Mom Thinks Technology is my Enemy: A Teen Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

Teen users of the internet and technology are emerging in Bangladesh, where technology users are increasing in recent years –these teens are one-third of Bangladesh's population [7]. Recently, teens are much more integrated in technology usage. Pew Research showed that 45% of the teens in the USA are constantly connected online [8]. These teens use numerous sites without their parents' knowledge and sometimes block their family members from their online territories [1, 4, 6]. From this motivation, we have studied n = 20 teens in Bangladesh over a week's duration to understand their technology and smartphone usage, and interaction with parents regarding it. We found that many teens tend to hide their excessive online usage from their parents when parents, while some are open depending on the existing teen-parent relationship.

RELATED WORK

Teens usually use numerous social networking sites to keep continuous connections with their friends [1] and sometimes their parents are not aware of their usage [1]. Teens sometimes receive smartphones only for communication purposes [5, 6]. Most of the teens tend to hide their usage from main members of the family, such as parents [1, 4, 6]. In these circumstances, parents try to restrict their internet usage by taking away their phones [2, 4]. On the other hand, teens have expressed that they need online connections to do their homework, but their parents think they pass this time on other activities that hamper them [1]. It is proved that parents' restriction and this behavior from teens sometimes results in a poor relationship between them [1]. Alternatively, teens and parents who have a mutual understanding regarding internet usage have a positive relationship [3]. In this study, we found similar tendencies in teens in the context of Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY

We have conducted a qualitative study on n = 20 teens of Dhaka, Bangladesh over a period of one week to understand their internet engagement. Four of the participants were male and sixteen were female. All of them were in the age range of 12 to 15 years. The interviews were conducted one

on one in a safe school environment. We reached out to these participants through their friends. The participants were asked about their ways of online usage. They were also asked whether their parents were aware of their internet usage and what opinion they had about it. Their answers were noted down carefully. The following list in Table 1 shows the basic information about participants.

Table 1. Table of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Class/Grade	Family Members
P1	Female	15	VIII	Parents and sibling
P2	Female	14	VIII	Parents, two siblings
P3	Female	15	VIII	One parent
P4	Female	14	VIII	Parents, sibling
P5	Female	15	VIII	Parents, two siblings
P6	Female	15	VIII	Parents and sibling
P7	Female	15	VIII	Parents and a sibling
P8	Female	15	VIII	Lives with parents, no siblings
P9	Male	15	VIII	Lives with parents
P10	Male	15	VIII	Lives with parents, no siblings
P11	Male	15	VIII	Lives with father, mother and a sibling
P12	Male	15	VIII	Lives with father, mother and sibling
P13	Female	13	VI	Lives with father and mother, No sibling
P14	Female	13	VI	Lives with father, mother and sibling and grandparents
P15	Female	13	VI	Lives with parents and sibling
P16	Female	13	VI	Lives with parents, sibling studies abroad
P17	Female	13	VI	Lives with parents, no siblings
P18	Female	13	VI	Lives with parents, sibling and grandparents
P19	Female	13	VI	Lives with parents, sister
P20	Female	13	VI	Lives with parents, sibling, one grandparent

The participants were thanked for their cooperation. The interviews took around ten minutes each. All of them were conducted with the participants' consent after they were informed of the purpose of the interview. Names and identifying information were excluded to protect the participant's privacy.

FINDINGS

Participants have shown different behavior patterns in terms of parents' consent to use the internet and applications.

Usage Time and Application Usage: In terms of usage patterns, they have mentioned periods ranging from 2 hours to as long as 8 hours (Five teen users):

"I start to use it for 15 minutes and do not realize that hours have passed by." – P3, Age 15, F.

Participants have shared the applications they used. It was realized that some have mentioned google and some not:

"I did not realize that google was an application!" –P1, Age 15, F.

Teens' application usage patterns are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teens application Preferences

Application Name	*Number of Users(#)*	*Number of Users(%)*
Instagram	14	70
YouTube	14	70
Google	8	40
Netflix	8	40
Twitter	4	20
Fanfiction	3	15
Games	2	10
Snapchat	2	10

Consent: Teens have received three forms of consent from parents: *aware-consent*; *unaware-consent* and *no consent.*

Aware consent: This allows teens to use applications (mainly social media) with their parents aware of the usage. Around 13 participants have gained aware consent from parents.

"They think I spend too much time on it but so do they." P3, Age 15, F.

"They (parents) are ok. They do wish I would spend more time doing productive things but they also know that I do not waste all the time I spend on the internet – I read news articles and stay up to date on current events." P1, Age 15, F.

Unaware consent: Some teens shared that their parents are not entirely aware of the process of their technology usage – it can be obscure knowledge of the time of usage or applications of use.

"I feel like my parents don't understand that I'm old enough to have social media. I'm allowed to (use social media). They don't let me even though I am allowed to." P5, Age 15, F.

No Consents: Younger teens showed patterns of social media usage without parent's consent.

"I use it when my mom is sleeping." P11, Age 13, F.

Young male teens implied of watching flashy sites (e.g., porn sites) as follows:

"I cannot tell you all about what I watch (smiling with expression)." Participant 13, Age 16, M.

Conflict: Technology usage is a source of conflict for some teens. Around 3 of them mentioned major conflicts.

"My parents think technology is an enemy." P8, Age 12, F.

"My mom thinks I use too much internet – she says I use it for 20 hours a day." Participant 20, Age 15, M.

Ethics: Participants have talked about creating social media accounts with made up ages and shared it as a common phenomenon.

"I lied about my age but who doesn't?" P4, Age 14, F.

Apart from consent, ethics is a concern.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we have studied n=20 teens to understand their ways of online and smartphone usage. We have understood that these teens are very active in smartphone usage and social networking sites. Some of them try to hide their actual activities from their parents. Scholarly articles show similar contexts in a developed country's perspective [1, 4, 5, 6] –aware consent between parents and teens is important in establishing a good relationship between them. We hope this small-scale study will open up further research about young teens.

CONCLUSION

In this research, we looked at the teen perspective of how their technology usage is communicated and perceived by their parents. Our findings show that many teens use technology for extended time without parent's consent whereas some openly share their usage and activities. This information can be helpful to build up a responsible cyber experience for teens along with healthy relationship with parents with minimum contention.

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