

The Impact of Media Usage on Students' Social Skills

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Abstract: The present study explains the impact of internet usage on increasing students' social skills (Assertiveness and Haughtiness) and its effects on their scientific success and on improving their social relations. It also suggests that students' abilities can be illustrated as a result of their using internet and other media such as cell phones etc. Many people and students are educated through using internet and media. It is the most obvious and inevitable element to experience this relation in the routine life too. It is clear that internet has a key role in human life. So we need to obtain a lot of important information about internet also about relations with other variables especially in educational contexts that are important for young generation. It describes students' social relationships and their responsibilities too. This study offers that website designing should consider social and cultural concepts and standards and human beliefs and values. This research has been done by using survey method based on SSRS questionnaire. The sample size includes 288 students studying at universities in North West of Iran, who were chosen by random method. The results show there is strong correlations between two aspects of social skills and internet usage. Internet usage helps the growth of special aspect of social skills and abilities among students to bring success in the social and educational relationships. So it is necessary to develop social skills and group relations. This impact is unique to a particular group of students and there is different between various groups of students in relation to their courses and academic levels.

Key words: Education, media, social relationships, social skills

INTRODUCTION

We know that media are used widely by many people. So Internet, Media and related devices are very important in human life. Formal and informal education to train people needs media use as well. Media are basic elements for academic development and individual achievements. Today, society is very different from what it used to be 10-20 years ago, and in order to keep pace with the changing world and the nurture of students to meet the needs of tomorrow's society, education reform is inevitable. The new wave of education reform set new agendas in education. Apart from the traditional emphasis on ethics, intellect, physical fitness, social skills and aesthetics, schools in our world were expected to produce a new generation of students who could learn on their own, think for themselves, and explore new arenas of learning. So media and other new educational technology are growing in importance. We know inexperienced people come to university with much less education and skills than the general population. They may not have enough

time to spend in order to learn skills. This low skill level does not compel these people to have a good life and adapt themselves with the environment, and creates a context in which an individual sees limited options and opportunities and therefore, does not believe that he or she has much to lose. Also, lack of skills often is associated with a lack of regard for self, and is manifested in limited respect to others and institutions. Social skills training has been recommended as an intervention for students having difficulty establishing meaningful social relationships with peers and teachers in school settings (Axelrod, 1984). On the other hand, social skills are fundamental factors for the formation of relationships, for the quality of social interactions and even for the individual's mental health (Greshman *et al.*, 2006). Öztürk (2006) finds that the videotaped microteaching is effective in piano education on students' skills. "Through media education, the students have an opportunity to practice active and analytical information acquisition and also how to have influence through different media. In addition to media education oriented to social criticism,

emphasis has been placed on students' skills in using the media". Also, their findings show that the media education enables students to construct knowledge and develop a global outlook to cope with the changing and interdependent world in the 21st century, and develops students' lifelong learning skills (to enjoy learning, to enhance effectiveness in communication, to develop creativity, to develop a logical, critical, and analytical mind) as stipulated in the aims of current educational thought. Bradford's study points to the belief that media literacy makes a different ability to evaluate media messages more critically and it can be used as an example of how media literacy equips students with skills that can be used throughout their lives (Grosse, 2001). Teachers need and want more time to teach their students about media, yet such a request falls on deaf ears when the teaching of basic skills becomes the primary focus of instruction (Beaudoin, 2002). According to a number of studies confirmed that educational programs are directly responsible for recent rise in the dropout rate and the decrease in crimes because many of those who drop out of high school or fail to qualify for admission to college or university do not possess the skills necessary to compete for jobs (Beaudoin, 2002). The other research with focus on Individuals differing in the extent to which they engage in and enjoy thinking was done to respond to a series of media-related variables. The results showed that those with high need for cognition individuals had more skills and abilities and had stronger internet and media educations (Cacippo *et al.*, 1984). The goal of this study was to conduct a survey of university students with different social status and behaviours and abilities. The study relies on previous research investigating media and distance education (Hay, 2001; Bradford, 2001). Another survey conducted by the American Federation of Teachers found that distance learning instructors generally believed that course preparation took anywhere from 50 to 66% longer than similar preparation for a traditional class (Carlson and Zmud, 1999). While past studies have explored training methods differences in skills, this study investigated how students differ in their skills. The main objective of the study is to analyze the students' skills in relation with media education. In sociological theory, social reproduction was typically explained by social structure. This view has the effect of making people into agents of that structure who had little independent effect on the constitution of their social world. In the recent years, there has been theoretical attempt to establish an independent role for social actors in social reproduction. This debate has been framed around the issues of connecting social structure to actors, or as it was sometimes put, the problem of agents and structures (Clark, 1993; Giddens, 1984; Staples *et al.*, 1999). The debate has sensitized scholars to the important role that

real people play in the reproduction of social life. So in micro level, media usage can help students to reproduce their interaction with others. These attempts refine and develop the approach, synthesizing it with Giddens' theory of structuration and Bourdieu's notion of habitus in order to understand to gain insight into the relationship between media, identity and power (Fligstein, 2001). He presents it by evidence to show that the mass media provide a key source of empowerment for the confined, offering a range of material from which they can create new identities or maintain pre-existing identities, exploring their inner selves, form subgroups based on collective fandom, and find autonomy and self-respect in all circumstances (Feinberg and Vinaja, 2002). Gavriel Salomon argued that media can be analyzed in terms of their "cognitively relevant" capabilities, in terms of those characteristics that affect the ways in which individuals represent and process information (Salomon, 1979). These capabilities relate to three aspects of each medium: its technology, symbol system(s), and processing capabilities. "Technology" refers to the physical, mechanical, or electronic capabilities that determine a medium's function (Jewkes, 2002). We attempt to draw on social cognitive theory Bandura channel expansion theory Carlson and Zmud and media naturalness theory Kock, and offer a theoretically based holistic view of how individual's scan and abilities develop the capabilities to cope effectively with social structure forms. In this view, the media has a basic effect on students, cognition and their abilities (Feinberg and Vinaja, 2002).

On the other hand, the concept of social skill originates in symbolic interaction. Actors' conceptions of themselves are highly shaped by their interactions with others. When interacting, actors try to create a positive sense of self by engaging in producing meaning for themselves and others. Identities refer to sets of meanings that actors have that define who they are and what they want in a particular situation. According to self-efficacy theory, people develop confidence in technologies and behaviors through their experience of observing, using and evaluating them (Darley, 1992; Joas, 1996). In virtual settings, people expose themselves to technologies, putting them to various uses such as communication and collaboration. In this way, they have opportunities to develop their self-efficacy towards remote communication via ICT and working without being collocated (Bandura, 1986).

When individuals with a self-presentational skill deficit develop a preference for online social interaction, they may devote increasingly more resources (e.g., time, money, and attention) to their online social lives; their careers and their relationships may quickly become secondary priorities. For example, Davis argued that for socially reticent individuals, online social interaction is "a

social liberating experience that might motivate increased dependence on the internet as a means of communicating with others” They go on to explain that “the process occurs as individuals confine themselves to virtual communications and reduce time spent engaging in face-to-face interactions”. In other words, when individuals’ primary use of the internet is synchronous online social interaction, it becomes harder for them to control their internet (Davis *et al.*, 2002; Caplan, 2005).

In this research we investigate the relationship between media usage and students’ social skills and dimensions of social skills so we investigate this relation within students; birth place, different universities and sex. Moreover, the researchers are interested to compare students’ social skills within studying courses.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted at different branches of Islamic Azad Univ. at North West of Iran during summer 2010. 288 students who are studying at East Azerbaijan province universities were chosen for this study by simple random method sampling. This group involved male and female.

We use survey research method for data collection. In order to assess the improvement of students’ skills, a SSRS questionnaire was used to gather data on students’ social skill levels. The questionnaire included 62 questions in all dimensions. Additional questionnaire included 14 questions about each of the different type of using media. This section was containing five-point LIKERT scale as well as a number of usage questions. These included media and internet usage and rate of media enjoy. Also some questions used for measuring other variables. Data collection was done through three months by interviewers at Azerbaijan Province Universities, was conducted in spring 2009 and served as the basis of this research study. We examined the content validity by using reviewer’s evaluation of scale elements before data collection, and Factor analysis for classifying skills scale elements in theoretical categories after data collection; so, we obtained the high validity of this study. We started by using a widely quoted review on skill and media usage in two ways: (1) we evaluated the articles that were included in that review and (2) we used the Science Citation Index to identify studies that cited that review. Then, we searched the database using the search term "skill" combined with "student learning" or "media usage". In case of doubt, the full article was retrieved and eligibility was discussed. Both original articles and reviews were retrieved. This whole process was repeated for references from identified studies and our criteria and data collection were reviewed.

Three criteria chosen for eligibility for inclusion of studied follow:

- Cohort study in humans and human sciences
- exposure defined as use of students’ skills
- cases defined as media usage, and related topics

We recorded study design, characteristics of students, definitions of cases and, total number of cases in the all areas, the measure of association [odds ratio, relative risk, or hazard ratio], the magnitude of the association with its corresponding 95% confidence interval, and the variables adjusted for in the analysis.

Data were analyzed through two types: descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. We used frequencies table and description statistics to describe each variable. The inferential statistical analysis was conducted to address the research questions and examine the relationships among the variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient used for variables association. A hazard ratio is the ratio of instantaneous probability of the outcome event in the student skills [male and female] compared with that in the groups and can be considered a relative risk. For simplicity, we refer to relative risk for all types of measures of association. The correlation of the relative risk with its corresponding standard error, taken directly from the studies or calculated from the reported 95% confidence interval, provided the data points for the analysis. Factor analysis was used to determine dimension of students’ skills manipulation check scales.

RESULTS

Using SPSS software, we conducted reliability tests, correlation tests, and compared analysis to analyze the data collected. To analyze the hypotheses, the scores of the constructs [media usage and internet usage] were computed by adding the corresponding items scores and we obtained total score for media education variable. Further scale development and testing was necessary to identify valid and reliable scales for media usage measurements. The score of each aspect of skills was normally distributed. We investigated the effect of media usage on students’ skills by performing Pearson correlation coefficient. Although these scales were designed for students, they all had high reliabilities. We did not encounter any problems with the scales because they were previously tested by researchers. These included the students’ skills and the attention to peripheral cues scales.

The basic dimensions of student’s skills are:

- **Overconfident:** Confident to excess

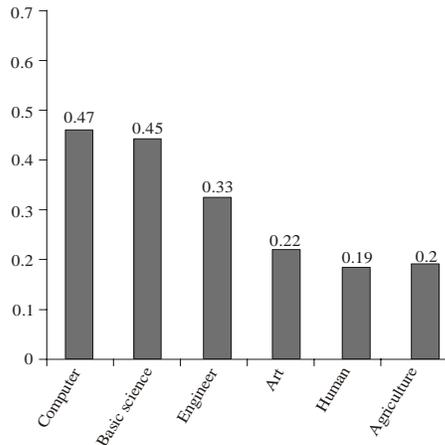


Fig. 1: Comparing correlation between studying - courses

Table 1: Correlation Between students' social skills and media education

Social skill dimensions	Correlation coefficients	Sig.
Overconfident	0.08	0.59
Assertiveness skills	0.51	0.00
Haughtiness skills	0.44	0.00
Appropriate	0.15	0.32
withdrawal skills	0.13	0.42

- **Assertiveness:** aggressive acts and poor temper control
- **Haughtiness:** a defense mechanism against feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem.
- **Appropriate:** behaviors with the development of positive act and thinking
- **Withdrawal skills:** ability to retreat from interpersonal contact and social involvement.

The media usage was positively correlated with two dimensions of students' social skills (Assertiveness and Haughtiness). These findings led us to conclude that whenever media usage increases, students' skills increase as well. In this study, it was found that the media usage was positively correlated with Assertiveness skills ($r = 0.51$) and Haughtiness skills ($r = 0.44$) more than other aspects of skills. Table 1 show that the other dimensions of students' social skills were less correlated with media usage, in comparison with the Assertiveness and Haughtiness skills. The correlation between media usage and academic skills supports what Murray (2001) found which refers to the fact that there are many reasons why a prospective student would choose to take online, distance and media courses.

There was no significant difference in correlation to "birth place" groups. They did not have different [high or low] skills and abilities, if they live at different cities and

cultures. Also it was found that there is no significance difference between students' sex differences and their skills with media usage. But it was found that there is significance difference between students' social skills with media usage within different universities. Average of two subscales [Assertiveness and Haughtiness] in universities with a population of more than 6000 was more than the rest. Also it was found that the correlation between students' social skills (Assertiveness and Haughtiness) and media usage is very different within students' course study, which means to have the correlation within studying courses (Fig. 1). Also by changing the course study, the relationship between students' social skills and media usage will change. For example, Correlation between media usage and Haughtiness within Computer Sciences, Basic Science and Engineering courses are much higher than other courses (Mead, 1934; Nelson Goodman, 1976; Parker and Asher, 1987).

There were no significant differences between art, agriculture and Human Sciences courses? This finding indicates that students' studying courses play a significance role in their social skills achievement by using media. This finding is compatible with what Gary found regarding the consequence of computer and internet skills and need for using such technologies (Gary, 1997).

CONCLUSION

In sum, the relationships predicted about the effectiveness of media usage on students' social skills within the framework of the Elaboration correlation Model were supported. According to the statistical analysis, we believe media usage makes growth and helps students' social skills and abilities in order for them to achieve social success in their life. On the other hand, data analysis showed that there was significant correlation between media usage and students' skills. Also media usage has different influences on five dimensions of social skills. In this perspective, both male and female students are similar because the relationship between variables did not differ among sex groups of students, but in relation to course study, some interesting findings were revealed during factor analysis of the data. As found in many studies, human skills are always influenced by the lack of knowledge of the nature and advantage of media usage and education. Therefore, the formal institutions as the agencies responsible for students could introduce media education and media usage services to all people, especially for students prior to starting the service to ensure more involvement into education activities for skills achievement. We find that all students with different thoughts and cultures and different born places can increase their various skills and it also makes academic convergent and success. It seems reasonable to conclude

that the media usage is helpful and necessary that reinforces students' skills (Öztürk, 2006).

This introduction could be done by providing facilities such as seminars explaining the nature and advantage of the new paradigm. The institutions could also initiate professional development process directed toward media education by providing public with awareness, seminars, and tutorial for optimal media usage, prior implementing the system as it was found in this study, the availability of a suitable infrastructure for media learning programs is a significant factor for developing skills. Therefore, developing media usage in academic contexts, infrastructure would be a very important factor for students and the youth to social skill achievement. Providing the students with sufficient social skills and reliable technology and facilities will be a significant factor for successful implementation of media education programs too (Sewell, 1992; Darley, 1992).

It is very difficult to arrive at a generalisation from this study as it draws upon a small number of respondents. Since the study did not look at other students such as other city or countries, it is not possible to generalize that students' social skills only has been determined by media usage. Nevertheless, the findings point to a significant trend that needs to be taken up in further studies. It needs to be investigated if the presence of the same set of variables, such as regular contact with groups and friends, and learning style in work inside the university is related with it. It would also be interesting to study whether students' skills are investigated in other areas and time by controlling variables such as socialization process, due to the influence of other variables. The outcome of these studies would be particularly useful if we like to extended media usage (Cacippo *et al.*, 1984; Carlson and Zmud, 1999; Staples *et al.*, 1999).

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