# Use of Smartphones for Interpersonal Communication Among Youth in Edo State, Nigeria

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**Abstract**
*This study investigated the use of smartphones for interpersonal communication among youth in Edo State, Nigeria. The study became necessary following the assumption that it is gradually becoming impossible to achieve either social relations or process social information, which are the springboards of interpersonal communication, without the use of smartphones. Anchored in the tenets of social relations and social information processing theories, 400 youth were purposively selected from the 18 LGAs of Edo State, Nigeria. An 11-item structured questionnaire was used to elicit data. Data generated were analyzed and presented using frequency tables, simple percentage, mean scores, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the one-way ANOVA statistical test. The study discovered that youth' use of smartphones influenced their interpersonal communication and that male and female youth use smartphones for interpersonal communication at different frequencies, which implies that gender might affect the use of smartphones. It was also found that the use of smartphones for interpersonal communication can be very regular or occasional depending on the communication needs of the users. The study also revealed that the use of smartphones for interpersonal communication did not cause depression/anxiety. Therefore, it concluded that positive usage of smartphones remains the bedrock for achieving effective interpersonal communication. The study recommended that users of smartphones should apply caution and discipline in their usage in order to avoid any health related issues like eye and ear defects usually associated with addiction to smartphones.*

***Keywords:*** *Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Interpersonal Relations, Nigeria, New Technologies, Smartphones,* Youth.

## Introduction

Smartphone is a mobile phone evolutionary product that has redefined and advanced the world of communication and computing. It has been over 19 years since the emergence of the technology and its spread across all settings of human endeavours, education inclusive, is very alarming. In fact, smartphones have

become one of the most dynamic trends found almost everywhere, which has greatly enhanced communication through calls, emails, instant messaging, surfing the Internet and even handling computer-related tasks. It is therefore not surprising that the 2018 statistics of smartphone users in Nigeria found that the number of users is increasing in a geometric progression. O'Dea (Feb. 27, 2020) states that as at 2014, the number of smartphone users in Nigeria was about 11million. In 2018, the number of smartphone users in the country increased to 20.5 million and 23.3 million and is expected to grow to 140 million by 2025. In Edo State however, the number of smartphone users was reported to be 4,744,100 individuals as at 2016 (Nigerian Monitor, 2016). This figure will continue to grow as new developments emerge in smartphone.

Definitely, this astronomical increase in smartphone usage in the country in general and Edo State in particular, especially among youth, can be attributed to the numerous potential and benefits of the device. In view of this, Jung (2018) asserts that smartphone technology is so successful that youth, businesses and employees have trouble imagining a day without them. Besides making phone calls, nearly all smartphones today can natively provide directions through Global Positioning System (GPS), take pictures, play music and keep track of appointments and contacts. Through the installation of applications, the list of possible smartphone uses multiplies by tens of thousands and grows longer everyday. More so, smartphones provide a variety of communication and computing options for users such as having access to immediate photo sharing, video calling and video conferencing. A user can also remain connected through social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Today, smartphones are being used as minicomputers, whereby users can word process documents, create databases on Microsoft Access, produce spread sheets on Excel as well as prepare slides on PowerPoint presentation. Studies like that of Robinson, Cronin, Ibrahim, Jinks, Molitor, Newman, and Shapiro (2013) acknowledged that smartphones have many features which can be successfully harnessed in human endeavours, including rapid access to information, instant communication, and improved organisation. In particular, the

smartphone's potential as an educational tool is an area which is starting to gain recognition among youths. It would not be out of place to state that this device has become an addiction for youth especially those in tertiary institutions (Al-Barashdi, Bouazza, & Jabur, 2015). Youth use the device to communicate, socialize and for educational purposes. However, there is an increasing use of smartphones by youth especially in Edo State for socializing. Commenting in this regard, Head and Ziolkowski (2012) state that "while Smartphone use has been increasing all across economic and age sectors, university youth have been seen as one of the most important target markets and the largest consumers group of Smartphone services" (p. 211). This may be attributed to the fact that smartphones have several features that make youths attracted to the device. These functions allow youth not only to communicate with others face-to-face or instantly, which is a perfect way for shy youths to communicate with others, but also to enjoy different kinds of entertainment like games. Users can also get information while surfing on the Internet which helps them to escape from uncomfortable situations. As a result, it seems that many youth tend to rely heavily on their phones, which will inevitably lead to even heavier use.

Invariably, a question arising therein is will this youth's heavy use of smartphones affect their interpersonal communication? Interpersonal communication has been defined as the process by which people exchange information, feelings, and meaning through verbal and non-verbal messages. It is face-to-face communication. Interpersonal communication is not just about what is actually said - the language used - but how it is said and the non-verbal messages sent through tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures and body language (SkillsYouNeedToKnow, 2018). No doubt, smartphone has influenced interpersonal communication and has changed the way we communicate, making communication more efficient, easier, faster and even cheaper. Smartphones have also almost replaced verbal communication with texting. Texting is a quick procedure, which is one of the favourite concepts of modern communication of youths. More so, youths are the parties mostly affected by this "small computer"

which has introduced a form of communication without borders. They are addicted to their easily reached smartphones and would do more of texting using short forms, slangs, smiles, etc. which may diminish face-to-face communication, verbal communication and interpersonal communication. This is because indeed studies like Isibor, Okhawere and Ogbonnaya (2018) have shown that undergraduates who are mostly youth in Edo State own and use a variety of smartphones. For example, Isibor et al.'s (2019) study revealed that 90.6% of undergraduates in Edo State had a smartphone like Tecno, Infinix, Samsung, Itel and Apple phone, which they basically use for social and communication purposes. It therefore becomes imperative to empirically investigate the use of smartphones for interpersonal communication among youth in Edo State, Nigeria.

**Statement of the Problem**

Several studies like Mojaye (2015); Al-Barashdi, Bouazza and Jabur (2015); Foen, Che Hassan, Mohammad and Abdul Malek (2017); Fuller and Atkin (2017); and Isibor, Okhawere and Ogbonnaya (2018) have highlighted the numerous benefits of smartphone usage among youth in Nigeria as well as in other countries. Some other studies like Tertadian (2012) however found that smartphones usage affects youth either directly or indirectly and may create conflict in their use of the device for interpersonal communication. Similarly, in Nigeria, Mojaye's (2015) study also found that the use of mobile phones like smartphones affects students in various ways. People constantly negotiate between being physically present and mentally absent by using their smartphones in public settings. They must navigate between the physical world and the virtual world, simultaneously engaging in face-to-face and digital interactions. With this scenario, a challenge is eminent in interpersonal communication. Besides, several studies like those of Mojaye (2015), Fuller and Atkin (2017) and Isibor, Okhawere and Ogbonnaya (2018) on the use of smartphones by youth exist but very few of them have investigated smartphone usage for interpersonal communication among youth. Therefore, how does the use of smartphones affect interpersonal communication among youth in Edo State, Nigeria? It may be

possible that the use of smartphone may make interpersonal communication less time consuming and at the same time lead to misinterpretation of messages. Thus, the need to investigate the use of smartphones for interpersonal communication among youth becomes an issue for empirical evaluation.

**Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out the frequency at which youth use smartphones for interpersonal communication in Edo State.
2. Determine the ways youth use smartphones for interpersonal communication in Edo State.
3. Ascertain the ways the use of smartphones influence the interpersonal communication of youth in Edo State.

**Hypotheses**

**$H_o$1:** There is no significant influence of youths' use of smartphones on their interpersonal communication.

**$H_o$2:** There is no statistical significant difference between the mean rating of male youth and female youth on the frequency at which they use smartphones for interpersonal communication.

**Literature Review**

**Frequency at which Smartphone is used for Interpersonal Communication among Youth**

Mobile phones have evolved into ''smartphones'' that are fully functional computers (Wang, Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2014). Alfawareh and Jusoh (2014, p. 321) define smartphones as mobile phones running a complete operating system in a manner similar to a traditional computer, which offers advanced computing abilities and connectivity options. These features enable new kinds of mobile services that in turn shape the usage habits of Smartphone users. Smartphones have become part of our daily lives since we use the device as our planners, dictionaries, calendars, notes, computers and more. Smartphones are able to remind users of what

they want to do at a particular time; which can make people remembering anything by themselves almost unnecessary. Important to mention are also the applications - apps - through which youths, as well as other smartphone users, are able to find anything they need, use communication in different ways, edit pictures and videos, browse the Internet and more. There is the possibility to find applications of any kind of interest; they seem almost unlimited in the category range. Some of them are for free, many can be quite expensive.

Worthy to note is that in the past, there were no other technology devices, social networks that would allow adolescents to be online 24 hours per day. To communicate after school was not so common because there were no devices that would let people be reachable everywhere. Telephone was used mostly for the purpose of being in contact with one's family, and actually not all young people owned mobile phone at that time. Nowadays, it seems more and more normal. At that time, the house phone was also very common, which was used by all family members. Another important fact to mention is that adolescents had different interests; they were more physically active and they were more often participating in group plays where the interpersonal communication was possible (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2013).

Today, research reports have that nearly every youth at a college level owns smartphones. Although most of the youths own smartphones not for academic purposes, indirectly smartphones can be directed to useful and beneficial purposes (Alfawareh & Jusoh, 2014). Youth use smartphones mostly for communication and they are known to be heavy users of the devices. For instance, Alfawareh and Jusoh's (2014) study revealed that youths spent an average of five hours per day on their smartphones, interacting with others via SNS, and remain online for about 16 hours per day. Would this increased frequency of usage affect youths' interpersonal communication? Unequivocally, yes, it would. Commenting in this regard, Idris (2017) observes that it is so sad how smartphones are turning us into detracted and terrible friends to one another. Face-to-face interactions are becoming rare.

## Ways Youth Use Smartphones for Interpersonal Communication

Smartphones are being adopted at a phenomenal pace but little is known (publicly) today about how people use smartphone devices (Falaki, Mahajan, Lymberopoulos & Govidan, 2010). However, Essay UK (November, 2018) argues that most young people would like to make contact with others using their smartphones but not through texting, social networking and instant messaging. On the other hand, Falaki et al.'s (2010) and Fuller and Atkin's (2017) studies found that demographic variables play a significant role in the ways youth use smartphones. For instance, Fuller and Atkin's (2017) study found that males typically use smartphones for instrumental purposes, while females tend to talk for longer periods of time on calls. However, in a study earlier conducted by Li (2013), it was found that professional women used smartphones to maintain a high level of professionalism responsibility and commitment to their jobs.

Nevertheless, evidence abound that indicate that smartphones usage for interpersonal communication keeps increasing. For instance, Silver, Smith Johnson, Jiang, Anderson and Ranie's (2019) study found that large majorities in the eleven emerging and developing countries surveyed either owned or shared a smartphone. The study also discovered that it was much more common to own one's own smartphone than to share it with someone else. Smartphone use was also found to be common especially among younger and much educated group. Silver et al.'s (2019) study also discovered that Facebook and WhatsApp were the most widely used social media platforms on smartphones among youth. Apparently, youth use smartphones to communicate, socialise and interact on Facebook and WhatsApp, make phone calls as well as browse the Internet etc. Similarly, some others may use their smartphones to watch movies, upload and download videos, games, financial transactions as well as to meet other communication needs.

**How the Use of Smartphones Influences Interpersonal Communication among Youth**

Smartphone usage among youth has unequivocally increased. The use of smartphone is likely to have both negative and positive influences on interpersonal communication especially among the youth, who are often regarded as the vulnerable ones. One thing strongly associated with the use of smartphones is that it can reduce face-to-face communication. As long as a group message will suffice, we no longer see the need for visiting family and friends. In situations where visitations do happen, people tend to be physically present, but emotionally absent. Within the sitting rooms of families and public spaces, people are now glued to their smartphones at the expense of discussing and interacting. As a people, we now give more attention to building virtual relationships over real and concrete ones. Elhai, Hall, Levine and Dvorak (2017) argue that smartphones are killing the art of face-to-face conversation especially among youths. According to Hills, smartphones are everywhere now and for many of us they serve as a constant companion. They keep us continually connected, filling gaps in our day, entertaining us, and demanding our attention with a string of notifications. Because they offer a convenient alternative to face-to-face conversations, and at times they butt into our chats directly, there is a growing realization that they may be killing the art of conversation. Smartphone dismisses the body language, tone of voice, and facial expression associated with face-to-face communication.

Furthermore, the use of smartphones can lead to addiction which in the long run can make youths lack empathy. Empathy, which is the ability to put one in another person's shoes and see from his point of view, is lacking due to promotion of self-image fuelled by the use of social media. Because of the constant supply of people on social media and smartphones, we now treat people like commodities that are disposable at will. Also, studies like Tertadion (2012) have shown how people using smartphones a lot are susceptible to developing depression and anxiety. More so, much smartphone time means less time for building bonds and learning to read each other's emotions while, in reality, lots of

other studies have shown spending more time with people in person as one of the best protection from having mental health issues (Wang et al., 2014). Unfortunately we have become a generation caught in an obsession for Smartphones and Internet connection. This means that smartphones can affect the mental health of youths which would affect their interpersonal communication.

However, this is not to say that use of smartphones does not have positive influences on interpersonal communication. With smartphones, communication is faster, easier and less formal. Smartphones together with other technology devices provide every individual with the perks of quick communication, which is partly why smartphones gained in popularity to the point where they are considered the most commonly used channel of communication among people especially youths. Besides, in our contemporary fast and stressful lifestyle, smartphones do play a crucial role. WhatsApp, Facebook, Skype, Viber, Snap chat and others, which are the few among many apps on smartphones, have a unique way of relieving stress. Interpersonal Communication is better enhanced in a stress-free environment. They keep us continually connected, filling gaps in our day, entertaining us, and demanding our attention with a string of notifications. Evidently, it can be argued that smartphones have both positive and negative influences on the interpersonal communication of youths in one way or the other depending on the intent of usage.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored in the postulations of the social relations and information processing theories. This is because both theories heavily complement the argument and knowledge being advanced in this study. For instance, the social relations theory propounded by Melvi De Fleur in 1970 according to Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008) emphasizes the relationship or interaction between members of the same social category. The relationship between social relation theory and this current study is the fact that the study considered the members of the same social category as the youth utilising smartphones for interpersonal communication with

the aim of achieving social interactions in order to maintain social relations.

On the other hand is the social information processing theory which Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaomu (2017) state was developed by Joseph Walther in 1992 to reveal how online relationships are established among people. Just as this study places a premium on the use of smartphones, which are in fact veritable tools for establishing contacts online among youths for interpersonal communication, the social information processing theory also emphasizes the import of managing relationships online. Furthermore, Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaomu (2017) argue that the social information processing theory is an interpersonal communication theory enabled and empowered by new technologies like smartphones for the promotion of online relationships. One good thing about smartphones is their ability to enhance and maintain online and social relationships thereby creating a form of communication without border.

Notably, but for the want of space and number, this study would also have been anchored in the tenets of uses and gratification and media dependency theories. This is because these theories could also be used to support the knowledge being advocated in this study. For instance, uses and gratification theory supports the use of smartphones to satisfy the communication needs of the users. On the other hand, media dependency theory holds that one cannot do without depending on the media/medium like smartphones for communication purposes. Therefore, in order not to anchor a single study in the postulations of more than two theories, social relations and information processing theories were then considered most appropriate to anchor this study based on their broader perspectives and strong connection to the knowledge being advanced in this study.

**Methodology**

The cross-sectional research design was adopted for this study. The cross-sectional research design was considered appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to examine youth of

different ages, gender and disposition scientifically without manipulating the variables. The population of this study was 1,051,497, which constituted all the youth in Edo State, Nigeria. This figure, according to City Population (2006) and National Bureau of Statistics (2018), consisted of 657,951 youth within the age range of 20-29 years and 393,516 youth within the age range of 30 years and above. The sample of the study was 400 youth selected from the 18 Local Government Areas (LGA) of Edo State. The sample of 400 was derived following the sample size determination formula propounded by Taro Yamane (1967). Besides, Camry and Lee's (1992) in Wimmer and Dominick (2011) sample selection guideline rated a sample of 300 and above as good. Therefore, the sample of this study can be considered as good and appropriate. Moreover, the 400 youth selected for this study reflected and represented all the youth in the 18 LGAs of Edo State, Nigeria. The youth were purposively selected based on their background knowledge of the study and their ownership of smartphones.

A well structured and tested 11-item questionnaire was the research instrument for this study. The Cronbach-Alpha formula was used to test the reliability of the research instrument for this study, which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.84. Data collected were analysed and presented with the aid of frequency tables, simple percentage, mean score, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the one-way ANOVA statistical test. Frequency tables helped to provide pictorial explanations for findings; mean scores were used to provide descriptive statistics and explanations and PPMC helped to establish the significant influence youth use of smartphones have on their interpersonal communication. On the other hand, one-way ANOVA, which is particularly good for comparing and determining the differences between two or more variables, was used in this study to establish the statistical differences between mean rating of male and female youth towards the frequency at which they use smartphones for interpersonal communication. The criterion mean of this study was 3.00. All analyses were done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20.

**Results and Analysis**

From the data analysed, respondents' bio-data showed that they were 242 (60.5%) males and 158 (39.5%) females. This means that a majority of the respondents were male. Findings also revealed that a majority of the youth were within the age range of 18-23 years (191, 47.8%) and most youth were single (183, 45.5%) and Christians too (274, 68.5%). Data from respondents' bio-data also showed that most of them were students (13, 34.3%).

**Table 1: Frequency at which Youth use Smartphones for Interpersonal Communication**

| Frequency of Smartphone Usage | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Mean | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| You use your smartphone every minute for interpersonal communication | 8(2.0%) | 91(22.8%) | 60(15.1%) | 241(60.3%) | 1.67 | Rejected |
| You use your smartphone on an hourly basis for interpersonal communication | 16(4.0%) | 158(39.5%) | 143(35.8%) | 83(20.8%) | 2.27 | Rejected |
| Your smartphone is online every time for interpersonal communication | 340(85.0%) | 48(12.0%) | 9(2.3%) | 3(0.8%) | 3.81 | Accepted |
| You use your smartphone once a day for interpersonal communication | 17(4.3%) | 11(2.8%) | 203(50.5%) | 169(42.3%) | 1.69 | Rejected |
| You use your smartphone on a weekly basis for interpersonal communication | 7(1.8%) | 6(1.5%) | 326(81.5%) | 61(15.3%) | 1.90 | Rejected |
| You use your smartphone to chat more than face-to-face communication | 137(34.3%) | 202(50.5%) | 35(8.8%) | 26(6.5%) | 3.13 | Accepted |
| You use your smartphone once a month for special reasons | 3(0.8%) | 7(1.8%) | 197(49.3%) | 193(48.3%) | 1.55 | Rejected |
| You use your smartphone as long as you have a call/message/email. | 51(12.8% | 330(82.5%) | 13(3.3%) | 6(1.5%) | 3.07 | Accepted |

**Criterion mean = 3.00**

Table 1 shows the frequency at which youth use smartphones for interpersonal communication. It could be clearly seen that 388 (97.0%) of the 400 respondents of this study either strongly agreed or agreed that their Smartphones is online every time for interpersonal communication. It was also found that a majority of respondents that is 381 (95.3%) strongly agreed or agreed that they use their smartphones as long as they have a call/ message/ emails. It could be inferred therefore that there is no particular time frame that youths in Edo State use their Smartphones especially as items such as "You use your smartphone every minute for interpersonal communication" (x=1.67), "You use your smartphone on an hourly basis for interpersonal communication" (x= 2.27), "You use your smartphone once a day for interpersonal communication" (x=1.69)," and You use your smartphone on a weekly basis for interpersonal communication" (x=1.90) were all rejected as they had mean scores below the criterion mean of this study.

**Table 2: Ways Youth use Smartphones for Interpersonal Communication**

| Uses of Smartphone for Interpersonal Communication | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To make phone calls | 254(63.5%) | 133(33.3%) | 13(3.3%) | - | 3.60 | .553 |
| To send/receive text messages | 210(52.5%) | 160(140%) | 11(2.8%) | 19(4.8%) | 3.40 | .763 |
| To make video calls | 156(39.0%) | 238(59.5%) | 3(0.8%) | 3(0.8%) | 3.37 | .541 |
| To chat online | 156(39.0%) | 241(60.3%) | 3(0.8) | | 3.38 | .502 |
| To watch videos / films | 143(35.8%) | 239(59.8%) | 9(2.3%) | 9(2.3%) | 3.29 | .622 |
| To share pictures/ videos | 143(35.8%) | 234(58.5%) | 12(3.0%) | 11(2.8%) | 3.27 | .651 |
| To browse the Internet | 144(36.0%) | 240(60.0%) | 12(3.0%) | 4(1.0%) | 3.31 | .579 |
| For social networking | 141(35.3%) | 248(62.0%) | 10(2.5%) | 1(0.3%) | 3.32 | .533 |
| For group chats | 141(35.3%) | 243(60.8%) | 13(3.3%) | 3(0.8%) | 3.31 | .568 |
| For instant communication | 141(35.3%) | 239(59.8%) | 14(3.5%) | 6(1.5%) | 3.34 | 1.108 |
| For Facebook | 313(78.8%) | 85(21.3%) | 1(0.3%) | 1(0.3%) | 3.78 | .441 |
| For WhatsApp | 311(77.8%) | 85(21.3%) | 2(0.5%) | 2(0.5%) | 3.76 | .471 |

**Criterion mean=3.00**

Using the mean scores as indicated in Table 2, respondents use their smartphones for interpersonal communication by making phone calls (x= 3.60), sending/receiving text messages (x=3.40), making video calls (x= 3.37), chatting online (x=3.37), watching videos/films (x=3.38), sharing pictures/ videos(x= 3.29), browsing the Internet (x=3.27), social networking (x=3.31 ), For group chats (x= 3.32), for instant communication (x= 3.31), For Facebook (x=3.78), For WhatsApp (x=3.76).

**Table 3: Influence of Smartphones Use on the Interpersonal Communication of Youth**

| Influence of Smartphones Use on Interpersonal Communication | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Your use of smartphone makes interpersonal communication less time consuming | 39(9.3%) | 335(83.8%) | 23(5.8%) | 5(1.3%) | 3.01 | .448 |
| Your use of smartphone saves the cost of interpersonal communication | 50(12.5%) | 322(80.5%) | 26(6.5%) | 2(0.5%) | 3.05 | .456 |
| Your use of smartphone leads to misinterpretation of messages | 49(12.3%) | 334(83.5%) | 16(4.0%) | 1(0.3%) | 3.08 | .409 |
| Verbal cues are absent in your use of smartphone for interpersonal communication | 49(12.3%) | 340(85.0%) | 11(2.8%) | -- | 3.10 | .376 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Your use of smartphone erodes your interpersonal relationships | 141(35.3%) | 184(46.0%) | 62(15.5%) | 13(3.3%) | 3.13 | .788 |
| Your use of smartphone enhances your interpersonal communication | 100(25.0%) | 122(30.5%) | 63(15.5%) | 115(28.8%) | 2.52 | 1.152 |
| Using smartphone reduces your face-to-face communication with family/friends | 358(89.5%) | 23(5.8%) | 6(1.5%) | 13(3.3%) | 3.82 | .614 |
| Using Smartphone for interpersonal communication causes depression/anxiety for you | 138(34.5%) | 17(4.3%) | 122(30.5%) | 123(30.8%) | 2.42 | 1.248 |

**Criterion mean=3.00**

As indicated in Table 3, the majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed to all the items on the positive influences smartphones have on their interpersonal communication such as "Your use of smartphone makes interpersonal communication less time consuming," which had 374(93.5%) of the 400 respondents who agreed or strongly agreed. Also, 372(93%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their use of smartphones saves the cost of interpersonal communication, and 222(55.5%) respondents claimed that their use of smartphones enhance their interpersonal communication. Yet, using the mean scores, the items that reflected the negative influences on the youth's use of smartphones were accepted having mean scores above the criterion mean of this study which is 3.00. These items are "Your use of smartphone leads to misinterpretation of messages" (x=3.08), "Verbal cues are absent in your use of smartphone for interpersonal communication" (x=3.10), "Your use of smartphone erodes your interpersonal relationships" (x=3.13), "Using smartphone reduces your face-to-face communication with family/friends" (x=3.82). It was however interesting to find in Table 3 that youth's use of smartphones does not cause depression/anxiety for them as the item had a mean score of 2.42, which is below the criterion mean of this study.

**Testing of Hypotheses**

**$H_o$1:** There is no significant influence of youths' use of smartphones on their interpersonal communication.

**Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlations Test**

| Variables | N | $\bar{x}$ | Std. Deviation | R | P | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Use of smartphones | 400 | 58.62 | 11.311 | 0.821 | 0.012 | Sig. |
| Interpersonal communication | 400 | 63.89 | 11.204 | | | |

Table 5 displays the outcome of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation used for testing the hypothesis formulated for this

study. Data analysed while testing the hypothesis indicated a mean score of 58.62 for use of smartphones and 63.89 for interpersonal communication. With a co-efficient of 0.821 and a p. Value of 0.012, which is less than the 0.05 significant level, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant influence of youths' use of smartphones on interpersonal communication. By implication, youths' use of smartphones influences their interpersonal communication in one way or the other.

**$H_o$2**: There is no statistical significant difference between the mean rating of male youths and female youths on the frequency at which they use smartphones for interpersonal communication

**Table 6: One-way ANOVA Test**

| Male and female youths frequency of use of Smartphones for interpersonal communication | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 68.518 | 1 | 68.518 | 108.824 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 250.592 | 398 | .630 | | |
| Total | 319.110 | 399 | | | |

Table 6 shows the one way ANOVA result that tested the null hypothesis "There is no statistical significant difference between the mean rating of male youths and female youths in Edo State on frequency at which they use smartphones for interpersonal communication". There was statistical significant difference between groups as determined by one-way ANOVA, (F=108.824, p= .000). It could be seen that the significance value is .000, which is below 0.05 level of significance; therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. It could be deduced therefore that there is statistical difference between the mean ratings of male youths and female youths on the frequency at which they use smartphones for interpersonal communication.

## Discussion of Findings

From the data analysed, it was established that youth regularly use their smartphones for making calls, sending text messages and e-mails and that their smartphones are usually online most times. It was also found that the youths use their smartphones to chat more than face-to-face communication. Indeed, smartphones appear to be taking the place of face-to-face communication among youths of this age. This finding strongly corroborates the finding in Alfawareh and Jusoh's (2014) study which found that youth remain online for about 16 hours per day using different devices like smartphones. Indeed, smartphones use has been on the increase globally because of their unique features and attributes. Besides, just as this study found, youth have also been found to be heavy users of smartphones in other studies on smartphones (Mojaye, (2015); Al-Barashdi, Bouazza and Jabur (2015); and Foen, Che Hassan, Mohammad Abdul Malek (2017)).

It was also revealed that youth use their smartphones for interpersonal communication basically for: Facebook, WhatsApp, making phone calls, sending/receiving text messages, making video calls, online dating, watching videos/films, sharing pictures/videos, browsing the Internet, for group chats and for instant messaging. This finding agrees with Kubackova's (2015) study, which found that youth preferred text messages to voice calls, claiming that Short Messages (SMS) and text messages were cheaper. These patterns of smartphones usage among youth were bound to largely influence their interpersonal communication. Furthermore, this finding is also in consonance with that of Fuller and Atkin (2017) which discovered that youth use smartphones for instrumental purposes and for making of calls. Nonetheless, Cartledge (2017) argues that the original, intending job of mobile phones, which is to make calls, is changing drastically as smartphones users are more likely to communicate through text, e-mail and instant message. This is because the nature of most smartphones allows for innovation and creativity among users,

which are the characteristics of most youth since they like to explore every now and then.

Findings in this study also showed that using smartphones among youth reduce their face-to-face communication with friends and families. This study also discovered that youth's use of smartphones often leads to misinterpretation of messages, and eliminates verbal cues in communication, yet, it makes interpersonal communication less time consuming. The implication of this finding is that the influence of smartphones use on the interpersonal communication of youth can be likened to a two-edged sword, which is capable of resulting in positive influence like making interpersonal communication less time consuming or negative influence like misinterpretation of message. Nonetheless, it was also found that youth' use of smartphones does not cause depression or anxiety among them. Invariably, the last aspect of this finding disagrees with the findings in the study conducted by the University of Arizona (September 30, 2019), which found that young people who are hooked on their smartphones maybe at an increased risk of depression and loneliness. Perhaps, the factor responsible for the differences in findings between this current study and that of the University of Arizona may have arisen because of the different geographical scopes of the studies. While the University of Arizona surveyed youth in a state in the United States, this current study surveyed youth in Edo State, Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

It has been established that smartphones remain the springboard for achieving social relations as well as the processing of social information online, which in turn enhances interpersonal communication. In fact, the use of smartphones has created a new form of communication, which is communication without borders. Also, worthy of mention is the fact that this study has revealed that youth in Edo State Nigeria regularly use their smartphones even though such usage does not follow a specific frequency like every minute, hourly, daily, weekly or even monthly but it is based on whenever they want to or receive a call/message, send e-mails, etc. Besides, their smartphones are always online. It has also been

confirmed that youth use their smartphones to make calls and send text messages more that they make video calls. Video calls would have enhanced verbal cues usage required for effective interpersonal communication. The implication of this is that as face-to-face communication, which reduces misinterpretation in communication but encourages strong relations among families and friends, is gradually fading away because of the use of smartphones for interpersonal communication. No wonder, Idris (2017) argues that face-to-face interaction in this age of smartphones is becoming rare. Nevertheless, the use of smartphones would continue to evolve just like new technologies thereby constantly creating new dimensions in the world of interpersonal and modern communication.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forward:

1. Since it was found that youth in Edo State regularly use smartphones for communication, which may lead to positive or negative outcome on their interpersonal communication, it becomes necessary to recommend that users of smartphones, who are mostly youth, should apply discipline and caution in the use of their smartphones. This is to ensure that their use of smartphones does not result in health complications for them, which are capable of negatively affecting their eyes and ears, etc.
2. Since it was found that verbal cues were absent in the use of smartphones for interpersonal communication among youth in Edo State, Nigeria, it becomes expedient to suggest that video calls should be used more frequently for interpersonal communication on smartphones. This is to enhance face-to-face communication despite using smartphones. Moreover, exchange of information and communication through the use of video calls is almost like live communication. Similarly, any voice message supported with videos and pictorial symbols is likely to have a stronger effect than only calls or text messages.

3. The use of smartphones for interpersonal communication should be encouraged especially among youth in Edo State, Nigeria. This is to enable them to continue to derive all the benefits associated with interpersonal communication. Also, it would enable the youth regardless of gender to overcome issues of depression/anxiety as well as communicate regardless of time and distance. Moreover, with the use of smartphones for interpersonal communication, one, especially the youth in Edo State, Nigeria, can communicate without borders.

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