Digital Devices and Self-Expression among Teenagers in Osogbo, South-Western Nigeria

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Abstract

Digital devices have reshaped human communication in today's technology driven society. These devices, as a medium of identity and self-expression, now determine personal, domestic, and corporate interactions by providing access to digital and online facilities enabled by an influx of computer and portable mobile devices into the Nigerian market. The effect of this digitalization on self-expression cuts across contexts and age categories. This study, driven by new media theory and the theory of transitivity in systemic functional linguistics, examined the influence of digital devices on identity and self-expression among undergraduate teenagers in Osogbo, Osun State. Carefully selected through stratified and convenience sampling techniques, undergraduate teenagers involved in the survey—which employed a questionnaire—and focus group discussions, revealed that their preference for interactive chats, social media picture galleries, captions on photographs, and video subtitles outweighed their propensity to read long or academic texts and partake in online economic activities. Most of our respondents explored online communication through their mobile devices, while others accessed the internet on personal computers at home with little or no parental guidance or supervision. Subsequently, age falsification, wrong or misleading self-identification, and a consequent cultural literacy were common among undergraduate teenagers online. A self-regulation facility was then recommended alongside parental and caregiver monitoring of teenagers' virtual communication to reduce the influence of social media on teenagers' time management and self-identity. Further research is also recommended in the field of ICT to detect age falsification and other forms of online false-identity among minors.

Keywords: cultural literacy, social media discourse, self-expression, digital devices, digital natives/net generation

Introduction

The new and digital media has changed virtually everything in human life. Communication, lifestyle, and cultural orientations are now determined by access to and use of digital media and the internet. Consequently, a different human (the digital man) has just been created, separate from the traditional man we used to know. This new breed of human beings think and behave digitally or virtually, as separate from the conventional man. This trend was first observed in 1997 when the concept "net-generation" (Koutropoulos, 2011) was coined to identify the new breed of individuals born into and growing through the digital age. Among other labels used to describe this generation are the "Millennials" (or "Generation M") and the "Google Generation" (Koutropoulos, 2011; Jones & Shao, 2011). But the most popular parlance coined for this generation is probably "digital native" (Prensky, 2001). As the conversation continues, digital natives are understood from cultural, regional, and tribal perspectives, thus leading to the coinage of "digital tribes" (Watson, 2013). In addition to the above, more recent studies have coined newer terms for the digital generation. Meyer (2016) and Venter (2017), for instance, identify "Generation Y" as children born between 1980 and the 2000s and "Generation Z" as those people born from the 2000s till now. Despite the diversity in labelling, scholars agree that the distinguishing feature between the digital generations and the generations before them is that the former are born into and growing in digital environments (Helsper & Eynon, 2010). That is, they have no experience of a world without digital devices, computers, internet, iPhones, etc. They are majorly identified by their access to and use of digital devices, which they use to express themselves through images, brief textual representations, unvoiced videos, and vlogs (video blogs).

This situation then presents a socio-cultural trend leaving a vast gap between parents, born in either the Silent or Boomer Generation, and their children of the "X-Y-Z Generation"; teachers of these digital generations also complain about students' lack of enthusiasm and participation in classroom activities in more or less the same way the students grouse about their outdated class deliveries. This paints a picture of socialization crises (Watson, 2016). Apart from this, the economic status of the majority of Nigerians, and the infrastructural facilities like power supply and access to efficient internet facilities, are some of the challenges that may question the existence of a true Generation Z, as described by scholars (Meyer, 2016; Venter, 2017), in many developing countries.

This study of teenage university undergraduates in Osogbo, Osun State, South-west, Nigeria, therefore seeks to investigate the influence of access to mobile-digital devices on the teenagers' cultural literacy and self-expression.

Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the usage of mobile digital devices by teenaged university undergraduates to determine how such may or may not affect their

virtual self-expression. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the influence of mobile-digital devices on teenagers' cultural literacy.
2. Find out the influence of mobile-digital devices on teenagers' online self-expression.

Research Questions

Based on relevant literature and theoretical underpinning, two guiding questions help to structure this study. These two research questions ultimately interrogate the main question at the crux of the study as extrapolated in the problem of the study.

1. What is the influence of mobile-digital devices on teenagers' cultural literacy?
2. What is the influence of mobile-digital devices on teenagers' online self-expression?

Methodology

This study adopted the survey design in addition to utilizing focus group discussion (FGD) for data collection, while questionnaires and an FGD guide (instrument for data gathering in focus group discussions) were the instruments for data collection. From a population of 1,000 students in the study setting at Fountain University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria, 133 teenage students were selected based on stratification and convenience. The students of Fountain University were first stratified based on age and academic year, and based on this, it was discovered that first year students were, for the most part, teenagers. The study then purposively selected all 100 level students as the sampling frame for the study, which was stratified into two categories based on college (Management and Social Sciences; Natural and Applied Sciences). Next, the questionnaire was administered during a general class where all the students were expected to be present. For the survey, therefore, 133 copies of the questionnaire were administered while two FGDs of six participants each were conducted among teenage undergraduate students. After the data collection, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for data analysis. Then, the table of frequencies and percentages derived therefrom yielded the data presented at the discussion of findings section of this study. Inferences and deductions were then drawn from the data for discussion of the findings. The FGD data, which are qualitative in nature, were analysed using narratives, theme building, transitivity analysis, verbal discussion, and representative quotes. The findings thereof were discussed alongside the quantitative analysis from which conclusions and recommendations were drawn from the study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is based on relevant aspects of new media theory by Holmes and Halliday's system of transitivity from systemic functional linguistics. Aspects of the theories that have been used in the analysis of the work are visited below.

The New Media Theory

This study leans on the new media theory, which became formalized in the 1990s. According to Holmes (2009, p. 684), "The accelerated diffusion of digital media from telecommunications and information technology sectors in the 1990s has led media and communication studies to be defined by new objects of investigation". This, according to him, has called for the "exploration" of new media as well as investigating the "remediation" of traditional media, therefore bringing about obvious challenges in the traditional media environment at the technological innovation and ecological levels. This is because incremental developments that occur in the media environment have also caused some "qualitative changes" in the social landscape.

Marshall McLuhan, a major proponent of the term media, had already called attention to the substantial changes in society due to new technologies in the 1950s. He argued that "…the effects of the electronic revolution in 1950s America were so great as to make educators displaced persons living in a world that has little to do with the one in which they grew up" (2009, p. 684).

Part of what makes McLuhan's earlier theoretical claims more prophetic after the 1990s is the fact that his ideas of "globalisation" and "convergence" have become realities that the human race must live within the internet age. Among other scholars, Vivian (2009) describes media convergence as a situation in which all traditional media (print and electronic) are accessed on a single gadget (digital/mobile device), sometimes simultaneously or by navigating from one to another, a process conceptualized in literature as "digital multi-tasking"—a distinctive feature of digital natives (Meyer, 2016).

Citing Jenkins, Holmes says "new consumers of convergent media are more socially connected because they can upload their own content and choose from a much wider array of fragmented information" (2009, p. 685). Furthering the explanation of the influence of online interactive media made possible by internet and digital devices, Holmes also cited Turkle as saying that "online communication" can "control how much we reveal of ourselves or, indeed, project altogether new identities" (ibid., p. 686) which may, in fact, become more fluid and decentered online. Discussing ritual theory, Holmes says, Turkle added that people find comfort "…in only having to interact with a medium rather than directly with other human beings" (ibid.). This sense of online "comfort", he says, "…creates the paradox that avatars are more willing to express intimacy online than they are offline" (ibid.). Therefore, self-disclosure on the Web is such an ambiguous process through the Internet, an irresistible medium of convergence, facilitated by Web 2.0 features and facilities.

Transitivity in Systemic Functional Linguistics

In furtherance, systemic functional grammar or linguistics contributes to the theoretical framework of this paper. This theory by M.A.K. Halliday (1985), based on language as

a social semiotic, reveals that language is functional (language is used to do something or to speak of something) and as such, is used by speakers or writers to accomplish specific needs. In this theory, language expresses three kinds of meaning simultaneously: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational meaning, also called experiential meaning, comes from the clause as representation and is an expression of our experiences in the real world and our cognitive world. At the level of interpersonal meaning, social relations are established and maintained through individuals expressing their individuality via interactions. Textual meaning creates a nexus between features of textual matter with elements in the discourse or the way the text is organised. This means textual meaning comes from the clause as a message; the clause gets its meaning from its *theme*. Themes serve to situate the clause within context. The rest of the message outside the *theme* is referred to as *rheme*. The *rheme* elaborates the *theme* and therefore a clause is comprised of both *theme* and *rheme*.

Halliday posits that these types of meaning are not accidental but necessary for performing social functions through language. In relaying our experiences, the main system of grammatical choice involved is the transitivity system. This system competently explains the linguistic processes used in the meaning interpretation of data. In this theory, clauses represent events and processes while transitivity aims to clarify how the action is performed, who receives the action, and on what it is carried out. Transitivity can be used to show participants involved in an interaction or text, how speakers/writers encode through language use, their cognitive perception of the world, how they situate or place themselves in respect to other people, and whether they take an active or passive role in the interaction. Aspects of the focus group discussion (FGD) in this paper will be structured after these analytical components of the transitivity system. Using transitivity analysis, previous research reveals that language structures can produce certain meanings and ideologies that are not always necessarily clear to the readers. Therefore, transitivity analysis is tasked with discovering the relationship between meanings and wordings which account for the organisation of linguistic features in a text.

In the system of transitivity, we have six processes divided into three main types—material, mental, and relational, with three sub-types—behavioural, verbal, and existential processes. The material processes (pr: material) are processes of doing something physical, or tangible things called action clauses signifying that an animate or inanimate entity "does" something which may be done to some other entity (transitive verbs), or the verb action might end with the "actor" (intransitive verbs). The main participants in a material process are *Actor,* the doer of an action; *Goal,* the person or entity affected by the action; and *Beneficiary,* the receiver (direct and indirect object). For the mental process, we have a *Senser,* the entity involved in the process; and *Phenomenon,* what is felt, thought, or experienced by the Senser, while the relational process affects issues of being and having. Two types dominate this process: the *identifying relational* which serves to define, with participants that include *Token* and *Value*, and the *attributive relational* which serves to describe, with participants that include *Carrier* and A*ttribute*.

In their subsidiary roles, these three process types share characteristics of each of the main processes. Therefore, between Material and Mental lies the *Behavioural process*, which is characteristic of the outward expression of cognition reflecting psychological and physiological behaviours. The *Behaver* is the conscious participant of this type. Between Mental and Relational processes, we have the *Verbal process*, which covers acts of saying. There are three participants involved in Verbal processes: the *Sayer,* who is responsible for vocal action, the *Receiver,* at whom the verbal action is aimed, and *Verbiage,* which is the utterance. *Existential processes* which prove states of being, existing, and happening, lie between Relational and Material processes. This process type employs forms of the verb "be" or its synonyms, such as "live" and "happen". The only participant here is *Existent,* which comes after "there is/are" sequences. Although no one process holds more priority than the other, they all interact to enable us to understand and express our mental representation of events as we see them.

Driven by these theories, this paper examines social media use, lexical choices, visual and textual self-presentations, cultural literacy as a distinct strategy between generations, identities, self-expression, and the self-disclosure of teenagers in online communities.

Cultural Literacy

Cultural literacy, popularized by E. D. Hirsch as a knowledge of what others know, notes the essential importance of the knowledge of certain cultural details to writing and communicative competence. In other words, to achieve an appreciable degree of communicative competence, a writer or communicator needs a fair knowledge of the other person's cultural and/or literate knowledge of the world as it exists, or as they both know it, to enable the writer to select culturally homogenous words that will foster understanding of the subject of communication. This is the distinction drawn between elaborated and restricted codes vs. prolixity and conciseness by Berstein (1972). Teaching writing as a craft while neglecting the huge domain of implied but unwritten knowledge, which, although invisible, is just as imperative to the writing process as the written words, is putting the cultural dimension of writing in jeopardy. While writing is a minute part of the task of communication, requiring proper syntax, rhetoric, spelling, arrangement, coherence, and so on, the larger part of writing, which is mainly invisible to communicators, is dependent on a cultural base or knowledge beyond linguistic parameters. However, it extends to both the writer and reader's knowledge about the topic, and the audience or reader's expectations on the topic, about the form, the writer, and the world. For Hirsch, the cultural dimension is a whole system of unspoken, implicit knowledge shared between writer and reader. Hirsch (1987) further observed that young people in the American society, were unable to recall and associate historical and literary facts. He holds this inability responsible for students' non-attainment of cultural literacy. However, this perspective to cultural competence has been severally criticized among educators as wrong and misleading (Paul, 1989; Estes et al., 1988). The argument against

Hirsch's position from H. T. Estes et al., is that although Hirsch is right in his deduction that today's students cannot allude and apply, however, teaching culture from a dictionary list of associations and a test of achievements will not help students create contexts for those words; rather it will increase their inability to do so. The logic to developing cultural literacy is for students to play a role in their learning process. Therefore, learning cultural words by rote memorization fails to achieve the purpose of transmission of knowledge in teaching because the teacher is seen here not as a conduit to learning but as information transmission, "telling" while students react as mere receptors in an information acquisition process. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to explore the culture teachers want them to learn. Learning comes by association and association by meaning so that students will graduate with a full knowledge of words and the requisite associations to conjure up meaningful usage for those words. Fragmenting and reducing the curriculum for students fosters inadequacies in associating these discrete and often isolated parts with their meanings or context because they do not cohere adequately for students to attach meaning, situate them in context, and subsequently recall or allude to them in a related context of writing and conversation. Students are unable to memorize what they do not understand and as such will not remember what they have not attached meaning to nor been able to situate within a context.

Self-Identity and Self-Expression

Identities are dynamic, context sensitive, and context determined. They provide a meaning-making background to interpreting pragmatic and linguistic choices made in communicative contexts. Awareness of self and of choices made in communicative contexts to create positive recognition, impression, or reception in the eyes of the other person is the crux of our discussion on identity and self-expression. Bringing this to the fore, especially in the context of digital media, is important because digital media has been identified as being powerful in building social relations and identities (Iványi, 2017). Because people want to present their best self and be perceived as such, choices made are identity based and identity congruent (Leary & Tangney, 2012). Saying that identities are context based points to the truth of identities being fluid and rapidly changing; depending on the demands of a communicative context, for instance, a young girl of 17 years old who is also an undergraduate first-year student of English Language in Nigeria may have, in addition to this academic identity, a social identity of being Yoruba, liberal and gregarious. However, this same girl might have an entirely different form of self-expression and presentation with certain members of her extended family, her lecturers, academic mentors, and the online public especially. To the online public, she is at liberty to recreate, redo, and erase any mistake or less pleasant form of self-expression engaged in with her offline social relationships.

Identities, therefore, are "traits, characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is" (Leary & Tangney, 2012). A combination of the

differing identities constitutes a person's self-concept, or who one perceives they are when thinking of oneself. Self-concept is also viewed as an individual's realisation of who they are or what one believes to be true of themselves. Hence, most people have a constant and reassured self-awareness based on a huge store of autobiographical memories and experience. This feeling of self-awareness is based on the assumption of self-knowledge which facilitates meaning-making and choices of communicative competence. Self and identity are sometimes used interchangeably while at other times are used to refer to separate things. Since the concept of the self and identity are sometimes, if not in all cases, abstract, people adopt visualization by using pictures to objectify (Stocchetti, 2017) their self-conceived identity, especially on social media.

People have schemas for the identifications with which they want to be perceived. Going by their schematic strategies, reflecting on oneself is a mental activity that requires an "I" engaged in the consideration of an object "me". Therefore, *self* includes the actor "I" in "I am thinking" and the object of the mental activity (about me). In addition, self can be realised as an individual (reflexive) or in relation to a group (collective), or measured in respect to the past self (who one was), present self (who one is), or future self (who one wishes to or will become). These are mental contents of the concept of self. Binaries of the self, include the individualistic "me" self or the collectivistic "us" self, the temporally near "now" self or the temporally distal "future" self, and the immersed "mind's eye" self or the observer's "eyes of others" self (Leary & Tangney, 2012).

Although Leary and Tangney (2012) identify a number of identity types, namely, role identity, personal identity, religious identity, and social identity, they go further to posit, as social theorists, that people have as many selves as they have interaction partners; for every interaction, they might take on a different identity. From this perspective, identities are distinct parts of the self-concept, the internalized meanings and expectations associated with the positions one holds in social networks and the roles one plays. Social theories agree on three core notions concerning self, self-concept, and identity namely, mental construct, social product, and force for action to explain the assumption that self, self-concept, and identity come from somewhere, are stored in memory and matter for behaviour.

Agreeing that self and identity are mental constructs which develop from early childhood, this paper also notes that these concepts are grounded in social context (distal or proximal) and that self, or how one thinks about oneself, consequently produces action or influences behaviour. As social contexts of the distal perspective, the effects might be seen as parental upbringing, schooling, the culture, life experiences, and the time of place of residence. In proximal perspectives, the effects of context on self can be felt in the psychological implications of the immediate situation one is in. People do not create themselves from thin air, rather they work with existing notions of who they are, how others perceive them, and who they want to present themselves as to others. Endorsement and validation from others which help to reinforce a sense of self is required to determine and maintain the aspect of self-relevance in the moment. Getting others to endorse one's

identities is congruent; people change their behaviour to get others to view them as they want to be viewed or as they view themselves. Considering that it might be a difficult task to demonstrate that the self influences action, manipulative strategies are often employed to influence whether and how people think about themselves and to show that this has an effect on their subsequent actions.

In light of the above, this paper considers that as social participants in an online context, people are influenced by a mental construct of who they are and the dictates or relevant aspects of their social condition (what is happening in the moment). Therefore, teenagers consider their social environments online and offline, but especially online, before they act. How one thinks and subsequently acts is tied to relevant features of the social environment which can be adjusted to suit contextual demands. Because judgement can be easily influenced by available information and how it is interpreted, identities are dynamically constructed and manipulated to fit the situation.

Arguing that thinking and action are influenced by what comes to mind and feels relevant in the context of a situation, this paper further suggests that the place of cultural literacy is crucial at this point because individuals can only reproduce what they know. Therefore, teenagers' online self-expression and self-disclosure will be shaped by, and limited to, their pre-existing knowledge of the online and offline culture of their society and of the world. The content and behavioral implications of an online identity are context sensitive and dynamically constructed in the moment (Leary & Tangney, 2012).

In a similar study, based on research conducted mostly in the United States, Herring and Kapidzic (2015) examine the self-presentation of teenagers through online social media—Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and chat forums. Their study found that online social media usage of teenage boys and girls appear similar but self-presentation (self-expression) differs in some aspects. In respect to the truthfulness ratio, likability, style, tone, visual representation, and linguistic orientations, boys scored lower than girls and tend towards assertiveness in their language, tone, and style, while in accessibility boys scored higher with making their profiles public. Importantly, their research reverberates what previous studies have found—a persistence of traditional gender stereotypes in the use of language and image display. This is an indication for the importance teenagers attach to the display of gendered identities in social media because these social media sites are mostly heteronormative environments. By looking at other people's profiles, posts, and interactions, teenagers get a sense of what is appropriate to express, which guides their own self-expression and self-presentation. Therefore, social media sites provide growing and searching teens a space to negotiate, explore, reconfigure, and, in the process, test the effects of their presented self-image on others, while clarifying to themselves who they are. Conversely, if social media sites produce feelings of endorsement, validation, and positive self-worth in teenagers, it can also produce psychosocial problems and feelings of low self-esteem when profiles, pictures, comments, or interaction with others are met with negativity, zero likes and comments, or cyberbullying, harassment, and negative comments. Moreover, comparing oneself to others on social media can generate feelings

of inadequacy and depression.

Discussion of Findings

The first set of the data reveals that 92% of the respondents have access to the internet, while those regularly accessing or using the internet fall to 88%. Of these regular users, 59% had unbridled access to the internet while just 2.3% had never used the internet before. This shows that there is a slight difference between access and rate of access to the internet among teenagers who are undergraduates.

Similarly, the result reveals that the majority of the respondents usually sent and received information through email and the social media. Out of the entire sample, 99 (74.4%) and 104 (78.2%) made use of email and social media respectively to send and receive information. Questions were put to students about the kind of activities they performed online, and from their responses, it becomes clear that online transaction (buying and selling) was not popular among the respondents. Only 63 out of 133 (47.4%) had ever bought something online before this study. This, however, falls very short of the frequency of other social activities ranging between 74% and 78%. Up to 66.9% of our respondents said they sought health information online, to keep them aware of personal health needs. This shows that they are in a way conscious of their health. It was also gleaned from our data that only 30% of the respondents had personal websites or blogs where they post messages regularly.

To reflect the attitude of the respondents to mobile digital devices, 30% of them agreed that they either called, sent, or received SMS while in the classroom and during the course of a lecture. This reveals how digital devices become distractions to comprehension and participation in classroom discourse. For the question of exchanging nude pictures online, 13% admitted to have sent nude pictures while more than double that (32.3%) had been previous recipients of nude pictures. Comparing this with the results from our FGDs, all the participants confirmed that they regularly sent or received *selfies* which in some cases displayed some level of nudity to their friends on social media. One participant admitted, "I send and receive *selfie* (sic) to and from friends at least three times a week". On the nature of *selfies* being shared on social media, they all agreed that nude personal pictures (*nudies*) were being shared among friends and their online communities. For instance, a participant said, "I share my nude *selfie* when I feel like among friends and loved ones". The researchers further engaged the issue to gain insights into the motives of sharing nude pictures among undergraduate teenagers in Nigeria. Participants subsequently gave the following reasons: "to show friends and family something on my body when I'm away from home"; "to show loved ones my look for the day"; "to make sexual advances to the opposite sex"; "to share or extend affection and intimacy to a dating partner"; "based on request by a sexual partner"; "to show what we *have*" (i.e. how pretty and admirable one is); "to get people's attention; "to get more likes, followers, and comments online"; "to mark birthday"; "due to social media influence". Leary and Tangney (2012) espoused

similar ideas in their discussion of self-expression and self-identity. Besides, this also correlates with the findings of Iványi (2017) which claim that people use digital media to lubricate social relations.

Reactions to nude pictures online vary among the respondents. These include "likes", "you're beautiful", "look and check (sic) more nude pictures from that person". Only one respondent said s/he would privately call the sender's attention to why it is not good to share nude pictures on social media. Some other respondents also said they would "like and share similar pictures for 'beefing'". Beefing is a term among Nigerian undergraduates which originates from "beef", not in the biological sense of the word, but to describe disagreements, a rift, usually latent, or displeasure between two people or groups. For example, "Shola and Ade have beef" or "They are beefing each other over a girl". On whether people's religion determines them sharing nude pictures or not online, a participant said, "…religion resists sharing nude pictures sometimes but not always". All other participants agreed that both Muslim and Christian teenagers are the same regarding social media participation. "Both Muslims and Christians do the same thing on social media. They share social stuffs not consistent with offline identity". This shows that people use social media as masks which enable them to express hidden aspects of the self. This is consistent with postulations of the new media theory by Holmes (2009) concerning social media use among people. The findings also affirm the concept of objectification discussed by Stocchetti (2017). In addition, this new study faults the general notion that religion may determine people's online behaviour and adds "religion" to the demographic variables like gender, which was found by Herring and Kapidzic (2015) as inconsequential to the online behaviour of social media users.

Another dataset from the study indicates that undergraduates use digital devices more for social relations than economic activities, as only 44% of the respondents have at one time transacted any type of business online. Also, only 30% have personal online sites or blogs. Although a smaller percentage (13%) of the respondents admitted to regularly sending nude pictures/videos online, 30% regularly receive the same. This correlates with a principle of the social media theory that people are more comfortable sharing certain content online than offline (Holmes, 2006). Considering that 53% said they shared with friends many times daily and only 18% read e-books online, this paints a non-progressive vista for the future of education in Nigeria. Consequently, teenagers sometimes "pay the price of their career for multi-tasking". This shows that they are not multi-tasking as proficiently as Meryer (2016) explained.

Among respondents, 44% shared updates about themselves online many times daily. This is done on several social media platforms where they are members. In fact, teenagers sampled for this study said they belonged to at least one social media platform, just as 33% of them admit to being active on more than four social media platforms. Prensky (2001) opines that digital multitasking is wasteful of precious time for the digital native.

Linguistic Patterns in Students' Social Media Expressions

In the data examined, language choices and patterns of use reveal deep-seated notions of intent, goals, and habit among participant users. From an infinite number of choices, an individual will select a lexical choice or word that best suits their experiences or expresses adequately a certain worldview or perspective. Therefore, utterances made by teenagers who participated in the FGDs are investigated for patterns of behaviour revealed through their linguistic choices. Ten utterances purposively selected from the results of the FGD are analysed below using the transitivity system, which is an aspect of M.A.K Halliday's systemic functional linguistics.

Utterance 1:

I | send and receive | *selfies* | to and from friends | at least three times a week

Actor	Process	Goal	Beneficiary	Circumstance

Utterance 1 is a general statement establishing the context of selfies and admitting to sharing same between teenage social media users. By personalizing the pr: material action "send and receive" with the personal pronoun "I", the participant takes responsibility for subsequent actions. In addition, the recipient of the verb action is non-sexual "friends", however, the frequency of the verb, "three times a week", piques one's curiosity.

Utterance 2:

I | share | my nude *selfies* | when I feel like | among friends and loved ones

Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance	Beneficiary

In this utterance, the context of "selfie sharing" is narrowed to a specific content type— nude selfies. Therefore, the personal pronoun "I" personalizes the action of participants taking responsibility for pr: material "share", with further personalization to show ownership "my + nude selfie". The use of the personal items "I and my" claiming ownership for the "nude selfies" and agency for the action "share", effectively exonerate third party authorship or blame because the *actor* in utterance 2 has claimed agency for the act and for the items shared.

Utterance 3:

to show | friends and family | something on my body | when I'm away from home

Process	Beneficiary	Range	Circumstance

Utterance 4:

to show | loved ones | my look | for the day

Process	Beneficiary	Goal	Circumstance

Utterance 5:

to make | sexual advances | to the opposite sex

Process	Goal	Beneficiary

Utterance 6:

to share or extend | affection and intimacy | to a dating partner

Process	Goal	Beneficiary

Utterances 3-6 have the elliptical subject "I" or "We" as *Actor* which, although it is not expressed in the clause, is clearly understood as carried over from the preceding utterances. They all open with a marker of intent "to". The utterances "to show", "to make", and "to share" tell us immediately "why" a specific activity is carried out. All three lexical choices are pr: material verbs which indicate active participation by teenagers to attain specified goals "my body", "my look for the day", "sexual advances", "affection and intimacy". To + material process verbs in the infinitive form have been used to show that action on the part of the speaker/actor is conscious, deliberate, and pre-mediated towards a specific goal. In these instances, different goals are approached via different material actions. However, while utterances 3 and 4 appear non-sexual and neutral in situations where a teenager might show a scar or injury to parents or guardians, utterances 5 and 6 appear sexualised because of the beneficiaries of the pr: material verbs. Where "friends and family" and "loved ones" (used in most instances to connote biological relatives and close friends) can be viewed from a non-sexual perspective, "opposite sex" and "dating partner" are undeniably sexual.

Utterance 7:

to show | what we have (i.e. how pretty and admirable one is)

Process	Goal

In addition, utterance 7 signifies a need for acceptance by teenagers who equate nude graphic expositions with being pretty and worthy of admiration. The need to be seen and accepted by others (Brown & Levinson's (1987) *positive face*) as "pretty and/or admirable", and consequently, worth "following" and ultimately becoming friends with (*goal*), is expressed by pr: material "to show" effacing a physical display of aesthetic qualities in exchange for social acceptance.

Utterance 8:

to get | more likes, followers and comments | online

Process	Goal	Circumstance

This utterance reveals teenagers' need to be accepted, to gain attention, and get more

"followers", which, perceptively and incidentally, the participants do not misrepresent as "friends". It is pertinent from the lexical choice "followers" that the abstract noun "friendship" is not misunderstood by the active verb "follow". In order to achieve this goal of "more likes, followers, and comments online", teenagers engaged active behavior expressed in pr: material "get" which reveals that to achieve certain results on social media, physical action is required. Furthermore, the choice of mental abstraction, "likes", carries a graphic representation on social media which serves to boost the emotional satisfaction (another mental constructs) of the receiver who has their online post "liked".

Utterance 9:
due to social media influence

Attribute

The above utterance attributes an aggregate online behaviour directly as a major culprit for teenagers' online behavior. The lexical choice "due" is a pr: *attributive relational*, synonymous with "because" and used by participants in this study to explain their online practice of sharing *nudies*. This implies teenagers are simply copying trends and reproducing online behaviour they have been exposed to. The implicit or blended *carrier* of this relational attribute becomes "I or We + do this" which carries the blame of sharing *nudies* online. The Carrier is omitted by the speaker because it is assumed the listener can infer from the previous utterances who the carrier is.

Utterance 10:
like and share | similar pictures | for "beefing"

Process	Goal	Circumstance

This utterance points specifically to one of the malicious methods *nudies* can be used to, in order to defame, disgrace, embarrass, and threaten *negative face* (Brown & Levinson, 1987) of teenagers online. Admittedly, teenagers engage in the practice of sharing *nudies* online, however, the above utterance clearly expresses malicious intent by teenagers on social media using other users' *nudies* whom they have a rift or misunderstanding with. To achieve the malicious goal of "beefing", conscious physical action is required as seen in pr: material "like and share" which is an admittance or confession of physical action. "Like" is a mental construct but is used here as a pr: material verb because it requires physical action to "like" something on social media. The lexical choice "for" reveals the purpose or intent of the *actor* which is the elliptical "I or We" from previous utterances.

Utterances 3-10 are some of the reasons cited by participants of the FGD for sharing nude selfies with other social media users. These utterances display a preponderance and consistency of pr: material verbs to reveal active and conscious participation of teenagers. Intentions of teenagers are also marked by the repeated and consistent use of the bare infinitive "to (+ base form of verb) e.g. to show" where "to" serves as a marker of intent

to attain specific results or "a plan to perform some future action in order to achieve specific results". These expressions of intent from the experiences of participants provide conscious and intentional reasons why teenagers engage in certain online behaviour.

Conclusion

The findings of the study can generally be summarized into three themes. First, that university undergraduates spend more time on social issues online than economic and academic activities. Two, in virtual space, teenagers enjoy a certain freedom which removes natural constraints and inhibitions towards sharing messages that should naturally be treated with a high level of secrecy and confidentiality. The study also reveals that the behaviour of teenagers is more or less the same regarding their social media practices, irrespective of their religion. By self-admittance of participants, being a Muslim or a Christian does not influence the kind of social content, personal or impersonal (texts, pictures, and video), which individuals share online. Therefore, we conclude that teenagers devise means to constantly fragment their identity for online and offline social contexts to accommodate behavioural contexts dictated by their social environments. The identity portrayed in offline interactions and expressions of their personalities is quite different from that displayed during online interactions and self-expressions. Parents, caregivers, teachers, and even religious leaders/counsellors of digital generations, therefore, have a challenge in understanding the identities of teenagers in their care or with whom they interact. This may have adverse implications on planning and designing personality models and training for "digital natives", Millennials, or the "Net Generation". In this study, material process verbs dominate the linguistic choices of teenagers in online discourse to express conscious and active participation, while one relational process verb is seen from the data which could be an indication of possible change in future interactions since it is not a dominant feature. By engaging in sharing nude selfies online, a teenager risks their positive face, thereby increasing the chances of being threatened with negative face.

Recommendations

Based on the above, we recommend that technology should be improved to censor what is accessible to underaged teenagers and children on social media, as they may succumb to trends and pressures in online communities. Teenagers should benefit from counselling about social media engagement to enhance time management, curtail exposure to nudity, and prevent subsequent malicious effects via their media activities. They should also be educated on the possibilities and utilization of the internet for more productive activities to enhance academic and entrepreneurial engagements.

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