Abstract: Introduction: New digital media have dramatically altered the communication landscape, especially for youth. “Indian web users spend 26 minutes online each day”. This study is concerned with effect of social networking on youth regarding potential risk, safety, wellbeing & skill development because they are still maturing & forming the ability to attain & implement communication & conflict resolution skill on interpersonal level. Aim & objective: To explore the impact of social networking on communication & conflict resolution skills among first MBBS students. Material & Methods: A cross-sectional study was carried out on 122 first year MBBS students using semi structured questionnaire after taking their consent. Data collection was based on purposive sampling. Data entry and analysis was done using excel and SPSS v16.

Result: Mean age of participants was 17.7 ± 0.62 years. All the participants 122 (100%) have their own cell phone & 112 (91.8%) were using internet. Majority of participants have their profile on Facebook 100 (81.9%) and What’s app 105 (86.1%). Twenty seven percent (33) participants strongly agreed that “people who rely on social networking are losing the ability to talk with others”, while 50% strongly disagreed to it. More than forty seven percent (58) of participants were of strong belief that “people cannot effectively solve problem using social networking”. More than half (52.4%) of participants said that “it’s easy to take things the wrong way during social networking”. Conclusion: The study shows that participants have replaced traditional methods of communication with social networking on which they spend a fair amount of time. Use of social networking sites helped half of the adolescents to open up to the world but these sites did not help much in conflict resolution as responded by nearly half of participants.

Key Words: Social networking, Communication skill, Conflict resolution kill, Youth

Introduction: During the last two decades the world, in general and India, in particular has witnessed for remarkable changes in Information Technology (IT) & it led to the emergence of Social Networking Sites (SNS) which are currently being used by millions of Indian college students and it has far reaching impacts on their skills.(1) SNS enable rapid exchange of knowledge, high levels of dialogue and collaborative communication through text, audio and video. (2). (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) found that 72% of all college students have a social media profile with 45% of college students using a social media site at least once a day. (3)Growing concern exists among researchers regarding the effects of the Internet on youth regarding potential risks to safety, well-being, and skill development.(4) Social networking is a current phenomenon that consists of both web-based communication with Internet users through websites (Facebook, MySpace, You Tube) and interaction with others via cellular phones.(5) According Digital statistics India, Indian’s online population skews significantly younger than other countries with 75% under age of 35 years.(6) Greenfield and Yan (2006) use the “Effects Model” to explain the shift from seeing the Internet as doing something to adolescents to an outlook that consists of adolescents taking an active role in co-constructing their own environments. (7) Communication plays a central role in personal relationships and relationships are assessed by the communication skills of others (Burleson, 2003), impairment in the ability to effectively communicate may hinder successful relational development in young adults (8) Lack of
conflict resolution skills may lead to the use of human services and involvement in the legal system, requiring the need to access limited financial resources, and also the risk of out-of-home placement.(9)

**Purpose of study:** 
Despite the potential benefits for adolescents from social networking, such as the sense of being understood and supported by peers,(4) the research is showing that the excess use of this technology may underhandedly inhibit proper interpersonal skill development (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2003).(10) So, further examination of the impact of social networking on adolescents is justified. Therefore, purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social networking on the skills of communication and conflict resolution within the young adult population.

**Materials and Methods**

**Study Design:** This was a cross sectional study which gathered the quantitative data.

**Study Setting & Sample Size:** College fresher first year MBBS students who enrolled in Govt. Medical College, were the target population for this study. Using a purposive convenience sampling method, first year MBBS students were chosen due to their practical access and their likely experience of the research topic. Study was conducted in December 2013. Written consent of participants was obtained. Students who were absent in the class and who didn’t give consent for participation were excluded from study & final sample size reach was 123. Participants had the choice of quitting survey at any time or skipping questions without any adverse future damage in the case they became uncomfortable during study.

**Data Tool & Data Collection:** Self-administered semi structured questionnaire consisting of closed ended questions was use. Questionnaire consisted of various items including 5-point Likert scales in two format, scale range from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree” and scale range from “Never” to “always” for answer options regarding communication and conflict resolution, asking participants to rate their attitudes on numerous statements involving aspects of social networking. There were also two ranking questions on the survey. Estimated time for completing the survey was 10 minutes. It was filled up by participant during their regular class schedule.

**Data Entry & Analysis:** Data entry was done in Ms excel and was analysed in SPSS v16 software. The descriptive statistics was used to explain result of survey. Frequency distributions and measures of central tendency were used to report on nominal variables. The ordinal level variables are displayed in figures.

**Results**

**Demographics:** A total of 122 students participated in study. Mean age of the participants was 17.7 years ± 0.62 years. 54 (44.2%) students were males while 68 (55.7%) of the studied participants were females. Majority of students 71 (59%) are staying at hostel.

**Social networking accessibility & use of Social networking sites:** All students 122 (100%) have their own cellphone and 112 (91.8%) students were using internet in one or the other way. Majority of students using internet have their Facebook account 100 (81.95%) & What’s app profile 105 (86.06%). As many as 60(50%) students are using different ways of verbal communication on internet through skype 40 (34%) and G-talk 20 (16%).

**Figure 1: Use of Social networking sites by participants**

**Perceived impact of social networking on communication skill:** Students were asked to rate their level of agreement to various statements regarding their use of social networking to communicate with other. In response to statement “I rely too much on texting to stay in touch with people”, (36.9%) of respondents reported they agreed, the next most common choice was disagree with (26.2%) choosing this option. In response to statements “I have improve my ability to communicate with other by texting”, (60.7%) of respondents agreed. This was the most common choice. In response to statement “I have improve my ability to communicate by using FB and other media”, (36.1%) of respondents agreed, while (32.8%) were neutral in their answer. The result demonstrate that more of the respondents felt that they rely too much on texting and FB and other media and their ability to communicate has improved because of these activity. Respondents then asked to respond to a statement that reflects a specific behavior of communication. In response to statement “I text to people who are in same place with me rather than talking with them”, the most popular responses were ‘Never’ and ‘Sometimes’ responded by (36.9%) and (37.7%) respondent respectively. In response to statement ‘I carry on conversations on Facebook and other media rather than talking to them”, the most popular responses were ‘Never’ and ‘Sometimes’ each resulting in (36.1%) of the respondents choosing these categories. It reflects that communication behavior is definitely changing, three times out of four the youngsters using this mode of communication but verbal communication is the preferred need of communication.

**Perceived impact of social networking on conflict resolution skill:** Students were asked to rate their level of agreement to statement regarding their use of texting & social networking sites for conflict resolution. In response to statement “I ’have improve my ability to work out problems by texting”, 52 (42.6%) of respondents reported they disagreeing and 43 (35.2%) neither agreed nor disagreed. In response to statement “I ’have improve my ability to work out problems by FB and other media”, (31.1%) of respondents reported they disagreeing and (33.6%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Respondents then asked to respond to various statements that reflected the prevalence of using texting to resolve conflict with other. In response to the statement “I solve problem with friends by texting”, (50.8%) of respondents choosing ‘Sometimes’, (27%) choosing ‘Often’ & only (3.3%) said ‘Always’. In response to statement “I send text to someone I’m mad at instead of talking”, (47.5%) of respondents choosing ‘Never’ and (27.9%) choosing ‘Sometimes’. In response to statement “I solved problem with friends on FB and other media”, (31.1%) of respondents reported never using Facebook in this manner, while (40.2%) replied sometimes. The result demonstrate that more of the respondents felt that Texting & Social networking though FB and other media can be ‘Sometimes’ use as tool of conflict resolution but it is not so powerful and effective that it can be used ‘Frequently’ and ‘Always’. Most of the participants prefer face to face conversation for conflict resolution.
Rank preference to statements: Talking face to face was the most preferred among respondents to express conflict and talking on phone was ranked next. Texting showed mixed results, using Facebook appeared less favorable, and sending an email was the least preferred way to express conflict. So, it appears that respondents prefer to show feelings of anger in ways that they can receive a more personal interaction by performing this in person or talking on the phone. A point to be considered is that respondents find instant and direct individual conversation more favorable during conflict than waiting for a text or typed response. Eighty nine (73%) of study participants believed that relationship is better when people talk face to face as compared to talking on the phone or online.

Attitude towards the social networking: Students were asked to rate their level of agreement to various statements about social networking and its impact on relationship, communication, conflict resolution and society. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Level of Agreement on Attitude towards Social Networking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Neutral (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking makes the friendship stronger.</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who rely on social networking are losing the ability to talk with each other.</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People cannot solve problems using social networking.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking has made a positive impact on society.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than 50% of the participants agreed that social networking makes the friendship stronger & almost 43% of participants agreed that the people cannot solve problem using social networking while 30% to 45% of respondents were neutral in all the questions (Table 1).

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the impact of the social networking activities on communication and conflict resolution skills among young adults. For decades, communicating and resolving conflict with others was mostly performed in-person, through written correspondence, or by talking on landline telephones. Now, with an attitude of technological advances, people have an array of options with which to interact with others. This study asked respondents to report on their activities of social networking as well as to respond to various statements created to measure their perspectives on the subject. It was hypothesized that respondents would indicate high participation in social networking activities, as seen in previous studies, as well as reports an impact on their communication and conflict resolution skills. Social networking has become a mainstay in society and the data from this study will add further insight into the phenomenon and its potential impacts on today’s young generation.

Access to Social Networking: The findings of this study indicate that social networking is very popular among young adults and their participation in social networking activities is highly common in today’s technological society. As seen in the results, all 122(100%) of the respondents have their own cell phones and access to computers, as well as (92%) had internet and profiles on Facebook and other social media. These findings are higher than the average found in the existing literature. As reported in the 2010 Media Industry Fact Sheet, two-thirds of the populations over the age of 13 are connected by cell phones.(11) Finally, according to Facebook’s statistics, 1 in every 13 people in the world have an active profile on Facebook. Therefore, the 100% participant accessibility rate for cell phones, computers, and Facebook found in this study does not accurately represent what is found in society. It is also the fact that even changing the target population to include all enrolled students at the Medical College Surat instead of only first year students would illicit different results. An explanation may be that having cell phones and computer as well as a Facebook profile is considered the norm in the younger student population.

Communication: It was surprising that the majority of the respondents agreed that they relied on texting, Facebook and other media too much, and their ability to communicate has improved because of these activities. This may represent the finding by Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007), that social networking may be used to strengthen relationships that already exist and can enhance the feelings of closeness to others. (12)

Finally, it is worth noting that 38% of participants stated that they text others in the same place they are and that the large majority of participants reported sometimes carrying on Conversations over text. This was not true for carrying on conversations over Facebook, as participants were equally split between never and sometimes. The prevalence of texting, even to people in the same location, may be an indication of a trend that makes this style of communication more common than the traditional method of actually speaking to others as seen in the ranking for communication, the overwhelming first preference was talking in person, followed by talking on phone, texting, Facebook, and then email. These results are consistent with Reid, F. and Reid, D. (2007) in which participants reported high levels of texting and preferred using texts to communicate over voice calls. (13) One point to consider is if communicating over text is viewed as closer to in person communication than Facebook. This could be explained by social exchange theory in that risk associated with texting is low. However, the nature of communicating over Facebook and its nature of reaching a larger audience makes the risk high, but also the potential reward high. Therefore, texting may be the more appealing form of communication next to face-to-face contact and talking on phone due to its perceived low risk.
Conflict Resolution: Just as in the case of building communication skills, the large majority of the respondents felt that texting and using Facebook and other media has not improved their ability to resolve conflict with others. However, based on the results, there seems to be a definite difference between how often respondents use social networking to communicate versus using this medium to resolve conflicts. The result demonstrate that more of the respondents felt that Texting & Social networking though FB and other media can be ‘Sometime’ use as tool of conflict resolution but it is not so powerful and effective that it can be used ‘Frequently’ and ‘Always’. These findings seem to match those in the ranking of preference of conflict resolution, with talking in person by far being respondents’ first choice, which was then followed by talking on the phone sending a text, using Facebook, and sending an email did not receive any first preference rankings. Respondents seem ambivalent about resolving conflicts in general. However, it is important that talking in person was the most popular way to manage conflict.

Attitude towards Social networking: The last section of the survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement on various statements about social networking and its impact on relationships, communication, Conflict resolution and society in the hopes of uncovering any prominent attitudes among participants. In viewing the results, all but one statement showed that respondents varied along the continuum including positive, neutral, and negative attitudes. In regard to participants feeling that social networking makes friendships stronger, the level of agreement in this study may reflect findings cited in the literature review that online friendships were described as being long-term, trusting, and very meaningful (Mishna et al. 2009). To Table 1 shows that 30% to 45% of respondents were ‘neutral’ in all the questions, which means that they are not able to make out their mind on whether to agree or disagree in spite of the fact that that they all were using cell phone & more than 90% were using SNSs in one or the other way.

Conclusion: This research study offered insight into a possible relationship between how young adults are incorporating social networking into the ways they communicate and resolve conflicts with others. By far, the most common and preferred method of interaction is face-to-face, as stated by most of the respondents. The results of the study also show that participants are adding technological communication to this traditional method of contact and using the social networking activities for various purposes. The majority of study participants agreed that social networking helped them to open up to the world and to improve communications skill. This was not true for using these mediums to build conflict resolution skills. It should be a point to mention that even though the majority of respondents disagreed or were neutral that texting and Facebook have improved their communication and conflict resolution skills, the results do not suggest nor imply that these skills were hindered. Because adolescents and young adults are still maturing and forming the ability to attain and implement communication and conflict resolutions skills on an interpersonal level, it may important that their participation in social networking activities be observed.

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