

The Effect of Social Media on Interpersonal Communication Skills in Contemporary Society

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Abstract

This study looks into how social media affects college students' interpersonal communication abilities in today's world. Data were gathered through surveys and interviews with English and international relations students using a mixed-methods approach. According to quantitative findings, using social media more improves digital verbal fluency but has a detrimental impact on nonverbal expressiveness, listening comprehension, empathy, and face-to-face communication. This was corroborated by qualitative research, which revealed that students frequently prefer virtual communication and are less comfortable in face-to-face settings. According to the report, there is an increasing reliance on digital platforms, which might impede genuine human interaction. Social media seems to undermine emotional depth and natural contact in real-world situations, even as it promotes virtual connectivity.

The results also imply that students frequently utilize digital messaging in place of in-person talks, which may result in a drop in social intelligence and the quality of relationships. The study emphasizes how crucial it is to strike a balance between digital communication and conventional social skills in order to preserve meaningful and productive human interactions.

Keywords: Social media, interpersonal communication, digital interaction, empathy, university students, relationship quality, communication decline

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Introduction

Background of the Study

The growing use of digital technology in the twenty-first century has changed how people interact. Social media is one of the most significant of these technologies, changing communication styles across generations, professions, and cultures. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X (previously Twitter), TikTok, and Snapchat, which were initially created to improve connection and engagement, have completely changed what it means to sustain connections in a society that is more reliant on technology. Even though social media opens up new ways for people to connect through visual sharing, rapid messaging and connecting globally, it is also questioned because it affects how individuals interact with each other.

Social cohesiveness is greatly influenced by interpersonal communication which is the act of sharing ideas, feelings and impressions with body language and spoken words. Being emotionally intelligent, empathetic, a good listener and able to read social signs helps in having effective communication with others. At the same time, there is a concern that using technology too often can reduce our social skills, ability to use language well and our efforts to build real-life relationships. This study focuses on how much social media use affects interpersonal communication, especially among young adults today.

Statement of the Problem

Even though social media is everywhere and easy to use, its role in affecting relationships is still widely discussed. Some say that social media makes conversation easier because it allows people to talk at any time, from any place. On the other hand, detractors argue that continuous digital contact frequently results in shallow conversations, less emotional depth, and a deterioration in interpersonal skills. Concerns have been expressed specifically about young people's capacity for effective face-to-face communication, dispute resolution, and nonverbal cue interpretation in practical situations[2].

Given these worries, this study aims to investigate the following issue: How much has social media use impacted people's interpersonal communication abilities in modern society, especially among college students? The study looks at how digital engagement affects users' linguistic, nonverbal, and relational skills as well as if it replaces or enhances human communication.

Objectives of the Study

This study's primary goal is to investigate how social media use affects interpersonal communication abilities. The particular goals are:

To determine how frequently and in what ways college students use social media.

To evaluate how social media is thought to affect people's ability to communicate both verbally and nonverbally. To assess if social media improves or degrades interpersonal connections in real life.

To find out how students feel about interpersonal conversation versus online engagement. To investigate differences in how social media affects communication abilities by age and gender.

Significance of the Study

This study's conclusions are important for a number of reasons. First, they provide insightful information on how social behavior and interpersonal dynamics—particularly among young people—are impacted by digital communication. These findings may be used by educational institutions, communication specialists, and mental health practitioners to create plans for enhancing students' communication abilities. Additionally, the study adds to the expanding corpus of work in digital sociology, communication psychology, and media studies. This study promotes a more analytical and balanced approach to digital involvement in contemporary life by analyzing social media's advantages and disadvantages[4].

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

Because they are among the most active social media users and are at a critical juncture in the development of interpersonal skills, university students are the focus of this study. Only a few Pakistani governmental and private universities are included in the study. The study looks at how social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Snapchat are used and how they affect several aspects of interpersonal communication, such as listening, empathy, relationship-building, nonverbal expressiveness, and verbal fluency.

Theoretical Framework

Two important ideas of communication serve as the foundation for this study:

Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT)

According to this hypothesis, which was put out by Joseph Walther, people may build meaningful connections through computer-mediated

Communication, even if these interactions could take longer than in-person meetings. SIPT provides an explanation of how people adjust to digital environments in order to make up for the absence of nonverbal clues.

Media Richness Theory (MRT)

This hypothesis, which was developed by Daft and Lengel, asserts that the ability of various mediums to convey information and resolve ambiguity varies. While thinner media, like text messaging, may hinder interpersonal subtlety, richer media, like in-person interactions, are better at complicated communication.

Both theories offer a framework for assessing the impact of social media, which is typically thought of as a lean medium, on the depth of interpersonal communication.

Literature Review

Human connection is based on interpersonal communication, which includes both vocal and nonverbal forms of expression. Because of social media, traditional ways of communicating are changing which sometimes makes it difficult to tell the difference between online and face-to-face contact. The study provides insights on how people communicate interpersonally using new digital tools, mainly focusing on the effects of social media on communication skills, verbal and nonverbal. In this chapter, authors look at the role that using digital technologies has on communication, the use of language, emotions and how relationships work. It also points out important ideas, conflicting material and gaps still present in the studies examined which could guide future research.

The Concept of Interpersonal Communication: A Dual Modality

A fundamental component of human connection, interpersonal communication includes both verbal and nonverbal components. While nonverbal communication encompasses body posture, tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and even silence, verbal communication uses spoken or written words to communicate information, convey messages, and express thoughts. Each of these two aspects reinforces or modifies the meaning of the other, forming a holistic communication process. DeVito (2016) asserts that the synchronization of verbal and nonverbal cues is what makes interpersonal communication effective. This enables communicators to express not only the message's

literal content but also interpersonal dynamics, social meaning, and emotional overtones.

A crucial background for comprehending spoken comments is frequently provided by nonverbal indicators. For example, depending on the speaker's tone, body language, and facial expression, a simple remark like "I'm fine" might signify quite different things. In the absence of these indicators, the message might be misinterpreted or its emotional impact miscalculated. Just 7% of a message's significance is conveyed by words, 38% by voice cues like tone, and 55% by body language and facial emotions, according to Mehrabian's Communication Model (1971). This approach emphasizes how crucial nonverbal communication is for interpreting social and emotional cues. A large portion of this nonverbal complexity is either missing or insufficiently replaced by digital symbols like emojis, stickers, or response buttons in digital places, especially on social media platforms.

The balance between verbal and nonverbal modes is put to the test when conventional, face-to-face conversation gives way to online communication. Users of messaging apps like Instagram Direct Messages, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp mainly rely on spoken or written discourse with little visual signals. Emojis and GIFs provide some emotional context, but they are unable to fully capture the variety of human expression that occurs during in-person interactions. This means digital natives and others, could struggle to properly use gestures, emotions from facial expressions and body language in social situations. Maintaining relationships, settling conflicts and showing emotional intelligence will be affected.

Also, communication with others involves social elements and an exchange of information. Being influenced by psychological factors, a person's social life and culture. A lot of times in collectivist cultures like Pakistan, nonverbal clues matter a lot for showing authority, respect and different feelings. Some simple signs of respect in a speech are sitting still, not meeting the speaker's eyes and gently bowing. When people interact virtually, the signals that express the culture are usually lost or misinterpreted which might result in problems between cultures or the loss of established practices.

Being in a digital environment makes it harder to communicate with others since distractions and multitasking happen more frequently. People often multitask during online chats by doing other things which blocks their ability to engage properly. Due to split attention, our ability to communicate by speaking is affected, as is our ability to understand people's feelings. Moreover, because replies on social media may not

come right away, the flow of communication can be interrupted which may lower empathy, emotion and understanding for some meanings.

Feedback has important value in interpersonal communication but it is not mentioned often. Traditional types of feedback are live, quick and spontaneous. The speaker discovers if their words are having the right impact when they notice gestures like a frown, a smile or a nod from the audience. But, giving feedback in digital spaces is more restricted and it takes more time. Although an emoji, "liking" something or a "seen" tag indicates that the message was delivered, they cannot match the real-world quickness or feeling of a live response. As a result, presenters can't easily vary their tempo, tone and what they talk about according to audience reactions.

Finally, people need to practice interpersonal communication skills often in actual social settings. Although social media gives more ways to express ourselves, it can also prevent people from building important social skills like listening, helping with disputes and reading others' nonverbal signs in real life. More efforts are needed to improve how young people, professionals and students use social skills, as they use technology for almost everything.

To sum up, people use both language and gestures in order to communicate well with others. All activities like forming relationships, talking with people and using social skills happen through the combination of these two skills. As a result of growing social media use, how well people relate, interact emotionally and communicate is being threatened in modern culture. In the future, future insights and educational efforts ought to focus on restoring balance so digital knowledge does not come at the cost of human interaction.

Social Media's Evolution and Its Communication Influence

Over the last two decades, social media has changed a lot, moving from simple networking sites to complete platforms that affect the way people communicate, connect and look at one another. The main objectives at the beginning were to help people network with each other and have fun. After Facebook was founded in 2004, more social media sites like Twitter (now X), Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok and others appeared. These platforms included live video streaming, multimedia messaging, short-form content, and even customization powered by artificial intelligence. Interpersonal communication has been greatly impacted by this technological advancement. Geographical location, time zones, or even bodily presence are no longer barriers to engagement. Users may join in international discussions, start real-time chats, and express their feelings

through visual media with only a tap. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), this digital revolution changed the definition of "social presence," allowing individuals to engage in social activities without physically being together. As a result, social media has evolved into a key setting for establishing, sustaining, and occasionally ending relationships in addition to being a communication tool.

But social media's development also brings with it communication difficulties. Online platforms' format and structure sometimes put speed, visual attractiveness, and brevity ahead of emotional depth, clarity, and richness. Twitter/X, for instance, encourages users to communicate in 280 characters or fewer, which forces them to distill complicated ideas into brief statements. Much like Vines, TikTok and Stories on Instagram focus on short and eye-catching clips that rely more on music, bright filters or popular memes than on clear or distinct conversation. Because of this, people now tend to engage in conversations that are focused on material and planned rather than being based on old relationships or off-the-cuff banter.

How instant and asynchronous messaging affects how some people communicate. Users can answer when they are free using apps such as WhatsApp or Messenger and they don't experience real-time feedback like in face-to-face conversations. Even if being flexible helps smoothen things in intense discussions, it also lessens how quickly we react emotionally, cuts down on being responsible and can lead to misunderstandings since body language is often lacking in such situations.

Also, it is much harder to tell private and public communication apart because of social media. Private ideas may be talked about publicly and even private messages can wind up on the internet. As a result, people tend to get caught up in designing the way they talk or to hold back from discussing things that involve their identity. So, people start talking in a reserved manner which reduces honesty and openness, both vital for a true friendship.

Because of social media, using visual and symbolic languages is now more common. Many times, emojis, GIFs, stickers and filters are now considered essential parts of digital communication, replacing speaking. Though using these symbols helps express emotions in a unique way, they tend to be culturally vague and do not always have a lot of subtlety. A gesture that communicates agreement in a certain culture might upset people or seem misleading in another culture.

Social networking sites change our perspective on how successful communication and relationships look. Quantifying approval on social media by likes, shares, views and followers might cause users to worry

more about their online image than connecting personally with others. Instead of trying to make people feel deeply connected, communication is created to draw attention and encourage taking part. Because of this, a rise in social media networks may lead to weaker human communication.

It is especially clear that social media sites' attractive, tempting designs lead to attention being divided. The constant updates, notifications and stimulus showed by algorithms make it hard to keep our attention during both online and offline communication. Because it is called "continuous partial attention," this habit can decrease memory, emotional understanding and listening skills which play a key role in good communication with others.

At the same time, it must be noted that social media allows ordinary people more opportunities for participation. It enables those who feel underrated to be heard, helps people from different backgrounds communicate and forms groups based on their interests instead of their location. In digital formats, many shy or socially nervous people can express their emotions and thoughts that they can't in regular settings. In such cases, social media acts more as a way to further offline conversations than to take their place.

All in all, social media has changed completely the way people start, conduct and understand communication. Though technology allows people to connect, share thoughts and be creative, it can also place certain limits that might affect the realness and depth of relationships. How digital platforms design communication is now more significant as they develop and shape how people talk, listen and understand one another, both on the internet and in person.

Theoretical Frameworks: Explaining the Shift

Both Media Richness Theory (MRT) and Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT) offer understanding of how individuals update their communication skills in digital spaces. Joseph Walther maintains that people still build closeness with each other while texting, even in the absence of gestures or facial expressions. Unfortunately, it often happens that the number and velocity of messages on social media add difficulty to this process. MRT sorts communication medium according to their information communication effectiveness. C. Daft and K. Lengel developed it. Experts categorize face-to-face interaction as the most valuable form, because it lets us pick up all kinds of cues immediately. Meanwhile, since it is lean, social media usually has difficulty delivering personal or in-depth relationship messages. Attempting to connect like in

person, voice notes and video chats often lack the full emotion of talking with someone face-to-face.

Verbal Communication in the Social Media Era

In today's digital world, talking on the phone now looks very different due to changes in tone, speech clearness and the way we structure our language. There are changes in language use thanks to the influence of social media platforms on people's interactions. The limited space on modern phones, instant messages and the desire for fast communication have caused a casual and brief style of communication. Recently, instead of traditional emotions or information, we use "LOL," "OMG," and "BRB" a lot in online conversations. According to David Crystal (2008), this type of writing, often called "Netspeak," brings together elements from both written and spoken language so people can talk more freely and make exchanges faster.

Even so, this example points out issues with how people use language in speaking and its exact use. Meaning in face-to-face verbal communication includes how the conversation is said, the speed it is said and the language used. A lot of the fine details are skipped or misunderstood when seen on social media. Examples show that, minus voice signals and facial expressions, it's easy to mistake comedy or sarcasm for another meaning. Because of this uncertainty, miscommunications or conflict often appear during intense emotions in a conversation.

Also, using GIFs and emojis to stand in for certain spoken words adds a layer of symbols to messaging. This method can make it easier to understand certain messages while also creating extra challenges to communicate. Emojis usually show emotion or mood, but sometimes they are not clear and may mean something different to various cultures. Someone may understand an emoji differently which may make the spoken intent unclear.

Verbal language used to be mainly about having a dialogue, but now, due to social media, it is more about showmanship. A lot of people post messages on sites like X (earlier known as Twitter) or TikTok aimed at gaining likes, shares or followers, instead of talking with people they know. It means that storytelling now uses showy, alluring phrases instead of the slow, thoughtful words used before. This kind of acting-out can eventually shift how people interact with each other, making it focus more on looking good than connecting.

Too much use of digital communication for casual purposes can cause them to be less ready for education and work. The same researchers (Rosen

et al.) concluded that spending much time texting and chatting online made students prone to making more spelling and grammar mistakes in writing tasks. People may also find it hard to communicate clearly in important situations, because they often use slang, filler words and unfinished grammar when they speak.

Social media communication's lack of immediate engagement disrupts the usual way people talk. Real life chats occur on the spot, so you must react and display emotions instantly. Social media allows users to take a little time to respond, making things simpler but making the talk less spontaneous and expressive. Skills related to active listening, quick thinking and how people talk and follow a conversation may be influenced.

A reduced variety of words used in everyday conversations is also an important effect. With the rise of short forms, memes and templates, people might shy away from using fewer complicated styles of speech. Because of this way of speaking, someone might find it hard to express complicated ideas, convince others with arguments and use language appropriately in different environments.

All in all, social media has caused spoken communication to change drastically. While innovation and easy operation are included, creativity, insight and rapid thinking reduce. Users may lose the richness in how they express themselves through words as they become better at using digital language. Reaching good levels of communication offline and online requires being able to speak and write well, plus having digital know-how.

Nonverbal Communication in a Digitally Mediated World

Interpersonal comprehension is greatly influenced by nonverbal communication. It includes tone of voice, body posture, eye contact, physical closeness, facial expressions, and gestures—all of which are essential for controlling relationships, conveying emotions, and reiterating spoken words. A well cited research by Albert Mehrabian (1971) suggests that nonverbal clues may account for up to 93% of the emotional content conveyed in conversation. These cues offer extensive background that facilitates the interpretation of sincerity, emotional tone, and interpersonal goals in face-to-face situations.

However, the majority of these nonverbal cues are missing from digital environments, especially on text-based social media sites. Because communication using applications like Facebook Messenger, Instagram direct messages, and WhatsApp is disembodied, users must infer meaning using written words and a small number of visual symbols. Although stickers, GIFs, response symbols, and emojis have become popular digital

alternatives to tone or facial emotions, people's interpretations of them differ greatly throughout countries. One person's intended playfulness might be interpreted as caustic or dismissive by another. This fluctuation frequently results in misunderstandings and emotional disconnection. Even the speech and video functions on apps like WhatsApp video calls, Zoom, and Snapchat try to replicate some aspects of nonverbal communication, but they are limited. These instruments' efficacy is diminished by digital delays, low resolution, screen fatigue, and a narrow range of vision. Users frequently unintentionally restrict their expressiveness, avoid eye contact (because they are staring at the computer rather than the camera), or minimize gestures in these mediated contexts. The authenticity and emotional depth that are normally expressed through body language are diminished by these minor yet important adjustments. Furthermore, extended use of digital communication might impair a person's capacity to interpret nonverbal clues in face-to-face conversations. According to studies like Uhls et al. (2014), kids and teenagers who use screens a lot do worse on assessments that gauge their capacity to identify emotions from facial expressions. Because young people depend a lot on digital communication for their social lives, this decline in understanding emotions can affect them as well. Such persons may find it hard to manage awkward or uneasy conversations because of their disorders in areas like eye contact, interpreting social gestures and responding to body language when conversations happen face-to-face.

Because of the absence of nonverbal hints, the way someone controls a conversation is altered. When having conversations, gestures, nods and expressions from one person help speakers control the talk and pass the word back and forth. The real difference between real life and digital interactions is that live feedback vanishes and it is replaced by hints like the read message sign and typing notifications. an abrupt slowing of activity or frozen state can stand in for these signs. It makes it harder for the conversation to stay on track and people could become confused about involvement or enthusiasm. Not getting any nonverbal response such as a text message left "on read," can give the impression of something wrong—this can cause someone to feel uneasy, not about what was said, but about not knowing how the other is receiving the message.

Very often, nonverbal signs are used in Pakistan to represent respect, kindness or the job someone needs to do as part of their family. Respect shown verbally can also be shown with things like physical gestures, inclining the head or limited eye contact. Since these gestures only happen in person, it becomes much harder to make sure people are practicing

cultural etiquette, particularly among youth who are constantly using their phones.

"Nonverbal detachment" is becoming another cause for alarm because it makes people less responsive to emotions. People tend to express strong emotions using just an image or emoji when they use these more frequently. Persons may not fully express happy emotions if they often choose the crying-laughing emoji rather than laugh or smile themselves.

In essence, digital sites have their limits when it comes to expressing such things as deepness, quickness and cultural differences, though they can offer tools that help users mimic the way they communicate in real life. Using these strategies often may disturb a person's feelings and weaken social skills due to a poor ability to pick up or use nonverbal signals. Since emotions and truth in conversations are important, we need to consciously preserve and grow our nonverbal skills in physical situations as more communication happens online.

How Social Media Affects Empathy and Listening

One key skill in person that is hard to replace online is listening. People often have to think about many things at once when they use the internet. According to Koole and Veenstra (2017), students who regularly use social media find it difficult to stay focused during talks, particularly when multitasking and alerts are present. Furthermore, empathy—a vital element of successful interpersonal relationships—is also at jeopardy. According to Konrath et al. (2011), digital culture has contributed to a 40% decrease in empathy among American college students over the past three decades. Deep emotional comprehension is limited by the emotional "flattening" that takes place in online encounters, when expressions are condensed or substituted with symbols. The emotional resonance of conversation is diminished in the absence of eye contact, tone fluctuation, and bodily presence, which may limit users' ability to engage in compassionate virtual and real-world interactions.

Gaps in the Literature and Future Directions

Even with the expanding research, there are still a lot of unanswered questions about how social media impacts communication abilities in collectivist, non-Western societies like Pakistan. Since a large portion of the present study is predicated on Western individualistic theories, it could not adequately account for cultural quirks like the importance of social hierarchy, respect, and group belonging in communication. Additionally, there is a dearth of longitudinal studies demonstrating how sustained digital participation influences the evolution of interpersonal skills over

time. Furthermore, few research examine how users perceive changes in their communication behavior, even though quantitative studies frequently assess screen time or frequency of usage. Future studies must also differentiate between various platforms and their distinct effects on verbal and nonverbal abilities, since Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok all promote various types of contact. Qualitative techniques should be used in these investigations in order to record personal narratives, emotional depth, and lived experiences.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Both types of data were gathered by applying a mixed-methods study design. Thanks to this approach, the study can study trends and receive firsthand experiences from the participants, because the issue of interpersonal communication includes both statistical patterns and personal experiences. Numbers and statistics show broad patterns and how things are related, while single cases and observations give more detail about the whole phenomenon.

One goal of the study is to explore and another is to explain the phenomenon under study. It examines the way social media impacts our ability to talk and write to others and it defines what supports this effect. Gathering information with a cross-sectional approach made it possible to observe what university students were using for communication and social media at a set moment in time [6].

Research Approach

Consistent with positivist and interpretivist philosophies, the study makes use of a deductive method. The rational method starts by looking at general theories of media and communication and considers how they relate to Pakistani university students. Interpretivist elements came into play with the interviews to learn about their actual experiences.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches makes it possible to study and describe how social media changes our feelings, empathy and connections with each other.[7].

Population and Sample

Undergraduate students from Southern Punjab, Pakistan's English and International Relations departments made up the target group. The great importance of communication skills in their academic and professional training led to the selection of these departments.

Non-probability purposive sampling was used to generate a sample size of 120 students in order to make sure that participants fulfilled the study's requirements, which included active participation in peer or academic communication and regular social media use (at least two hours per day).

For the quantitative phase, 100 of these individuals answered a standardized questionnaire. Ten participants were also chosen for semi-structured interviews, which offered more in-depth qualitative information. The validity of both numerical results and narrative interpretations is supported by this hybrid sample[8].

Data Collection Methods

Questionnaire

Both closed-ended and Likert-scale items were included in the structured, self-administered questionnaire. Three components comprised the questionnaire:

Section A: Demographic data (gender, age, department, and social media usage frequency).

Section B: Platform types and their intended uses.

Section C: Individual perceptions of how social media affects verbal, nonverbal, and emotional communication.

Ten students pre-tested the tool to make sure it was clear and consistent throughout. High internal reliability was confirmed by the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, which was computed at 0.82.

Interviews

To extract in-depth personal experiences, a group of subjects participated in semi-structured interviews. Examples of social media influence, perceptions of changes in their communication abilities, and thoughts on digital vs in-person contacts were the main topics of the interview questions.

The interviews were verbatim transcribed, thematically analyzed, and recorded (with consent). The comprehension of the patterns in the survey replies was enhanced by this qualitative data.

Research Instruments

Among the tools utilized are:

- A well-organized survey comprising both scale-based and multiple-choice questions.
- An interview guide that includes open-ended questions specific to aspects of interpersonal communication.

- Audio recordings and field notes for believability and triangulation.
- The tools were updated after being verified by specialists in communication and education research[9].

Data Analysis Techniques

SPSS (Version 26) was used to examine the quantitative data from the questionnaires. To compile demographic and usage patterns, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were calculated. Relationships between social media use and perceived communication abilities were investigated using inferential statistics, such as regression analysis and Pearson correlation.

Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data from interviews using the six-phase model developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). We found and classified recurring themes and patterns in listening, empathy, verbal fluency, and nonverbal conduct. Deeper understanding and greater research credibility were guaranteed by the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data.

Ethical Considerations

The institutional research committee granted ethical approval. Every participant was made aware of the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously upheld. Before any data was collected, each participant completed an informed consent form. The information was safely kept and utilized only for scholarly research. Participants were free to leave at any time without facing any repercussions.

Limitations of the Methodology

Although the mixed-methods architecture provides breadth and depth, certain drawbacks are noted:

The longitudinal tracking of communication behavior was limited by time restrictions.

Biases like social desirability or erroneous recollection might affect self-reported results.

The sample may not be representative of other demographics because it is restricted to Southern Punjabi university students.

In spite of these drawbacks, the approach used yields accurate, trustworthy, and perceptive results that are consistent with the goals of the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

This chapter discusses the methods that are used for studying how social media changes college students' social communication. The primary goal was to see how abilities like empathy, how we express feelings and how we speak get impacted by using technology for communication. Credibility, dependability and depth were raised by applying a mixed-methods research design that combined both numbers and in-depth discussions to examine findings.

Part of the study required one hundred students from English and International Relations to complete a set questionnaire. Looking for patterns and relationships between social media activity and people's views on their communication skills was the core goal. Semih structured interviews were conducted with ten participants to get a detailed look into their life stories.

The main parts of this chapter are research design, the type of sampling used, the instruments for gathering data, ethical issues, handling and saving information, methods for analysis and the final conclusions. Every section discusses why, how and what happens as a result of every procedure. Because of the different methods used, the results are proven accurate, relate to the context and reflect the actual words and actions of the participants. By mixing these approaches, we can better understand the changes digital platforms make to the way we interact one-on-one in modern society.

Research Design and Rationale

This study conducted surveys and interviews, since using several approaches lets us study data in depth and across many areas. Social media research chose this approach to look into issues people face and the emotions they experience that cannot be measured, while also examining data about social media trends.

Using social media often, changes in communication skills and how old or young someone is were all set to be measured by the quantitative method. For ease of processing the data statistically, most of the replies were on a Likert scale which are closed-ended questions.

Because of the qualitative phase, participants were able to give more information about their digital habits, favorites and how social media influences their in-person attention. To capture issues that were planned and additional topics provided by the interviewees, semi-structured interviews provided a more flexible way of interviewing.

The researcher checked for any patterns numerically and studied them more already using qualitative information. For example, some people taking part in interviews revealed that having social anxiety or worrying about others judging them in person was the reason for their decreased self-confidence in person.

To make sure all aspects were understood, researchers used a mixed-methods design, since working with just one strategy could have been very limited. In the digital era, where emotions and behaviors are so closely linked in interpersonal communication, having this dual view matters a lot.

Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection

The reason for using non-probability purposive sampling in this study was to ensure that the people participating met certain criteria linked to the research goals. Students currently enrolled in English and International Relations programs at public and private colleges from Southern Punjab in Pakistan made up the pool of subjects.

Communication skills are very important for their academic and professional lives which is why we chose students from these fields. They reflected more on how they communicate in real life and how they engage online. Participants were required to communicate with others socially or for school at least twice daily using social media and that was a requirement for joining the study.

One hundred and twenty people were enlisted. Ten of these students were chosen for in-depth interviews after 100 of them finished the quantitative survey. To guarantee a range of viewpoints, the interviewees were selected based on their stated social media usage tendencies, department, and gender. To evaluate the survey's timeliness, clarity, and dependability, ten more students took part in a pilot test.

The sample provides a targeted, pertinent group that is actively involved in interpersonal communication and social media, even if it might not be representative of all Pakistani university students. The selected sample size strikes a compromise between the practical limitations of time, access, and ethical clearance and the requirement for generalizability.

Data Collection Instruments

A semi-structured interview guide and a structured questionnaire were created as the two main tools for gathering data. These instruments were created to assess a variety of interpersonal communication abilities, such as listening comprehension, empathy, verbal fluency, self-assurance in face-to-face conversations, and reliance on nonverbal clues.

Survey

Three primary components comprised the questionnaire:

- Section A: Demographic data (average daily usage of social media, academic department, gender, and age).
- Section B: Usage patterns: the kinds of platforms, how often they are utilized, and the context (entertainment, personal, or academic).
- Using a 5-point Likert scale, Section C: Self-perception of Communication changes.

With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, the survey demonstrated strong internal consistency and dependability. It took around ten minutes to complete and was given in English.

Interview Guide

Open-ended questions centered on participants' experiences with digital vs in-person contact were included of the semi-structured interview guide. Among the main topics covered were:

- Confidence levels during face-to-face vs virtual interactions
- Observed changes in how emotions are expressed
- Understanding the intent and tone of text messages
- The application and effects of stickers, GIFs, and emojis
- Cultural norms about communication

The interviews lasted between 20 to 30 minutes, took place in a confidential environment, and were audio recorded (with permission) for transcription and analysis.

Data Management and Organization

To preserve accuracy and the ease of understanding the analysis, all collected data was thoroughly and carefully handled and analyzed.

Quantitative Data

SPSS (Version 26) was employed to record and enter information from the surveys. Before further analysis, any outliers, discrepant cases or absent data were spotted through preliminary screening. Because we wanted the data to remain useful, we replaced the values where the data was missing. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means and standard deviations) were used for demographic and Likert-scale items.

Qualitative Data

All the interviews were recorded and then accurately transcribed. To find thematic trends, transcripts were manually categorized and arranged using NVivo. To guarantee transcribing accuracy and minimize prejudice, each transcript was anonymized and subjected to an independent review process.

An external hard drive and secure cloud storage were used to backup both datasets. Standardized labeling techniques (such as P1_Interview and P1_Survey) were created to make cross-referencing across approaches easier. In compliance with university data protection standards, data was stored in encrypted form for any future releases.

Analytical Framework

The two parallel tracks of the analytical approach—qualitative theme analysis and quantitative statistical analysis—were eventually combined in interpretation.

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to evaluate the questionnaire data. Among the important metrics were:

- How often people utilize social media
- The relationship between linguistic and nonverbal abilities and social media use
- Disparities depending on gender
- Using regression analysis to forecast in-person faith in communication based on screen time

Notably, social media usage and empathy were shown to be negatively correlated by Pearson's correlation, but digital verbal fluency was positively correlated.

Qualitative Analysis

The six-step paradigm developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used for thematic analysis:

1. Getting acquainted with the data
2. Producing preliminary codes
3. Looking for recurring themes
4. Examining the topics
5. Identifying and characterizing themes
6. Putting together the report
7. "Online Confidence vs. Offline Anxiety," "Loss of Eye Contact and

Emotional Resonance," and "Emoji Misinterpretation" were among the main issues. These qualitative results highlighted the emotional repercussions of digital communication patterns in the actual world, giving the statistical trends more depth.

Integration

During the interpretation stage, the results from both approaches were combined to create a comprehensive story. The reasons underlying the changes were revealed by interview data, which connected digital habits to interpersonal discomfort, communication breakdowns, and emotional detachment in in-person relationships.

Results and Analysis

The results of both quantitative and qualitative data acquired from college students are presented in this chapter. The goal is to examine the ways in which social media use impacts many aspects of interpersonal communication abilities, including listening comprehension, emotional intelligence, nonverbal conduct, and verbal fluency. Semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires were used to collect the data. Following an analytical discussion of the findings in light of the study's goals, the results are displayed using tables, charts, and thematic summaries[10].

Quantitative Data Results

Frequency and Type of Social Media Use

Questions concerning the respondents' preferred and frequency of use of social media platforms were posed.

Table 0-1 Daily Social Media Usage (N=100)

Duration	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	8%
1-3 hours	25%
3-5 hours	42%
More than 5 hours	25%

Most Frequently Used Platforms

WhatsApp (92%)

Instagram (78%)

Facebook (69%)

TikTok (47%)

Snapchat (38%)

Twitter (22%)

This indicates a tendency for rapid, casual communication and shows a heavy dependence on visual platforms and instant messaging.

Self-Perception of Communication Changes

Social media use caused respondents to rate changes in their interpersonal interactions[11].

Table 2 Perceived Impact on Communication Skills (Mean Scores on 5-Point Likert Scale)

Communication Skill	Mean Score	Interpretation
Verbal fluency (online)	3.8	Moderately positive
Face to face conversation ease	2.2	Negative
Listening and attentiveness	2.5	Mild negative
Empathy and emotional expression	2.7	Mixed
Use of non-verbal cues	2.1	Negative

These results imply that although students feel verbally competent when communicating online, they struggle in real life, particularly when it comes to emotional and physical gestures.

Correlation Analysis

The association between social media usage hours and interpersonal skills was investigated using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Online Verbal Fluency versus. Social Media Usage: $r = +0.42$ (moderately favorable)

Comparing Face-to-Face Confidence with Social Media Usage: $r = -0.46$ (moderately unfavorable)

Empathy vs. Social Media Use: $r = -0.39$ (moderately unfavorable)

The findings show that spending more time on social media is associated with improved digital fluency but worse interpersonal relationships in the real world[12].

Qualitative Data Results

Ten participants in semi-structured interviews provided further in-depth information. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data.

Theme 1: Confidence Online vs. Shyness Offline

Participants said they felt more comfortable sending voice messages or texts but were hesitant to share their thoughts in person. An English student remarked, "I feel anxious in class, but I can talk confidently on voice chat."

Theme 2: Shorter Attention Duration

Many students acknowledged that they had trouble listening for long stretches of time and frequently checked their phones throughout class. "When people talk for too long, I lose my train of thought; I'm used to scrolling and giving brief responses."

Theme 3: Disengagement from Emotions

Students believed that emojis were taking the place of real expressions in online interactions, which lacked depth.

One person thought, "We send a heart emoji, but it doesn't mean we really feel it."

Theme 4: Preferring Digital Connections Over Live Ones

Even in situations where individuals were physically close, participants frequently preferred texting over chatting.

"Instead of knocking on my roommate's door, I'll text her."

Integrated Analysis and Interpretation

When the quantitative and qualitative data are combined, a recurring pattern emerges:

Social media improves writing articulation, linguistic fluency, and digital expressiveness.

However, it also impairs important interpersonal skills including body language, empathy, listening, and confidence in person [13].

These results are consistent with other research (Turkle, 2015; Baym, 2010), which cautioned about the potential for emotional shallowness and diminished social cohesiveness as a result of extended digital engagement. Pupils often develop asynchronous communication styles in which they respond slowly and selectively. This has an impact on their capacity to have impromptu, emotionally charged conversations in real-time situations.

Furthermore, the false sensation of connection that social media creates can lead to a false impression of mastery of social skills, concealing the loss of subtle interpersonal indicators that are crucial in academic, professional, and emotional situations.

Results

Most kids spend more than three hours a day on social media. While listening, empathy, and nonverbal communication abilities deteriorate, verbal fluency increases in online conversation.

As digital engagement increases, face-to-face confidence declines. Although they are conscious of these consequences, students feel "trapped" by digital culture. In the digital era, there is an urgent need for awareness and training in the development of interpersonal skills[13].

Conclusion

Using both statistical and thematic approaches, this chapter offered a thorough examination of the research findings. It turns out that social media affects social interaction in two main ways. For one, students get experienced with digital channels, text messaging and showing emotions online. At the same time, people are becoming much less skilled in emotional understanding, listening closely to others, feeling comfortable in direct conversations and noticing expressed body language. The reality is shown in students' worries, hesitations and confusion in situations where computers are not needed. Many studies demonstrate that using social media a lot often makes students less comfortable in real-world discussions where they need to act impulsively and emotionally. Thanks to more digital advancements, people's direct social skills may be decreasing. They make it clear that striking a balance between online learning and practical communication is very important in schools. Excessive use of social media can keep us from developing important people skills needed in school, at work and in our personal lives, but still brings benefits like making it easier to speak to people quickly. As a result, the findings point to a new way of communicating amongst people in present-day society, along with new technological progress.

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