they can freely be open to us so that they can tell us their problems. If we are able to solve them, we do so. But when we cannot, we explain to them our inability to do so. In a family, a parent must be a friend to his or her children. That way, the children will always be free to express all their problems.

This section has analyzed data expounding on the type of communication between youth and their parents. The next section will interrogate how the use of mobile phones and the nature of existing communication contribute to the sustenance of family values.

Mobile Telephony and Family Values

The theme of ‘Mobile Telephony and Family Values’ gives an analysis and interpretation that is aimed at achieving the third objective of the study which was to
find out the relationship between the use of mobile phones and the sustenance of family values. This concern can be traced from the already discussed themes which are intertwined with this theme. The ‘youth mobile phone appropriation’ is seen to influence the ‘type of communication’ in the family. The ‘Mobile Telephony and Family Values’ as a theme, seeks to interrogate the connection between the type of communication in the family and the sustenance of family values. Can mobile phone interactions in the family sustain family values?

Behavioral mobile phone attributes

The youth’s access to the internet to a point of addiction strained family communication. The youth were designated for their inactive participation to conversations consequently compromising the value of listening. A parent lamented about the youth’s insensitivity on the use of the device:

The youth will hardly look up to face a visitor during an introduction. They have no time and patience but will continue concentrating on their phones. They will just be nodding as you talk to them.

The youth’s body language exhibited lack of interest from the limited countenance during interaction. Another parent shared:

Sometimes you call them but they hardly respond because they are busy chatting on their phones. They don’t listen. You may talk to them but they are absent-minded, then they ask you, ‘what were you saying?’

The youth also concurred as exemplified from a self-disclosure, “The mobile phone has affected me a lot. Most of the times when I am spoken to I have no concentration. I rarely pay attention. The phone distracts me from having meaningful conversations with others.” This attitude demonstrates a subconscious defiance to family authority which is a vice compromising family values. Interactions were and are still the main avenue for value generation.
Sustenance of privacy from this technology espoused accelerated adoption among the youth. The youth were content despite their parent’s oversight role; they could communicate to one another with composure. Some youth, however, perceived ‘privacy’ from a very negative dimension thus enhancing abuse of mobile phones as disclosed by a youth, “There are some phone calls I cannot take when she (mother) is around. I may want to gossip about some stuff.” It is therefore evident that mobile phone use perpetuates anti-social deportments.

Mobile phones and parenting

The parents were anxious that the youth could be navigating unsafe and prohibited sites hence venting their frustrations for the lack of control mechanisms as seen in one parent’s lamentation, “Controlling against these vice becomes very difficult because the mobile phones are used privately.” Parents harbored other fears related to the virtual space as one shared, “This is also how some join cults. The youth wish to be rich very quickly so it’s very easy for them to join cults.”

Combated by such situations, parents continued to lament about the deleterious effects of mobile phones that compromised religious family values. A parent stated, “If a youth is going to navigate prohibited sites and access nude images of people, it is contrary to the teachings of our Christian faith.” Some youth concurred with the parental figures’ perspective as reflected in a youth’s respondent, “In my opinion the mobile phones have not affected my communication with my parents. But they have affected our social values. For us Muslims, Islam teaches us to shun immorality but through the phones we access pornographic material.”

Some parents also designated the mobile phone as an avenue to terror gangs. They purported that some social media groups meant to woo the youth were deliberately formed as one parent disclosed, “They are easily persuaded to join terror
gangs on promise of riches but they are brought back home dead. It makes us very sad.” However, there were a few parents who deliberately took a comforting prospect:

I cannot say I am worried because I have already given them my advice and guidelines and it’s my expectations that my advice and guidelines shall be adhered to. If you develop any fears you will not trust them and earning their trust is a very important component.

The youth relished a sense of power and control over their identities and communities from the self-directed activities, unlimited to the production and forwarding of own unregulated content through their mobile phones. This nature of youth empowerment enabled new antipathetic forms of agency as narrated by a parental figure:

The whole of last year I didn’t give my daughter a mobile phone. We used to share. Why sharing? Because I wanted to know and monitor what friends she had and what they were doing. Right now her brother has given her a phone and she has immediately put a password. So I can no longer monitor her. At one time a boy sent a nude picture thinking that it was my daughter who still had my phone. I was so shocked. I advised my daughter against receiving or sending nudes even to the people she considered friends. One day all these pictures will be all over the media and it would be embarrassing.

The youth’s demand for autonomy and privacy was seen from the feat of barricading mobile phones with passwords. The youth defied control interpreting their parents’ obligation as ‘over parenting’, prompting them to be deceitful as one youth testified:

It gives one the opportunity to tell lies for instance when my parent calls and asks me where am I. I can easily tell him I am at ‘Buxton’ (name of an estate in Mombasa) but in the real sense I am hiding somewhere in the alleys with my girlfriend.

Parents attested to this deception as one put it, “You may call them to seek their whereabouts but they lie. They may tell you they are in church or in the mosque and in real sense they are in a guest house or in a club.” Another parent lamented,
“They will even put their phone on silent mode. When you try calling them they will always say they did not hear the phone ringing since it was on silent mode”

Access to the internet was perceived a contributory factor making the youth potential victims and perpetrators of family defiance as perturbed parent revealed, “Some of the clips forwarded are very immoral. Even the way they dress and the hairstyles they have has been influenced by what they see on their mobile phones.” This is the perceived negative ‘celebrity’ influence affecting the youth. Some youth had revealed their admiration for celebrity news that they consistently sought for from the internet through their mobile phones. Nonetheless, some parents perceived these behavioral attributes as a deviation from the already socialized family values.

Mobile phones and religious values

Both groups of respondents had a synchronized perspective on religious tension in the family. They conceded to there being an influence to religious values especially those embedded in the family system from mobile phone use. With the advent of mobile communication, coveted religious values increasingly became difficult to sustain as the mobile phone absorbed the social space. This affected the dominant religions in Kenya. The Kenya Demographics Profile (2019) profiled the Christian faithful at 83% followed by the Muslims at 11.9%; the Traditionalists at 1.6% and the unspecified at 3.5% respectively. Most parents admitted that mobile phones had a deleterious effect on family ways of life as shared by a parent a parent from the Christian faith:

It was just yesterday when we had a major problem with our son. He had uploaded a status on his phone that was very immoral. This prompted me to go through his phone. What I saw in that phone only God can help. Now that you have asked that question, let us answer it maybe we shall get help through you (the interviewer). I called him and asked him about the status he had uploaded on his phone. He pretended not to know about it lying that it had been forwarded to him by someone else. I reminded him we are leaders in the
church and what he had uploaded was visible to many users and therefore embarrassing us.

Many parents demonstrated anxiety over the impression that a significant proportion of the youth were using their phones obstructively as put by another parent:

Chatting on the mobile phone is not bad. But sometimes the usage invites immorality and that is what worries me. Some of the pictures forwarded to them by friends are immoral and disturbing. But if they chat with friends positively for finding out how each is faring I have no problem. The mobile phones have brought many issues to the present society, both good and bad.

This anxiety was confirmed from the youth respondents who conceded that it was peer pressure that influenced their negative deportment. A youth from the Islam faith shared a perspective:

A Muslim lady is expected to cover herself in decorum. But you will find she has posted a picture of herself on Facebook wearing short pants. According to our religious customs it is wrong. It is immoral, but everyone wishes to be like others.

The mobile phone use also came under strong criticisms. Among the criticisms leveled against it were the subverted uses of the electronic ‘Holy Bible’. Modern technologies had digitally compressed the book, making it accessible from communication devices. This technology was wiping out the convention of reading hard copies as a youth pointed out:

Some churches don’t tolerate mobile phones because someone might say he or she is reading the ‘Bible’ through the phone but maybe he or she’s chatting. Or you might just open the Bible you want to read but you get distracted, because you receive a message alert.

Deception as a vice was deplored. Users chatted on social media during worship pretending to be reading the Bible. Mobile phone message alerts could easily be a distraction to users genuinely reading the Bible from the mobile phone. In a similar situation, Muslim parents abhorred youth’s addiction to mobile phones for
ignoring the calls for ‘Swala’ (prayers) from the mosques. Both Muslims and Christians’ sentiments were synonymous as exemplified by a parent who said, “It has impacted negatively on our cultural and social values since the youth want to ape things in the contemporary secular world.”

This part of the section evinced mobile telephony as a catalyst in moral decay in the family. It was becoming an exigent sustaining and upholding values resulting from communication technologies individually experienced. The following section will give an analysis of the mobile youth culture and how it contributed to the general nature of family relations.

Youth and Family Relations

This section gives an insight on ‘Family Relations’. The ‘Youth and Family Relations’ theme corresponds to the fourth research objective which was investigating how uses of mobile phones had affected relationships in the family. The theme is broken down into three inter related sub themes.

Disruptive communication technology

Parental figures conceded that the youth by design were avoiding spending time with family members. The youth engaged in mobile communication activities involving peers which were interpreted as the contemporary agencies in control. Disheartened parents discerned that the mobile phones dictated the youth’s daily activities at the expense of family ties. The situation was no better for some parents whose lack of awareness of the features used by the youth raised suspicions and mistrust as revealed by a parent:

You will observe them staying up very late at night with the lights from their mobile phones blinking. You cannot ask them or intervene but one can clearly see they are not asleep yet but very busy on their phones. You also hear from time to time tone alerts from received messages which is an indication that the users are busy using the phones.
The mobile youth culture spawn mixed reactions in families. While some parents lamented against the youth’s leverage of their obstructive mobile phone use and privacy, other parents were comfortable with the youth’s behavior justifying the need for their space. The latter group of parental figures acknowledged the benefits accrued from globalization as shared:

In my opinion the youth are now like adults. They are now in the position of knowing what they want to do with their life. We give them an opportunity to discover themselves except those who are under 18 years, but these ones are now over 18 years. So we cannot control how they use the social media but only offer parental advice so that they put it into good use.

This is a positive outlook that calls for parents’ acquaintance with their youth’s mobile phone activities and advice accordingly for optimum family relations.

Youth and privacy

A close examination of how private mobile phones were to the youth, showed most youth were uncomfortable to receive incoming calls in the presence of their parents. Receiving incoming calls was dictated by the nature of the call and contact as a youth disclosed, “It will depend with who is calling. Some conversations require space; some calls are private and confidential.”

Family relationships founded on lack of openness and transparency fashioned youthful family members to be discrete about their mobile phone conversations. Nonetheless, some tolerant youth unreservedly revered their parents as seen in a youth’s response, “I am free with him and I maintain respect because I know he is my father and she is my mother. So I avoid being playful with them the way I can be with my friends. Yes, I am free.” This is a typical example of a relationship anchored on a significant family value of ‘respect for authority’. In other families, tension raged as exemplified in this response from a youth, “I am not really free. It depends on who is
calling because some things you cannot talk about when your parents are there especially when it’s my girlfriend calling.”

While there was the notion that mobile phones allowed better coordination within the family, this notion was contradicted by parents’ heightened anxiety resulting from the youth’s desire for emancipation. Parents’ skepticism on the mobile youth culture characterized by high levels of ‘secrecy’ and ‘privacy’ escalated. Parents’ fears were justifiable from the youth’s deportment and attitudes towards incoming calls as reinforced by one youth:

I can never receive a phone call in front of my parents. I wouldn’t want them to know what is going on in my life. I will always leave and receive my calls where I have my privacy. The language sometimes is vulgar and it comes in use suddenly.

The youth compromised family relationships from unwarranted mobile phone behaviors including vulgarity. Nonetheless, not all parents perceived the youth’s use negatively. Some parents expressed confidence in their youth giving them leeway in mobile phone use as expressed by a parent:

You need to give the youth the necessary guidelines. If it’s a call on issues concerning the immediate family he or she has a right to speak in everyone’s presence. But if he or she considers the call as ‘private’ then they have a right to receive it in privacy. The truth of the matter is that it is their phone and we must treat it as ‘private’.

The investigation of the youth’s reactions on mobile phone intrusion from parents spawn varied reactions. Most youth revealed that they would take offense but a few would not as one youth put it:

It’s not really private because on my phone, I don’t even have a password; it’s just open like that. People actually ask why I don’t lock my phone. I don’t think it’s necessary to lock my phone or even my laptop. I don’t lock it. It’s just open.

In agreement to this perspective, another youth added another angle to it:
If I say my phone has so many things in it, it doesn’t mean it has bad things. Everyone at home knows my password. So I have nothing to hide. However, it will not be fair just to take someone’s phone and go through it.

These illustrated family relationships entrenched with optimism, discernment and provision of opportunities for family bonding. Trusting families demeaned secrecy as narrated by a youth that took no infringement:

I will feel okay because they are used to my phone. Like at times my mum’s phone might stop working so she takes my phone. She says “assist me with your phone I want to send a photo to your aunt” or “I need to make a call” or “let me see your pictures”. So am used to that or even my dad sometimes will need my phone so that he can listen to music through my phone, [even my sisters].

Other youth however possessed divergent views, vehemently stating that their mobile phones were private gadgets as demonstrated in some responses, “I will feel very offended. Why would they go through my phone without my consent? My phone is my private gadget.” Another youth also expressed concerns, “It’s a bad feeling, a negative vibe. It’s not good at all. Your phone has a lot of things, a private thing, I do hate it”. Another youth had this to share:

I will take offense because in my phone I have many things I consider confidential. Some things on my phone are just mine alone. I wouldn’t want any other person to know them. But if they have to know I should give my consent. There should be boundaries.

This type of statements strongly opposed intrusion into their mobile phones. One youth placed premium on the words ‘private gadget’, another one emphasized on ‘boundaries’. While another one used ‘negative vibe’. This diction disclosed the nature of relationships. However, some youth subscribed diplomacy in their sentiments as one disclosed:

I will not feel so bad; however, I am entitled to my privacy since there are some things on my phone I wouldn’t want her to see. She might see things and judge me negatively yet I may not find them that bad.
It was evident that there were youth who readily reached out to their parents despite their quest for privacy. Although most parents may have misunderstood them, these youth bore a point of view that acknowledged that the generational gap will always exist and this may be a source of conflict regardless of how the youth used their mobile phones. These youth yearned for correlative relationships pervaded by minimal misunderstandings thus imploring an ambivalent point of view as one youth put it:

I will take offense but what can I do? He will have already taken it. His phone is his and mine is mine. There are things in my phone that I have not deleted that I wouldn’t want him to see, but since he is my father I will just keep quiet.

Nonetheless, most youth felt untethered from mobile phone use that accorded them some sense of autonomy.

All parents acceded that prying into the youth’s phones would generate a bleak outcome. Invasion of privacy was perceived to demean the youth prodding some parents to concede and reinforce youth privacy. One parent devised a parenting mode helping her guide her youthful members of the family:

I cannot go through their phones. It is not my nature to do so. But I pray for them all the time. I have given them their uncle’s telephone number so that they can call him for advice if they cannot talk to me.

From the parent’s perspective, most youth were unprepared to share phones or any information, prompting them to barricade their phones with passwords. Infuriated parents used emotive language to express their displeasure. A parent exaggeratingly disclosed that her daughter’s phone had ‘over twenty passwords’ as if she had literally counted them:

Their mobile phones have passwords left and right. My daughter has over twenty passwords on her phone. You cannot access her mobile phone messages. But she will all the time take my phone for her personal use but I can’t touch her phone.
Another parent put it even more strongly:

You will not be given the phone to go through no matter what you do. Even if President Uhuru Kenyatta was here you will not be given the phone. In the first place how will you access the information in it when it has passwords all over? They will never accept. But they will always ask to use my phone. Even when you request them to see certain images from their phones, they will hold it at a 'safe angle' as you watch.

This parent used exaggerated invocations to emphasize the point to an extent of making reference to the highest authority in the country. The point made was that even with the President’s intervention whose office constitutionally is the highest in command in Kenya; the youth would not be compelled to sacrifice their privacy. These were indeed very strong sentiments.

Youth and parental control

In the examination of parent - youth relationships in the family, the study interrogated ‘authority’. Assumptions revolving around parental figures representing and wielding authority in the household was disputable. All parental figures conceded being obstreperous on the youth’s use of mobile phones; neither had they any control even as the youth possessed handsets. Parents attested that the youth understood with ease the use of the technology making them technological savvy as one parent declared, “It is very difficult to control the youth. You cannot control their conversations neither can you control whom they speak to. The youth know how to manipulate the phone more than I do.”

A spinoff from earlier parts of this section encapsulates parents’ resignation to ‘youth defiance’. The youth’s deportment already cited herein was their deception about their whereabouts, switching off mobile phones and claiming of a dead battery. Others included claiming the phone was charging unattended. Most parents acknowledged experiencing youth defiance or resistance to family authority as one
parent shared, “I can’t say I have the control because if they go somewhere and they
don’t want me to call they switch of the phone so that you will not reach them.”
Another one lamented, “Sometimes you try calling them but they cannot be raised. If
you ask them why they could not be reached they will always say the battery went
off.”

This posed a delicate situation in the balancing of relationships in the family. The mobile phone accorded the youth some leeway rendering parents with a difficult
task of being in control except for the ‘physical space’ as one parent said, “You can
only be in control when they are indoors. You can lock the door and tell them ‘no
going out’ but not when they are out or using their phones.” Some parents alluded the
lack of control was leveraged from the youth’s self-purchasing of mobile phones. The
youth labeled mobile phones as personal possessions that gave them a sense of
ownership. The seclusion and privacy accorded from the device gave them leverages
especially to those who purchased their own handsets. Moreover, some parents
deliberately adopted positive perspectives as shared by a parent, “I may have no
control over them because they purchase the handsets on their own. I don’t buy them
the mobile phones. But we appreciate that we are able to communicate with each
other.” This was an indication of families whose foundation was concretized on
mutual understanding. Parents in this cadre did not disparage youth’s mobile phone
use instead elevated their parenting role as one parent put it:

The youth having mobile phones does not give me any control of their lives. I am still taking care of them and their welfare. In my opinion this is what gives me control over them and not the mobile phone. So the mobile phone is just but a gadget.

Nonetheless, it is evident from the study findings that the youth have adjusted
to new social communication environments and expectations that bestow upon them
autonomy. This has generally modified family relationships and dynamics especially
in parent–youth relationships. Whereas some youth are tolerant to their parents’ participation in or management of their routine aspects of lives, others find it parochial which Awiti (2011) chronicled as ‘relational turbulence’.

4.3 Summary of Key Findings

This study’s analysis corresponded to the first research objective which was to investigate how the youth used the applications or features in their mobile phones. It referred to the uses as the ‘youth mobile phone appropriation’. It is clear from the analysis that the youth coveted mobile telephony because of the multiple uses of the device. The analysis divulged the difference in the significance attached to the value of the mobile phone from its usage. The older generation was more disposed towards general communication. On the contrary, the youth used it for numerous communication activities beyond the general communication. Nonetheless, both groups conceded that the paramount function of the mobile phone was the ‘general communication’.

The analysis also corresponded to the second research objective which was to examine how the usage of mobile telephony designed the way the youth communicated with their parents in everyday communication. The data analysis expounded on the type of communication between the youth and their parents whose findings indicated that the youth spent a substantial amount of time on their mobile phones instead of bonding with the family. This behavior was perceived as a deliberate move to distance themselves from other family members. Over reliance of mobile phone communication in the household took precedence instead of the face to face interactions. Nonetheless, most youth preferred the face to face interaction when they wished to communicate problems to their parents. The findings also indicated
that the duration of voice calls to peers were longer than those to parents. Generally there was a reduced level of face to face interaction.

In correspondence to the third research objective which was to investigate how the use of mobile phones had affected relationships in the family, the analysis revealed that the youth were designated for their inactive participation to conversations consequently compromising the value of listening. The youth also perceived ‘privacy’ from a negative dimension. This posed a challenge to parents who acquired mobile phones for parenting purposes. Tension emerged from the youth’s use of the device citing fear of lack of accountability of the ‘virtual space’ they navigated. Parents lamented about the deleterious effects of mobile phones that compromised religious and other family values. Parents mistrusted the youth’s social media groups proclaiming that most deviant behaviors were perpetrated from social media.

Finally, the analysis corresponded to the fourth research objective which was to investigate how the use of mobile phones had affected relationships in the family. The analysis revealed that most parents were disheartened by the youth’s mobile phone use that dictated their daily activities at the expense of family ties. The youth regarded the mobile phones as private gadgets putting a lot of strain on family relations. The parent’s skepticism on the youth’s mobile phone use was pegged on the ‘secrecy’ and ‘privacy’ with which the youth handled the device. Nonetheless, the parent’s fears were justifiable from the youth’s deportment and attitudes towards how they handled incoming calls.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the qualitative Phenomenological data analysis. The chapter has interpreted the research objectives aligning them in turns to specific
themes of ‘Youth Mobile Phone Appropriation’, ‘Type of Communication in the Family’, ‘Mobile Telephony and Family Values’ and ‘Youth and Family Relationships’ and each theme reinforced by relevant sub themes. This analysis and interpretation will form the basis of the ‘Discussions’ and ‘Conclusions’ in the next chapter using the study’s theoretical framework.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an in-depth discussion and conclusions on the study findings. The discussions are guided by the theoretical framework the study adopted hinged upon the Symbolic Interactionism Theory, complemented by the Technological Determinism paradigm, the Family Systems Theory and the Cultural Onion Model. The chapter will generally demonstrate the interrelatedness of the theoretical aspects contributing towards the achievement of the objectives and the research questions of the study. It diagnoses digital communication cancer which the study coins as ‘Mobileosis. The purpose of this study was to investigate how the youth used their mobile phones and how this usage impacted on communication in the family. The research questions were as follows:

i. For what purposes did the youth use the applications or features on their mobile phones?

ii. How did the use of the mobile phone technology design the way the youth communicated with their parents in everyday communication?

iii. What was the relationship between the use of the mobile technology and the sustenance of family values?

iv. How did the use of mobile phones affect relationships in the family?

5.2 Discussions of Key Findings

Analysis of the Research Design Perspective

The study was informed by the Symbolic Interactionism Theory as its theoretical framework; however, the data collection procedure took the
Phenomenology approach. Both the Symbolic Interactionism and the Phenomenology approach were associated with anti-positivism which embraces the interpretive approach into the inquiry of knowledge relevant to this study. Herbert Blumer’s Symbolic Interactionism Theory disputed the quantitative approach to inquiry arguing mere questionnaires only answered about one’s attitude but abjured how people behaved in various situations. For anyone to know the ‘truth’ the theory suggested one should take the ‘insiders’ approach to situations (Blumer, 1934).

On the other hand, the Phenomenology approach undertaken in this study was a complement to Blumer’s (1934) position. Phenomenology as developed by Edmund Husserl rejected empirical evidence to inquiry of knowledge. Embracing an inquiry where no experiment or scientific observations approved or disapproved people’s lived experiences is its major tenet (Husserl, 1950). Both Symbolic Interactionism and Phenomenology took the interpretive approach in inquiry of knowledge which was relevant to this study.

Phenomenology extensively used the interpretive theorists’ perspective whose philosophy was hinged on seeking an understanding of how people constructed meaningful worlds through interaction (Miller, 2005). The epistemology adopted in the study advocated the distance between the ‘knower’ and the ‘known’. In this approach, the researcher set aside any preconceived beliefs and values in the investigation of social life which Weber (as cited in Miller, 2005) referred to as the ‘objective sociology’. Miller (2005) expounded that the heart of an interpretive study was on the belief that people constructed their world through ‘communicative interaction’.

The study dwelt more on participant’s descriptions of ‘experiences’ and not ‘interpretations’ of the researcher. Guided by Miller’s (2005) perspective, bracketing
or setting aside one’s personal beliefs and experiences was one of the most appropriate methods of understanding other people’s point of view or perspective. Husserl’s (1950) Phenomenology referred to bracketing as ‘epoché’, which he described as the exclusion of one's own personal perspective.

The data collected was analyzed from the participants' personal experiences with the phenomenon. From these experiences, a composite description of the essence of the individualized and personal experiences was arrived at. The descriptions consisted of ‘what’ and ‘how’ they experienced the use of the mobile phone. This approach was best suited for this kind of study where understanding several individuals’ common or shared experiences on the use of the ‘mobile phone’ came into play. The mobile phone is a communication gadget consciously and subjectively experienced. As stated in chapter three, the findings were allowed to emerge, rather than being imposed by the investigator. Besides, the researcher did not delete, add, change, or distort anything originally presented in the initial “meaning units” of the participants’ transcripts.

The Relevance of the Symbolic Interactionism Theory

The Symbolic Interactionism Theory gives precedence to the interaction process making it a very important theory in communication studies. The theory views an individual as a subject with a social position capable of designing his or her communication context identity. In this study the family’s use of mobile phones was examined from both the youth and the parents’ lenses. The main focus was on the youth’s uses; however, for creating a better understanding, it was prudent to examine the parents’ perspective too. This approach gave this study an understanding of the mobile phone use in the family since the participants were examined from their interactional level.
The family is formed by interacting members of the family. During these interactions, human behavior can be understood from the symbols that emerge. With relevance to this study, the use of mobile communication technology was examined to find out how it designed the already established family communication. In this research the mobile phone user was both the sender and the recipient at the same time, completing the cycle in the interaction process that is acknowledged in the Symbolic Interactionism Theory. Nonetheless, mobile telephony was argued to change the nature of communication through its services such as e-mail, chats, voice calls and message texting (Drago, 2015).

In subjecting the ‘meaning’ principle as advocated in Blumers’ (1934) Symbolic Interactionism Theory, use of mobile phones in the family can be seen from the way family members act towards each other based on the individual meanings assigned and interpretation from the use of the mobile phone. For instance, it was observed that the duration of calls made by the youth to their peers were longer than calls made to family members. The youth too spent a substantial amount of their time on social media at the expense of having conversations in the family. All these behaviors generated certain family relations in one way or another. In this study, the mobile phone as experienced by the youth in some instances resulted in mutual and in others antagonistic communication relationships as interpreted at the family level.

Youth and the Virtual Community

The Symbolic Interactionism Theory states that individuals form human groups through ‘action’ and from it ‘act’ towards the interaction process. In this study the ‘mobile youth culture’ integrated the youth in virtual groups. In fulfilling the Symbolic Interactionism Theory’s tenet, the mobile phone conveniently aided the youth to form deliberate communities which succored great social communication
opportunities. The social media connected and strengthened group relations supported by mobile phone applications.

The driving force behind the youth’s choice of popular applications was the leverage and impetus that dispensed opportunities for updates and peer networking. Most youth revealed that they were members to many social media groups whose interactions within took precedence. Inadvertently, this weakened relationships in the family. It is a common phenomenon that parents would always want to keep abreast with the on goings of their children and youthful members of the family. Most youth in the study were university and college students and very few were already employed. These youth were still dependent on their parents and because of that most parents felt they still had a responsibility over them as far as their parenting role was concerned.

On the other hand, since being a part of a communicating group had been the youth’s desire, this dictated the genus of mobile phones acquired. The youth sought mobile phones adept of hosting latest services and applications. Mobile phones with inadequate ‘memory space’ or amplitude for the latest application software warranting ‘downloads’ and other services were not propitious. Since the youth desired to stay connected with peers, social media platforms were interpreted as the pre-eminent avenues underpinning interaction reflecting the group life prescribed in the Symbolic Interactionism Theory.

Deconstructing Family Values

The theory states that family institutions were formed as a result of people coming together while constructing actions. Blumer (1934) construed the society as one that emerged from continuous ‘negotiation’ of perspectives processes. Like their parents, the youth used the mobile phone for ‘general communication’ but this
communication was reneged to peers mostly. The youth manifested a thirst for social media connecting them with the world, typical of a dominant culture defining them as a group influenced by internet sites and online chatting. The youth adored the world as interpreted from ‘deceptive celebrities’ and ‘peer packaging’ perspectives which sculpted their communication behaviors.

Most parents lamented about the socialized values that were being eroded with the invasion of this communication technology. In an ideal family setting, members would constantly interact as they demonstrated filial love for each other. Parents were considered a source of wisdom through the advices they orally passed to the younger members of the family. As children grew and developed, they physically played with other children and a lot of face to face interaction took place even when they resolved arising disputes amongst themselves.

In this study, the youth mobile phone activities characterized by active participation on social media and other online interactions took precedence. As a result, some parents downloaded social media platforms for use, especially WhatsApp, justifying their being on the platform as a vantage for reaching out to the youth. The youth’s addictive use of mobile phone applications infuriated other family members, however in resignation; these members accommodated or normalized the obstructive mobile phone behaviors which the Symbolic Interactionism Theory refers to as ‘negotiations’ that were slowly deconstructing the existing family values. The acceptance of certain behavioral vices for convenience denoted a high level of tolerance from parents. The proposition developed herein is that this tolerance to the vices by extension was entrenching new norms and communication cultures.

Typical African families had a non-negotiable prescribed authority and way of life as seen in Adinlofu’s (2009) and Idang’s (2015) scholarly write-ups. The
contemporary family setting is witnessing a rebellion resulting from the many ‘civil rights’ organizations that purport to safeguard children and youth’s rights, pushing parenting roles in the background. Wadende et al. (2016) document that Kenya is a signatory to various international conventions that include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. These scholars claim that the Kenyan government has not only been a signatory to these conventions, but has also reinterpreted them through the national laws and policy guidelines aimed at benefiting the child. At an international platform, the United Nation’s (2013) Youth Participation forum proposed that the drafting of laws affecting the youth be facilitated through youth’s participation in consultative processes. This undermines the authority status quo that prevailed in African family settings. The use of mobile phones provides an opportunity for the youth to negotiate their place and space in the family which may disregard the established family authority.

The negotiation contributing to the deconstruction of family values can be interpreted from the Symbolic Interactionism Theory’s perspective that views individuals as active agents in the social world that are instrumental in producing the culture, society and meaningful conduct that influence them (Blumer, 1934). In this study, the deconstruction of family values was signaled from the reduced youth’s desire for face to face communication with their family members. The mobile youth culture was strongly integrated into the youth’s behavior of displaying symptoms of behavioral addiction that impacted on their body language eliciting lack of interest when being addressed. There was evidence of lack of mutual communication experienced in the face to face interactions. The face to face communication reinforces Simmel’s (1908) perspective on ideal interactions. Georg Simmel, a
sociologist and a notable scholar in the field of communication analyzed face to face interactions saying that sensory organs played a crucial role. Nevertheless, this study demonstrated that the disheartened parents tolerated these negative behaviors accommodating a new frontier to the acceptance of a newly produced culture influenced by mobile phone use. The youth had become agents in the social world conforming to the ‘agency’ advocated in the Symbolic Interactionism Theory.

On the contrary, such behavior was unacceptable in the typical African context. Listening is considered a virtue in interactions, especially when the elderly are addressing younger members of the family or society. The youth’s display of this negative trait or behavior can be dichotomized as being ‘rude’. Culturally, the blame may even be extended to the parents for failure of giving appropriate guidance to their younger members of family. In the African setting, the children and youthful members of the family’s behavior was correlated to the nature of family upbringing. The society was very fast at blaming the parents for the display of any undesirable behavior from their younger members of family (Wadende et al., 2016). For instance, the Swahili people from the Kenyan Coast have a proverb that says, ‘Mtoto umleavyo ndivyo akuavyo’, meaning, ‘A child grows up as he is brought up’. This proverb has a heavy bearing on the nature of parenting.

Youth and Alienation

Blumer (1934) opined in his Symbolic Interactionism Theory that social institutions are made up of roles into which individuals fit. These roles are linked to the functionalistic view of the society, especially when the society is described as being made up of institutionalized norms and values. The family recognizes ‘parental figures’ as the authority in households justifying the parents’ contemporary use of mobile phones to know the whereabouts of their children and the youthful members
of the family. Traditionally, even as children and youthful members of the family visited friends and other relatives, their whereabouts were well known to their parents. It was normal for them to seek for permission from the family authority before visiting. Parents were typically in control of the physical space and also guided how children and youthful members of the family addressed parents and other elderly people in the society. This was constantly done through oral interactions. Nonetheless, the use of mobile phones by the youth was creating a societal revolution.

In this study, parents’ vexation from the youth’s continued distancing and reduced communication with family members escalated the tension. Attributes building upon the tension included parents’ not being aware of the youth’s mobile phone contacts, evidently an indication of youth being in control of the conversation and virtual space. Interactive mobile phone features with peers had conveniently secluded other family members.

The time spent on popular applications was extremely high making parents apprehensive. The youth diligently subscribed to mobile phone use making it synonymous to a full time occupation. Mobile phones domineered and superintended the youth’s daily routine exhibiting deportments defining the youth’s daily routine. In a typical African home the youth would be engaged in house chores or activities that gave them life skills and also learn about their environments. Communities through the immediate families socialized their children and the youthful members of the family in accordance to their social and economic needs.

Wadende et al. (2016) explain that this African indigenous education addressed the physical, emotional and social aspects of a child all the way to the youthful stage. Through learning by doing, a child would learn to take responsibility for himself and others in his group and of virtues such as hard work, friendship and
truthfulness through play, story-telling sessions and practical assignments. The
practical assignments included the aspects of tasks in the family that the child could
effectively accomplish such as brief sessions of caring for a sibling, helping an older
sibling or parent clean up or even prepare a meal. The notable aspect of the
indigenous unwritten curriculum is that learning objectives were achieved through
sequential cultural skills and interaction. For instance at the Kenyan Coast among the
Swahili people who live on the shores of the Indian Ocean, fishing skills would be
imparted to the young males, while the young females would be trained on how to run
homes. This was in preparation for the adult world. A lot of these skills were imparted
through face to face interactions and demonstrations. In essence, adults spent more
time with their children and their youthful members of the family preparing them for
their future adult roles (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization, 2013)

Idang (2015) cited meal times among others, as very significant family social
events creating an opportunity for sharing face to face the day’s activities. Traditionally family members had meals together where family conversations took
precedence. However, it should not be construed that this tradition has become
extinct. There are families that have sustained this tradition over generations.
Nonetheless, this study revealed that the youth declined having meals with other
members of the family due to mobile phone addiction. The youth paid special
attention to their mobile phone use at the expense of these family moments. This is
reflected in one of the Symbolic Interactionism Theory’s tenets that advances that
people behave based on their beliefs and personal social constructs. According to the
theory, the youth have made it their personal social construct that family moments are
no longer significant.
Interpretations and Impact on Communication Patterns

Since the Symbolic Interactionism Theory views the world as one that is socially constructed where meaning of objects, events, and behaviors come from the interpretations people assign, a justification can be made to account for the youth’s spending of significant amount of time chatting away with other peers on mobile phones. While traditional roles gave parents ample time to execute parental roles that proactively engaged the youth in preparation for adulthood, the youth interpreted this role positively viewing their parents as role models (Wadende et al., 2016).

Although parents in this study felt that they had a responsibility over their youthful members of family because the latter group was dependent on them, the study revealed that most parents seemed detached from the youth’s lives due to their everyday economic schedules. This subconsciously contributed to the youth’s behavior of being aloof. The proportion of parents who communicated face to face with their youthful members of the family all the time was slightly low. This could have accounted for the youth’s resentment to face to face interactions resorting to social media as escapism.

As a result of the existing minimal face to face interactions, family members’ misinterpretation of each other engendered a rift. Parents were less talked to even through ‘mobile phone’ communication resulting to a pedigree of vexation among them interpreting the youth as an alienated group. On the other hand, the youth that were frequently ‘voice’ called by their parents took offense, interpreting it as being ‘micro’ managed. Thus genuine concerns became a pedigree of conflicts. Nonetheless, the study also revealed some traces of positive family relationships where both parties enclasped mutual communication reinforcing family values of kinship.
Adinlofu (2009) elucidated that the continuity of value reinforcement depended on family communication from one generation to the next. Adinlofu (2009) is apprehensive about individuals who grew up in the absence of proper family setting with the perceptions that such individuals had tendencies to display deficiencies in family values. Precautious measures ought to be taken to curb the invigoration of the slow death of face to face interactions emanating from mobile phone addiction. Nguru (2014) discerned it as the accommodation of the ‘culture of silence’ synonymous to television viewing activity.

With reference to this study, the fear of isolation perhaps influenced parents’ unwillingness to express their opinions over the negative mobile phone use in the family. This dimension on ‘silence’ can be reflected from Noelle-Neuman’s Spiral of Silence Theory that could be used to explain the parent’s fear of speaking against the youth’s negative mobile phone behavioral attributes. Noelle-Neuman (1974) outlines that one of the most crucial factors that increase the power of spiral of silence is the fear of isolation. This theory states that human beings are afraid of being isolated. According to Noelle-Neuman (1974) when people are afraid of being isolated, they will not express their opinions, which they perceive as the minority opinion. This is what the Symbolic Interactionism Theory refers to as a world that is socially constructed.

This section has discussed the study findings from the Symbolic Interactionism Theory’s perspective which is the main theory guiding the study. The next section will engage a discussion on the analysis from the Technological Determinism paradigm’s perspective complementing the main theory.
Relevance of the Technological Determinism Paradigm.

Technological determinists Smith and Marx (1994) postulated that technology was a key mover in social change. This was a pointer to how use of mobile communication technology had constructed communication in family relationships. This study examined aspects of technology that helped explain technology’s influence on social relations through a reflection on the Technological Determinism paradigm. From the analyzed data, one can authoritatively state that technology can transform human communication practices, extending to family interaction. There is a link between technology and the changing communication practices within the family. Although technology is associated with these changes in practice, the nature of this association is complex and can be contested since both instances of ‘technology’ and ‘human’ agencies that influence change exist.

Technological Determinists predicted that old technologies would become obsolete and new ones will continue transforming the society from their adoption (McLuhan, 1964). The mobile communication technology is no exception. It is touted for its potentially transformative properties through the innovation of its features that continue to attract users. The study has revealed its growing impact in most aspects of human endeavor and provides strong evidence of its direct impact on communication in the family. Features of mobile phone and design are argued to provide active ingredients that determine the youth’s response towards them.

On the hand, the parents in this study revealed that the mobile communication had properties that directly changed the nature of communication in the family. In a deeper sense, the findings revealed that parents were more anxious about the ‘virtual space’ than the youth’s ‘physical space’. These findings contradicted Burke et al. (2018) whose context of ‘over parenting’ suggested parents were more worried of the
‘physical space’. This brings upon a debate on the influence of technology on family values which cannot be fully resolved since technology keeps revolving through innovation and adoption rates. The lack of a regulatory framework interferes with family values since parents seem incapacitated while the youth exploit innovative communication technologies through globalization. The imminent danger that comes with this is linked to Schiller (1976) a major proponent of the ‘Cultural Imperialism’ view of the early 70’s. Herbert Schiller expressed fear for the loss of cultures of the developing world from domination of new technologies. The parent’s concerns over the lack of a regulatory framework resonated with a study by Francke and Weideman (2008) on the youth’s obstructive exposure to pornography through mobile phones. The study had revealed that mobile phone users accessing pornographic sites were worse than that of users who directly accessed the World Wide Web without using mobile phones.

The data analysis in this study considered characterizing the effects of new communication technology from both agencies; technology and human based agencies.

Technology and Youth Behavior

The youth’s adoption rate of communication technologies keeps escalating as Mamman-Muhammad and Ogbu (2018) observed, expounding that these technologies continue to marvel the youth hence justifying their expansion. McLuhan (1964) opined that the human beings’ desire to enhance communication dominated the natural world. Technological Determinism paradigm views communication technologies as a people’s extension of themselves manifesting themselves in personal time and space (McLuhan, 1964). In most cases users are oblivious to the technology’s influence. For instance, this study revealed that the youth’s non-paying
of attention whenever being addressed was as a result of their deep concentration on their mobile phone activities. The youth subconsciously internalized this deportment and may not have necessarily seen anything wrong with it. Nonetheless, there were factors influencing or determining this kind of behavior.

Technology agency played a significant role in molding the mobile youth culture as seen from the marketing strategies used by manufacturers and mobile communication service providers to attract consumers. The availability of ‘free airtime’ is a typical example of a technology based agency wooing youth into technology use submission. The mobile communication service providers through enticing advertisements make the mobile phone device very attractive from the nature of promotion of their services through ‘offers’ or ‘goodies’. For instance, ‘Safaricom’ a local mobile communication service provider in Kenya has on several occasions had a promotion called ‘Storo Bonus’, which essentially involved benefits accrued from the amount of airtime one spent. The promotion dictated that the more one utilized the already purchased airtime, the more ‘free airtime’ one received equivalent to what they had initially purchased. However, this free airtime was to be used or utilized within a time limit of four hours before its expiry. This had a profound effect on users as they struggled to meet the provider’s demands to secure free airtime. In the real sense, the promotion subconsciously kept them active on their mobile phones, considering that the free airtime had to be used within the approved four hours’ limit.

Culture and Social Change

Mamman-Muhammad and Ogbu (2018) predicated that the new communication technologies either by content or infrastructure were shaping people’s perception of their immediate surroundings and relations. Societal cultural heritage was slowly fading away from the accelerated adoption of new frontiers of
communication. This was replicated in this study’s findings where most parents conceded that the mobile phones had a deleterious effect on family ways of life. Mobile telephony sculpted communications cultures as reflected from the youth’s preference for mobile communication. Dependency on mobile phone interactions rendered decreased face-to-face conversations, a testimony of the far reaching effects on communication almost shaping up a ‘voiceless society’ culture. Technology as an agent was providing the avenue for this culture as seen from the youth’s preference for use of social media for self-expression.

Nonetheless, according to the National Council for Law Reporting (2010) the youth can conveniently defend their communication behavior attributes as provided in the constitution that grants them the right to freedom of opinion and expression which is a fundamental right that safeguards the exercise of all other rights underpinning democracy. This further complicates communication and relationship in the family making it a complex nexus to determine the end of freedom of expression and the beginning of family authority since the Constitution of Kenya 2010 provides for the right to freedom of expression to every person. Such legislation coupled with the invasion of new communication technologies have disrupted established family communication, values and relationships.

The Technological Determinism paradigm posits that technology can be a basis for human activities, suggesting that it is the key governing instrument in the society (Smith & Marx, 1994). With reference to the findings in this study, mobile telephony has had a great impact on people’s activities and relations. The youth’s access of the internet to a point of addiction denoted that ‘technology’ overrode ‘human agency’. Roncallo-Dow and Scolari (2016) attributed this to new communication technologies whose effects were the primary mechanism that shaped
the society. Beard (1927) a technological determinist, illuminated that technological development not only determined social change but also modified people’s thinking and interaction. The youth’s loss of touch and lack of interest when being addressed demonstrated disparagement to family authority. Mobile phone addiction signaled the slow death of face to face interactions. In essence technology was seen to determine social change in human interactions both at the verbal and non-verbal levels of communication.

The next section will dwell on discussions on the Family Systems Theory that highlights the role of family in human relations.

The Relevance of the Family Systems Theory

The Family Systems Theory was significant to this study as it expounded the family interaction component. The theory views the human family system as one governed by relationship building processes. According to this theory, mobile phone use translated into an emotional process which regulated the functioning of different social groups.

Disruption of family relations

The Family Systems Theory outlines two kinds of anxieties: ‘acute anxiety’ and ‘chronic anxiety’. Acute anxiety occurred when the threat was short-lived. However, many of people’s problems were affected by the chronic anxiety (Bowen, 1976). The theory explains chronic anxiety as the fear of what is long-lasting. The study revealed that the mobile phone use was the new chronic ailment disrupting family relations. Equivalent to an unhealthy condition perceived to threaten human life, mobile telephony though a vital technology in society, led to harmful effects on communication and relationships in the family. Its long lasting effects can be termed as the cancer of ‘digital communication’ whose symptoms are the mobile phone
‘uses’ that shape ‘behaviors’ impacting on relationships and communication in the family. The study refers to this ‘digital communication cancer’ as ‘Mobileosis’ which is discussed in the next section.

The adoption of new communication technologies has facilitated ‘Mobileosis’ bringing with it a series of tension and effects in the family. To understand these effects it must be noted that this technology is considered as material culture, produced in a social process that includes the users of the technology, who appropriate and adapt the technology rather than adopting it. This is through its modification to produce an endless process of interaction between technological production and social use. In a bid to assess the impact of mobile communication in society, it is important to view its characteristics based on the context of the transformation of the social structure, as well as its relationship to the culture of this social structure. Families now live in a new social structure characterized by a global network society that has seen the rise of a new culture; the culture of autonomy that is slowly disrupting socialized values.

Nonetheless, families through communication strive to amalgamate into a cohesive unit. Parental figures perceive the mobile phone as a parenting aid helping them monitor their children and youthful members of the family beside other communication purposes. However, the mistrust and suspicions rendered parents’ reservations on the youth’s mobile phone use in their privacy. Elsobeihi and Naser (2017) justified the youth’s high level of technology approbation from the perceived convenience of privacy in its use. The youth were discerned to have more freedom in carrying out social relations deemed significant in their lives. Parents were exasperated for the lack of control mechanisms and their lack of complete awareness
of the youth’s popular mobile phone applications or whom the youth were communicating with.

In the traditional African setting parents knew all their younger members of the family’s friends. Parents would even have the leeway to advise them on how to choose friends based upon qualities corresponding with the societal approval. In this study, the youth safeguarded this information by manipulating mobile phone security applications to install passwords for the sustenance of privacy. This is what Dr. Murray Bowen the father of the Family Systems Theory referred to as ‘chronic anxiety’ (Bowen, 1976).

Dialectical tension

In the Family Systems Theory every system was governed by two counterbalancing life forces: the force towards ‘togetherness’ and the force towards ‘individuality’. In mobile phone use, parents represented the force aspiring for ‘togetherness’ while the youth inclined towards ‘individuality’. Bowen (1976) explained that the force towards togetherness drove people’s need for social support, affection and love. This was the moral obligation parents had in raising up their families which the study has shown. Nonetheless, while parents were committed to the maintenance of family relationships threatened by the use of mobile phones, the youth on the other hand were driven by individuality, striving to be unique and different. This put a strain on meaningful relationships.

The mobile phone was the new ‘digital’ umbilical cord uniting parents, children and the youthful members of the family. Parental figures in this study perceived the device as a parenting gadget. Parents acquired mobile phones to monitor their children and the youthful members of the family, bestowing upon them some sense of security especially over the youth’s ‘physical space’. However, the
device initiated another fear of lack of accountability of the ‘virtual space’ the youth
navigated. Most parental figures expressed displeasure at their unawareness of how
the youth used their phones in their private spaces. Parents mistrusted the youth’s
social media groups proclaiming that most deviant behaviors were perpetrated from
the social media.

In comparing the mobile phone use of the two generations, the older
generation appreciated general communication while the youth was inclined towards
multiple phone activities. The youth considered phones that accorded them ample
opportunities for a variety of services such as picture upload on social media and
general updates. The youth’s mobile phone interaction was geared more towards the
maintenance of peer-group networks than family interaction. This means
‘individuality’ contributed to the youth’s adjustment to new social communication
environments that gave them increased ‘independence’.

The situation above undermines the structural definition of the family that is
characterized by family members sharing a household or is related through blood ties.
In a social sense people see themselves as being members of the family with their
parents and siblings. However, in the current mobile communication dispensation
changing realities have redefined people’s roles and outlook in the family. By
insinuation, Leshtarova (2017) is in support of this view in the description of a family
as an organization, stating that it is made up of a variety of persons, each having his or
her own personality and belonging to a specific age group. Drago (2015)
acknowledges that each age group has its own specific goals and aims which
reinforces the individuality found within the subscribers of the mobile youth culture.
Owing to this perspective, the family system that enabled one to grow up, get
socialized and find his or her own identity, as reflected in the structure and culture as well as values, expectations and rules of the society is under imminent threat.

Traditionally, the family was entrusted with laying a bridge for the child all the way to the youthful stage to be a part of the society and life, while ensuring that the individual was content with life, fulfilling his or her duties as prescribed by the societal norms. The experiences and models that the family set for individuals at home played an important role in developing positive social behaviors and values. On the contrary the study revealed that certain vices were being normalized like gossiping on mobile phones and telling lies. Despite the crisis in the family, it is still the place of transmission of norms and patterns of social, religious and moral behaviors.

Bowen (1976) opined that humans were regulated through an emotional system. Burke et al. (2018) hinted that most families could have been well equipped to navigate the youth’s developmental challenges; however, the argument posed was that the parents and the youth did not necessarily share the same emotional appeals. This study exemplified that the youth pursued different interaction modes and patterns fashioned by their autonomy and privacy that gave rise to communication emotional appeal conflicts. The parent-youth relationship bore two opposing perspectives on the emotional appeal. Some parents were dismissive of the youth’s autonomy and privacy, while others were unequivocal. This is the relational turbulence that Awiti (2011) referred to as ‘dialectical tension’ that resulted from the friction of two generations within the family. The next section will dwell on the Cultural Onion Model outlining specific behaviors and communication cultures refashioned by mobile phone usage.
Relevance of the Cultural Onion Model

The Cultural Onion Model, originally developed by Gerard Hofstede complemented the Symbolic Interactionism Theory in this study. In applying Hofstede’s (1980) Cultural Onion Model, Donald Smith portrayed an analogy of a typical ‘cultural onion’ seeking to explain different cultural values. Claudio and Dominique (2012) defined values as the deeply rooted, complex and patterned principles that provided guidelines for the way a society should behave. The Cultural Onion Model which is rich in the description of culture makes references to symbols, heroes, rituals and values that culminate into practice.

From the model these are exemplified from the families’ ways of life. For instance, in the traditional African setting, ‘greetings’ were considered very important. Families freely interacted from the moment they exchanged greetings and parents were revered as heroes for their roles of taking care of the family. Story telling was a very significant activity in socialization. Nonetheless, this was slowly changing with the adoption of communication technologies. In this study, most parents were nostalgic of family values upheld before the invasion of mobile phones. The findings designated that the parents were subdued by the mobile youth culture denying them parental obligations. An examination on ramifications on the idiosyncrasy from mobile phone use revealed that its use was an impediment to cognition in families.

Idang (2015) viewed values as beliefs and practices that any society dictated to its members as the acceptable way of its routine life. This study was keen on the impact of mobile phone communication on family values and other relational norms such as: (i) Family identity (ii) Good relations (iii) Sense of time for family; (iv) Respect for family authority, which guided the study.
Family identity

The family is the central focal point for the reinforcement of values. Adinlofu (2009) viewed the use of mobile phone as an intrusion and catalyst to the destruction of African practices. ‘Family identity’ as a value depended on an individual’s personal identification with his or her immediate family. Despite the extensive mobile phone use exhibited by the youth in the study, most youth identified with their parents especially when they had personal problems and preferred to communicate face to face.

Nonetheless, family members ascribe to different forms of relationships depending on various meanings and interpretation of the relationships experienced with the immediate family. Communication technologies are contemporary catalysts in the transformation of rules and modes of the relationships between members of the family. The nature of interactions between family members offers an important key for interpreting the way one identifies with the family.

The study findings indicate that the relationships between parents and their children and youthful members of the family are radically being redefined, due to the advent of communication technologies, making it difficult for parents to exercise their parenting responsibilities. The mobile telephony provides an avenue for the continually shifting boundaries between and kinship. The youth have demonstrated a tendency to identify more with the world outside their families’ precincts through extensive mobile phone interactions. In a typical African setting the immediate family and the clan was paramount, giving an individual a sense of identity and belonging.

On a positive note, it is considered a virtue to relate and identify with peers and other family members in a healthy way which the mobile phone provides for the sustenance of this responsibility. This was seen through the youth’s sharing and
communicating with others even through mobile phones to reach out to peers and other members of the family. Although there was a reduced face to face communication, families continued to communicate with each other using every possible means even if it is through the mobile phone.

Good relations

In family communication, Ezedike (2009) lauded the art of dialogue embedded in face to face interactions buttressing family relationships to achieve collective solutions to problems. Ezedike (2009) recommends openness in conversations and views it as an obstructively human social trait when individuals refuse to talk or open up. The art of dialogue in human relations is cherished, as it advocates for free discussion of issues with each other seeking collective solutions to problems.

In this study, despite the youth being ‘secretive’, they maintained ‘good relations’ with their parents when faced with personal problems. They communicated freely with their parents, a virtue which Ezedike (2009) considered as a reinforcement of good human relationship. ‘Good relations’ is a value that throws its weight on the way of life emphasizing human interests. Existence of mobile phones did not inhibit the youth from discussing their personal problems with their parents. However, it can be construed that this nature of communication took place at the ‘personal convenience’ level.

On the other hand, as identified in Smith’s (1992) version of the Cultural Onion Model, a system of values was created from the accumulation of personal experiences about the world us. The use of mobile phones assigned new values in the youth, among them ‘the culture of selective silence’. This interfered with the relationship in the family. The youth in the study displayed a perennial ‘online
culture’, as they constantly interacted with others using the mobile communication device. This ‘online culture’ was characterized by forwarded content and regular updates on happenings or occurrences relevant to them. Before the advent of mobile communication, the youth had to wait until they physically met to relay any new information. The urge for a physical meeting is no longer there as there is no backlog of information since the mobile phone gives them opportunities for regular updates on matters they consider important and even forwards of live videos of events taking place such as parties or a graduation ceremony or any other. This threatens mutual relationships that results from the face to face. The youth were no longer listening to conversations. The study findings revealed that the mobile youth culture had impacted on the family value system. Oduor et al. (2014) underscored that ‘listening’ was a virtue and a strong integrant of face to face communication in any interaction process.

The nature of relationships in the family is weakened by the everyday personal experiences with the mobile phone use in the family. For instance social media interaction is characterized by extensive use of ‘emojies’ in place of interaction countenances such as facial expressions to demonstrate emotions that would otherwise be physically elicited during face to face interaction depending on the context of the discourse. The mobile phone feature provides an emoji for every nature of expression that replaces emotions such as those of joy typically expressed through smiles and laughter, grief that is emotionally expressed through tears or sadness, or shock and disbelief. These mobile phone features replace the face to face interactions that are rich in non-verbal cues that effectively demonstrate approval or disapproval or the intensity of emotions.
Sense of time for family

The ‘sense of time for family’ was very scant in the youth’s way of life. The study showed both generations were detached from each other. While the youth alienated themselves, their parents were equally engaged with their daily economic activities. Moments such as meal times which Ezedike (2009) and Idang (2015) referred to as the perfect traditional moments for bonding, became insignificant, yet these created opportunities for sharing about the day’s activities.

The inbuilt mobile phone applications and downloads created new communication experiences attractive to the youth. The youth viewed themselves from the lenses of peer identity and networking while using the perceived attractive mobile phone features at the expense of the family. These interactive applications created mutual networks among them secluding other family members which can be interpreted that the youth have very little time for family moments. It is evident from the study that the mobile phone has given users, especially the youth, new technological spaces that are altering communication behaviors to display lack of time for the family.

Smith (1992) also stated that personal experiences validated a person’s world view. The youth experienced the phones independently and subjectively, while considering them as ‘private gadgets’ hence demanding autonomy from their parents. The mobile phone can be equated to the new diary. Earlier on people used diaries to document the activities they did or planned to undertake or accomplish. These diaries were considered very personal and private, thus prying into them would result into the diary owners taking offense. The digital communication through mobile phones has taken this dimension. This has escalated tension in relationships between the youth and their parental figures. The mobile phone is seen to influence antipathetic
behaviors and values exemplified from the youth’s deceptive acts such as installation of passwords or switching them off to maintain privacy. This privacy seems to alienate them from the other members of the family. The youth are using their phones in privacy, including treating incoming calls as private. This undermines the opportunity for families to spend time together.

The youth out rightly demonstrated certain visible behaviors, among them, personal identification with and within their peers. They had fewer conversations at home and had become secretive. The youth have created a virtual community, spending more time on chats, longer duration of calls to friends and staying au courant with the latest features. Technology dictated the youth’s behavior since it seemed to have authority or control over them shaping their behavior while reinforcing patterns and standards enforced by peer and societal pressure. This was seen from one’s desire to remain a part of one’s community at the expense of spending time with family members.

Respect for family authority

Wadende et al. (2016) posited that the African culture had strong connections with regard to how families were knit together. Enduring traditional values for African families typically included a deep sense of family loyalty and an emphasis on interpersonal relatedness, relationships, and mutual respect. Wadende et al. (2016) outline that a well-socialized, well-raised person was generally considered to be obedient, and respectful toward adults from the African context. Nguru (2014) and Ezedike (2009) also affirmed that Africans generally had a deep respect for family authority manifested in communication with parental figures and the elderly. Parents were considered to have great wisdom and knowledge of the world, thus their word was law in the households.
Nonetheless, this study revealed that most parents were instead nostalgic about family values upheld before the invasion of mobile phones. Most parents were resigned to the fact that they were not in control of their youthful members of the family as expected in their parental obligations. The findings in this study indicated that the mobile phone accorded the youth a sense of power and control over their identities and communities. From the youth’s uses, it offered opportunities for self-directed activities where the youth produced and forwarded their own unregulated content such as the exchange of nude photos.

With the advent of mobile communication, the youth have devised ways of circumventing this authority, citing the example of using the ‘silent mode’ feature or application deceitfully to keep their parents at bay. The mobile youth culture cushioned the youth in their obstructive comfort zones. The youth conveniently and deceptively used technology, raising the parents’ anxiety from the perceived deleterious mobile phone influence. Burke et al. (2018) were skeptical that despite mobile phones being useful gadgets for parental control, the youth would defy that control. This created some emotional stress and instability in the family resulting from the perceived disruptiveness of mobile phone use. For instance, most parents took an unconstructive position claiming that the youth were untrustworthy, citing numerous excuses by the youth made for not receiving incoming calls in their presence. The youth’s inventory of lies included excuses of poor network connections or caller being inaudible. Some youth being eccentric, also hang up on the caller or opted to call back or deliberately ignored the calls. But if they ran out of options they retreated to secluded private spaces to receive the calls. Some youth opted to immediately switch off their phones.
Many youth revealed that they would convenientlylie about their whereabouts which they interpreted as normal. While the use of modest language was upheld in the ancient traditional African family setting, this study revealed that most youth were uncomfortable in receiving calls in front of their parents citing the subconscious use of vulgar discourse as one of the reasons among many. This is an alien or foreign communication culture that deviates from the established norms. The younger generation was nurtured through value systems that were upheld, among many other virtues, respect for authority, truthfulness, and decency in expression which the mobile communication was slowly disrupting.

Intrusion in this study was interpreted from the perspective of parents prying into the youth’s mobile phones. However, in safeguarding intrusion from unwarranted breach of privacy, most youth installed passwords in their mobile phones. By proxy this symbolized youth’s regard of mobile phones as private gadgets. This undertaking put a lot of strain on family relations and myriad misunderstandings ensued. However these misunderstandings were rarely experienced in households that nurtured trust and respect for each other.

The mobile phone has altered parent–youth relationships instigated by the youth’s growing desire to increase their sense of autonomy and independence. The youth have become less satisfied with parents’ authority over their personal lives. Wadende et al. (2016) underscore that traditional African families had an extremely high value placed on respecting, obeying, and learning from elders in the kinship network and community. The study findings revealed that parents abhorred communication technology viewing it as a persecution to their parenting roles. The major misunderstandings resulting from the youth’s use of mobile phone was characterized by the lack of respect for parents, defiance to authority and watering
down of family values. In contrast, the youth primarily viewed the conflicts as issues of a generational gap between them and their parents. Thus, different perceptions of conflict by parents and youth contributed to the entrenched pessimism on mobile phone use in the family which to a great extent was seen to undermining family authority.

This part of the section has highlighted the discussions from the perspective of the theoretical framework adopted in the study. The discussions on the study findings have shown how the main Symbolic Interactionism Theory guided this study and how the Technological Determinism paradigm, the Family Systems Theory and the Cultural Onion Model complemented it. All the discussions were tied to the study’s research questions. The following section draws the conclusions to the study.

5.3 Conclusion

This study concludes that the youth’s approbation and uses of the mobile phone referred herein as the ‘mobile youth culture’ has had far reaching effects on communication in the family. The Ideal family communication is associated with more intimate relationship levels with family members. In this study, the youth demonstrated an over dependency on the communication device at the expense of building mutual family relations with other members of the family especially the parents which compromised everyday conversations. The mobile phone promoted the culture of silence in the homes where family members experienced reduced face to face interactions.

In a typical African setting, the adults were in control over the reinforcement of the value system which traditionally was orally handed from generation to generation. The sustenance of family values was proving a challenge in the contemporary society following the invasion of mobile telephony. Among the
challenges that came with this technology was the lack of a regulatory framework or mechanisms for instilling discipline over its usage. This resulted in gross suspicion and mistrust among the two generations owing to the high levels of privacy that this technology accorded. The socialized family values, communication and relations suffered a deconstruction as the ascendancy of the mobile phone took precedence. Nonetheless, all the respondents from both divide were in agreement that it is a vital and inevitable communication technology that has conveniently networked its users. The problem was on how the technology was being utilized. This study therefore diagnoses the problem or problems that emanate from mobile phone use.

Any unhealthy condition that is perceived as a threat is usually diagnosed to facilitate its treatment. In as much as the mobile telephony is considered a vital technology in society, if not well utilized, it may lead to harmful effects on communication and relationships in the family. As a way of conclusion, this study diagnoses the cancer of ‘digital communication’ whose symptoms are the mobile phone ‘uses’ that shape ‘behaviors’ that are a threat to relationships and communication in the family. The study refers to this ‘digital communication cancer’ as ‘Mobileosis’.

Why ‘Mobileosis’

The term ‘Mobileosis’ is coined from an analogy of ‘paralysis’, a medical condition which medical scholars Hasin, Hasan, Islam, Hossain, and Musa (2018) and Stone, Carson, and Hallett (2016) describe as the loss of strength in and control over a muscle or group of muscles in a part of a body. These scholars go further ahead to expound on the medical condition where they explain that whenever any part within the body’s relay system such as the brain nerves or spinal cord is damaged, signals for
making any movement are never communicated through to the muscles thus causing ‘paralysis’.

Hallet et al. (2016) highlight further that our senses of movement are controlled by communication between the sensory nerves. Any disruption of the communication of nerve impulses anywhere along the pathway from the brain to the muscle can impair control of muscle movement. This will lead to a general weakness and loss of coordination. Muscle weakness can progress to ‘paralysis’ which is the loss of the ability to move muscles.

Among other symptoms, Hasin et al. (2018) identify major symptoms of paralysis which include: changes in moods, personality or behavior and confusion or loss of consciousness. Other symptoms are memory loss, drooling, numbness among others. Since this condition is referred to as ‘paralysis’ which paralyses movement of muscles in the body, excessive use of the mobile phone can also do a lot of damage to communication and relations in the family as seen in chapter four.

This study takes the equivalent of ‘paralysis’, the medical condition, from the social perspective to coin the term ‘Mobileosis’. This condition as disclosed earlier is the ‘digital communication’ cancer of the ‘mobile phone’. The condition, synonymous to paralysis, causes a dysfunction in family communication and values. Medicine is good, but an overdose or misuse results in ‘drug abuse and substance’. This study is not a condemnation of mobile telephony adoption, but an advocate for its proper use. Antipathetic use of the technology results in shaping threatening ‘behaviors’ to communication and relationships in the family. The study diagnoses negative behaviors from this disruptive technology as symptomatic of ‘Mobileosis’.
Symptoms of ‘Mobileosis’

The study has evidenced that the youth used multiple mobile phone applications, and spent a substantial amount of time on them. Embracing this digital communication technology is attributed to its ease and frequent access, especially to social media. The use of mobile phone features or applications that are attractive to the youth facilitated the high addiction levels of the technology. This has led to ‘over dependency’ on their mobile phones. ‘Over dependency’, is therefore a symptom of ‘Mobileosis’.

The symptoms are deeply rooted in the negative interaction behaviors that the youth exhibited. ‘Mobileosis’ manifests itself in the youth’s behavior of self-expression on social media while avoiding sharing with loved ones in the family through face to face interactions. Acceptance of some of these behaviors for convenience was increasingly being treated as ‘normalcy’. When parents begin to tolerate certain use of mobile phone vices they are in essence entrenching a new communication culture. This act of ‘tolerance’ is a symptom of ‘Mobileosis’ that is slowly disintegrating family cohesiveness.

‘Mobileosis’ manifests itself in users’ severe addictions to the technology. The symptoms are deeply rooted in the obstructive interaction behaviors that the youth exhibit, among them, none paying of attention when being addressed. The youth were inactive in the interaction process as most of them hardly listened actively but continued using the technology. The body language exhibited lack of interest, with limited or no eye contacts or any facial expressions. Thus ‘Mobileosis’ compromises the value of ‘listening’ in the interaction countenance.

As an encroachment to family’s value system, the unregulated ‘virtual space’ is another threat. The youth are known to manifest ‘Mobileosis’ through navigation of
immoral and prohibited sites; some youth extended this behavior to that of exchanging nude photos. This was a huge compromise of both religious and family social values. The domination of new communication technologies at the expense of family values is the new digital cancer. With the belief that most deviant behaviors are perpetrated from social media, antipathetic use of the social media will always be a concern. Apart from access to pornography, ‘Mobileosis’ manifests itself through other youth behaviors such as getting ‘radicalized’, joining ‘cults’ and or spending more time on unworthy ventures such as ‘betting’.

Mobile phones have become private communication gadgets. The society has adjusted and barricading mobile phones with passwords has been normalized. This has put a strain on family relationships as ‘trust’ is compromised and ‘suspicions’ embellish. The perverse behavior of installing passwords on mobile phones is a symptom of ‘Mobileosis’.

There are other social evils associated with mobile phones uses. The youth sometimes are discrete about their whereabouts, so ‘Mobileosis’ symptoms are manifested through intentional switching off of their phones or being deceitful about their physical space and or putting phones on ‘silent mode’. These symptoms occur from the youth’s stamping of their privacy; consequently, inhibiting parents’ access to the youth.

‘Mobileosis’, the communication digital cancer compromises religious values. The youth pretend to be reading the Bible from their gadgets in church yet they are busy ‘chatting’ on social media. The youth from the Islam divide have also displayed symptoms of this cancer through an extensive addiction to their phones making them ignore the call for ‘Swala’ (Prayers).
Most families endure relationships void of openness and transparency. The youth being uncomfortable in receiving incoming calls in the presence of their parents is a display of the symptom. The youth’s behavior of being discreet about their conversations and unwillingness to share with other family members are symptoms of ‘Mobileosis’ manifesting themselves in the levels of ‘secrecy’ and ‘privacy’ straining relationships in the family.

All obstructive excuses to avoid receiving incoming calls in the presence of everyone are symptoms of ‘Mobileosis’. The pretense that there is ‘poor network connections’ or the caller being ‘inaudible’ or simply ‘hanging up’ on the caller or opting to call back later are all symptoms of this digital communication cancer.

As a parent, being on social media is lauded; however, parents display the symptoms if their justification for being on social media is purely a convenient avenue for reaching out to the youth. This enslaves them as reflected in their purpose of engagement. Another argument posed herein is that some youth purchase their own handsets. This may proffer them the right to privacy. Controlling or superintending and intruding into the youth’s privacy who own self-purchased handsets can therefore be an exigent for parents. A parent engaging in such an act displays the ‘Mobileosis’ symptoms disrupting ‘mutual’ relationships in the family. Parental figures are instead advised to offer parental guidelines on mobile phone use rather than condemn.

5.4 Recommendations

This study has established that the use of mobile phones in the family has generally modified nature of family communication, family relationships and dynamics especially in the parent–youth relationships. Some youth respondents demonstrated tolerance for their parents’ natural participation in or management of their routine aspects of lives but others found it parochial thus showing an indication
of the existence of relational turbulence among the two generations resulting from mobile phone usage.

Due to the established relational turbulence already mentioned herein, the study recommends that parental figures and the youth should work coherently aimed at improving communication and maintaining healthy family relationships even as they continue utilizing mobile telephony. Both parties need to engage each other openly expressing how they feel about mobile phone use and the merits and the demerits of the communication device. They should also engage in developing some rules on its use.

The study also provides evidence on the proliferation of the mobile phone in the contemporary society, therefore acknowledging that the growth of this technology is inevitable. Consequently, this study also recommends that the manufacturing industry of this technology should improve further on its ‘customer care’ during advertisements. Similar to the already existing disclaimers in advertisements that signal the dangers of improper consumption of certain manufactured commodities with severe harmful effects such as alcohol, cigarettes or the abuse of ‘medicine’ or ‘drugs’, advertisers in this industry should engage users on the negative use of this technology.

There is need also to set the media literacy agenda beyond the educational precincts and shift it to other institutions outside the professional field of media education such as the family. There is need to discuss and evaluate the “internet and the digital society”. The institutional contexts should frame media literacy with neutrality of the internet through protection of personal data, children and young people from harmful content. A regulated internet should safeguard users from
perceived negativity and restore the inevitability of communication technologies such as mobile telephony that remains quite significant in the contemporary world.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

This study made assumptions that family members possessed personal mobile phones. The findings on the appropriation of social media imply that smartphones are more prevalent than simple unsophisticated mobile phones which in essence imply a perpetuation of socioeconomic disparities. This study recommends further studies on the socioeconomic genus resulting from type of mobile phone on social networking.

Construction of family Communication is dependent on the nature and extent of the mobile phone variation which includes digital inequality as reflected in the contrast in appropriation between the youth and the parental figures. Further studies on communication device limitations and structural inequalities in mobile phone appropriation could be undertaken.

It is evident that new conditions emerge with changes in mobile technology and digital habits. Future research on mobile telephony in the family and beyond will benefit this field more on mobile affordances, user motivation and habituation, popular mobile uses, and the particular conditions of disadvantaged and marginalized populations that probably lack mobile phone networks.
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APPENDICES


INTERROGATING YOUTH’S MOBILE PHONE APPROBATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN MVITA SUB COUNTY

Time of interview:

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

(Briefly describe the research)

SECTION A

In the event the family has both the father and mother, interview both the parents.

They may be interviewed at the same time or individually depending on their convenience. Request for permission to voice record the interview.

Do you have any youth under your care that are aged between 18 and 22 years old? (If the response is YES request permission to interview the youth. If the parent has more than one youth, interview all the youth. If the answer is NO, do not interview. If permission to interview the youth is not granted, do not interview the parent)

How old are you?

Do you have a mobile phone? (If the response is ‘NO’, do not interview)

Research Objective 1:

To investigate how the youth use the applications or features in their mobile phones.

For what purposes do you use your mobile phone?
What phone applications or features appeal to the youth in your household?

In your personal views on how do the youth in your household use these applications or features on their phones?

Research Objective 2:

To examine how the usage of mobile telephony affects the way the youth communicate with their parents in everyday communication.

How do the youth in your household communicate with you?

How much face to face interaction do you have with the youth who have mobile phones in your home?

Explain how you prefer to communicate with your son(s) / daughter(s) when using the mobile phone. (Explain your response)

How frequent do you communicate with the youth under your custody? Explain your answer.

Research Objective 3: To find out the relationship between the use of mobile phones and the sustenance of family values.

Would you explain any fears you have over how the youth in your custody use their mobile phone(s)?

What is the importance of family members having personal mobile phones?

In your opinion, how does the mobile phone impact on your family’s ways of life?

How comfortable would the youth under your custody be in receiving and having conversations from their incoming calls in your presence? (Explain your response)
Research Objective 4: To investigate how the use of mobile phones has affected relationships in the family.

Describe how you feel when your son / daughter is communicating with you over the phone.

How does the use of the mobile phone give you the control over your son / daughter?

How would your son or your son / daughter react if you went through his or her phone with or without her consent? (Explain your response)

Explain generally what you feel about the use of mobile phones in the family.

(Thank the individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her that of confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews)
Appendix B: Interview Schedule for the Youth Respondent

Interview Schedule for the Youth Respondent.

INTERROGATING YOUTH’S MOBILE PHONE APPROBATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN MVITA SUB COUNTY

Time of interview : 
Date : 
Interviewer : 
Interviewee : 
Position of interviewee :

(Briefly describe the research)

In the event there are more than one youth in the household, interview all of them.

Request for permission to voice record the interview:

SECTION A

How old are you? (If the respondent is less than 18 or more than 22 years, DO NOT interview)

Do you have a mobile phone? (If the response is ‘NO’, do not interview)

Research Objective 1: To investigate how the youth use the applications or features in their mobile phones.

How is the mobile phone so important to you?

In what way is the make of a mobile phone or handset so important to you?

Describe how you use your mobile phone on your daily routine.

What services do you look for from a mobile phone? (Probe.....why?)

Research Objective 2: To examine how the usage of mobile telephony affects the way the youth communicate with their parents in everyday communication.

How do you communicate with members of your family in most of the time(s)?

Approximately how long are the calls you make?
Whom do you mostly call? \((Probe...why?)\)  

How much face to face communication do you have with your parent / guardian / sponsor?  

Research Objective 3: To find out the relationship between the use of mobile phones and the sustenance of family values.  

How has the use of the mobile phone impacted on your interaction with your family members?  

In what way or ways has the mobile phone affected your way of life?  

Explain how you would feel if your parent / guardian / sponsor went through your mobile phone with or without your permission.  

How do you consider your phone as a ‘private’ gadget? (Explain your response)  

Research Objective 4: To investigate how the use of mobile phones has affected relationships in the family.  

How free are you with your parent / guardian / sponsor as you communicate with each other on the phone? (Explain your answer)  

How free are you in receiving incoming calls in the presence of your parent / guardian / sponsor? (Explain your answer)  

If you had a personal pressing problem, how would you prefer to communicate it to your parent / guardian / sponsor?  

Explain generally what you feel about the use of mobile phones in the family.
(Thank the individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her that of confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews)
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

INTERROGATING YOUTH’S MOBILE PHONE APPROBATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN MVITA SUB-COUNTY

*Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies*

YES   NO

Information on the study has been adequately explained to me. [ ] [ ]

My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point. [ ] [ ]

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason for my withdrawal or decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher. [ ] [ ]

I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality. [ ] [ ]

I wish to participate in the study voluntarily. [ ] [ ]

I consent to the voice recording of the information I will be giving for the purposes of this research study only (NOT FOR ANY OTHER STUDY) and on guaranteed anonymity. [ ] [ ]

Participant’s Signature: ____________________________ Date: ___________

Participant’s Name Printed):___________________________________________
Contact Valid Telephone Number: ________________________________

Researcher’s Name (Printed): ________________________________

Researcher’s Signature: ________________________________

Researcher's contact details: (Name, Valid Telephone and Physical Address of investigator)

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Please keep your copy of the consent form.
Appendix D: Ethical Clearance

REF: DU-ERB/03/10/2019/000350

Date: 03-10-2019

To: Daniel Katama Mwaringa

Dear Daniel,

RE: MOBILE TELEPHONY AND ITS IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION IN THE FAMILY: AN ANALYSIS OF YOUTH’S USES OF THE MOBILE PHONE IN MVITA SUB-COUNTY

This is to inform you that Daystar University Ethics Review Board has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is DU-ERB-000350. The approval period is 3rd October, 2019 – 2nd October, 2020.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used

ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by Daystar University Ethics Review Board

iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to Daystar University Ethics Review Board within 72 hours of notification.

iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to Daystar University Ethics Review Board within 72 hours.

v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.

vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.

vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to Daystar University Ethics Review Board.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) https://oris.nacosti.go.ke and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Purity Maweni
Secretary, ERB

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance
Appendix E: Research Permit

This is to certify that Mr. DANIEL MWARINGA of Daystar University, has been licensed to conduct research in Mombasa on the topic: MOBILE TELEPHONY AND ITS IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION IN THE FAMILY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE YOUTH'S USES OF THE MOBILE PHONE IN MVITA SUB COUNTY for the period ending: 18/December/2020.

License No: NACOSTI/P/19/3220

Ref No: 984525

Date of Issue: 18/December/2019

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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The Grant of Research Licenses is Guided by the Science, Technology and Innovation (Research Licensing) Regulations, 2014

CONDITIONS

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Appendix F: Plagiarism Report

Daniel Mwariga dissertation - 03.11.2020

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3. Carla Millar, Martin Lockett, Ted Ladd.
   "Disruption: Technology, innovation and society",
   Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 2018
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