

“SOCIAL MEDIA UTILIZATION AND FRIENDSHIP QUALITY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS”

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to determine which domains of social media utilization best predict friendship quality among college students in Davao City, Philippines. The researchers used a quantitative approach which involved the survey of a total of 150 college students. Adopted survey questionnaire was the research instrument used in gathering the data. Mean, Pearson Product Moment Correlational, and Linear Regression were the statistical tools used in the study. Based on the findings, social media is highly utilized by college students as important tools of communication for engaging and interacting with their friends.

The respondents manifested high level of friendship quality and it was found out that there was a significant relationship between social media utilization and friendship quality of the respondents. This implies that social media utilization has influenced friendship quality wherein by consistent usage, the college students feel that they are more valued and listened to by their friends. Engagement as domain of social media utilization can singly predict friendship quality of the college students.

Keywords:

Social Media Utilization, Friendship Quality, Mean, Pearson Product Moment Correlational, Linear Regression, Engagement, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a primary communication platform and as social connections are established and maintain through social networking sites now more than ever, social media has changed the dynamics of friendship. A person can have thousand of friends in the virtual world but only have five friends in real life. Interactions made through social media have become a normal part of human relationships. This changing landscape of communication and building social relationships are the foundations of the creation of this research.

Considering that there is high social media utilization among college students in terms of communicating and engaging with their peers, it is interesting to know if this utilization has influenced the relationship that these students have with their friends. There are numerous studies on social media utilization but very few dealt with looking at its impact on friendship quality. This has to be looked at because nowadays, young people, particularly college students, are more connected to their peers online than they do outside the context of the virtual world. If face-to-face relationship is becoming less popular because of more virtual means of communication, it is interesting to know the impact of this engagement in the kind of relationship that college students have.

Background Information

The effect of social media utilization is crucial in maintaining and strengthening friendship quality. Social media has created a phenomenon on the internet that has gained popularity over the last decade to create and sustain relationships with others (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Although, social media supports and strengthens friendship in ways that mirror reciprocity, empathy, self-knowledge and the shared life, particularly when used to supplement rather than substitute for face-to-face interactions, it may also pose a problem and troubling questions about the capacity of online social media to support complete friendships of virtue in the contemporary world (Valor, 2011).

Friendship refers to the experienced closeness, trust, and understanding between friends. Another key feature of friendships is its quality. Social networking sites are now normally used to keep in touch with existing friends and to develop new friendship (Boyd, et al. 2004). Lusk (2010) affirmed that social media can provide various benefits to the students because of its ability to enhance connections by making them easily accessible. This can be observed by the level of the student's usage of social networking sites to facilitate social engagements and activities that may reflect a higher quality of friendship. Thus, social networking sites provide a good opportunity in determining the domains that affect the quality of friendships.

Moreover, Manago and Vaughn (2015) mentioned that utilization of social media generally affects friendship because it suggests a customized sociality that emphasizes the kind and quality of the student's relationship. A high-quality friendship is characterized by high levels of prosocial behavior, intimacy, and other positive features, and low levels of conflicts, rivalry, and other negative features (Berndt, 2002). Therefore, in the digital age, friendship quality and social media have been assumed to have direct effects on many aspects of person's social development, including their self-esteem and social adjustment.

Undeniably, social media has an important role to play in our lives and how we use these communication tools has an influence on the idea of friendship (Parrack, 2017). Although it is important to examine the effect of social media usage on social relationships, it is also equally important to examine the quality of the friendships through social media utilization. After all, social network usage affects the intimacy of the friendship it can yield. Thus, in this study, the researchers focused on the social media utilization and its domains that best predict friendship quality of college students.

Purpose of the study

Social media utilization has become popular over the last decade. It has created a phenomenon that sustains relationship (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media has become a supplement to face-to-face communication and interaction. As an alternative medium, it has been revealed by studies that there is a positive influence that social media has brought to young people in terms of strengthening their friendship. However, problems arise on social media's capacity to support complete friendships vis-à-vis the contemporary world (Valor, 2011).

This study was conducted to identify the level of social media utilization and friendship quality of students; to determine if there is a significant relationship between social media utilization and friendship quality among students; and to identify the domains of social media utilization that best predict the friendship quality of college students.

Research questions

1. What is the level of social media utilization and friendship quality among the college students?
2. What is the significant relationship between social media utilization and friendship quality among college students?
3. What domains of social media utilization best predict the friendship quality of the college students?

Literature review

The Uses and Gratification Theory provides an explanation as to how and why people utilize various media, and the advantages and gratifications that people get from this usage. Social media is the most popular communication tool in the world today not just for sharing information but for interaction and engagement (Lewis, 2009; Osatuyi, 2013; Whiting and Williams, 2013). It has been assumed that social media audiences are active audiences who have various goals in utilizing the media. These goals are reinforced by the needs of the people to be satisfied particularly in forming relationships with other people.

New ways to communicate have been introduced by social media and face to face interpersonal communication is losing its popularity (Subramanian, 2017). The world has become fast-paced than ever and shorter and easier methods of communication are what communication technologies are being developed into. The theory explains that people use social media as a substitute for companionship and to escape life's adversities. Manago and Vaughn (2015) mentioned that utilization of social media generally affects friendship because it suggests a customized sociality that emphasizes the kind and quality of the student's relationship. Current studies suggest that the use of social media has contributed to the friendship quality among young people by developing their interpersonal communication. Moreover, the gratification of this need is unique to social media usage (Musa, Azmi, and Ismail, 2016).

Methodology

Quantitative approach was used in the study and survey questionnaires were distributed to gather data about the social media utilization and friendship quality among college students in Davao City, Philippines. The researchers personally administered the survey and the consents of the students were taken prior to rolling out the survey questionnaires. Mean, Pearson Product Moment Correlational and Linear Regression were the statistical tools used in the study.

Data Collection Methods

A survey questionnaire was used in this study. The questionnaire was used in identifying the social media utilization and friendship quality among college students in Davao City, Philippines. The number of respondents involved in this study was 150 and their identities were kept confidential.

Data Analysis

A quantitative method was used in collecting the data. Mean, Pearson Product Moment Correlational and Linear Regression were the statistical tools used in analyzing the data gathered in the study.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 shows that the respondents have high level of social media utilization as disclosed with the mean rating of 3.83 specifically in their usage with 4.20 and perceived usefulness with 3.94. However, the respondents' engagement in social media is moderate with a mean rating of 3.33. This means that the respondents often use social media in interacting and engaging with their peers because of its usefulness as a communication tool. This finding supports the statement of Subramanian (2017) that new ways to communicate has been introduced by social media and face to face interpersonal communication is losing its popularity. The world has become fast-paced than ever and shorter and easier methods of communication are what communication technologies are being developed into.

Table 1. Level of Social Media Utilization among College Students

Indicator	Standard Deviation	Mean	Descriptive Level
Usage	0.69	4.20	high
Engagement	0.81	3.33	moderate
Perceived Usefulness	0.61	3.94	high
Overall	0.60	3.83	high

Table 2 presents the level of friendship quality of the respondents which is high across all indicators. This means that the respondents have good relationships with their friends. They always validate their friends' feelings; they avoid conflict and if conflict arises, make ways to resolve it. They help and guide their friends in accomplishing tasks, they make time for recreational activities that would develop their companionship, and they share and keep private stories of each other. High quality of friendship is mostly recognized by adolescents and is determined by high intimacy and interactions that encourage cooperation and other positive social behaviors, minimal levels of conflict, misunderstanding, and competitive behavior affirmed by Berndt (2002). Self-disclosure is also an indication of high-quality friendship in which the best of friends often tells each other their most personal secrets.

Table 2. Level of Friendship Quality among College Students

Indicator	Standard Deviation	Mean	Descriptive Level
Validation and Caring	0.49	4.09	high
Conflict Resolution	0.71	3.79	high
Conflict and Betrayal	0.66	3.57	high
Help and Guidance	0.56	4.06	high
Companionship and Recreation	0.64	4.10	high
Intimate Exchange	3.94	4.02	high
Overall	0.43	3.94	high

Relationship between Social Media Utilization and Friendship Quality among College Students

Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between social media utilization and friendship quality as revealed in the r-value of .421** with a p-value of .000 which is lower than .05 level of significance. Usage, engagement, and perceived usefulness are significantly related with friendship quality as disclosed in the r-values of .260**, .450**, and .313**, respectively. Their corresponding p-values are lesser than .05 level of significance. This implies that friendship quality among the students is dependent on their social media utilization wherein the more social media is utilized, the quality of friendship improves. This is affirmed by Manago and Vaughn (2015) that utilization of social media generally affects friendship because it suggests a customized sociality that emphasizes the kind and quality of the student's relationship.

In addition, all the indicators of social media utilization contributed to a positive relationship to the friendship quality of the respondents. Thus, there is a significant relationship between social media utilization and friendship quality. This implies that social media has a direct effect on a person's social development, including self-esteem and social judgment, and these effects are reinforced in interpersonal relationships.

Table 3. Relationship between Social Media Utilization and Friendship Quality among College Students

Social Media Utilization	Friendship Quality						
	Validation and Caring	Conflict Resolution	Conflict and Betrayal	Help and Guidance	Companionship and Recreation	Intimate Exchange	Overall
Usage	.271**	0.132	0.026	.292**	.181*	.196*	.260**
	(0.001)	0.107	0.75	0.000	0.027	0.016	0.001
Engagement	.357**	.246**	.274**	.336**	.235**	.376**	.450**
	0.000	0.002	0.001	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.000
Perceived Usefulness	.320**	.208*	0.153	.253**	0.129	.231**	.313**
	0.000	0.011	0.062	0.002	0.116	0.004	0.000
Overall	.386**	.238**	.197*	.358**	.225**	.329**	.421**
	0.000	0.003	0.016	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 reveals that engagement as domain of social media utilization best predicts friendship quality of the respondents as revealed in the p-value of .000 which is lesser than .05 level of significance. The R square value of .205 implies that social media utilization influences friendship quality by 20.5%. The variance of 79.5% is attributed to other factors not covered in this study. There is a significant combined influence among indicators as revealed in the F-value of 12.546 with the p-value of .000 which is less than .05 level of significance. This implies that using social media has favored personal relationships of the respondents among their friends. Engagement has also made the respondents feel valued and that their opinions are taken into account. This result supports the proposition of Musa, Azmi and Ismail (2016) that people use social media as a substitute for companionship and to escape life's adversities. Social media utilization has impacted the friendship quality of young people by improving their interpersonal communication.

Table 4. Domains of Social Media Utilization that Best Predict Friendship Quality among College Students

Social Media Utilization	Friendship Quality			
	Beta	B	T-value	P-value
Usage	.035	.022	.401	.689
Engagement	.407	.216	3.994	.000
Perceived Usage	.041	.025	.422	.673
R	.453 ^a			
R ²	.205			
F-value	12.546			
P-value	.000b			

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that social media is highly utilized by college students as important communication tools for engaging and interacting with their friends. The respondents manifested high level of friendship quality. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between utilization of social media and friendship quality of the respondents. The utilization of social media has influenced friendship quality wherein by consistent usage, the college students feel that they are more valued and listened to by their friends. Engagement as a domain of social media utilization can singly predict friendship quality of the college students.

Given the results of the study, the researchers would like to recommend to educational institutions to utilize social media in engaging the youth through especially in programs that require establishing a personal connection such as guidance and counselling. This is in line with the findings that there is high social media utilization among the respondents and that engagement through social media is a determinant of friendship quality. Educational institutions must adapt to communicate to young people in a way that is more familiar and more comfortable to them. Furthermore, studies should be done on determining the most effective social media platform in terms of influencing friendship quality. With the various social media sites available today, it is best to find out what social media network has the most influence on friendship quality among the youth.

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