



Role of Social Media in Managing Everyday Information: A Case Study of Urban Teens in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study attempts to fill the research gap that exists in the management of everyday information. It seeks to explore if and how urban teenagers manage everyday information with the help of social media. A qualitative study was conducted and Sample was 25 Pakistani urban teenagers aged 13 – 19. The sample was chosen, as Generation Z individuals were targeted in this study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted, however, due to Covid 19 pandemic outbreak, few interviews were obtained via the software “Zoom”. Thematic analysis was done using the software NVivo. It was concluded that managing information forms a critical part of everyday information practices of urban teenagers, especially after the advent of online classes after which every teenager has access to social media and digital gadgets of their own. Urban teenagers manage information by using all social media platforms and also sharing it with their peers and family through digital media. They are managing their information to handle the information overload and to manage, organize and summarize the collected information for their future use and quality management. This practice is also developing their relationships, identifies the cultural differences, and makes them realize what and how to manage. Based on the general analysis and suggestions, opinions have been created to further improve these practices. This study may be replicated on rural teens to know their information managing practices..

Keywords: , : Information Management, Social Media, Urban teenagers, Pakistani Youth, Gen Z

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INTRODUCTION

“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family” Annan (1997).

Pakistani youth is getting all kinds of information related to different aspects of life through social media. The human brain although, it cannot store infinite information, yet, the finite amount of information it does store is more than enough to suffice for our everyday information needs. However, we are living in the age of digital technology and the influx of information load has altered ways of accessing, using, and managing information. Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) mentioned that “The internet is nearly ubiquitous among teens and young adults”. When we talk about the internet it is all about social and digital media. UNESCO (2020) mentioned that after the COVID-19 pandemic 98% of the world’s student population has been affected by school closures. As a result, there was a significant change in school education and a rise in the use of technology for remote teaching and learning (Chiu, 2022). Youth is known as digitally literate, confident, and have a belief in teamwork (Gibbins, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Wu (2021) reported that online information-seeking came so common during the pandemic and further mentioned that “Social media became a popular source for immediate, local and relevant information of daily lives”. So the daily activities of collecting, using, managing, and sharing information all are connected and rely heavily on social media.

The researchers of the present study have identified the everyday information managing practices of urban teens and the role of social media, as the objective of this study was how urban teens are managing their everyday information and to explore the role of social media in managing everyday information among urban teens. This research is an attempt to understand the issues of Pakistani teens that may lead to designing systems for fulfilling their everyday information needs. This study also recommends adding managing information as a separate construct in its baseline study “Everyday information Practices” and the model introduced in it (Savolainen, 2008).

Research Questions:

To fill the research gap in this field, the present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How can the conceptual picture of managing everyday information be sketched such that it involves the everyday practices of Generation Z which is technologically inclined and relies on social media?
2. What is the role of social media in managing everyday information amongst urban teenagers?

Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to develop an in-depth explorative approach to understanding the managing everyday information behavior of urban teenagers in Pakistan and the role of social media in managing this information. This study is designed in such a way that it provides information on what are the everyday managing information practices of urban teens and how social media is forming these practices. These findings are then related to the undertaken study in a humble attempt to operationalize the phenomenon of everyday information management. The findings obtained from this study would be helpful for the policymakers, curricula designers, and educationists to relate their policies and curricula to per needs of the time and according to the modern era of social media. Further new policies and curricula can be designed and information literacy programs can be introduced in libraries. In this way, the youth can avail full advantage of social media for managing their everyday information.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Technology and media are the main sources that are forming the everyday information practices of youth. Although print media is still in use youth is mostly relying on social media due to its availability and specialty of being the commonly used practice of this digital era. However better facilities in the provision of advanced technologies can help teens in their everyday life information seeking. For managing everyday information, teens are more connected with technology and social networks. Kari and Savolainen (2003) proposed a model (Contextual model of information seeking on the web) in relation to web searching. They explained that for collecting information related to daily lives the world wide web can be investigated by looking into the life of participants, their situations, actions, and sources. Another perception in literature and media is that “digital natives”, a term coined by Prensky (2001), are well-trained for technology as they are grew up using such technologies, Frand (2000); Hoffman, Novak, and Venkatesh (2004), Lorenzetti (2007); Abram (2007), Palfrey and Glasser (2008).

Williamson, Qayyum, Hider, and Liu (2012) conducted an in-depth study to explore on how media support the everyday information practices of students. Results of this study found that TV, print media, radio and local news channels were the most in use sources and print media was found to be still in use source of information for young people. The news seeking and news generating was also found to have an impact of social networking tools. They found mostly purposeful information searching was online. Print and online newspapers were used accidentally for everyday information. This study also revealed that everyday information practice is not specific to sources. Justo (2015) did a qualitative study through a Doctoral dissertation on “Analyzing Everyday Life through the Lens of Performance from the Cultural and Historical Activity Theory” from George Washington University. Themes were identified to know the life experiences of young people and to understand their daily activities and experiences. Six themes and four typologies were explored. Lenhart, Ling, Campbell and Purcell (2010) Study entitled “Teens and mobile phones: Text messaging explodes as teens embrace it as the centerpiece

of their communication strategies with friends” this study was conducted on 16 young students aged 18-29. This sample was from four age generations, through survey and interviews technique. Daily information practices were investigated and it was found that mobile phone was the most commonly used information source. For American teens phone calls were the central function for finding any information, however, for parents, it was found an area of conflict. Social media and telephone were found a basic source for making payments of bills and for making programs for families. This research shows that the everyday life information-seeking behavior of teens has an impact on this technology in their social cultural and personal life. Van Grove (2010) did research on 600 students and used an online survey of OTX’s secure advanced technology. The sample of this study was the teens’ aged group of 13-17. The finding of this study was that teens were spending at least two hours on the internet on daily basis and an average of 80% of that time was spent on social networks. Agosto, Magee, Dickard, and Forte (2016) stated teens tend to consider librarians as an outdated institution with little connection to their daily information practices which are technology focused. The emphasis of this study was that librarians can serve better if good and quick technologies will be provided to them. The reviewed literature shows that for youth social media is mandatory for acquiring, managing, and sharing everyday information. Wu (2021) reported that teens are actively seeking online information during the pandemic. Today’s teens are labeled as Generation Z, Net Generation, Google Generation, and Millennials as they are growing up with technologies and dealing with information in a different way. Thus, teens seek, use, manage, and share information in everyday life. Ali and Warraich (2022) investigated that students are using mobile phones to find, scan, manage and share their information.

In Pakistan, there has been a dearth of research that specializes in information seeking, use, and sharing. Shakeel, Shakeel, and Fatima (2015) observed, day scholar students have been greater happy with their lives as compared to college students who have been living in hostel accommodations. The recent qualitative study by Naveed, Batool, and Anwar (2021) explored through the critical incident technique that everyday life information seeking (ELIS) needs of postgraduate students living in Punjab university residence halls have been targeted on health, socioeconomic, cultural, technological, and prison issues. Rafiq et.al (2021) explored that hostel living is expanding the social circle of female students. These students are managing everyday life information for their academics, social concerns, and self-help issues. They are mostly relying on mobile phones, social media, the internet, and their relationships. These students also faced some challenges in getting and managing their everyday information such as language and cultural differences, time concerns, and finding reliable information. The reviewed literature shows that a good number of studies are available on information seeking, use, and sharing, however, less literature is available on managing information. In the Pakistani scenario, not a single study is available directly on this topic, however, from the studies on information needs, information behavior and knowledge sharing, and everyday information seeking some literature were found relevant.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In our study, we employed the qualitative approach as a research method. A total of 25 urban teens in the 13 – 19 years age bracket were taken for the sample population. This sample was taken from all provinces of Pakistan namely Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and special territories like Gilgit Baltistan and the Federal Capital Islamabad.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted, however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, a few of the interviews were taken online. Zoom meetings were scheduled and written semi-structured interviews were conducted. For each interview duration was 40-50 minutes. The questions regarding everyday information management practices and the role of social media in forming these practices were asked. Responses were carefully jotted down in the printed interview guides. Follow-up and probing questions were also asked. The researchers strongly felt the saturation point after 25 interviews and meaningful themes were not developing. In the end, each interview was transcribed carefully. The transcribed data were analyzed using the software Nvivo for content analysis because it was considered more appropriate and was widely used for determining and ranking the emerging themes from the qualitative data.

Figure 1. depicts the number and the distribution of the sample population along with codes generated by NVivo.

Punjab = 5 1. EA 2. HA 3. AH 4. RAR 5. SZ	Sindh=5 1.AQ 2.FA 3.MZ 4.GS 5.HA	KPK=5 1.RA 2.HA 3.YA 4. BR 5.RA
Islamabad=5 1.NA 2.AI 3.UZ 4.TA 5.SZ	Balochistan=3 1.MS 2.SA 3.HA	GB=2 1.SR 2.SZ
Total= 25 Urban Teens		

Fig 1 Demographics of respondents

Data Analysis:

Taking managing everyday information as a parent node, the child nodes obtained were again individual, social, cultural, and economic. Their sub-themes were also plotted out in the figure below via NVivo.

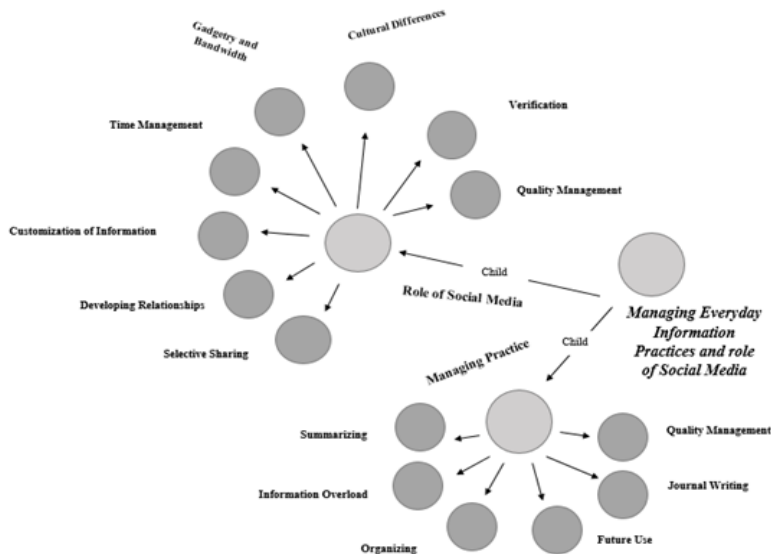


Figure-2 Nodes Diagram for Managing Everyday Information and Role of Social Media based on the interviews (NVivo Output)

Managing Practices:

The following sub-themes were explored for managing practices and the most relevant statements are mentioned under each subtheme.

Summarizing. Summarizing was the main reason for which teens were managing their everyday information. They were summarizing their everyday information for clear and relevant information. It was found whatever information teens are getting through social media, they are making a summary for that information, as keeping long files was difficult for them. A 15-year-old male stated “I am summarizing my collected information as I have to manage my information for use.”– HA-2, Punjab. A 18-years-old female UZ-3 responded “Without Summarization any collected information I cannot keep it safe or use it in future”. A 14-year-old female from Gilgit stated “I am making summary of all relevant point”.

Information Overload. Too much information is available on each topic. So it is mandatory that how to handle with this information overload. This is the main

reason that teens were managing their everyday information. A 16-year-old argued “I only focus on relevant information otherwise so much information is available and I cannot keep all” _BR-4 (Sindh). Even they were not interested to preserve information for potential use. A 14-year-old female from Gilgit stated “Too much information is available and I have to tackle this issue, Therefore I am managing my information. These statements are providing sufficient reasons for youth to manage their information.

Organizing. Organizing information is directly related with managing everyday information. Mostly teens were convinced that, they cannot manage everyday information if it is not organized “I make sure that I compile and organize my collected information, for saving that information I am used to modify it according to requirements” – HA-2 (Punjab). 13-years-old female UZ-3 stated “Without organizing the collected information, I cannot complete my task. I am making headings for each topic”.

Future use. Managing information was found highly important for future use. An 18-year-old female stated” I am managing my information for future use” _BR-4 (KPK). A 15-year-old boy quoted “I believe that mostly students are saving and managing their information to use in future” – H.A (Islamabad). A 15-year-old from KPK, reflected “The only reason for managing the information is that we could use it in future” – HA-2(KPK).

Journal writing. Journal writing was also found as an everyday information managing practice and surprisingly teens are still involved in journal writing. A 15- year- old from KPK, stated “I am used to write down my personal things in my diary” – HA-2(KPK) Another 13- year-old stated “I am used to jot down my collected information in my journal for future use.” – AQ-1 (Sindh).

Quality management. Quality management was also found as an important reason for managing any information “I am managing my everyday information to ensure quality” – AH -3 (Punjab). A 15-year-old female expressed that “Only quality information is useful otherwise there is no reason for managing information.” – A.I-2 (Islamabad). Another 14 -year -old male stated “Our Holy Prophet (PBUH) said only share the right information so I am managing and sharing only authentic information” – RAR (Punjab).

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media was found to play a vital role in managing everyday information. Teens were fully relying on social media for performing their everyday information management practices.

Selective Sharing. Social media has made it possible to do selective sharing. A 19 years old male stated “I have learned many techniques through social media on how to do selective sharing.” – SR-1 (Gilgit). A 13-year-old from Punjab stated “Selective sharing through social media is helping us a lot for our information needs and managing everyday information practices” – EA-1(Punjab).

Developing Relationships. Social media was found to play a highly important role in developing teens' relationships with others. One 15 year urban teen quoted "I have made many good friends through social media and they are guiding me on many points" – RAR-4 (Punjab). A 19-year-old boy HA-3 from Balochistan stated "I have few friends who are not Pakistani, but they are helping me in my studies. We became friends through social media".

Customization of Information. Customization of information became easy through social media. One 15-year-old male stated, "I can easily customize my information taking help from social media" – HA-2 (Punjab). Another participant quoted "To customize any information became so important nowadays and social media is helping a lot in this regard" – M.S (Balochistan).

Time Management. Social media is saving time for youth by providing quick information "I prefer to save my time therefore I am taking help from social media. _ HA -5 (Sindh). "To save our time I and my friends are using social media for collecting and sharing information" _ SA-2 (Balochistan). A teen from Gilgit Baltistan mentioned "I have very less time to meet others due to my studies. Through social media, it became very easy". - SZ Gilgit.

Gadgetry and Bandwidth. In this era of technology, everyone needs gadgets and good space to save their information. Teens were found to take opinions through social media on, which gadgets they need to buy and how to increase bandwidth limitations. An 18-year-old female from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stated "We are six siblings and we all need gadgets for our online classes. expensive devices my parents can't afford. So I started taking help from social media and got very good information for cheap and useful devices. Now we all are taking our classes and busy in our everyday information practices." - B.R- 4 (KPK). Another 19-year-old boy HA-3 from Balochistan stated "I cannot save much information on my laptop due to the saving capacity of my laptop however I can find answers through social media very quickly".

Cultural Differences. Social media is a strong source that can highlight and introduce cultural differences. One urban teen stated "I am afraid to not use any information which is not right according to our culture. Then I am making it confirm using social media channels and taking advice from others." – SZ-2 (18 years, Islamabad). Another 18-year -old female stated "Social media provides culture friendly information. It also provides much information from other cultures which we can use" _ HA -5 (Sindh).

Verification. A quick source to verify any information is social media. A 14 year-male stated "We cannot manage any information until it is not confirmed that the collected information is not accurate. I am making it confirm through social media" _ RAR 4(Punjab). Another participant quoted "A quick source to verify the information is social media". – M.S (Balochistan).

Quality Management. For the quality management of any information, social media was found to help urban teens and save their time. A 19-year-old female stated

“Before managing my information I am verifying this through social media and mostly my family members and friends are available online all the time” – SS-5(Punjab). One participant mentioned. “For our study, we have to ensure that only quality information we have gathered. I am taking help from social media before managing my information” – SZ (18 years, Islamabad).

The management of information was found to be an abstract concept among urban teens. The findings mentioned above also validate this observation as the management of information is more common among urban teens and teens were found relying on social media for their information managing practices.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Information behavior research is characterized by the growing number of models describing various aspects of information seeking, sharing, and use, Mai, Case, & Given, (2016). This study was conducted when an important factor of information management was identified in a study conducted on the everyday information practices of urban teenagers in Pakistan in a working paper which was later developed as a doctoral dissertation, by Hanif & Warraich (2019). This study provides value addition to Savolainen (2008) study and reveals that information seeking, sharing and usage are not the only major constructs, management of information is also a vital component of the everyday Information practices. The component of information management was identified as an everyday information practice of Generation Z individuals who are more technologically driven and manage information for using and sharing everyday information which they obtain from social media, the internet, their elders and/ or broadcast media. In our study we attempted to explore the information management practices of Urban teenagers in Pakistan. Furthermore, since the spread of the pandemic, the concept of online classes has sprung up, due to which teenagers have more access to social media, internet and some have even purchased their own cellphone for the sake of ‘online classes’. In this study it was concluded that the everyday information practices of urban teens are very technology oriented. Teenagers rely upon social media sources and often face confusion due to an information overload. Under such circumstances, teenagers store whatever information they believe might come in handy in their cellphones and / or their laptops and believe in sharing this information with their friends. Thus, these teenagers aged between 13 – 19 years prefer to consult social media sources for their everyday information practices. This study is in stark contrast to the model proposed by Savolainen (2008, 2004), this study reveals that the internet and social media is the most preferred source of information used by urban teens to seek, manage and share their information. The need to cover this research gap was attempted in this study. It was found that teenagers can recognize misinformation, aware of issues of accuracy and relevancy, and save information for their future use. Teens believed that managing information for accuracy is mandatory. However, social media was found as a major source to perform all these activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Since social media was found frequently used source for managing everyday information and youth were found relying on social media. It is, therefore, recommended that educational institutions should conduct workshops on the effective use of social media. Moreover, findings revealed the reasons why teens were managing information and relying on social media. Schools, curricula designers, and policymakers can add more stuff related to these findings to help teens to the best use of social media and information sources. School librarians can also design information literacy programs for their young students to guide them on how to use the information and sources of information.

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