

Effects of Mobile Technology on Human Relationships

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Abstract: *Technology plays an essential and important role in industrial and developing countries. Technology has affected almost all walk of human life such as education and social life. It has drastically changed the cultural norms and behavior of individuals. This study aims to find out the relation between mobile technology and its effects on face- to- face communications at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. The major objectives of this research are to examine the relationship between mobile technology use and the ability of people to communicate face- to- face and to find out whether mobile usage is weakening the quantity and quality of face- to- face interactions. This study found out that the use of mobile technology have negative impact on both the quality and the quantity of face- to- face communications. The study concludes that mobile use by individuals has reduced the time they spend engaging in face- to- face communications with each other because of the time spent on the mobile.*

Keywords: Technology, impact, mobile, communications.

1. INTRODUCTION

Technology is going through a revolution while human beings evolve also. The recent years have witnessed a revolutionary development in mobile technologies. The development has involved the hardware, software, and network communications. Therefore, leaders of mobile technologies like mobile device manufacturers and mobile services/apps developers compete to attract the increasingly growing wide section of mobile users to fulfill their demands.

With a smartphone, a person can make calls, send e-mails, watch and share photos and videos, play video games and music, keep track of appointments and contacts, surf the Internet, use voice search, check news and weather, use chat applications for voice calls and texting (e.g., Whatsapp) and interact on social networks (e.g., Facebook). Samaha Maya (2016).

This research presents a no. of studies in developed and developing countries that will assist in finding out the effect of technology on communication between people and their relation with each other. The conducted studies addressed different points of view.

Digital technologies, such as mobile smartphones and laptop computers, allow users to access social media easily and frequently and have substantially increased the uptake of social media. Social media is a relatively recent phenomenon as ownership and access to computers, smart phones, tablets and the Internet has rapidly increased in Australia. Emma S. (2016)

The review of previous studies of mobile technology and its effect on human relations and face- to- face communications has identified that the use of mobile technology in conversation is less significant compared with those in the presence of a mobile device. Also, from literature review, the quality of conversations is degraded in the case of using mobile technology. Thus, in this study, it is important to analyze the previous studies to find out the level of engagement individuals have with their cell phones, other technologies and with each other in face- to- face communications.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The mobile technology appears to have played an essential role in human communications. Several studies have being conducted on the impact of communications on face-to-face communications in America and Europe. Few of them were in developing countries. These studies includes: Abdullah O. et al, (2016) study on " the effects of mobile user knowledge of mobile platform on the utilization of mobile services " , Emma ,(2016) on " Social media and digital technology use among Indigenous young people in Australia: a literature review " Lucas (2015) on " mobile technology: Its effects on face -to- face communication and interpersonal interaction", Emily (2015) on "The effect of Technology on Face –to- Face Communication " and Nuha Gapsiso (2014) who found that, The use of the Internet has substantially reduced the desire of teenagers for face to face communication with their family members and friends. Since they spend more time on the internet and hardly have time for face to face communication with the family due to the time spend engaging others on the internet. In spite of this, there appears to be a dearth of research in Palestine on

the impact of the mobile technology on face- to- face communications. This study is therefore designed to investigate the impact of mobile technology on face- to- face communications on students at Al-Azhar University in Gaza as well as finding out whether the mobile technology usage decreases both the quality and quantity of face- to- face communications.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The goal of this research is to investigate the impacts of the mobile technology on face- to- face communications on students at Al-Azhar University. The objectives of the study include:

1. To find out the relationship between the use of technology mobile and the ability of people to communicate face to face.
2. To determine whether the presence of technology affect the ability of people to communicate with individuals in a public place.
3. To find out whether the use of mobile technology decreases both the quantity and quality of face to face interaction.

4. RESEARCH LIMITS AND SCOPE

1. **Subject (Academic) limitations:** The objective of the research was to examine Effects of Mobile Technology on Human Relationships
2. **Place Limitations:** The research was carried out on Al-Azhar University
3. **Human Limitations:** The search for on students at Al-Azhar University in Gaza was conducted.
4. **Time Limitations:** the study was conducted, preliminary data was collected, and statistical analysis was performed during the year (2017).

5. STUDY AREA

The author conducted this study on students at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. Al-Azhar University was considered suitable for this research work-investigating the impacts of the mobile technology on students' face - to - face communication because it has access to internet facility owned by Al-Azhar University. There is also the availability of mobile internet services provided telecommunication companies such as Jawwal and Etisalat. Furthermore, most of the students at the senior level are already on the facebook and regularly connect to the internet through their mobile phone and thereby maintaining regular contact with their internet friends. After a day University, all students live with their parents and therefore have natural opportunity of engaging in face- to- face communication with their immediate family members and friends. The researcher intends to use the senior students at Al-Azhar University for this research to determine the level of engagement with their cell phone, other technologies, and each other in face to face situations.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

The growth and spread of digital media technologies as well as their changing capabilities seriously enables (or disables) interpersonal, community and individual communication, as well as significantly affecting what it means to be literate and to learn in the 21st-century.

In this field, a study for Vandana et al, (2016), showed that adolescent's is more inclined towards using mobile phones for activities other than communication than older generation because in adolescence stage, people are more susceptible to changing fashion trends and style, building them more Tech savvy which creates certain behavioral disorders. The fame of the mobile phones is followed by an alarm towards the detrimental effects of cell phone radiation, Fatigue, headache, decreased concentration and local irritation and burning are the major effects of excessive usage of mobile phones.

Also, in a study for Emily Drago (2015) on a survey of 100 Elon students, and an analysis of previously conducted studies, she concluded that field observations, provided evidence that the rapid expansion of technology is negatively affecting face-to-face communication. People are becoming more reliant on communicating with friends and family through technology and are neglecting to engage personally, uninhibited by phones and devices, even when actually in the presence of others. A majority of individuals felt the quality of their conversations degraded in the presence of technology, and many individuals were bothered when friends or family used technology while spending time together. Additionally, nearly half of survey respondents (46%) communicate more frequently with friends and family via technology than in person, indicating strongly that face-to-face interactions have decreased both in quality and in quantity.

In another study for the school community journal fall / winter (2016) regarding technology and its effect on the families, it showed that technology has always altered the nature of social interactions, including those within the family. In its most recent forms, whether a public venue (e.g., chat rooms) or private media (e.g., instant messaging), a different type of social PARENTS,

TECHNOLOGY, AND MEDIA 13 interaction has rapidly evolved. Staying up-to-date with the latest version of technological gadgets has become a sign of status that has begun having an impact on peer relationships and gaining peer acceptance.

Also, Brooks, S. (2015). in his research with respect to social media, indicated that personal social media usage leads to negative effects, both on efficiency and well-being. Specifically, social media usage is associated with lower task performance, increased techno stress, and lower happiness. These results, though negative, are encouraging for future research as the first step in solving any problem is understanding that it exists. Social media will continue to exist and grow in one form or another in the future. As more and more people spend increased amounts of time with the technologies, the potential for these negative effects grows. Having an understanding of what occurs and how to help remedy these effects will be vital for continued enjoyment of these dynamic platforms

In a study for Richardson, (2014) to see this impact on his classroom. He is a teacher who has experienced the impact of mobile phones in his classroom. He teaches theatre, and this is what he said, “the freedom of choice and control that students associate with their use of smartphones...shapes the way in which they experience and respond to live theatre” He is not only seeing a disruption but also a misuse of the responsibility giving to students by these devices.

In a study for Chan (2014) regarding using Facebook, it showed that when Facebook usage is low, the positive relationship between extraversion and empathic social skills is strong. As Facebook usage increases there is a decline on positive extraversion and empathic social skills. This may suggest the possible replacement of real-life relationships with digital ones. This replacement, that seems to be occurring decreases body-to-body sociability.

In another recent study, Abdullah O. et al, (2016) showed that there are increasing numbers of conferences and academic publications relating to the use of mobile and its hypothetical or actual effect on society, but there is little empirical evidence about the impact of the technological advances being made. It is important to be aware of how technology has affected social interaction, and to study the results of it. The author look at how new and emerging technologies are being utilized to promote understanding, build relationships, and facilitate cooperation throughout the life course between generations that are aging together in a range of community settings and family contexts. To produce effective, evidence-based policy, an assessment of the effect of technology on face to face communications and interpersonal interaction is required.

The mere presence of a cell phone can impact quality of interactions and perceptions of one’s relational partner, as recent studies have revealed. In their study of observations in coffee shops, Misra, Cheng, Genevie, and Yuan (2014) found that “if either participant placed a mobile communication device (e.g., smartphone or a cell phone) on the table or held it in their hand during the course of the 10-minute conversation, the quality of the conversation was rated to be less fulfilling compared with conversations that took place in the absence of mobile devices” (p. 16). Participants reported lower empathetic concern from their partner, and this was especially true if the participants had a closer relationship.

Another research concerning technology and the families by Kral (2014), indicates that communication, increasingly mediated by technology, has disturbed traditional forms of interaction in the Western Desert community. Previously typically incorporating gesture, sign, and gaze, communication via written messages reduces the capacity for traditionally socially sanctioned forms of conflict resolution and social control by the older generation, Kral (2014). This means that cyber bullying can go on unaddressed and even result in severe outcomes such as suicide if family members are not aware of young people’s activities on social media. Educational programs are needed to raise awareness of issues like cyber bullying and cyber racism in order to ensure that parents, adults, community leaders and Elders in remote locations have opportunities to learn about social media use and the potential negative effects it can have on individuals, families and communities (Cowling, 2014 & Vaarzon 2014).

In a study for examining the relationship between the presence of mobile devices and the quality of real life, in-person social interactions, in a naturalistic field experiment, Misra et al., (2014) found that conversations in the absence of mobile communication technologies were rated as significantly superior compared with those in the presence of a mobile device (Misra, Cheng, Genevie, & Yuan, 2014). People who had conversations in the absence of mobile devices reported higher levels of empathetic concern, while those conversing in the presence of a mobile device reported lower levels of empathy

Beside, School Community Journal, (2016) showed that on line interactions lack features that have been a crucial part of human relations, such as eye contact, body language, and voice inflections and, therefore, are often characterized as lacking the richness of face-to-face interactions. However, there have been both positive and negative features identified in on line interactions.

People are wasting so much time with their mobile phones and trying to interact on social media with people that they don’t know, even going as far as trusting someone on the Internet over someone in real life. “The evolution of the Internet to include user-

generated content, often referred to as Web 2.0, has altered our basic notions of privacy, connectivity, and communication” (Appelbaum, 2014).

Another negative effect of social media is the increased connectivity between people who live far away from each other, so that conflicts that previously remained local can spread as young people call, text or inform kin in other places about conflicts. A social networking site called Diva Chat has brought about substantial conflict among the Warlpiri population as well as in other Indigenous populations (Vaarzon, 2014) Diva Chat is a public and free to use social networking site that can be used anonymously and therefore provides a forum where some people partake in socially and culturally inappropriate behaviours because they are effectively invisible. These behaviors include, cyber bullying and posts that are meant to incite violence between feuding families. Both community and legal efforts have been made to prevent the further abuse of Diva Chat and its negative impacts. Negative experiences like this have led other communities which don’t yet have mobile connectivity to consider the potential negative effects of digital technologies before adopting them in their communities (Vaarzon, 2014).

Tuck, (2014) illustrated in his study about the mobile and prople that mobile devices are everywhere we turn, they have for many people become an essential part of life, not only are they essential in communicating they are critical in the way one accesses the internet. It is seldom we find a cell phone where we cannot use its internet capabilities to shop, play, calculate, read, communicate, etc. We live in a time in which we are permanently visible and available at all times through our many internet outlets. One needs only look around at the average social setting and see the impact of this technology on society. We see silent tables at the café, quiet train commutes, and expressionless faces on walks. There seems to be “a disconnect with all this connection”.

7. RESEARCH METHODS

The participants of this study were selected from students of Al-Azhar University using a non-probability sample via Facebook and email because the university has access to internet facility. Most of students are present on the Facebook and Twitter regularly connect through their mobile phone and this leads to obtain regular contact with friends being at the university. After the university, all students live with their parents and therefore, have natural opportunity of engaging in face-to-face conversations with their friends and family. The survey was conducted in January 14, 2017 at 11: 11 pm 120 students were selected and the survey used a convenience sample and therefore, it cannot be generalized to a greater population. Also, only individuals with a Facebook account had access to the study, which excluded students who do not regularly check or use the social media platform. This sample is a good representation of how mobile technologies have affected face-to-face communications and social interaction since this generation is the first generation that has been saturated with technology exposure, (Refer to Appendix A)

Beside the survey, field observations were conducted at four populated areas inside Al-Azhar University inside scientific colleges building, including cafeteria, the yard, in front of student’s affairs, and in front of admission & registration offices. Observations were conducted during heavy foot-traffic times and in between classes. The researcher recorded different interactions between other students and technology such as texting or talking on the phone, those interacting with others and those who did not have contact with devices (Refer to Appendix B) this study examine the impact of mobile technology on Face-to-Face communications at Al-Azhar University. The objectives include: to examine the relationship between mobile technology uses and people’s ability to communicate face –to- face, to find out whether mobile usage is weakening the quantity and quality of face to face interactions.

8. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT PRESENTATION

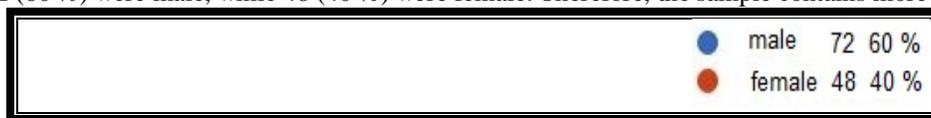
All collected data from the entire questionnaire (120) administered were used for analysis as follows in the following tables:

1. Gender

Table 1: Gender Results

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	72	60 %
	Female	48	40 %
Total		120	100 %

Table 1 shows that 72 (60 %) were male, while 48 (40 %) were female. Therefore, the sample contains more male than female



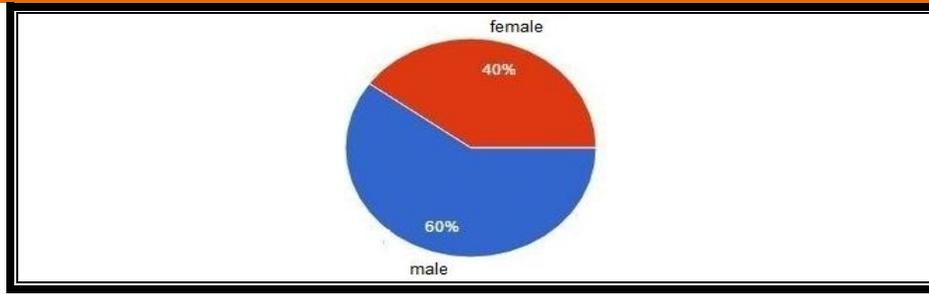


Figure 1: Gender Results

2. Year of Study

Table 2: Results of Year of Study at Al-azhar University

	Year of Study	Frequency	Percentage
Year of Study	First	15	12.5 %
	Second	48	40 %
	Third	43	35.8 %
	Fourth	6	5 %
	Fifth	8	6.7 %
Total		120	100 %

From the table above, the majority of respondents was in the second year 48 (40 %) and the third year 43 (35.8 %), in the 1st year 15 (12.5 %), the 4th and 5th years 6(%) & 8 (6.7 %) respectively.

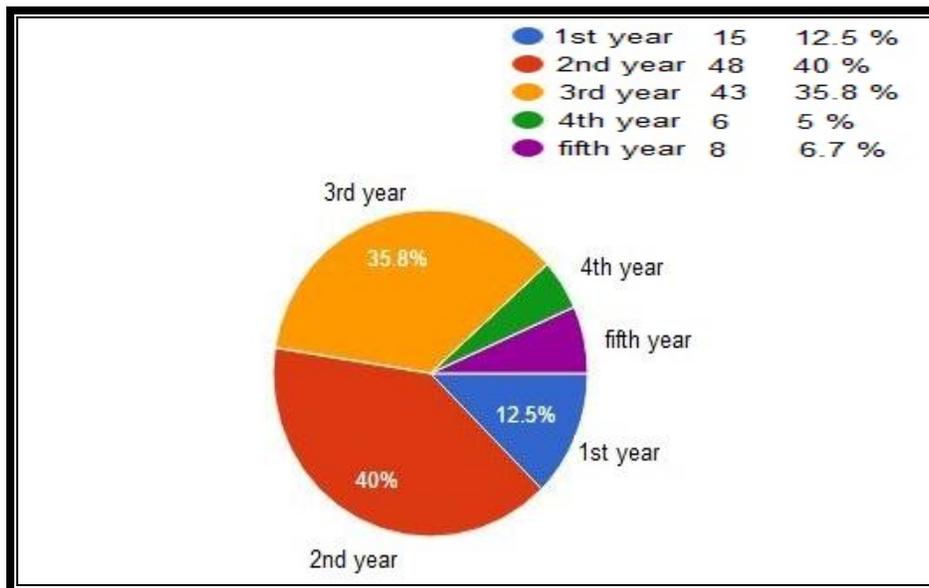


Figure 2: Results of Year of Study at Al-azhar University

3. Owning a mobile or tablet

Table 3: Results of owing a mobile or tablet

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Owing a mobile or tablet	Yes	118	98.3 %
	No	2	1.7 %
Total		120	100 %

As shown in the above table, all respondents except two respondents owned mobile phone or tablet.

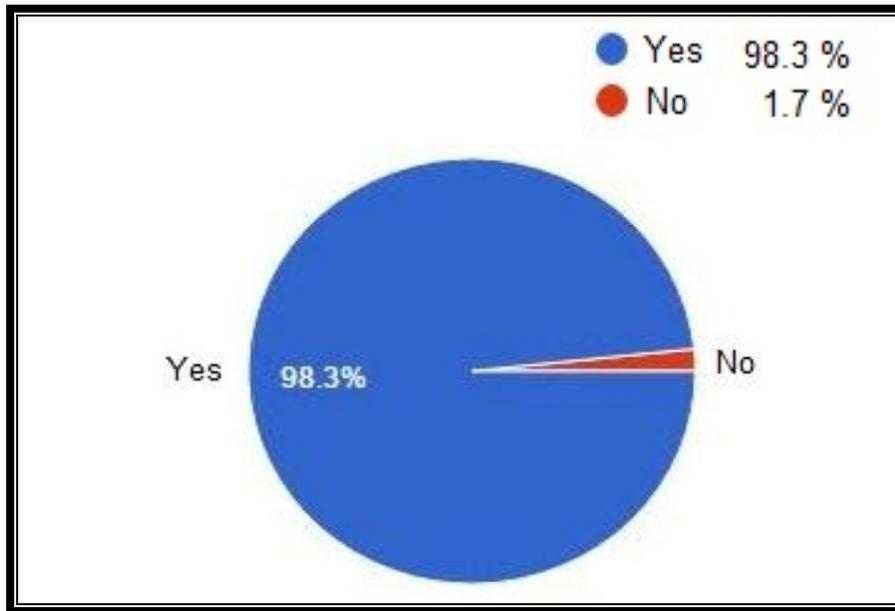


Figure 3: Results of owing a mobile or tablet

4. No. of times using mobile or tablet per day

Table 4: Results of No. of times using mobile or tablet per day

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
No. of times using mobile or tablet per day	2 hrs – 3 hrs	26	21.7 %
	4 hrs – 6 hrs	49	40.8 %
	Less than 2 hrs	8	6.7 %
	More than 6 hrs	37	30.8
Total		120	100 %

From the table above, 40.8 % of respondents said that they use their mobile or tablet 4 hours to 6 hours per day, 30.8 % of respondents use the mobile or tablet more than 6 hours, and 8 % use the mobile or tablet less than 2 hours.

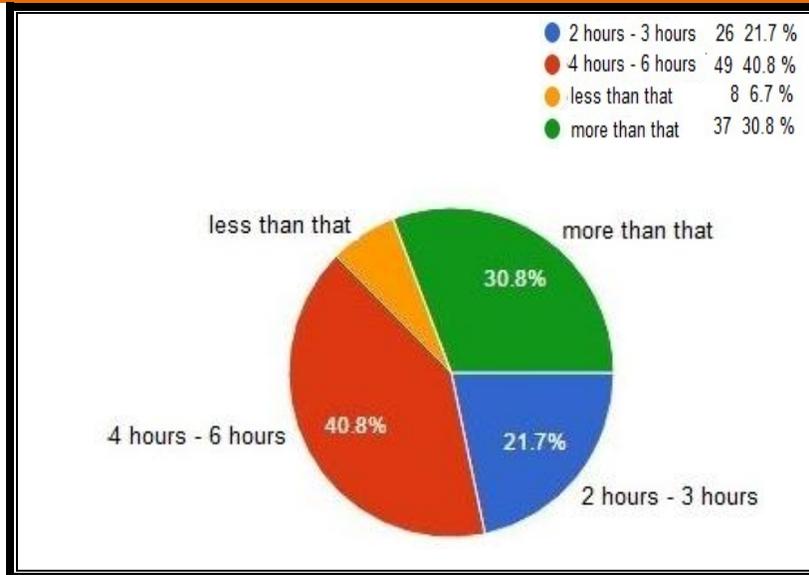


Figure 4: Results of No. Of times using mobile or tablet per day

5. No. of times to bring mobile or tablet when leaving the house

Table 5: Results of No. of times to bring mobile or tablet when leaving the house

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
No. of times to bring mobile or tablet when leaving the house	Always	100	83.3 %
	Sometimes	14	11.7 %
	Rarely	4	3.3 %
	Never	2	1.7 %
Total		120	100 %

From the table above, it has shown that almost all students (83.3 %) bring their mobile phones or tablets with them every day they leave the house, 11.7 % said sometimes, 3.3 % said rarely and 1.7 % said never.

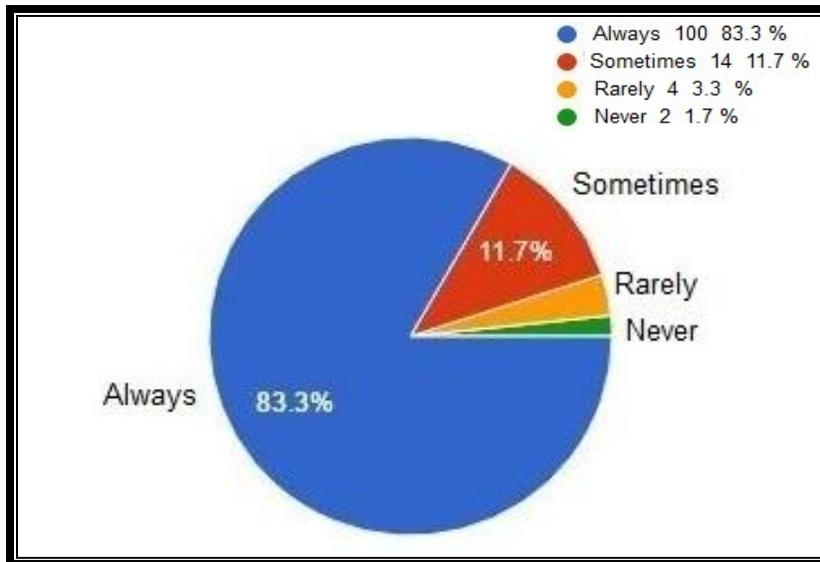


Figure 5: Results of No. of times to bring mobile or tablet when leaving the house

6. No. of times to use mobile or tablet while spending time with friends or family

Table 6: Results of No. of times to use mobile or tablet while spending time with friends or family

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
No. of times to use mobile or tablet while spending time with friends or family	Always	33	27.5 %
	Sometimes	74	61.7 %
	Rarely	9	7.5 %
	Never	4	3.3 %
Total		120	100 %

The above table indicates that the majority of students use their mobiles or tablets sometimes when they are with friends or family (61.7 %), 27.5% of respondents said always, 7.5 % said rarely and never 3.3 %.

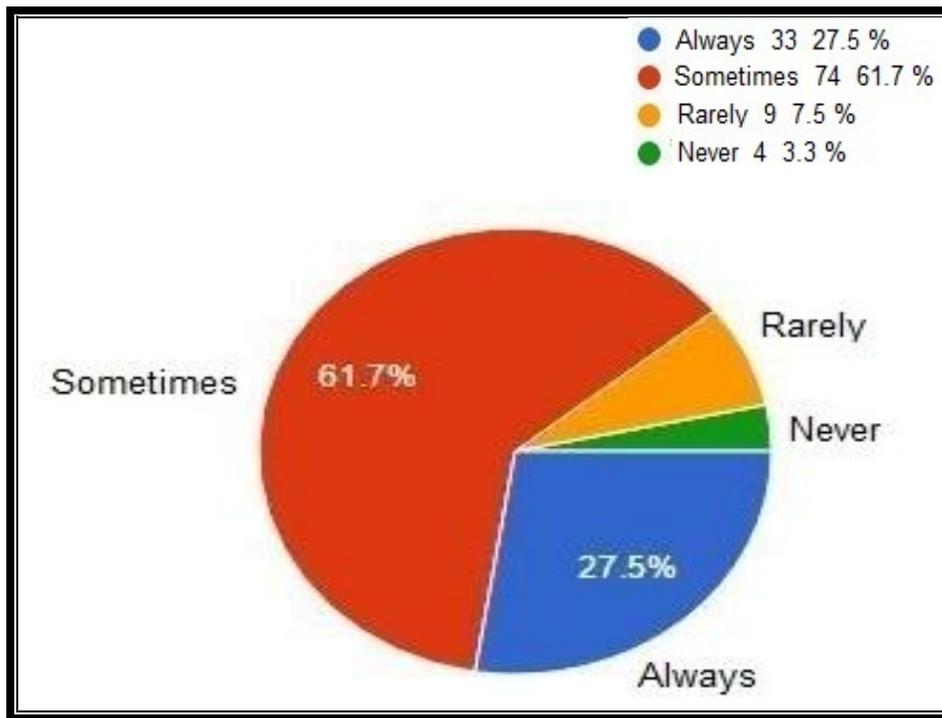


Figure 6: Results of No. of times to use mobile or tablet while spending time with friends or family

7. I communicate more frequently with family and friends via technology than I do in person (face to face communications)

Table 7: Results of I communicate more frequently with family and friends via technology than I do in person (face to face communications)

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
I communicate more frequently with family and friends via technology than I do in person (face to face communications)	Strongly agree	10	8.3 %
	Agree	37	30.8 %
	Strongly disagree	18	15 %
	Disagree	39	32.5 %
	Neither agree nor disagree	16	13.3 %
Total		120	100 %

The table above indicates 30.8 % of respondents said Agree, 32.5 % of respondents said disagree, 8.3 % of respondents said strongly agree, 15 % of respondents said strongly disagree and 13.3 % of respondents neither agree nor disagree.

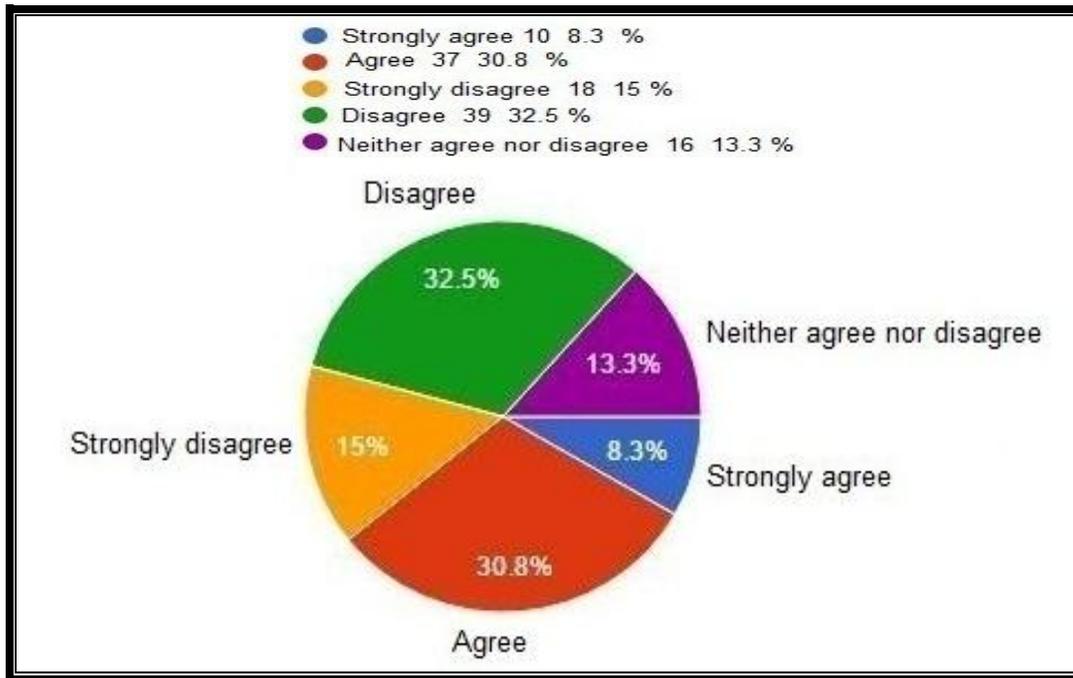


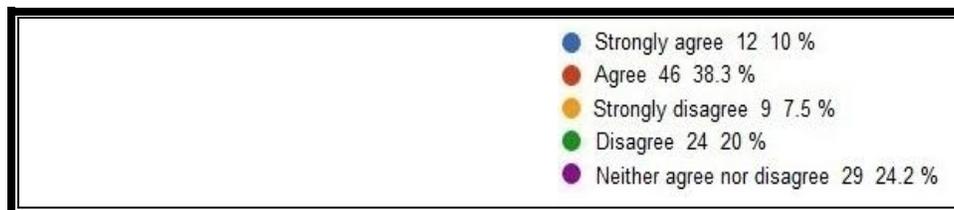
Figure 7: Results of I communicate more frequently with family and friends via technology than I do in person

8. It bothers me when my friends or family use technology while spending time with me

Table 8: Results of It bothers me when my friends or family use technology while spending time with me

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
It bothers me when my friends or family use technology while spending time with me	Strongly agree	12	10 %
	Agree	46	38.3 %
	Strongly disagree	9	7.5 %
	Disagree	24	20 %
	Neither agree nor disagree	29	24.2 %
Total		120	100 %

As shown in the above table, 38.3 % of respondents agree with this statement, 10 % of respondents strongly agree with the statement, 24.2 % of respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement and 7.5 % of respondents strongly disagree.



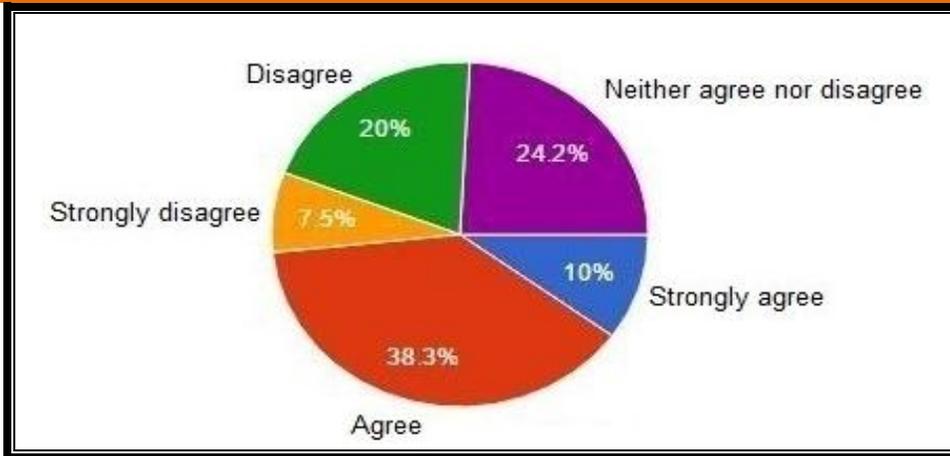


Figure 8: Results of It bothers me when my friends or family use technology while spending time with me

9. The presence of technology while spending time with others affects face to face communication negatively

Table 9: Results of The presence of technology while spending time with others affects face to face communication negatively

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
The presence of technology while spending time with others affects face to face communication negatively	Strongly agree	38	31.7 %
	Agree	54	45 %
	Strongly disagree	4	3.3 %
	Disagree	12	10 %
	Neither agree nor disagree	12	10 %
Total		120	100 %

From the above table, 45 % of respondents agree with this statement, 31.7% of respondents strongly agree with the statement, 3.3 % of respondents strongly disagree, 10 % of respondents disagree and also 10 % of respondents neither agree nor disagree with this statement.



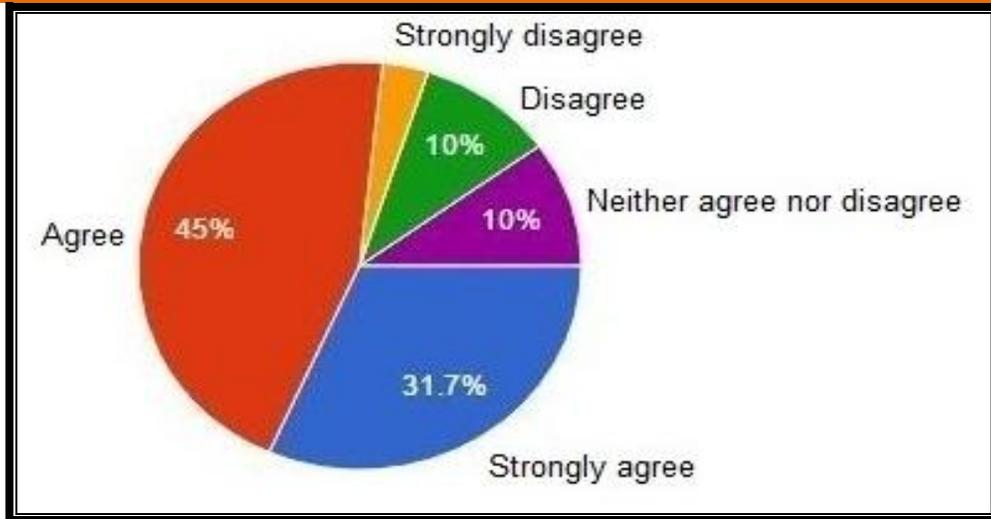


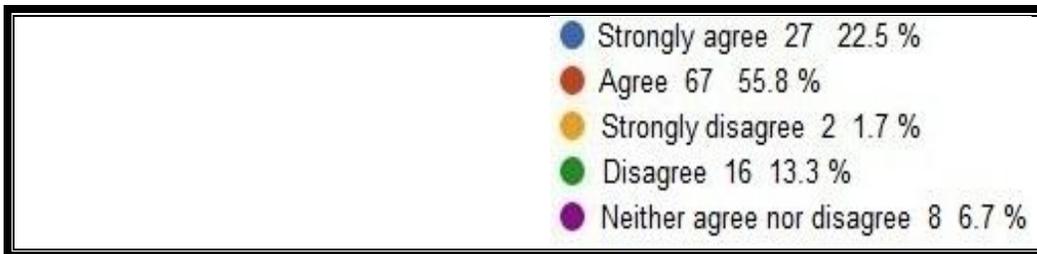
Figure 9: Results of The presence of technology while spending time with others affects face to face communication negatively

10. If the respondents noticed a degradation in the quality of their conversations with others when technology is present or used

Table 10: Results of if the respondents noticed a degradation in the quality of their conversations with others when technology is present or used

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
If the respondents noticed a degradation in the quality of their conversations with others when technology is present or used	Strongly agree	27	22.5 %
	Agree	67	55.8 %
	Strongly disagree	2	1.7 %
	Disagree	16	13.3 %
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	6.7 %
Total		120	100 %

This table shows that 55.8 % of respondents said that they are agree, 22.5 % of them said that they are strongly agree, 13.3 % of the respondents disagree, 6.7 % of the respondents neither agree nor disagree, and 1.7 % of the respondents are strongly disagree.



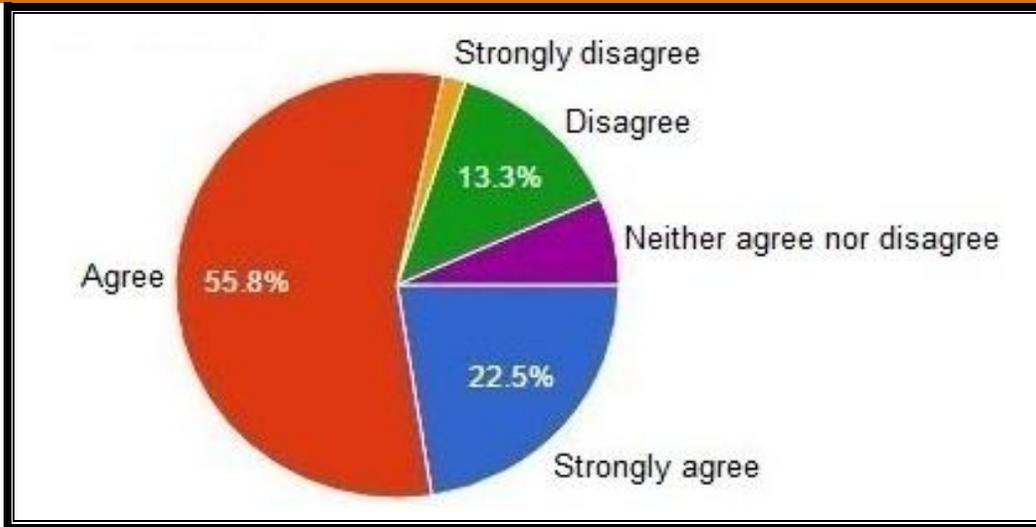


Figure 10: Results of If the respondents noticed a degradation in the quality of their conversations with others when technology is present or used

11. Access to Internet at Al-Azhar University

Table 11: Results of Access to Internet at Al-Azhar University

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Access to Internet at Al-Azhar University	Yes	52	43.3 %
	No	68	56.7 %
Total		120	100 %

As shown in the above table, 43.3 % of respondents said that they access to internet of the university and 56.7 % of the respondents said no.

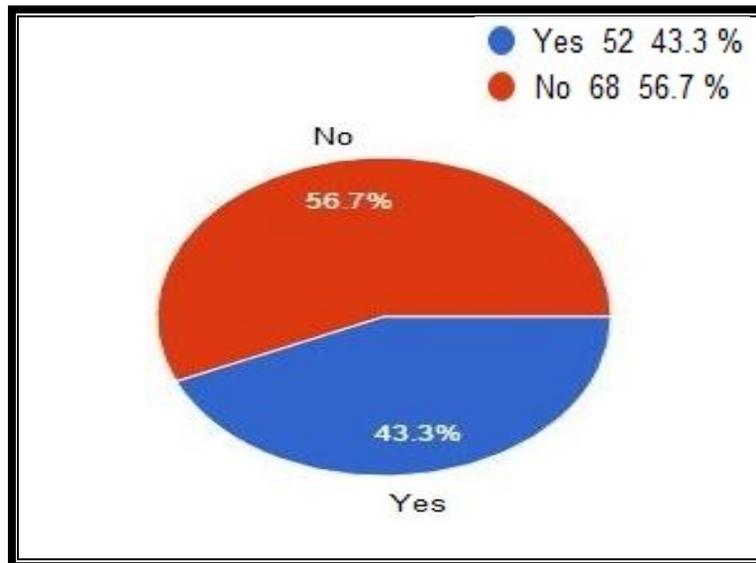


Figure 11: Results of Access to Internet at Al-Azhar University

12. The way you use the sites of social media

Table 12: Results of The way you use the sites of social media

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
The way you use the sites of social media	Personal computer	8	6.7 %
	Mobile or Tablet	16	13.3 %
	Both together	96	80 %
Total		120	100 %

The survey asked the students about their ways in using the sites of social media and the majority of the students use computers and mobile together (80 %), 13.3 % of the students use mobile or tablet and 6.7 % of the students use personal computer.

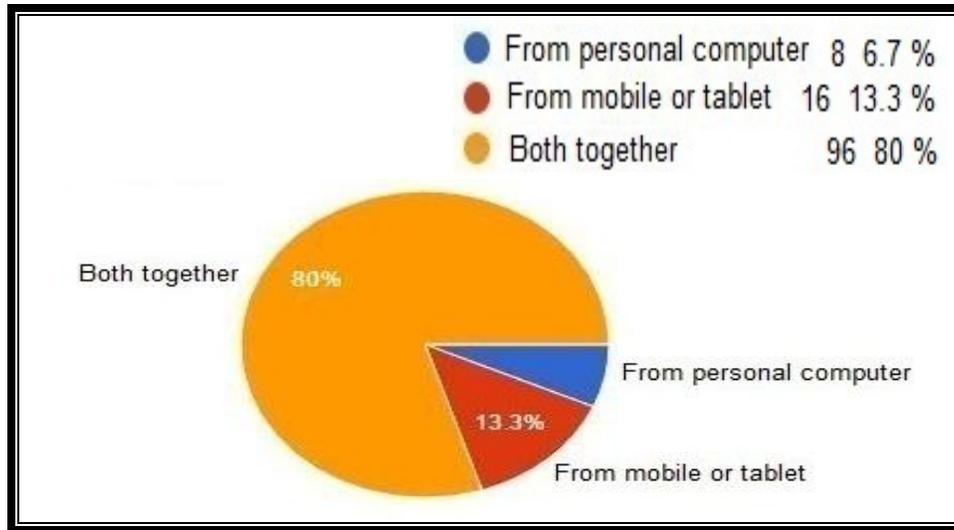


Figure 12: Results of The way you use the sites of social media

13. I think technology has a negative effect on my life

Table 13: Results of the statement I think technology has a negative effect on my life

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
I think technology has a negative effect on my life	Yes	40	33.3 %
	No	15	12.5 %
	Sometimes	65	54.2 %
Total		120	100 %

The survey asked respondents if technology has a negative effect on their lives. The majority of the respondents said sometimes (54.2 %), 33.3 % of the respondents said yes and 12.5 % of them said no.

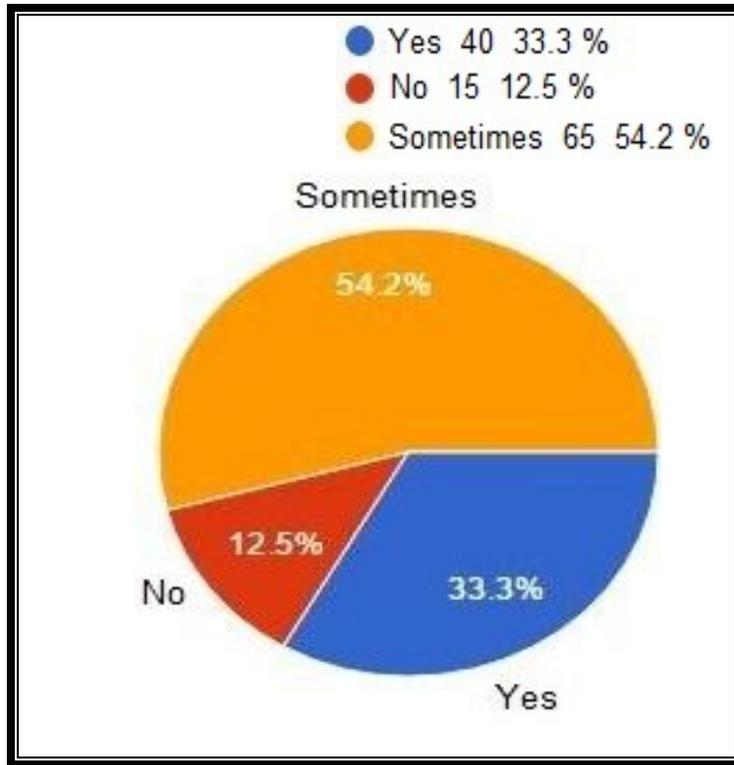


Figure 13: Results of the statement I think technology has a negative effect on my life

The last question of the survey asked respondents if they have any comments regarding technology use and face to face communication

Only forty-one respondents answered the last question. All of them except three respondents said that technology has a negative effect on the relation between members of the family and between friends and it destroyed the face to face communications in the same family and society. Other respondents said that the user of technology has to balance between using technology and human relations.

9. FIELD OBSERVATION

Table 14: Results of field observations at Al-azhar University

Field Observation	Al-Azhar University / Scientific Colleges building / Gaza				Total	Total %
	No. of students observed in the Yard	No. of students observed in front of Students Affairs	No. of students observed in front of Cafeteria	No. of students observed in front of Admission & Registration		
Date	Dec. 11,2016	Dec. 11,2016	Dec. 12,2016	Dec. 12,2016		
Time	11:10 – 11:25 a.m.	01:10 – 01:25 p.m.	11:10 – 11:25 a.m.	01:10 – 01:25 p.m.		
Holding or Texting by using mobile or computer (student alone)	23	29	13	6	71	31%

Listening or Talking using mobile or other technology (student alone)	8	9	7	5	29	13%
No technology (student alone)	13	18	6	1	38	17%
Using technology with others	17	13	14	7	51	22%
No technology with others	12	7	16	4	39	17%
Total	73	76	56	23	228	100%

10. CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence of field observations, a survey of 120 Al-azhar students, and an analysis of previously conducted studies, face –to- face communication with their family members and friends has reduced as a result of the use of technology. People are neglecting to engage personally, uninhibited by phones and devices and even when actually in the presence of others. They are becoming more reliant on communicating with friends and family through technology. These are partly because they spend more time on the mobile and internet and therefore have little time for interaction with their friends and family, perhaps because the internet offers them the platform for personal interactions with many people of diverse background around the world. A majority of individuals felt the quality of their conversations degraded in the presence of technology. Also, the majority of respondents were bothered when family and friends used technology while spending time together. More than 78 % of students noticed a degradation in the quality of their conversations with others when technology is present or used. This indicated strongly that face –to-face communications have decreased both in quantity and quality.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many solutions to restore humanity and at the same time to establish a better balance between human use of technology and his living contact that he needs to have with each other as follows:

1. Despite the wide progress of technology such as Internet, computer, mobile phones, ...etc. and all the machines for easy contact, one often feel socially isolated because most of contacts are by machines, not close warm living human contacts.
2. We need to observe what happened to our social interaction as technology appeared, developed and grew.
3. Before the technology evolved, people spent more time together and human relations were strong.
4. If people smile and have a friendly expression, they will converse with others. Conversation or Social Interaction cannot be invited by a cold, unfriendly facial expression.
5. Encourage whenever and however friendly facial expression, understanding, politeness and respect among human beings regardless of their age, nationality, color, language they speak, religious beliefs or points of view.
6. Attend, organize and encourage gathering such as meetings, conversations and dinners where people meets and greet one another to share experiences, resources and ideas. People do not forget events when they come together.
7. Make presentations about certain subjects such as friendship conversations and social interactions among human beings. Write articles and booklets on these subjects for publications in newspapers and magazines anywhere in the world.
8. Distribute information such as brochures and maps in our community, neighborhood, university, ...etc or in the city we live to encourage people to discover their surroundings and participate in interesting and exciting events.

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