

**INFLUENCE OF WHATSAPP BROADCAST MESSAGES ON INTERPERSONAL
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUTHS AND PARENTS**

MOYOSORE ALADE

Mass Communication Department
Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State
adenijim@run.edu.ng

GRACE OLATUNDUN JIRE-OLADIRAN

Mass Communication Department
Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State
ajokeadeolamide@gmail.com

OLUBUSAYO TEMITOPE KOYI

Mass Communication Department
Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State
busayokoyi@gmail.com

GODSGLODY JESUGBEMIGA ALABI

Mass Communication Department
Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State
gloryalabi18@gmail.com

Abstract

WhatsApp, a digital platform, with broadcast messaging as one of its features, enables users to send a single message to several contacts at once, promoting effective information transmission. This study examined the influence of WhatsApp broadcast messages on interpersonal relationship between youths and parents. The study defines the problem, first, defining the importance of a good interpersonal relationship between youths and their parents and then going further to investigate the influence of broadcast messages on the interpersonal relationship between youths and parents. The survey research method was employed in this study and questionnaire was used for data collection from the selected 100 respondents. Findings of the study reveal that parents make use of WhatsApp broadcast messages to communicate with their youth children, though, youths see some of these messages as information overload. Findings also reveal that respondents do not feel WhatsApp broadcast messages have improved the depth of communication or relationship between themselves and their parents/children. The study however recommends that both parents and youth should intentionally build strong interpersonal relationship as WhatsApp broadcast messages cannot and should not replace the emotional connections that come from face-to-face conversations.

Keywords: WhatsApp, Broadcast Messages, Interpersonal Relationship, Youths, Parents

INTRODUCTION

Digital communication platforms have gotten more and more ingrained in daily life in recent years, having a significant impact on interpersonal interactions and relationship maintenance (Holkar, 2022). The development of digital communication technology has had a profound impact on how people connect with one another in a variety of settings. WhatsApp is a platform that is very popular among users because of its many capabilities, which include text messaging, voice calls, video calls, and the capacity to send messages to numerous recipients at once (Church & De Oliveira, 2013). According to Backlinko (2023), with more than 2 billion active users worldwide as of 2024, WhatsApp has established itself as a vital tool for daily communication. Broadcast messaging, one of its primary functions enables users to send a single message to several contacts at once, promoting effective information transmission.

WhatsApp broadcast message function, which enables users to send a single message to numerous contacts without starting a group conversation, has become a popular tool for rapidly and effectively sharing information without requiring one-on-one discussions (Liu, 2024). There are several uses for this feature, such as sharing announcements and updates with groups and alerting them to upcoming events. Broadcast messaging can help families, in particular, stay connected and expedite communication, but it also changes the dynamics of family relationships (Taipale & Farinosi, 2018). This function gives parents a practical method to stay in touch with their kids, exchange significant information, and plan family get-togethers. Youths, who frequently use social media and messaging applications, may view and participate in the parent-child relationship differently if they receive broadcast messages from their parents. They may see these messages as information overload or some sort of disturbance from their parents.

According to Imam et al. (2023), social and emotional developments are largely dependent on interpersonal relationships, especially between children and their parents. These contacts were traditionally mediated by in-person meetings, phone conversations, and written correspondence. New conventions and practices have been introduced by digital communication, nevertheless. Broadcast messages on WhatsApp are a big change that presents both chances and difficulties for preserving and strengthening family ties. The emergence of digital communication platforms like WhatsApp has revolutionized conventional means of family communication (Omipidan & Sanusi, 2024). Although there are many advantages to these tools, such as greater connectivity and convenience, there are also some drawbacks and modifications to interpersonal relations. There is no empirical study on the precise effects of broadcast messages on interpersonal relationships inside families, despite the fact that WhatsApp and comparable services are

becoming increasingly popular. Previous research frequently overlooks the special role that broadcast messaging plays in family dynamics in favor of focusing on more general features of digital communication or the effects of social media in general.

The study seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of WhatsApp broadcast messages on interpersonal relationships between youths and their parents. The study's objectives include:

- i. To find out how WhatsApp broadcast messages affect the frequency and quality of communication between youths and their parents;
- ii. To examine the perceptions of youths and parents regarding the personal nature of broadcast messages compared to face-to-face communication and;
- iii. To investigate how broadcast messages impact the emotional connection and relational dynamics between youths and parents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of WhatsApp

The popular messaging software WhatsApp makes it easier to communicate across a variety of digital channels. Jan Koum and Brian Acton started it in 2009, and Facebook (formerly Meta Platforms Inc.) bought it in 2014. Providing a smooth and intuitive platform for text messaging, voice calling, video calling, and multimedia sharing is the main idea behind the app. According to Alsanie (2015) & Yeboah, Horsy and Abdulai (2014), WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform instant messaging application for smart phones and certain feature phones, that is proprietary and requires an internet connection to function. Apart from text messaging, users can communicate with one other using photographs, videos, and audio files, as well as by sharing their location through integrated mapping functionalities. When using WhatsApp to send a message, users are not charged. This is a result of the fact that WhatsApp uses an internet data connection to send messages. WhatsApp can handle a wide variety of message formats, including text messages, images, audio files, and videos.

WhatsApp makes use of an altered version of the extensible messaging and presence protocol (XMPP), which is an open standard. Installing it results in the creation of a user account with the member's phone number serving as the username. Depending on the settings, WhatsApp can also be used on laptops and PCs. Users will need to download an app player in order to download the online version of WhatsApp and utilize it freely and conveniently (Naresh, 2021). Users would type web.whatsapp.com into the computer browser's URL bar after clicking. There will be a QR code on the left side of the screen in the next window that opens. After that, the user will pick up his or her phone and navigate to WhatsApp's settings. There will be an icon on the setting that

matches the one that is reflected on the laptop. The user ought to click on it. Utilize your phone to scan the computer's QR code.

As of January 2023, according to Doris Sasu (2023), Nigeria had 31.6 million active social media users. WhatsApp is the most popular platform used in the country, with close to 95% of users. Facebook, YouTube and Instagram followed as the most used social media platforms in Nigeria. The idea behind WhatsApp is to offer a flexible, safe, and easy-to-use communication tool that can be used for everything from private conversations to business teamwork. It is a prominent player in the field of digital communication due to its wide acceptance and assortment of features.

Concept of WhatsApp Broadcast Messages

With the use of the WhatsApp messaging app's Broadcast Messages function, users may send a single message to several receivers at once without starting a group chat. This function makes communication more effective by sharing information with multiple contacts at once while allowing for separate chats.

Parents often send broadcast messages to their youth children for several reasons. Parents can swiftly and effectively communicate crucial information to their children through broadcast messages (Henard-Zolten, n.d.). This could be scheduling reminders, updates on family gatherings, or information on significant matters like health and safety. Community values and familial ties are important in Nigerian culture. One method to strengthen these ties and make sure kids stay aware and engaged in family and cultural activities is to send broadcast or forwarded messages. Parents can forward messages about scholarships, career guidance, and educational opportunities. This aids in educating their kids about opportunities and pertinent information that may have an impact on their lives in the future. Broadcast messages are frequently used by parents to impart moral guidance, religious lessons, or motivational sayings. These teachings can be used to instill moral principles, offer spiritual direction, or promote virtue. Broadcast messages can be used by parents to communicate safety advice or critical health information, particularly during emergencies or when there are public health concerns. By doing this, parents may make sure their kids are aware of any crucial safety measures or updated rules.

Broadcast or forwarded messages are a useful and culturally relevant means for Nigerian parents to stay in touch with their children, give advice, and convey essential information. The approach satisfies both traditional ideals and contemporary communication techniques, providing

effectiveness and wide applicability. It is safe to say the intentions behind sending broadcast messages on WhatsApp by Nigerian parents to their youth children is pure but the fact that there can be information overload and it is quite difficult for the children to determine false news from true ones have led some youths to block their parents on WhatsApp. Also, some parents communicate to their children through these broadcast messages, neglecting the role proper interpersonal communication plays between themselves and their children.

Concept of Interpersonal Relationship

The term "interpersonal relationships" describes how a patient and other people in their surroundings engage socially and emotionally in return. A social association, connection, or affiliation between two or more people is referred to as an interpersonal relation (Cherry, 2021). The link, connection, contact, and bond between two or more individuals is referred to as an interpersonal relationship, of which family relationships can be said to be the most important of all the different types of interpersonal relationships.

Our relatives, often known as family, are the people we are related to in some way, whether it is via blood, marriage, romantic relationships, or adoption. Strong ties between individuals and their families are ideal, but this is not always the case. These ties have been broken or weakened due to many factors, technology included. Family ties should ideally last a lifetime, but as kids grow into teens and then adults, they typically become more independent and the parent-child dynamic shifts to one of mutual support rather than supervision. Having open lines of communication with family members is crucial because, with proper nurturing of relationships, families may provide support for a lifetime.

As children transit from toddlers to teens to adolescents or youth, they become more independent and as it is in the Nigerian culture to sustain bonds to the end, parents have joined the technological train by "checking up" on their children by sending broadcast messages on WhatsApp to their youth children. These messages are sent to update and inform their children on updates around them in all spheres of life (health, marital, spiritual, moral, political, etc). It is rather unfortunate that instead of strengthening the family ties between the youths and their parents, it has left these ties the way they are, as youth consider these broadcast messages as untrue and information overload. Some youths have taken it extreme by blocking their parents on WhatsApp, thereby hindering them from sending these messages to them and further weakening the bond between themselves and their parents. Although, it is still unclear the current state of the interpersonal relationship between these youths and their parents, hence this study.

WhatsApp Broadcast Messages & Interpersonal Relationship between Youths & Parents

The influence of WhatsApp broadcast messages on the interpersonal interactions between young people and their parents has been varied. Positively, broadcast messages can improve communication between parents and their young adult children at once by enabling them to exchange updates, information, and critical news (The Legacy Project, 2013). By doing this, they may avoid having to repeatedly convey the same information and keep everyone informed. Broadcast messages, though, can occasionally come across as impersonal. They do not provide the same focused, one-on-one attention that one-on-one discussions can, which might lower the level of communication and make exchanges feel less significant or intimate (Happer & Philo, 2013).

It can occasionally feel intrusive to young people to receive broadcast messages from their parents or other family members, particularly if the communications are concerning personal concerns or are distributed to a wide audience. Feelings of unease or privacy invasion may result from this. Sometimes, using broadcast messages can result in misconceptions. These messages are delivered to a large number of people at once, so there's a chance that the tone or intent will be unclear, which could cause misunderstandings or unexpected reactions. A heavy reliance on broadcast messaging may result in less in-person interaction. A parent's level of engagement with their child may suffer if they begin to communicate crucial information to their children through broadcast messaging rather than face-to-face chats. Broadcast messages can be useful for quickly disseminating information, but they may not have the in-depth personal touch required for meaningful family connection. There are situations when this ease could be at the expense of the relationship's quality.

Depending on personal preferences, the content of the messages, and the dynamics of their relationship, young people's responses to broadcast messages from their parents might differ significantly. When sharing information, some young people find broadcast messages to be convenient, particularly when the messages are about reminders, general updates, or logistical information. It can help you keep organized and save time. Some young people may find broadcast messages to be intrusive, especially if the content are personal or if they are delivered too frequently. There are occasions when feeling "broadcast" to a big number of people—like family friends or distant relatives—can cause unease or a sensation of privacy invasion. Information overload may result from receiving several broadcast messages. It may become more difficult to distinguish whether communications are pertinent or significant if they are frequent or poorly targeted. Broadcast messages are generally employed in a way that maximizes

the likelihood of a favorable response. This includes their frequency, content, and tone, as well as how effectively they blend in with other kinds of communication. Maintaining a solid and healthy relationship frequently requires effective communication that incorporates both digital technologies and in-person interactions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed the survey research method to collect data for this study. The survey approach is designed to investigate people, their systems, motivational range, and manifestation, as well as their attitude and mental state. The survey approach was chosen in order to verify the prior assumptions and information that are relevant to this investigation.

The population of this study includes youth and parents resident in Ikeja, Lagos State. According to City Population (2006), Ikeja has the population of 227,482. Therefore, the population of the study 227,482 residents of Ikeja, from where the researcher will draw the sample size. The researcher adopted purposive sampling technique. In determining the sample size for this research work, the systematic sampling method was used. The researcher selected a total of hundred (100) respondents from the population. The sample of this research is calculated by using Taro Yamane formula with 95% confidence level. The calculation formula is presented as follows:

$$n = N / 1 + N (e)^2$$

Where;

n = sample required

N = number of people in the population

e = allowable error (%)

$$\begin{aligned} n &= 227,482 / 1 + 227,482 (0.10)^2 \\ &= 99.95 \simeq 100. \end{aligned}$$

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

A total number of hundred (100) copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents, out of which only eighty-three (83) copies administered were completed and returned. This represents 83%, while 17% of the questionnaire administered was not returned.

Table 1: Demographic Data

1.	Age	18-28 66 (79.5%)	29-39 16 (19.3%)	40-50 0 (0%)	51 above 1 (1.2%)
2.	Gender	Male 29 (34.9%)	Female 54 (65.1%)		
3.	How often do you use WhatsApp?	Daily 77 (92.8%)	Weekly 2 (2.4%)	Occasionally 3 (3.6%)	Rarely 1 (1.2%)
4.	How often do you communicate with your parent (s)/children through WhatsApp?	Daily 39 (47%)	Once a week 12 (14.5%)	Two-three times a week 24 (28.9%)	Rarely 8 (9.6%)

Source: Field Work (2024)

The above table shows the basic data of respondents. Table 4.1 revealed the ages of respondents. Respondents in the age bracket of 18-28 represent 79.5% (66), those in the age bracket of 29-39 represents 19.3% (16), 40-50 had 0% (0) and 51 above represents 1.2% (1). This indicates that respondents that participated in the survey fall between ages 18-28 with a higher percentage of 79.5%.

Table 4.2 also revealed the gender of the respondents. 34.9% (29) are male, while 65.1% (54) are female. This shows that most of the respondents are female.

Item three on the Table revealed how often respondents use WhatsApp. 92.8% (77) use WhatsApp daily, 2.4% (2) use WhatsApp weekly, 3.6% (3) make use of the app occasionally and 1.2% (1) rarely use WhatsApp. This reveals that most of the respondents make use of WhatsApp on a daily basis.

Table 4.4 shows how often respondents communicate with their parent (s)/children via WhatsApp. 47% (39) communicate daily with their parent (s)/children, 14.5% (12) communicate once a week, 28.9% (24) communicate two-three times a week, while 9.6% (8) rarely communicate via WhatsApp to their parent (s)/children. This indicates that most of the respondents communicate with their parent (s)/children through WhatsApp daily.

Table 2: How often do you receive/send WhatsApp broadcast messages from your parents/to your child?

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Once a week	11	13.3%
Several times a week	28	33.7%
Multiple times a week	12	14.52%
Rarely	26	31.3%
Never	6	7.2%

Source: Field Work (2024)

Table 2 above shows that 13.3% of the respondents receive/send WhatsApp broadcast messages once a week, 33.7% several times a week. 14.52% multiple times a week, 31.3% rarely and 7.2% never receive/send WhatsApp broadcast messages.

Table 3: Has receiving/sending broadcast messages increased how often you communicate with your parents/children on WhatsApp?

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	40	48.2%
No	43	51.8%

Source: Field Work (2024)

From Table 3 above, 48.2% agreed that receiving/sending broadcast messages increased how often they communicate with their parents/children and 51.8% disagreed to that.

Table 4: How would you rate the quality of communication with your parents/children on WhatsApp before you started sending/receiving broadcast messages?

Responses	Number of respondents	Percentage
Good	45	54.2%
Average	34	41%
Poor	4	4.8%

Source: Field Work (2024)

Data available from Table 4 above shows that 54.2% responded good, 41% responded average and 4.85 responded poor when asked the quality of communication between respondents and their parents/children before they started sending/receiving broadcast messages.

Table 5: How would you rate the quality of communication with your parents/children on WhatsApp after they started sending/receiving broadcast messages?

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Good	45	54.2%
Average	34	41%
Poor	4	4.8%

Source: Field Work (2024)

As shown in the Table above, 54.2% responded good, 41% responded average and 4.8% responded poor when asked the quality of communication between respondents and their parents/children after they started sending/receiving broadcast messages.

Table 6: Do you feel WhatsApp broadcast messages have improved the depth of communication between yourself and your parents/children?

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	35	42.2%
No	48	57.8%

Source: Field Work (2024)

From Table 6 above, 42.2% of respondents agreed that WhatsApp broadcast messages have improved the depth of communication between themselves and their parents/children, while 57.8% disagree to that.

Table 7: In your opinion, do WhatsApp broadcast messages express the same level of care and attention as face-to-face communication?

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	23	27.7%
No	60	72.3%

Source: Field Work (2024)

As shown in Table 7 above, 27.7% agree that WhatsApp broadcast messages express the same level of care and attention as face-to-face communication, while 72.3% disagree with that.

Table 8: Do you believe receiving/sending broadcast messages can replace face-to-face conversations?

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	16.9%
No	69	83.1%

Source: Field Work (2024)

From Table 8 above, 16.9% of the respondents believe that receiving/sending broadcast messages can replace face-to-face conversations, while 83.1% do not believe so.

Table 9: Whatsapp broadcast message content are better relayed in person than sent as broadcast messages.

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	3	3.6%
Disagree (D)	16	19.3%
Neutral (N)	31	37.3%
Agree (A)	24	28.9%
Strongly Agree (SA)	9	10.8%

Source: Field Work (2024)

Data available in Table 9 shows that 22.9% disagreed, 37.3% neutral and 39.7% agreed that WhatsApp broadcast message content are better relayed in person than sent as broadcast messages.

Table 10: Whatsapp broadcast messages lead to deeper face-to-face conversations between you and your parents/children.

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
SD	8	9.6%
D	30	36.1%
N	31	37.3%
A	8	9.6%
SA	6	7.2%

Source: Field Work (2024)

From Table 10 above, 45.7% disagreed, 37.3% neutral and 16.8% agreed that WhatsApp broadcast messages lead to deeper face-to-face conversations between themselves and their parents/children.

Table 11: WhatsApp broadcast messages help maintain emotional closeness between you and your parents/children.

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
SD	11	13.3%
D	21	25.3%
N	32	38.5%
A	14	16.9%
SA	5	6%

Source: Field Work (2024)

As shown in Table 11 above, 38.6% disagreed, 38.5% neutral and 22.9% agreed that WhatsApp broadcast messages help maintain emotional closeness between the respondents and their parents/children.

Table 12: My emotional needs are met through WhatsApp broadcast messages.

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
SD	22	26.5%
D	29	34.9%
N	23	27.7%
A	7	8.4%
SA	2	2.5%

Source: Field Work (2024)

Data available in Table 12 shows that 61.4% disagree, 27.7% neutral and 10.9% agree that their emotional needs are met through WhatsApp broadcast messages.

Table 13: How do broadcast messages affect the overall dynamics of communication between you and your parents/children?

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strengthens our relationship	28	33.7%
Weakens our relationship	3	3.6%
No effects at all	46	55.4%
Neutral	6	7.3%

Source: Field Work (2024)

Table 13 shows that WhatsApp broadcast messages strengthen the relationship between parents/children and 33.7% of respondents, weakens the relationship of 3.6%, no effect on the relationship 55.4% of respondents and 7.3% are neutral.

Table 14: How do you usually respond to these broadcast messages?

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
I usually reply	17	20.5%
I occasionally reply	27	32.5%
I rarely reply	30	36.1%
I never reply	9	10.8%

Source: Field Work (2024)

When asked how they respond to these broadcast messages, 20.5% usually reply, 32.5% occasionally reply, 36.1% rarely reply and 10.8% rarely reply.

Table 15: On a scale of 1-10, rate the interpersonal relationship between yourself and your parents/children ever since you started receiving/sending WhatsApp broadcast messages from/to them.

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	7	8.4%
2	6	7.2%
3	3	3.6%
4	5	6.1%
5	22	26.5%
6	11	13.3%
7	13	15.7%
8	6	7.2%
9	4	4.8%
10	6	7.2%

Source: Field Work (2024)

Data available in Table 15 shows that 51.8% of respondents' interpersonal relationship between themselves and their parents/children fall on the scale of 1-5 while 48.2% of respondents' interpersonal relationship between themselves and their parents/children fall on the scale of 6-10.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first research objectives sought to find out how WhatsApp broadcast messages affect the frequency and quality of communication between youths and their parents. Findings revealed that 47% of the respondents communicate daily with their parents/children daily on WhatsApp, with the remaining 53% communicating once, twice, thrice or rarely with their parents/children on WhatsApp. This corroborates with Doris Sasu (2023) findings that WhatsApp is the most active social media. This shows as findings reveal that 92.8% use WhatsApp daily and 47% talk daily with their parents on WhatsApp.

Findings also show that 61.5% of the respondents often receive/send broadcast messages. This confirms Henard-Zolten's study that parents often send broadcast messages to their youth children. Findings reveal that 51.8% confirm that receiving/sending broadcast messages has not increased their communication with their parents. Respondents were also asked how they would

rate the quality of communication between themselves and their parents/children before and after receiving/sending WhatsApp broadcast messages of which 54.2% responded good respectively. In response to research objective two which was to examine the perceptions of youths and parents regarding the personal nature of broadcast messages compared to face-to-face communication. Finding revealed that 57.8% of the respondents do not feel WhatsApp broadcast messages have not improved the depth of communication between themselves and their parents/children, 72.3% do not believe that WhatsApp broadcast messages expresses the same level of care and attention as face-to-face communication, and 83.1% do not also believe that receiving/sending broadcast messages can replace face to face conversations. 39.7% of respondents go further by agreeing that contents of these broadcast messages are better relayed in person than online. Findings align with Happer & Philo (2013) study that states that broadcast messages can come across as impersonal and does not provide the same focused attention one-on-one conversation does.

Findings show how broadcast messages impact the emotional connection and relational dynamics between youths and parents. 38.6% of respondents disagree to the statement that WhatsApp broadcast messages help maintain emotional closeness between themselves and their parents/children. 61.4% also disagree that their emotional needs are met via WhatsApp broadcast messages. This is confirmed as 55.4% of the respondents' state that the receiving/sending of WhatsApp broadcast messages between themselves and their parents/children have no effect whatsoever on the dynamics of their relationship. Findings corroborates with Happer & Philo (2013) that because broadcast messages can come across as impersonal, they can lower the level of communication and make exchanges feel less significant or intimate.

CONCLUSION

Although, it is general belief that as children grow older and start learning independence, they sometimes drift away from their parents not because they want to but because they believe it will help out their independence journey. Parents try their possible best to keep the relationship running but technology has in a way put a stress on the relationship. By sending broadcast messages that covers topic from peer pressure to marriage, health, spiritual matters, etc, parents believe they can keep up with the relationship between themselves and their children and vice versa but rather it is causing them to ignore their parents. It is evident that it is not intentionally done but because of the information overload and replacement of proper face-to-face conversations by these messages, youths have decided ignore the messages or occasionally reply.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the data analyzed, it was recommended that:

1. Parents should reduce the frequency of sending out broadcast messages to their youth children and focus mainly on building a good rapport with them.
2. Communication is never complete if there is no feedback from the receiver to the sender. Rather than keeping mute and not saying anything about information overload and whatnots, youths should ensure the communication line between themselves and their parents are kept open.
3. Both parents and youths must know that sending/receiving messages cannot build emotional connections and should not replace face-to-face conversations, as these are what help the interpersonal relationship between both parties wax stronger.

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