

## **ADVERSE EFFECTS OF MODERN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN CHRISTIAN FAMILIES: A CASE OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NAKURU, KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The evolution of MICT globally has rocked Christian families in various dimensions: socially, morally, psychologically and even emotionally. This study evaluates the adverse effects of Modern Information and Communication Technology (MICT) in Christian families in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru (CDN), Kenya.

**Methodology:** Sociological Theory and Communication Theory guided the study. The study employed mixed method research design, which included both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. To obtain the sample size, the study used multi-stage and cluster sampling technique to select four deaneries as a representation of the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. From a target population of 16,520 registered Christian families, Youths, Parish Priests, Chairpersons and Catechists, a sample size of 391 respondents from the four deaneries was selected who included the Parish Priests, Catechists, Chairpersons of Small Christian Communities (SCC), Parents and Youths.

**Results:** The study found that the use of MICT has weakened the interpersonal relationships among family members. The study further found that, MICT has contributed to poor parenting or lack of parenting roles. The study also revealed that, MICT has exposed children to pornography, which has attracted them to premarital sex and early marriages. In addition, the study established that, the use of digital technology in communication has introduced families to conflict due to personal interest in watching preferred programme and cyber-crimes.

**Conclusion:** This study concluded that use of Modern Information and Communication Technology (MICT) has adverse effects on Christian families in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya

**Recommendations:** The study recommends that, the government of Kenya to come up with attainable and practical guidelines on the type of MICT programs to be airing in TV and the quality of their contents before airing or posting them in the social platforms in order to protect families and other innocent users from detrimental content. The study further recommends that, religious leaders to offer technical and moral guidance on how to engage MICT devices to contain their misuse. The study further recommends families to initiate open sharing, fraternal corrections, unconditional love and uninterrupted family prayers as preventive actions in order to contain the dangers arising from the negative usage of MICT. The study also recommends parental control over usage of MICT devices.

**Keywords:** *Adverse Effects, Modern Information and Communication Technology, Christian Families*

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## INTRODUCTION

Globally, Pew Research Centre (2016) noted that MICT use has increased rapidly in the United States over the last decade, raising important questions about how much time families spend with MICT devices and their effects on family members. Przybylski and Weinstein (2017) found that parents in the United States interacted more with MICT such as cell phones and laptop computers. As a result, children from such households lacked essential social experiences, such as friendship and reciprocal communication, which are critical for the development of life-long social skills. According to Patti and Jessica (2017), in London, children spent on average of six hours a day on MICT while parents spent ten hours.

In Brazil, UNICEF (2017) observed that families face a variety of dangers from MICT such as exposure to pornographic and violent images, hate speech material, and websites encouraging unhealthy and harmful behaviors including self-harm, suicide, and anorexia. MICT has also put families at danger by exposing children to potentially harmful content, such as promoting racism or publishing sexual photos, as well as items that they have created themselves (UNICEF, 2017). In Syria, UNICEF (2017) established that MICT has exposed children to unprotected social media profiles and online gaming forums. This allowed criminals to remain anonymous, lessening their danger of being identified and prosecuted, as well as growing their networks and revenues. MICT was further noted to have allowed criminals to pursue multiple victims at the same time (UNICEF, 2017).

Regionally, a study was carried out in African countries: Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda on the use of MICT in families with the following findings. In Nigeria, more than 66% of children aged 8-18 years used personal mobile phones while 75% of parents spent 10 hours a day on their smart phones, leaving less time to spend with their family. This shows that interpersonal ties within families suffered because of this (Ngozi, 2015). Besides, in Ghana, 75% of Ghanaian families owned mobile phones, with 25% of them using the mobile phones for social media, 54% for texting, and 24% for instant messaging and a further 13% of Ghanaian households utilized MICT in internet browsing (Internet Global Statistics, 2016). In Uganda, six million Ugandan families (59.2%) used MICT, commonly cell phones for sharing information via social networking sites and seeking companionship (Ngozi, 2015).

Locally, a study done in Kenya by Baya (2015) revealed that, 75% of families in Kenya actively used MICT, resulting in practical, social and economic improvement as well as cultural betterment. Further, Baya (2015) revealed that sexual content and sexual initiation became

more prevalent on MICT devices such as television (TV) and mobile phones. The MICT devices contain an expanding and increasingly explicit dose of sexual theme that may misinform Christian families, particularly children, in sustaining Christian values, contrary to Catholic Church teachings. Onyiengo (2014) claims that exposure to sexual content via MICT, such as TV shows and Facebook friends, has caused sexual arousal, which has resulted in impulse inhibition or activation of ideas or connections. This exposure has had a negative impact on people's behaviour such as engaging in premarital sexual activities and infidelity between spouses. As a result, Christian families in Kenya, notably in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru (CDN), have experienced challenges connected with the use of MICT.

Due to this revolution in digital advancement in communication, the Catholic Church insists that parents ought to take full responsibility to safeguard their families against the bewildering forces of MICT. According to the Catechesis of the Catholic Church (1995), the family is the domestic church (*Ecclesia domestica*), where parents as the head of the family by word and example, are the first heralds of faith and exercise the priesthood of the baptized. In addition, they also are in a privileged way, live and celebrate the sacraments, pray together, are full of gratitude to God, become witnesses of a holy life and practice self-denial through active charity. While there is ample evidence that MICT use has increased quickly over time in Christian families; how does it adversely affect the Christian families in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru (CDN), Kenya? The study contends that discerning the effects of MICT in Christian families helps to respond to these problems and opportunities brought to the fore.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The misuse of MICT is harmful to Christian families. In Kenya, the use of MICT is associated with social concerns for example, online predators, inappropriate content exposure, sexual predators, cyber bullies, and unsafe disclosure of personal information. All of which have been linked to compromising Christian values in Christian families (Njoroge, 2013). The rise in the use of MICT by Catholic Christian families has brought about threats and weakening of Christian values such as communal family prayers, love, concern, fidelity and unity among family members. Some of the threats brought about by MICT include sharing and posting false information about themselves and others, exposure to fraudsters and addiction to internet that has affected their social, psychological and emotional well-being.

The study contends that if this misuse of MICT is not controlled, Christian families will experience spiritual decay, moral decadence, psychological problems, conflict and illicit behaviour, social dysfunction and dismantlement of the family social fabric. Previous studies in the context of families and the use of MICT has shown various research gaps such as variables, area of study, respondents or target population and methodology; these gaps are yet to be addressed with potential solutions (Behnke et al., 2014; Ranney, 2014; Seiler, 2014; Tochukwu & Hocann, 2017; Wolfe & Wolfe, 2015). This seeks to address the research gaps on MICT and families by analyzing the effects and offering recommendations on how to salvage Christian families from moral decay and social stigmatization caused by the misuse of MICT.

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

This study sought to determine the adverse effects of MICT on Christian families in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the adverse effects of MICT on Christian families in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya?

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Research gaps and evidence of MICT challenges concerning family unity, interpersonal relationships, illegal behaviour, socio-economic challenges, and moral deterioration contrary to Christian principles and exhortations on family living; justifies this study. The current study therefore comes in handy in bringing to knowledge moral issues such as habitual misuse of MICT in relation to effects of MICT in Christian families. This study hopes to improve catechetical programmes and reawaken the Catholic Church to support families in achieving integrity. This study may further be of help to Christian families in Catholic Diocese of Nakuru to understand how MICT affects various aspects of Christian life. Academicians and researchers, especially in the area of MICT may be able to base their further studies on the findings of the current study. The findings of this research may also be of great help to spiritual leaders in educating and informing the family on her role in bringing forth and nurturing life of every person as stipulated in the sacred scriptures.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Communication Theory developed by S. F. Scudde in the year 2015 guided the study (Juneja, 2015). Communication Theory states that all living beings that live on the earth do communicate to survive, though differently. The theory proposes that to survive, every living entity must communicate. Communication then becomes a dire need of survival (Juneja, 2015). Communication Theory framework is blended with five viewpoints: mechanistic, psychological, social, systemic and critical. According to the mechanistic viewpoint, communication is the transmission of information from the first party, the sender to the second party, the receiver. On the other hand, psychological viewpoint posits that, communication is the thought and the feelings of the sender tries to share with the recipient or receiver, which includes reactions, feelings of the receiver after decoding the information. According to the social point of view, communication occurs due to social interaction between the sender and the receiver, and whereby communication is simply depending on the content of the speech (Hazard, 1971). On the contrary, systematic approach describes communication as a new and different message created when various individuals interpret it in their own way and then reinterpret it and draw conclusion. Critical viewpoint argues that communication is simply a way with the help of which individuals express their power and authority among other individuals.

The principles of Communication Theory according to Juneja (2015) consist of the **fwig** elements: honesty, clarity, accuracy, comprehensive, concise, correct, timely, attentiveness and feedback. These elements help the receiver or the audience to benefit from communication. Communication is therefore less about the one communicating, but rather about the receiver and the audience. According to Communication Theory, effective communication is simple and clear, focuses around a single idea, and ultimately achieves the results you desire to be most effective. Juneja (2015) asserts that communication is influenced by some of the environmental factors that have nothing to do with the content of the message such as nature of the room, in-sitting arrangements, type of chairs, style of authority of the speaker and the amount of noise within the environment. Communication Theory asserts that people will

remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see and 40% of what they hear and see. Receiving feedback is a crucial part of communication and attentive listening enhances feedback (Juneja, 2015).

Communication Theory provides ingredients for effective communication between the sender and the receiver, however, there are number of critics to the theory. Among the weaknesses of Communication Theory is over-emphasis on the inflow and outflow of information. The theory insists that the inflow or outflow determine the process of decision-making. However, decision-making depends more on the nature of information, which is determined by how attentive, accurate, systematic, and timely the receiver is. Communication in numerous ways also influences the individual's behaviour depending on the message and how it is delivered (Daniel, 1994). In addition, Cooren (2012) Communication Theory is based on rationality and formality of the structures, which means if rationality and formalism are not always adhered to, the decision-making process will be disturbed. In reality, decision-making process is incremental in nature and since human efforts are behind the communication of news and information, therefore, the meaning and context of the information undergo changes and this is inevitable.

Communication Theory was selected to inform this study because it emphasizes on the tenets of communication such as timeliness, attentive listening, accuracy, correctness and honesty (Robbins & Judge, 2007) as important factors for effective communication, which begins by knowing the person you are communicating with or the audience. For that matter, this theory is helpful in creating awareness on Christian families that communication is a process that needs preparedness to be effective and meaningful. Such preparations include a conducive environment and peace of mind to be able to listen attentively. Communication theory recognizes communication skills which can assist in reawakening human values such as respect and love in Christian families amidst the information circulating through MICT, which if not scrutinized by parents may mislead the children and destroy the family.

Therefore, this theory was considered relevant to the current study because it insists on accuracy in passing information between the sender and the receiver. This is important in Christian families because it effects positively family activities such as family gatherings and promotes social interaction among family members. Consequently, helping those in families overcome the challenges brought by MICT in relation to family unity. Communication Theory equally elaborates more on communication as a process, in which one should understand how people relate to each other, because the context of relationship influences communicators. For example, those in families will respond promptly to family issues through MICT than other areas, which may need equal attention. Communication Theory gives a summary on how communication works, by specifying the role of the sender and the receiver, as well as the barriers to effective communication when using MICT devices in passing important communication

## **REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

According to Brandon (2019), recurrent use of MICT such as mobile phone brings a tendency of being overwhelmed by the amount of notifications and information that require immediate responses. In addition, it has expectations and exhaustion over continuous connections from near and far that needs attention. Families and other users find it a challenge to cognitively adjust between what they are doing on their phone and interactions they need to have at home. Consequently, bringing conflict between children and parents. According to the researcher, the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru has been creating awareness to families on the effects of MICT

that can be exploitative, manipulative and dominating if the families are not vigilant on when and how to use them.

McDaniel et al. (2018) adds that, parents may be irresponsible due to divided attention between engagement with MICT devices and parenting roles. Surprisingly, parents believe they are better in interacting with their children when they intentionally avoid engaging with MICT devices during meals. Parents who frequently use their phones while with their children are distracted and experience less connected with their families. They are associated with less verbal interactions, lower parental responsiveness and at times, use of impolite responses when responding to the children (Chen & Yan, 2016).

According to Kushlev and Dunn (2018), when parents are obsessed with their mobile phones, they tend to be reserved and less accommodative. Parents perceive technology interruption with their romantic partners, children and parenting responsibilities. McDaniel (2016) asserts that, distractions not only affect parenting behaviour, but also interactions and quality relationships in the family (Christakis, 2018). Parents report difficulty switching between being attentive to their mobile phones and being available to their children (Dindar & Dunn, 2018). This divided attention leads to inefficiencies and more errors when handling family chores (Stupica, 2016). For example, parents find it difficult to attend to the needs of their children when engaged with mobile phones (Chen & Yan, 2016).

In view of McDaniel and Coyne (2016), parental bonding with their children is important in the process of development. Children form an internal working model of relationship through early interactions with their parents or caregivers. Therefore, parental distraction through MICT may influence children's growth and development process, by being less attentive to the needs of their children (Lee *et al.*, 2014).

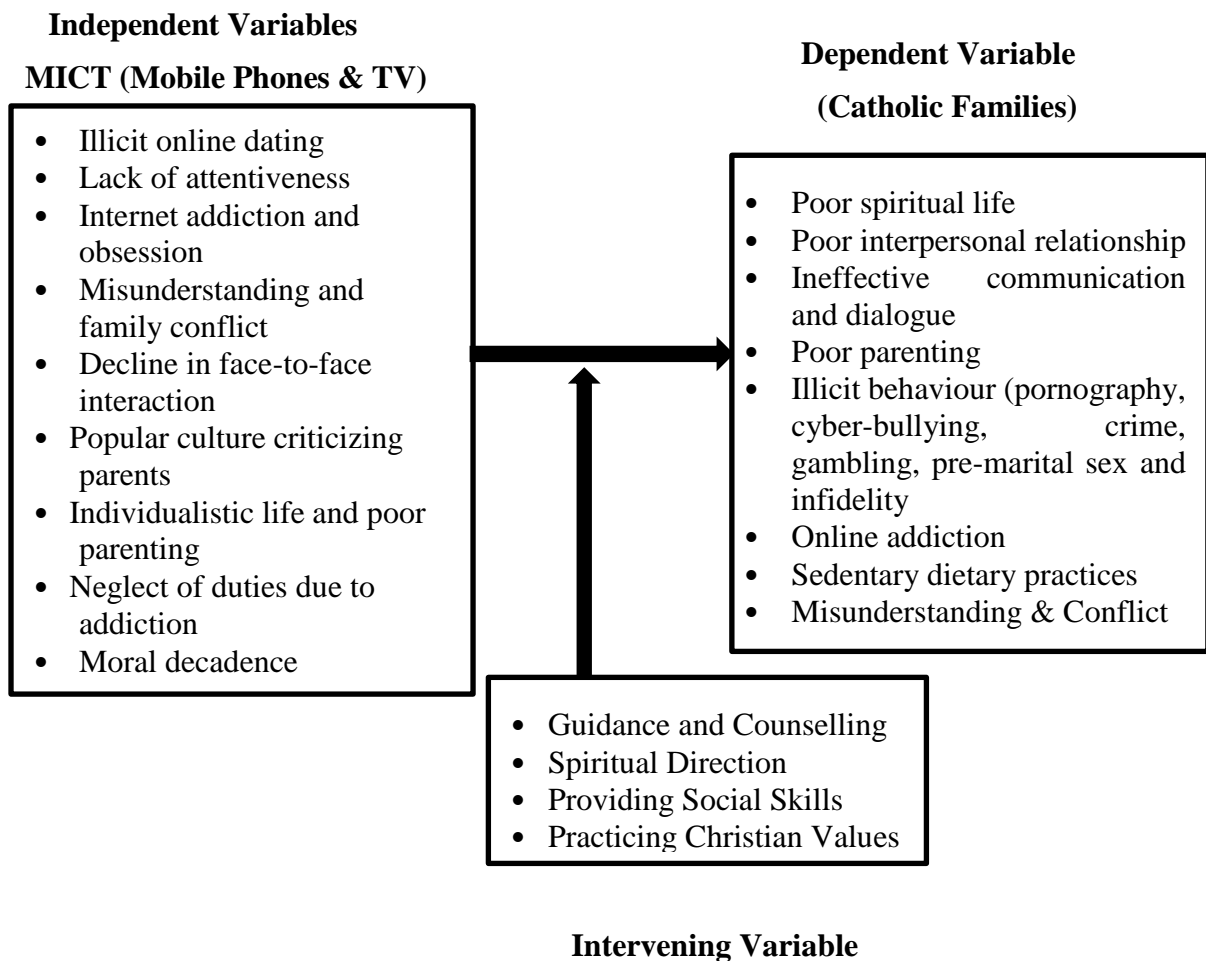
According to Mohammed and Samy (2017), an additional harmful effect of MICT devices is the amplified connectivity between people who live far away from each other. In this way, misunderstandings among family members can extend beyond the nuclear family. Among the MICT devices is Diva Chat, which has brought about significant conflict among families (Vaarzon, 2014). Diva Chat is a public and unrestricted social networking site used secretly. Therefore, this device provides a medium where some people participate socially and culturally in propagating illicit behaviour because they are not exposed to the public for identification.

These unlawful actions include, cyber bullying and messages provoking violence between disputing families. Public and lawful efforts are in place to prevent the future abuse of Diva Chat and its destructive effects. Harmful practices such as these have assisted families without mobile connectivity to consider the potential negative effects of MICT devices before adopting them in their families (Appelbaum, 2014).

Precisely, Gold, Guthrie & Taylor (2014) explain further that online communication takes time away from face-to-face communication. This weakens family relationships resulting in lack of family bonding. The more time families spend in MICT, the more they lose interaction with their families. In view of Ticona and Tupac (2016), MICT addiction changes behaviour of the users. The manner of interaction, working and living among family members influences the use of MICT. Family members no longer respect family space for face-to-face interaction with their members. They are regularly on the screen to respond to messages sent, or any missed call. They have their mobile phones in their hands for immediate response with their contacts (Ticona & Tupac, 2016).

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The independent variable is Modern Information and Communication Technology (MICT), while the dependent variable is Christian Families (CF). The independent variable consists of adverse effects of MICT in families in situations such as lack of commitment to spiritual life, misunderstandings and conflicts. Reduced face-to-face interaction, destruction and mental exhaustion, illicit behaviour for example premarital sex and online dating. In addition, substitution of time for family prayers with entertainment movies (soap operas). The intervening variables are guidance and counselling, role modelling, spiritual direction, providing social skills and practicing Christian values. The intervening factors can moderate the adverse effects of MICT on Christian Families if employed appropriately and effectively as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study employed mixed method research design to investigate MICT and Christian families in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya. The target population for the study was 32,180 registered families, which included Youth, Parish Priests, Chair Persons and Catechists as summarized. The study used multi-stage sampling technique. The first stage involved purposively selecting Nakuru, Naivasha, Lanet and Njoro deaneries from the 11 deaneries in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. The second stage involved computation of sample size using Yamane's formula whereby 391 registered Christian families consisting of Parents, Youths, Parish Priests, Catechists and Chairpersons of Small Christian Communities (SCC) from four deaneries (Nakuru, Naivasha, Lanet and Njoro) from the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru were sampled. The third stage was stratified random sampling to distribute the 391 respondents across the Nakuru, Naivasha, Lanet and Njoro deaneries. As a result, 98 respondents from Nakuru deanery, 138 respondents from Naivasha deanery, 68 respondents from Njoro deanery, and 87 respondents from Lanet deanery were selected.

The researcher used questionnaire for parents and youths, interview schedule for parish priests, catechists and chairpersons of small Christian communities (SCC) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for the youths. To ascertain validity of the tools, the study used the research supervisors in collaboration with educational research experts in the department of research from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa to evaluate the relevance of the research instruments in meeting the study objectives. To establish whether the research instruments were reliable for use in this study, the study used Cronbach's Alpha test of internal consistency based on a pilot data. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of at least 0.7 was achieved and therefore acceptable. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 in terms of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Qualitative data was analyzed using NVivo version 12 in terms of thematic aspects.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to investigate on the adverse effects of Modern Information and Communication Technology (MICT) on Christian families (youths and parents) in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya.

### **The Adverse Effects of MICT in Catholic Families by the Youths**

The adverse effects perceived by the youths are illustrated in Table 1.



**Table 1: Adverse Effects of MICT in Catholic Families by the Youths**

Adverse Effects of MICT	SA		A		N		D		SD		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Parenting during this era of MICT is a challenge.	140	52.3	82	30.8	10	4.2	15	3.7	7	3.4	1.69
Some parents over-concentrate on use of MICT and creates little time for their children.	130	51.9	81	28.7	10	4.7	9	3.1	6	2.9	1.65
Use of MIC affects interpersonal relationship of family members.	150	60.1	65	23.5	20	8.9	8	3.2	3	1.5	1.58
MICT exposes children and youth to cyber bullying.	140	57.2	65	26.9	15	5.8	10	4.1	5	2.9	1.63
Over-use of MICT leads to online Addition.	161	67.7	58	23.5	11	4.2	6	2.3	3	1.9	1.48
MICT destroys family bond	139	55.2	64	25.7	19	6.6	5	2.1	12	4.9	1.76
MICT exposes children to Pornography.	160	62.5	60	22.9	10	4.3	3	1.2	13	4.8	1.59
MICT makes children to deviate from Christian values such as prayers.	150	53.4	69	27.5	10	3.9	10	4.5	9	3.9	1.69
Lack of MICT makes children and youth not to attend church regularly.	130	49.2	65	26.5	19	6.7	13	4.8	20	7.9	1.93
MICT breeds illicit behavior such as commercial sex, drugs and substance abuse, crime, abortion and online gambling.	150	58.1	67	26.1	11	3.8	10	3.8	9	3.5	1.65
MICT is among the leading cause of divorce and separation in families.	147	50.2	60	26.1	11	8.7	9	3.9	9	5.1	1.84
MICT causes psychological issues such as suicide.	100	43.1	90	34.5	12	6.2	8	5.6	10	5.9	1.89
MICT results in lifestyle conditions such as obesity.	110	40.3	103	38.5	14	6.2	10	3.5	18	7.1	1.94

The mean score on challenges of parenting during the era of MICT was 1.69. This show that majority of the youth from the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru agreed that, parenting is a challenge during this era of MICT. One of the religious leaders supported this finding during the interview who narrated that:

*Among the negative effects of MICT among the youth in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, includes: illicit relationships and pre-marital sex due to exposure to pornography, addiction to technology, immorality and involvement with online predators, which erodes Christian values, making parenting difficult (Parish Priest X, 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2022).*

The findings were in line to House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (2019) that MICT exposes children to online hate and threatening behaviour based on race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or transgender identity.

The mean on whether some parents over concentrate on the use of MICT and spending little time with their children was 1.65. According to the findings, majority of the youth consented that some parents over- concentrate on the usage of MICT and spending little time with their children. Boyd and Ellison (2013) explain further that, the division in the family has increased due to frequent use of MICT from texting to playing video games. Parents who spend more time on technology may also neglect their duties or responsibilities, particularly, parenting and accompanying their children.

The mean of the MICT effect on interpersonal relationship among family members was 1.58 indicating the tendency of the youth in agreement that the use of MICT affect the interpersonal relationship among family members. Echenje (2021) confirms that, MICT has wrecked human relations and is slowly eroding interpersonal relationships and prayer life in Christian families. Among the Catechists, during the interview, one of them narrated that:

*Having listened to the parents and youths on the drawbacks posed by MICT devices from the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru pertaining the effects of MICT devices, particularly mobile phones and television, families do experience difficulties that needs urgent intervention. Among the effects are: it provokes them live individualistic life each enjoying personal program, family prayers being replaced by other entertainment programs from television channels in their own spaces free from other members of the family (Catechist S, 7<sup>th</sup> / August / 2022).*

The mean on the usage of MICT in exposing the youth to cyber bullying was 1.63. This equally was an indication that, a majority of the youth agree that the usage of MICT exposes them to cyber bullying in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. Huisman, Edward and Catapano (2012) presented similar findings, that, modern technology through its devices: mobile phones and television exposes young people to cyber bullying and hate speech. Additionally, a mean of 1.48 was realized on the over use of MICT leading to online addiction among youths from Christian families from the Diocese of Nakuru. Lauren, John and Lisa (2016) explain further that, excess engagement of MICT devices such as mobile phones may lead to addiction.

Similarly, the study revealed that the mean on whether the use of MICT destroys the family bond was 1.76 suggesting the consensus of the youth that the usage of MICT destroys the family bonds among the youth living in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya. Gwenn & Kathleen (2011) echoes that MICT has become a hindrance for listening to each other and reducing physical contact among family members thus weakening family bonds. On average, MICT exposes children to pornography as revealed by a mean score of 1.59 indicating that the youth from the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru agree that the use of MICT do expose children to pornography.

The findings show that there is a large extent in agreement that MICT use makes children deviate from Christian values such as prayers. This was illustrated by the average mean of 1.69 and supported by (Njoroge, 2013; Moran, 2010), that MICT use has been associated with compromising of Christian values. When respondents were asked whether lack of MICT makes children and youth not to attend church regularly, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that, lack of MICT makes children and youth not to attend church regularly. According to Francis (2018), the use of MICT is appropriate, but if not used wisely, it can stop people from acquiring wisdom, to think deeply and love generously.

The findings revealed that, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that, MICT breeds illicit

behaviour such as commercial sex, drugs and substance abuse, crime, abortion and online gambling. UNICEF (2017) affirms that families face a variety of dangers from MICT such as exposure to pornographic and violent images, hate speech material, and websites encouraging unhealthy and harmful behaviours including self-harm, suicide, and anorexia. The study further found that the mean for MICT in breeding illicit behaviour among the youth in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru was 1.65 suggesting that MICT breeds illicit behaviour as further indicated by the response of the majority who strongly agreed that MICT breeds illicit behaviour among the youth.

The study recorded a mean of 1.84 on average showing the extent to which the youth agree that MICT is among the leading causes of divorce and separation in families. Similar findings were presented in (Young, 2001; McGrath, 2012; Ticona & Tupac, 2016), that the misuse of MICT is harmful to Christian families, especially, if it is not well managed, it can lead to poor social interactions, separation and divorce in families. The mean on whether MICT can result in psychological issues such as suicide was 1.89 an indicator that MICT can result in psychological issues such as suicide among the youth in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. The finding was supported by one of the youth in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) who stated that:

*Modern Information and Communication Technology (MICT) is good but its misuse and addiction may lead to challenges such as living secretive life, prone to pornography and experiencing depression which may lead to death if the device is taken away from the user. For instance, a young girl committed suicide because her mother took her mobile phone to allow her study and concentrate in school (Youth S, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2022).*

The study found that majority of the youth from the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru strongly agreed that MICT results in lifestyle conditions such as obesity. Additionally, a mean score of 1.94 was the recorded on whether MICT results in lifestyle conditions such as obesity among the youth in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya. During the interview, one Chair Person of the Small Christian Community stated that:

*In this modern era where communication is made more available, various forms of entertainment are equally accessible for children such as cartoons and games. Though, many parents are not watchful on how long and how often the games should last, the results of this is obesity in children especially those in towns as they feed on junk food while sitting down for many hours a day (Chair Person of Small Christian Community Z, 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2022).*

According to Benedict XVI (2007), people use MICT, which influences their lifestyles negatively.

### **The Adverse Effects of MICT in Catholic Families by the Parents**

The adverse effects of Modern Information and Communication Technology (MICT) on Christian families in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru as perceived by parents are illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2: The Effects of MICT in Catholic Families by Parents**

Adverse Effects of MICT	SA		A		N		D		SD		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Parenting during this era of MICT is a challenge.	59	63.2	15	20.1	3	1.4	2	0.6	9	10.9	1.79
Some parents over-concentrate on MICT creating less time for their children.	67	66.2	20	23.2	2	0.5	3	2.6	2	1.3	1.38
Use of MIC affects interpersonal relationship of family members.	50	61.1	20	21.4	7	1.9	9	8.9	2	0.6	1.71
MICT exposes children and youth to cyber bullying.	60	63.7	30	29.1	2	0.3	1	0.2	2	1.3	1.38
Over-use of MICT leads to online addiction.	54	59.4	23	22.2	2	1.3	9	8.9	2	0.9	1.72
MICT destroys family bonds.	68	40.7	30	27.9	2	1.3	3	1.9	10	10.9	2.14
MICT exposes children to Pornography.	62	54.8	18	20.1	3	1.2	2	1.3	9	8.4	1.81
MICT makes children deviate from Christian values.	60	53.7	23	22.7	2	1.5	2	1.6	3	1.4	1.56
Lack of MICT in churches makes children and youth not to attend church regularly.	50	57.5	20	26.5	2	2.1	3	3.9	4	3.2	1.60
MICT breeds illicit behavior such as commercial sex, drugs and substance abuse.	52	48.5	25	27.3	6	5.7	3	3.4	7	8.1	1.91
MICT is among the causes of divorce and separation.	54	48.9	15	17.1	14	16.3	5	4.9	3	2.5	1.87
MICT can lead to psychological issues.	49	43.5	25	31.8	16	14.1	5	4.5	2	1.5	1.84
MICT results in lifestyle conditions such as obesity.	50	44.6	28	34.1	6	3.5	10	9.8	3	2.4	1.90

The study found that majority Table of parents strongly agreed that parenting during this era of MICT is a challenge. The research registered a mean of 1.79 confirming the consent of the parents under study that parenting is a challenge during this era of modern technology. To attest to the findings; one of the religious leaders cited the following during the interview:

*Modern Information and Communication Technology (MICT) devices such as mobile phones introduce the youth to pornography and eventually to pre-marital sex which attract them to immoral behaviour and early marriages, this consumes the ample time*

*allocated for academics and family prayers (Chair Person of Small Christian Community M, 7<sup>th</sup> / August / 2022).*

These findings concur with Lauren, John and Lisa (2016) that, parenting is difficult with MICT offering more materials to children, which may not be of use to their integral formation

A mean of 1.38 was realized as evidence that some parents over-concentrate on MICT creating less time for their children. Similarly, a mean of 1.71 was achieved on whether the use of MICT affects interpersonal relationship of family members showing that the use of MICT affects interpersonal relationship of family members in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. The Parish Priest had a similar opinion that the use of modern Information and Communication Technology (MICT) has posed challenges to families worldwide by creating visible dichotomies, isolation and loneliness among family members because of one or some members feeling comfortable with his/her MICT gadget at the expense of the family. During the interview the parish Priest narrated that:

*Some parents carry home, some office work which compel them to use either their mobile phones or laptops which consumes the time to share and be with their children or family. To calm the children, the parent (s) allow them watch programs of their choice just to keep them busy as they work. Children especially those in town are left in the hands of house helps as their mothers who may not bother to monitor and strike a balance between leisure and other core activities for children, therefore, the major source of information for the child and the youth is MICT (The Parish Priest N, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2022).*

The results concur with Fletcher, et al. (2015) finding that, it is not only children who are contributing to social dichotomy in families; parents are equally guilty of contributing to social distancing in families due to addiction to MICT.

When the respondents were asked whether MICT exposes children and youth to cyber bullying in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, a majority of the parents of the respondents strongly agreed that MICT exposes children and youth to cyber bullying. This was further evidenced by a mean of 1.38. In addition, a similar finding in Undiyaundeye (2014) explains that, the infiltration of MICT among family members has resulted in emotional social phobia and cyber bullying. From the findings, majority of the parents strongly agreed that over-use of MICT leads to online addiction, indicated by a mean of 1.72 on average. In support of the above finding that over-use of MICT leads to online addiction, one of the Catechist states that:

*Having been a Catechist for many years before and during this era of MICT, social fabric and relations have changed even among Christians. Before modern technology, people could stop and greet each other for some minutes. Today, people walk with their mobile phones in their hands and fully engaged, no time for others even those whom they share the same roof with (Catechist X, 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2022).*

This finding was supported by Gold, Guthrie and Wank (2002) that, those who are lonely or have poor social skills due to MICT addiction, run the risk of obsessive and destructive Internet use and eventually, reduced well-being.

The study recorded a mean of 1.81 on average demonstrating the use of MICT in exposing children to pornography. The findings indicate that the majority of the parents strongly agreed that MICT exposes children to Pornography. During interview, one of the senior Parish Priest

proclaimed the following in support of the fact that MICT exposes children and the youth to pornography:

*Today some of the children and youth are experiencing sleepless nights having watched pornography, which has changed their emotions and feelings. Yet most of these children find it difficult to open up to their caretakers or parents, therefore, they seem to be suffering in silent. Some experience nightmares, others screaming due to anxiety (Parish Priest P, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2022).*

In view of Procentese, Gatti and Immacolate (2019), MICT has contributed to exposure to pornography with a negative impact on their mental health.

On whether MICT makes children deviate from Christian values from the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya, majority of the parents strongly agreed that MICT makes children deviate from Christian values such as prayers. In addition, on average, a mean of 1.56 was observed showing that MICT makes children deviate from Christian values in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. Echenje (2021) confirms that, MICT has wrecked human relations and is slowly eroding Christian values and prayer life in Christian families. Majority of the parents strongly agreed that lack of MICT in churches makes children and youth not to attend church regularly. In addition, the mean on whether lack of MICT in churches contributes to irregular attendance to the church by the children and the youth was 1.60 indicating that majority of the parents agreed that lack of MICT in churches makes children and youth irregular attendants in the church. In support of the above findings, lack of MICT in churches makes children and youth not to attend church regularly, during Focus Group Discussion (FGD), one of the youths narrated that:

*Youths enjoy attending the Eucharistic celebration in churches where the readings and songs are projected on the screen. It is one way of responding to the signs of time, the digital era. Many children and youths flock such churches any time of the day (Youth B, 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2022).*

The findings showed that a majority of the parents strongly agreed that that MICT breeds illicit behaviour such as commercial sex, drugs and substance abuse. These results were reinforced by a mean of 1.91 on average. Njoroge (2013), adds that, the use of MICT propagates illicit behaviour. The study sought to interrogate if MICT is among the causes of divorce and separation in Christian families within Nakuru Diocese. According to the findings majority of the parents strongly agreed that MICT is among the causes of divorce and separation in Christian families. This result was backed by a mean of 1.87. Other studies reported the same results that MICT leads to poor social interactions, separation and divorce (Young, 2001; McGrath, 2012; & Ticona & Tupac 2016).

According to the findings on whether MICT can lead to psychological issues among Christian families, majority of the parents strongly agreed that MICT can lead to psychological issues. A mean of 1.84 supported this finding. It is worth noting that online hate and threatening behaviour based on race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or transgender identity can lead to psychological issues (House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, (2019). Procentese, Gatti and Immacolate (2019) explains further that, exposure to pornography affects children's psychological wellbeing. From the findings, majority of the parents strongly agreed that MICT results in lifestyle conditions such as obesity. During interview, in agreement with the above findings that MICT use results in lifestyle conditions such as obesity, one of the parents explained that:

*Life style conditions such as obesity and high blood pressure which was common in the recent past among children from the rich families because of over eating and being fed on junk food, today, there is a paradigm shift, children irrespective of their family backgrounds, suffer from obesity due to lack of active physical exercise. During vacations, most of them visit cyber to watch online series movies for several hours and feeding on chips for lunch to enjoy these addictive movies without the knowledge of their parents (Parent B, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2022).*

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study concluded that the use of MICT has weakened the interpersonal relationships among family members. For instance, warm relationship between husband and wife and similarly, the cordial relationship between parents and their children. The research has also observed that, MICT has contributed to poor parenting or lack of parenting roles. Consequently, children have been left alone without parental guidance on what to do. Some have opted to seek advice and solace from social media and eventually became addicted to MICT. The study concluded further that, MICT has exposed children to pornography, which has attracted them to premarital sex and early marriages. In addition, the study concluded that, the use of digital technology in communication has introduced families to conflict due to personal interest in watching preferred programme and cyber-crimes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends that, the government of Kenya to come up with attainable and practical guidelines on the type of MICT programs to be airing in TV and the quality of their contents before airing or posting them in the social platforms in order to protect families and other innocent users from detrimental content. The study recommends that, religious leaders: The Priests, Catechists and Chair Persons of Small Christian Communities to offer technical and moral guidance on how to engage MICT devices to contain their misuse. In addition, they ought to explain the consequences of the adverse effects of MICT devices on Christian values and commitment to the three cardinal virtues: faith, hope and love. Priests supported by the Bishops of their respective Dioceses should hold forums on the adverse effects of MICT and at the same time, work towards illicit data protection or preservation from being accessed by everyone more so, the children. The study further recommends families to initiate open sharing, fraternal corrections, unconditional love and uninterrupted family prayers as preventive actions in order to contain the dangers arising from the negative usage of MICT. The study recommends parental control over the number of hours children and the rest of the family members can use their devices to create time for family recreations, meals, sharing, prayers and rest. In addition, parents should not replace physical games and toys with mobile phones.

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