

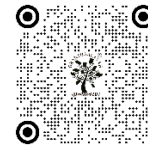
Original Article

ERODING FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION – EXPLORING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Social media in this digital decade is deep- rooted in students' existence and has become the significant part of everyday communication among college students. It has significantly impacted their relationships, communication patterns and education. Social media platforms have shaped the way they interact and connect with others. There has been a perceptible shift from traditional face-to face communication to online modes of interaction as students increasingly engage on social media to share formation, personal interactions and maintain relationships. This transition has deeply influenced the interpersonal communication patterns, affecting the way students perceive the non-verbal and verbal cues, thereafter interpret and build meaningful relationships. Therefore, it becomes important to examine how social media communication habits influence students' interpersonal interactions, highlighting the need for the present study.

Through quantitative convenient non probability sampling technique 120 samples will be collected from both boys and girls to study the above-mentioned areas. The influence of social media interactions on interpersonal communication patterns will be analyzed. The study examines how college students frequently use various platforms for different communication purposes and the need for direct personal interaction with others. It examines their intention of use, preferred platforms, time spent, and the impact of social media on their interactions.

Keywords: Social Media Communication, Interpersonal Face to Face Communication, Communication Barriers

INTRODUCTION

Communication plays a vital role in human interaction. Communication has to be dyadic occurring between two individuals. Effective communication fosters meaningful relationships reducing conflicts, emotional stability, career advancement, cultural awareness and global connection. Recent advancements in technology have transformed communication from traditional face to face to modern means. The emergence of social media fosters global connectivity, instant information sharing, community building.

In inter-personal communication, face-to-face conversations, point-to-point (i.e.) interviews, telephone conversations are common forms. Social media platforms have enhanced quick access to inter-personal communication, helps maintain relationships through shared media. The use of social media by college students has exponentially increased for various purposes like relationship building, education and professional growth. The smartphones play an important role in quick access and constant connectivity. The affordable internet services is also a key factor for the accessibility.

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These advancements led to a noticeable shift from traditional forms of communication to digital interaction. Social media has replaced in-person communication with video calls and social networking platforms. Communication is becoming more immediate, accessible, conventional, reducing direct personal interaction and non-verbal cues.

However, Inter-personal communication has emotional connection, empathy and behavioral engagement. Theories like social penetration states that self-disclosure deepens inter-personal relationships, uncertainty reduction theory helps individuals gather information to predict behavior and build familiarity in new interactions. Communication accommodation theory reveals how individuals adjust their interaction through tone, language, place to build rapport and maintain their identity.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Social media is an important platform for young people that facilitates peer engagement to express their emotions that is unimaginable. The advent of various platforms like YouTube, Instagram, snapchat has helped them share their emotions globally. Many youngsters are using it to educational purposes, to express and raise their opinion on social causes. This fosters creativity, permitting young users to experiment with various forms of content. Social media provides support and community at the same time has challenges like mental health issues, online harassment, impact on personal relationships. (Ghall Kalan, Moga) This study states that excessive use of social media increases loneliness, inadequacy and low esteem. While social media can provide support and community, it can also contribute to major problems like mental health challenges among young people. Studies have shown a correlation between excessive social media use and increased rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present research paper attempts to examine the influence of social media on inter-personal communication patterns among Chennai college students. The amount of time spent on various social media platforms has increased enormously among students. Social media has become the major tool used for social interaction. The following objectives have been identified for the purpose of this research paper.

- 1) To identify the most frequently used social media platform to communicate.
- 2) To examine whether social media affects face-to-face communication.
- 3) To examine whether social media has changed the inter-personal communication style.
- 4) To understand the role of digital communication in shaping students' inter-personal relationships.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Looking through the concept of human communications, interpersonal communications, inter-personal relationships, social media and its influence on Interpersonal Communication Patterns and how they are related to this research, there are many articles documented.

Joo and Teng (2017) has stated that social media like Face Book plays an important role in building constructive role in building relationships with family and friends. Other than interpersonal communication people depend on social media for information, game playing, accessing to audio and video clips and reading articles. When Face Book exists as a primary communication channel, among the online community users it will influence the offline human relationships overtime. Through the use of Face Book, relationships among family members and communication shall be improved and enhanced to the level of a united society.

Mohammed (2017) stated that people are neglecting personal conversations, face-to face communication due to the use of technology. They are becoming more dependent on communicating with friends and family through technology. Internet serves them with the platform for personal interactions with diversified people around the world. The study found that increased dependence on has reduced and degraded the quality of interpersonal conversation which states that face -to-face communications have decreased both in quantity and quality.

This study by Jadhav and Patel (2025) examined the influence of social media on interpersonal relationships and explored the positive and negative impacts. Social media has improved connectivity and accessibility on the other hand decreased face-to face interactions. It has led to miscommunications and deterioration of emotional intimacy. Reliance on digital communication has affected online behaviour that has reduced the quality of communication and emotional detachment. Comparison and validation have led to trust issues and altered personal communication.

Kumbhar (2026) This article explores Digital Behavior and Social Media use Patterns of College Students. This highlights that social media is an integral part of students' everyday life. The usage patterns indicate that moderate engagement is typical, a small subset of students exhibits high-frequency usage. The central purpose is to interact with friends understanding the dual role of social media as a learning tool and entertainment. The usage patterns emphasizes the social and expressive functions of digital platforms. The offline interactions are limited with implications on social behavior, peer influence, and mental well-being, including risks of excessive use. The findings highlight the need for digital literacy and awareness on appropriate social media behaviour.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is based on Social Presence Theory developed by John Short, Ederyn Williams, and Bruce Christie, explains that different communication media create different levels of personal connection between people. According to this theory media creates a stronger social presence among people while interacting. Social media platforms like Instagram, video calls make people feel more emotionally connected while others are less personal. This theory helps us understand how digital communication affects interpersonal relationships, emotions, and online interactions. The theory is relevant to the current study to understand the role of digital communication in students' interaction patterns and how it has impacted their face-to-face communication styles.

RESEARCH GAP

Although previous studies have examined the relationship between social media use and communication behavior among youth, limited research has focused specifically on how social media communication habits, forms influence interpersonal communication patterns among college students. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by examining the usage platforms, its applications and impact on college students' interpersonal communication.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of social media communication habits on interpersonal communication patterns among college students. A sample of 120 college students with the age group ranging from 17 to 23 years was selected for the study using the convenient sampling method. This method was adopted based on accessibility and availability of respondents. The selected participants of both genders belonged to Under graduate and Post graduate levels. This is an online survey using google forms. Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire to categorize the study population on gender, age, preferences on social media platforms, time spent, negative impacts. [De Jesus and Catchuela \(2026\)](#)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Frequency of the respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	1. Male	54	45%
	2. Female	65	54.20%
	3. Not preferred	1	1%
Age Group	17-18 years	27	22.50%
	19-20 years	38	31.50%
	21-22 years	36	30%
	23 years and above	19	15.80%
Years of study	First Year (UG)	29	24.20%
	Second Year (UG)	34	28.30%
	Third Year (UG)	10	8.30%
	Post Graduate (PG)	47	39.20%

In the present study, among 120 students, 45% of the sample consisted of 54 males, 54.2% consisted of 65 females and 1 who preferred not to be mentioned. 22.5% of respondents belong to age group of 17 to 18 years, 31.5% of respondents were 19 to 20 years, 30% belong to 21 to 22 years and 15.8% were above 23 years. The respondents were chosen from various under-graduate and post-graduate college students. 39.2% were post-graduate students and 60.8% were under-graduates.

1) Time spent on social media everyday

Table 1

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents Based on Usage Patterns				
Time spent on social media	Less than 1 hour	1-2 hours	2-4 hours	More than 4 hours
Frequency	4	26	50	40
Percentage	3.30%	21.70%	41.70%	33.30%

2) Preferred social media platform

Platform	Instagram	WhatsApp	Others
Frequency	83	28	9
Percentage	69.20%	23.30%	7.50%

3) Nature of communication:

Type of Communication	Text messages	Voice messages	Emojis/ Stickers/ GIFs	Sharing images/ videos	All of the above
Frequency	48	7	2	8	55
Percentage	40%	5.80%	1.70%	6.70%	45.80%

Table 1 states that 41.7% use social media for about 2 to 4 hours a day, 33.3% use more than 4 hours, 21.7% use for 1 to 2 hours. The high usage of social media platform was Instagram with 69.2% of the respondents and 23.3% use WhatsApp for various purposes. 7.5% of respondents use other platforms like snapchat, telegram, YouTube, Netflix etc. Findings regarding the type of social media communication used, showed that 45.8% of individuals use for text/voice messages, emojis, stickers and GIFs, sharing images and videos. 40% individuals use for text messages and almost 50% prefer communicating through face-to-face interaction than social media. Only 26.7% often prefer social media usage. [Racheal and Archana \(2025\)](#)

Table 2

Table 2 Distribution of respondents based on preference levels and categories					
Categories	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Preference level	12 (10%)	32 (26.7%)	60 (50%)	12 (10%)	4 (3.3%)
Misunderstanding of messages	17 (14.2%)	24 (20%)	62 (51.7%)	15 (12.5%)	2 (1.7%)
Use of emojis or stickers	34 (28.3%)	36 (30%)	30 (25%)	19 (15.8%)	1 (0.8%)
Preference of sending short replies in online communication	21 (17.5%)	27 (22.5%)	44 (36.7%)	19 (15.8%)	9 (7.5%)

Table 2 states that over 51.7% of people have misinterpreted the information circulated on social media, and frequently 20% of individuals do the same. Among high usage group of 30% people use emojis or stickers instead of words to express their emotional feelings. Results state that 70% of the respondents find the tone or intention of messages shared on social media to be easily understood. Communicating through short replies using words like “OK”, “hmm”, emojis instead of long texts and messages are felt more convenient, time saving and modern way of interaction by 59.2% of individuals. 32.5% feel that frequent use of social media affects social media affects face-to-face communication with others. These results reinforce the positive interpretation the positive perception of face-to-face communication.

Table 3

Table 3					
Change in inter-personal communication style	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	12 (10%)	44 (36.7%)	51 (42.5%)	10 (8.3%)	3 (2.5%)

Table 3 findings state that 36.7% feel that social media communication has changed their inter-personal communication style and 27.5% express that social media communication has reduced the need for direct communication.

MAJOR OBSERVATIONS

The analysis of data collected from Chennai college students reveals several important findings regarding social media communication usage and their influence on interpersonal communication patterns. The study found that a majority of students spend a significant amount of time on social media especially on Instagram and WhatsApp since it allows them to post instant content and reactions. Through this platform they stay connected through direct messages and stories. Emojis, GIFs, Texts, Video and Images offer more interesting and easier means to express than face to face interactions. Notifications and reels constantly prompt students to reply and be involved. Students use this platform for self-expression and to widen their interpersonal and group relationships. Most of the individuals do not find it difficult to read long messages on social media. However, 29.2% agree that they are more comfortable to express their opinions and most often they do not find it difficult to interpret the information and intentions. 45.8% of individuals engage in meaningful or detailed conversations sometimes and 27.5% engage very often. Frequent use of social media platforms affects face to face communication for 32.5% whereas 45 % are unclear about the changes. Since self-disclosure is not compulsory the individuals have no autonomy regarding information sharing. The expectations regarding personal sharing are muted in social media interaction.

While examining the previous studies it is understood that constant exposure to social media:

- Leads to anxiety and depression, creating a fear of missing out (FOMO)
- Young people are compelled to engage themselves in persistent social media activity to continue their presence, resulting in digital exhaustion.
- Social media offers education contents on various platforms for youngsters especially students to explore global ideas and broaden their prospects.

Previous studies reinforce the fact that social media is a powerful tool for education and self-improvement. The educational institutions are harnessing the potential of social media to create an interactive educational environment which will foster more face-to-face interactions. In-person sessions build a strong sense of community and trust between teachers and learners. A traditional, screen-free or low-screen physical classroom will reduce individualization and self-isolation. The parents, educators and policymakers should reduce the pressure for digital space by encouraging young people to set boundaries to prioritize offline activities, such as hobbies, sports, and face-to-face interactions to achieve a more balanced lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the influence of social media interactions on Interpersonal Communication patterns among 120 Chennai College Students. The findings of this study states that social media has an important role in their everyday interactions. The most frequently used platforms are Instagram and WhatsApp. They agree that frequent use of these platforms affect the interpersonal communication. This study states that college students of this age group feel more convenient to send instant messages, short replies than spending time in long conversations. They are happy to send digital images and symbols to convey their emotions. Recent updates like AI editing and enhanced user control in the Apps and new platforms has varied options in the era of digital communication. College students should understand the importance of interpersonal face to face communication and control the amount of time spent on social media.

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