



“EFFECT OF GENDER AND INTERNET USE ON INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AMONG THE MANAGEMENT STUDENTS”

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ABSTRACT The objectives of the present study were to find out the main and interaction effect of gender and internet use on interpersonal communication among management students. A sample of 120 students (60 male and 60 female) with average (30 for each gender) and high internet user (30 for each gender) was employed in this study based on 2×2 factorial design. Tools used in the study were socio-demographic data sheet, online cognition scale and communicative competence scale. Results of the current study indicated that gender and internet use had significant main and interaction effect on interpersonal communication among the management undergraduates.

KEYWORDS : Gender, Internet Use, Interpersonal Communication.

Introduction:

Problematic use internet have sought huge attention of researchers to delineate its impact on various inter and/or intrapersonal aspects of human behaviour and health. Literature reflects that excessive use of internet has adverse effect on health, work, academics, sleeping and eating habit (Spada, 2014). It is positively associated with discomfort, anxiety, depression, poor life style and poor quality of life (Tran et al., 2017).

Prior researches have come a conclusion that excessive use of internet has adverse impact on the offline social, familial or interpersonal relationship (Kraut, Mukhopadhyay, Szczypula, Kiesler, & Scherlis, 2000; Douglas et al., 2008; Drussel, 2012). However, impact of excessive internet use on interpersonal communication is a less studied phenomenon. Once having developed a habit of excessive or high use of internet, individual spends more time and efforts in online activities i.e. chatting, watching online videos, playing online games, surfing, online shopping, viewing pornographic material etc. While spending more time online, simultaneously one has to cut off from offline activities, interactions and relationship.

In a study, online interaction was found to decrease the desire for offline interaction with people (Al-khaddam, 2013). This withdrawal or reduction of offline interaction is assumed to have an adverse impact on the offline interpersonal communication competence or skills of an individual. On other hand previous studies indicate gender difference in context of interpersonal communication (Bylund & Makoul, 2002; Furumo, Buxton, Pillis, Higa & Furumo, 2014). However, there is a gap in literature regarding which of the two genders is equipped with better interpersonal communication competence. Adequate interpersonal communication is not only a crucial aspect of healthy interpersonal relationship but also one of the indirect key factors of mental well being. Therefore, the present study was conducted to see the impact of gender and internet use on interpersonal communication.

Objectives:

The present study was conducted with objectives whether gender and level of internet use affect the interpersonal communication and to evaluate the interaction effect of these two variables for interpersonal communication among the management students.

Method Sample

The final sample of study consisted of 120 students of B. B. A. from 3 management colleges, in Raipur, C. G. Based on 2×2 factorial design, sample included 60 participants for each gender, which was further subcategorized in high and average internet users based on the average score of Online Cognition Scale (Davis, Flett & Besser, 2002). In this way each of the four cells included 30 participants. Participants were voluntary and it required the following criterion: management undergraduate students aged between 18 to 24. Mean age of male participant was 18.90 (SD=.93) and of female participants was 19.11 (SD=.97).

Tools

Socio-demographic data sheet

It is semi-structured, performa prepared by the researchers was used to take information about socio-demographic variables like age, gender, education, monthly family income, residence and family types.

Online Cognition Scale (OCS)

This scale was developed by Davis, Flett and Besser (2002) to measure the problematic internet use. It has 36-items rated by respondents on a seven point Likert scales and scored as 1 to 7 for strongly disagree to strongly disagree. It secured high internal consistency as a total measure of problematic internet use ($\alpha=0.94$). Item-total correlations were highly significant, ranging from 0.47 to 0.80. This scale was used to measure levels of internet use and to categorize the participants into high and average user based on average score of internet use on this scale.

Communicative Competence Scale (CCS)

Wiemann (1977) developed this scale to measure communication competence and it was used in present study to measure interpersonal communication. Participants are asked to respond the items in context of offline interactions. This scale has been standardized on college student population. It has 36 items, endorsed by respondents on Likert scales that range from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Item 4, 8, 11, 12, and 28 are reverse-coded before summing the 36 items. The higher score reveals the better communication ability. This scale is reliable and valid (Wiemann, 1977; Cupach & Spitzberg, 1983; Query, Parry & Flint, 1992).

Procedure

Data collection took place in three management colleges in Raipur, between April to June 2017 after approval of administration of the institutes. All questionnaires were administered to students of B. B. A. after briefing about the purpose of the study and receiving consent from them to participate in the study. A non-random convenience sampling method was chosen to select the students for the study. The data was collected from more than 200 participants and data of only 120 participants was included in the analysis fulfilling the high or average internet use for both genders on the basis of 2×2 factorial design.

Data was processed and analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences, 20 versions.

Results

Data were analyzed in 3 stages and they are given below.

1. Socio-demographic comparison in relation to gender and internet use

In correspondence with the objectives of the study socio demographic variables were compared in context of the independent variables of the present study i.e. gender and levels of internet use i.e. high vs normal users. Chi square was calculated to see the difference in groups. There was no significant gender difference on residence ($\chi^2=.833, p=.36$),

monthly income ($\chi^2=3.320, p=.34$), family type ($\chi^2=1.71, p=.19$) and religion ($\chi^2=2.47, p=.48$). Similarly, there was no significant difference between the high and average internet users on residence ($\chi^2=1.87, p=.17$), monthly family income ($\chi^2=.47, p=.92$), family type ($\chi^2=.035, p=.85$) and religion ($\chi^2=2.47, p=.48$).

2. Effect of gender and internet use on interpersonal communication

To explore the objectives of our study we wanted to check whether interpersonal communication differs with respect to gender and high or average internet use and whether there is a specific interaction between these two independent variables to influence interpersonal communication.

We used 2x2 independent sample ANOVA in order to test how gender and internet use affect the interpersonal communication. Prior to that, Levene's test was used to check the equality of variance for interpersonal communication. The variances were found to be significantly homogenous ($F=1.964, p=.123$) which allowed us to move with ANOVA. The main and interaction effects of gender and internet use on interpersonal communication is given below in table 1 and 2.

Table 1: two way ANOVA for interpersonal communication

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	1159.408	1	1159.408	4.494	.036
Internet use	1062.075	1	1062.075	4.116	.045
Gender*Internet use	1725.208	1	1725.208	6.686	.011

Table 2: Post Hoc (LSD) comparison of mean scores on interpersonal communication for gender and high/low internet use

Independent Variables	Means	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	
Gender	Male	132.300	6.217	2.933	.036
	Female	126.083			
Internet use	Normal users	132.167	5.950	2.933	.045
	High users	126.217			
Gender*Internet Use	Normal user	Male	13.80	4.147	.001
		Female			
	High user	Male	-1.367	4.147	.742
		Female			

Results (table 1) reveal that both gender ($F=4.49; p=0.36$) and internet use ($F=4.11; p=0.045$) significantly affect the interpersonal communication separately. There is also a significant interaction effect ($F=6.68; p=0.011$) of gender and internet use on influencing the interpersonal communication among management undergraduate students. Further, Post Hoc indicated the male participants ($M_{diff}=6.217, p=0.036$) and normal internet users ($M_{diff}=5.950, p=0.045$) are significantly better in interpersonal communication as compared to female and high internet users. There is no gender difference for interpersonal communication in high internet users ($M_{diff}=-1.367, p=0.742$) whereas among the normal internet users male participants are significantly higher ($M_{diff}=13.80, p=0.001$) in interpersonal communication.

Discussion:

The present study was based on 2x2 independent sample ANOVA. While selecting sample for the study random sampling methods could not be employed. As a result it seemed worthwhile check the effect of socio-demographic characteristics on independent variables of the study. Result suggests that there is no significant difference between male and female participants, and normal vs high internet users on religion, residence, monthly family income and family type. This led us to move into subsequent analysis in the study.

Current study revealed that gender had significant main effect on the interpersonal communication among the management undergraduates. It was evident that male participants had significantly better interpersonal communication competence as compared to the female counterparts. In this context, prior studies have focused on gender difference for various qualities of interpersonal communication i.e. conflict management style, use of empathy etc. (Bylund & Makoul,2002; Furumo, Buxton, Pillis, Higa & Furumo,2014).

Another major outcome of this study is that individuals with high

internet use have poor interpersonal communication skills as compared to those with normal internet use. This is indicative that high inclination toward online interest and activities can lead to poor interpersonal communication competence. Prior studies suggested that people who are more engaged in online activities (social networking sites, chat sites, online video game, online pornography etc.) develop low desire to have offline interaction with people around them (Al-khaddam, 2013) and there is deterioration in their ability to interact with the people (Mistry, Verma, Vyas & Kantharia, 2014). If the resultant low desire for offline interaction persists along with the increasing levels of high internet use, individuals will gradually reduce the offline interaction that might result in deterioration of healthy interpersonal communication skills. This depletion in interpersonal communication competence might be understood as a consequence of longitudinal and gradual reduction offline interaction with the people.

Another outcome the study is that higher internet users in both genders are similar in terms their interpersonal communication whereas normal internet user males were found to have better communication competence as compared to normal internet user females. These findings guide us to understand that excessive internet use leads to poor interpersonal communication irrespective of the gender and female are comparatively lower in communication competence.

Despite the major contribution to the literature regarding how high internet use influence the interpersonal communication, this study has some inherent shortcomings. First, the interpersonal communication account of the participants was not known before they developed habit of excessive internet use. Therefore, it was not possible to comment how much change for interpersonal communication has occurred in the individuals after falling in criteria of high internet use. Second, random sample method could not be employed.

This study has major contribution to the existing literature that excessive internet use adversely affects the interpersonal communication among the management students and adequate interpersonal communication plays a significant role in relational and mental well being of the individuals. Therefore, proper measures must be taken in order to handle the excessive internet use.

Conclusion: Current study is indicative that level internet use is one of important factors that have adverse effect on offline interpersonal communication of the individuals. This study further suggests that male management students have better communication competence as compared to their female counterparts.

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