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Mothers` Attitudes on the Influence of Social Media on Parenting Styles of Adolescent Girls in Tanga Municipality, Tanzania

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Keywords:

Adolescent Girls,

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This study aimed to assess the influence of mother's attitude on social media towards parenting styles of adolescent girls. The study employed a mixed methods research approach with convergent parallel design. Questionnaires, interview, and documentary review were prominent methods used in data collection. 104 respondents were recruited to collect data which deem suitable for the study. The obtained data analysed by using free QDA Miner and SPSS for non- numerical and numerical data respectively. The findings show that mothers have either positive or negative attitude on social media use of adolescent girls. The positive mother's attitude is influenced by such factors as screening time, learning and communication purpose. While negative mother's attitude is influenced by factors as early sexual relationship and age of adolescent girls. Finally, the researcher recommended that adolescent should be emphasized on the positive use of social media to increase their performance in the educational carrier.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, science and technology are developing more rapidly, which also influences the advent of the internet and new forms of information communication technology, which in turn run each and every aspect of our current digital lives (Prabandari and Yuliati, 2016). With the internet, people can access a variety of social and economic services anywhere and anytime. One of the most desirable internet services in communities is social media (SM). The term SM emerged in the 1990s in reference to upcoming web-based communication tools that facilitated online interaction (Bercovici, 2010). It is a social structure made up of nodes (which are generally individuals or organizations) that is woven with one or more specific types of relationships such as values, visions, ideas, friends, descent, and others (Prabandari and Yuliati, 2016).

SM has become a common and widely used form of social communication all over the world, and Tanzania is not an exception (Perrin and Anderson, 2019). In east Africa, after Kenya, Tanzania is leading in social media use; most social media subscribers in Tanzania pay much attention to using social media (Thobias, 2019). The existence of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Path, WhatsApp, and Skype allow users to interact with people from all over the world at a lower cost and more promptly. Unfortunately, currently there is a threat of SM addiction all over the world that affects children, specifically adolescent girls (Marsh, 2018 and Sloviter, 2011). In fact, SM addiction may become another addiction disorder after drug and alcohol addiction (Das and Sahoo, 2011). It is a kind of internet addiction that leads to sinking into a virtual life and forgetting about the physical world around them. The crimes correlated with social media have rapidly increased in some areas; this includes murder, rape, paedophilia, bullying, assault, and robbery (Das and Sahoo, 2011).

Besides negative impacts, the use of social media also has positive impacts. On the side of positive impacts, there are many schools and universities that are interested in social media such as blogs to

improve or complement the activities of formal education and improve learning outcomes (Notten and Nikken, 2016). Social media are also used to expand opportunities for formal learning in a geographical context. Students use instant messaging and Skype to share information about their culture and work together (Collin et al., 2010). This necessitates the monitoring of SM usage to enable users to use SM safely and effectively.

Be familiar with the positive impacts of social media. The government plays a vital role in ensuring safe and effective use of social media all over the country by regulating the price of bundles and providing better services to the subscribers. Moreover, by recognising the risk of social media, the government of Tanzania has sufficiently tried to defend adolescent girls and other users from social media risky situations; among the efforts placed are the enactment of laws, prohibitions, and punishing those who violate the enacted laws (United Republic of Tanzania (URT), 2018). However, the government cannot regulate SM usage due to its enormity. Therefore, leaves it up to parents to exhibit an appropriate parenting style to regulate their adolescent girls' social media uses and keep them safe from risky situations (Livingstone, 2008).

Parenting style used is a major factor that could influence the use of social media for adolescent girls (AGs) as well as defend AGs from risk situations brought by SM use Olalere and Olatokun, 2020). Parenting styles include authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, indulgent, and rejecting-neglecting. Each parenting style is characterised by either low or high levels of all or some of the aspects of parenting, which are disciplinary strategies, warmth and nurturing, communication styles, and expectations of social media use by adolescent girls (Baumrind, 1967). The exhibition of an appropriate parenting style depends much on the attitude parents have towards certain actions or behaviours. In other words, it is appropriate mothers' attitudes towards SM that may lead to the selection of an appropriate parenting style responsible for regulating adolescent girls' social media uses and

thus protecting them from the social media's negative aspects (Floros et al., 2012).

A mother's attitude refers to a disposition or a response style in child-rearing that promotes the growth and development of children. Mother's attitude has been emphasised as a key factor influencing selection of parenting style (Lee and Kim 2022). The studies (Lee and Kim, 2022; pointed out that, however mothers have different attitudes on social media; these attitudes have been the influential determinant towards selection of parenting styles for keeping adolescent girls safe from risky situations of SM use. Moreover, there is no common attitude among parents toward SM. This variation in mothers' attitudes towards SM has also led to variation in mothers' parenting styles, which is among the key factors that can be used to control the use of SM for adolescent girls (Hossain et. al 2020). In addition, there is neither perfect nor common parenting style used in Tanzania. The weaknesses or the strengths of parenting style vary with the variation of behaviour exhibited and local context (Manyama and Lema, 2015). In this regards, the current study seeks to discover the influence of mothers' attitudes on SM and its influence on parenting styles of adolescent girls in the context of Tanga Municipality.

Objectives of the Study

This study had one objective which was to assess the influence of mother's attitude on social media towards parenting styles of adolescent girls.

Research Question

To achieve the objective of this study, the research was guided by one research question which was "how mothers' attitude on social media influence parenting styles of adolescent girls?"

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed methods approach. With this approach both qualitative and quantitative were concretely employed in data collection, analysis, and presentation of the findings on mothers' attitudes towards social media use of adolescent girls (Creswell, 2009).

The researchers employed a case study research design as the blueprint for qualitative data collection, interpretation of the findings, and data analysis. The study conducted in Tanga district, where one ward (DUGA) selected to represent the rest 27 wards. Mothers of adolescent girls employed because mothers seem to be closer to AGs; therefore, mothers deemed to have much more information of their adolescent girls on social media use as compared to Fathers. Random sampling and Yamane formula (1967) were used to obtain suitable sample for the study. The study employed more than one instrument for data collection in the field. The researcher used the following instruments for collecting data: Questionnaires, interviews, and documentary reviews. Two data collection methods (documentary analysis and interview) were employed to collect qualitative data that was deemed useful for this study's sake. Questions that covered aspects of moral values, early sexual relationships, education, communication, and screening time were developed to answer this specific question of this study. Interviews were conducted to collect participants' views on the factors that influence mothers' attitudes on social media. Five mothers were recruited as prominent participants to collect qualitative data on this question. On the other hand, 100 respondents were recruited for data collection through questionnaires. Numerical data were subjected to descriptive analysis and non- numerical data were analysed by using thematic analysis.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY AND DISCUSSION

This study was guided by one research question which was " what are the factors influencing mothers' attitudes towards social media?" The findings were categorized into themes and presented by using quotation and tables as follows.

SM Simplifies Communication

the findings from the questionnaires show that, the desire to communicate with family members, siblings, and close friends that AGs influence

mothers' attitude toward adolescent girls' SM use.
The findings are represented in *Table 1* below

Table 1: social media simplifies communication

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	98	98.0	98.0
NO	2	2.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source: field (2023)

The respondents were asked whether a desire to simplify communication affects their attitudes towards social media use among their adolescent girls. 98% of respondents, agreed that it is all right for their adolescent to use SM to communicate with their friends and other siblings. While 2%, disagreed. This indicates that the majority of mothers exhibit a positive attitude towards social media used by their adolescent girls when it comes to communication purposes. On the other hand, through interviews, participants agreed that that it is alright for their adolescent to use SM for exchanging useful information with their friends and other siblings. One of the participants said,

“Social media came to simplify communication and some things that in the past could not be easy to do unless you visited some places like internet cafes, but nowadays, social media can be used by a single person anywhere” (Interview with P1, 2023).

The desire of exchanging information with other individuals that adolescent girls have is influencing mother's attitude towards the SM use of their adolescent girls. They view SM as an important platform that facilitates the distribution of information informed by messages or pictures that capture lovely family and friendly moments.

This implies that mothers exhibit a high positive attitude towards social media used by their adolescent girls when it comes to communication purposes, with the aim of maintaining family connectedness. These findings are consistent with the findings of Ka Vian and Zhoorati (2021), who found that parental attitudes are positive for communication, as it serves as a significant tool for friends and family bonding. Mothers have positive attitudes towards the use of social media

by their adolescent girls. Therefore, they do not intervene with their adolescent girls to use social media when adolescents use social media to communicate with their friends, siblings, or parents, as they want their adolescent to maintain connectedness. Also, mothers do not intervene in the use of social media by adolescent girls because it is a quick way for the adolescent to access various information. However, mothers aggrandize SM as the best way of simplifying communication among their adolescent girls, but they are not sure whether the communication undergone by the adolescent is ethical or not. As a result, some mothers are enthusiastic to develop a strategic intervention plan to unveil this kind of communication and those who are communicating with their adolescent girls. In their point of view, one of the mothers of adolescent girls explained:

It does not mean that social media are perfect for our children, because everything has both negative and positive effects. So as a parent, I have to know what is good for my child to follow and what is bad to abstain from (Interview with P3, 2023).

On the other hand, the findings from the interview reveal that some mothers prefer to intervene in the SM accessed by their adolescent girls so that they can facilitate the proper sharing of useful information. This implies that besides having a high positive attitude, mothers are likely to have a low positive attitude in the sense that they appreciate the SM use of their adolescent girls as the way of quickest information exchange with friends, family, and relatives, but they are less compliant with the SM use of their adolescent girls. This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Ante Contreras (2016), who found that parents

who are active users of social media can access various content and platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter, which are found in social media, and they are likely to exhibit aggressiveness and a negative attitude towards teen social media use.

SM Simplifies Learning Activities

Table 2: Social media simplifies learning activities

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	53	53.0	53.5
NO	46	46.0	100.0
Total	99	99.0	
Missing	1	1.0	
Total	100	100.0	

Source; field (2023)

From these results, it is clearly shown that the use of social media, particularly by adolescent girls, for the sake of learning is influencing positive attitudes towards most mothers and negative attitudes towards fewer mothers. In interviews, mothers testified that, to a great extent, them

adolescents are benefiting from social media when it comes to education issues. With social media, adolescents may browse materials sent by their fellow students and access information during the holidays.

From social media, our children may find some information that is useful to their studies and their future lives (interview with P3, 2023).

Another stated that:

She is benefited because if she finds difficulties in her studies, she needs to use SM to learn more, but most of the time she uses my mobile phone, so I am aware of what she is doing on the internet and I always cooperate with her. And when she is at school,

Repeatedly, the use of social media for the sake of learning has been reported by various scholars to increase the academic performance of students of various levels of education, including adolescent girls. This seems to influence mothers' attitudes towards the social media use of adolescent girls. The findings are represented hereunder by *Table2*.

I know she will not be able to use the internet because they are being restricted from using the internet at school (Interview with P2, 2023).

In light of the findings found from literature, questionnaires, and interviews, however, the mothers have a positive attitude towards the SM use of their AGs, but they have to allow their adolescent girls to use social media under the condition of learning. This indicates that the sake of learning can influence the attitude of mothers towards the use of social media, particularly among adolescent girls. These findings are consistent with the findings of Ka Vian and Zhoorati (2021), who found that parental attitudes towards social media turned out to be positive when it came to communication purposes, as it served as a significant tool for multifunction purposes like education and entertainment.

SM is a Source of Moral/Values Deterioration

With questionnaires, the researcher found that most mothers' hate SM use of AGs. Responses are shown in *Table 3* below.

Table 3: Social media is a source of moral/value deterioration

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	85	85.0	87.6
NO	12	12.0	100.0
Total	97	97.0	
Missing	3	3.0	
Total	100	100.0	

Source; field (2023)

From Table 3 above, mothers agreed that social media does not consider the moral value of adolescent girls as it does not filter the contents to be consumed by social media subscribers; therefore, social media is the source of moral deterioration among adolescent girls. For this reason, 85% of the respondents display a negative attitude towards social media. From the interview, one of the respondents stated that:

'Many things happen on social media; some of them even I myself do not want to see. There are some pictures that are not suitable for our adolescent girls. They lead them to feel tempted and want to practice what they observed on social media. They find themselves in a trap that leads them to destroy their own lives by failing to achieve their goals' (Interview with P3, 2023).

Another said;

"Social media are good for adolescent girls if the girl has self-awareness and self-esteem and can analyse things enough to know what is good to follow on the Internet and what is bad to avoid. But if a girl is not, social media is a storm, and it can destroy her behaviour, including delay if she fails to achieve their goals" (Interview with P1, 2023).

Another participant cemented that, apart from early sexual intercourse, SM contributed to the establishment of early sexual relationships among adolescent girls. Therefore, being a source of early sexual relationship SM use among adolescent girls affects a mother's attitude towards SM use towards AGs by saying:

Currently, daughters are imitating everything they see on social media. You will find that the girl wants to be in a relationship so that she can experience something that is explained or viewed on social media, which is often a loss for them instead of a benefit because they find themselves involved in informal relationships. At the end of the day, they broke up, and you find many cases of adolescent girls attempting suicide because they found out that they had been seduced by the wrong people, they had

lost their directions, they had failed to fulfil their goals, their lives had been destroyed, and they felt ashamed, so the only thing they thought would stop the pain was taking away their own lives. These are all the impacts of letting our girls be involved on social media without our assistance and concern" (Interview with P2, 2023).

The findings obtained from the interview show that mothers discourage SM use of their AGs since most SM platforms and content contribute to the moral deterioration among adolescent girls. This indicates mothers' negative attitude towards social media use by their adolescent girls, since the contents found in SM are detrimental to AG's moral development. Additionally, adolescent girls are directly influenced to have sexual intercourse through sexting and being promised money or gifts. The adolescent girls are indirectly influenced to engage in sexual activities (sexual intercourse, early sexual relationships) through sharing naked pictures and pornography. This implies that with the Cybercrime Act, Tanzania has remained politically stable, as none of the uprisings erupted by SM mobilisation. On the other hand, most people, including adolescents, who violated the laws made under the act either received heavy penalties or were sentenced for several years (Thobias, 2019). However, social media delinquency among adolescents has become indomitable. To illustrate, most adolescents who are social media subscribers use social media for sharing nude pictures, which is contrary to the Cybercrime Act, culture, ethics, or Tanzanian morals (URT, 2018).

Nevertheless, none of the adolescents have been apprehended for moral value deterioration. Probably, SM use by adolescent girls is accelerating moral deterioration as the sharing of nude pictures, early sexual relationships, and sexual intercourse among adolescent girls increases, as mothers develop a negative attitude towards social media use by their adolescent girl. This finding supports the findings of Ka Vain and Zhourat (2021), who found that parents' praise of digital technologies' benefits in education can have drawbacks, as improper supervision can

negatively impact children's psychosocial development and exposure to inappropriate content.

Banning below-18-Year-Old Adolescent Girls from Using SM

The ideal age for children to be exposed to and own a mobile phone was still a debate among

parents and educators (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, and Purcell, 2010) Mothers' views are different, particularly on the issue of appropriate age and whether to prohibit, restrict, or allow adolescent girls to use social media. The findings are presented in *Table 4* below.

Table 4: Banning Below 18 years Adolescent Girls from Using SM

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	55	55.0	55.0
NO	45	45.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source; field (2023)

The information obtained from the questionnaires exposed to the respondents indicates 55% of the targeted population, agreed that age is among the factors influencing their attitude towards social media. 45% of the respondents, disagreed that age was a factor in their positive or negative attitude towards social media. The information presented in the table implies that the majority of mothers in Tanga consider the age factor to allow, control, or prohibit social media use among their adolescents. Some mothers believe that at the age of adolescence, the girls are sufficiently mature to be intervened with or strictly prohibited from using social media. On the other hand, some mothers view the time when their daughters will be married as the proper age for them to use social media. That it will be upon her husband whether to allow her or not. While some mothers view the age of adolescence as not the right age for adolescent girls to use social media, one of the participants said,

I always forbid them from using mobile phones. I do not like a girl who is not yet married, an adolescent girl, to use a mobile phone, especially when involved in social media. Maybe for those who are at the college level, at least they need the Internet for their studies to progress. But not standard 5/6 or 7 primary school girl (Interview with P4, 2023)

Another said;

As a parent, I have to know what is good for my girl to follow and what is bad to avoid. (Interview with P3, 2023)

Another said;

'I tell her you have grown enough to analyses what is good and bad, so she should not imitate everything she sees, but she should take the good and leave the bad behind. By the way, I have raised her by always considering morals, so she listens to me (interview with P1, 2023).

The age of adolescent girls influences the attitude of mothers towards social media. This implies the behaviours or actions exhibited by most others in Tanga towards social media usage by adolescent girls have been culminated by the age of adolescent girls. This implies that the majority of mothers in Tanga consider the age factor to allow, control, or prohibit social media use by their adolescents. Most mothers do not prefer social media usage to their adolescent girls; they see adolescents could better use social media after being married. This implies that, due to the age factor, mothers could develop a varied attitude towards social media use towards their adolescent girls. These findings are consistent with the findings of Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, and Purcell (2010) who found that parents have different views on what is the proper age for children to engage in social media activities.

SM Destroys Adolescent Girls' Morals/Values

Children spend a considerable amount of time browsing various social media platforms and content; the time that AGs spend browsing SM contributes to their mother's attitude towards the use of AGs in SM (Kim and Kim, 2022).

However, the results obtained from the questionnaires indicate that the majority of the respondents do not prefer SM use to AGs as they spend much time using SM.

Table 5: SM Destroys Adolescent Girls' Morals/Values

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	76	76.0	76.0
NO	24	24.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source; field data (2023)

The results from table 5 indicate that 76% of the respondents, do not prefer social media usage to adolescence, as they spend much more time using social media than studying. The same findings can be seen in the findings obtained from the interview, as presented in the quotation below:

Most of the time, adolescent girls are online, which leads them to do many things that are not suitable for them. So, even if you do not want your daughter to involve herself on social media, she will not hear you because they are good at explaining, so if you are lucky, your daughter will be listening to you, but if you are not, you cannot restrict her from using her mobile phone as a result of them being involved on social media, which is harmful to them (Interview with P4, 2023).

Another cemented that sometimes the girls missed the time of prayer because they concentrated on using SM.

I am disappointed that sometimes you may find it is a time for prayer, but the girl is still using it, and when you ask her, she says I will pray (Interview with P5, 2023).

From interviews and questionnaires, it was found that mothers agree that adolescents spend a lot of time on social media. Moreover, the mothers do not prefer adolescents to use social media, but they have no ability to prohibit it as the adolescents always provide reasonable excuses. This indicates that screening time on social media influences the attitude displayed by mothers towards adolescent SM use. This finding is inconsistent with the finding of Lenhart, Ling,

Campbell, and Purcell (2010), who found that adolescents do not spend much time browsing contents or social media platforms. Instead, they visit social networking sites every day but spend less than one hour a day.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was guided by the main objective "to assess the influence of mothers' attitudes on social media use of adolescent girls in Tanga municipality. The obtained findings show that, Mothers are likely to have positive attitude whenever SM utilized for communication, studying, learning and other useful utilization of SM. This positive attitude has contributed to permissive parenting style and authoritative parenting style. On the other hand, harmful uses of SM among adolescent girls and negative consequences of SM have greatly contributed to negative attitude among mothers. This negative attitude has led mothers to develop authoritarian parenting style. attitudes are positively influenced by social media use of adolescent girls because, social media are essential for information and knowledge sharing, but it is important to use them responsibly with social, ethical, religious, and political responsibility. On the other hand, mothers' attitude are negatively impacted by inappropriate uses and risky situations of social media. Positive use of social media can develop academic career, skills, economic activities, and a better lifestyle. Adolescent girls should avoid sharing contents which are centrally to societal standards, social norms, and religious values, and should only share relevant information. Exact

education on appropriate platform and content to be accessed by adolescent girls should be provided for adolescent girls, and surveillance software should be deployed.

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