

2406156  
Ako Uno  
ECA Y6005  
Assessment 2  
Portfolio

Identify 4 images which represent families in the 21st century. Then compare and contrast these images to explore, in depth, how social media can influence current representations of family within society.

2406156

Assessment 2

## Table of Contents

|                                       |    |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Written Component (Add a title) ..... | 3  |
| Appendix 1 (Image 1).....             | 4  |
| Appendix 2 (Image 2).....             | 6  |
| Appendix 3 (Image 3).....             | 8  |
| Appendix 4 (Image 4).....             | 10 |
| Reference List.....                   | 14 |

## Written Component (Add a title)

# The Impact of Social Media on Diverse Family Structures in the 21st Century

### Introduction

In the 21st century, different forms of family have become increasingly recognised. The ease of international exchange has led to an increase in international marriages, with people living away from their families, or the increase in nuclear families, with people living apart from their elderly family members. The impact of social networking on these extended and transnational families is significant. Families with children with disabilities and families that include sexual minorities can exchange information in communities with other families with similar disabilities and communicate with others who are struggling with similar sexual issues. The 21st century has also seen a greater understanding of sexual minorities in general than before. What is the impact of social media on these LGBTQ+ families? The anonymity of social media now makes it easier to communicate with people outside the family. The impact of social media on families will be considered from the perspective of four family models.

## Appendix 1 (Image 1)

### Extended and transnational family



The University of North Texas Health Science Center (2020)

According to Sharaievska, I (2012), the Internet also allows extended and transnational families to stay in touch, to share pictures and to have online conversations with the use of web-cameras. Also, some people discussed scrolling old friends and family's profiles to check in with them because they had not talked in a while, something they had not done pre-pandemic (Pennington, N., 2021). Madianou, M. (2016) stated that it provides an online space where family bonds are reworked through 'likes' and comments. Additionally, it is considered that looking at pictures of their extended family, as well as pictures of their friends who had families made them feel that being a part of the family was a positive experience, which increased their family satisfaction (Sharaievska, I. and Stodolska, M., 2016). In particular, according to Parreñas, R. S. (2008), contextualised in transnational mobile communication, for instance, previous studies have shown how mobile device use facilitates transnational intimacy. Social media has thus had a significant impact on keeping in touch with family members who live far away, especially when COVID19 was prevalent. In addition, extended family also emphasise family bonds by commenting on these posts (Damkjaer, M. S., 2018). However, these exchanges rarely evolve into actual dialog on Facebook, as they seldom exceed more than two speech

units (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008). These show that while it is possible to keep in touch with distant family members and seemingly maintain or develop relationships, there are limits to how social media can strengthen their relationships. Social media also has an impact on families when parents and children are far apart, particularly in the areas of parenting and education. It is said that considering the popularity of SNS, many parents initiate a connection with children via SNS (Madden, M., Cortesi, S., Gasser, U., Lenhart, A. and Duggan, M, 2012). Also, the popularity of social networking may also affect family relationships and family leisure, as family leisure is associated with family satisfaction and communication, as well as the establishment of youth and family memories and traditions (Sharaievska, I. and Stodolska, M., 2016). From these, social networking has a significant impact on family and parent-child relationships. Mesch, G. S. (2018) studied parent-child connections on social media in relation to children's experience of cyberbullying and found that children with parents as friends were less likely to be victimised in the online domain. Also, children who had their parents as friends on social media were also more likely to say that their parents exercised greater control over their online activity. Mesch, G. S. (2018) suggests that this should be considered a "new type of parental mediation. Other studies suggest that by using social networking sites, parents extend their role in ensuring their children's safety in the online space and are also involved in media literacy education by talking to their children about their social networking profiles and privacy settings (Madden, et al. 2012).

## Appendix 2 (Image 2)

### Family with people with disabilities and impairment



MindfulTeen (2024)

According to Viluckiene, J. and RUŠKUS, V. (2017), far scientists have failed to agree on the benefits of Internet and SNS for people with disabilities. However, many authors of recent works also talk about positive life changes for people with disabilities or health issues brought by communication possibilities via SNS (Jaeger, P., 2009). Especially, the persons with disabilities have a stronger emotional connection and as sociation with SNS as a virtual community as compared to the persons without disabilities (Viluckiene, J. and RUŠKUS, V., 2017). Therefore, it can be said that social media provides an important opportunity for people with disabilities to communicate. Also, according to Kim, K. M. and Qian, X. (2021), it is said that SNSs provide opportunities for PIDD (people with intellectual and developmental disabilities) to interact with friends and family, which is often impossible because of limited transportation, financial resources, and support, and we can argue that It is clear that social

2406156

## Assessment 2

media not only facilitates communication with a large, unspecified group of people, but also encourages interaction with family members. In addition, Gilmore, L. and Cuskelly, M. (2014) states that approximately 50% of the total population of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is chronically lonely as compared with 15–30% of the general population. However, the social network of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities consists mainly of family (Kim, K. M. and Qian, X., 2021). Family members of people with disabilities are required to provide support, and often, support or permission from the family is also needed for the operation of social media, so there may be situations where people with disabilities do not have full freedom to communicate through social media, and the relationship between people with disabilities, social media, and their families can be described as intimate yet limited. However, social media can also have a positive impact on families with children who have disabilities. For example, according to Sweet, K. S., LeBlanc, J. K. and Stough, L. M. (2019), students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) primarily used social media to stay in contact with friends/family or to create new friendships and the majority of students used social media for finding information. Also, Schoenebeck, S. and Ammari, T. (2015) states that the behavioral component (taking action to achieve broader outcomes) involves answering other parents' questions, welcoming newly diagnosed parents, creating groups for sharing information or advocacy, and campaigning and fundraising on social media sites. Based on these points, family members and parents of individuals with disabilities can access information related to the same disability through social media. Furthermore, social media facilitates the exchange of information among families with children who have similar disabilities, allowing them to easily share information and answer each other's questions. As a result, social media plays a key role in promoting information exchange among families of individuals with disabilities.

## Appendix 3 (Image 3)

### Family with LGBTQ +



The Hollywood Reporter (2018)

According to McConnell, E. *et al.* (2018), LGBTQ youths who were not disclosed to their family were often highly engaged with and disclosed to their LGBTQ networks on the web compared with those who were disclosed to their family. Therefore, individuals who are unable to disclose their sexual identity to their families often come out through social media. However, the unintentional revealing of an LGBTQ identity, often through sharing with unintended audiences, was recognized as a risk of using social media for identity expression (Rubin, J. D. and McClelland, S. I., 2015). Also, according to Dhoest, A. and Szulc, L. (2016), in one interview, there was a person who created two separate Facebook accounts: one for family use and another for relaxation. In this way, while social media allows individuals to disclose their sexuality to a wide audience, it can also place pressure on them to keep it hidden from their family. It can also be argued that social media has the potential to foster rifts within families.

2406156

## Assessment 2

However, social media often provides significant support for sexual minorities. For examples, according to Curry, R. T. (2014), gay men, from non-accepting families, who use online social networking sites (SNS) to reshape their perception of the world and of self. Also, Craig, S. L. *et al.* (2015) state that anonymous social media activities ensure that participants' emerging LGBTQ+ identities are protected from premature disclosure and from socially significant individuals (e.g., friends, family) who may not be accepting. In addition, by temporarily blocking family members on Instagram and Snapchat only when attending queer events, limited privacy SNSs could benefit from soft temporary blocking, where people who are blocked are not informed and are only blocked for a set duration (Geeng, C. and Hiniker, A., 2021). In this way, individuals from sexual minority groups who are not accepted by their families can use social media to express their identities or temporarily express their true selves. However, it is likely that they may experience negative emotions when temporarily blocking family members on SNS or feel the pain of not being able to open up to their families.

## Appendix 4 (Image 4)

### Family Relationships and Excessive Use of Social Media



Mind Matters (2021)

According to Linda, Y. and Chassiakos, R. (2016), parent-child interaction decreases when the TV is on, and family functioning declines in households with high media use. Kraut, R. *et al.* (1998) found that increased time spent online is related to a decline in communication with family members. Also, according to Niedorys, B. *et al.* (2018), family relationships are gradually being replaced by online friends and activity on 348 social networks. Based on these findings, it can be inferred that as the time spent on social media increases, there is a potential reduction in communication with family members and a weakening of familial relationships. Also, according to Pantic, I. (2014), online communication with friends and family (today mostly done on SNS) is actually associated with a decline in depression. In addition, extensive use of SNS might weaken existing close family and friend interactions and increase feelings of

loneliness and depression (Pantic, I, 2014). Therefore, while it has become possible to communicate with family members through social media, it can be argued that excessive use of social media itself may weaken the intimacy within family relationships. Also, according to Burton, D. *et al.* (1994), smartphone addiction could also be affected by family dysfunction, and the negative aspects of the family environment are presumably key risk factors for smartphone addiction. Moreover, Kim, H-J, *et al.* (2018) state that adolescents with negative family stresses are more likely to be smartphone over-users. According to Niedorys, B. *et al.* (2018), the cause of excessive use of the Internet is a kind of "escape from problems", and the teenager gains the sense of acceptance and understanding which he did not get from the family. From this, we can argue that the deterioration of family relationships can be one of the factors contributing to dependency on social media. In light of these points, it can be considered that excessive use of social media and family relationships mutually influence each other, and the presence of the internet has created spaces outside of the family, which may contribute to the deterioration of family relationships. However, it has also been reported that social media can have a positive impact on relationships with family members. For example, according to Coyne, P. *et al.* (2018), using SNSs to stay in touch with family and friends, and maintain social connections can have a positive impact on their mental health and well-being.

## Conclusion

It is clear that social media has a significant impact on communication for extended and transnational families. In particular, by posting photos and videos, family members can share memories and create a sense of connection by commenting on posts. Additionally, parents living apart from their children may use the internet and social media to communicate with their children and promote media literacy as a way of educating them. In this way, social media

plays a substantial role in facilitating communication within families. Furthermore, for families with children who have disabilities, social media serves as a means of connecting with others who share similar experiences. Through social media, people with disabilities and their families can find communities of individuals facing similar challenges, exchange information, and communicate with one another. However, supporting the operation of social networking sites for people with disabilities also often requires the support of family members, and disabled parties may not be able to operate social networking sites freely. For other families with sexual minority children, social media has a significant impact: sexual minorities with family members who lack LGBTQ understanding or who are not accepting of sexual minorities may avoid coming out to their families and may not tell their families about may use social media to extend their community. Others use social networking sites while hiding from their families that they are gay using multiple accounts. While social media thus broadens the community of social minorities, social networking sites can also dilute relationships with family members. Excessive use of social networking sites has also been reported to reduce communication with family members. Conversely, it has also been shown that stress and negative aspects created by family relationships can increase social media use. While social media can increase communication between family members, its anonymity and the amount of information it provides can in turn worsen family relationships.

Social media has a significant impact on different families, mainly in terms of encouraging or enabling communication. Social media play a major role in communicating with families living at a distance, especially extended and transnational families and the elderly who are living separately from their children due to the increase in the number of nuclear families. In addition, families with social minority, such as people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ people, can use social media to share information and communicate in various ways with people from the same community. However, social media does not only have a positive impact on families.

2406156

Assessment 2

Excessive use of social media can lead to a weakening of family relationships and a decrease in communication. Furthermore, deteriorating relationships with family members may encourage excessive use of social media. Thus, family relationships and reliance on social media interact with each other.

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2406156

Assessment 2

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2406156

Assessment 2

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2406156

Assessment 2

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