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Computer-Mediated Communication Usage and Perceptions Amongst Rural Elderly in the Ningo-Prampram District

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ABSTRACT

With the advancement of technology, the widespread use of mobile phones for internet access has become routine for many people. This trend has also impacted how the elderly maintain social relationships, which is a crucial aspect of healthy aging. To address this research question, a survey employing questionnaires was conducted, targeting a large sample of elderly individuals aged 50 years and above in the Ningo-Prampram district of Ghana. The study revealed that a significant number of respondents were hesitant to use social media, primarily due to the perception that it could disrupt communal culture and social relations. These findings highlight the need for further investigation into the usage and perception of computer-mediated communication (CMC) among the elderly, including those from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Exploring these aspects could uncover valuable opportunities to improve the digital experiences and social well-being of the elderly population.

KEYWORDS

Communication, Computer mediated, Mobile Phones, Rural-Elderly, Social interactions, Social media

INTRODUCTION

Most nations' rural regions are experiencing faster population ageing than urban areas, resulting in a larger proportion of elderly citizens. Lower population density and more geographically distributed people make it more difficult and costly to create and maintain extensive service infrastructure in metropolitan areas, such as adequate roads and telecommunications services (Arcury et al., 2005). As a result, rural residents have restricted access to services and activities, and their status may worsen when paired with weaker socioeconomic situations. This disadvantages the rural population in compared to urban populations, and it may be particularly troublesome for elderly people, who may suffer a higher risk of social isolation, limited mobility, a lack of support, and health care shortfalls as a result of where they reside (UNECE, 2017).

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The United Nations defines older people as those aged 60 and up. It is frequently defined as 65 and above. According to the United Nations (2013), the population of elderly people will more than double between 2013 and 2050, rising from 841 million to more than 2,000 million. It is projected that by 2047, elderly adults will outnumber children for the first time. The number of people aged 60 and above is anticipated to double by 2050 and more than treble by 2100, growing from 962 million in 2017 to 2.1 billion in 2050 and 3.1 billion in 2100, according to World Population Prospects: the 2017 Revision (Sanderson, Scherbov & Gerland, 2017). In turn, the older population is growing older. In 2013 the proportion of people over 80 years within the older population was 14% and it is projected to reach (19%) by 2050 (Coto, Lizano, Mora, & Fuentes, 2017). The authors reiterate that by that year, there will be 392 million people over 80 years worldwide, which means more than three times the present number.

In the demography of Ghana, the elderly, people aged 60 and above account for approximately 7% of the total population, out of these majority of the elderly people live in rural areas (Mba, 2010). Mba stated that the ageing population of Ghana has been accelerated by several factors including rapid fertility decline and advancements in public health, personal hygiene, sanitation, and nutrition. The impact of rural-to-urban migration, as well as the stronger external family ties, have contributed to the rural population's declining growth. The elderly population like most people in Ghana needs to be socially and emotionally connected in society, a situation accelerated globally by the introduction of information communication technology and smartphone technologies enabling individuals to communicate with virtually anyone at any time (Sum et al., 2008).

The use of mobile phone technology allows instantaneous communication with others and has become a prominent method of socialization. The covid-19 pandemic has taught us that the internet is now the new way of communication, one that has forever changed the way people live and communicate. Many rural elderly have the desire of living the same life as their counterpart in the cities; however, the rural elderly suffer the deepest social and economic disadvantage where social integration and interaction is likely to be limited to watching TV and attending local folk activities such as a funeral, child naming among others. The problem of the high dependency ratio among rural dwellers makes it difficult to adopt the technology. Mba (2010) added that in Africa, particularly in the Ghanaian context, the majority of persons aged 60 and above are economically dependent. OConnor, Fuller, and Cortez (2018), opined that technology may benefit older adults in rural areas, however, a sizable minority of these elderly often do not use it. Technologies such as social media tools are low-hanging fruits allowing for greater connection through video-mediated visits and engagement in virtual communities among the aged (Dornovan & Blazer,2020).

Helsper (2008) maintains that the rural elderly have a low willingness to use the Internet to access government services online or through other electronic channels. Helsper added that where the rural elderly are deprived of amenities, particularly television programs, they are more likely to rely on simple mobile phones with dial-up access. Consequently, the internet will be less frequently used.

According to Favotto (2016); Wild, Inchley, and Currie (2014) traditional methods of CMC involve email, and instant messaging but currently, there are many diverse methods such as Skype, FaceTime, and social media sites. Currently, the most common methods are not bound to a desktop computer; portable laptop computers, mobile phones, and tablets have become more common communication tools (Arnold, Lucier-Greer & Mancini, 2015). Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire,1984; Kiesler & Sproull, 1992; Sproull & Kiesler, 1991) suggest that the text-based CMC environment reduces or filters out physical and contextual social cues and, as such, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop close, intimate relationships. With these problems highlighted above, the. purpose of this study was to determine how rural elderly people perceived social media and its use to maintain their social relationships The main objective of this study was to examine how rural elderly perceived social media and its use for social relationships It has been established that the digital divide leads to the social exclusion of populations based on different factors. Age has been a major leading factor in the digital divide, placing older adults into one of the largest affected populations (Tsai et al., 2015).

This paper argues that as technology advances the rural elderly either become unfamiliar, lag in the adoption of the new technologies, or are outrun by these technological advancements. The paper, therefore, seeks to:

- Find out the familiarity of the rural elderly with social media and its diverse platforms.
- Examine the perceptions of the rural elderly on social media.
- To examine how the rural elderly used social media to maintain social relationships.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The paper further attempted to address the following questions.

1. How familiar are the rural elderly with social media and its various platforms?
2. What are the perceptions of rural old people on social media?
3. How does the rural elderly maintain connectedness through social media?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

People's physical capacities continue to deteriorate as they age, resulting in reduced mobility and a significantly slower response time. Such mobility restrictions frequently result in decreased engagement in social activities, which may raise feelings of loneliness and lower morale and happiness with life (Erickson, 2011; Lin & Chou, 2013). Ageing well requires the maintenance of meaningful social relationships as a key element. Geographical distance to kin, impaired mobility, or time-consuming obligations such as caregiving may hinder older adults from satisfying the need for social contact, with the risk that these adults feel lonely, but have little opportunity to engage in social contact (Leist, 2013).

The recent advances in technology and online social networking can have large implications for the health and well-being of older adults. Litwin (2001) defines social networks as a collection of interpersonal ties that people of all ages maintain in varying contexts. While such ties may or may not be supportive, the terms "support network" and "social network" are often used interchangeably in the gerontological literature to refer to the same social aggregate. According to Chopik (2016), technology makes it easier for older adults to connect with their loved ones and kin and has made life more convenient to live. There are numerous ways that technology can help the elderly live an easier and more fulfilled life.

Clemental (2021) outlined the four most significant benefits of technology to the elderly. The benefits include socialization, safety, entertainment, and convenience. These are essential as human age and mobility become almost impossible. However, studies demonstrate a relationship between excessive social media use and feelings of social isolation and loneliness. It discovered that people who spent the most time on social media (more than two hours per day) had twice the odds of feeling socially isolated as those who spent less than half an hour per day on social media.

Social isolation is a state in which an individual is separated or excluded from interacting with others in their social network or community. This can happen for a variety of reasons, including geographic distance, physical or mental health concerns, a lack of transportation, or an intentional decision to withdraw from social interaction. A state in which an individual lacks a social sense of community lacks interaction with others has a low number of social contacts and is lacking in rewarding and quality relationships (Shvedko, et al., 2018).

Kusumota et al. (2022) classified technologies into three categories: "Internet use," which includes social networking sites, the internet, and applications; "communication devices," which includes smartphones, tablets, and iPads; and "types of communication," which includes the use of

interpersonal means of communication in the digital age, such as video calls and emails. There were positive results (63.6%) regarding the use of social media to minimise the perception of loneliness and/ or social isolation in older adults. According to the study, data suggests that using digital social media can reduce the experience of loneliness and/or isolation in older persons. Furthermore, the internet can facilitate better contact between older persons and family members, serving as a source of support, increasing a sense of belonging in the community and decreasing isolation.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MOBILE PHONES AND CELL PHONES

Parker (2022) believed that all living things are made up of cells, which are small elements that can exist independently. The cellphone is substantially smaller than a smartphone. Smartphones are in use by the earlier generations, who used telephones initially when they became introduced. This is the product of technological advancement. A cell phone might be a mobile phone; however, not all cell phones are mobile phones. For example, a satellite phone is a mobile phone but not a cell phone. Previously, distinguishing between a cellphone and a smartphone was simple. One could differentiate by any of these features i.e.: Touchscreen vs. physical keypad/keyboard. Slow versus fast. Cheap vs. Expensive, and so forth. However, today the proliferation of technology is making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between the two types of phones as phone manufacturers attempt to incorporate functionality from a smartphone into a feature phone (Xie, 2013). Parker maintained that Cellphones are small, convenient, and portable devices that use radiofrequency connections rather than telephone wires. Cell phones were first used in 1940. Smartphones, on the other hand, are portable devices that have all of the characteristics of a computer, such as a touchscreen display, an internet connection, and an operating system. They are known as "smartphones" because of this technical development. The table below summarizes the differences between a smartphone and a cell/keypad phone according to (Parker 2022).

USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG THE RURAL ELDERLY

A study conducted by Connect Africa Summit (2007) revealed that the rapid advancement in mobile technologies and their ease of use, coupled with their falling prices in both services and equipment have made it possible for the "mobile phone to become the ideal tool bridging the digital divide in Africa". Even the less educated such as children and the elderly, unskilled or illiterate can put the mobile phone to some good use because of its versatility and ease of use (Overa, 2006; Rahman, 2005).

A study by Berner et al., (2015) revealed that those living in rural areas used the Internet less than their urban counterparts. Being younger and higher educated influenced Internet use; for older urban adults, these factors as well as living with someone and having good cognitive functioning were

Table 1.

Mobile Phone	Cell Phone
They are used to make & receive calls and browse the internet	They are used to make and receive calls only
They are portable, but a handful.	The majority are portable and handy
The connection bandwidth is not limited.	The connection bandwidth is limited
They utilize an advanced operating system.	The operating system was basic
Include a touch screen and a full QWERTY keyboard.	Have a tiny screen with a numeric keypad
Have all the characteristics of a computer, such as a touchscreen display, an internet connection, and an operating system.	Use radiofrequency connections rather than telephone wires.

Figure 1. Images of keypad phone
Sources: https://www.nokia.com/phones/en_in/feature-phones

Figure 2. Images of smartphone
Source: https://apnlive.com/gadgets/smartphones-under-rs-22000/

influential. They concluded that solutions are needed to avoid the exclusion of some older adults by a society that is today being shaped by the internet. Similarly, Lee et al., (2021) conducted a study on the rural and non-rural digital divide that persists in older adults: Internet access, usage, and attitudes toward technology. According to the study, rural residents had significantly lower internet access rates (54%) than urban residents (66%) or suburban residents (66%) and (61%) respectively. Suburban

residents were less likely to use health technology than urban residents, while rural residents were less likely to use communication, financial, and media technology.

Hodge et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of internet use by older people living in rural and small towns because it affects service accessibility. In conjunction with Hodge's assumptions, Rosenberg and Nimrod (2021) however, identified some inequalities among elderly media users, emphasizing how older people living in small cities use a narrower range of technologies and emphasizing how access to technologies characterizes social stratification. To buttress the findings above, Casanova et al., (2021) study, revealed that the rare use or non-use of social media technologies is primarily due to privacy and security concerns, as well as technical difficulties. This is also the reason why the majority prefers WhatsApp over Facebook. The study suggested that widespread SNS-focused online communication training interventions for the rural elderly be implemented.

Johnson (2013), discovered that 45 of the elderly utilized the internet for other reasons and did not use social media due to different restrictions in a study of social media usage among the elderly. Lack of understanding and personal restrictions are the most significant barriers to accessing social media, accounting for (86.6%). This discovery was comparable to that of (Nefet al., 2013). To that purpose, Yu (2009) proposed that education may enhance the use of social media among the elderly.

A case study using both quantitative and qualitative methods by Harambam, Aupers, and Houtman (2013) suggests that socioeconomic status and skills are less of a factor in the take up of social media tools than culture, specifically age-related cultural beliefs regarding social interaction. So, how people feel and think about this technology in social life is of major importance. Similarly, Braun's study (2013) described above on the attitudes toward social media found that their perceived usefulness and trustworthiness had more to do with usage than ease of use or social pressures to participate online.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG THE RURAL ELDERLY

McCormack (2010) contended that online communication such as social media serves as an alternative to traditional communication channels and provides low-cost, easy-to-access self-help services for older adults. Harley and Fitzpatrick (2009) discovered a positive attitude toward social media use among the elderly in their study. According to a case study of a 70-year-old YouTube video blogger, video blogging was found a useful tool for elderly persons to share life stories and strengthen intergenerational communications. Similarly, Smith (2011) reported in his study that Internet users say that connections with family members and friends (both new and old) are a primary consideration in their adoption of social media tools. The study revealed that approximately two-thirds of social media users admitted that staying in touch with current friends and family members is a major reason they use these sites, while half say reconnecting with old friends, they have lost touch with is a major reason they use these technologies.

In a study, why don't the elderly use social media? Meymo and Nyström (2017), the study found that more technical and human resources were needed in local communities. The study also revealed that the elderly simply lacked the motivation to actively engage in technology, such as using the internet or social media. The study recommended integrating technology into their daily routines in places where they are socially active, such as community centres, which they highly valued. For the current generation use of technology is a daily ritual. According to Reifova and Fiserova (2012), computers and other new media tools are perceived as the sphere of influence of younger generations; though, these technological tools may be a significant socializing tool for older adults, particularly those who have been living alone. Dhar (2017) alluded to certain setbacks and a lack of motivation to learn to use computer technologies and smartphones in explaining why the current generations are considered dominant in the use of new media and technologies. Contrarily, Selwyn (2004) in his study points out that "*it is misleading to conceptualize older adults as nonusers or highly empowered silver surfers as older adults' use of computers more basic and mundane."*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To evaluate CMC usage among the rural elderly in the Ningo Prampram district, a survey approach was used. Through this method, many participants in various localities were reached to participate in the study. The survey instrument used consisted of a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions. According to the City Population (2021), the population of older people in Ningo Prampram is 10,280. A statistical table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) was used to determine the sample frame and size resulting in a sample size of 375 from a population of 10,280 rural elderly with a confidence level of 95%. Three hundred and seventy-five (375) questionnaires were issued; only 372 were returned and used for analysis.

The purposive sampling technique was employed to select the research setting in the Ningo Prampram District in the Greater Region of Ghana based on the assertion that purposive sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher regarding subjects who are representative of the phenomenon or topic being studied Brink (1996). The study setting was selected because the district is a growing one with more settlements moving into the industrial enclaves. The elderly were chosen at random from three communities in the Ningo-Prampram district: Prampram, Tsopli, and Dawhenya. Undergraduate student assistants contacted elderly passersby and invited them to take part in the study. Respondents were informed that the survey was anonymous and voluntary and that the information gathered would be used purely for research reasons. A structured research questionnaire was developed for the research. The questionnaire included basic demographic information such as age, gender, and education, as well as questions bothering to social media and text messaging, and mobile phone ownership. The same questionnaire was presented to all participants, who completed it during the data collection period. Data collected through the use of the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 from which descriptive and inferential statistics were computed.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This was anonymous and non-liked. All respondents were dully assured of confidentiality. For participants who could not read, the research assistants helped to read and explain the objectives to them. Only participants who agreed to participate in the study were given the research instrument to answer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Percentage Response

In the study, a total of 380 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. Three hundred and seventy-two (372) individuals filled and submitted the questionnaire, with a response rate of (97%). However, it was found that twenty-eight (28) of the respondents did not complete the questionnaire or the questions were not properly filled and hence there were excluded from analysis; leaving a total of 372 questionnaires to be analyzed.

Demographic Information

Table 1 depicts the demographic of the respondents 236(63.4%) males and 136(36.6%) females were surveyed therefore we can conclude by saying we have more elderly males in the Ningo-Prampram district than females. The researchers came to this conclusion by just observing the participants the day the research was conducted. The total breakdown of respondents is shown in Table 1 below.

Age of Respondents

Second, the ages of respondents in the table below (Table 2) show that slightly less than half of those who responded to the questionnaires were between the ages of 50 and 55. In terms of percentage,

Table 2. Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Per cent
Male	236	63.4
Female	136	36.6
Total	**372**	**100.0**

Sources: field study, 2023

they account for 178 (47.8%) of all respondents. This was followed by respondents aged 55 to 60, who were in the region of 96 (25.8%). A total of 56(15.1%) of them were between the ages of 60 and 65, with the remaining 20(5.4%) being between the ages of 70 and above.

The Educational Level of Respondents

Table 3 shows the current educational qualifications of the study respondents. Most of the study respondents 266(71.5%) were uneducated, those with form 4 leaving certificates comprising 88(23.7%) with the remaining 18(4.8%) of the respondents being graduates, even though the last group claimed to be graduates they did not disclose specifically what their qualifications were.

Mobile Phone Usage and Type

Figure 1 depicts the responses of respondents relating to mobile phone usage. From the study, all the respondents were mobile phone users with the majority (264(71.0%) indicating that they use keypad mobile phones which mostly did not support internet applications while the remainder (18(29.0%) indicated that they owned and used smart or touch phones. Additionally, the majority of the respondents 250(67%) had used a mobile phone for as long as 5-10 years. Another group of respondents, totalling

Table 3. Age of respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Per cent
50-55	178	47.8
55-60	96	25.8
60-65	22	5.9
65-70	56	15.1
70 and above	20	5.4
Total	**372**	**100.0**

Sources: field study, 2023

Table 4. Educational level of respondents

Educational level	Frequency	Percent
Graduate	18	4.8
Form 4 leaver Uneducated	88 266	23.7 71.5
Total	**372**	**100.0**

Sources: field study, 2023

62 (16.7%), had used mobile phones for less than two years, with the final group indicating that they had used the phone for two to five years.

There are two types of mobile phone categories on the market: smartphones and basic phones. To distinguish the phone from a smartphone, the term "basic phone" was coined. Basic phones are becoming less common as technology advances at an exponential rate. People have become more demanding of their cell phones, requiring a wide range of features. However, some people have chosen to stick with basic phones to avoid the complications that come with having a smartphone in their lives.

Many people may become perplexed by these two categories, as basic phones have become increasingly rare in today's technology-driven world. Comparison between keypad/basic phone and smartphone features, table 4 depicts a comparison.

Frequently Use of Mobile Phones

Respondents were also asked what they frequently use their phones for, to determine the purposes for which the rural elderly use the mobile phone. A little more than half of the respondents, 270 (72.6%), indicated that they use their cell phones to make and receive phone calls; however, 84 (22.6%) of the respondents use their phones to take pictures. The final group, numbering 18 (4.8%), uses their phones to send SMS-text messages. The frequency with which respondents used their phones is shown in Table 5 below.

Awareness of Social Media Platforms Among the Rural Elderly

Social media has impacted various facets of modern life and it has a profound influence on interpersonal communication. When the rural elderly of the Ningo-Prampram district were asked to indicate whether

Figure 3. Mobile phone usage

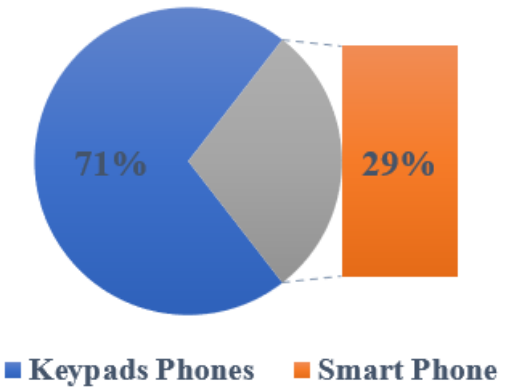

Table 5. Comparison between a keypad/ basic phone to a smartphone

	Smartphone	Keypad phone
Making phone calls	Yes	Yes
Send texts	Yes	Yes
Surfing the Internet	Yes	No
Download apps	Yes	No
Keyboard	Virtual	Physical
Camera	Maybe present or not	Always present

Table 6. Frequent use of mobile phones

Range	Frequency	Per cent
Phone Calls	270	72.6
Take pictures	84	22.6
SMS	18	4.8
Total	372	100.0

Sources: field study, 2023

Table 7. Awareness of social media platforms among the rural elderly

	Facebook		WhatsApp		Twitter	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	230	61.8	230	61.8	76	20.4
No	142	38.2	142	38.2	296	79.6
Total	**372**	**100**	**372**	**100**	**372**	**100**

Sources: field study, 2023

they were aware of any social media platform such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter as high as 47(78.3%) indicated "Yes" agreeing to say they were aware of such platforms and 13(21.3%) of the respondent indicated "No". The responses are represented in Table 6 below.

Perceptions of CMC Platforms

Regarding the perception of CMC platforms, the study established that most rural elderly were not using internet-enabled mobile phones with the majority 108(28.5%) strongly disagreeing. However, the study revealed that the elderly people in Ningo Prampram were losing out on social media usage with the majority of the respondents 206(55.4%) strongly agreeing with the question asked by the researchers. The study, on the other hand, could not establish whether elderly people in Ningo Prampram should be encouraged to use the CMC platform because the majority of the respondents totalling 206(55.4%) remained neutral to the questions posed by the researchers.

Table 8. Perceptions of CMC platforms

Perceptions of CMC platforms	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
More elderly people are using the internet	106	28.5	18	4.8	110	29.6	80	21.5	58	15.6
Elderly people are losing out on social media usage	_	_	_	_	148	39.4	18	4.8	206	55.4
Elderly people should be encouraged to use CMC platforms such as social media	30	8.1	20	5.4	206	55.4	18	4.8	98	26.3

Sources: Field Study, 2023

Impact of Social Media Use on Maintaining Social Relationships

The survey also sought to find out from the respondents the impact of social media uses on maintaining social relationships. Particularly, the study was interested in the usefulness of social media in social interaction, communal information sharing and social media as social communication tools. In this regard, the study could not establish the usefulness of social media as means of communication in social interaction, communal information sharing and social media social communication tools since the majority of the respondents did not own smartphones and therefore remained neutral to the questions asked by researchers. Furthermore, the majority of the 130 respondents (34.9%) stated that social media platforms were a major cause of deterioration in communal culture and social relations. Another group of respondents 106(28.5%) indicated that CMC/social media has been useful to them. According to Sauer (2022), some benefits of social media platforms to the elderly include: social media is an easy method to interact with long-distance family, social media can establish new friendships and reconnect existing ones, and social media can stimulate civic involvement.

Individuals and organizations can use social media to better understand, interact with, and respond to people. the rural elderly can collaborate, build relationships, and share information and resources when they use social media and social networking technology. Saltzman et al., (2020) suggested the digital world opens new opportunities to stay in touch with friends and family to avoid losing contact with others and to meet social needs. In the researcher's quest to determine whether computer-mediated platforms are social care tools, a significant number of respondents 206 strongly agreed (55.4%) that indeed CMC was a tool for social care.

DISCUSSION

The majority of participants in this study were mobile phone users, with the bulk of them using basic/keypad phones that did not support the internet as well as social media applications. Even though technological advancements have offered users additional options. According to Xie (2008), CMC is no longer limited to the text-based mode, which provides asynchrony and anonymity; rather, voice- and video-based modes are now available. The current study revealed that the majority of 230(61.8%) of the respondents who participated in the study were aware of the presence of social media platforms, however, they were non-users of social media for that matter CMC particularly due to the use of the

Table 9. Frequent use of mobile phones

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
CMCs have been useful to me	80	21.5	18	4.8	110	29.6	106	28.5	58	15.6
Computer-mediated platforms are tools for social care	74	19.3	35	9.5	39	11	18	4.8	206	55.4
CMC platforms are essential to emergency communication such as social interaction, communal information sharing etc	68	18.7	40	10.8	148	39.4	18	4.8	98	26.3
CMC channels/platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter make people gradually isolated	20	5.4	18	4.8	122	32.8	118	32.	94	25.3
CMCs platforms such as social networking sites are breaking down our communal culture /social relations.	36	9.7			116	31.2	90	24.2	130	34.9

Sources: field study, 2023

keypad phones. These results were comparable to Nef et al., (2013), who discovered that the major benefit of using social media for older persons is that it allows them to participate in intergenerational communication with younger family members (children and grandkids), which is valued by both sides. Privacy concerns, technological issues, and the fact that current Web design does not consider the requirements of older users have all been mentioned as impediments. In contrast, Harley and Bell (2013) determined in research that a significant percentage of the elderly (84.2%) owned gadgets that provide Internet services for social media use.

Social media is an excellent tool for connecting long-distance relatives and friends, as well as those with similar interests. Younger people have been eager to embrace social media, but elderly people have been slower. Similarly, to the findings of Nef et al. (2013), social media has offered a tremendous chance for those persons who fall under the senior citizen and older group in terms of improved social interconnectivity prospects (Nef, et al., 2013; Eggermont et al., 2006). According to the findings, the majority of respondents were apprehensive to use CMC or social media in general because they thought CMC was destroying community culture and social interactions.

On the contrary, an increasing number of studies show that CMC can aid in the formation and maintenance of online connections that promote the exchange of social support (Eastin & LaRose, 2005; Stefanone & Jang, 2007; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007; Walther & Boyd, 2002; Wellman et al., 1996). There is preliminary evidence that different modes of CMC may have different effects on perceived social support.

When respondents were asked about their perceptions of social media, the study showed that just 28.5 per cent of the elderly study population used social media. The elderly people of Ningo-Prampram were convinced that social media was destroying their communal culture, which was attributed to widespread non-use. Indeed, social media has been proven to have a good influence on people's well-being amid contact limits (Nimrod, 2020), and spending time with family through media has been linked to decreased loneliness (Ellis et al., 2020).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused primarily on rural elderly who were less educated and use mainly touched phones, as a result, may not know the benefit that social media brings to mankind.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study primarily focused on usage and perceptions amongst rural elderly in the Ningo-Prampram District which is a fraction of the rural elderly in Ghana. With the dominance of social media in our society and Ghana's drive for digitization, it is a worthwhile venture to find out how the rural elderly are coping with technology in general and social media in particular.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study's findings suggest several avenues for future research into CMC use and perception among the elderly, particularly the elite. A larger, more generalizable sample size would be useful in future research. According to the findings of the study, while rural elderly people are aware of the current state of social media, they are unwilling to use it due to cultural reasons and the high cost of purchasing a smartphone. A more in-depth investigation of the potential impact of CMC and related technology on social inclusion is required. This study on CMC usage and attitudes among rural elderly people raises awareness of its potential utility as a social communication tool that can help people improve their community social relationships.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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