

# Impacts of Instant Messaging on Communications and Relationships among Youths in Malaysia

DA Bakar, AA Rashid, and NA Aziz

**Abstract**—The major concern of this study lies at the impact the newly invented technologies had brought along over the traditional way of communication, face-to-face communication. As far as the Mobile Instant Messaging is concerned, it has instilled the sense of obsession among the youths not only for entertainment purpose but also has impacted the way social communication take place. This study is aimed primarily to examine the impact of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) on the Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of Youths in Malaysia. Survey questionnaire was distributed to 200 youths within Klang Valley area and the finding revealed that the impact of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) on the interpersonal communication and relationship development of youths is relatively encouraging. Analytically, the fact that the technological advancement has been able to replace a number of social processes and activities, yet to keep interpersonal communication and relationship balance and positive remain as parts of the youths' social concern.

**Keywords**—Communication, Mobile Instant Messaging, Relationships, Youths.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THIS research which touches on the Impact of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) on the Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of Youths who uses smartphones in Malaysia, will be discussing on how the vast advancements of technology has significantly created a new way for communication between people. How has all this technological advancement affect the youths who are constantly in touch with all these developments? According to Courtney (2014), if technology is used in a proper manner, it may be used as a positive cause, for example to conduct businesses, but if it is used improperly, it may mould us into people who are socially awkward in face-to-face communications.

The main issue and problem that this study would like to highlight is the deterioration of interpersonal development of youths, ranging from the ages of 13 to 20 years old, in terms of

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their interpersonal communication skills, as well as their interpersonal relationships with those around them. We know how youths these days depend a lot on technologies to communicate with their peers, and forgetting the essence of communication is that of face-to-face communication.

This research aims to answer the questions below:

1. What are the Mobile Instant Messaging applications that are the most popular among youths these days?
2. What are the levels of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) usage, Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development?
3. Is there a relationship between using Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) and Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of Youths?
4. What are the difference between the Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of male and female youths?

## II. METHODOLOGY

Survey Research was used in this research design in order to identify and observe the method of communication most preferred by youths and to what extent does this affect and impact their Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development.

The respondents from the distributed survey consist of youths from the Klang Valley area, particularly in the cities of Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam and Kuala Lumpur. This area is chosen due to the fact that there are many youths between the ages of 13 to 20 years old staying around this area, as there are many learning institutions around the area. Also, these are the areas that have high probability of youths owning personal mobile phones, which is the most important tool of communication that is used for this research.

## III. INSTRUMENT DESIGN

This research used the Purposive Sampling technique, which is a type of non-probability sampling that is very effective if we would like to study certain groups of individuals, based on criteria's that has been set by the researcher (Tongco, 2007).

The main instrument of data collection in this study is a set of carefully constructed close-ended questionnaires for the identified sample. The questions constructed will respond to

the hypotheses defined at the beginning of this study. The underlying hypotheses of this study are:

H1 – WhatsApp is the most commonly used Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) application by youths.

H2 – The average level of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) usage, and level of Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of youths are at a good level.

H3 – There is a significant relationship between the use of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) towards Interpersonal Communication.

H4 – There is a significant relationship between the use of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) towards Interpersonal Relationship Development.

H5 – There is a significant difference between male and female youths in terms of their Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development.

IV. PILOT STUDY ANALYSIS

A Pilot Study was first conducted in order to test the reliability of the instruments that will be used in this study. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2009), a minimum sample size that is needed in order to conduct a pilot study was 30 samples (Sekaran & Roger, 2009).

TABLE I  
SUMMARY RESULTS OF RELIABILITY ANALYSIS FOR PILOT STUDY (N = 30)

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Number of Deleted Items
Interpersonal Communication	.774	24	-
Interpersonal Relationship	.724	20	-
Use of Mobile Instant Messaging	.825	3	-

The Table above shows the results of the reliability analysis for the pilot study that had been analysed. There was substantial variation of Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables, ranging from .724 to .825. Given that the alpha value that are greater than .70 are generally considered to indicate a reliable set of items this shows that the instrument has good reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). For Interpersonal Communication and Interpersonal Relationship, the reliability level is at an acceptable level (.774 and .724 respectively), while for use of Mobile Instant Messaging, the set of items that measures this variable was very reliable (.825).

V. DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

For the purpose of this study, the data was collected via questionnaires that have been distributed to the study sample identified between the months of March to May 2014. The questionnaires have been created using an online survey tool and distributed by way of a web link to the sample that has been identified. The data collected from the respondents'

feedback will then store in a designated repository available on the website.

The data was extracted from the website and analysed by using a statistical analysis tool, Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 20. The methods of data analysis that were used include the Descriptive Analysis, Relative Importance Index (RII), Pearson Correlation, Cronbach Alpha, MANOVA and T-Test.

VI. RESULTS

In this study, majority of the respondents living area was the urban area, which consists of more than 50.0% from the total sample size (72.0%). However, the respondents that come from rural area were a really small percentage, which is at 2.0% or 4 respondents in total. Respondents that lives in the suburban area, was ranked as the second highest living area category, which consist about 52 respondents in total (26.05). In terms of age distribution in this study, the age of participants ranged from 13 to 20 years old. On average, the average age of participants in this study was 16.92 years (SD = 2.18).

TABLE II  
SUMMARY RESULTS OF RESPONDENTS PROFILES

Respondents Profile	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	87	43.5
Female	113	56.5
<b>Race</b>		
Malay	88	44.0
Chinese	78	39.0
Indian	34	17.0
<b>Education Background</b>		
Secondary School	112	56.0
Matriculation	2	1.0
University / College	86	43.0
<b>Geographic Location</b>		
Rural	4	2.0
Suburban	52	26.0
Urban	144	72.0
<b>Age<sup>a</sup></b>		
Minimum	13	
Maximum	20	
M ± SD	16.92 ± 2.18	

**RQ 1: What are the Mobile Instant Messaging applications that are the most popular among youths these days?**

TABLE III  
SUMMARY RESULTS OF DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Items	n	%
<b>What is the most important application do you need in your phone?</b>		
Instant Messaging	145	72.5
Games	11	5.5
Social Media	44	22.0
<b>Which one of this method of communication do you prefer the most?</b>		
E-mail	6	3.0
Instant Messaging / Texting	109	54.5
Talking in person	75	37.5
Telephone	10	5.0
<b>Which of the Mobile Instant Messaging Application do you have and use the most?</b>		
Blackberry Messenger	6	3.0
Facebook Messenger	14	7.0
Kakao Talk	2	1.0
LINE	17	8.5
Viber	3	1.5
WeChat	2	1.0
WhatsApp	156	78.0
<b>If you have Mobile Instant Messaging Application, what do you usually use it for?</b>		
For education / work communication	20	10.0
To connect with family	27	13.5
To connect with friends	138	69.0
To connect with friends and family	15	7.5

TABLE IV  
HOW THE YOUTHS USED MOBILE INSTANT MESSAGING

Rank / Priority	Used of Mobile Instant Messaging	RII (%)
1	Chatting with friends (gossip, about my life, etc.)	85.90
2	Reporting good news	80.80
3	Wishing a friend happy birthday	79.80
4	Discussing academics (homework help, study groups, etc.)	78.40
5	Comforting others	76.90
6	Setting up social events	76.60
7	Ranting / complaining	73.40
8	Reporting bad news	73.20
9	Talking to a boyfriend / girlfriend	65.50
10	Flirting	51.70
11	Discussing religion	47.90
12	Discussing politics	44.70
13	Breaking up with a boyfriend / girlfriend	36.50

Table 3 shows the result of descriptive analysis which helps answer the first research question, with regards to the most used Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) application among youths. It indicates that in this study majority of the youths these days need some form of Instant Messaging application (72.5%) in their phone and that the application was rated as the most important application that they would need in their phone. Social Media (22.0%) application was rated as the second most important application that they need in their phone, while only 5.5% of the respondents claim that games was one of the most important phone application they need in their phone. It also indicates that majority of the respondents (78.0%) agree that communication application such as Instant Messaging and Social Media applications were the most important application that they would need in their mobile phones.

**RQ 2: What is the level of the use of mobile instant messaging, interpersonal communication and interpersonal relationship development among youths?**

TABLE V  
SUMMARY RESULTS OF DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS FOR VARIABLES

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	M ± SD
Interpersonal Communication	49.00	120.00	73.82 ± 10.60
Interpersonal Relationship	50.00	96.00	63.83 ± 7.31
Use of Mobile Instant Messaging	3.00	15.00	9.14 ± 3.65

Note: M ± SD = mean ± standard deviation

Table 5 shows the results of the descriptive analysis on the variables that are being studied in this study. The results were computed using the summated score as suggested by Sekaran and Bougie (2009), in order to get an appropriate value for representing the situation of the study.

Since the Interpersonal Communication was measured with 24 items, the summated value of this number of items will be in the range of 24 to 120. The highest value in this variable indicates that the interpersonal communication was at a good level (cut-off point = 72.00). The same technique was employed for Interpersonal Relationship. The summated value of 20 items will range between 20 to 100. The highest value indicated that the Interpersonal Relationship was at a good level as well (cut-off point = 60.00). For the use of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM), the items that are measured for this variable were 3 items. Therefore, the summated value range will be in between 3 to 15. The highest value in this variable indicates that the usage of the Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) was at a high level (cut-off point= 9.00).

Referring to the Table 5, as an overall, on average the Interpersonal Communication of youths in this study was at 73.82 ± 10.60. It is indicated that, the level of the Interpersonal Communication among youths was at a good level due the summated average value was greater than 72.00. In addition, it can also be concluded that on average, the Interpersonal Relationship among the youth generation was also at good level (63.83 ± 7.31), as the summated average value was more than 60.00 cut-off point for this measurement.

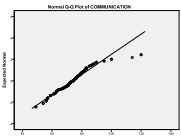
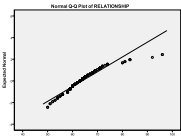
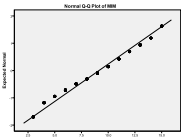
In terms of use of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM), it can be concluded that on average, the level of usage among the youths who participated in this study was at moderate level ( $9.14 \pm 3.65$ ). Although the average value is greater than the setting cut-off value of 9.00, the difference between summated average value and cut-off point was very minor (magnitude differences = 0.14), so it indicates that the usage level of youths in this study was at a moderate level.

**RQ 3: Is there a relationship between using Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) and Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of youths?**

Pearson Correlation is designed to be used with the interval level or ratio data and is particularly useful when the data meets the criteria for normality assumption (Pallant, 2010). Pearson can take the value between ranges of -1 to +1. The sign in the front indicates whether there is a positive correlation or negative correlation (Coakes, Steed, & Ong, 2010).

Pearson Correlation statistical test is a parametric test, where there are a certain number of assumptions which needs to be fulfilled in order to get a valid result. The assumptions are: a) the data must be a random sample of “n” pairs of numeric, b) each pair of observations represents two measurements taken on the same object, and c) populations from which the samples have been drawn should be normal. Since assumption (a) and (b) are about the concept of designing research and was fulfilled (Field, 2009). By using descriptive statistics, the normality test was performed in order to meet the assumption of normality. In this study, to access the normality assumption, the information of Shapiro-Wilk test of normality statistics as well as Normal Q-Q plot that was gathered from descriptive statistics, was used and it is proving that all three variables were normally distributed (see Table 6).

TABLE VI  
SUMMARY RESULTS OF NORMALITY TEST

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk test of normality	Q-Q plot
Interpersonal Communication	15.94 (.839)	
Interpersonal Relationship	16.91 (.759)	
Use of Mobile Instant Messaging	15.95 (.921)	

Note: The number in the bracket is a probability value. The non-significant value indicated that the variable was normally distributed.

Coefficient Correlation above 0.2 and above were considered satisfactory, however the strength of the correlation are based on the coefficient of the correlation. The coefficient correlation more than 0.81 to 1.0 were indicated as excellent strength, the coefficient between 0.61 to 0.80 was indicated as very good strength, coefficient between 0.41 to 0.60 indicates a good correlation strength, the coefficient between 0.21 to 0.40 measures a fair strength correlation, whereas the correlation coefficient less than 0.20 indicates poor correlation (Bluman, 2012).

TABLE VII  
SUMMARY RESULT OF PEARSON CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Variable	Interpersonal Communication	Interpersonal Relationship	Use of Mobile Instant Messaging
Interpersonal Communication	1.00		
Interpersonal Relationship	.628**	1.00	
Use of Mobile Instant Messaging	.321**	.411**	1.00

From the results above, it can be concluded that, the high use of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) among youths will make their Interpersonal Communication good. It is also indicates that by high use of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) among youths, it will also make their Interpersonal Relationship stronger because the results above revealed that all the three variables were significantly positively correlated to each other.

Referring to Table 8 below, it also confirms the results of the correlation above, where when participants in this study were asked about their feeling when they are introduced to new people, most of them said they felt Normal or Fine (55.0%), which is the highest response by the participants. They also felt Confident when they face this situation (35.0%) followed by having shown a feeling of Interest (34.5%) and Excited (34.0%).

TABLE VIII  
SUMMARY RESULTS OF MULTIPLE RESPONSE FOR FEELING WHEN DOING SELF-INTRODUCTION TO NEW PEOPLE

Feeling when self-introduced to new people <sup>b</sup>	n	%
Normal/Fine	110	55.0
Awkward	55	27.5
Pleased	33	16.5
Confident	70	35.0
Stressed	16	8.0
Bored	27	13.5
Excited	68	34.0
Anxious	52	26.0
Interested	69	34.5
Nervous	49	24.5
Uncomfortable	20	10.0
Shy	31	15.5

**RQ 4: Is there a difference between female and male in terms Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of youths?**

TABLE IX  
SUMMARY RESULTS OF MANOVA TEST

Effect	Wilks's Lambda	F (2, 197)	$\eta_p^2$
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.998	0.176	.002

Note: <sup>a</sup> Gender type was measure at two levels which are female and male

The table above shows the results of the MANOVA test. By using Wilks's Lambda statistic, there was no significant effect of gender type (female and male) on the Interpersonal Communication and Interpersonal Relationship variables, Wilks's Lambda = 0.998, F (2, 197) = 0.176, p = .839,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ .

## VII. CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to measure the Impact of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) on the Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of youths in Malaysia who uses smartphones in their daily activities. Does using too much Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) affect one's Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development? What are the level of Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of youths nowadays? Is there a relationship between using Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) towards the development of a person's Interpersonal Communication and Relationship? These are some of the questions that this study was looking to answer, and through the findings, all of these questions were answered.

Technology in a way does bring us closer together, but research has proven now and again that it can also drift us apart. However, this does not mean that technology only bring about negativity, as it actually also brings out positive outcomes. Through the findings and analysis of the questionnaire that was distributed, mostly the results leaned towards the positive side. Most of the respondents believe that their Interpersonal Communication Skills as well as Relationship Development with others have become better through using Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM).

The respondents of the study has a moderate level for usage of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM), and this show that they don't only use this form of communication in order to communicate with one another. They also would use other method for communication such as Face-to-Face Communication in order to communicate. This is a good sign, as we now know that youth these days still appreciate the classic way of communication. As for their level of Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development, both are at a good level as the summated score that was analysed was more than that of the cut-off point. Besides that, all three variables mentioned, which are Use of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM), Interpersonal Communication and Interpersonal Relationship has a good correlation between one another. All three were significantly correlated in a positive way. This means that, those with high usage of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) will have a good level of Interpersonal Communication as well as Interpersonal Relationship with others.

To conclude this study, it is safe to say that the Impact of Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) on the Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Development of youths has been found to lean more towards the positive side as according to the respondents and sample.

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