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LEAD ARTICLE

New media, youngsters and family: An emerging culture of changing communication practices in Indian families – a study in Delhi and NCR¹

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Abstract

There is consensus among media and communication scholars that a monumental shift is occurring in the media and communication habits of young people, and the communication culture within family, is in a swirl. On the one hand, new digital media has progressively become a part of life in the urban cities and remote towns of India, governing the interactions of people, on the other, social media that developed as an off shoot of new digital media quickly became a big source of connectivity among the people, as across the globe. India has a special place on the social networking sites map owing to large numbers of its young users³. The usage of social networking sites amongst teenagers and college going students greatly increased with extensive influence on the youth in numerous ways, particularly as the new platform has scope to impact their interpersonal relationships. This triggered a debate on the impact of the new media on the activities, social relationships, and worldviews of the younger generations, and on values, attitudes, and patterns of social behavior, in the family context. The scope of enquiry of the present study is focused around two primary questions, i.e., 1) How is family communication influenced using new media (inclusive of social media)? 2) Is family losing its place of importance in youngsters' lives?

¹ National Capital Region that includes 4 additional cities surrounding New Delhi, namely, Noida, Gurugram, Faridabad and Ghaziabad.

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³ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/internet/internet-users-in-india-to-reach-627-million-in-2019-report/articleshow/68288868.cms?from=mdr> (discussed in Notes 1)

Keywords

Teenagers, youngsters, family, peer group, new media, social networking sites, family communication culture.

New media, family, and the youth as an integral part of family

The term 'new media' in general refers to those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication, and involve some form of computing as opposed to 'old media such as the telephone, radio, and TV'. 'New media are new cultural forms which rely on computers for distribution: web-sites, human-computer interface, virtual worlds, VR, multimedia, computer games, computer animation, digital video, special effects in cinema and net films, interactive computer installations'⁴. Now, smartphones embedded with the Internet, social media, music, camera, video and sound recording in them are additional features. Lev Manovich proposed five 'principles of new media' – to be understood 'not as absolute laws but rather as general tendencies of a culture undergoing computerization', which were numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding'⁵. A key distinguishing feature of new media is interactivity, which describes the ability of users to provide content in response to a source or communication partner (Ha & James, 1998). This provides audience members' control over content and its use. New media as a generic category covers all the above including social media⁶, which are sources of information/instruction, knowledge and entertainment to the people. However, the present study does not look at the new media merely as a rapid, deterministic, one way technology, but includes all the technological gadgets including desktop, laptop, iPad, and smartphone, etc., aided with the Internet, situated in the social mundane, processed and iterated in a cultural setting that shapes and gets shaped by its usage. It is the iterations with the 'social' and 'cultural' of the new media that this study is largely concerned about, the sociology of online engagements of family members and its repercussions in the family

⁴ http://www.manovich.net/Stockhol/stockholm_syllabus

⁵ <https://nisfornewmedia.wordpress.com/2015/02/22/the-five-principles-of-new-media/>

⁶ Boyd, D. M. & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 13(1), pp. 210–230. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x> (discussed in Notes 2).

setting. New media includes usage and content of the Internet embedded in smartphone.

Family in India

The Indian family in this given context, forms the core of socialization, development of personalities and offers support system in a variety of ways, as family bonds and relational ties have lifelong existence. Family as a microcosm of society plays a major role in the development of the personality of an individual as an enviable support system, in and during crises periods. Working as shock absorber to pain, stress and depression of its members and providing a cushioning effect to spring back to normal activities, it is a cohesive and integral unit of the larger social systems. Though families in a large and culturally diverse country such as India may have plurality of forms that vary with class, ethnicity, and individual choices, but its members are bound by interpersonal relationships in a wider network of role and social relations. Family in India is undergoing vast changes and over time it has shown resilience to cope with the pressures of the modern life and is able to adjust and adapt to changing social norms and values. It has demonstrated a unique strength in keeping together despite the growing stress and strain. (Desai, 1995a; Sonawat, 2012; Sriram, 1993; Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 1993).

Youth and adolescents

The development of phenomenon of youth is seen by researchers 'as a site of secondary socialization developing clearer ideas of their future position in the social order,' and period of youth as 'plethora of transitional transitions' (Pedrozo, 2013). The youth were constructed as a social category shaped by social institutions regardless of young people's diverse experiences in terms of age, maturity, gender, class, and education (Evans & Furlong, 1997; Fornäs, 1995; Jones, 1988; Miles, 2000; Osgerby, 1998; Wallace & Cross, 1990) in the 1970s and 80s. Livingstone (1999) pointed out the difficulty of capturing the meaning of youth in one term, 'with the post-1950s emergence of youth culture <...> leading to childhood and youth becoming reconceived as connected but distinct phenomena'. Popular media accounts are based on adults' prescriptive views of youth attitudes and behaviours reflecting sociological perspective reporting/characterizing primarily, youth use of social media as overwhelmingly negative, and their engagements as reckless, unsafe behaviors with little thought to their online privacy or safety (Agosto & Abbas, 2017).

However, studies are undertaken now to explore the identity aspect using the psychological and sociological perspectives to look at the concept of adolescents and youth (Buckingham, 2013). Erikson therefore saw adolescence as a critical period of identity formation, where identity is developed by the individual, but needs to be confirmed by others. With increasing social competencies and skill, exploring different domains of movement digitally and challenging elders' authority becomes plausible. Erikson's notion of adolescence as a 'psychosocial suspension', in which young people's experimentations with different potential identities, and engagements with risks of various kinds (e.g., Internet) seems suitable in this respect. The psychological viewpoint may be juxtaposed with the sociological one, wherein a traditional, functionalist account of socialization treats the young person as a passive recipient of adult influences, a 'becoming' rather than a 'being' in their own right. The coining of category like 'Generation X' and its subsequent mutations, reflects both the importance and the complexity of age-based distinctions in contemporary consumer culture. The present study precisely looks at this supposedly conflicting zone of psychological (personality development, peer group dependencies and digital immersion) and sociological wherein /familial/parental assumptions and expectations may work in opposite directions. However, the study includes young adults, i.e., the age group 19-22, to ascertain the difference in online usage of youngsters spanning 13-22 years of age.

The terms youngsters/young people/youth connote and convey this age bracket throughout the study interchangeably, except for the difference in using the terms teenagers/adolescents and young adults. The study has used the terms teenagers/adolescents as universally understood, that is, people who are in their teens/or people beyond 12 years but younger than 19-20 years of age. However, using the term 'young adults' has different meaning as adulthood is bestowed legally at 18 years to young people in India. Therefore, the young adults are addressed for people who are 18 years of age and above in the study. Though one may find differences even among early teenagers and late teenagers; and late teenagers are close to young adults as used in the present study. Youngsters are key important personalities in nuclear families in the urban settings, as they are always connected with an emotional cord with their parents. The present study aimed to find the new media usage of youngsters that included early teens and later teens and the young adults who are studying in school/college/universities respectively, in order to observe the difference in their inclinations and preferences of new media practices in everyday life, and how it helps or intervenes to organize the family life.

Literature review

Researchers have looked at the iterations with the new media of young users considering its negative aspects or the benefits and opportunities it provides.

Identity, youth, and new media

Youngsters/adolescents use social media for socializing and for communication and entertainment. Seeing themselves through the eyes of their imaginary ideated audience they tend to seek approval of their popular culture, entrenching in unreal standards of appearance, and falling prey to depression and anxiety. There are both risks and benefits to teenager's social and emotional development when it comes to the use of social media due to how embedded their lives are in it, implicating both the role of development on social networking site use, as well as the role of social networking site use on development iteratively (Cingel et al., 2014; Christofferson, 2016; Livsey, 2013). The studies undertaken in the Netherlands, the UK, the USA, Pakistan, Brazil and India, suggest both positive and negative effects of social networking use on adolescent self-concept which include strengthening of group identity, benefits of self-expression, and ability to reinforce social relationships, an intensified discrepancy between one's ideal and actual selves, false representations of the self, and the risks involved with online disclosure. In any case, identity, existence and everyday life of youngsters today is irretrievably layered with the new media. The results highlight the possibility of smartphone addiction (Gennaro & Dutton, 2007; Manhas & Chambyal, 2017; Nasir Ahmad et al., 2018; Pedrozo, 2013⁷; Rallings, 2015)

Youth as new media usage influencers

Adolescents/youngsters influence the acquisition and use of the Internet at home which become major issues in family discussions and conflicts (Eynon & Helsper, 2015; Rompaey et al., 2002)⁸ they might increase the engagement, digital skills and use of the Internet of parents and older adults in the family context in the adoption and use of the Internet and while children might influence uptake, studies in the UK and Belgium were undertaken to find a co-relation between a globalised society with the pervasiveness of new media technologies in the fabric of society and being young.

⁷ Pedrozo, S. (2013). Consumption youth and new media: The debate on social issues in Brazil.

⁸ Rompaey, V. et al. (2002). Children's influence on Internet access at home: Adoption and use in the family context.

Parental mediation and monitoring⁹ of new media practices of youngsters

The studies undertaken in Israel, the USA, Singapore, the UK, and India explored continued growth of Internet use among kids and adolescents. The online use is enhanced when education systems, health, support and other care and support services increasingly rely on new technologies, especially within the home. For the parents, the challenges come in the form of cyber bullying, easier ways to be contacted by strangers, and easier access to porn and other age-inappropriate content by the technological innovations/additions among youngsters (Livingstone & Das, 2010). 'The alchemy between youth and digital media disrupts the existing set of power relations between adult authority and youth voice'. Parental mediation tends to diminish whereas peer mediation tends to escalate with age among teens which may increase teens' vulnerability to online risks. These may be improved, based on young people's reaction to the current mediation practices and may be more effective, within the social and cultural context of India. Shifting of technological gadgets from the public spaces of home to adolescents' and youngsters' private spaces, enhances their intensive utilization by them. Parental technological expertise may enhance their prestige in youngsters' eyes (Buckingham, 2008; Cho et al., 2005; Fletcher & Blair, 2016; Jennings, 2017; Kumar 2016; Li & Shin, 2017; Livingstone, 2007; McMillan & Morrison, 2006; Mesch, 2009; Nathanson, 1999; Shin & Lwin, 2017; Vaidya et al, 2016).

Family cohesion and new media

The studies in the USA, Israel, and the UK suggest a correlation between new technologies into the household and changes in the levels of family cohesion. Frequency and type of Internet use are negatively related to family time and positively related to family conflicts, yielding a low overall perception of family cohesion. The new media technologies are negatively impacting social interaction between individuals within the household, leading to increased social isolation and privatisation of people's lives within the household. This impacts the cultural and moral values of families and personal lives, organising family life, leading to conflicts arising out of sharing of domestic details on the social media (Chambers, 2015; Little et al., 2009; Livingstone & Bovill, 1999; Madianou & Miller, 2012; McGrath, 2012; Mesch, 2006, 2009; Newham, 2012; Nie & Erbring, 2002; Sponcil, 2012).

⁹ Jennings, N. (2017). In media and families: Looking ahead. *Journal of Family Communication*, 17(3), pp. 203-207.

Rationale

The youngster, who was largely dependent on family has many goals to attend to now, and one of them is to keep the family, peer-group and her/his own inquisitions iterated through new media, satisfied. How the new media with its multi modal freedoms given to individuals has enhanced their aspirations needs to be investigated. How the family, which has been enacting the function of socialization, as a core social institution from centuries, is absorbing the new media in its fold, or whether the social networking sites have already taken up its role of socialization and put it on the margins? The central issue is, how it is influencing and shaping the communication patterns and interactions in the domestic. Livingstone & Bovill (2001) argued that youngsters withdrew into the privatised world of their bedrooms, stacked more and more with the technological gadgets resulting in the ‘privatization of young people’s lives’. India as a society could boast of a family system that supported the individual in times of stress and distress and played an important role in her/his development. Family envelopes a youngsters’ quotidian life every now and then. An enquiry therefore, was needed to ascertain how youngsters are assimilating new media in their lives, how their renovated communication culture determining the changes in the role and functions of the family and how the attendant influence of the social networking sites over the young members colouring the family interactions (Alzahrani & Bach, 2014; Christofferson, 2016; Cingel & Wartella, 2014; Livsey, 2013).

The present study looks at youth, comprising adolescents and young adults, as the core group of actors in the family, who define the family communication in ways not foreseen few decades back, becoming key persona in major decisions of the family and playing pivotal roles in everyday life and routine. Compared to their parents, they are digitally pivoted in that they are more likely to resort to their smartphones (Internet embedded) in multiple ways. They use it when exploring a topic for school or personal use, to read news on the Internet than in a printed newspaper; and to use online social network tools to meet friends and to find information. Their special relationship to digital media greatly influences the way they approach learning and interaction. This group of college and university students may be contrasted with school going early teenagers, whose approach of new media usage may be different from the late teenagers and young adults.

Research questions

There are two research queries. Firstly, what kind of role is the new media playing in the family life in terms of engagements? Secondly, if these engagements influence the family communications to impact family relationships in important

ways. Largely, the scope of inquiry would shed light on the iterative engagement of young members with the new media, vis a vis, discounting, trading, or facilitating interactions within the family.

How is family communication influenced using new media inclusive of social media?

1. Is family losing its place of importance in youngsters' lives?
2. The study focuses on the two following objectives:
3. To determine how the youngsters, view mediation of their parents of their new media usage.
4. To ascertain the significance of family in youngsters' lives.

Methodology

Research perspectives, design, and framework

The theoretical prism is an intersection of developmental theory and uses and gratification theory. The research design is descriptive, as the objective is to describe the usage and attitudes of young users of new media and how this is bringing about a change in the family communication culture. Presently, the survey method answers the research questions.

The research enquiry was conducted with a survey and instrumented through a questionnaire which was carried out to generate a larger picture. The research methodology drew on the existing literature which provided a backdrop to initiate the argument. Later, the data generated from the primary research of survey illustrated the prevailing scene.

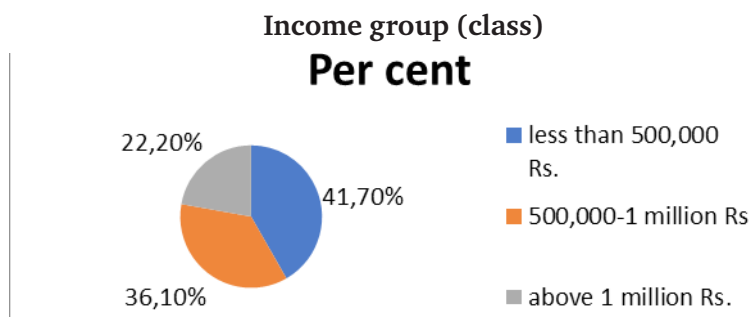
Sample taken from colleges and universities ensured diversities of demographics as students from all corners of the city come to one college or university. Therefore, convenient and purposive sampling with the desired age bracket (13-22) of school, college and university going youth using new media was used for the survey (online/ offline) in the NCR/Delhi. The participants who were tech savvy, comfortable using online method, filled up the google forms and those who wanted to answer offline were given the questionnaire to write their answers. The sample consisted of 310 male and 302 females divided into young age brackets, for the survey. The sample was drawn from schools, colleges and universities in East Delhi, North Delhi and South Delhi, NCR (Noida and Faridabad). Data was derived from some public schools that catered to middle or high-income groups, and from some government schools that catered to low-income group students. A total of 700 respondents were contacted and given/forwarded the forms, however, only 612 filled and returned the forms. The response rate was thus 87.4%. The survey was conducted in 2017-18.

Data analysis

Frequency analyses were employed to determine online engagements and usage of youngsters. A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to examine the dimensions of statements and to test the overlap of factors and a total of 29 statements were included in the first analysis, listwise, yielding a sample size of 612. Following the results of the factor loadings, means, standard deviations, were computed for each factor. T-tests were employed to examine gender differences in the factors, and one-way Anova test was conducted on the age group, analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between social media usage of youngsters and family relationships.

Demographics

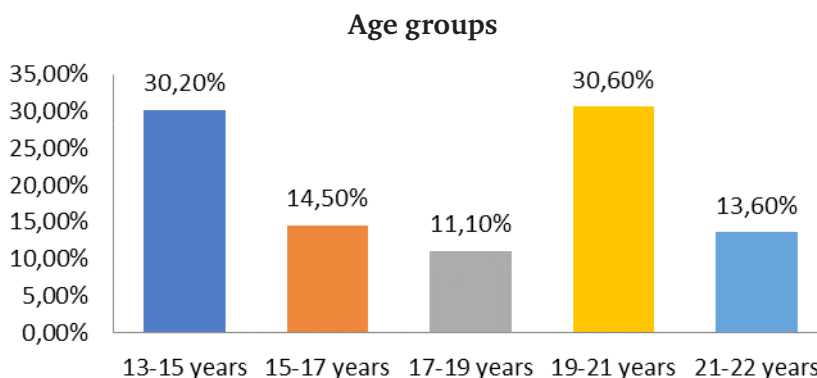
Figure 1



Note: 500,000 Rupees (Rs) equals 6,969.50 US dollar, 1 million equals 13938 USD.

Division/classification of sample age wise

Figure 2



In the study the respondents were asked to respond the way they are using virtual media with different electronic devices.

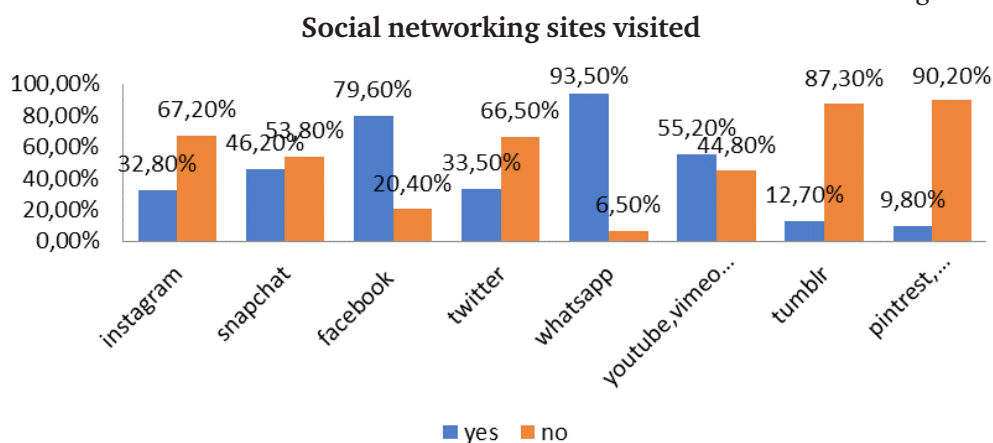
Online preferences and behaviour: Devices used and preferred

The results indicate that majority of the respondents are using the virtual media with the help of smartphones. Approximately 93% of the respondents agreed that they are using smartphones for using virtual media, however, 7% of the respondents say no to using smartphones for accessing new media. This is followed by using laptop by approximately 55% of the respondents, for going online. The results also indicate that desktop is no longer the preferred medium of accessing new media as close to 27% of the respondents agreed that they are using desktop for accessing new media. In today's scenario it is observed that most of the youngsters are carrying latest smartphones with them and due to the facility of Wi-Fi and 4G networks the accessibility of virtual media becomes very easy to access. The virtual media now offers different platforms and web-sites to the users. With the help of such web-sites the respondents can also participate via pictures, music, videos, comments, etc. with other participants. These platforms are providing a social community of the similar minded people where they can interact, share their feelings and also contribute in many ways.

Social networking sites visited

The results of the frequency distribution indicate the most used platform by the users, which is WhatsApp and Facebook, followed by YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram. However, very few of the respondents also use Twitter, Tumblr and Pinterest. The results indicate that WhatsApp is the most common platform used by respondents; this is due to the easy availability/configuration of the app in smartphones. After WhatsApp, Facebook is found to be second most used visual platform by the youngsters. It is observed that Tumblr, Pinterest, Periscope, Vimeo, Skype is used more by the students of high-end schools/colleges and students from the lower end of the spectrum do not use them, nor have any knowledge about these platforms. Economic class is a determining variable in developing the range of online expanse.

Figure 3



Phone type preferred and broadband connectivity

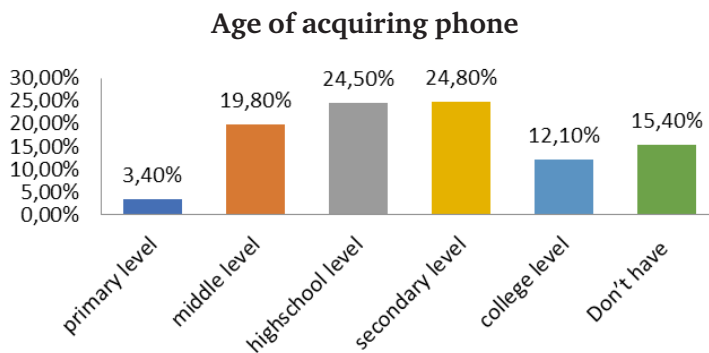
In the study, the respondents were asked to provide their preferences for using landline phone versus mobile phone. It is found that 88% of the respondents prefer mobile phone over the other for mobile phones give more comfort and privacy to the users (youngsters) as compared to landline phones (it encompasses all the uses with just a swipe). In addition to this, the mobile phones are found to have more flexibility and offer applications as compared to landline phones. The usage of landline phones is found to be almost negligible by the users. Broadband connectivity of the Internet at home denotes the networked facilitated area, the total expanse that facilitates not only mobile phones but desktop and laptops as well. In the study it is found that about 88% of the respondents do not have the broadband connection at home. This is because the relevance of broadband is coming down nowadays due to the smooth availability and better accessibility of Wi-Fi and 4th generation networks in the smartphones. While smartphones provide Internet access in seconds, it also ensures individualized space, in nutshell a big world in compact form, away from the prying eyes of elders at home, then accessing Internet in public space of the living room (Livingstone, 2005)¹⁰.

¹⁰ Livingstone, S. (2005). Mediating the public private boundary at home: Children's use of the internet for privacy and participation. *Journal of Media Practice*, 6(1), pp. 41–51.

Age of acquiring mobile phone, frequency of going online, average length of each visit

‘Children being addicted to their mobile phones’ seems to be the common complaint of most metropolitan parents in India today¹¹. 69 million children under the age of 18 residing in urban cities in India, 30 million have a personal handset and 11 million share it with one of their family members, while 28 million have no access to it (Ericsson, 2012)¹². In the present study the respondents were asked the age at which they got their personal mobile phones. The results indicate that maximum respondents got their mobile phones either at high school or senior secondary levels followed by 20% who got it at the middle level. Gifting mobile phones to their young ones, as early as at primary level, is still not a regular practice by parents in India as compared to kids in developed countries where average age of acquiring smartphone has gone down to 10.3 years on an average¹³. Also, there is a visible percentage of those who do not own a mobile phone but manage with either of their parents’ phone. There are some who got their first mobile at the college level. Boys generally get mobile at an earlier stage than girls, reasons of which may be culturally seeped into the Indian society which has a penchant for the males, hence the preference and priority to boys in buying gadgets as well (Klaus & Tipandjan, 2014)¹⁴.

Figure 4



¹¹ Children’s use of mobile phones – an international comparison 2011. Available from: <https://www.gsma.com/publicpolicy/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Children-suseofmobilephones2011.pdf>

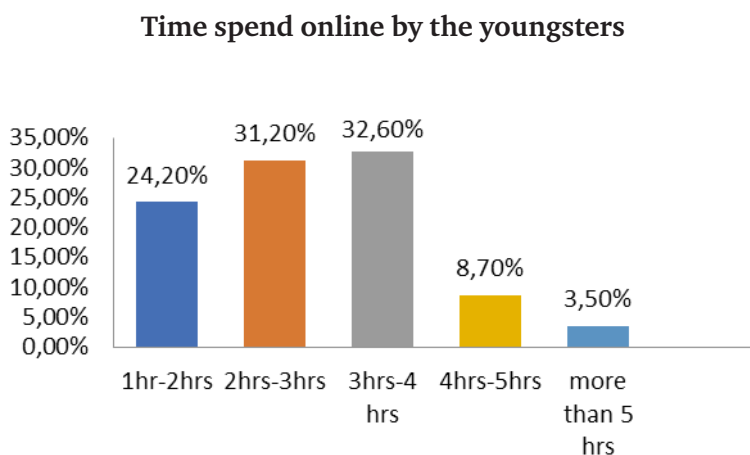
¹² http://www.afaqs.com/news/story/35922_30-million-urban-Indian-children-own-personal-mobile-phones

¹³ Kids and tech; the evolution of today’s digital natives. Available from: <http://influence-central.com/kids-tech-the-evolution-of-todays-digital-natives/>

¹⁴ Son preference in India: Shedding light on the north-south gradient. *Comparative Population Studies*, 40(1), 2015, pp. 77–102.

Smartphones have become constant companions to the youngsters. For a variety of reasons, they reach out to their smartphones. More than 70% of them keep looking at their smartphones, either to check updates, or to satiate their curiosity, or being in touch with their friends and family. Therefore, for most, going online for most part of the day is routinized. However, they do not admit spending longer durations online. Most students do not admit using the Internet for longer hours as close to 63% admit of spending less than one hour to two hours. Very few (a miniscule 3.5%) acknowledge that they access content on the Internet for more than 6 hours.

Figure 5



Discussion¹⁵

The primary data is collected with the help of questionnaire method and analysed using EFA, frequency distribution, descriptive analysis and reliability analysis. The youngsters selected in the study were asked to provide the responses against the statements related to the expected changes in their family life as a result of their exposure and involvement with the social media networking web-sites. In the study, twenty-nine statements are included using seven-point Likert scale, representing different possible influence of online social media in the family life of selected students. The respondents were asked the statements, and they could rate each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 for strongly disagree, 7 for strongly agree).

The results of PCA indicate that five extracted factors can explain 66.9% of the variance in the included twenty-nine statements. In PCA the first factor

¹⁵ For statistical description and analysis, see the Appendix.

explains maximum variations in the statements (20%) followed by 16% by second factor extracted in the study and so on. The results of rotated component matrix indicate the five factors extracted along with statements with high factor loading. On the basis of subjective judgment these five factors are named as: 1) new media, personality and family, 2) emotional space, family vs new media, 3) parental control on youngsters' new media use 4) family together time and new media, and 5) youngsters personal space vis a vis parents' personal space.

New media's impact on personality vis a vis family

The high mean scores of statements in this section, bring out how social and new media are influencing the young minds, immersed deeply in their routine and how it directs and controls their behaviour and attitude as checking phones every now and then has become their second habit and expecting response from family members at the Internet speed, is the new norm. It is the attachment with the device they think now is indispensable to them as many believed 'parents own levels of media and technology use affect the use patterns of new media by children at home'. It reveals what importance youngsters attach to their parents' digital expertise. Youngsters credit new media for making career choice, learning social skills and interacting with the foreign culture over their parents or family. Social media score over family in that it gives them more knowledge and better exposure to the choices/decisions they need to make outside the domestic purview. Many youngsters admit that social media is the ground where they have been ridiculed or bullied by their peer group, but that does not give them reason enough to withdraw from using it. However, Internet usage seems to have brought about behavioural difference gender wise as more females than males expect immediate/swift response from family members on the line of Internet ('I expect immediate response from my family and friends just as Internet gives me instant answers to my queries' for the females is 5.0, and that of male is 4.7), this shows their tolerance level at a lower level than males. The inquiry brings to light that new media has come to influence their lives, attitudes and behaviour profoundly. It is increasingly becoming a window to their world, replacing some conventional functions of the family and in doing so, the role of new media and of social network sites in young people's lives is getting integrated.

Family together time and new media

Parents might be concerned about the digital world's negative influence over the youngsters, with all the alerts, texts, tweets, calls and instant messages it

brings. But how do youngsters look at this new media consumption eating into family together time? Most of the participants affirm that ‘negotiating media use causes conflicts in their homes’. An increasing number of young people admitted their use of the Internet, including social network sites, is eroding the time they spend with their family. Other studies previously deduced this¹⁶. The statement confirms this ‘If social network sites like Instagram/Snapchat/Facebook did not exist then I would spend more time face to face with my family’ (mean score – 4.8). Youngsters being more connected than ever in the digital age as they generally think that the time, they spend on virtual reduces the amount of time they spend communicating with family face to face (mean score – 4.4). Face to face family communications are a preferred choice as all the statements favouring face to face family communication have higher mean scores than the one favouring new and social media. Though spending time on new media is a habit now in the event of absence of social networking sites, the youngsters wish to spend more time with their families. Perhaps, the new media usage is associated with enhancing networking. The youngsters living in nuclear families tend to think that those living in the joint/extended families do not much need to spend their time on new media as already they are living in joint families implying in a sense that they do not have to think about how to pass their time. Joint family has a network of relations, more siblings, more elders, where one is always surrounded by the family members. It is people living in nuclear families that need smartphones. There was difference in mean scores of early teens and young adults as the mean scores of young adults and older teens (18-22 years) were higher for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd statements as compared to the mean scores of early teens (13-15 years) whereas the means score of the 5th statement of early teens was higher than the late teens and young adults¹⁷.

Parental control, new media, and youngsters

The family in India may be little different from the families in other parts of the world, in that how the youngsters deal with their parents, and family’s presence in youngsters’ lives. Their responses inform that they do not interpret that family is

¹⁶ Anderson, M. (2016). Parents, teens and digital monitoring. Available from: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/01/07/parents-teens-and-digital-monitoring/>; Gaudin, S. (2009). Social networks cutting into family time; Increasing use of social networks are making users less social with their families. Available from: <https://www.computerworld.com/article/2525517/internet/social-networks-cutting-into-family-time.html>

¹⁷ To see the statements, please see the Appendix.

poking its nose in their affairs. All the statements (except 2 and 7) that are critical of family intervention get minimum mean scores implying the youngsters are not always averse to parental interventions or supervisions of their online activities. They do not mind if parents supervise their online behaviour, nor they find it invasive or intrusive, parental interjections may be irritating when they are busy on their phones, yet they perhaps understand and appreciate that all this supervision is about their safety and security. However, there is a slight difference in male and female perception to family interruptions when they are occupied in their smartphone activities, as they take it differently, females do not get upset mean score 3.8, and that of males is 4, that is females do not much think of family members interrupting them whereas males do not like family interrupting them when they are busy on their phone/Internet activities. Nevertheless, they do not approve parents wanting to know all their online activities (mean score – 3.5) and sharing their digital device (smartphone or laptop) is not a good idea (mean score is 4.2). There was difference in perception across age brackets as well, as mean scores in the age group of 13-17 for statements 1, 3, 5, and 6 which favor youngsters' independence from parental supervision, and statements 2, 4, and 7 that favour mediation and monitoring, were higher than the age group from 17-22 years.

Youngsters personal space vis a vis parents' personal space

Teenagers not only get their needs to be listened to and noticed in this peer public but admired sometimes when that peer public is made online. If the family cannot provide them a situation where their needs are noticed or listened to and the need to be loved are met, then, they in turn will look for its fulfilment in social media as other alternatives (Boyd, 2008; Elkind, 1967; Varghese & Nivedhitha, 2014¹⁸; Warner, 2004). The following statistics explain an Indian youngster better, (s)he is happiest in her/his bedroom checking the latest updates on her/his mobile as the mean score illustrate (at 4.1) Interestingly, when it comes to their perception of their parents' usage/addiction the youngsters find it annoying. They are not tolerant to their parents if they indulge with their smartphones, as they are vexed at finding their parents glued to their own mobile phones (mean score is 4.1), which implies there is sufficient number of youngsters who get frazzled when they find parents occupied on their smartphones. And this is an interesting aspect of their disposition; that they want to deny the same freedom to their parents they themselves want to enjoy.

¹⁸ Varghese, T. & Nivedhitha, D. (2014). Indian teenagers and their family relations in the social networking era. *Rajagiri Journal of Social Development*, 6(1), pp. 29–48.

Emotional space, family vs new media

Contemporary youth are growing up in a cultural setting in which many of their experiences and opportunities are shaped by their engagement with social network sites. Subsequently, questions and controversies emerge about the effects social network sites have on their development due to how embedded their lives are in social media, and its repercussions on family life. However, it emerges from the present study that youngsters believe providing emotional support is their family's prerogative, as all the mean scores are maximum in favour of family providing emotional and psychological care. In a wide spectrum of providing emotional sustenance during times of illness, loneliness, distress and sharing happiness, family comes first. Wishing family members through social media minus physical warmth is not their first choice. Nevertheless, the female perception of loneliness when the family is not around, despite the social media, is little greater than the males (mean score of females is 5.1, whereas that of males is 4.9). Correspondingly, the females give more weightage to family in times of distress as the best stress buster than the males (mean score females 5.3, whereas that of males is 4.8). This underscores the priority that females give to the concept and existential importance to 'family'. From the overall mean scores, it is evident that family scores better in terms of giving emotional support to youngsters, that they are not yet alienated in their own world and need familial presence and psychological sustenance from their family, as all the activities, that gives them support or relief, sentimental transactions receive some higher thumbs up than familial communication mediated through virtual media. There was no significant difference of opinions across age- groups in the perception of the idea of family function of providing psychological and emotional care and sustenance to youngsters.

Has new media, including social media, influenced family communication? The answer is largely in positive, for it fulfils many tasks in the mundane of a youngster of today. When it got structured in the quotidian, it was imperative that it replaced some functions of family, that it was always performing. The new media has influenced family communication culture in profound ways. It now plays the role of guide, instructor, educator and trains young people to face the world, all the functions that were performed by the family in not so distant a past.

Figure 6

New media’s gain vs family’s loss

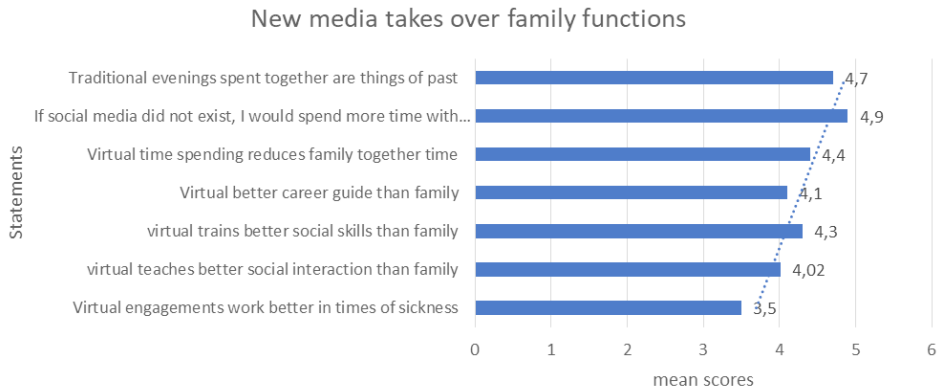
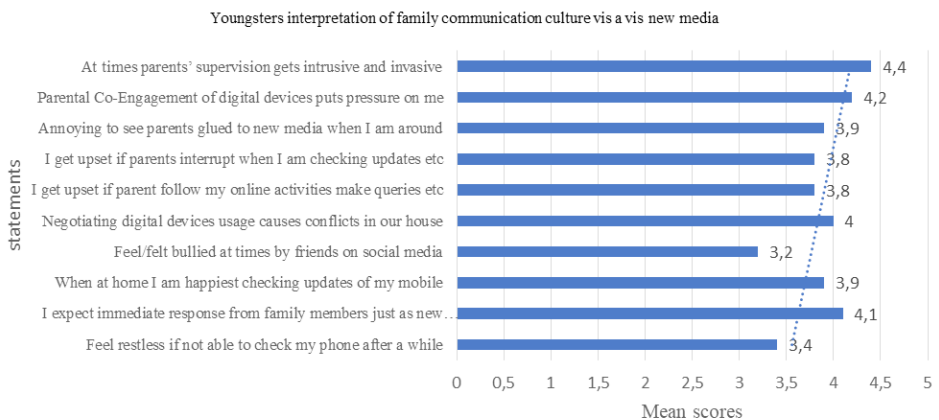


Figure 7

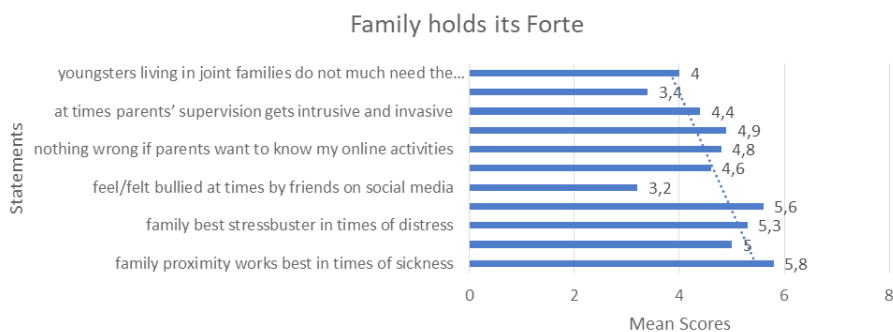
Youngsters’ interpretation of family communication culture



As technology enters the domestic and comes to perform family’s functions, tension may arise for the device gets integrated and consumes time of family members. Parental monitoring may not be accepted readily by the youngsters, and there may be other undulations in their routine and behaviour. Despite the conflicts and tensions, youngsters have given new media through their smartphones, a primacy of space in their lives. It is understandable as it sates their everyday investigations without inquisitions and preaching.

Figure 8

Family communication culture least influenced by new media



Therefore, one may assume that new media has almost family for the plethora of functions and utilities it has in young people's lives. As of now, family holds its forte because it has certain sacred efficacies in the lives of youngsters that it cannot find in social and new media. Values and utilities that only family may offer. A technological gadget with all its interactivity, services and conveniences, may not replace the warmth, support and care of human relationships.

Theoretical perspective

Erikson's model provides a theoretical framework to explore issues of self-esteem, belonging and identity. While the 'self-esteem and identity' issues may co relate with peer group and new media, the family may provide 'belonging' to youngsters. Erikson's *Stages of psycho-social development* posits adolescent development occurring primarily through identity formation within the context of social relationships consisting primarily of family and friends, where new and social media is indispensable part. New media plays a crucial role as it enters their lives when their world is in a state of transitional flux. Being exposed to the vast new world of friends, new media and their own body and mind, youngsters try to adjust themselves to the new orientations, and fine tune to demands and expectations of the peer group and family (Erikson, 1968; Frydenberg, 2008; Manago et al., 2012; Moshman, 1999; Steinberg, 2005). Social networking sites greatly influence the formation of individual identity through digital communication and interaction with peers. In today's time, when peer group plays an important role in youngsters' lives, and with new media becoming omnipresent, its role assumes significance as a shaper of personality development in the mundane. The role of peer group needs to be underscored as social media plays out all the interactions and iterations in a youngster's life through it

(Leung & Wei, 2000; Qi et al., 2017). Youngsters turn to one another, instead of their families, as their first line of support during times of worry or upset. This increased reliance on friendships may well be another reason that youngsters assert for private spaces that includes ownership of smartphones that helps them glue together with friends on social media. Thus, enabling them to bond over shared experiences with the Internet and smartphone mediating and facilitating in building up a conducive environment for interaction and relationships. In general, social media with its interactive features helps youngsters to gravitate toward peer groups with whom they share common interests.

The personality development theory is aided by uses and gratifications theory (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010) as a key distinguishing feature of new media is interactivity, which describes the ability of users to provide content in response to a source or communication partner (Ha & James, 1998). Youngsters enjoy their position as producer of information. The uses and gratifications theory may apply to all youngsters as they feel gratified when they use the new media in terms of generating content and satisfying their inquisitions on a range of subjects, by consuming the content and later sharing with their peers or family members. This provides them control over content and its use, making it important to examine the gratifications new media provide to users in comparison to traditional media (Lin, 2001; Toffler, 1980). Youth psychology of generating social media content is closely related to her/his gratifications, when (s)he uses it to mark her/his authorship, hence his personality.

Conclusion

Situated in the mundane of family, the online engagements may demand adjustments, assertions or a middle path where authorities are challenged/defied or there may be role reversals. 'Over the years, families have transitioned from finding ways of turning off the media to learning strategies to cope with and navigate media in our lives' with understanding from both sides, parents as well as children' (Jennings, 2017). The study has brought to light some interesting results like appreciation of new and social media's role in personality/skills/competencies enhancement by all age groups and gender, which were considered family responsibility. However, age and gender emerge as significant variables in perceiving role and importance of family and new media. The early teens in general resent parental control and monitoring of their online activities, later teens and young adults understand and appreciate parental concerns. Early teens are critical of parental online usage whereas young adults are tolerant. They associate their privacy and independence with

their online usage and prefer it than their seniors. Gender-wise, the results do not show marked difference, yet females associate loneliness with the absence of family more than males. All the same, family is important to them and take precedence in matters of emotional sustenance and being together time.

Studies carried out across globe including the USA, the UK, Europe, Asia have looked at the youngsters' engagements and conflicts arising thereafter in the family, however, the meaning and relevance of this study may be different for the family in India as it signals arrival of new media in the domestic domain and overtaking some of the important functions of the family, thus cutting down the role of family in blooming lives. Technology is here to stay, and the family must adapt itself to be in sync with the changing times and with youngsters. Their itch for privacy may be universal, but it is worth noting that youngsters consider parental control and monitoring as necessary part of parenting. There is a scope for further exploration to ascertain parental viewpoints and how they monitor the Internet activities of the young ones. Family communication and relationships may further improve if there is more transparency of the Internet activities and both the sides need to understand points of views of each other. This study has provided a theoretical framework for understanding youngsters' practice and usage of new media in the domestic and an emerging change in communication culture therein¹⁹.

¹⁹ 1) India's Internet users expected to register double digit growth to reach 627 million in 2019 with an annual growth of 18% and is estimated at 566 million as of December 2018, a 40% overall Internet penetration. It projected a double-digit growth for 2019 and estimates that the number of Internet users will reach 627 million by the end of this year. Of the total user base, 87% or 493 million Indians, are defined as regular users, having accessed Internet in last 30 days. Nearly 293 million active Internet users reside in urban India, while there are 200 million active users in rural India, it said. The report found that 97% of users use mobile phone as one of the devices. Provided by market research agency Kantar IMRB;

2) Boyd & Ellison defined 'social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. While the term "social network site" is used to describe this phenomenon, the term "social networking sites" also appears in public discourse, and the two terms are often used interchangeably'. Social media used for sociality and social networking is a part of new media which is an all-encompassing term for technological gadgets and network.

Appendix I

Table 2 depicts wording, means, and standard deviations for each item. In order to classify the different type of impacts the social media have on the family life of young generation, the EFA method using principal component method and varimax orthogonal rotation is applied in the study. The EFA technique helps in exploring the latent factors representing similar influence of the social media on the family life of the students. The EFA method requires the fulfilment of few assumptions, namely the sampling adequacy and the presence of correlation among the different sets of included statements. The sampling adequacy represents the presence of sufficient variations in the responses received against the statements. The presence of sufficient sampling adequacy is tested with the help of KMO tests where the expected value of KMO statistics is greater than 0.6. The Barlett’s test of sphericity is used to analyse the coefficient of correlation between the different pairs of statements included in the analysis. The Bartlett’s test examines the null hypothesis that the estimated correlations matrix representing the coefficient of Pearson correlation between the different pairs of statements is an identity matrix. The results of KMO test as well as Barlett’s test of sphericity are shown below.

Table 1

Results of KMO and Bartlett test in EFA

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) estimate of sampling adequacy		0.938
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Chi-Square statistic	11656.244
	Degree of freedom	406
	Significance value	.000

The result indicates that the KMO statistics is found to be 0.938 which is greater than minimum expected value of 0.6. Therefore, it can be concluded that the condition of sampling adequacy is fulfilled. Also, the probability value of Chi Square statistics in case of Barlett’s test of sphericity is found to be five percent level of significance. Hence with 95 percent of confidence level the null hypothesis that ‘*The correlation matrix is an identity matrix*’, cannot be accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded in the study that there exists significant correlation between the different pairs of included statements in the factor analysis. Thus, factor analysis may have significant contribution in fulfilling the purpose of the study. In the process of principal component analysis, the eigen values of different components are estimated and arranged in the descending order. Only

the factors with eigen value more than 1 are selected for further study. The PCA method arranges the factors as per the decreasing order of eigen values i.e. in this process, the component with the highest eigen value comes first and the next component with second highest value comes after that. The eigen values are estimated before and after the varimax rotation. The results of EFA indicate that the twenty-nine statements related to the impact of social media on the family life of young students included in the EFA analysis can be further reduced to five significant extracted factors. These extracted factors are selected on the basis of criteria of eigen values greater than one. In EFA method, the orthogonal varimax rotation is also applied on the extracted factors in order to increase the explanatory power of the different extracted factors. The varimax rotation helps the researcher in getting the independent and uncorrelated factors and also helps in better explaining the latent factors extracted from the process of EFA. The factor loadings of different statements to different extracted factors are estimated and shown in table. The factor loadings represent the coefficient of Pearson correlation between the different included statements and factors. In EFA method it is expected that each statement should have high factor loading to one single factor and low factor loadings to remaining factors. The statements in the EFA having different factor loadings to different factors are sorted with respect to their factor loadings in descending order. This helps in locating the statements having high factor loadings to a specific factor. In addition to this, the communality of different statements is also estimated which is similar to the coefficient of determination (R^2) and indicates the percentage of variance of the statements explained by extracted factors. The result of rotated component matrix is shown below.

Table 2

Rotated component matrix

	Extracted latent components					Mean	std deviation
	New media's impact on personality, and family	Emotional space, family vs new media	Parental control, new media and youngster	Family together time vs new media	Youngsters personal space vis a vis parents' personal space		
I expect immediate response from my family and friends just as internet gives me instant answers to my queries	.838	.192	.124	.117	.098	4.864	1.802
For my career, it's best to seek choices on the internet, surf it thoroughly than to seek counsel from the family members.	.829	.195	.228	.143	.023	4.694	1.736
Direct social interaction with others makes me more socially skilled	.827	.198	.065	.079	.073	4.743	1.751
Parents' own levels of media and technology use affect the use patterns of new media by children at home	.816	.214	.170	.136	.095	4.743	1.731

I do not see/check my phone after every 15-20 minutes, I feel restless	.791	.101	.256	.157	.099	4.405	1.762
I feel/felt bullied/small/ridiculed at times by my friends on social media site(s)	.782	.154	.209	.204	-.018	4.405	1.775
The virtual world has made me more socially skilled in social interaction with strangers or foreigners	.778	.160	.229	.149	.082	4.403	1.799
One can interact better socially with others, by reading, viewing similar examples/experiences, on the internet etc. than by what parents/family elders counsel or suggest, advise	.765	.167	.241	.146	.120	4.514	1.795
In times of distress, the family is the best stressbuster	.180	.872	.097	.106	.063	5.052	1.711
When I fall sick, a personal attention by parents/family members gives me relief	.147	.854	.039	.093	.067	5.413	1.672
Sometimes despite social media, I feel lonely when my family is not around	.148	.838	.121	.113	.075	5.034	1.653
When I fall sick, I feel better with my engagements in the virtual world	.144	.792	.109	.106	-.009	4.112	1.738
I prefer to wish my family, face to face, on special occasions	.214	.736	.151	.109	.202	5.357	1.669
'On special occasions it's better to wish my family through social media like WhatsApp/Facebook/Instagram / etc	.162	.662	.186	.144	-.011	3.918	1.887

Social media has helped me connect with my extended family and distant friends	.159	.582	.146	.114	.139	3.683	1.869
I get upset if my parents follow my online engagements in that they make queries, visit the sites etc.	.203	.127	.776	.097	.034	4.697	1.858
I don't see anything wrong if parents want to know everything about my online activities	.182	.108	.770	.149	-.010	3.846	1.888
At times parental supervision gets intrusive for youngsters	.115	.038	.707	.057	.101	4.233	1.971
Parents keep a tab on their children's social media activities, as they are concerned about their child's safety	.276	.167	.677	.182	.071	4.403	1.681
I get upset by family members if they interrupt, when I am checking my phone for updates (personal space, new media and family interference)	.127	.177	.668	.108	.245	4.352	1.833
Parental Co-Engagement of digital devices puts pressure on kids	.256	.261	.621	.173	.051	4.697	1.724
I understand that parents are concerned about their kids' deteriorating eyesight, shoulder-aches etc.	.167	.070	.598	.239	.109	3.911	1.974
'If social networking sites like Instagram/ snapchat/Facebook did not exist then I would spend more time face to face with my family	.239	.180	.058	.762	.056	4.823	1.733

Negotiating media use causes conflicts in our home	.137	.129	.259	.753	.043	4.209	1.678
The time I spend on virtual reduces the amount of time I spend communicating with family face to face	.172	.198	.123	.746	.032	4.439	1.732
Youngsters, living in joint families, do not much need social media through smartphone/laptop.	.214	.160	.108	.741	.119	4.568	1.805
It is always better to explore the latest information/knowledge/entertainment etc.) on the internet, than to spend a holiday/evening with the family	.046	.018	.380	.663	.015	3.764	1.916
When at home, I am happiest when checking latest happenings of my social media world in the privacy of my bedroom	.153	.168	.116	.116	.863	4.089	1.897
It is annoying to see my parents always glued to the new media when I am around	.172	.188	.358	.088	.739	4.145	1.736
Eigen Value (Percentage of variance explained)	5.841 (20.143%)	4.725 (16.29%)	4.162 (14.35%)	3.141 (10.83%)	1.533 (5.28%)		
Reliability statistics Cronbach alpha	.949	.906	.869	.846	.726		
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.							

Appendix II
ANOVA result
Parental coengagement puts pressure on youngsters

ANOVA

VAR00001

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	70.371	4	17.593	8.223	.000
Within Groups	1298.706	607	2.140		
Total	1369.077	611			

Descriptives

VAR00001

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
13-15 years	185	5.0973	.94480	.06946	4.9603	5.2343	3.00	7.00
15-17	89	4.9326	1.09542	.11611	4.7018	5.1633	2.00	7.00
17-19	68	4.0882	1.87470	.22734	3.6345	4.5420	1.00	7.00
19-21	187	4.5134	1.76391	.12899	4.2589	4.7678	1.00	7.00
21-22	83	4.4699	1.61802	.17760	4.1166	4.8232	1.00	7.00
Total	612	4.6977	1.49690	.06051	4.5789	4.8165	1.00	7.00

I GET UPSET IF PARENTS FOLLOW MY ONLINE ENGAGEMENTS

ANOVA

VAR00002

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	237.858	4	59.464	28.349	.000
Within Groups	1273.219	607	2.098		
Total	1511.077	611			

Descriptives

VAR00002

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval f or Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
13-15 years	185	5.3243	.94564	.06953	5.1872	5.4615	2.00	7.00
15-17	89	5.4382	.82510	.08746	5.2644	5.6120	2.00	7.00
17-19	68	3.8529	1.73863	.21084	3.4321	4.2738	1.00	7.00
19-21	187	4.3690	1.78033	.13019	4.1121	4.6258	1.00	7.00
21-22	83	3.9398	1.76931	.19421	3.5534	4.3261	1.00	7.00
Total	612	4.6977	1.57262	.06357	4.5729	4.8226	1.00	7.00

At times parental supervision gets intrusive

ANOVA

VAR00003

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	209.314	4	52.328	16.455	.000
Within Groups	1930.273	607	3.180		
Total	2139.587	611			

Descriptives

VAR00003

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
13-15 years	185	4.8486	1.52829	.11236	4.6270	5.0703	1.00	7.00
15-17	89	4.8876	1.59857	.16945	4.5509	5.2244	1.00	7.00
17-19	68	3.5588	2.06161	.25001	3.0598	4.0578	1.00	7.00
19-21	187	3.9037	1.84954	.13525	3.6369	4.1706	1.00	7.00
21-22	83	3.4578	2.07952	.22826	3.0038	3.9119	1.00	7.00
Total	612	4.2337	1.87130	.07564	4.0851	4.3822	1.00	7.00

I GET UPSET BY FAMILY MEMBERS IF THEY INTERRUPT WHEN I AM WHEN I AM CHECKING MY PHONE FOR UPDATES

ANOVA

VAR00004

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	73.873	4	18.468	6.399	.000
Within Groups	1751.892	607	2.886		
Total	1825.765	611			

Descriptives

VAR00004

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
13-15 years	185	4.5730	1.52740	.11230	4.3514	4.7945	1.00	7.00
15-17	89	4.9326	1.46006	.15477	4.6250	5.2401	1.00	7.00
17-19	68	3.8382	1.97454	.23945	3.3603	4.3162	1.00	7.00
19-21	187	4.2299	1.79772	.13146	3.9706	4.4893	1.00	7.00
21-22	83	3.9398	1.82362	.20017	3.5416	4.3380	1.00	7.00
Total	612	4.3529	1.72863	.06988	4.2157	4.4902	1.00	7.00

It is always better to explore the latest information/knowledge / entertainment on the internet than to spend a holiday/ evening with the family

ANOVA

VAR00005

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	98.763	4	24.691	8.276	.000
Within Groups	1811.001	607	2.984		
Total	1909.765	611			

Descriptives

VAR00005

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
13-15 years	185	4.8216	1.65029	.12133	4.5822	5.0610	1.00	7.00
15-17	89	4.7079	1.53891	.16312	4.3837	5.0320	1.00	7.00
17-19	68	3.8529	2.00942	.24368	3.3666	4.3393	1.00	7.00
19-21	187	4.1176	1.68071	.12291	3.8752	4.3601	1.00	7.00
21-22	83	3.8675	1.93032	.21188	3.4460	4.2890	1.00	7.00
Total	612	4.3529	1.76795	.07147	4.2126	4.4933	1.00	7.00

**When at home, I am happiest IN my social media world
IN THE PRIVACY OF MY BEDROOM
ANOVA**

VAR00006

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	131.293	4	32.823	11.208	.000
Within Groups	1777.705	607	2.929		
Total	1908.998	611			

Descriptives

VAR00006

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
13-15 years	185	4.9243	1.47983	.10880	4.7097	5.1390	1.00	7.00
15-17	89	4.9438	1.54007	.16325	4.6194	5.2682	1.00	7.00
17-19	68	3.8088	1.76413	.21393	3.3818	4.2358	1.00	7.00
19-21	187	4.2246	1.82363	.13336	3.9615	4.4877	1.00	7.00
21-22	83	3.8434	2.03315	.22317	3.3994	4.2873	1.00	7.00
Total	612	4.4428	1.76759	.07145	4.3025	4.5831	1.00	7.00

It is annoying to see my parents glued to the internet
ANOVA

VAR00007

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	51.690	4	12.922	5.082	.000
Within Groups	1543.622	607	2.543		
Total	1595.312	611			

Descriptives

VAR00007

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
13-15 years	185	4.6811	1.30672	.09607	4.4915	4.8706	1.00	7.00
15-17	89	4.6292	1.36833	.14504	4.3410	4.9175	1.00	7.00
17-19	68	3.7500	1.79863	.21812	3.3146	4.1854	1.00	7.00
19-21	187	4.3476	1.76039	.12873	4.0936	4.6016	1.00	7.00
21-22	83	4.2048	1.81967	.19973	3.8075	4.6022	1.00	7.00
Total	612	4.4036	1.61585	.06532	4.2753	4.5319	1.00	7.00

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CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

Journalism in the era of mobile technology: The changing pattern of news production and the thriving culture of fake news in Pakistan and Ghana

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Abstract

The advent of new technologies has resulted in the rise of mobile journalism around the globe. Mobile devices have reformed the newsroom environments by introducing new means to connect with the audience and to communicate with other journalists within the same place. Many traditional media organizations already produce news content for mobile web-sites and apps in proportion to cross-media strategies, reflecting structural changes in the journalism industry and transformation in the process of news production in many countries and although coming from different cultural traditions and geographical locations, Pakistan and Ghana are no exceptions. However, there are concerns about the potential role of mobile journalism in fostering the culture of fake news in both countries. Thus, using the media convergence and social responsibility theories, this study aims to analyse how mobile journalism is altering the news production process and fostering the trend of fake news in Pakistan and Ghana. To accomplish this aim, this study uses the qualitative methods of document review and in-depth interviews and offers a thematic analysis of the qualitative data.

Keywords

Mobile journalism, fake news, media convergence, social responsibility, Pakistan's and Ghana's news media.

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Introduction

Technology has always been at the forefront of newsgathering and the journalistic process. The last century has seen audio, visual, and digital innovations contributing greatly to changing the way journalists think about and perform their routine work (Lasorsa et al., 2011). With the advent of new media technologies, the possibility for journalists to create, modify, and share content with others by using relatively simple tools has actually transformed the way journalism is practiced (Gambarato & Alzamora, 2018; Pavlik, 2001). Particularly, the new technologies of mobile phone equipped with features of phone camera, sound recording, Internet access and instant messaging have resulted in the rise of mobile journalism around the globe (Gambarato & Alzamora, 2018; Westlund, 2013). Mobile phones are revolutionizing journalism practice by transforming traditional patterns of news gathering and production as the reporters now use mobile phones to inform and to give live picture from the field without using broadcast systems (Gambarato & Alzamora, 2018; Jokela et al., 2009). Evidently the mobile devices have reformed the newsroom environments by introducing new means to connect with the audience and to communicate with other journalists within the same place (Mabwezara, 2009; Nicole, 2014).

Like many other countries, Pakistan and Ghana have experienced mobile phone explosion and easy access to the Internet. For instance, Ghana has an estimated population of 29 million, yet the country has 34.57 million mobile phone users (Zanney, 2018). Whereas, Pakistan has a total population of approximately 204.60 million and the number of 3G and 4G users in Pakistan has reached to 55.47 million and approximately 150 million Pakistani people use mobile phones (World Population Review, 2019; Yousufzai, 2018). The penetration of mobile infrastructure has revolutionised Pakistan's and Ghana's journalism landscapes so the working journalists, being part of mobile-laden media ecosystem, are more well-equipped and connected for rapid production and dissemination of news especially in rural and remote areas of both countries (Ahiabenu et al., 2018; Umair, 2016; Zanney, 2018). Despite these positive implications of mobile journalism, the use of mobile phones and cameras for news reporting by journalists has raised concerns regarding the authenticity and credibility of the news content in Pakistan and Ghana both (Ahiabenu et al., 2018; Umair, 2016).

There are significant international studies on fake news (Ahiabenu et al., 2018; Iretton & Posetti, 2018; Levinson, 2016; McNair, 2017) and mobile journalism practice (Bardoel & Dueze, 2001; Bivens, 2008; Cameron, 2011;

Nicole, 2014; Stephen, 2009; Umair, 2016; Westlund, 2008, 2013). However, there is a dearth of studies that offer qualitative analysis about the role of mobile journalism in reshaping news production process and the ways it aids in promoting fake news in Pakistan and Ghana. Therefore, drawing on the media convergence and social responsibility theories, this study fills this gap in literature by offering insights into three objectives, namely: (i) to study how the proliferation of mobile phone has altered the news production and distribution process in Pakistan and Ghana; (ii) to analyse the ways practice of mobile journalism among professional journalists are promoting the trend of fake news in Pakistan's and Ghana's news media; (iii) to investigate whether professional journalists receive training for mobile journalism and news verification in both countries.

Theoretical framework: Media convergence and social responsibility theories

Media convergence is concerned with the coming together of two or more distinctive perspectives of the media industry due to technological innovations (Dominick, 2011; Grant & Wilkinson, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Kalamar, 2016). In media studies, convergence advances analysis of the blurring boundaries between the media and telecommunications. The theory highlights the fusion of different tools and equipment for news production and distribution because it is the coming together of the media, telecommunications and computer industries (Grant & Wilkinson, 2009). Singer (2004) posits that media convergence is 'some combination of technologies, products, staff and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online media'. It is also considered as being beyond technological shift because it has not only transformed the relationship between existing technologies, but it has also altered the relationship between existing media industries, markets, genres and audiences (Jenkins, 2006).

Though it has been established that media convergence is about fusion of varying but inter-connected components in the media industry, the exact components that are fused are considered from various dimensions (Dominick, 2011; Grant & Wilkinson, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Kalamar, 2016). The fusion of distinct but interwoven media features (Garcia, 2006) can be technological, ownership/economic, content, collaboration and operational. Technological convergence is the fusion of tools and equipment for news production and distribution (Grant & Wilkinson, 2009), ownership/economic convergence is about the concentration of media companies due to economic reasons

(Herkman, 2012; Lawson-Border, 2006) and content convergence has to do with the designing of a common content for different media including newspapers, radio, TV and online (Jenkins, 2006). Also, operational convergence occurs when a common newsroom is used for different media organisations (Garcia & Carvajal, 2008), and collaboration or cooperation convergence happens when different media organisations cooperate with one another such that they both use a common entity in the course of news gathering and production (Deuze, 2004).

While there are various forms of convergence, this study is hinged on technological convergence. This is also known as production convergence (Cooke, 2005) and it is of much relevance to this study because it is about how technical design and functionality effectively interoperate in a device (in the context of this study mobile phone) for gathering and dissemination of news (Jenkins, 2006). Thus, technical design entails the fundamental set up necessary for digital content transportation whereas functionality encompasses accessibility. Technological convergence entails the merging of the functions of different gadgets into a device. For instance, beyond being used for phone calls and text messages, a smartphone is also used by journalists for recording audio and visual contents, compose news stories and send the packaged news to editors for review and/or broadcast to different sources within a short time.

Technological convergence has simplified news production and has facilitated accelerated news distribution (Dominick, 2011; Drula, 2015; Jenkins, 2006; Kalamar, 2016). As a result, journalists have changed their traditional pattern of news gathering and dissemination. For instance, the photo journalists can shoot, edit and send digital pictures to their editors on their smartphones without processing pictures in the darkroom and printing and distributing them physically. Editors can access stories from reporters and broadcast before the reporters get to the newsroom from the location of an event. Online newspapers can break stories as well as distribute news stories before traditional newspapers go into production due to technological convergence.

Convergence scholars agree that media convergence has transformed the journalism industry, especially news production and dissemination, in many countries (Dominick, 2011; Drula, 2015; Garcia & Carvajal, 2008; Herkman, 2012; Jenkins, 2006; Kalamar, 2016; Lawson-Border, 2006) and Pakistan and Ghana are no exceptions. It has led to the adaptation of mobile journalism practices that has reshaped the media landscape and resulted in an increased speed in news production and distribution, more audience interaction, cut down on cost of media operations and a lifeline to declining newspaper circulation

and sale (Garcia & Carvajal, 2008). While mobile journalism has made the journalists' work easier and faster, they have also put a question mark on the authenticity and reliability of the news they report. And it is contended that mobile journalism as an outcome of technological convergence has given to the proliferation of fake news. This proliferation stems from the fact that journalists are not professional in their conduct and their news reports lack accuracy and truthfulness in countries like Pakistan (Umair, 2016) and Ghana (Ahiabenu et al., 2018). They are apathetic towards the huge negative impact of fake news to democratic political systems in societies. Beyond freedom of expression, democracy is most importantly about responsibility for the right to free expression. Thus, being guaranteed the right to freedom of expression does not mean professional journalists must produce fake news. Rather, the guaranteed freedom should be enjoyed responsibly with the development of the society in mind.

Therefore, in addition to the media convergence theory, this study also uses the social responsibility theory that emphasizes journalists' adherence to professional standards of objectivity, truthfulness, accuracy and impartiality. The theory supports the notion of freedom with responsibility that requires individual journalists and media organizations not only to report facts with truthfulness, but also to provide deeper and unbiased interpretations of news stories in the public's interest. Thus, the theory attempts to buttress journalistic standards and their roles in any society for accomplishing broader objectives of democracy and development. Drawing on the principles of social responsibility theory, many countries worldwide, have devised journalistic codes of ethics (Baran & Davis, 2005). Code of ethics sets a frame work for the journalists within which they can perform their routine jobs professionally, and thus can be viewed as a self-regulatory mechanism for responsible journalism (Encabo, 1995). It serves the public interest by ensuring dissemination of truthful, impartial, accurate information and protection of other basic human rights such as freedom of speech; protection of privacy, reputation and religious feelings (Baydar, 2008; Jamil, 2017).

The theory avers that the 'press is not free if those who operate it behave as though their position conferred on them the privilege of being deaf to ideas which the processes of free speech have brought to public attention' (Baran & Davis, 2003). Thus, the media are expected to be responsible for progression of democratic values and principles in any democratic society.

Hence, this study draws on two strands of theoretical frameworks: media convergence theory and social responsibility theory. Media convergence,

specifically technological convergence, is used in this study to analyse the use of mobile phones in news gathering and news dissemination process in Pakistan and Ghana. It is also used in authors' assessment of the proliferation of fake news in the two countries and it justifies the need to investigate the training given to journalists in the countries so as to be able to detect fake news in the prevailing disruptive era. Furthermore, this study has used social responsibility theory as the second strand of theoretical framework to analyse whether the growth of mobile journalism has facilitated or affected the practice of responsible journalism through providing the public unverified or fake news in Pakistan and Ghana.

Literature review

Media landscape in Pakistan

Pakistan's media is quite vibrant in Southeast Asia. However, the country's media operates under the competitive authoritarianism. Independent media exists with the constitutionally protected rights of freedom of expression and access to information under the Articles 19 and 19 (A) of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973). However, the ruling authorities use different mechanisms to suppress the voice of media through constitutional manipulations, financial incentives, taxes, the selective allocation of government's advertisements and stringent media laws. Journalists are also banned, imprisoned and harassed by the government being critical of its performance. Thus, there is always a tension between the government and the media outlets (Jamil, 2017; Riaz, 2010).

Pakistan's print media ecology can be characterised as pluralistic and competitive. It reflects ethnic, linguistic and class division. There are almost over 18 major Urdu-language's newspapers circulating across Pakistan. The Urdu print media is popular and enjoy a wide range of readership or viewership, especially in the middle class of the society. There is an existence of both conservative and liberal strands within the Urdu-language's newspapers. As far as English print media is concerned, there are over approximately 12 mainstream English-language newspapers in the country. And they have a very low mass readership than the Urdu-language newspapers (Khan & Aziz, 2017). The reason behind the lesser readership of English-language newspapers is the linguistic barrier and Pakistan's less literacy rate. However, the English-language media has a greater leverage on policy makers, politicians, elite class, civil bureaucracy, industrialists and professionals (Riaz, 2010; Siraj, 2009).

The vernacular media also exists in provincial and regional languages including Sindhi, Punjabi, Baluchi, Pashtu, Saraiki, and Kashmiri languages

(International Media Support, 2009). The cross-media ownership dominantly characterise Pakistan's mainstream media with the influence of major media groups such as Jang Group, Herald Group, Nawa-e-Waqt Group, Business Recorder Group, ARY digital network, and Lakson Group.

Furthermore, in the past, there used to be only one state-owned television channel known as Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV). However, in the last ten years, there has been a proliferation of private television news channels in Pakistan. At present, there are over 80 local television channels available to the Pakistani viewers via cable and satellite, along with many other international television channels. This mushrooming of satellite television news channels has helped to reduce the information vacuum and the state monopoly on the broadcast media. The growth of private television news channels has positively implicated in the culture of political discussions, which is imperative to increase the public's awareness in Pakistan (Riaz, 2010).

In terms of the 'sources of revenue', the print media (either in Urdu-language or English-language) rely on approximately less than 35 per cent of the government's advertisements, apart from the advertisements given by multinational companies. On the other hand, private television channels' and radio stations' owners mainly derive their revenue from commercial advertisements given by multinational companies.

Apart from local Press Council, there are five main media associations in Pakistan, namely: All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), The Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF), and the Association of Television Journalists (ATJ). Each province has its own journalist union as well. For instance, journalists in Karachi have their union called as Karachi Union of Journalists (KUJ). There are two national news agencies currently in operation including Pakistan Press International (PPI) and the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP). Foreign media correspondents from CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera, Voice of America do report from Pakistan's various major cities for the coverage of local news.

Media landscape in Ghana

Ghana has a liberal and vibrant media landscape under the Fourth Republic due to lessons learnt from its post-independence political and press histories. It is among the African countries with best press freedom ratings. The 1992 Constitution has been rated as the best so far in comparison with previous constitutions because its provisions on rights/freedoms of the citizens and the press are explicit and elaborate (Owusu, 2012). The twelve Articles under

Chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution are dedicated to provisions on freedom of the press. As a result, journalists in Ghana enjoy double freedoms: their rights to free expression in Article 21 (e) and their right to freedom of the press in Article 162 (1). Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the constitution and it explicitly forbids censorship, government control and harassment of editors, publishers and journalists. The constitution mandates the formation of an independent regulatory body, the National Media Commission (NMC), to oversee the functioning of the press and outlines the duties of the commission.

The repeal of the Criminal Libel and Seditious Law in 2001 is considered as another success of the Fourth Republic in ensuring that the press is free. This is because it has 'brought a measure of respite to journalists, particularly those in the private media' (Owusu, 2012). However, in place of decriminalising the libel and seditious laws, there had been cases where huge fines are slapped on the media as compensation for damages in civil libel cases and such instances have negative implications for the promotion and the protection of freedom of speech and of press in Ghana. Also, the country just passed the Right to Information Law and it is seen as another attempt to give more freedom to the media. This is because it is expected that the law will give the media more access to information.

Before and just after the Fourth Republic, private print media existed but the electronic media were monopolised by government. This has changed in the last fifteen years because in the spirit of the 1992 Constitution, many private electronic and online media outlets have been established. According to National Communication Authority (2015), 412 radio outlets, 54 television stations and 136 newspapers are in Ghana and currently, the statistics are higher especially for the electronic and online media outlets. All the traditional and online newspapers are published in English language but the electronic media and their web-sites broadcast in English or Ghanaian languages. The elitist, therefore, patronise the newspapers and English-language news channels whiles the middle and lower class patronise media outlets that use the Ghanaian languages, especially Twi, due to language barrier.

Ghana has exhibited a liberal approach to foreign media. Representatives from Associated Press (AP), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN), Aljazeera and other well-known foreign channels are resident in the country. Foreign newspapers like New York Times and Washington Post can be accessed high class hotels. However, with the exception of content from BBC, CNN and Aljazeera, content of other foreign media is limited to the elitist due to cost implications and language barrier. Thus, some free to air channels broadcast content from these foreign channels to their viewership.

Mobile journalism, the changing pattern of news production and the rise of fake news: The rationale to compare the cases of Pakistan and Ghana

In developing countries, the rate of information communication technology development over the past two decades has been breathtaking, to say the least. These developments have affected all aspects of life and work. As a result, it is a generally accepted notion that new communication technologies have had, and will continue to have a significant impact on how media organisations and the public communicate, including the way journalism is produced and practised in different countries of the world (Ireton & Posetti, 2018; Umair, 2016). For this study, two developing countries from Africa and South Asia have been chosen, namely: Pakistan and Ghana.

The cases of Pakistan and Ghana are very interesting because Ghana ranks 113 and Pakistan ranks 148 in the UN's Global ICT Index of 2017 (International Telecommunication Union, 2017). This implies that Ghana's ICT progress is much higher as compared to Pakistan. Despite a good progress towards ICT development, the number of mobile phone users in Ghana is 34.57 million (Zanney, 2018), which is very less as compared to Pakistan. According to Pakistan Telecommunication Authority Statistics (2018), the number of 3G and 4G users in Pakistan has reached to 55.47 million and approximately 150 million people use mobile phones, despite the country's very slow progress towards ICT development (Yousufzai, 2018). Besides, Ghana has 10.11 million active Internet users (Zanney, 2018) while that of Pakistan is 44.61 million (Farooq, 2019).

Moving beyond ICT related statistics, both countries have different levels of media freedom and censorship as well. The media landscape of Ghana is most liberal and the Ghanaian press is freest in Africa (Nayko, 2016; Reporters Without Borders, 2019) but that of Pakistan is not liberal and the Pakistani press is not free as compared to other countries in South Asia (Jamil, 2017; Reporters Without Borders, 2019). Also, censorship is prohibited in Ghana (Constitution of Ghana, 1992), but media content is regularly and heavily censored by Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority, the country's government and military/ or intelligence agencies (Reporters Without Borders, 2019). As a result, Ghana is favourably rated by Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders than Pakistan (Freedom House, 2019; Reporters Without Borders, 2019).

Markedly, Pakistan and Ghana are two very different countries from South Asia and Africa respectively because they have different levels of population, ICT development, mobile subscribers, media freedom and censorship. However, still both countries have commonly witnessed an increase in the journalists' use of mobile phones in their routine work, resulting in the growing culture of fake news.

With regard to this, a few recent studies and reports reveal that both countries have experienced mobile phone explosion that has resulted in the rise of mobile journalism. These recent reports and studies indicate that the growing practice of mobile journalism has altered the way journalism is produced in Pakistan (Umair, 2016; Weiss, 2019) and Ghana (Ahabienu et al., 2019; Endert, 2018; Sey, 2011). Also, some studies have shown that mobile journalism has fostered a rapid rise in the culture of fake news in both countries (Ahabienu et al., 2019; Umair, 2016). However, there is no study that offers comparative and qualitative insights into how mobile journalism has transformed the process of news production in African and South Asian developing countries. Hence, it is in this light that this study seeks to comparatively investigate the interplay between the rise in mobile journalism and its implications for the news production and distribution process and news authenticity in two countries of Africa and South Asia (i.e. Pakistan and Ghana).

Methods

Drawing on the media convergence and social responsibility theories, this study employs the qualitative methods of document review and in-depth interviews in order to investigate three research questions: (i) What is the impact of the proliferation of mobile phone on news production and distribution process in Pakistan and Ghana? (ii) How the practice of mobile journalism among professional journalists is promoting the culture of fake news in Pakistan's and Ghana's news media? (iii) Do journalists receive training for mobile journalism and news verification in both countries? Specifically, data triangulation is used in this study. Thus, qualitative data from document review and in-depth interviews have been used to interpret, clarify and validate the findings.

Using purposive sampling¹, this study includes 15 in-depth interviews (face-to-face) of Pakistani male and female journalists, who work in the country's mainstream and most influential media organizations², and who are also

¹ **Purposive sampling** refers to the 'selection of certain groups or individuals for their relevance to the issue being studied' (Gray et al., 2007). The purposive sampling has been chosen so as to ensure the representation of media monitoring officers from Ghana and Pakistan and working journalists from the selected mainstream media organizations in Pakistan.

² This study includes 15 working journalists from 15 media organizations in Pakistan including: nine television news channels (i.e. SAMA News, Geo News, ARY News, Express News, Dunya News, Ab Tak News, AAJ News, Channel 92, Pakistan Television Corporation); three English-language newspapers (Daily Dawn, The News International, Express Tribune); three Urdu-language newspapers (Daily Jang, Daily Express, Nawa-e-Waqt).

members of media monitoring associations including: All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Council of Newspapers Editors (CPNE), and Association of Television Journalists (ATJ). For Ghana, four current senior officers from media monitoring organisations, National Media Commission (NMC) and Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), and two former senior officers of the monitoring organisations (who are currently editors of leading mainstream media organisations) have been interviewed³. In order to ensure the privacy of interviewees, the Pakistani interviewees' names have been replaced with numbers (ranging between 1 and 15) and the Ghanaian interviewees' names have been replaced with alphabets (ranging between A and F).

Moreover, this study uses thematic analysis⁴ to analyse data gathered from the in-depth interviews. There are three key themes that have been derived from the research questions of this study, precisely: (i) proliferation of mobile phone and its impact on news production and distribution in Pakistan and Ghana, (ii) mobile journalism and the thriving culture of fake news in Pakistan and Ghana, (iii) journalists' training for mobile journalism and news verification in Pakistan and Ghana. Hence, the next section discusses the results of this study.

Results and discussion

Proliferation of mobile phone and its impact on news production and distribution in Pakistan and Ghana

Mobile journalism is a growing practice that employs convergence of various devices in a device – a mobile phone. With the little passage of time, mobile journalism has been accepted in various international broadcasting channels to enhance their services as news providers, such as CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera. This study reveals that the proliferation of a mobile phone has also revolutionised journalism landscapes in Pakistan and Ghana as the working journalists, being part of mobile-laden media ecosystem, are more well-equipped and connected for rapid production and dissemination of news. This is in consonance with literature on media convergence (Dominick, 2011; Drula, 2015; Garcia & Carvajal, 2008; Herkman, 2012; Jenkins, 2006; Kalamar, 2016; Lawson-Border,

³ In this study, the main location of data collection in Pakistan was Karachi and in Ghana was Accra. In addition, the number of selected Pakistani interviewees is greater than Ghanaian interviewees because Pakistani news media is comprised of over 35 television news channels and over 50 newspapers in different local languages, which reflects a larger media landscape of Pakistan as compared to Ghana.

⁴ **Thematic analysis** helps to classify data under relevant themes in order to interpret the various aspects of research topic (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2008).

2006). For example, a majority of the interviewed journalists (i.e. Pakistan: 13 out of 15; Ghana: 5 out of 6) view that the proliferation of mobile technology has altered the news production and distribution process. Interview findings suggest that the development of information and communication infrastructure in Pakistan and Ghana have played a crucial role in transforming the traditional forms of news production and dissemination in both countries. The introduction of 3G and 4G mobile technologies has fostered the use of smartphones for news gathering and reporting. This is an affirmation of the main relevance of technological convergence in the media industry as noted by Grant and Wilkinson (2009), Jenkins (2006) and Singer (2004).

This study highlights that big television news channels use large crews and heavy equipment (such as OB Vans and broadcasting systems) in addition to using mobile devices for news production and distribution. Majority of middle to small-scale media organizations in both countries substantially rely on smartphone coverage of events because of these four common reasons: (i) easy mobility, (ii) fast production and distribution of news or information (through SMS, WhatsApp and e-mails), (iii) low cost (in terms of crew and equipment), and (iv) capacity for live transmission and break news in real time to audience (through Periscope and Face book live). This is in agreement with literature on the outcome of technological convergence on media operations (Garcia & Cavajal, 2008; Jenkins, 2006). Beyond these common reasons, Pakistan's journalists' reveals that an increased accessibility to remote and conflict areas and better level of safety are additional reasons for their smartphone coverage of events.

Interviewees' responses highlight that mobile journalism has made the process of news production and dissemination much faster and less costly (See Grant and Wilkinson, 2009) as the Pakistani and the Ghanaian journalists both are able to produce and distribute news in no-time and without big outdoor broadcasting vans and satellite trucks. In this regard, a male journalist from a local television news channel in Pakistan and an editor of a national newspaper in Ghana respectively suggests:

'I would not say that the penetration of Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure (ICT) and an increased use of mobile phone technology have totally changed the journalism practice in Pakistan. Yes, there are certain notable changes in the process of news gathering, production and distribution. Journalists, working even in big media organizations that operate with rich resources, are now using mobile phones for information gathering <...> and they no longer rely only a satellite truck or OB Van and other heavy equipment for reporting'. (Interviewee number 6)

‘I think not only mobile journalism, but technology has enhanced journalism in Ghana. If I should take you back to history, you will realise that our coverage of news took place at the location of things that happen...and one has to be there physically to cover and go back to his or her office and write the story, present it to the news editors for publication. But with the advent of technology and social media platforms, it is possible to watch an event on Face Book live from even Tamale or Wa [northern part of Ghana] sitting right in the comfort of one’s office in Accra [southern part of Ghana] to write the story. Hitherto you may have it when it is a live coverage by a TV station. Also, what is happening now is that most newsrooms are cutting down on cost. Therefore, media organizations rely on people who can provide them with the information on social media platforms <...> And the social media platforms and the Internet have become sources of information where without soliciting, information is posted and news houses pick those posts as news to publish or broadcast’. (Interviewee C)

When comparing the cases Pakistan and Ghana, this study highlights similarities on the cost cutting strategies of news organizations as media owners in both countries are reducing their staff and prefer mobile journalists (MoJo) who can perform multi-tasking of video shoot, editing and news distribution through their smartphone. Though many Pakistani journalists (i.e. 9 out of 15) think that the practice of mobile journalism has resulted in their financial insecurity and crises, and the Pakistani journalists from television news channels are suffering more as compared to those working in the country’s newspapers. For instance, editor of an Urdu-language’s newspaper in Pakistan says (Interviewee number 11), ‘I call it the financial murder of journalists. News organizations cannot call any journalist a “redundant staff” just because of new ways of news production. Unfortunately, technology has some negative implications for journalists too’. Another common implication of mobile journalism is the use of social media information (as mentioned by the Ghanaian interviewee C above), which is resulting in a culture of fake news in both countries (See also Ahiabenu et al., 2018).

Thus, there is no uncertainty that mobile journalism is transforming the way news is gathered, packaged and distributed in Pakistan and Ghana. Particularly, in the case of Pakistan, the development of mobile phones with advanced multimedia features and Internet connectivity has brought new ways for journalists to live out their risky and challenging profession. News stories, photos and videos can be produced or even published straight from remote and risky conflict areas (such as Interior Sindh, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces), making the news production

process safer, faster and more efficient. Despite these positive implications of mobile journalism, this study unpacks the rampant rise in the culture of fake news as an outcome of growing numbers of mobile journalists in Pakistan and Ghana. Hence, the next section addresses this aspect.

Mobile journalism and the thriving culture of fake in Pakistan and Ghana

Mobile journalism has transformed news production and dissemination process in many countries due to technological convergence and this is creating opportunities for independent journalists, citizen journalists and bloggers (Gambarato & Alzamora, 2018). However, one major implication of the practice of mobile journalism is the rise of fake news trend (Grant and Wilkinson, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Umair, 2016). As the technology is advancing, the use of mobile phones and cameras for live reporting and journalism have also questioned the authenticity of the news content being reported to the public. The authors believe that the use of mobile photos and video sharing on social media sites and other online platform has maximized the unauthenticity of incidents and news content. The growing trend of breaking news and live transmission has increased the competition between professional journalists, resulting in their reliance on the use of mobile devices for reporting. The videos and image with minimum quality and blurred videos are usually considered to be accurate. The videos and photos may be tempered or manipulated, or the content may be disseminated in such a way that it conveys half or wrong information (Ahiabenu et al., 2018; Ireton & Posetti, 2018; Umair, 2016).

This study also highlights the Pakistani journalists generate news stories, images and videos that are often put on Internet instantly and without any verification of incidents and content. For example, when talking about the implications of mobile journalism, a male television news producer in Pakistan states:

‘Pakistan’s news organizations are inclined to recruit mobile journalists (MoJos) that is basically a cost-cutting strategy by minimizing the staff. Then, public has no idea how uploading of unverified information, rumours and manipulated videos on Internet and social media are affecting the societal peace and the integrity of journalism as an institution. Ironically, professional journalists also use videos and images received by the public and these are normally not verified <...> I feel sad to say that the gate keeping process is weak in the Pakistani news media’. (Interviewee number 16)

Unlike the case of Pakistan, the interview data from Ghana suggests that the news content from media organisations (whether produced by journalists or

citizen journalists) do not encourage fake news as they are verified during the gatekeeping stage of news production. Thus, only editors can disseminate news stories from their organisations, therefore; content from media organisations is verified by sub-editors and/or editors before dissemination. However, content from citizen journalists who are not liaising with any media organisation, do not go through any verification process because there is no gate keeping. For instance, in January 2019, the President of Ghana has condemned the killing of Ahmed Hussein-Suale (an investigative journalist) and has charged the police to investigate and punish the culprits on his twitter post. Some media organisations have picked the President's twitter post as a news item for their network without further investigation into the case. There are many other examples of the Ghanaian's media use of unverified information from citizen journalists, who gather and disseminate news using their smartphones. With regard to this, a senior officer associated with a local media monitoring organisation notes that:

'I don't think that mobile journalism, as you have defined, it is encouraging fake news. I think more specifically the issue of fake news is all about gate keeping. It is about gate keeping more than the use and facility of news generation <...> a citizen journalist, if he contributes through the main stream media, there is a gate keeping process where there is an editorial process, and so by the time the news is let out, somebody takes responsibility for the story and when push comes to shove that editor will come out and apologize for the error. So, that form of gate keeping is very fundamental to the issue...' (Interviewee A).

In comparison, the foregoing analysis shows that the news verification process is weaker at media organizations in Pakistan than in Ghana. This is because any content from media organisations in Ghana go through verification process before dissemination, except content from citizen journalists who are not associated with any media organisation. Despite a good level of news verification in the Ghanaian news media, the authors think that there is still space for the breeding of fake news in the country's traditional media outlets as Ahiabenu et al (2018) suggest that:

'It is important to stress that several media houses (in Ghana) rely on social media and online content in their news production processes. This situation poses a major risk since the use of social media and online content is now the norm in most newsrooms across the country. As a result, fake news is not only an online and social media occurrence since its influence on traditional media is now a reality'.

When analysing the case of Pakistan, as aforementioned, there is a lack of news verification and gate keeping rise that is fostering fake news culture

and misguiding millions of Pakistanis news consumers. According to a senior journalist from an English-language newspaper:

‘In many medium to small-scale Pakistani television news channels, reporters rely on their mobile phones for video shoot and sound recording. And at times, video images and sound recordings are not clear that can mislead the public about the actual facts of incident/s <...> Citizen journalists are actually more harmful for the journalism industry in Pakistan. For the sake of competition and breaking news, footages captured by citizens and information received by them are instantly broadcasted on television news channels without any verification. I would say that news verification process in newspapers is much better as compared to television news channels in Pakistan’. (Interviewee number 12)

In Pakistan, interviewed journalists’ feedback reveals some more interesting facts regarding the growth of fake news trend. According to a senior news director of local television news channel:

‘I do not see any difference between fake news and planted news. At times, we receive information from government’s officials and political parties, and we are forced to on-air the news without any filtration or verification. We are compelled to broadcast the news regardless of the authenticity of provided information. This is called as news feeding <...> So, it is not just mobile journalism that is fostering fake news trend in Pakistan, but one must recognize political pressures and safety threats that compel journalists to publish and broadcast misleading information’. (Interviewee number 9)

Similar to the case of Pakistan, in Ghana, there is also an increase in fake news culture from citizen journalism that is misinforming the media audience. A senior Ghanaian officer from a local media monitoring organisation posits that:

‘More people are able to transmit information and the possibility of verification is lessened because of the availability of smartphones and social media. Therefore, a lot of fake news are going out... and in terms of occurrence, it is more with the mobile journalism than mainstream media...the fact is that it is becoming a trend now and more and more people who have access to the mobile phone so are able to distribute information’ (Interviewee D).

Interestingly, almost all interviewees in Pakistan (i.e. 14 out of 15) and Ghana (i.e. 6 out of 6) also admit that media literacy rate is very low in both countries, so it is difficult for most news consumers to distinguish between credible news sources and fake news. Therefore, they suggest for introducing reforms in media laws, thereby to combat the menace of fake news that is potentially increasing because of journalists’ and citizens’ irresponsible practice

of unverified information dissemination. Some Pakistani journalists, in this study, emphasize academic reforms for fostering media literacy and ethical mobile journalism practice. For instance, a female journalist from an Urdu-language's newspaper states:

'There are no proper media literacy and journalists' training programs offered by local universities and media organizations, which I think is one of the major reasons for the rise of fake news trend <...> Mobile journalism is evolving in Pakistan and journalists do need training on how to maintain accuracy and ethics being a MoJo'. (Interviewee number 5).

By and large, this study has manifested that mobile journalism is causing an increase in the spread of fake news in both countries, and unfortunately very less is known about how much the Pakistani and the Ghanaian journalists are trained for news verification and mobile journalism. Therefore, the next section reflects on this point.

Training for mobile journalism and news verification in Pakistan and Ghana

Fake news has become a global phenomenon during the last couple of years. However, mainstream media organisations across the world are using different mechanisms to counter fake news. For example, mainstream US media organisations (such as The New York Times, the Washington Post and CNN) have not only trained their journalists to be on guard against fake news but also developed effective mechanisms to make sure fake news is filtered out from their news stream (McNair, 2017; Umair, 2016). Social media giants (like Facebook, Twitter and Google) are developing algorithms to identify and discourage fake news. And many international universities and media training organisations are investing in research projects to deal with the menace of fake news.

In this study, interview data reveals that all interviewees in Ghana and the majority of Pakistani journalists (i.e. 14 out of 15) are not formally trained for fake news detection and news verification process by their organisations or the monitoring organisation. However, all of the interviewed Pakistani and the Ghanaian news editors mention that they informally caution journalists to double-check their sources. In this regard, a senior news producer from a local television news channel in Pakistan suggests:

'The problem is journalists do not pay attention on the authenticity of news or images or videos received through their cell phones and they put it on-air immediately just for the sake of breaking news. And in many news channels, the information received by citizen journalists is broadcasted without verification.

Unfortunately, the concept of gate keeping has damaged in Pakistan due to irresponsible practices of journalists and media organizations. And universities and media organizations are apathetic to train journalists on how to cross check information and how to act professional and responsible when practicing mobile journalism <...> Apparently, Ministry of Information is also not interested to bring some effective laws and regulations that help to deal with the trend of fake news'. (Interviewee number 11)

An editor in a newspaper organisation in Ghana also submits:

'I will be telling falsehood, if I tell you now that in my organisation, we have a deliberate policy to teach or to educate our journalists to check and verify their information before it is published. But what we have done is to continue to alert them and continue to ask the sub editors and news editors to check the sources to make sure that the source is verifiable'. (Interviewee C)

In Pakistan, the multiplication of media channels and the race for ratings has led the channels to promote sensationalism and the culture of breaking news without keeping in view news authenticity (Umair, 2016). The journalistic discipline that requires a reporter or a commentator to verify any hearsay or news before publicizing it has been relaxed in Pakistan. What has further helped the spread of the fake news trend is the ignorance of the Pakistani universities, media organizations and media monitoring organizations to train journalists for news verification and fact-checking in the country. On the other hand, in Ghana, journalists from media organisation race with citizen journalists to break news to their audience. However, still the gate keeping process for professional journalists allows citizen journalists to first break the news whether it is credible or fake content. This implies that fake news gets to audience without any filter that not only allow fake news to thrive but also misinform the citizenry.

The authors, therefore, suggest that the Pakistani and the Ghanaian news organisations and media monitoring organizations also need to follow the example of the developed world's media to improve news verification process for information gathered or disseminated through mobile devices and to counter the menace of fake news.

Conclusion

Media convergence has altered journalism landscape in many countries of the world. Peculiarly, technology related convergence, has given rise to mobile journalism practice that has resulted in many positive and negative implications for the quality of journalism in various contexts (Grant & Wilkinson, 2009). Mobile journalism has unleashed ground-breaking forms of gathering and

publishing news including increased speed of news dissemination and ability to reach a wider audience. These innovations in journalism profession have affected the traditional ways of verifying the news content. Thus, 'fake news (i.e. spreading falsehood, misinformation and disinformation in public discourse)' has now become part of the 'global news ecosystem', a situation that has implicated in the citizens' lack of trust not only in the news media but also, in key governance institutions and the way they consume news. There are growing concerns and calls on governments to step in to deal the challenges that come with the proliferation of fake news without necessarily restraining journalists' free expression, which is a key principle of democracy or undermining the progress of the use of technology in the news production cycle (Ireton & Posetti, 2018; Levinson, 2016).

Given this background, this study highlights the positive implications of mobile journalism in Pakistan and Ghana such as easy mobility of journalists, fast and economical production of news and better safety level of journalists (in the case Pakistan). Nevertheless, it also reveals the growing trend of fake news that seriously increases the weight of social responsibility on professional Pakistani and Ghanaian journalists in terms of ensuring that fake news does not affect the quality of journalism and the public's right to know. This study suggests that Pakistan's media severely lacks the practice of gate keeping filtering news stories either gathered by mobile journalists (MoJos) or received by citizen journalists. What is apprehensive is the apathetic attitude of Pakistani journalists' unions and media owners both, who are not putting efforts to make the journalistic codes of conduct effective in practice, to adopt the use of algorithms that can filter fake news and to organize training programs for mobile journalists. Unfortunately, no efforts have been made by the Pakistani Ministry of Information to promulgate laws to counter the culture of fake news in the country. On the other hand, in Ghana, this study highlights the need for media monitoring organisations and other stakeholders to train journalists, especially citizen journalists, on fake news detection and news verification to ensure quality journalism.

This study unpacks that there are growing concerns among Pakistan's and Ghan's journalists regarding the growing trend of fake news spreading through mobile journalism. Journalists from both countries urge their respective governments to step in to tackle the challenges that come with the proliferation of fake news without necessarily curbing free speech, which is a key principle of democracy and very necessary to undermining the progress of the use of technology in the news production cycle. Last but not least, this study also emphasizes that journalists must receive the essential technical training required

to use mobile devices for news purposes. These technical competencies must be accompanied by core journalism skills such as storytelling, corroboration, news verification and ethics and packaging content for mobile devices.

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ARTICLE

Content analysis of the reflection of media literacy in communication curricula of select Nigerian universities

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Abstract

Media literacy enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of digital technology sources, as well as to become producers of media contents in their own right. However, many Nigerian universities are not aware of this literacy or have not included it in their curricula. This study analysed the media-literacy content in curricula of nine select universities in Africa's most populous nation: Nigeria. Some key findings revealed that: (a) media-literacy courses proper were not on the curricula; (b) media-literacy-related courses, which stood as proxies, accounted for about two per cent of the curricula; and (c) media-literacy-related courses were available to students only as electives. The present research indicates that media-literate students tend to be skilled in accessing information about their health, environment, education and work. They would also be able to evaluate media content critically and to make informed decisions as users of digital technology sources, as well as to becoming producers of media contents in their own right. Based on the accumulated skills of media literacy for contemporary young people, it was recommended that communications programmes redesign their curricula to include media literacy and related courses. Also, communication educators should be more receptive to the importance of media literacy skills in the education of their students.

Keywords

Communication curricula, digital era, digital literacy, media content, media literacy, media literacy skills, Nigerian universities, students.

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Introduction

With the recent development of the information era, the Nigerian society is experiencing various changes whereby people, particularly young people, have unfettered access to a plethora of information and freely express themselves through new media. The advent of new media technologies continues to pose substantial challenges and risks to the 21st century youth, especially in the use of new media technology (Aduloju, 2017). In other words, it becomes clearer that they influence both the cultural and moral values of the current century youth when considering the influence of the ever-growing and expanding social networking sites on the Internet. In this way, the current students and youth generally are overwhelmed every day with media contents that shape their lives in different ways. Nevertheless, they often lack the ability and skills to decode the inherent meaning(s) of the media message(s). Given these current media and social atmospheres in Nigeria, a relevant media literacy would be essential to empowering people especially the young people with critical thinking and media skills.

This is why Avery (2007), Jenkins (2006, 2008) argue that, in the light of the media-saturated nature of modern life, it has been widely acknowledged that today's students need to develop new media or digital related competencies that will prepare them to live and participate in the world of the present and future. In other words, in the 21st century, it is fundamental that all individuals develop the understanding and capability of creatively expressing their ideas through multiple forms, including multimedia. This means that media literacy has come to the fore and is a fundamental part of the work needed to achieve a media and information society capable of promoting a professional and sustainable community. Beyond the benefits of media composition and creative expression, the skills students develop through media production are marketable and increasingly being integrated into courses with a focus on professional development or applied discipline research experiences.

This is the reason the media literacy or digital literacy movement was developed to assist individuals of all ages in acquiring the competencies needed to fully participate in the modern world of media convergence (Schmidt, 2012). Corroborating this, Liang (2013) points out that media literacy can enable students to change from being passive information receivers to information creators and critical receivers. Such a student-centred orientation would, on the one hand, transform Nigerian education on the cultural level and, on the other hand, would ultimately influence the educational practice in the Nigerian society more broadly. Thus, media literacy is even more vital to today's university

students as more and more of them have practical access to a variety of media (old and new) both at home and in school.

No doubt, media/digital literacy enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of digital technology sources, as well as to become producers of media contents in their own right. It leads the media literate students to the ability to access information about their health, their environment, their education and work. Supporting this view, Aduloju (2017) argues that those who are opened to media literacy are empowered to evaluate media contents critically and to make informed decisions as consumers and producers (prosumers) of media contents. Unfortunately, despite all the potentials of media literacy for students and young people, in particular, many Nigerian universities are not aware of this literacy or have not yet included it in their curricula. Thus, there is a need to develop these new skills and competencies among Nigerian university students to allow them to use more modern media technologies effectively and productively. This study, therefore, analyses the content of some curricula in Nigerian universities to find out the reflection of media literacy and related courses within the curricula.

Objectives of the study

The study aims to:

1. Find out the level of awareness of media literacy as a course among the universities in Southwest, Nigeria;
2. Determine the extent of the reflection of media literacy as a course in Southwest universities' curricula;
3. Investigate the extent to which the universities' curricula in Southwest, Nigeria reflect other media literacy-related courses;
4. Explore ways in which media literacy can be incorporated into the curricula of universities in Nigeria.

The concept of media literacy

There have been various arguments on what the meaning of media literacy should be. Buckingham (2006) refers to it as 'a set of skills that enables individuals to operate effectively in information retrieval task in the technology-oriented environment'. Aririguzoh (2007) sees media literacy as 'the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate information to the media audience through a variety of channels including print and non-print'. She explains further that it is a literacy that involves the systematic study of the media and their operations in our socio-political systems as well as contributing to

the development and maintenance of our culture. It is the information and communication skills that are needed to make citizens more competent. In other words, it is the ability to read what the print media offer, see what the visual media present as well as hear what the aural media announce. According to the EU's Report on Formal Media Education in Europe (Hartai, 2014), the concept of media literacy is nowadays predominantly defined in policy, pedagogic, research, and public discourse as the ability to '[1] access the media, [2] understand and to critically approach different aspects of media contents and institutions, and [3] to create communication in a variety of contexts'. In short, according to Gallagher and Magid (2017), media literacy is the ability to think critically about the information you consume and create. It includes the ability to distinguish fact from opinion and to understand how media can sometimes be used to persuade people. This approach to media literacy, firstly introduced in The Aspen Institute Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy (Aufderheide, 1992), describes media literacy partly as the ability to use and understand media, as a means of self-protection and safe media choices, and partly as the ability to create media in all format, leaning towards the idea of self-empowerment, self-expression. It stresses that media literacy will bring about an active youth with informed, moral, and legal choices. In other words, specific skills have been identified as needed to be competent in a digital age.

Since Article 19 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1989) states that everyone has the right and freedom 'to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers', the UN holds that media literacy is 'essential to empower citizenries all around the world to have the full benefits of this fundamental right' (UNESCO, 2011). Asserting media literacy as a human right, a 'matter of inclusion and citizenship in today's information society' (European Commission, 2011a), has brought UN's and EU's attention to a need for strategic media education as a compulsory aspect of schooling. Media literacy is, therefore, a response to the changing nature of information in our modern society. It addresses the skills students need to be taught in the schools to enable them to evaluate the media wisely. Additionally, competent citizens must possess these skills to consume or create information in their homes and offices, and the abilities workers must acquire in this new millennium as globalisation takes over the world economy (Aririguzho, 2007). Thus, a media literate person is a 'person who can evaluate and use information critically from a relevant and authoritative source online' (Buckingham, 2006).

The necessity of media literacy for students

Reading and writing have been valued as the primary means of communicating and understanding history, cultural traditions, political and social philosophy and the news of the day since the invention of moveable type. In more recent times, traditional literacy skills ensured that individuals could participate fully as engaged citizens and functioning adults in society (Dasgupa, 2013). Today, the definition of literacy is much broader. It takes into account the fact that people now live in a multimedia environment in which most of the information is delivered in a vibrant and intricate combination of words, images, and sounds. In addition to this, social networking sites have become the most popular online activity of recent, with Facebook claiming more than 500 million users (Wortham, 2010) and Twitter claiming 105 million users (Chacksfield, 2010) and the trend continues daily. In view of the media-saturated nature of the digital era, it has been widely acknowledged that the contemporary young people that are aptly called the 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2003) need to develop new media-related competencies that will prepare them to live and participate in the world of the present and future (Avery, 2007). Thus, the responsibility for developing young people especially, for living and learning in a global culture that is increasingly connected through multimedia and influenced by powerful images, words and sounds are shared by different stakeholders, such as families, schools and all community institutions (Aduloju, 2017).

The 21st century is a media inundated, technologically dependent and globally connected world. Knllener and Share (2007) believe that the contemporary young people live in a world of multimedia where the majority of information they receive comes less often from the print source and more typically from highly constructed visual images, complex sound arrangement and multiple media formats. Specifically, the revolution that new technologies have brought about in every field is urging a new vision in the general formation and education of young people and the youth generally (Aduloju, 2017). The present technological revolution, however, brings to the fore, more than ever, the role of media like television, music, films advertising, as the new media particularly the Internet, rapidly and radically absorbs these conventional forms and creates an ever-evolving cyber-space, cyber-community and emergent forms of culture and pedagogy (Kellner & Share, 2007).

Media literacy aims at:

i) increasing audience knowledge and understanding of the mass communication process and the mass media industries;

ii) raising students' awareness of how they can interact to create media content and meaning;

iii) helping students become more skilled and knowledgeable media consumers.

Thus, media literacy matters because it arms the students with the needed skills for becoming informed and critical thinkers in a world where technology and media are ubiquitous, helping to immunise young people against undue persuasion and false information (Gallagher & Magid, 2017). This is precisely what media literacy will help in addressing. In simple terms, the students will be more informed in terms of deciphering the right media content.

On the importance of media literacy for young people, Hobbs (2010) stresses that 'when people have media literacy competencies, they recognise personal, corporate and political agendas and are empowered to speak out on behalf of missing voices and omitted perspectives in our communities'. According to the European Charter of Media Literacy, there are seven areas of competencies or skills that are related to media literacy. These are:

(i) effective use of media technologies to access, store, retrieve and share content to meet individual and community needs and interests;

(ii) accessing and making informed choices about, a wide range of media forms and content from different cultural and institutional sources;

(iii) understanding how and why media message is produced;

(iv) critically analysing the techniques, languages and conventions used by the media and the messages they convey;

(v) creative use of the media to express and communicate ideas, information and opinions;

(vi) identifying, avoiding and/or challenging, media contents and services that may be unsolicited, offensive or harmful;

(vii) making efficient usage of the media in the practice of democratic rights and civil responsibilities (Perez-Tornero, 2008).

Looking at these areas of competencies, Adekunle (2017) argues for the inclusion of media literacy in the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, when he states that: 'In increasingly complex multicultural societies, education must enable us to acquire the intercultural competencies that will permit us to live together despite cultural differences. We need media literacy in our curriculum among other things; to enhance education outcomes by equipping citizens with competencies necessary to participate fully in political, economic, and social life'.

To further justify the need for inclusion of media literacy in Nigerian curriculum, Olushola (2017) asserts that the youths quest for knowledge has gone beyond reading and writing skills, and needed a necessary tool that will enable them in analysing, understanding and using effectively the deluge of information they receive today.

Based on the above media literacy skills, it is indisputable that the new media literacy has several potentials that could develop and empower Nigerian university students and other young people. However, Bekkhus and Zacchetti (2010) point to the fact that these skills are fundamental in the lives of the youths but equally essential for other categories of adults – older adults, parents, teachers and media professionals – because these skills are needed for full participation in digital society as well. They are also part of a broader set of skills and competencies that are required for effectiveness and efficiency in the contemporary century (Aduloju, 2017).

Methodology

The present study was conducted using the content analysis method, which is applied in terms of research goals because its results could be used by Southwest university stakeholders and other tertiary institutions. The study population consisted of nine universities which were divided into three groups. The first group included three state universities (Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba, Ondo State; Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State; and Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State); the second group included three private universities (Afe Babalola University, Ado – Ekiti, Ekiti State; Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji – Aragbeji, Osun State; and Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State), the third group included three federal universities (Federal University Oye, Oye – Ekiti, Ekiti State; University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State; and National Open University of Nigeria, Ikeja, Lagos State). All the nine universities were from the Southwest geopolitical zone in Nigeria. Nine handbooks and curricula of undergraduate level for 2017/2018 academic session of the communication departments in the selected schools were collected and analysed to generate the data for this study. In this research, the purposive sampling method was used to select the universities. The reason for this was that the selected universities were the ones floating communication programmes at the time of conducting this study. The research tools in this study were a semi-structured telephone interview and a content analysis checklist.

This study used a summative qualitative content analysis approach. Summative qualitative content analysis approach utilises the counting of manifest content and latent meanings and themes to explore the usage of items in the text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2016). The validity of the tool was determined by using content validity, and the checklist was provided by an educational specialist who approved it after minor corrections. William Scott's method was used for the reliability of the study, where the content of the curricula was analysed by the researcher and an expert familiar with the content analysis method. An agreement coefficient of 84% was obtained. The unit of analysis in this research was words and courses in the undergraduate curricula of communication departments in the sampled universities. Therefore, to achieve the aim of the study, after analysing the contents of the curricula of the undergraduate curriculum of each school, tables were presented for the frequencies of each construct and its subcomponents.

Data presentation and analysis

The content analysis of the reflection of media literacy and related courses in the undergraduate's curricula of communication departments of nine universities in Southwest, Nigeria is presented below.

Table 1

**Content analysis of media literacy and related courses
in the Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies
(Adekunle Ajasin University)**

No of communication courses	No of media literacy courses	No of ICT/ related courses	Percentage of media literacy courses	Percentage of ICT/ related courses
56	0	2	0	4

The data shows that in the Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, of Adekunle Ajasin University, a total number of 56 courses are offered at the undergraduate level. Out of the 56 courses, 0% is media literacy oriented while only 4% is devoted to ICT and other related courses. The data imply that the department has not given due attention to media literacy courses.

Table 2

**Content analysis of media literacy and related courses
in the Department of Mass Communication
(Lagos State University)**

No of communication courses	No of media literacy courses	No of ICT/ related courses	Percentage of media literacy courses	Percentage of ICT/ related courses
86	0	2	0	2

The results in the above table show that in the Department of Mass Communication of the University of Lagos, a total number of 86 courses are offered at the undergraduate level. Out of these 86 courses, only 2% is ICT oriented courses while none is media literacy inclined. Thus, the results indicate that the department does not give much emphasis to media literacy and ICT courses.

Table 3

**Content analysis of media literacy and related courses
in the Department of Mass Communication
(Olabisi Onabanjo University)**

No of communication courses	No of media literacy courses	No of ICT/ related courses	Percentage of media literacy courses	Percentage of ICT/ related courses
57	0	3	0	5

The data on the above table show that in the Department of Mass Communication, a total of 57 courses are offered at the undergraduate level. Out of the 57 courses, 0% of media literacy oriented courses make up the curriculum while 5% of the total courses is ICT inclined. The results show that media literacy and other related courses in this school have not been given due attention to in the undergraduates' curriculum.

Figure 1

**Summary of the content analysis of media literacy/related courses
in the curricula of state universities of Southwest, Nigeria**

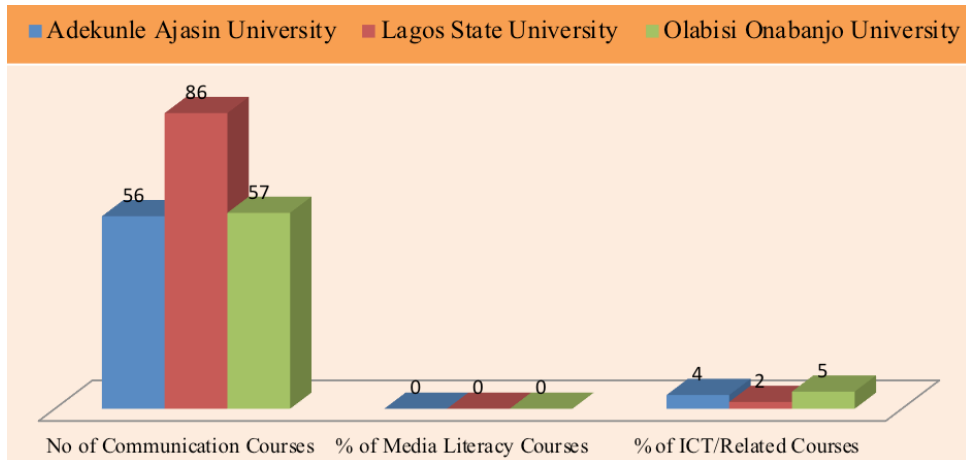


Table 4

**Content analysis of media literacy and related courses
in the Department of Media and Communication Studies
(Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti)**

No of communication courses	No of media literacy courses	No of ICT/related courses	Percentage of media literacy courses	Percentage of ICT/related courses
55	1	2	2	4

The data in the above table show the Media and Communication Studies Department of the Afe Babalola University with a total number of 55 courses that are offered at the undergraduate level. Out of these 55 courses, only 2% and 4% of them are media literacy and ICT related courses in the curriculum. The data imply that the importance the department gives to both ICT and media literacy courses is very low compared with emphasis on general courses.

Table 5

**Content analysis of media literacy and related courses
in the Department of Mass Communication
(Joseph Ayo Babalola University)**

No of communication courses	No of media literacy courses	No of ICT/ related courses	Percentage of media literacy courses	Percentage of ICT/ related courses
59	0	3	0	5

The data in the above table show that in the Department of Mass Communication, a total number of 59 courses are offered at the undergraduate level. Out of the 59 courses, only 5% of ICT oriented courses make up the curriculum with 0% reflection of media literacy as a course in the curriculum. This implies that the department does not attach much importance to media literacy and other related courses.

Table 6

**Content analysis of media literacy and related courses
in the Department of Mass Communication
(Covenant University)**

No of communication courses	No of media literacy courses	No of ICT/ related courses	Percentage of media literacy courses	Percentage of ICT/ related courses
84	0	5	0	6

The data in the above table show that in the Department of Mass Communication at the Covenant University, a total number of 84 courses are offered at the undergraduate level. Out of these 84 courses, it is only 6% of ICT/Related oriented courses that make up the curriculum while there was no reflection of media literacy in the whole syllabus. This data indicates that the department has not placed adequate importance on media literacy and other related courses.

Figure 2

**Summary of the content analysis of media literacy/related courses
in the curricula of private universities of Southwest, Nigeria**

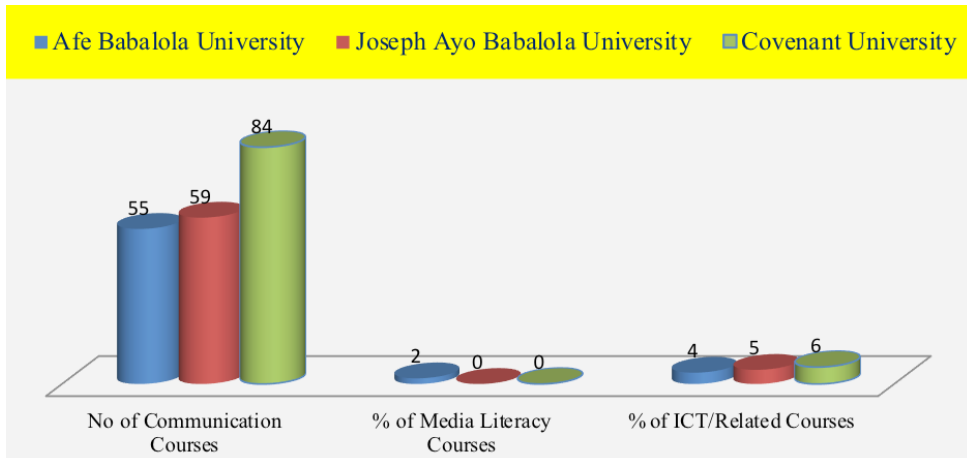


Table 7

**Content analysis of media literacy and related courses
in the Department of Mass Communication
(Federal University Oye Ekiti)**

No of communication courses	No of media literacy courses	No of ICT/ related courses	Percentage of media literacy courses	Percentage of ICT/ related courses
62	0	2	0	3

The data in the above table show that in the Department of Mass Communication, a total number of 68 courses are offered at the undergraduate level. Out of the 68 courses, only 3% of ICT oriented courses constitute the curriculum with no traces of media literacy or related courses in the curriculum. The data imply that the department does not pay much attention to media literacy and other related courses in the curriculum.

Table 8

**Content analysis of media literacy and related courses
in the Department of Mass Communication and Language Arts
(University of Ibadan)**

No of communication courses	No of media literacy courses	No of ICT/ related courses	Percentage of media literacy courses	Percentage of ICT/ related course
59	0	0	0	0

The data in the above table show that in the Department of Communication and Language Arts at the University of Ibadan, a total number of 59 courses are offered at the undergraduate level. Out of the 59 courses, 0% is given to both media literacy and ICT oriented courses in the curriculum. Here, the data indicate that the department has not placed significant value on media literacy and other related courses.

Table 9

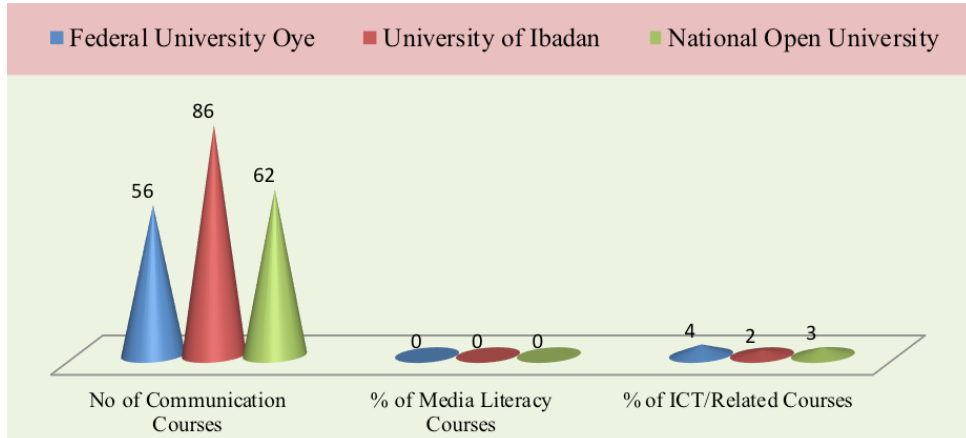
**Content analysis of media literacy and related courses
in the Department of Mass Communication
(National Open University of Nigeria)**

No of communication courses	No of media literacy courses	No of ICT/ related courses	Percentage of media literacy courses	Percentage of ICT/ related courses
64	1	4	2	6

The results in the above table show that in the Department of Mass Communication, at the National Open University of Nigeria, a total number of 64 courses are offered at the undergraduate level. Out of the 64 courses, only 2% of media literacy oriented courses, and 6% of ICT/related courses constitute the curriculum. This data imply that the department has not paid due attention or placed sufficient importance to media literacy and other related courses.

Figure 3

**Summary of the content analysis of media literacy/related courses
in the curricula of federal universities of Southwest, Nigeria**



Discussion of findings

Generally, the analysis of data for this study suggests that university students in the study area are not exposed to media literacy and other related courses. The responses to the telephone interview by the heads of communication departments of the sampled schools revealed that most of them were not aware of media literacy as a course in higher institutions. Some have very scanty knowledge about the course, and even the few that know about it and its imports are yet to include it in their programmes. In other words, the tertiary institutions in Nigeria are yet to incorporate media literacy as a course in the programmes offered at the undergraduate level. For instance, the analysis of the findings shows a range of 0% to 2% of media literacy and other related courses that are being taught in the select universities in Nigeria. This implies that media literacy or digital literacy courses are not reflecting in the curricula or not sufficiently taught in the selected universities.

The analysis also reveals that some contents in the curricula that reflect ICT/related courses are merely taken as electives or optional courses. Thus, the data in the tables and figures show the poor treatment given to media literacy, digital literacy and ICT courses in the curricula of Southwest, Nigerian universities. For illustration, out of the nine universities sampled, only Afe Babalola University, (private) and National Open Universities of Nigeria (federal) have attempted to include a related course in media literacy (Film Criticism) in their curricular with

only 2% of the total courses respectively. The findings of the analysis also show that State Universities have not included either media literacy or any related courses in their curricula. Besides, among all the universities, only Covenant University (private) and National Open University of Nigeria (federal) have incorporated up to 6% ICT or related courses in their curricula. Although this percentage is comparatively high compared to others, it is still very low when compared with other higher institutions of learning in advanced countries. Hence, one can say that the provision of media literacy content, in particular, is yet to be realised in Nigerian universities or adopted in the Nigerian educational system like other advanced countries.

Such findings are not, however, entirely surprising. Instead, the analysis and data gathered in the study confirm what other media scholars have suggested: the implementation of media literacy curricula in post-secondary higher education is still in its infancy stages (Aufderheide, 1993; Brown, 1991; Stuhlman & Silverblatt, 2007). Similarly, Wulff (1997) avers that, 'In higher education, the progress towards the incorporation of media literacy as an essential ability in higher education appears minimal'. Several reasons may be responsible for the weak reflection of media literacy in the Nigerian universities' curricula such as confusion among mass communication departments regarding what media literacy involves and a general perception that students are 'digital natives' who do not require media training.

Additionally, as observed in the curricula of the universities sampled, some of the challenges the departments of communication studies face today are the growing number of general studies courses such as courses in French, citizenship education, peace and conflict studies, entrepreneurship studies, history and philosophy science, etc. Some private universities include in their curricula the study on agricultural science and food security, language acquisition and the study of the history of the proprietor of the university. No doubt, some of these general courses are useful; nevertheless, they do not have direct bearing with communication studies. One can then say that rather than filling the curricula with many of these general courses, media literacy and other related courses that have direct bearing with communication, the students and the society at large should be integrated because of their accumulated values to the contemporary young people.

It is true that other courses in other areas should also be taught and taught well. However, when we evaluate the importance of the skills of media literacy, we realise how essential it is in the development of the 21st century youth/

students in the country. Such as Edarabia (n.d) points out that the skills of media literacy should help the future generation to be able to analyse, interpret and understand the content published by media and not get misled. Corroborating on the importance of media literacy to the young people, Hobbs (2010) argues that ‘when people have media literacy competencies, they recognise personal, corporate and political agendas and are empowered to speak out on behalf of missing voices and omitted perspectives in our communities’. Hence, media literacy has become a moral obligation for education institutions to help the young minds develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of new media, the techniques used by them and the impact of these in their lives. Therefore, there is an urgent need to enrich the mass communication curricula with courses on media literacy, ICTs and other related courses and make them core courses. Arguing for the inclusion of media literacy education in the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Adekunle (2017) states that: *‘In increasingly complex multicultural societies, education must enable us to acquire the intercultural competencies that will permit us to live together despite cultural differences. We need media literacy in our curriculum among other things; to enhance education outcomes by equipping citizens with competencies necessary to participate fully in political, economic, and social life’*.

In line with this, Yates (2001) points out that for many years, the notion of new media literacy has continued to emerge; nevertheless, it is now being ‘marketed’ as a new concept in its current structure. In other words, the idea of media literacy is being expounded as an innovation to prospective adopters. Nigeria educators, instructors, policymakers, interest groups should recognise the necessity to promote media knowledge in schools and among children and youths. Thus, Nigeria as a country, should see media literacy as a new concept that is being diffused into the educational milieu and adopt it in her educational system not only at the tertiary levels but also at the elementary levels because of the relevance of media literacy/education to the contemporary children and young people in general.

Conclusion

Curriculum development has always been challenged with the emergence of new ideas and perspectives on how to best train students. These new perspectives are not only brought about by the developments in information and communication technologies but also changes in the content and pedagogy of subject courses. The communication curricular at the undergraduate level in Nigeria is no exception, especially in the formation and training of the 21st century youth

as future media practitioners. They are expected to be the game-changers in the promotion of responsible and critical media consumption and production of mediated contents. With the advances in information technologies, social networking sites and other digital formats, which have turned 21st century youth into digital natives, there is a need to review the existing curricula to make them more responsive to the needs of the current web generation. As future media practitioners, students need to access, understand, use and share required information responsibly and appropriately to promote a healthy media living for the individual and the society. This is why media literacy (education) in the communication curriculum is imperative. Thus, this study provides some new perspectives on integrating media literacy in the communication curriculum of the universities in Nigeria. The position of this study is that at least 30 percent of the curriculum contents of mass communication departments in Nigeria universities should be devoted to media literacy and other related courses.

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