

Global Perspectives 0457

Component 02: Individual Report

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Research question: Do online forms of text based communication take away from or add to communication and interaction between adults aged 20-30?

Word count: 1999

Introduction

Communication is a crucial skill that is needed in the workplace and in general. It is one of the core things that makes us human.¹ Communication is said to be effective when information, thoughts, ideas and feelings are exchanged with "clarity and purpose" and when both the receiver and sender feel satisfied.² Online forms of text based communication include online websites and apps, implementing shortened words or phrases, which provide flexibility in terms of when someone wants to respond, being more information dense, and also being the cheapest form of long distance communication.

But, interpersonal and communication skills of adults aged between 20-30 are negatively affected by online forms of text based communication: by displacing skills needed for face to face communication, increasing inauthentic interactions, increasing expectations of perfectionist messages, and providing more space to avoid face to face interactions, and important events.³ They become unable to have natural, unfiltered conversations and use artificial or forced texts instead - that can completely conceal and hide emotions and feelings.⁴

With multiple perspectives around this issue, this report aims to analyse, evaluate, and to conclude based on an assessment of the arguments researched. It will also consider the possible courses of action and what I propose to better address the issue.

Why are online forms of text based communication used?

In workspaces, online forms of text based communication help adults aged 20-30 communicate effectively with coworkers by allowing high flexibility to contact multiple people at once while being less time consuming than calling every individual. It focuses on the fastest and most efficient exchange of information. It also gives space to think before sending a text whereas taking up too much time to think before answering in a call, might make the conversation awkward or the waiting person feel ignored.⁵

Online forms of text based communication also improve communication between adults aged 20-30 as words can also be shortened and therefore speed up communication of information.⁶ Texting also is the most cost effective way to communicate.⁷

¹ (Attard & Forbes, 2022)

² (Coursera, 2023)

³ (Villines, 2012)(Mulqueen, 2019)(Dietz & Henrich, 2014)

⁴ (Ahmed, 2018)

⁵ (Vujasin, 2021)

⁶ (Meleen, n.d.)

⁷ (Yolla, 2021)

Communication is being impacted due to online forms of text based communication

Online forms of text based communication are used to dodge uncomfortable interactions when they can actually be used to organise face to face interactions. While online forms of communication can be used ideally to reduce and ease tension, they instead are used wrongly and overwhelm the recipient.⁸ It restricts reaction or a way to respond.

They impair the development of interactive and interpersonal skills while also affecting the ability of young adults to be able to communicate and interact appropriately.⁹

As a text message can be interpreted in different ways, meanings behind messages might not get through as a result of a lack of physical cues that are present in face to face interactions and not in online forms of text based communication.¹⁰ This affects interactions and communication - causing miscommunication.

Miscommunication is a significant issue that is caused by online forms of text based communication. “Miscommunication costs businesses with ≥ 100 employees - approximately \$450,000 or more a year on average”.¹¹

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Workplace relationships in the US

According to a research, 82% of employees¹² feel that - social media - a segment of online forms of text based communication, can improve work relationships. Employees can use it as a tool to help collaborate, share ideas, and solve problems.¹³ But, “teams in which the majority or all of the members are teleworking rely heavily on regular electronic communication to foster collaboration, trust, and transparency”.¹⁴

There is evidence from research that teams working remotely face more significant communication challenges than teams working face-to-face.¹⁵ As more workers transitioned to online forms of text based communication during COVID, the overall collaboration network became static and unchanging, while isolating and decreasing real time communication.¹⁶ The collaboration of teams degrade as workers tend to share less information with their colleagues and sometimes face difficulty interpreting and understanding the information they receive. The process for giving feedback tends to be less than that which occurs when teams are working together in the same location.¹⁷

⁸ (Mulqueen, 2019)

⁹ (How Texting Changes Communication, 2012)

¹⁰ (Fosslien & Duffy, 2020)

¹¹ (Hamilton, 2016)

¹² (O'Connor et al., 2016, as cited in Bizzi, 2018)

¹³ (Bizzi, 2018)

¹⁴ (Munar & International Labour Organisation, 2020)

¹⁵ (Hertel et al., 2005, as cited in Munar & International Labour Organisation, 2020)

¹⁶ (Yang et al., 2021)

¹⁷ (Munar & International Labour Organisation, 2020)

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A study in India, based on data from 48 small businesses and 70 enterprises with a total of about 53,000 active users on Flock¹⁸ - found that working habits remained the same while proving that teleworking was a viable alternative for in person workspaces. Features offered by online forms of text based communication allow "users to build happier, more productive workplaces"¹⁹ by allowing multiple ways to communicate with co-workers.²⁰ Liquid computing offered by online forms of text based communication help make business decision making quicker as the multiple layers of communication in a business can be reached easier.

However, more than 50% of people who use texting - an online form of text based communication, as their primary mode of communicating, experience higher stress levels and are also aware of it. They would like to engage in face to face interactions as their primary source of communication, on a day to day basis.

The stress levels it induces are due to misinterpretations and misunderstandings resulting from a lack of tone, facial expression, voice and context in an online text based conversation.

It prevents people from developing personal connections, is time consuming, mentally, emotionally exhausting and therefore - communication through online forms of text based communication demands more effort, time and energy for it to be clear - than face to face communication.²¹

Arguments for online forms of text based communication

Without developing interpersonal and communication skills, one might not get employment opportunities and not be able to develop meaningful relationships.²²

Texting - an online form of text based communication, has a flexible structure where capitalization and punctuation don't matter - just like face to face communication. Texting increases linguistic knowledge - with benefits such as those of cognitive advantages, bilingualism or being bidialectal. It is therefore - an asset and should be viewed as such.²³

Many organisations are introducing and increasing informal opportunities for workers to connect and it can make a big difference for workers suffering isolation, although, in order not to further blur the line between working time and private time - it is important to predominantly contain social interactions within regular working hours. These occasions draw from previous practices, and can be used through online social interactions, to

¹⁸ An online form of text based communication - identified by google as a messaging service

¹⁹ (Sarkar, 2021)

²⁰ (Sarkar, 2021)

²¹ (Vaghani, 2019)

²² (Love Is Respect, n.d.)

²³ (McWhorter, 2013, as cited by Jangra, 2017)

entertain children of colleagues via online tools, or simply to check in to see how colleagues are doing.²⁴

Evaluating and measuring the effect that online forms of text based communication have on communication using accuracy of nonverbal decoding skill²⁵ show that - the communication skill of passive users, users who just read, and observe others' posts - improved.

This supports the "Liberated Relationship Perspective",²⁶ and the "Internet Enhanced Self Disclosure Hypothesis"²⁷.

Arguments against online forms of text based communication

However, active users - users who actively engage in creating and posting their own content - saw a reduction in their accuracy of nonverbal decoding skill. This supports the "Reduction Hypothesis"²⁸, and "Cues Filtered Out Theory".²⁹

Online forms of text based communications can cause miscommunication - as a text message can be interpreted in different ways and the meaning behind a message might not get through. This is caused as "we don't have access to the non-verbal cues, including tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions, that give us valuable emotional context when we're discussing in person".³⁰

Miscommunication is extremely detrimental to organisational effectiveness, and according to a survey by Expert Market - 28% employees listed poor communication as the reason why projects were not finished in time.³¹ Miscommunication is a very significant and relevant issue that is caused by online forms of text based communication.

²⁴ (Munar & International Labour Organisation, 2020)

²⁵ This was measured considering - multiple aspects of decoding skill using 41 brief video segments - with and without sound from three types of role-played workplace interactions, a test of emotion recognition ability using static and posed photographs - measuring accuracy using proportion of correct identification of 24 photographs of adult faces with high and low intensity portrayals of the four basic emotions - happiness, anger, sadness, and fear, from a subscale of the Social Skills Inventory (SSI; Riggio, 2005), and finally - the ES subscale consisting of 15 self-report items, with a 5-point response scale ranging from "Not at all like me" to "Exactly like me"(Ruben et al., 2020).

²⁶ This theory argues that increased internet usage has allowed individuals who may not typically engage in conversation the opportunity to engage with one another through technology-mediated communication (Hu et al., 2004, as cited by Ruben et al., 2020). Some of the constraints may be psychological, such as in cases of shyness and social anxiety (Stritzke et al., 2004, as cited by Ruben et al., 2020), or physical, such as in cases of distant geographical locations (Ellison et al., 2007, as cited by Ruben et al., 2020).

²⁷ This theory posits that greater technology use may enhance social connectedness and wellbeing by enhancing *online self-disclosure* (Valkenburg and Peter, 2009, as cited by Ruben et al., 2020); (Ruben et al., 2020)

²⁸ The Reduction Hypothesis posits that it is the lack of or decrease in face-to-face interacting that leads to detrimental communicative consequences rather than technology itself (Valkenburg and Peter, 2009, as cited by Ruben et al., 2020)

²⁹ This theory suggests that the filtering out of important nonverbal cues (e.g., especially for individuals who use low bandwidth technology systems) impacts an individual's ability to receive practice and feedback on the accuracy of their nonverbal decoding attempts, thereby hindering nonverbal decoding skill (Walther and Parks, 2002, as cited by Ruben et al., 2020).

³⁰ (Fosslien & Duffy, 2020)

³¹ (Barraclough, n.d.)

Online forms of text based communication can provide an opportunity to clear the atmosphere after conflict - a significant and useful advantage - but these opportunities are not used. There isn't space for the recipient to respond or react in a way that shows their feelings and thoughts. By sending an apology through online means, the sender expects to not have a proper conversation about it or hopes to avoid it completely. This defeats the purpose of being able to organise a conversation.³²

Online forms of text based communication take away from communication as they affect grammar skills - evidenced by a study conducted by Pew Research Center - which shows that the frequency of usage of abbreviated words in official writing by teenagers has increased³³. Although the subjects in this study were teens, according to Sobha Nair, principal, SIA, Mumbai, India, these habits in formative years can cause long term issues³⁴ - and therefore also affect adults aged 20-30.

Text based communication displaces face to face communication and interpersonal skills, causing people to find it difficult to communicate the way that they used to. It also prevents the development of the skills necessary to communicate, and interact face to face with people. This has a direct negative impact on being able to communicate with new people and address large audiences.³⁵

Courses of action

Using online forms of text based communication more passively, would add to interactions between adults by improving nonverbal decoding accuracy, and using it more appropriately within set boundaries - would help maintain or improve healthy interactions in relationships.³⁶

Source evaluation

The article from *Frontiers.in* about engagement levels affecting the impact on communication was well researched, peer reviewed, posted in 2020 - giving it a high currency, and involved two student, and two expert authors - all four from the field of human behaviour. The article was written impassively and in an informative style. There was no identifiable reason for any potential bias and no opinions were presented. Viewpoints were shown in the form of observations of data and derived results. All work done was attributed and cited correctly. Overall, the source was credible.³⁷

³² (Mulqueen, 2019)

³³ (Pew Research Center, 2008, as cited by Jangra, 2017)

³⁴ (Pew Research Center, 2008, as cited by Jangra, 2017)

³⁵ (LaFata, 2014),(Cardone, 2016)

³⁶ (Ruben et al., 2020)(Love Is Respect, n.d.)

³⁷ (Ruben et al., 2020)

I have used two articles from *Harvard Business Review*, and both were within five years of relevance - one article was published in 2018, and the other was published in 2020. The source from 2018 had authority and accuracy - as it was written by a professor of management and the topic of the article was about employee retention. The source compared advantages and disadvantages of the usage of social media in workspace environments - in a balanced manner, and was found to be free of bias. This adds to the objectivity of the source. The source from 2020 was co-authored by two experts in the fields of management, and company growth and development - and the topic of this source was about miscommunication and avoiding it. This source had authority, accuracy and objectivity. Overall, both articles from *Harvard Business Review* were credible.

The International Labour Organisation was a very reliable source as it is an international organisation: it was accurate, had authority, was from 2020 - had currency, and was credible. This source had information on the effect of online forms of text based communication on organisations and how they communicate.

Personal perspective and conclusion

Although I was not well informed before research, I thought that - online forms of text based communication take away from communication and interaction between adults aged 20-30 by being distracting and reducing quality of interaction by not conveying nonverbal expression. Yet I felt that the advantages were more significant than the disadvantages through a greater number of people benefitting from being able to communicate more effectively and after thinking more.

As the research progressed, I found validations to points I had originally thought of, but more frequent were the emergence of newer perspectives that I hadn't given much thought to - such as how the effect of online forms of text based communication on interaction might depend on the engagement level with the medium.

Finally, now I understand that the level of engagement with a form of communication is a bigger factor in determining the impact it has on communication and interaction, even more than the form itself. This is validated by Ruben et al., 2020.³⁸

Therefore, if online forms of text based communication are used passively, communication and interaction between adults aged 20 to 30 would be enhanced, and if used actively, it would detract from communication and interaction between them.

³⁸ "The current research suggests that it may not be the technology use itself, but rather how actively or passively users engage with technology, that facilitates or hinders nonverbal decoding skill" (Ruben et al., 2020).