

# The Digital Media Consumption, Dependency and its Self-Perceived Effects on Familial and Peer Interpersonal Relationships of the Filipino Youth

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**Abstract** – Emergence of digital media has altered the way people live. People exist in a phase where the entire domain of earth is reachable. In a few clicks, individuals can contact anyone at any given time. Digital media changed the way people communicate and interact with their family and friends. Thus, this quantitative study sought to find out the digital media consumption and dependency of the Filipino youth and know its self-perceived effects on their interpersonal relationship among family and friends. The study used quantitative research approach, specifically descriptive and correlation method, to analyze the gathered data the researchers employed a survey form administered to the Filipino youth. A total of 353 Filipino youth in the College of Communication of Polytechnic University of the Philippines were randomly selected to answer the survey questions. Findings revealed that respondents have a high level of digital media usage but low level of digital media dependency. There is a positive significant correlation between the digital media consumption and digital media dependency of the respondents. Results also revealed that digital media affects the interpersonal relationship of the Filipino youth. It has more positive effects on their peer interpersonal relationship and somehow negative impact on their relationship with their family.

**Keyword** – digital media, digital media dependency, interpersonal relationship, family, friends, Polytechnic University of the Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

People exist in a phase where the entire domain of earth is reachable. In a few clicks, individuals can contact anyone at any given time. Computer-mediated communication or CMC is a procedure that follows the usual exchange of messages through Linked telecommunication systems [1]. It can also influence communication patterns and social networks which can lead to social effects. With the rise of computer technology, people are experiencing a dramatic change in learning. It can be exciting, threatening and unsettling at the same time. Individuals can ask if the Internet can lead to a radical transformation of learning.

In the latest study conducted by ITU World Telecommunication, 40% of people all over the world are using the Internet [2]. Furthermore, predicting the progress since last year, by the end of 2015, about 3 billion people or will be using it. Additionally, from

ages 16-64 or mostly adults have their desktop, laptop, and smartphones.

Media in general has affected people from all over the world since its discovery. Some of these effects include a range of behavioral and habitual vicissitudes from all the media exposed people [3]. Although some considered damaging started out to be harmless ideas to promote convenient conversations. Nonetheless, there had been continuous conflict whether it encourages better relationships or not.

People are born passionate and caring. Extending these virtues are the need to call our parents and figure out how they're doing and the simultaneous messaging of our friends to know how our day has gone. Following these, media has provided a convenient way to do so. But in a way, its exposure has applied an impact on everyone's particular judgments. Also, it outlined a standard of evaluation, engraved on each individual [3].

In an article entitled "Social Media and Society: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly", Ann Smarty

(2013) argued that one adverse consequence of social media, in particular, are the ways it has controlled over our own and has laid us behind screens and limits our actual socialization [4]. She believed that social media has given us the illusion of being social without the actual face-to-face interaction. In the same attitude, it pushes the idea to people's head that a ton of friendships is developed without having to deal with adversaries to build on said friendships. All of which is true consequently leading to the conduction of this study.

Media dependency states that people in a specific state of vulnerability are more reliant on mass media for data and such are more predisposed to their effects. As empirical evidence has shown how people have routinely democratized countries, it only demonstrates that these individuals' usage of media is not only for the venal reasons but deliberate plans to find [5].

In the Philippines, the most valued are familial and peer relationships. In the culture of extended families and endless virtues, it is never unfamiliar to see people doing their best to keep in touch. Beneficially, media, in general, has helped these virtues go even under difficult circumstances. Alas, to say that Filipinos are dependent in media is an underrated statement.

Digital media have been a segment of the Filipino transformation in how individuals organize events and communicate with each another. Adequately than physically socializing, they can post a comment about how they react to each other's lives. Filipinos love to keep in touch. It has given them the chance to rekindle friendships, all while making new others and still being able to keep their interests. Most of the time, Filipinos use it to connect new relationships, and although some don't plan on meeting those newly made friends online, they still like to keep in touch [6]. The amount of information you put out on the Internet over social media, intended or not, affect you in the real world.

Counting the online activities in a week of the Filipino youth, statistics by PEP Talk Asia shows that they are not one to live without digital media. In all of the Asia, the Filipino youth, in particular, are the most inclined to social networking. All 80% of them are involved which is about 51% on all youth in Asia. Furthermore, 3 in every 10 Filipino youth have and maintain their blog. They are also the top group in tagging web pages and online photos, 23% of Filipino

youth have done this in the past seven days. Furthermore, 28% of said Filipino youth has actively participated in online forums and discussions [7].

In 2013, it was established by the study on media use and youth lifestyle by Dr. Grace Cruz, that 3 out of five Filipino youth are regular internet users. Most of them have used and are currently active in social networking sites, and 78% are users of mobile phones. Regularly, they devote 6 hours each week online. Some of them even spend up to 35 hours on the internet [8].

This particular use of internet and information technology is said to contribute on how youth form their relationships. Additionally, one in every three Filipino young people admitted having made friends with people they met online. Furthermore, 25% of them have made friend with people through text even if they had not met these people personally.

Digital media has transformed the usual method people interact. In many ways, it has led to progressive modifications in the way individuals' converse and share information. Nevertheless, it has a destructive side, as well. Digital media can occasionally affect people in negative outcomes and some with long-term consequences [9].

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to know the Filipino youth's level of digital media consumption and digital media dependency. Moreover, the relationship between the two variables was identified. Additionally, this study was able to determine the self-perceived effects of digital media on familial and peer interpersonal relationship of the Filipino youth.

## **METHODS**

This study employed descriptive method type of research to provide information and describe the level of digital media usage and digital media dependency of the Filipino youth and its self-perceived effects on their interpersonal relationship. Moreover, this study used a quantitative research approach. This approach allowed the researchers to generalize the results of the data on the whole population based on the results draw from the sample.

The sample respondents of the study are the communication students from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. The researchers utilized Slovin's formula in obtaining the sample size. From the total population of 2,954 enrolled students in

College of Communication of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, 353 students were randomly selected to be the respondents of this study.

Table 1. Sample Breakdown

Course	Population	No. of Respondents
Advertising and Public Relation	863	103
Broadcast Communication	1,162	142
Journalism	447	55
Communication Research	441	53
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,954</b>	<b>353</b>

Parts of the survey questionnaire had been through psychometric testing, thus it is reliable and valid. The questions on self-perceived effects of digital media were from the synthesis of relevant literature. This study also adapted the Digital Media Dependency Scale (DMDS) from California State University, San Bernardino in measuring the level of digital media dependency of the respondents. The survey was self-administered with one of the researchers attending to any question regarding the survey. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents, and no information was seeped out to prevent biases. The researchers prevented any conversation about the subject of the study while the survey took place so that the amount of knowledge and perspectives of the respondents remain factual with no hindrances thus providing accuracy to the results.

The researchers utilized Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) v.20 in processing the gathered data. Percentage, frequency, weighted mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used in treating the data.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 2 presents the digital media consumption of Filipino Youth. Almost all of the of the study respondents uses Social Networking Sites (99%) and Smartphones (98%) every day and Video and Photo Sharing Sites (94%) 5-6x a week. Among types of digital media, online radio has the least frequency of users (84 respondents) with an average usage of 1x a month.

The data supports the findings of a national survey entitled The Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality

(YAFS) Study in 2014 which shows that 15-24 age groups appear to be the biggest consumer of information technology and digital media.

Table 2. Digital Media Consumption of Filipino Youth

Types of Digital Media	F	%	Average Usage
Social Networking Sites	348	99	Everyday
Smartphones	346	98	Everyday
Video/Photo Sharing Services	333	94	5-6x/week
Electronic Mail (E-mail)	330	94	3-4x/ week
Instant Messaging	261	74	5-6x/week
MP3/iPod	190	54	2-3x/ month
Electronic Books	216	61	2-3x/month
Blogs	196	56	1x/month
Online News Source	273	77	3-4x/week
Electronic Commerce	122	35	1x/month
Online Music App	181	51	1x/month
Online Radio	84	24	1x/month

Six out of 10 of the Filipinos aged 15-24 are regular Internet user, more than half access Social Networks and Email accounts while a great majority (78%) own mobile phone. Moreover, the survey shows that the Filipino youth on average spend 6 hours a week online while some exceed more than 35 hours of internet use [8].

Table 3. Reason for Digital Media Consumption of Filipino Youth

Reason for Digital Media Usage	f	%	Rank
Provides Information	240	68	2
Stay in touch with Friends & Family	241	69	1
Entertainment	232	66	3
Share Experience with Friends & Family	36	10	6.5
Education Purposes	140	40	4
Easy to Access	27	8	8.5
Makes Physical task easier	28	8	8.5
For Self-expression	70	20	5
Cheaper and Affordable	16	5	10
Keeping up with trends	34	10	6.5

The top three reasons why the respondents of this study use digital media are first to stay in touch with their family and friends (69%) as a form of reaching out and keeping their families updated. Next in line is to seek information (68%) and for entertainment purposes (66%). Meanwhile, the least reasons

reported for digital media usage among the respondents are because it is ‘easy to access,’ ‘makes a physical task easier’ (8% both) and because digital media are cheaper and affordable (5%). Keeping in touch with family and friends is a well-known trait of Filipinos. It has been a known characteristic as well as a cultural habit among Filipino household to have intimate social ties. Since the accessibility of digital media has been easier, the Filipino youth has grown with it. Information has been attainable without difficulty thus easing the effort usually needed in research. Lastly, the introduction of new media has affected everyone with access to it. The entertainment it provides is limitless hence engaging more and more Filipino youth.

The obtained result reflects the findings of UM survey entitled “Wave7 –Cracking the Social Code” conducted among more than one billion active Internet users across nations in 2013 revealed that the Filipinos uses social media to stay in touch with friends, to meet new people, as a mean of entertainment and diversion, for recognition and for learning [10].

Table 4 presents the digital media dependency of the Filipino Youth. Obtained result shows that the

Filipino youth has a low level of digital media dependency ( $\bar{x}=2.55$ ). The data implies that despite the rampant emergence of digital media and its high level of usage among the Filipino youth, they are still not dependent on these new media platforms in accomplishing their communication and interaction needs. As mentioned, familial relationships to Filipinos are significantly valued. It is part of the norm to keep in touch and physical interactions are greatly encouraged. The access to digital media has made these bonds tighter. It is applicable to those especially with families and friends far away from them. The distance may intervene with said culture of tight family bonds but the convenience helped a lot and the practicality of digital media is uncanny.

College student is very familiar in the digital world; they are the millennial learners that are first to come in the digital world. They grew up using social networking sites and video games, and they choose always to be in touch with their family and friends using their mobile phones, Facebook or MySpace, instant messaging and through texting [11]. The usage of media made people inquisitive and it also changed the interaction between people [12].

Table 4. Level of Digital Media Dependency of the Filipino Youth

12-Item Revised Digital Media Dependency Scale Statements	$\bar{X}$	Verbal Interpretation	Level of Dependency
1. I like emailing people rather than talking to them face-to-face	2.46	Disagree	Low Dependency
2. I like writing messages for my friends on Facebook Wall rather than telling them face-to-face	2.24	Disagree	Low Dependency
3. I like to read using EBook reader rather than reading an actual book	2.35	Disagree	Low Dependency
4. I like shopping things online rather than visiting retail store	2.16	Disagree	Low Dependency
5. I like chatting with others online rather than doing so face-to-face	2.22	Disagree	Low Dependency
6. I like to listen to music using MP3/iPod and online music app rather than listening to the FM radio	3.42	Agree	High Dependency
7. Using the Internet is my primary way to interact with other people	2.54	Disagree	Low Dependency
8. I prefer to read news online rather than reading an actual newspaper	2.81	Uncertain	Uncertain
9. I like to make my billing transactions and registration online rather than doing so face-to-face	2.55	Disagree	Low Dependency
10. I prefer to share my photos with my family and friends through social networking sites rather than doing so face-to-face	3.15	Uncertain	Uncertain
11. I like to seek advice and tips online rather than asking from my family and friends	2.36	Disagree	Low Dependency
12. I prefer to use my mobile phone when talking to my peers and family rather than doing it face-to-face	2.31	Disagree	Low Dependency
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>2.55</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Low Dependency</b>

Table 5. Pearson’s Correlation of Digital Media Consumption and Digital Media Dependency

Digital Media Consumption	Digital Media Dependency		
	Pearson Correlation	P-Value	Remarks
Social Networking Sites	.173**	.001	Positively Weak
Mobile Phones/Smartphones	-.005	.927	Negatively Very Weak
Video/Photo Sharing Services	.164**	.002	Positively Weak
Electronic Mail (E-mail)	.099	.064	Positively Very Weak
Instant Messaging	.111*	.037	Positively Weak
MP3/iPod	.176**	0.01	Positively Weak
Electronic Books	-.024	.649	Negatively Very Weak
Blogs	.111*	.037	Positively Weak
Online News Source	-.016	.770	Negatively Very Weak
Electronic Commerce	.101	.058	Positively Very Weak
Online Music App	.132*	.013	Positively Weak
Online Radio	.016	.771	Positively Very Weak

Note: \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

However, even though modern technologies can be easily accessed and utilized by millions of people for the purpose of interacting with one another, Computer Mediated Communication will never replace the value of physical, interpersonal communication especially we Filipinos are used to the indirect and non-verbal manner of communicating feelings and emotions [13].

Table 5 shows the digital media consumption and its relation to digital media dependency. The decision is to reject the hypothesis if the computed p-value is less than or equal to the 0.05 level of significance, otherwise, if the p-value is greater than the level of significance, accept the hypothesis. The test for relationship reveals that there is a significant relationship between the level of usage on Social Networking Sites, Video and Photo Sharing Services, Instant Messaging, MP3/iPod, Blogs and Online Music App and the level of Digital Media dependency of the Filipino youth ( $p < 0.05$ ). It has positively weak correlation, and it implies that the higher the usage of social networking sites, video, and photo sharing services, instant messaging, MP3/iPod, blog and online music app, the higher the level of dependency of the respondents. Filipino youth are seen to be the biggest user of digital media compared to other age group [8]. They live in the era where digital media is being utilized by almost all of people. Because of extended usage of various digital media platforms that makes everything easier and possible from information seeking to communicating and interacting, they are becoming digital media dependent. DeFleur, M. & Ball-Rokeach (1989)

argued that an extended use of the media causes a close relation of dependence in the audience [21].

Social Networking sites give students an easy avenue to build their interpersonal relationships fast. It gives them the capability to make profiles and uploading videos and photos make students be more open information that may have to be “disclosed gradually and repeatedly in face-to-face context” [14]. Digital media lets usage of the environment online to write, study, search, chat and build relationships be easier for the students.

### Self-Perceived Effects of Digital Media on Interpersonal Relationship of the Filipino Youth

Table 6. Digital Media vs. Face-to-face Communication

Do you prefer using Digital Media over face-to-face communication?	f	%
Yes	53	15
No	188	53.3
No Opinion	109	30.9
No Answer	3	.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The majority of the Filipino youth (53.3%) still choose to communicate face-to-face rather than through digital media while 30.9% have no opinion, and fifteen percent (15%) preferred to communicate using digital media. The results show that even though almost all of people these days uses digital media, the respondents of this study still value and preferred face-to-face interactions.

It's not a surprise that Filipinos still choose face-to-face communication over digital media. Words can be warped when separated from body language, text messages, and electronic mail can send a different meaning on how the sender feels. There is something different in online conversation even though technology such as Skype lets us see the person we are talking to in an image on screen it still lacks a few dimensions in emotion that only two people talking face to face have. In communicating our feelings, there are parts that play important roles in facial expression, body language and tone of voice [15].

Table 7. Self-Perceived Effects on Familial Interpersonal Relationship

<b>What are the effects of digital media on your familial interpersonal relationship?</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
1. I communicate and keep in touch more often	189	54
2. I can easily express my thoughts and opinions to them	141	40
3. My relationship with them became deeper	59	17
4. I became secretive and distant to them	74	21
5. I rarely see and talk to them	45	13
6. I confine my thoughts and feelings on digital media and not to them	117	33
7. No effects at all	73	21

Table 7 presents the self-perceived effects on familial interpersonal relationship. The majority of study respondents said that they communicate and keep in touch with their family more often because of digital media (54%) while 4 out of 10 respondents can easily express their thoughts and opinions to them. However, a significant number of 117 respondents (3 out of 10 respondents) said that instead to their family, they use various forms digital media as a platform where they confide and shares their thoughts and feelings. One of the main reasons of the low percentage of the respondents confiding on digital media might be the fear of failure. Students oftentimes don't tell their parents the events of their day in school because of the disappointment it may bring to their parents [20].

Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla [16] argued that the structure of Filipino family is built on cultural values that reflect a system of cooperation; it provides a supportive and protective system that members can depend on for a sense of belonging and help when

need. The Filipino family's value of smooth interpersonal relationships discourages outward displays of behavior that might lead to conflict and instead encourages passive non-confrontation. The Filipino youth seldom utilized these strong family ties to discuss their problems especially those which concerns sex and sexuality. Less than two out of 10 contemporary youth discusses issues such as sex at home [17]. Adolescents' prefer to discuss sensitive issues with somebody within their age bracket.

Table 8. Self-Perceived Effects on Peer Interpersonal Relationship

<b>What are the effects of digital media on your peer interpersonal relationship?</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
1. I communicate and keep in touch more often	271	86
2. I can easily express my thoughts and opinions to them	271	86
3. My relationship with them became deeper	210	66
4. I became secretive and distant to them	106	33
5. I rarely see and talk to them	25	8
6. I confine my thoughts and feelings on digital media and not to them	35	11
7. No effects at all	62	20

Table 8 presents the self-perceived effects on peer interpersonal relationship. Majority of the respondents 'communicate and keep in touch more often' and 'can easily express their thoughts and opinions' to their friends because of digital media (both obtained 86%). Almost 7 out of 10 respondents answered that their relationship with their friends became deeper because of digital media.

The peer group remains an important feature of adolescent life in the Philippines. Youth can express themselves more easily among their friends and peers than their parents or other members of their family [18]. The topics and issues discussed more freely with their peers are those that have to do with their problems with their parents, as well as questions regarding sexual activities and relationships, their difficulties in school and problems with their friends [18].

The cliques or friendship group, or what Filipinos call *barkada*, mostly comprises friends from high school or college, as well as peers from church or community groups. The rising trend in parental absenteeism has caused youth to turn more their friends not just for friendship and companionship, but

also for nurturance, intimacy, security and guidance [19].

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discoveries of the study, the researchers were able to conclude that the Filipino Youth are active users of digital media specifically Social Networking Sites and Smartphones with the reasons for staying connected to their family and friends, a source of information and entertainment. However, although they have high usage of digital media, the Filipino Youth are not dependent on various digital media in accomplishing their communication and interaction needs. The test for significant relationship revealed that the higher the usage of Social Networking Sites, Video and Photo Sharing Services, Instant Messaging, MP3/iPod, Blogs and Online Music App, the higher the level of digital media dependency among Filipino Youth. The study also found out that digital media affects the interpersonal relationship of the Filipino youth. The digital media has positive effects on the peer interpersonal relationship Filipino youth; they communicate and keep in touch with their friends more often and can easily express their thoughts and opinions with them. Digital media has same positive effects on the familial interpersonal relationship of the Filipino youth however it was found out that they choose to confide their thoughts and feelings in various digital media platforms instead to their family, and this effect is seen to be negative.

The population used in the study is diminutive, as a recommendation; doing the same study in a larger scale may affect the results. Also the perceived effects are very limited, further studies may provide in-depth and specific effects of digital media consumption and dependency on interpersonal relationships among family and peers. Lastly, the researchers only investigated the relationship of media to audiences and its effects. For this matter the researchers recommend to the future researchers to explore the relationship of society system to audiences and to media among the respondents which are not explored in this study.

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