



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY USAGE AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS.

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the differences in social media and technology usage, as well as, attitudes, among two generations, namely, adolescents and adults. A sample of 60 adolescents and 60 adults were included for the purpose to study. The data was collected using the Media and Technology Usage and Attitude Scale. The results obtained indicated that there was higher use of social media and technology among adolescents as compared to adults. Besides, findings also revealed that adolescents tend to have more positive attitude towards social media and technology. Undoubtedly, the digital age is here to stay. It will only continue to grow and expand, and the younger generation will become more and more technologically sophisticated. It is therefore necessary to encourage older individuals to adapt to new ways to communicate and share information and thereby bridge this digital divide.

Keywords: Social Media, Technology Usage, Digital divide.

Introduction:

Technology and society or technology and culture refers to cyclical co-dependence, co -influence, co-production of technology and society upon the other (technology upon and culture and vice versa). This synergistic relationship occurred from the dawn of human mind, with the invention of simple tools and continues into modern technology. Today's technology is already producing a market shift in the way we think and behave, particularly among the young. Perhaps overcoming a sense of isolation is one of the greatest features of online communities and virtual worlds.

Technology is the knowledge of techniques, processes, etc, which can be operated by individuals without detailed knowledge of the workings of such things. It includes the computers and networks we access, smart phones and telephones, Social media, video gaming, the internet and the advanced and sophisticated apps (which enables the users to deal with various aspects of day-to-day functioning; instantly and without any stress) online shopping, online payments, etc, which are all popularly used today.

Technology can affect our lives either in a useful way or harmful ways. Humans have always been greatly affected with the development in new technology in every field. It is a universal fact that new information technology not only benefits programmers and hardware engineers, but it also benefits the common users. Internet is basically the core of computer mediated communications .The internet systems is worldwide and connects thousand of computer networks. On the other hand, social media is the collection of online communications channels dedicated to community based input interaction, content -sharing and collaboration. It consists of websites and applications that

enable users to participate in social networking. On one hand, the media and internet make people better informed than other modes of communications and on the other hand, there may be no check on the nature of information being gathered , and therefore , no control over the attitudes that are being formed. However, the most technologically influenced generation is the adolescent population.

The process of adolescence is a period of preparation for adulthood. Adolescence period seems to be dominated by peer interaction and friendship. The stage following adolescence is, adulthood, wherein any person who is above 18 years of age is considered as an adult. Adulthood is the transition that involves maturity experience responsibility and sensibility. These two growth stages of human beings although similar in some functions, vary greatly from one another. Therefore, there has always been a gap or conflict between the adolescents and adults with regard to values, ideas, attitudes, characteristics and in contemporary times, their usage in technology. It is evident that the technological advances are narrowing the gap between adolescents and adults, and as such, this study aims at finding out whether a generation gap does exist.

Review of Literature:

J. M. Vaterlaus et al., (2015) conducted a study on perceived differences in knowledge about interactive technology between adolescents and adults . The findings showed a difference between adolescents and adults with regard to newer interactive technologies and social networking (example : video chat) wherein adults are more comfortable in using technologies that have been in use longer such as E-mail while having difficulty with newer modes of technology.

Study by Lenhart et al., (2015) on Teens, Social Media and

Technology revealed that teenage girls use social media sites and platforms particularly, visually oriented ones, for sharing, more than their male counterparts. Boys are more likely than girls to own gaming consoles and play video games.

Narasimhamurthy N. (2014) made an attempt to research the impact and effect of social networking sites on Indian young adults in socialization and Entertainment, self status seeking and information seeking. Findings shows that adults generally use social networking sites for maintaining relationships as these give users an opportunity to communicate with friends via message, chat and to keep a track on their relationships. Gender difference was also found among adults in terms of social networking sites usage. Females were found to be more active in using social networking sites to socialize and males focused more on self status when using social networking sites.

Methodology:

Aim: To examine the difference in social media and technology usage, as well as attitudes towards it, among adolescents and adults.

Hypotheses

- There will be a difference in social media and technology usage among adolescents and adults.
- Adolescents will have a more positive attitude towards social media and technology as compared to adults.

Participants:

Primary data was collected from a field study conducted on a sample of 120 individuals. The sample consisted of two groups of 60 adolescents and 60 adults. Each group comprised of equal number of males and females. The age group of the adolescent sample ranged from 15 to 21 years; while the adult sample was selected from the age range of 22 to 40 years. The sample was equally represented by technology savvy population.

Tools for Data Collection:

- Data for the present study was collected using the following scale: *The Media And Technology Usage And Attitudes Scale* developed by L.D.Rosen, K.Whaling, L.M. Carrier, N.A.Cheever, and J.Rokkum (2013).

This scale is divided into two parts.

Part A, which measures social media and technology usage, comprises of 33 statements based on a 10 point Likert scale ranging from 'never' to 'all the time'.

Part B, which measures attitudes towards social media and technology, consists of 12 statements based on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

High scores on both the sub-scales is an indication of greater usage of technology and more positive attitude

towards technology, respectively.

Tools for data analysis:

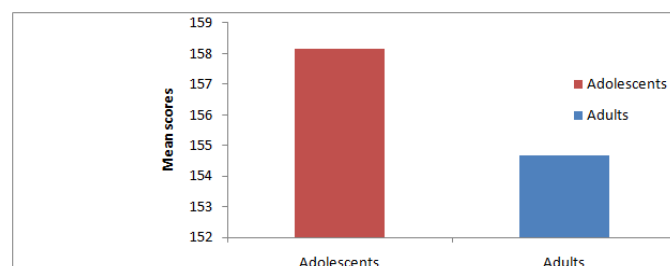
Data was summarized using descriptive statistics of mean and percentages.

Results and Discussion:

Table 1: Mean scores on social media and technology usage among adolescents and adults

Mean scores on Social media and Technology usage			
	N	Total scores	Mean scores
Adolescents	60	9490	158.16
Adults	60	9280	154.66

Graph 1: Shows differences in usage of technology and social media among adolescents and adults.



The above table and graph shows that there is higher use of social media and technology among adolescents as compared to adults ($158.16 > 154.66$). This indicates that there exists a difference between adolescents and adults with respect to social media and technology usage. This could probably be because adolescents have been exposed to technology right from a young age and throughout their life they are surrounded by technological advances. Also, young adolescents are already able to identify technological resources available and how best to use them and have an intrinsic understanding of technology that escape many adults. Further, these results get support from past studies which show that adolescents use more technology than adults. Lenhart et al., (2010) found that a greater percentage of adolescents use social networking websites as compared to adults. It was also revealed that there is drop in the proportion of adults use of social networking sites whereas proportion of adolescent using social networking sites has been on the positive rise (Lenhart et al., 2010).

Thus, the hypothesis that 'there will be a difference in social media and technology usage among adolescents and adults' has been supported, thereby indicating that a technology driven generation gap does exist among adolescents and adults.

Table 2: Mean scores of attitude towards social media and technology among adolescents and adults.

Attitude towards Social media and Technology
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	N	Total scores	Mean scores
Adolescents	60	2472	41.2
Adults	60	2458	40.98

Graph 2 (A): Graph depicting mean scores on attitude towards social media and technology among adolescents and adults.

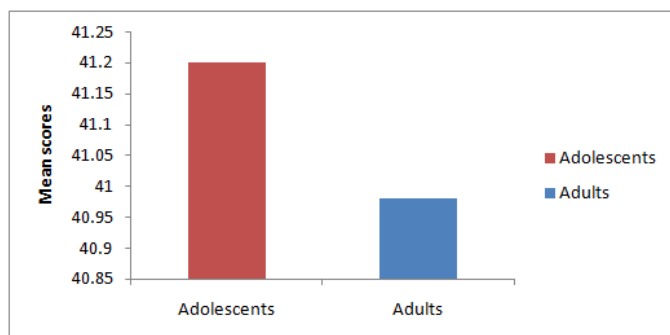
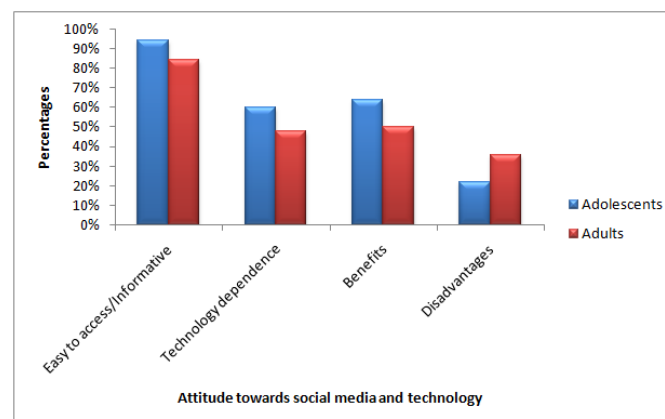


Table 2 (as well as Graph 2-A) shows the difference in attitude towards technology and social media among adolescents and adults. As observed, the mean score obtained by adolescents was higher than that obtained by adults ($41.2 > 40.98$), although the difference was not very large. In other words, adolescents tend to have more positive attitude towards social media and technology. This might probably be due to the fact that adolescents think that social media networks provide them a platform to connect, understand and meet, and they feel media is an undeniably powerful entity in their daily lives. Adolescent's perception towards media in all forms and varieties has a powerful influence on their life. Besides, adolescents apparently believe that social media sites enable them to play active role in the socialization process and construct their own identity.

A previous research study also supports this trend in results. A study by Bradley and Inglis (2012) reported that adolescents have positive attitude towards social networking and they believe that it impacts their social and emotional lives positively. Another study by Mokeyane (2006) found that media has a positive influence on adolescents in terms of cultural and political awareness, that is, by exposure to news and information about events occurring around the world, it allows teens to participate in charitable acts and secondly in terms of social skills, development as social media diversifies teens 'social skills' which will help them to navigate through technologically astute society. Besides, social media also allows teens to cultivate new friendships, which bring them access to wider networks, and provides even greater learning and social opportunities.

Thus, the hypothesis stating that 'adolescents will have more positive attitude towards social media and technology as compared to adults' has been supported.

Graph 2(B):Percentage of adolescents and adults showing different attitudes with respect to social media and technology.



Besides, data obtained on the attitude scale towards social media and technology was qualitatively analyzed. It was found that 94% of adolescents reported that technology was useful to find information, was easy to access and was useful to keep in touch with latest trends as compared to 84% of adults who felt the same. With regard to anxiousness of not having cell phones and internet, it was found that 60% of adolescents were technologically dependent in comparison to 48% of adults.

When asked about benefits and advantages of social media and technology, 64% of adolescents reported that technology provides the best of the solutions whereas 50% of adults felt that it is not so beneficial. With respect to its disadvantages, only 22% of adolescents viewed social media and technology as complicated and considered it a waste of time. On the other hand 36% of adults felt that social media and technology makes people isolated and drives them away from each other, and as such, was disadvantageous.

Hence, these results show that adolescents have a more positive attitude towards social media and technology than adults.

Conclusions:

The main findings obtained from the study are as follows:-

- Adolescents use social media and technology to a greater extent than adults.
- Adolescents have a more positive attitude towards social media and technology as compared to adults.
- Greater percentage of adolescents reported that social media and technology were informative, beneficial and were found to be dependent on it.
- A larger percentage of adults considered social media and technology usage to be disadvantageous.

Limitations:

One major limitation of this study was the nature and size

of the sample. Besides, for the adult population, only individuals in the age group of 22 to 40 years were selected as part of the study, hence the entire adult population was not represented in the study. Therefore, these results cannot be considered conclusive and thus, may not be generalised to the entire population. In light of these methodological issues, future research with a larger and more representative sample will strengthen the generalizability of the findings.

Scope and Significance of the study:

This study examines the use of technology in adolescents and adults and their attitude towards it. Parents, teachers and many other working adults, who have been compelled, due to many circumstances, to adapt and to fit in the new trends in technology, would be able to understand the difference and impact of this digital divide. These findings will help older individuals to change their attitude and adapt more quickly to the technological advancements, as compared to the adolescents. A future intervention based research may encourage adults, who constantly lag behind adolescents with regard to technology and social media, to adapt more easily to social media and technology and thereby destroy the digital divide that exists.

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