

THE PLUGGED-IN LIFE OF TEENS: IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AMONG ADOLESCENCES

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Abstract: New digital media have dramatically altered the communication landscape, especially for adolescence. With the growing popularity of Internet communication among adolescents, the Internet, social media, instant messaging and cell phones have become important social tools in their life. This study is concerned with examining adolescences' use of social media and the role that social media plays on how adolescents communicate with others on interpersonal level. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to the selected sample in the area surrounding district Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab in order to analyze the effect of social media on the interpersonal communication among adolescence. The data were gathered from 500 adolescents (ranged from 13-18 years). Findings show that adolescents rely too much on social media and their interpersonal relationships and communication has been significantly affected by it.

Keywords: Adolescence, Social media, Social networking sites.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades the world, in general and India, in particular has witnessed for remarkable changes in Information Technology and it led to the emergence of Social Networking Sites (SNS) which are currently being used by millions of Indian adolescences and it has far reaching impacts on their interpersonal communication skills. SNS enable rapid exchange of knowledge, high levels of dialogue and collaborative communication through text, audio and video. (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). It appears that in today's society someone may be lead on to believe that the Internet has begun to take over direct communication skills within families. Social media and adolescents have become a major topic in today's society or there may be a possibility that communication skills amongst teenagers may begin to diminish. Adolescents have now been given the tools and technology to maintain their lives without speaking a word to someone face-to-face. In contrast this may have a negative effect on their communication skills within their interpersonal life.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are several studies that have addressed the impact of social networking sites on the interpersonal communication of adolescence:

Shim (2007) examined the impact of the Internet on the face to face communication of teenagers. The study aimed to determine the relationship between high school students' use of Internet and face-to-face communication with family members and their friends at Carpnede Ischool in the state of Illinois, USA. The study found out that the Internet influences the behavior of students because it reduced the desire to connect personal, face-to-face communication with their families and friends.

Mecheel (2010) investigated the impact of the social networking on the social relations on a sample of (1600) young users of social networks in Britain, The results showed that more than half of the youth who used the sites, admitted that they spend more time on the internet more than on the real friends or with family members. The study also showed that about 53% of those who participated in the survey state that the social networks of Internet change their lifestyles.

Idakwo (2011) examined the use of social media among Nigerian youths. Findings revealed that most people use Facebook more than other social media channels in Nigeria. Also, most respondents concurred to the fact they use the social media especially Facebook, as an alternative to other conventional communication media. 74% admitted to using Facebook as an alternative to other kinds of communication.

Rantai, Hamdan and Hamid (2014) investigated the influence of social media in enhancing positive relationship among Youth. The variables discussed in the research were the purpose of using social media, the social media frequently used, and the usage of social media in enhancing positive relationship among youth. Findings revealed that the students used the social media for chatting, entertainment, and seeking news. The students also agree that the social media can be used to enhance positive relationship among youth.

Objectives

1. To explore the extent of adolescences' exposure to SNSs.
2. To determine the nature/patterns of adolescences' interactions on SNSs and
3. To determine the impact of SNSs usage on adolescences' interpersonal communication.

Hypotheses

1. There is no statistically significant effect of the number of hours of using social networking sites and interpersonal communication with others.
2. There is no statistically significant effect of the use of social media on the interpersonal communication of adolescence with others.

Research Design

The research design for this study is the descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey seeks to find out certain facts concerning an existing phenomenon. The area of the study is Fatehgarh Sahib District, Punjab. The choice of the area is for proximity and to ensure effective distribution and collection of data through the use of a questionnaire.

Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection is a self constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire has been designed for the purposes of the study consisting of three parts: the first part includes the independent variables such as age, gender and area, the second part includes 10 items about social media usage. The third part includes the effects of social networks on the interpersonal communication among adolescences containing 20 items.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The growth and popularity of social networking sites have generated concerns among school authorities, communication experts and socio-psychological researchers about the benefit and potential risks facing adolescences, as they engage in online social networking to cater for their social and information needs rather than oral or face-to-face communication. The current tools of teenage communication go by a peculiar set of names. Wall Posts, Status Updates, Activity Feeds, Thumbs Ups, Smilies and Profiles are some of the ways that teens today communicate with one another. The use of social media can directly shape and form the behavioural patterns of adolescence as they learn develop a sense of self and form their own opinions and judgments based on their interpersonal communication within online social networks. The communication techniques that they develop may possibly be a direct result of these learned behaviours and could be derived from their social networking. However, social networking could prove to be benefit or negative influence on teens and their overall behaviour and communication skills.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are discussed in light of the study objectives and hypotheses. The findings of the study showed the following:

4.1 Findings

Demographics

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the impact of the social media on the interpersonal communication among adolescence. A total of 520 adolescents were asked to respond to a questionnaire. Out of these, 500 participants who met research criteria were selected. Out of the participants 59% were male and 41% were female. The average age of the participants was 16.5 years. An overwhelming majority of 92.2% were between 15-17 years old, while 6.8% were between 13-14 years old. This indicates that all of the respondents belonged in the teenage years, with majority falling between mid and late teenage.

Social Networking Accessibility

Respondents were asked three closed ended questions regarding access to cell phones, computers, and profiles on the social networking sites. The participants in the survey reported they either own or have access to a cell phone with texting capability and a computer with the ability to connect to the Internet. Majority of the respondents i.e. 61.7% said they own mobile phones, 14.8% said they used cyber cafes, 12.7% said they used laptops and 6.7% said they used their parents' mobile phones. This results in easy access and the convenient option to participate in social networking.

Social Network Usage

- Almost 98 % adolescents spend more than two hours a day using the social media. 78 % of the respondents spend more than three hours on social media. 38.3 % of the participants spend more than four hours on social media at home or in schools.
- Friends or peers are the significant factor in introducing respondents to the Internet or social media.
- A large number of the respondents (86.4%) reported facebook as their first social media program and it was closely followed by Whats app with 83.6% of the respondents visiting it daily.
- Furthermore, chatting was the most popular initial usage of the social media with 79.8% admitting so. Becoming updated on friends' activities was at a high 65 % while keeping up with trending topics at 12 %. Zero respondents claim that they use the social media for playing online games.
- Since chatting was the most popular usage, it can be safely assumed that adolescence's interpersonal relationships and communication has been significantly affected by it.
- 92.8% respondents said that social networking sites have helped them keep in touch with friends, 94.8% said social networking sites helped them meet new friends and 79% agreed that they felt out of touch when they had not logged into Facebook for a while.

Social Media and Interpersonal communication

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to various statements regarding their use of social media to communicate with others. Respondents were also asked to answer various statements that reflected the prevalence of specific social media behaviours to communicate with others.

A high 93.2% respondents agreed that they use social media more while in waiting rooms, hospitals, gatherings etc. 74.6% respondents strongly agreed that their personal communication is done through social media, 54.8% either agreed or strongly agreed that social networking sites take away their face to face socializing time with family. A majority of 88.2% either agreed or strongly agreed that they prefer talking through social media than direct communication, 83.7% either agreed or strongly agreed that their diction has changed by using social media, 71.7% strongly agreed that they spend more time at home using social media than spending time with their family,

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to various statements regarding their use of facebook and whats app to communicate with others. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to a statement regarding their

perspective on how social networking has affected their interpersonal relationships. Results revealed that more respondents felt they rely too much on WhatsApp and Facebook, while the majority felt that their ability to communicate has been affected due to this usage. Also, the majority of respondents strongly felt that social media have helped them to make more friends. All the respondents admitted that the social media have helped them to be in touch with friends. Again, this proves the usefulness of the social media in improving relationships among adolescence. All respondents also feel that the social media can improve interpersonal communication between friends. This again reflects the power of the social media for cementing friendship. Respondents were then asked to respond to a statement that reflected a specific behaviour of communication; results revealed that respondents use texting/WhatsApp more often than Facebook to have conversations with others. It may be that the quick turnaround time and easier access to cell phones may be attractive features of texting.

4.2 Testing Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant effect of the number of hours of using social networking sites and interpersonal communication with others.

This hypothesis was tested with the help of the table given below:

Item	N	Mean	S.D.	Co-relation coefficient	Level of Significance
Effect of number of hours of using social media on Interpersonal communication	500	81.176	10.194	0.268	.01

To test the first hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficients were used between the number of hours spent on using social media and its effect on interpersonal communication. The results showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between the number of hours of using social media on interpersonal communication, which implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore, concluded that the number of hours spent on using social media significantly impact interpersonal communication among adolescence.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant effect of the use of social media on the interpersonal communication of adolescence with others.

This hypothesis was tested with the help of the table given below:

Item	N	Mean	S.D.	Co-relation coefficient	Level of Significance
Effect of social media on Interpersonal communication	500	81.176	10.194	0.289	.01

To test the second hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficients were used between the use of social media and communication with others. The results showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between the use social media on interpersonal communication, which confirms the validity of the second hypothesis. It is therefore, concluded that the social media usage significantly impact interpersonal communication among adolescence.

4.3 Discussion

Our results indicated that the majority of participants use social media frequently. In fact, our sample showed that our participants use social media multiple times per day. The continual use of social media indicates that it has become an integral part of daily life for these teens. Furthermore, a significant number of participants indicated they access social media while in class and home, either from a mobile phone or computer. This finding indicates that teens frequently engage in social media while communicating with others.

There are statistically significant relationships between the number of hours spent on social media and the effect of social media on interpersonal communication, which confirms the validity of first and second hypotheses, meaning that the use

of social media makes it easier for the participants to communicate with others. However, social media affects the interpersonal communication among adolescences. This is a logical and acceptable result, given that the subjects live in a social environment in which there are some requirements of modern life such as technology and Internet.

Educational Implications

This research study offered insight into a possible relationship between how adolescences are incorporating social networking into the ways they communicate with others. This research took a critical look at adolescences' usage of social media and how it impacts their interpersonal relationships. It so emerged that this generation has made social media their top priority and continues to need more usage in order to feel satisfied. The results and implications from this study can be used to improve relationships and communication through social media.

KEY TERMS DEFINED

Adolescence - is a young person whose age falls within the range from thirteen through nineteen (13–19)

Social media-refers to the means of interaction among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.

Social networking sites- virtual communities which mainly focus on user relationships' the members of this communities create profile pages of themselves which have information about one self ,their backgrounds and any vital information that may lead one to recognize another in these virtual communities.

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