Texting Behavior' And Impacts of 'Mobile Messaging' on Youth of Pakistan: A Uses and Gratification Analysis

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Abstract
Advances in mobile technology have revolutionized the lives of Pakistani people, especially youngsters. The excessive use of mobile for 'texting' i.e. sending messages has become a normal practice regardless of the time and place. The present study focuses on this intensive habit of mobile texting exhibited by the youngsters of Southern Punjab to highlight and understand some of the common factors/reasons of mobile texting and their impacts on the lives of teenagers. The research paper explored texting behavior and impact of messaging on teenagers and youth in light of Uses and gratification approach. This research includes a sample of 627 students associated with various institutions of Multan city as the respondents were selected through multi-staged sampling technique. In this connection, survey research designed was used with structured questionnaire comprised close-ended questions. The results of the study clearly indicated positive and negative impact on different sphere of life of the users including social, physical and academic etc. The date collected clearly reveals that youngsters frequently use mobile messaging in order to keep in contact with their friends as it is economically viable mode of communication. Teenage boys show a greater tendency of sending and responding to messages from unknown numbers as compared to girls. Moreover, mobile texting has become a popular mode of secret communication in the face of sexually segregated patriarchal Pakistani society. However, this blessing also, at times, proves to a 'social evil' due to its negative impacts on studies and health.

Keywords: Cell Phones, Text Messaging Behavior, Teenagers, Southern Punjab, Cellular Subscribers& SMS Contraction.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, text messages have revolutionized the communication. Round about 72.1% of Western Europe have cell phones (Katz &Aakhus, 2002). Mobile messaging is generally considered as a more personal, private and independent mode of communication which is keenly preferred by the new mobile phone and computer mediated communication generation making it one of the fastest means of cell phone communication industry (Nokia, 2002). According to statistics of the cell phone company, more than one billion messages comprised at least 160 characters were sent on average basis in each month by the cell phone users in the United Kingdom (AOL mobile, 2002). In the Year 2017, it was found that 56 percent users of UK relied on their cell phone for text messaging purpose several times per day. Quite interesting it was revealed that males used mobile phone for sending more messages per day in comparison of females of UK.(The statisita,2017)

PTA reports that the country has 125.1millionsubscribers. Cellular companies added around 1 million subscribers during the months of September 2016(PTA, 2016). The table given below shows the position and subscribers of Pakistan cellular industry in the years of 2015 and 2016. Telecommunication Authority) has just announced that the number of cellular service subscribers has crossed the 150 million mark in May 2018. Through the first quarter of 2018, the mobile service subscribers in Pakistan have increased by 10.5 million. It should be noted that in 2016-17 the revenues generated by Telecom industry have increased to about Rs 464113 Million from 457024 Million. The Cellular market share as of May 2018, Jazz has been able to secure the highest 36.93 % market share. While Telenor, Ufone, and Zong were able to grab a market share of 28.92 %, 20.61 % and 13.50 % respectively.(www.telecoalert.com, June 2018)

Cellular Company	January2018	2017
Mobilink	54 million	51.534 million
Telenor	42 million	39.586 million
U.fone	19.8 million	18.478 million
Zong	30 million	27.496million
		Source: *Express Tribune, February 25.2018*

Table 1: Cellular Subscribers in Pakistan, 2017-2018

Statistics as mentioned in the table paint this picture that Mobilink cellular company ranked first with total subscribers comprised 54 million while Telenor and Zone remained at the second and the third slot with regard to their penetration in the market with total subscribers of 42 And 30 million users by the end of January 2018.

Year	Percentile
2012-13	74.9
2013-14	79.89
2014-2015	62.9
2015-16	70.81

Table 2: Annual Cellular Mobile Tele-density, 2016:

Annual cellular mobile tele-density during the last five years paint this scenario that the year 2013-2014 was the productive year in lucrative term as the density was calculated almost 80 percent while the year 2014-2015 it was observed 62.9 percent as comparatively mentioned in the table.

There is popular trend that youth are utilizing cell phone for test messaging purpose as compared to age groups (Thurlow, 2003). A world wide survey was administered under the aegis of Nokia Cell Phone Company. It was found that core cell phone users were below 45 year age group. It was reported that text messaging was the most common activity as expressed by 3300 respondents. Several other studies found that more than 80 percent teenager in UK having their own cell phones particularly between to age group of 14 to 16 years. It was also revealed that they prefer to use cell phone significantly for text communication instead of voice calling (NOP, 2001; Haig,2002; Thurlow, 2003). Most of the studies were based on qualitative research method explored patterns of cell phone text messaging among teenagers subscribers (Puro, 2002; Ling &Yttri, 2002; Kasesniemi&Rautiainen, 2002; Thurlow, 2003).

According to the statistics, two- third population of this planet earth had cell phone subscription in 2016 as total users were estimated 4.8 billion. Geographical shift is underway from Europe to Asia Pacific region as high penetration rate is forecast with 860 million new cell phone users globally up to 2020. In other words, three-quarters of the total population of this planet, precisely 5.7 billion individuals would be cell phone subscribers by the end of this second decade of twenty first century. After India, rapid growth markets of mobile phones in the continent Asia are observed Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia. It is possible due to affordability, low prices and relatively better improved network coverage of cell phones. In the year 2017, total number of subscribers in Pakistan was estimated more than 140 millions as reported by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and 17 millions new users would likely to be added in this club by the end of the year 2020.

Most of the users considered text messaging as effective and appropriate modus operandi for establishing and strengthening social interaction instead of coordinating practical arrangements (Ling &Yttri, 2002). There are certain attributes of text messaging via cell phone apart from traditional internet use, also making it similar from the subscriber's point of interest. There features were accessibility, faster communication, and affordable packages with nominal rates of texting SMS. Similarly sharing of text messaging may also resemble online chatting as taking and

discourse style structure (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen, 2002). In addition to this, the texting interface allow the cell phone users certain features more similar to email such as composition, reflection, and the opportunity to manage which make it possible for them to construct their messages effectively as well represent themselves through SMS (Danet, 1995; Chenault 1998; Ling &Yttri, 2002).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leung (2001) studied about the satisfaction of ICQ which is a kind of messenger facility. According to him influential and ritual were the significant motives for usage of this messenger facility. Choliz (2010) in his research depicts that people have become dependent on new technological devices due to its increasing usage which has become integral part of their lives.According to Henderson (2002) use of SMS, by its usage allows users to stay furtively linked to communal groups and provides additional semi-private communication. Weilenmann, Larsson (2001)'s analysis reveals that how devising of novice technology and service in terms of cell phone can be used and shared for field data. Hofvenschiold (2003) considered the affect of customs and economic classification as how people relate and observe technology. According to her, it is quantifiable to differentiate in attitudes due to emotional and motivational aspects of mobile phone usage. In spite of its benefit to its customers, heavy usage of this medium may be harmful for the mental and physical health of its user. According to a study from Thailand (Kawsaki, 2006) and Korea (Jee Hyun, Doo-Heum, Seung-Ho &Jaehak, 2008), excessive usage of mobile phone among the students may be the reason for Psychological interruption. According to a Korean research, comprised of 595 persons observed that heavy usage of the cells may cause students to suffer through psychological disorders. Rice and Katz (2003) stated that economic strata of a user can be ascertained by the usage of cell phone. Prezza (2004) described that in youth, use of cell phone is of free type. It is not linked with gender and economic status of its user. Carbonell et al. (2008) explained that swift alteration in behavior of user can not be affected by the excessive use of cell phone. According to the study, it is an abuse not an addiction. Under mentioned are the rest of researches which analyzed the different views regarding the usage of mobile phones: Geser(2006), Horrey & Wickens(2006). Wei & Lo (2006) Nasar & Wener(2007), Lipscomb et al. (2007) Campbell & Park(2008), Pettigrew (2009) Ezoe et al. (2009), Zulkefly & Baharundin (2009), Bakke (2010), Jin & Peña (2010) and Bond (2010).

Statement of the problem: The study mainly intended to look at general consumption pattern of SMS among teenagers in light of uses and gratification approach in Multan (City of Saints) Punjab-Pakistan which is not a metropolitan in true sense in comparison with other big cities of Pakistan. There have been certain needs and factors which motivated the youngsters for usages of cell phones for the purpose of text messaging. In order to gratify the following categories of needs, communication through text messaging have been done as they kept themselves busy while sending or receiving messages via their smart or ordinary cell phones. In this connection, it was focused on these human needs as categorized in groups by Katz, Gurevitch(1973):

Affective needs: it is based on sharing of emotions, feelings and pleasure as well

Cognitive needs: It is achieved through imparting of information and knowledge

Social integrative needs: It is done through interaction with friend circle and other primary group members

Personal integrative needs: It is focused on developing credibility as well as maintains their current status

Tension release needs: The needs is gratified through escapism and diversion

Research Questions

This research paper has focused to answer the following research questions
RQ 1: Why do the teenagers engage themselves in activity of text messaging?

RQ 2: What sort of gratification the teenagers are desirous to achieve through text messaging

RQ 3: What are pros and cons of text messaging on different aspects of life of teenagers due to excessive usage of cell phone for the purpose of messaging?

RQ4: What are major differences and reasons of text messaging among boys and girls?

RQ5: Is there any difference in context of level of satisfaction among boys and girls with regard to mobile phone text messaging?

RQ 6: What sort of trends of contraction is being used by the teenagers while constructing messages?

Research Methodology

In order to explore purposes of text messaging and level of gratification among teenagers, the survey technique was applied. As mentioned earlier, the total sample comprised of 627 teenager respondents as they belongs to leading educational institutes of city of Multan including colleges and university i.e. Bahauddin Zakariya University. Population of the study was based on high school and under graduate students as the sample form target population was selected through convenient sampling method. In addition to this, Focus group was considered a convenient and right tool for exploring perception of teenagers of high schools.

Reasons	Boys	Girls	Total
Easy and immediate access	*176(55.6)*	180(58.1)	356 (56.7)
Economical way	63(19.8)	64(20.6)	127 (20.2)
Sense of privacy	46(14.5)	27(8.7)	73 (11.6)
To avoid face to face communication	32(10.1)	39(12.6)	71 (11.3)
Total	**317**	**310**	**627**

Table 3: Reasons for sending text messages:

Results of the survey communicated without any sense of ambiguity that more than half of the respondents considered and preferred text messaging because it is simple, easier and rapid form of communication if chatting is underway. It is pertinent to

highlight here there has been no significant difference among boys and girls for text messaging for the said purpose. Similarly one fifth of the respondents did text messaging because it was comparatively cheap and economical way of two way communication. How it is economical in country like Pakistan? It has been discussed in concise and precise manner in discussion part of the paper by citing rates of different bundle packages being offered by the cell phones companies in the country to the subscribers. Other general purposes namely sense of privacy and to avoid face to face communication stood third and fourth in ranking with narrow margin of just 0.3 percent difference. Quite eccentric findings were explored in context of sense of privacy as ratio was slightly greater among boys in comparison of girls' respondents.

Receiving & sharing of sexual Messages	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	130 (41)	41(13.2)	171(27.3)
No	187 (59)	269 (86.8)	456(72.7)
Total	317(50.5)	310(49.5)	627

Table 4: Response regarding receiving of sexual messages:

Findings as mentioned in Table 2 lucidly communicate this picture that receiving and sharing of sexual explicit messages and MMS was found significantly greater among boys in comparison of girls respondents. As the total score was calculated 41 and 13.2 percent respectively among boys and girls in context of said question.

Messaging effects on studies	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	125(39.4)	237(76.5)	362 (57.8)
No	192(60.6)	73(23.5)	265 (42.2)
Total	317	310	627

Table 5: Teenagers perception regarding effects of Excessive Text messaging on studies

The results as calculated in the table communicate in lucid and vivid manner that more than half of the respondents shared that excessive text messaging has been reason of disturbance coupled with negative effects as they couldn't concentrate on their studies. Negative consequences have come out in shape of poor performance and grades in examinations. In this connection, overwhelmingly majority of girls' respondents considered uses of cell phones for excessive text messaging as detrimental gadget which resulted in negative effects on their academics work in comparison of boys respondents.

Affective needs	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	208(65.6)	185(59.6)	393 (62.7)
No	109(34.4)	125(40.4)	234 (37.3)
Total	317	310	627

Table 6: Teenagers perception regarding gratification of affective human needs

Almost two third of the respondents were engaged in activity of sharing feelings and emotions through text messaging as shown in percentile in the table. It is significant to mention here that usage of cell phone for text messaging in order to gratify the affective needs was statistically found greater among boys' respondents in comparison of girls.

Cognitive needs	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	238(75.1)	242(78.1)	480 (76.5)
No	79(24.9)	68(21.9)	147 (23.5)
Total	**317**	**310**	**627**

Table 7: Teenagers perception regarding gratification of cognitive human needs

Findings of the study as described in table 5 overwhelmingly majority relied on text messaging sharing information and knowledge related contents to their fellows. By doing so they were able to satisfy their cognitive needs and use of cell phone for this gratification was to some extent statistically found greater among girls in comparison of boys users.

Social integrative needs	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	256(80.7)	282(88.9)	538 (85.8)
No	61(19.3)	28(11.1)	265 (14.2)
Total	**317**	**310**	**627**

Table 8: Teenagers perception regarding gratification of social integrative human needs

Results of the survey indicated as mentioned in the above table more than 85 percent respondents shared that they used to communicate through text messaging in order to fulfill their social integrative needs as similar pattern of usage was observed among boys and girls subscribers.

Personal integrative needs	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	187(59)	177(57.1)	364 (58.1)
No	130(41)	133(42.9)	263 (41.9)
Total	**317**	**310**	**627**

Table 9: Teenagers perception regarding gratification of personal integrative human needs

More than 58 percent subscribers relied on text messaging in order to fulfill their personal integrative needs by sharing contents and views for establishing their credibility and this factor was found slightly greater among boys in comparison of girls respondents.

Tension release needs	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	161(50.8)	167(53.8)	328 (52.3)
No	156(49.2)	143(46.2)	299 (47.7)
Total	**317**	**310**	**627**

Table 10: Teenagers perception regarding gratification of Tension release human needs

Results as mentioned in the above table clearly indicate that more than half of the respondents expressed that on certain state of mind under stress and anxiety, they kept themselves busy in text messaging in order to mitigate their tensions. It was also divulged that girls used cell phone for text messaging to some extent more in comparison of boys by gratifying the said needs of tension release and escapism.

Discussions and conclusion

The analysis of text messaging behavior of the teenagers of the Southern Punjab was the motive of this study. The sample consisted of 317 and 310 boys and girls from different public and private educational institutes of Multan city. The study mainly intended to look at general consumption pattern of SMS among teenagers in light of uses and gratification approach in Multan (City of Saints) Punjab-Pakistan which is not a metropolitan in true sense in comparison with other big cities of Pakistan. There have been certain needs and factors which motivated the youngsters for usages of cell phones for the purpose of text messaging. In order to gratify the following categories of needs, communication through text messaging have been done as they kept themselves busy while sending or receiving messages via their smart or ordinary cell phones. In this connection, it was focused on these human needs as categorized in groups by Katz, Gurevitch(1973) as already mentioned above.

Results of the study indicated that overwhelming majority of the respondents relied heavily on cell phone text messaging in order to fulfill and satisfy social interactive needs. It was further explored that Cognitive and affective needs stood second and third in terms of gratification by using this gadget for the said purpose. Text messaging has become the most convenient and the cheapest way of communication in Pakistan. For instance ,Mobilink ,the largest cellular phone company offers daily package of 1200 SMS in just 4.77 Pak rupee while Zong, Chinese company offers daily package of 500 SMS in 2.50 Pak rupee. Similarly consumers enjoy 500 SMS and 30 MBs for 3.99 rupee.(propakistani.pk,2018) Ufone company offers monthly package of 1200 minutes on U-U or landline, 180 minutes call on other mobile networks, 1200 SMS and 1200 MB internet for 600 rupee(3.80 Pound Sterling) On top up before expiry, unutilized call time or SMS would be added in your account.

Due to the penetration of smart phone in the local market as reported by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority almost 31 million subscribers were using smart phones in Pakistan. It is estimated it would cross 40 million by the end of this year. It is interesting to mention here as revealed by infographic app that one third of the users bought comparatively cheaper phones due to law and order situation in shape of mobile snatching in ever increasing street crimes in urban areas of the country. Overwhelmingly majority of the youngsters(77 percent) having smart phones are below the age of 30. Quite interestingly, more than 60 percent of the subscribers have more than one cell phone. Moreover 68 percent consumers of smart phones are on android. Results of the study endorsed findings of Divitini et al.(2002) that due to the cost factor that some of the users could not make maximum utilization of the gadget.

It was explored that majority of the youngsters used text messaging as effective way of building new relationship. In other words, two third respondents prefer to use cell phones in order to gratify their affective needs. It has become easier to share their feelings, pleasure, liking or disliking with their fellows through text messaging. Apart from traditional utilization of SMS bundle packages, they also rely on different apps including Whatsapp, Messenger, Wechat,Imo, Snapchat, Bingo, Viber and Skype etc. for two way communication in shape of text messaging. As mentioned earlier, due to penetration of 3G, 4G technology, online chatting through the device of smart phone has been replacing traditional SMS communication rapidly in urban areas. Similarly, the degree of gratification was found greater among the teenagers (74%) those using

more apps as they considered it symbol of status to be the member of different social chat groups. It has also been endorsed by study of Ling&Yttri(2005) with regard of social integrative factor, also confirmed the findings of E.Marketer(2014) incontext of affective needs and also verified results of Papacharissi& Rubin(2000) in perspective of higher social gratification.

Our respondents belong to educational institutes, hence majority (76.5%) of teenagers felt gratified with regard to their cognitive needs. As they shared messages in order to discuss studies related issues, seeking help from the fellows, sharing info of assignments and exam schedule etc. Succinctly, they considered cell phone as great blessing which gratified their learning needs as the said objectives were achieved through text messaging. Similarly, more than 85 percent respondents used cell phones in order to gratify their social integrative needs. Pakistani society is relatively traditional and conservative coupled with male chauvinism, interaction among the opposite gender, by and large not appreciated in social gatherings. Uses of cell phone for text messaging made it plain sailing task to interact with opposite gender. It helped a lot to use the gadget for the specific purpose to interact with friends. Hence it fulfilled the desire of socialization of the majority of the respondents.

Results of the survey also depicted that most of the female students communicated that they feel more secure in presence of cell phone because their parents and siblings remained in touch through calling or text messaging. They continuously updating about their whereabouts, location while traveling in public transport, auto or cab. While on the other hand, such usage of the technology with regard to safety concern was observed significantly least among males in comparison of female respondents. It was also explored that overwhelmingly majority of respondents particularly of females did not reply to messages received from unknown numbers. On the other hand, a tendency has been observed among boys as one third of the respondents used to respond to unknown person. Another quite interesting activity has been divulged as TV viewing is no more sole task with complete attention as two third of the respondents kept engaging themselves in texting while watching this chatter box.   It was also explored that overwhelmingly majority (84%) of girls' respondents were engaged in activity of text messaging in order to remain in touch with friends and siblings in comparison of boys. While on the other hand, boys did text messaging to propose girls and to make new friends and contacts as this trend was found statistically greater than girl respondents.

Personal integrative needs urge individual to maintain their status and enhancement of credibility. Teenagers irrespective of male or female users have been relying on this gadget to maintain their status in the social circle of this virtual world. Majority of the users were desirous to express their presence in this new phenomenon of virtual world with the help of the cell phone which is being used for multi-purpose. It has been observed as shared by majority of the respondents (83%) they consumed most part of their spare time with the gadget by engaging in numerous online activities including text messaging while lesser quality time is spent with primary group members through face to face interaction. In oversimplified manner it can be said that greater usage of the gadget for the said purposes has created negative impact on the factor of social interaction in real world setting.

Apart from utility of the cell phone for several positive and constructive purposes, it has certain negative impact on the heavy users those particularly kept themselves busy in text messaging for several hours per day. It was shared by the significant number of respondents (64%) that it has created bad impact on their language, grammar expression and diction. Reading habits has also been effected as they prefer to spend more resources on buying new technology instead of books. It was also shared that excessive usage has relatively negatively impacted on the health condition as significant majority of the teenagers was not engaged in physical sports activities in outer physical world. In the nut shell, it is concluded that text messaging is a mix blessing activity. However, it is strongly recommended that parents, elders and high school teachers should keep socializing the teenagers for appropriate usage of the gadget for the certain constructive purposes. Mainstream media should educate the youth in this context through public service messages and other genre. Likewise these constructive messages should be disseminated via new media.

According to findings of this study, teen have different purposes of text messaging. Other rising social phenomena related to mobile texting are also divulged by this study. A large number of teens displayed the tendency of using text messaging to befriend the members of the opposite sex, especially unknown people. This practice proved beneficial in concealing their identity. In the case of known people, texting helped to better convey their emotions ensuring an atmosphere of ease. Furthermore boys out won the girls in sending messages to unknown numbers.

Owing to the strict environment of the Pakistani society and the sexual segregation, free mingling and interaction with the opposite sex is always frowned upon and highly discouraged. In the face of these social/religious boundaries, mobile texting has become a popular medium which allows teenagers to interact and communicate with each other in secrecy. This medium of communication also proves beneficial in cases where teenagers feel shy in expressing their emotions face to face. Thus, mobile texting has introduced an entire new realm of communication especially for teenagers of Pakistan generally and Southern Punjab specifically.

In a nut shell, it can be safely concluded that the cell phone has become integral part of the lives of teenagers. Communication on all levels, sharing of ideas and information and building new relationships has become far more convenient and easier in the last decade. No doubt this advancement in the realm of mobile communication has opened up new horizons and has made life much easier, but, it also raises some serious challenges especially for our young users of mobile. These side effects include negative impact on studies and health hazards. Thus, majority of the respondents describe this technology as mixed blessing or a double edged sword.

Some people recommended that parents should take necessary steps to check their children regarding the excessive usage of cell phones and some others are of view that cell phones should be banned to school going children. According to them, age constraint for the usage of cell phones would be a universal remedy and solution in order to contest the phenomena of misdemeanor leaning among the teenagers. In spite of all afore-mentioned negative aspects of the technology, it is a locus standi that the communication course has become incredibly easier, available and inexpensive due to multi diversification services on cell phones in this 21stcentury, as never before in the recorded history of civilization.

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