

TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION: An Impact study Involving the New Media, College Students, and Communication Patterns

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INTRODUCTION

The influence of technology can be clearly seen with the use of mobile phones. The dominant use of mobile phones was found to be for social communication (Dimmick, Sikand, & Patterson, 1994). Among residential subscribers, the modal hand-phone call is a pair-wise conversation between friends or family who are located geographically close to each other and who call each other to stay in touch. (Kraut & Mukhopadhyay, 1999) Dordick and LaRose (1992) had a national sample of household records showing whom they talked with, and why. About two-thirds of residential calls were made to family and friends. Mobile phones, on the other hand, are relatively cheap, and a survey indicated that they are owned and used by virtually every student at the University.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to understand the emerging family communication patterns among young adults and the influence of technology. A discussion of the relevant literature focuses on family communication patterns, technology, and its impact.

This study on the role of short message service (SMS) communication in the development of relationships among family and friends will help us understand if there is any difference in adapting to new technology with regard to the family communication patterns from those that existed prior to the adolescent's transition to college. It is also essential to understand if there were any perceived changes in relationships due to the new technology being used. Thus, this topic of using SMS to communicate with family and friends is an important topic and will help determine the nature and uses of communicating to family and friends and the role that the SMS plays in developing existing relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two main sections: Family communication patterns (FCP) and technology in family communication.

Family Communication Patterns

Historically, the underlying assumption has been that our attitudes, values, and beliefs influence how we interpret phenomena in the social world, and that many of these ideas originate within the family system. McLeod et al. (1966) connected family interpersonal communication patterns and media research. They assumed that the family's interaction patterns would form the child's "communication style." The researchers identified two general dimensions of family interactions: socio-oriented and concept-oriented. In socio-oriented dimensions children are taught to avoid disturbances in parent-child relations (at the expense of the child's own viewpoint). The concept-oriented dimension pertains to child-idea relations and is characterized by families in which the child may express his or her ideas freely and is exposed to contrasting ideas. Conversation-orientation, originally labeled concept-orientation, (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972) describes the degree to which family members are encouraged to openly discuss a wide array of topics. The absence of strict limitations regarding topics or time spent talking about them allows families high in this dimension to interact spontaneously on frequent occasions. Families low in conversation-orientation (originally labeled socio-orientation) interact less frequently and discuss only a few topics openly (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

Looking at the family control patterns, many scholars have presumed that family communication patterns are stable; others argue that such patterns are subject to change. For example, McLeod and Chaffee (1972) mentioned that they would expect to find changes during pivotal junctures in a child's life, including beginning college, taking a permanent job, and getting married. A first-year student in college may be presented with alternative values for the first time, which the authors suggest may influence the student's interaction patterns and the structure of those communication patterns. Conversation-oriented families tend to produce children who possess better social skills, problem-solving skills, and leadership abilities than families low on this dimension (Baumrind, 1968).

Application of the family communication pattern literature to how college students use emerging communication technology to communicate with family members suggests the following two hypotheses:
