

COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON ADOLESCENTS RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) refers to any form of communication that can only be achieved through the use of a computer. This includes such diverse means as e-mail, Facebook, MySpace and Tëitter. Many of these forms of communication have become extremely popular within the past few years. The various use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) are transforming the nature of social interactions and human relations among adolescents.

The purpose of this comprehensive review is to understand the effect that computer – mediated communication have on relationships. While there is no shortage of statistics documenting the progress and adoption of computer usage and internet access, its impact on society are as diverse and complex as the individuals ëho use it. The introduction of the Internet as well as CMC have not only expedited the speed of communication, but also revolutionized relationship formation processes. As electronics device capabilities have also drastically progressed to a point of replacing personal computer, many capabilities that were once bound by a traditional desktop are now readily available in the latest smartphone technology. CMC provides a more efficient, easily accessible, and cheaper alternative to traditional means of communication. Particularly those who are separated by long distances, CMC is essential in relationship maintenance. While CMC is by no means a replacement for face to face interaction, it has significantly, and will continue to change the landscape of communication especially among adolescents.

Keyöords: computer-mediated communication, CMC, computer mediated relationships, online relationship, relationship development, social netëorking

Introduction

Recent technological developments have enabled many young people to have a mobile phone and have the opportunity to be connected to the Internet most of the time. Even in Albania, the situation is almost the same with Western countries, where young people have access to the Internet via PCs or personal mobile phones. The frequent use of these tools to connect with their friends and relatives in the distance has turned computer communication into a phenomenon that has a strong impact on teenagers having in mind the specifics of their age. Although CMC has been used as a tool to reach communication many studies have concluded in the link between CMC and many individual behaviors.

Adolescence and CMC

The age of adolescence is a challenging age for the teen, at this stage where he struggles to find a balance between autonomy and relationships with others. Adolescence is precisely the age when rapid physical changes occur as well as entering the final stage of cognitive development and where the individual develops many psychological constructs at once. A very important element at this stage of development is the relationship that teenagers build with their peers, friends, and so on. This relationship nowadays mainly with peers is being addressed more and more towards communication through technology (CMC).

Cmc allows adolescents to have interactive communication through various technology devices such as handsets, tablets or computers. CMC is a way of developing an online and virtual relationship. Communication modes through CMC are achieved through various applications.

Positive and negative impacts of CMC on adolescents

Whitty (2008) emphasizes CMC may be one of the best ways of communication as individuals are more likely to be themselves when communicating online. This is one of the reasons why CMC has become a trend for all ages and not just for adolescents. CMC helps young people often communicate with each other in moments when they are most in need and this can happen even when it is impossible to physically meet with supportive peers. Many new facebook users find support from various groups on facebook. There are hundreds

of cases of young people who are struggling with illness or have various disabilities who find great support from their followers.

Another aspect of CMC's impact adolescents is the ability to use the language. There are some studies that actually focus more on the negative impact CMC has on language use, with a great emphasis on word abstractions by creating a whole new slang lingually from day to day. But some researchers such as Adams (2007) point out that the most important factor in deciding whether young people are developing the right language skills is the level of comfort they experience when using the language. Also, Ito (2008) emphasizes that CMC in social media provides a supportive environment for exploring romance, society, social status, and allowing young people to share their musical tastes, knowledge, TV and movie knowledge, online games and other aspects of youth culture.

But in the CMC among teenagers studies, many researchers have come to terms with the dangers that this form of communication can bring to young people. One of the most studied aspects remains online bullying. Bullying is a very worrying phenomenon as many young people have committed suicide because they were not able to manage the attack they have been made, where in most cases this assault is done by their peers. This phenomenon at the virtual level fluctuates from online harassment to the user's own profile or to a false profile to theft of a person's account and public swearing or turmoil, as well as the use of false-name individuals to damage his / her image.

Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak and Finkelhor (2006) point out that virtual bullying or cyberbullying involves a link between the real world and the virtual world, about 50% of adolescents who use the internet have claimed to recognize users who have made bullying before them.

According to Kowalski (2010), the cyberbullying phenomenon has caused higher levels of depression and anxiety for victims than real bullism and has also been associated with suicide cases among young people who have read very negative comments about them several days before committing suicide. In addition to the aforementioned apps and cyberbullying, CMC has a great impact on family relationships as well. The time that young people pass online is a time that takes away the time spent with the family. Greenfield (2008) in his longitudinal study examined exactly the role that technology has, CMC in modern family life. He found that the young people only greeted with their parents who had just come from work 1/3 of the

time. But on the other hand there are studies that show that there is an increase in communication between parents and children while they are not together through internet.

Conclusions

As discussed above, we can say that CMC has a great impact on teen life. CMC affects the real and virtual relationships of the adolescent in his psyche, influencing both emotionally and cognitive aspects. It is worth pointing out that despite the fact that there are many studies that highlight the impact of CMC on adolescent relationships, it is necessary to undertake studies that provide models to manage the consequences of this impact.

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