The Influence of Social Media Exposure on the Interpersonal Communication Skills
of Hospitality Students

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Abstract

Interpersonal competency has long been recognized as a crucial success factor in the hospitality industry. There is a common misconception that digital native students have underdeveloped interpersonal skills compared to students of previous generations due to heavy exposure to social media. This study explores the relationship between hospitality students' average interpersonal communication skills and their heavy social media exposure. Statistical tests yielded no significant relationship between social media exposure and interpersonal communication skills. However, influences were gathered qualitatively, particularly in the areas of emotional intelligence and group communication. Real life experiences and teacher's competence are influential in developing interpersonal communication skills.

Keywords : Social media, Interpersonal communication, Hospitality

1. Introduction

Interpersonal communication is one of the soft skills that has long been identified fundamental in hospitality. Technological advancement does not remove the significance of human communication in the context of hospitality. In fact, hospitalityschools.com ranked interpersonal communication fifth among the top ten qualities of a great hospitality employee. Moreover, the terms "hi-tech and hi-touch" have become buzzwords in the hospitality industry. In one of the articles in blog.ehl.edu, a balance between technology and human interaction was emphasized. The blog page from the world's first and oldest hotel school described hi-tech being the shaper of guest experience while hi-touch is pertained to as the emotion that brings about authenticity and human interaction. This underscores the need to equip hospitality students with both technology and interpersonal skills.

Furthermore, literature has been consistent in highlighting the importance of effective interpersonal communication skills in both the entry-level and management positions in the hospitality

industry. Interpersonal communication is commonly defined as the process through which people express, interpret, and coordinate messages in order to create shared meaning, meet social goals, manage personal identity, and carry out their relationships. It is also considered as a soft skill or people skill. Crawford and Weber (2016) published a study entitled, Developing Soft Skills for Future Hospitality Leaders: A Case Study. The article presented the importance and use of soft skills, including interpersonal communication, in the hospitality setting. The study also discussed the identification of competencies for hospitality management trainees which started in 1980s. Over the years, the competencies that remained are soft skills of communication, customer focus, interpersonal skills, and leadership. Plangpamools's (n.d.) study on human capital and interpersonal communication as a successful factor in the hospitality industry highlighted that interpersonal communication plays a crucial part in the industry. In a research conducted by Lolli (2012), his findings revealed that the entry-level hospitality leaders believed that interpersonal communication skills are very important. However, the respondents perceived that their college curriculum did not prepare them enough to be competent interpersonal communicators. More so, Kibe and Komunyu (2014) recommended that there is a need to do more research on how social networking affects relationship development. Similarly, Weber, Finley, and Crawford (2009) claimed that it is necessary to explore soft skills that are vital to hospitality management and to investigate method for development and utilization of these skills. It is on this premise that the significance of this research is established.

The study is conceived on the notion that the current students of hospitality who belong to the Generation Z or the post-millennials are viewed to be heavy users of technology, social media to be specific. Research results will be beneficial to curriculum and instructional design. The results may be used as springboard for designing specific courses where interpersonal communication skills may be reinforced among students. In addition, the results on the social media exposure of the respondents will be helpful in identifying e-learning and social media platforms and programs. The study provides a picture of where the hospitality students are in terms of social media use and this can be a basis for developing efficient communication channels to reach them, both for academic, personal, and social purposes. The research seeks to attain the following objectives:

1. To assess the interpersonal communication skill of the students in terms of listening, verbal communication, emotional intelligence, and working in groups

2. To determine the extent of social media exposure of respondents in terms of utilization, purposes, and sites accessed

3. To identify the relationship between the respondents' interpersonal communication skills and their social media exposure

4. To analyze the influence of social media exposure on the respondents' interpersonal communication skills

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social media exposure

Research on media exposure frequently begins with three basic questions: How much media are used? What kinds of media messages are the respondents exposed to? What are the effects of this exposure? In 2018, CivicScience released a report which defined heavy social media users as people who spend more than four hours in a day on social media sites and applications. Subramanian's (2017) study revealed that social media has shown significant growth as the preferred medium of communication. According to his research findings, 80 to 90 percent of youngsters are on Facebook and What's App. In the study of Aishwarya and Vinod (2017), they found out that 62 percent of their respondents, aged 20-30, believed that they are addicted to social media. As to frequency of use, 58 percent of the respondents use social media whenever new notifications appeared and 32 percent was always online. Most of the respondents use social media to keep away from boredom. Social networking was also the top response as the respondents' favorite leisure time activity.

In the study of Kibe and Komunyu (2014), four needs for using Facebook groups were identified. These four are socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information. The paper described each need as:

- Socializing: Students were interested in talking and meeting with others to achieve a sense of community and peer support on the particular topic of the group.
- Entertainment: Students engaged with the groups to amuse themselves.
- Self-Seeking: Students sought out or maintained their personal status, as well as those of their friends, through the online group participation.
- Information: Students used the group to receive information about related events going on and off campus

2.2 Influence of social media on interpersonal communication

Social media's effect on the ability to interact and communicate is visible throughout all areas of the society (Subramanian, 2017). In the same study, Bala (2014), as cited by Subramanian (2017), emphasized that while social media is strengthening social network, interpersonal relations are weakening. Furthermore, the students ascertained that the way they behave online affected their daily communication. Moreover, the respondents of the study of Vevere (2015) perceived social media as their new natural

environment. In the same study, 73 percent of the respondents agreed that social media influence the way they speak and write. In relation to this, 84 percent of the respondents use emoticons like smileys in writing. However, 83 percent claimed that when text messaging, they think of grammar rules and punctuation. Overall, the students recognized the impact of social media on their everyday communication patterns by perceiving social media as a new natural environment of communication. The paper also enumerated a number of surveys conducted that looked into Facebook's effects on communication modes. There was a significant relationship between the use of Facebook of female university students' contact with family members and others in terms of reduction of interpersonal contact. Another study highlighted the changing concept of relationships, specifically friendship brought about by the effect of social media to the concept of being "friends" among college students. Some advantages of social media relating to interpersonal communication mentioned in the article were sharing of ideas, using of social media as tool of communication, and bridging communication gap. On the other hand, the disadvantages included invasion of privacy and loosening of family ties. In contrast, the results of the study of Joo and Teng (2017) showed that social media like Facebook brings positive impact towards relationship building leading to a united society. In another research focusing on the impact on Facebook on interpersonal communication of university students by Al-Khaddam (2013), significant relationship was obtained between the number of hours use of Facebook and the interpersonal communication of students in terms of face-to-face contact with family and friends outside the university. The relationship was viewed as positive, with Facebook making communication with others easier. In another research conducted by Ikachoi, Mberia, and Ndati (2015), they concluded that social media has a profound influence on the self-esteem of undergraduate students. Moreover, they argued that social media can be used to improve communication skills and boost self-esteem if used appropriately. The same paper cited Strickler (2005) highlighting that the simulated interactions in a digital environment are different from real world interaction. This leads to the lack of opportunity to practice interpersonal skills in social media. The findings were supported by the study of Mims, et al (2013) as cited in the same paper, claiming that social media sites do not possess the crucial face-to-face interaction which is necessary for interpersonal skill attainment. Sheldon and Bryant's (2015) study specifically looked into Instagram. They investigated the different reasons for using Instagram. The results revealed that the main motives or reasons are surveillance or knowledge about others, documentation, coolness, and creativity. Furthermore, positive relationship between high personal interaction and use of Instagram for was identified. In terms of academic performance, the study of Amin, Mansoor, Hussain, and Hashmat (2016) indicated the positive impact of social media in the academic performance of students. Social media sites including Facebook,

Twitter, Google+, and Skype were able to capture the attention of students for academic purposes, resulting to positive effect on the student's grades. This is supported by the study conducted by Jagero and Murithi (2013) as cited by Ikachoi (2017). The findings revealed that despite using social media several times per day, the respondents succeed academically and claimed that they spend more time studying than using social media. On the other hand, in the study of Karbnsky (2010), as cited by Al-Khaddam (2013), among 219 university students, results indicated that Facebook negatively affected the students' grades in exams. Results presented that students spend less time studying and devote more time to Facebook and internet.

2.3 Interpersonal communication in hospitality industry

The scope of interpersonal communication skills in this study covers four essential competencies required in hospitality: listening, verbal communication, emotional intelligence, and communicating in groups. In 1994, Brownell's study on listening environments suggested that strong listening environment should be created by effective hospitality leaders. This fosters high employee participation, excellent guest service and organizational commitment. In another report, Brownell (2009) underscored the increasing importance of listening for hospitality employees despite the increasing utilization of computer and other technology. Her paper highlighted the role that listening play in customer service specifically in the areas of providing accurate information and developing strong relationships. In the same report, the influence of technology on listening was also presented. Among the cases presented that influenced listening were multitasking, use of shortcuts in writing and speaking, information overload, and too much dependence on technology.

The ability to speak and write effectively in English are given prominence in the hospitality industry. Rahim and Tazijan (2011) analyzed the training and internship needs assessment of verbal communication among hotel practitioners. The results revealed low verbal communication ability among the respondents as there are some mismatches between the ability of the interns and the requirements of the industry. The study recommended a balance between general English proficiency and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses to match the needs of the students. The need for more practice was also emphasized. Some of the specific needs discussed are listening to customers' enquiries, explaining hotel procedures, and giving oral reports.

Emotional intelligence, called EQ or EI, is defined as the ability to recognize, understand and manage emotions intrapersonally and interpersonally. In the study of Koroglu and Koroglu (2012), they reiterated emotional intelligence to be one of the most essential skills in hospitality, specifically in tourism

industry. Mayer and Salovey (1997) as cited by Koroglu & Koroglu (2012) described four skills that an emotionally intelligent person demonstrates. These skills include identifying, using, understanding, and regulating emotions. The research focused on the importance of emotional intelligence in the tourism industry in the context of the job performance of tour guides. Nguyen, Ladkin, and Osman's (n.d.) qualitative research on the emotional intelligence, on the other hand, dealt with hotel employees. They focused on examining the understanding and application of emotional intelligence. The results indicated the employees' high awareness about emotional intelligence and its applications in dealing with customers and colleagues. The research participants emphasized that they learn better from experiences or real-life situations compared to trainings.

The last interpersonal skill included in the scope of this study in communicating in groups. Group communication involves talking to and working in groups to attain shared or mutual understanding. An individual's self-esteem and confidence form part of group communication skill. As described by Sarkar, Ford, and Manzo (2017), digital natives are collaborative learners who prefer to work in teams and connect to peers. In addition, they also characterized digital natives as feedback seekers who expect immediate feedback and payoff for their effort. Kapoor and de Villa-Lopez' (n.d.) academic paper suggests that this skill can be developed among hospitality students through training, reviewing best practices, and providing opportunities to conduct team projects and give feedback. The role of the teacher in teaching student on how to be a team player was also discussed in the study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Measurement

The study employed a mixed methods research. Mixed methods research, as described by Creswell (2014) is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing and integrating quantitative and qualitative research. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. Qualitative data consists of open-ended information that the researcher usually gathers through interviews, focus groups and observations. On the other hand, quantitative research is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. Specifically, the study used explanatory sequential design which included three phases of data gathering namely: quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis, and interpretation and connecting both quantitative and qualitative results. The research instruments utilized were survey, test, and focus group discussion (FGD).

3.2 Data Collection

Quantitatively, online survey and test were administered to 93 respondents. The survey questions included items about social media exposure of the respondents in terms of frequency of utilization, purposes, and content. For the interpersonal communication skills assessment, the respondents took an online test which assessed their current interpersonal communication level. The online test is an open access test from skillsyouneed.com.

On the qualitative side, FGD was conducted among nine participants. During the FGD, the survey results were presented and validated with nine participants. FGD was also facilitated to further discuss the influence of social media exposure to respondents' interpersonal communication skills. The respondents and participants are students in a hospitality college in Bangkok, Thailand enrolled in Principles of Communication class during the first and second semester of academic year 2018.

3.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics using frequency counts, mean, and standard deviation was employed to assess the interpersonal skills of the respondents. In addition, Pearson r correlation was used to identify relationships among the variables. Pearson r correlation is the most widely applied correlation statistic to measure the degree of the relationship between linearly related variables. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was utilized to identify the common themes from the FGD participants.

4. Results

4.1 Interpersonal communication skills

As presented in Table 1, majority of the respondents have an average level of interpersonal communication skill. The mean score of the respondents in the online interpersonal communication skills assessment falls on average level. The scoring criteria of the assessment is divided in three levels: below 50 is below average, 50 to 69 is average, and 70 and above is above average. As described by skillsyouneed.com. the results indicate that the respondents have a basic grasp of the key interpersonal communication skills and there is a need for more practice to develop the skills. Looking at the specific skills, it is worthy to note that the respondents registered the highest score in emotional intelligence and the lowest in verbal communication. Next to verbal communication is listening, while group communication ranked second.

During the FGD, participants shared that the results capture their current level of communication. All of them agreed to the results describing their current interpersonal communication level. Verbal communication skill is the weakest among hospitality students. The results are aligned with the results of

Rahim's (2011) study which analyzed the training and internship needs assessment of verbal communication among hotel practitioners. The results also revealed low verbal communication ability among the respondents as well as some mismatches between the ability of the interns and the requirements of the industry. The FGD participants explained that this is brought about by limited exposure to the English language, lack of confidence, fear of rejection and correction, lack of opportunities to practice in class, and the Thai culture where respect is perceived to be demonstrated through listening, being passive, and avoiding asking questions or expressing themselves if talking with elders or people in authority, like teachers.

On the other hand, the participants associated their emotional intelligence skill obtaining highest mean score, with their common interest in hospitality. Participants furthered that because hospitality students are highly interested in the field, they have more motivation and they demonstrate more flexibility to adapt to the different people and situations. They also recognize the need to provide customer satisfaction and this was also considered as a factor where the EQ score could be attributed. As one responded put it, "this is a hospitality college and most people come here because they are interested in the hospitality industry and EQ is something you really need in the hospitality industry because that's what they want to do and when these people come together, so that makes for the high EQ." These results correspond to the research findings of Nguyen et al. (n.d.) which indicated that hospitality employees have high awareness about emotional intelligence and the importance of its applications in dealing with customers and colleagues. During the discussion, communicating in groups, which participants understand to be similar to teamwork, was frequently mentioned as part of emotional intelligence, in the context of developing self-confidence and boosting self-esteem.

Table 1

Interpersonal Communication Skills Assessment

IP Skills	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Listening	40	73	55	7
Verbal Communication	25	89	53	13
Emotional Intelligence	36	85	59	10
Working in Groups	27	88	58	14
Average	32	76	57	8

4.2 Social media exposure

Table 2.1 and 2.2 show the respondents daily social media utilization. Subscribing to the definition of CivicScience (2018), 73 percent of the respondents are heavy users of social media, with an average daily utilization of six hours. As to the purposes presented in Table 2.3, the respondents mostly access social media for entertainment, socialization, and general information. This is consistent with the study of Kibe and Komunyu (2014), where the same three were identified as the respondents' needs for using Facebook groups. Though the FGD participants confirmed that they mostly use social media for entertainment and socialization, the participants also clarified that the purposes overlap depending on the contents they access. The contents they access for entertainment sometimes lead to learning new information or they look for knowledge or educational content which are entertaining. The same is true with socialization. Another purpose added by two of the participants is the surveillance or knowledge of others. This purpose is not commonly listed as a popular reason for accessing social media. This is parallel to the research findings of Sheldon and Bryant (2016), where surveillance ranked first as a motive in using Instagram. Surveillance pertains to keeping up with what others are doing and getting more information about others by checking their social media posts. One of the participants shared that her perception about someone she met changed after she looked into the Instagram posts of that acquaintance.

Table 2.4 presents the ranking of the social media sites accessed by the respondents. The top three most accessed sites are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Line. Studies of Aishwarya and Vinod (2017), Sheldon and Bryant (2016), Amin et al. (2016), and Al-Khaddam (2013) all confirmed that Facebook and Instagram are two of the most frequently used sites. In the FGD, the most frequently referred sites were YouTube, Reddit, Line, and Instagram.

Table 2.1

Respondents' Daily Social Media Utilization in Hours

Hours	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1	1	1.08
1-2	5	5.38
3-4	19	20.43
5-6	24	25.81
7-8	16	17.20
More than 8	28	30.11

Table 2.2

Respondents' Minimum, Maximum, and Mean Hours of Social Media Utilization

Utilization	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hours	.50	10	6.3	2.5

Table 2.3

Respondents' Social Media Exposure in terms of Purpose

Purposes	Frequency	Rank
Entertainment	91	1
Socialization	81	2
General Information	68	3
Academic Matters	45	4
Leisure	34	5
Self-Seeking	25	6
Others	7	7

Table 2.4

Respondents' Social Media Exposure in terms of Sites Accessed

Sites	Frequency	Rank
YouTube	88	1
Facebook	86	2
Instagram	85	3.5
Line	85	3.5
Google+	46	5
Twitter	30	6
Pinterest	24	7
Snapchat	18	8
LinkedIn	9	10
Others	16	9

4.3 Relationship between social media exposure and interpersonal communication skills

The results in Tables 3.1 to 3.3 reveal that there is no significant relationship between social media exposure and the interpersonal communication skills of the respondents. However, the Pearson r values show that there is a positive correlation, though weak, between the respondents' utilization and interpersonal communication skills. Correlating interpersonal communication skills and purposes in using media yielded very weak positive correlation with listening and verbal communication while very weak negative correlation was computed for emotional intelligence and working in groups. This contradicts studies including those of Al-Khaddam (2013) and Sheldon and Bryant (2016) which yielded significant relationships between exposure to social media and communication skills. Al Khaddam (2013) used Pearson correlation coefficient to confirm the significant relationship between number of hours using Facebook and the personal contact of the respondents with friends outside the university. Similarly, Sheldon and Bryant (2016) found a positive relationship between scores in interpersonal interaction and using Instagram. In related studies of Amin, et al. (2016) and correlating social media use with academic performances, significant relationships, both positive and negative were also obtained.

Table 3.1

Relationship between Interpersonal Communication Skills Assessment and Frequency of Social Media Utilization

Utilization VS	Pearson r value	p-value	Interpretation
Listening	.159	.128	Not Significant
Verbal Communication	.039	.710	Not Significant
Emotional Intelligence	.009	.931	Not Significant
Working in Groups	.110	.294	Not Significant
Average	.107	.308	Not Significant

<u>Legend</u>: If p-value is <.05, Significant

If p-value is >.05, Not Significant

Table 3.2

Relationship between Interpersonal Communication Skills Assessment and Purposes in accessing Social Media

Purpose VS	Pearson r value	p-value	Interpretation
Listening	.183	.080	Not Significant
Verbal Communication	.029	.782	Not Significant
Emotional Intelligence	-.070	.503	Not Significant
Working in Groups	-.026	.807	Not Significant
Average	.021	.839	Not Significant

<u>Legend</u>: If p-value is <.05, Significant

If p-value is >.05, Not Significant

Table 3.3

Relationship between the respondents' Interpersonal Communication Skills Assessment and Sites Accessed

Content VS	Pearson r value	p-value	Interpretation
Listening	.006	.952	Not Significant
Verbal Communication	.054	.606	Not Significant
Emotional Intelligence	.035	.738	Not Significant
Working in Groups	-.045	.668	Not Significant
Average	.011	.919	Not Significant

<u>Legend</u>: If p-value is <.05, Significant

If p-value is >.05, Not Significant

4.4 Influence of Social Media Exposure on Interpersonal Communication Skills

Based on the results of the FGD, as summarized in Table 4, social media exposure has more positive influence on the interpersonal communication skills of the participants. The influence on emotional intelligence was the most actively discussed. Another theme on influence that emerged is how social media influence the participants' self-confidence and self-esteem. Most of them attributed this to YouTube and Facebook's motivational videos, stories, and influencers. This result supports the argument of Ikachoi et al. (2015) that social media has a profound influence on the self-esteem of undergraduate

students and that social media can be used to improve communication skills and boost self-esteem if used appropriately. On the other hand, the negative influence experienced by the participants include conflict and misunderstandings of chat messages, shorter attention span, and misspelling words. For the listening skill, the result supports Brownell's (2009) report that too much dependence on technology and use of shortcuts in writing and speaking affects listening skill.

However, this influence, though mostly positive, cannot be considered as a significant factor in directly affecting or improving their interpersonal communication skills, as the quantitative results suggest. This result is supported by the study conducted by Ikachoi et al. (2015) citing Strickler's (2005) claim that the simulated interactions in a digital environment are different from real world interaction. Moreover, the study of Mims, et al. (2013) as cited in the same paper, suggested that social media sites do not possess the crucial face-to-face interaction which is necessary for interpersonal skill attainment. This leads to the lack of opportunity to practice interpersonal skills in social media. Initially, the FGD participants all disagreed with the quantitative result. In the course of the discussion, two participants reflected on their experiences and tried to make sense of the insignificant relationship. One participant said, "it does help me, but would it be a big part of my life, in my learning, it would not be so big." Another respondent attempted to interpret the insignificant relationship by sharing an account about his eight-year old brother. He predicted that his brother and his generation's communication skills would certainly be significantly affected by social media, but that will not be true to their group right now because his exposure when he was younger was not as much as his little brother's exposure now. He shared that his brother directly learned video and gaming skills, specifically streaming and chatting, directly from YouTube and without any supervision or intervention. This was then supported by the other six participants, leaving only one participant still strongly claiming that social media has a huge impact in his interpersonal communication. He argued that as an active member of communities in Reddit, where members do not take offense on humor and comments, he finds himself in conflicting situations when he interacts face-to-face and still behave the way he does in Reddit. His behavior is similar to the respondents in the study of Subramanian (2017) claiming that the way they behave online affected their daily communication. As Vevere (2015) put it, users view social media as their natural environment.

Table 4

Summary of Influence of Social Media gathered from FGD

Skill	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Listening		● Short attention span ● Lack of appreciation for lectures
Verbal Communication	● More information for sharing in discussions and conversations	● Wrong spelling and shortcuts in writing ● Wrong choice of words
Emotional Intelligence	● Motivation and inspiration ● Learning from others' mistakes ● Getting to know a person first before establishing relationships (surveillance) ● Socialization	● Conflicting self-identity (online vs. face to face) ● Misunderstandings caused by misinterpretation of messages
Communicating in Groups	● Boosting self-esteem and confidence ● Willingness to do group work	

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion and implications

Interpersonal Communication Skills Assessment

Given their current level, participants unanimously recognized the need for improvement and more practice to improve their current interpersonal communication skill level. They pointed out that each skill is connected to another, and improving one will also help improve the rest of the skills. Improving the verbal communication skills of hospitality students is an area that must be given priority. Given that the lowest mean score registered under this skill, it is imperative to practice verbal communication skills

across subjects. Improving proficiency and integrating cultural communication are other critical areas to look into, considering the reasons for the Thai students' lack of confidence and assertiveness in speaking. On the other hand, reinforcing and enhancing the students' emotional intelligence will better prepare them for internship and future employment.

The participants identified several ways on how they can improve the four skills in a hospitality school setting. These included smaller class size, more opportunities for speaking activities and experiential learning, group work, independent or student-led learning, more interesting and fun projects, providing real life examples, assigning teachers with good communication skills specifically with effective paralanguage and questioning abilities, and identifying the effective teaching methods to reinforce teaching of interpersonal communication. In addition, an integrated approach in teaching interpersonal communication skills is also another implication of the results.

It is also significant to note that students have different skill levels and different approaches need to be explored to assess which would be more effective in improving their interpersonal communication skills. These implications also address the study of Lolli (2012) which asserted that the respondents perceived that their college curriculum did not prepare them to be competent in interpersonal communication. The results provide a springboard for hospitality schools to look into how interpersonal skill can be integrated in their curriculum. Given that the respondents of this study are mostly in their first year in the program, it gives the school more time and opportunity to improve the students' interpersonal skills by the time they graduate and join the workforce.

Social Media Exposure

The top three purposes for accessing social media signify the participants' appreciation for learning in a fun, collaborative and interactive way. There is also an implication that the respondents do not directly rely on social media for academic matters. This, in a way was validated by the FGD participants when they noted that they understand their role as students and that the crucial role of the teacher in improving their communication skills, through their suggested teaching and learning activities, are vital in the learning process. Heavy exposure to social media could be productively maximized by integrating social media platform as one of the tools in teaching and learning. Creating the need to use social media for more academic or educational purposes can enable social media to be a powerful teaching and learning tool. In addition, developing a system in utilizing social media for instruction is also worth looking into.

Relationship between Social Media Exposure and Interpersonal Communication Skills Assessment

Respondents' heavy social media exposure do not significantly affect their interpersonal communication skills. From these findings, it can be inferred that the hospitality students do not directly rely on social media to teach them or to help them improve their communication skills, although this does not discount the fact that social media exposure has some influence on their interpersonal skills as presented in the results. Other related studies claiming relationships between social media and communication skills did not correlate specific variables and mostly used descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis. Some connections among related variables were determined in the form of effects based on the participants' accounts. In addition, it is also noteworthy to discuss that despite the insignificant quantitative relationship between social media exposure and interpersonal skills, the quantitative and qualitative results agreed in terms of emotional intelligence and group communication obtaining the highest mean score and these are also the same areas which participants noted to be mostly positively influenced by their social media exposure. With these findings, it remains significant to look closer into the direct and indirect effects of social media to interpersonal skills.

5.2. Conclusion

Communication in social media is naturally different from face-to-face communication due to online or mediated communication's lack of synchronicity, verbal and nonverbal cues. Therefore, despite claims that social media weakens interpersonal skills of heavy users, results of this study reveal that social media exposure does not affect interpersonal communication skills in any significant way. What is interesting, however is the ability of social media to influence the interpersonal communication skills of the users in terms of improving or learning new skills and acquiring up-to-date knowledge that could be applied to their future jobs in hospitality field.

In addition, effective teaching and learning practices are influential in developing interpersonal communication skills, which are strongly associated with real life experiences and experiential learning. Effective pedagogy and andragogy on hospitality education remain relevant in developing the skill of this generation's learners. Face-to-face communication remains to be the more effective way to teach interpersonal communication skills.

5.3. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future study

The limitations of this study include sample size, instrument choice, and scope. The sample size is relatively small and only involved students of one hospitality school. Such may not be generalizable to the population of hospitality students. Testing a larger sample will yield more representative results. In addition, the online interpersonal communication skills test administered in also viewed as another limitation. Although the instrument facilitated an efficient scoring and immediate feedback, the questions

are generic and are not directly tailored for hospitality students. Furthermore, the scope of the test covered only four areas of interpersonal communication.

For future studies, it is recommended to increase the sample size and conduct of participant observations, more focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Modifying the interpersonal skills questionnaire and replicating the research with different groups of respondents like hospitality interns, employees, or practitioners is also proposed.

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