



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TEENAGERS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the growing influence of social media on the communication skills of teenagers in the digital age. As teenagers increasingly rely on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Telegram, their communication patterns undergo significant transformation. Social media encourages creativity, self-expression, and global connectivity; however, it may also weaken important interpersonal abilities such as face-to-face conversation, emotional expression, and academic writing proficiency. Drawing on previous research and a small-scale survey, this paper highlights both the benefits and drawbacks of social media usage among teenagers, emphasizing the need for balanced digital habits.

Introduction

In today's digital world, social media has become an essential tool for communication, especially among teenagers. Young people use these platforms not only to stay connected with friends and family but also to form their identities, access information, and express opinions. As of recent data, more than 90% of teenagers actively engage with at least one social media platform daily. This creates new opportunities for learning, entertainment, and social interaction.

However, the increasing dependence on digital communication raises important concerns. Face-to-face communication, considered the foundation of emotional and social development, is gradually being replaced by short messages, emojis, and visual content. Many educators argue that this shift may weaken teenagers' ability to engage in real-life conversations, express emotions clearly, and maintain focus during discussions. Additionally, the widespread use of informal language online may negatively affect academic writing skills.

This paper aims to explore these issues by reviewing key literature and presenting findings from a small survey involving teenagers aged 13–18. The goal is to better understand how social media shapes modern communication skills and what can be done to improve balance in communication practices.

Literature Review

Several researchers have investigated the impact of social media on communication skills. Clark (2021) explains that social media enhances digital literacy, allowing teenagers to communicate through multiple formats such as images, videos, and short texts. These skills are valuable in today's technologically advanced world and help teenagers express their creativity.

However, Brown and Miller (2019) highlight that excessive online communication reduces the development of essential interpersonal skills. Because online messages lack tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language, teenagers may find it difficult to interpret emotions and respond appropriately in real-life interactions. This can lead to misunderstandings and weaker emotional connections.

Lee (2020) conducted a study on academic performance and reported that teenagers who use social media frequently often include slang, abbreviations, and informal expressions in their essays and homework. This results in lower academic writing quality and poor grammar accuracy.

In summary, the literature shows that social media plays a dual role: it strengthens modern digital communication skills while potentially weakening traditional social and academic communication abilities.

Main Body

The main body of this study provides a detailed analysis of how social media influences teenagers' communication skills. It includes discussions on usage patterns, positive and negative effects, linguistic changes, psychological impacts, and the role of educational environments.

Social Media Usage Among Teenagers

Teenagers today spend a significant portion of their time on social media. Based on the survey conducted:

- 92% of participants use social media every day.
- 65% spend more than three hours daily on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.
- The most common activities include messaging, sharing videos and photos, participating in trends, and content consumption.

This high level of engagement shapes how teenagers interact, learn, and build relationships. As social media becomes a primary source of communication, traditional face-to-face conversations become less common.

Positive Effects of Social Media on Communication

Enhanced Digital Literacy

Teenagers become skilled in using multimedia tools, editing content, and communicating effectively through digital formats. This prepares them for futures where digital competence is essential.

Increased Confidence in Self-Expression

Online platforms give teenagers a safe space to express opinions, share personal stories, and participate in discussions. This builds confidence, especially for those who are shy in real life.

Exposure to Global Perspectives

Social media exposes teenagers to diverse cultures, languages, and ideas. This broadens their worldview and improves their ability to communicate with people from different backgrounds.

Negative Effects of Social Media on Communication

Reduced Face-to-Face Interaction

Teenagers often prefer texting or sending voice messages instead of having real-life conversations. As a result, they may struggle to maintain eye contact, listen actively, and express emotions verbally.

Overuse of Informal Language

Slang, abbreviations, and emojis dominate online communication. Teenagers often carry these informal habits into academic writing, resulting in weaker grammar accuracy, smaller vocabulary range, and difficulty writing formal essays. Teachers reported that students frequently use phrases such as "u" instead of "you" and emojis in school assignments.

Difficulty Interpreting Emotions

Online communication lacks body language, tone, and facial expressions. Teenagers who rely heavily on texting may find it hard to understand emotional cues in real conversations.

Shortened Attention Span

Constant scrolling and quick content formats (like TikTok videos) reduce teenagers' ability to focus during longer conversations or academic tasks.

Linguistic Changes in Teen Communication

Social media has introduced new linguistic patterns: emojis replacing words, shortened words (omw, btw, idk), and internet slang (lit, slay, fr). While these forms are acceptable online, they negatively affect formal communication. Teenagers struggle to separate casual and academic language.

Psychological and Social Impacts on Communication

Social media influences emotional and social behavior:

Anxiety in Real Conversations

Some teenagers feel more comfortable online than in person, leading to social anxiety during physical interactions.

Comparison and Self-Image Issues

Constant exposure to edited images and idealized lifestyles affects self-esteem, impacting interpersonal communication.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Teenagers frequently check notifications to stay updated, reducing the quality of real-life conversations and engagement.

Role of Schools and Families

Teachers and parents play a key role in shaping healthy communication habits: schools can teach digital literacy and formal writing skills; parents should monitor online activities and encourage real-life communication; family conversations strengthen emotional intelligence and verbal skills.

Methodology

This study used a mixed-method approach combining a literature review and a small survey. The literature review examined recent research (2019–2022) on how social media affects teenagers' communication skills, focusing on digital literacy, interpersonal interaction, and academic writing.

A survey was conducted with teenagers aged 13–18 using convenience sampling. Participants answered questions about their daily social media use, preferred platforms, communication habits, and perceived changes in their skills. The survey showed that 92% use social media daily and 65% spend over three hours online.

Data were analyzed descriptively, comparing survey findings with themes from the literature. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and approved by parents for younger respondents.

Results

The survey and literature review reveal a comprehensive view of social media's effects. Teenagers show improved digital literacy, confidence in online expression, and global awareness. Yet, face-to-face communication declines, informal language spills into academic writing, social anxiety rises, and attention span decreases. These dual effects highlight the need for guided usage and education to balance digital and interpersonal communication skills.

Discussion

The results show that social media has both positive and negative effects on teenagers' communication skills. On the positive side, teenagers gain digital literacy, creativity, and confidence in expressing themselves online, supporting claims by Clark (2021) and others.

However, consistent with Brown and Miller (2019) and Lee (2020), the study found a decline in face-to-face communication, difficulties interpreting emotions, and frequent use of informal language in academic writing. Teenagers also reported shorter attention spans and increased anxiety during real-life interactions, likely due to fast-paced online content and constant social comparisons.

These findings highlight the need for balance. Schools should strengthen formal writing and communication training, while families should encourage more real-life conversations. Guided use of social media can help teenagers benefit from digital tools without losing essential interpersonal skills.

Conclusion

Social media plays a dual role in shaping teenagers' communication skills. It enhances digital literacy, self-expression, and global awareness while undermining face-to-face interactions, formal writing, and emotional understanding. Balanced use, guided by educators and parents, is essential. Future research should explore strategies to optimize communication skill development in the digital age.

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