

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT SOCIOLOGY & HUMANITIES



ISSN 2277 – 9809 (online)

ISSN 2348 - 9359 (Print)

An Internationally Indexed Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal

www.IRJMSH.com
www.isarasolutions.com

Published by iSaRa Solutions

Gender Differentials in Mobile Phone Usage: An Analysis of Trends

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Abstract

The use of mobile phones as a means of communication represents a significant social and cultural development in contemporary society. The present research was undertaken during the early phase of the twenty-first century, between 2008 and 2014, a period that witnessed the rapid expansion of mobile telephony in India and other developing countries. The study seeks to examine the diverse socio-cultural dimensions of mobile phone use, with particular emphasis on gender-based differences in patterns of usage and their broader social significance.

Viewing the mobile phone not merely as a technological device but as an emerging medium of social communication, the study attempts to understand the extent to which conventional gendered patterns of social interaction, communication, and behaviour are reproduced, modified, or negotiated through this new technological medium. Particular attention has been given to the ways in which young men and women engage with mobile phones within their everyday social contexts.

The research employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to investigate gender differences in mobile phone usage among educated male and female youth residing in urban and suburban areas of West Bengal. The study was exploratory in nature and focused on young people within the specified age group of 18–25 years. Its primary objective was to establish a baseline understanding of how educated young men and women in West Bengal use mobile phones in different urban and suburban settings.

The findings indicate that mobile phone usage is significantly differentiated along gender lines. Differences were observed in the purposes, patterns, and contexts of mobile phone use among young men and women, suggesting that the adoption of mobile technology is influenced not only by technological accessibility but also by prevailing socio-cultural norms and gendered patterns of social interaction.

This study has focused on gender-based communication pattern of youths from urban and suburban areas of West Bengal through using their mobile (cell) phones. It is an attempt at the sociological understanding and interpretation of human interaction pattern influenced by the adoption of new technologies. The elaborated research work was entitled “***Gender Differentials in Mobile Phone Use: A Study of Trends among Urban and Suburban Youth***”.

This field work based research was conducted in early phase of the twenty-first century. It was the early stage of cyber technology explosion in India as well as in developing nations. So, highly influential social networking was not at its top notch at the time of study. Chiefly, calling facility and texting were prevailing among mobile phone users at that time. However, it was interesting that these new patterns of human communications were very much influenced by gendered prototype of traditional human communication.

Introduction

This study has been designed to explore the various socio-cultural dimensions and the significance of gender differential uses of mobile phones by both educated male and female youths of urban and suburban areas of West Bengal emerging out of the increasing use of technology in general and wireless communication devices like mobile phone in particular as the medium of conversation and communication in contemporary society. This study is related to socio-behavioural aspects of youth of urban and suburban areas and their gender based communication pattern using mobile phone.

In sociological research every day interaction is one of the vital expressions of societal veracity. Sociologically, social relationships can be analysed in the light of the nature of social interaction pattern among individuals of any social system. The values, norms and customs of a social group reveal the importance and nature of specific interaction pattern prevailing within it in a particular point of time. Patriarchal model of social domination is assumed to reflect its influences in every social interaction in human society. The roles of the individuals are set according to their relative statuses within the social system depending on the social context. The individuals are also supposed to behave as per their positions and accesses to available opportunities. It mostly depends on the nature and extension of interaction of a person with their fellow members in the society. In male dominated society traditional mode of interaction pattern hinders females' avenues of interaction by social sanctions, norms, values and taboos. The hue and cry of network society has not changed the situation much. Instead of doing away with gender difference the latest technological devices, perhaps, are reinforcing the prevailing gender differences. In this research work it has been tried to examine how both male and female young people assess and reassess the role of new technologies and devices for constructing and reconstructing gender identity and gender discourse in contemporary techno-exposed Indian society. The study also focuses on the ways women are using this comparatively new method of social interaction for creating gendered space for social communication.

Communication, interaction and mobility represent spatial practices through which female bodies are rendered out of place in specific contexts, thereby 'containing' women and girls in particular spaces. Ultimately, participants' narratives are powerful reminders that space represents more than the stage for life's drama—it represents a profound centre of meaning, a

clustering of symbols of experience. Thus general and mobile communication for the females implies possibilities and limits, gendered roles and responsibilities.

In the following section growth of mobile telephony has been discussed as per the scheduled time of study. In present time level of penetration of mobile technology is more than that time.

Mobile phones have been adopted worldwide at such a rapid pace that the penetration rate of mobile phones now has outstripped that of landline telephones and even exceeded the level for televisions. Subscriber growth has been spectacular everywhere and especially in the Asia Pacific region. Mobile phone subscriber-base has witnessed tremendous increase in India with about 652.42 million users as shows an official data released by the Telephone Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). Meanwhile, the wireline subscriber base has dropped from 36.18 million in June-2010 to 35.96 million at the end of July-2010, TRAI said in a statement. According to the TRAI data, 16.92 million new subscribers were added in July. The number of wireless phone users has grown 2.66 percent to 652.42 million in July, 2010 against 635.51 million in the previous month (www.india-server.com). Diffusing globally faster than any other communication technology to date, the data shows that mobile communication has become an essential part of many consumers' daily lives throughout the world (Castells et al. 2007). In 2020 total mobile phone users in India were more that 749 millions and among them more than 744 million users use internet through their mobile phone (www.statista.com).

Utilization of the mobile phone for communication is an immensely significant social and cultural phenomenon in our country. The fundamental issue for sociology revolves around the process of social change. Needless to mention here, that the process of social change has its root in the changes in the interaction pattern of any given society. Mobile phone with its wide scope of application is of enough potential to influence the nature and course of everyday interaction of the members of any given society. As one of the technological factors of social change, mobile phones can influence the pattern and dynamics of social change in, perhaps, an unprecedented fashion. Among many other dimensions, its influence, is quite apparent in the construction, reconstruction and even deconstruction (following the feminist argument) of the gender based social stratification system. Thus, tied up with contemporary issues of change, the mobile phone is a prime object for sociological attention both at the macro and micro levels of analysis.

Review of Literature

Though early efforts have been made to map out a general sociology of the mobile phone (Geser 2003; Katz & Aakhus 2002) in Indian scenario very few studies have been noticed to amalgamate sociological introspection with the use of mobile phone and its importance in gender construction.

Turning specifically to mobile adoption, studies have also shown mixed results on the impact of demographic variables. For example, Ahn (2001) found that age, sex, and education are all important determinants of current and intended mobile subscription among Korean consumers.

In India, Wei (2007) and David (2007) conducted dissertation length studies to examine mobile phone usage among adult women and working young adults. The results from the qualitative interviews suggested that women viewed the cell phone as an “electronic leash” or a “medium of control” and felt that it tied them to family responsibilities even when they were away from home.

Another important study in this aspect is the Ph.D. thesis of Priyanka Matanhelia entitled ‘Mobile Phone Use by Young Adults in India: A Case Study’ (2010). Her work was based on the empirical study conducted on two cities i.e. Mumbai and Kanpur.

In the last half of twentieth century the importance of telephone conversation was established in sociological study. Through ‘accomplishing gender’ and ‘conversation analysis’ the ethnomethodologists like Harold Garfinkel tried to established the magnitude of social construction of gender and social conversation. In this connection Ritzer cited the social significance of telephone conversation through explaining Emanuel A. Schegloff’s study. (Ritzer 2002)

Continuing the tradition of emphasizing social conversation Manuel Castells (2001), in his book, The Internet Galaxy explains the concept of the network society. He emphasizes the importance of the Internet as the dominant communication medium of the network society by claiming that the network (the Internet) is the message. By rephrasing McLuhan’s (1964) seminal phrase the medium is the message, Castells focuses on the main medium that influenced the transformation of humanity into the network society: the Internet. Unlike McLuhan’s approach, which is identified as a technological deterministic viewpoint, according which, technology determines the development of humanity, Castells’ point of departure is that society transforms technology by appropriating, modifying and experimenting it (Castells 2001, p. 4).

Following Castells’ general cultural and social perspective (2000; 2001), the present study tries to investigate the social deterministic communication approach, according which; communication usage is an effect rather than the highlight of the communication process depended on bi-directional influence between technology and society.

Considering mobile phone as a tool technological and social communication it may not be considered only to a material object; rather it may be a product of information revolution and globalization (McGuigan. 2005). It can also be reckoned as important communication tool with considerable social and cultural significance. The mobile is a symbol in itself, an obscure object of desire and a sign of the times that may provide virtual private space to its user. In this

proposed research considering mobile as a contemporary social artefact, an attempt might be conducted to relate uses of mobile phone and socio-cultural gender differentiation.

An article entitled ‘Gender and the Residential Telephone, 1890-1940: Technologies of Sociability’ by Fischer (1988) helps to develop a view on gender based use of telephony. In this article Fischer has basically emphasized the role of residential telephony or wired telephony in changing life of American women in the studied period (i.e. 1890-1940). As the present researcher’s work is on gender differential usages of mobile phone Fischer’s work has been considered as an important previously published literature.

In this connection some portion from Fischer’s article can be cited. Fischer argued, “The telephone is one of the most prominent technologies to enter the American home in the twentieth century, an era of rapid change both in technology and in women’s roles. The residential telephone has been associated, in popular stereotype and in (sometimes misogynist) humor, with women.” (Fischer 1988, p 211).

In Heidegger’s great book *Being and Time* (1962), he initiated one of the most important 20th century discussions of talk or, as he also called it, ‘discourse’. These ideas were taken up, criticised and developed in different ways by many European and American thinkers, notably among German philosophers of communication, of whom the latest representative is Jürgen Habermas, whose Theory of Communicative Action (1981) has shaped two decades of debate about dialogue and modern society. The nub of this encounter is the idea of communication itself, for, in their different ways, both the 20th century philosophers and the 21st-century mobile persuaders claim to be redefining what it means for human beings to communicate (Myerson: 2001).

Utilization of the mobile phone for communication is an immensely significant social and cultural phenomenon. The fundamental issue for sociology revolves around the process of change. Bound up with contemporary issues of change, the mobile phone is a prime object for sociological attention both at the macro and micro levels of analysis. (McGuigan. 2005)

Katz and Aakhus (2002) advanced the theory of Apparategeist to make sense of consistencies in the effects and uses of mobile phones and other PCT in very disparate cultures. Apparategeist, which literally means “spirit of the machine,” refers to a common human orientation toward PCT and coherent trends in adoption, use, and social transformations. Apparategeist was conceived when Katz and Aakhus (2002) observed parallel shifts in communication habits that came out of mobile phone adoption in Finland, Israel, Italy, Korea, the United States, France, the Netherlands, and Bulgaria. These trends appeared in the coordination of everyday activities, configuration of social networks, private use of public spaces, new forms of connections to the workplace, and numerous other areas of the social landscape. Apparategeist refers to an underlying spirit that contributes to these consistencies. Katz and Aakhus attributed the spirit of

Apparatgeist to a common logic that “informs the judgments people make about the utility or value of the technologies in their environment . . . and predictions scientists and technology producers might make about personal technologies” (p. 307). This is the logic of perpetual contact. According to the authors, perpetual contact is a “sociologic” derived from collective sense-making, and it “underwrites how we judge, invent, and use communication technologies” (p. 307). On its surface, the logic of perpetual contact is shaped by a host of social factors, such as values and norms, as well as technological factors, such as size and design, which influence how people think about and use their personal technologies. Peeling back the external layer of these social and technological factors exposes the core assumption of perpetual contact and the spirit of Apparatgeist—the ideal of pure communication. Katz and Aakhus (2002) explained, the compelling image of perpetual contact is the image of pure communication, which, as Peters (1999) argues, is an idealization of communication committed to the prospect of sharing one’s mind with another, like the talk of angels that occurs without the constraints of the body (p. 307). Pure communication can be regarded as the merging of self and other in an attempt to establish a perfect social connection. Along with differences (i.e., otherness), time and distance are also obstacles to this perfect connection, and Peters (1999) argued that overcoming these obstacles became a driving force behind the development of modern communication technologies such as telephony. In fact, telecommunication was anticipated as early as 1641 by Bishop John Wilkins, who expressed ambition for privacy and speed in communication across long distances (Peters: 1999). The theoretical lineage of the logic of perpetual contact and Apparatgeist can be traced to such ambitions.

Apparatgeist and its assumption of pure communication can be used as a framework for anticipating certain connections between the fashion and function of the mobile phone. The ideal of pure communication closely resonates with certain expressive uses of the mobile phone. That is, one can argue that individuals who use the mobile phone to exchange thoughts and feelings with others tend to idealize (at least latently) an unobstructed social connection.

Accordingly, it seems that individuals who use the mobile phone in this very expressive manner would tend to regard the technology not as a barrier between self and other, but rather as a bridging mechanism in the pursuit of pure communication, even as an extension of the self. As noted, the mobile phone is indeed regarded as an extension of the self by some users (Gant and Kiesler: 2001; Hulme and Peters: 2001; Oksman and Rautiainen: 2003). From this vantage point, one can see how the lines separating subject from object become blurred, to the extent that the mobile phone is considered part of the self, both as a relational bridge and as a reflection of one’s style (Campbell: 2007).

Practice theory – as it is exemplified in authors such as Bourdieu, Giddens, Foucault, Garfinkel, Latour, Taylor and others – is a type of cultural theory. Since its emergence with Scottish moral philosophy at the end of the eighteenth century, modern social theory has developed three fundamentally different forms of explaining action and social order: The first option – which was

that of the Scottish utilitarianists themselves, but which reaches to contemporary Rational Choice Theory – is that of a purpose-oriented theory of action. The second vocabulary, which Durkheim and Parsons presented as the proper perspective of ‘sociology’, is a norm-oriented theory of action. These two classical social-theoretical perspectives understand one another as options – but they both have been challenged by a third vocabulary, which has emerged as a result of the ‘culturalist’ revolutions in twentieth-century social philosophy. These ‘cultural theories’ are rooted primarily in structuralism and semiotics, phenomenology and hermeneutics, and in (Wittgensteinian) language game philosophy. Influenced by structuralism, cultural theories in the social sciences reach from Claude Lévi-Strauss to Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu; influenced by phenomenology and hermeneutics, they embrace Alfred Schütz, Harold Garfinkel and (in a very specific way) Niklas Luhmann; in the wake of Wittgensteinian philosophy, they contain the works of Jürgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens.

Practice theory does not place the social in mental qualities, or in discourse, nor in interaction. To say that it places the social in ‘practices’ and that it treats practices as the ‘smallest unit’ of social analysis is at first nothing more than tautological.

In this study in the light of practice theory considering gender role and gendered communication as patterns of ‘practice’ to the model of rule-governed behaviour of the male domination and female submission are tried to be defined and analyzed.

In India, Wei (2007) and David (2007) conducted dissertation length studies to examine mobile phone usage among adult women and working young adults. David (2007) conducted a mixed methods study which included interviews, cell phone surveys with Indian women age 21 and older, and qualitative reading of cell phone advertisements in India. In August 2003 and May 2004, David conducted 40 face-to-face and 7 telephone interviews with Indian women in India and United States, who were chosen through a snowball sampling technique. In the second phase, David conducted a survey in September 2006 with 182 cell phone users, 78 female and 104 male, chosen through a snowball sampling procedure, to understand gender differences regarding cell phone usage.

The results from the qualitative interviews of above stated study suggested that women viewed the cell phone as an “electronic leash” or a “medium of control” and felt that it tied them to family responsibilities even when they were away from home. Further, the study indicated that while women used cell phones for social purposes such as talking to family, their husbands used it for professional purposes. This suggested that cell phone use reflected traditional gender stereotypes which expect women to take care of family.

In an article Zafar Iqbal (2010) vividly explains gender differences in mobile phone usage by the male and female in relation with their fulfilment of gratification. This article helps the researcher to incorporate new dimension in his research. It also becomes helpful to understand appropriate

use of qualitative method. As this study is based on the data collected from Pakistani society, it may be considered as associated with this research work.

Zafar finds, “As far as fulfilment of interpersonal motives is concerned, the major interpersonal motives for using two channels (voice call and text messaging) are relaxation, inclusion and affection. It gives evidence that for young adults, communication through mobile phone is to chill out (relaxation), be with someone (inclusion) and exchange care and affection (affection) with their partners. Results further disclose that both genders are clear about their thoughts intended for text messaging rather than voice calls. While both genders especially females are more confused about their feelings/opinion about voice calls.

Results revealed that the confusing interpersonal motives for both male and female were control, escape and relaxation with higher number of confusion in context of voice call rather than text message. Perhaps it is because the statements were not clear or the respondents were not willing to expose their genuine feelings. Relaxation has been proved as the most controversial motive here. In the context of voice call, more than half of the respondents either disagree or don't know about their feelings and in the context of text message an equal number of respondents agree-strongly agree to it and it is the only statement where the number of respondents who don't know or disagree is slightest.

The results further elucidate that females use mobile phone more to fulfill their motive of relaxation and affection rather than other motives.” (Zafar 2010 pp 519-20)

In a study Haverila (2011) empirically establishes there are clear differences in the way female and male respondents conceptualise the cell phone use.

As this research topic entitled “Gender Differentials in Mobile Phone Use: A Study of Trends among Urban and Suburban Youth” and it is based on empirical data, it is supposed that conceptual understanding of identity development of women in Indian society is needed. In this relation an article entitled “Women's Role Expectations and Identity Development in India” by Nisha Dhawan becomes very helpful. This study aims to examine contemporary interpretations of women's roles, identities and development. The broader objective is to understand the roles and role possibilities that urban college educated Indian women in a changing society encounter and the manner in which they deal with these to develop their identities and lead more meaningful lives.

Dhawan (2005) argues, “This study did not focus on results but on the process, that is, how young college women in India are shaped by the social conditions. The focus was on the conflicts and contradictions they faced, the compromises and accommodations they made to develop ways of dealing with their lives and their social conditions. The findings yielded a deeper contextual understanding of the complex ways in which women constructed their lives

and the manner in which societal changes influenced that construction.” So, in this connection it is clear that a study on mentioned research topic may be proved as appropriate.

Research Design

This study has been conducted through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the issues related to social significance of gender differential in uses of mobile phones by both the educated male and female youths of urban and suburban areas of West Bengal. These can be classified into two broad sections qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis. This actually reflects representation of relevant mixed method of research.

Recourse to survey method has been taken to gather quantitative data. Qualitative data have been collected through case studies, informal interaction with the respondents and in-depth interviews. By mingling the insights obtained through the survey and the qualitative data, the study attempts to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the implications of the gender differentiated pattern of mobile phone use.

The sample of the proposed study has been planned to be purposively drawn from the educated male and female youths of age group of 18 to 25 years from a few urban and suburban areas of West Bengal. The target populations are the students from the higher education institutions or colleges and a few professionals.

Thrust areas

By nature it was an exploratory study. The chief purpose of this research work was to provide a baseline study of how educated youths (both male and female) use mobile phones in the West Bengal within the contexts of suburban and urban settings and across scheduled (18 to 25 Years) age range based on the following three thrust areas:

- (i) Understanding conventional interaction patterns vis-à-vis interaction using new technologies like mobile phones among the young people;
- (ii) Understanding how social communication is experienced differently according to gender.
- (iii) Exploring determinants of gender differential mobile communication among youths of urban and suburban areas of West Bengal.

Specific Objectives

1. To understand general mobile phone using pattern by the youths of urban and suburban study areas.

2. To explore the changing patterns of social network and communication channels attributed to the increasing uses of mobile phones.
3. To understand relationships of gender difference and difference in residential localities, with mobile phone using pattern of the youths.
4. To relate the dynamics of the relationship among mobile phone use, gender identity and role set in contemporary urban and suburban population.
5. Finally, to understand the role of patriarchal domination and surveillance over youths' mobile communication, particularly on female respondents and their counter strategies.

Sample Profile

Table 1

Cross tabulated Distribution of Respondents' Locality and of Respondents' Gender

		Distribution of Respondents' Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Distribution of Respondents' Locality	Urban	85 (26.90)	84 (26.59)	169 (53.49)
	Suburban	71 (22.46)	76 (24.05)	147 (46.51)
Total		156 (49.36)	160 (50.64)	N=316 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses denote the percentages of the corresponding data)

The sample for the survey has been obtained purposively through a mixture of primarily convenient and purposive sampling. The sample for the purpose of the present study is primarily composed of the youths belonging to the urban areas of Central Kolkata of Kolkata district and the suburban areas of Kalyani and its adjacent areas belonging to the Nadia district of West Bengal. From the abovementioned urban areas a total of 169 youths (53.50%) and from the suburban habitats 147 youths (46.50%), within the age range 18 to 25 years, have been selected purposively for the field study. Out of the sampled 316 youths about 156 (49 %) are males and 160 (50.64%) are females. The Hindus compose a large majority of the sample (80.70%), followed by the Muslims (13.90%), while the rest is composed of some other minority religions of India. As far as the social category of the respondents are concerned the General category, composed primarily of the upper caste people, make their presence felt in the sample in a significant fashion as no less than 63.30% of the sampled respondents belong to this category. Next to the General category, is the S.C. (Scheduled Castes) who composes 24.40% of the sampled respondents. The OBC (Other Backward Classes) category stands just after the S.C.s,

with 10.40% representation in the sample, while the presence of the Scheduled Tribes (S.T.) are indeed very marginal (1.90%). Within the selected sample the representation of the respondents belonging to small families (number of members up to 3) and the medium ones (number of members 4 to 7) are almost equal (49.10 % and 49.70% respectively). As is expected in the urban and suburban areas, the presence of the respondents of the large families (number of members 7 and more) is very low (only 1.30%). As far as the educational status of the respondents is concerned the majority (63.30%) is composed of the Graduates followed by those with Post Graduate and other professional/technical qualifications (32.30%). Within the sample the representation of the respondents who have studied up to the Higher Secondary or plus two level is quite insignificant (only 4.40%). Economically, the respondents of the Lower Middle Class and those of the Middle Class are almost equally represented in the sample (15.60% and 46.80% respectively). Only 7.60% of the respondents are composed of the Upper Class people.

Data have been collected from the sampled respondents through a carefully developed questionnaire and interview schedule. Primary data collection methods involve circulation of questionnaires among respondents besides in-depth interviews, for which interview guide/interview schedule has been prepared. The use of the interview guide indicates that there is some structure to the interviews, even though they were treated as conversations during which the interviewer drew out detailed information and comments from the respondents.

The qualitative analysis of this study consists of informal interview, in depth interview and case studies. In the analysis of this dissertation a selected number (20) of case studies have been cited for brief elaboration of qualitative findings of the study. Among the cited case studies 5 males and 5 females from both urban and suburban areas were interviewed. Moreover, case studies have been also instrumental in validating and filling up the potential gaps of quantitative analysis.

For completion of data analysis of quantitative data statistical methods has been used. Computation of data has been conducted with the help of software package SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Further analysis has been explained as per the requirement of the project.

Major Findings

Regarding the first thrust area of research it has been revealed that youth respondents from both study areas agree that spread of mobile phone communication is making traditional way of primary interaction vulnerable.

The findings also show that female participants acquire and use mobile phones for their safety and security and to make easy communication with family and friends.

Earlier studies conducted on mobile phone usages in other countries have revealed similar findings as young female adults used mobile phones for safety and security across countries (Campbell, 2007) and in India.

The second thrust area of the study focuses on gender differential aspects of social communication. Regarding this issue the study reveals that both male and female respondents agree that gender differentiation exists in social communication pattern of our society.

Regarding third focus area it can be concluded from the study that across the two study areas gender differences prevail in using mobile phones by the young people. More females than males use mobile phones for maintaining contacts with friends of opposite sex, because, females face more social, cultural and parental regulation and surveillance about going out and socializing with friends. In nutshell it can be wrapped up that patriarchal social regulation on interaction pattern of females in our society also affects their use of technological means like mobile phones, though the use of mobile phones has been creating gendered and personal spaces to the women.

Most of the female respondents have always experienced social surveillance by the respective authorities like parents, guardians or boyfriends etc. In relation to respondents' distribution on the basis of their sex it has been noticed that most of the female respondents have been very frequently called by their parents when these respondents remained away from their homes.

On the basis of gender duration of calls from parents has increased when female respondents remained outside their homes. This indicates females of studied age group (18-25 years) have been considered as subject to more surveillance when they remained outside their homes. In this case mobile phones are used as a tool for maintaining surveillance.

In response to the question whether communication through mobile phone is becoming a hindrance for other activities; almost half of the respondents irrespective of their age, sex and locality have replied that communication through mobile phone is not becoming a hindrance for their other social activities. However it is also true that a significant number of male (38.50%) and female (28.80%) respondents, as well urban (36.70%) and suburban (29.90%) responded have felt that continuous communication through mobile phone sometimes disturbs their other social activities. This revelation indicates ever increasing penetration of mobile telephony in daily life of the youths.

Regarding the statement technology empowers general interaction pattern most of the respondents agreed with the statement. In this connection 54.40 percent female respondents and 44.20 percent male respondents have replied that introduction of mobile telephony has been decreasing importance of primary face to face interaction process. In this issue another important revelation is that more suburban respondents (55.80%) than their urban (43.80%) counter parts agreed with the statement.

Another important depiction of the study is that a significant portion of the respondents have felt their mobile phones being embodied to themselves. 65.10 percent of urban and 58.50 percent of suburban respondents, as well 60.03 of male respondents and 63.80 percent of female respondents did agree that they felt embodied with their mobile phones.

Regarding freeness in sexually explicit conversation with opposite gender through mobile phone conversation a significant number of male respondents (37.80%) have agreed with the statement. However, majority of the female respondents (56.90%) have not agreed with this statement. It implies though mobile telephony opens a new way for personalising everyday conversation young females are still very much oriented by traditional gendered taboos. Because of these, most of the female respondents have restricted themselves in sober conversation. This also indicates general gendered communication pattern is also reflected by conversation through mobile phone.

Most important issue for this study was to investigate gender differences regarding mobile phone usage among young people. As expected the survey results and case study findings indicated that across residential localities, more females than males indicated that they preferred to be traditional both in general social interaction as well as in interaction through mobile phones. This suggests that females were more traditional than males and probably more likely to conform to social norms.

Theoretical Validation

As discussed earlier the concept of gender is used to differentiate between man and woman according to social and cultural norms. However, cultural paradigm was rightly estimated by Heidegger and Habermas in the light of social communication and culture. The present study connectively indicates differentiation in residential areas differentiated respondents' communication pattern through mobile phone in particular and their overall social communication pattern in general. Traditional socio-culturally constructed gender role and practice prevailed sometimes reinforced through females' communication practices. This finding significantly indicates urban culture and masculinity have dominated communication pattern of the respondents of this study.

Katz and Aakhus (2002), Campbell (2007) and other social scientists' developed the concept of 'Apparatgeist'. This was being helpful for understanding the findings of his study. As a wearable technology mobile phone has become indispensable for the studied young adults. For this reason, most of themselves felt that their mobile phones were embodied to themselves. It has been also revealed through qualitative analysis of the study that majority of the studied youths have personalised ringtones, caller tunes, wallpapers, even colour and accessories related to their mobile handsets. This practice reflects users' culture and gender orientation of the users. 'Apparatgeist' refers to 'spirit of machine'. When people interact with personal communication

technologies, they may be inclined to standardise infrastructure and drift towards consistent tastes and universal features. This specifies a reciprocal relationship exists between human beings, their culture and wearable technologies.

Another important theoretical orientation is the concept of ‘Practice theory’, which was preceded by influential sociological tradition of norm oriented Durkheim’s sociology to Foucault, Garfinkel, Bourdieu, Giddens’s writings. As per ‘Practice Theory’s’ concept the structure of ‘rule-governed’ social behavioural practice was observed by the researcher when majority of the female respondents have felt social, parental or masculine surveillance led them toward feeling more secured.

Significance of Study

Multiple and diverse negotiations of identity and social relationships may challenge dimensional associations between ‘youth’ and technologies, emphasising the diversity of economic, gender, cultural and social values attributed to mobile phones by different groups of young people. The gender aspects of information and communication technology usage need to be fleshed out because a negative trend could threaten gender equality in an information and knowledge society. It is especially important to look at the youth. The majority of studies on gender issues related to ICT and mobile phone uses have been focused on empirical trade related quarries. From the period of symbolic interactionist tradition sociological introspection has been emphasizing the role of communication and conversation on social relationship. As a tool or artefact of information and communication revolution mobile phone in current society may be considered as a trend setter in social communication. In advanced industrialized societies an attempt has been made to establish sociology of mobile phone. However not a significant number of studies regarding this issue in our society has noticed by the researcher. The issue of communication and gender identity is also gaining importance in contemporary global society. In the *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (1990) tells us that gender itself is "never fixed, always fluid." Working from that premise, it is important for feminist scholars to look not only at categories of gender as they have been historically defined, or as they are now constituted, but also as they could be redefined and changed through the influence of increasingly pervasive communication technologies. On the other side the educated youths can be considered as representatives of changing social and cultural patterns in global society. In context of our contemporary society, sociological study focusing on communication technologies, gender and youth may serve as a needed one.

Limitations of the study

Although this research provides interesting findings regarding the gender and locality differentiate use of mobile communication among young adults, there are several limitations to this study.

One of the main limitations of this study is that the results may not be generalized to all young adults in India. This study has used a small sample of educated youth living in two study areas, Kolkata (urban) and Kalyani (suburban). India is a land of disparities in culture and geography and as the study has shown, young people living in two different areas display very different behaviours regarding the use of mobile phones. Therefore, the results may not be applicable to young people living in other parts of India. Further the study used a convenience sampling method so the sample was not representative of all young people living in two study areas. Therefore, the results may not be applicable to young people living in the same locality but belonging to different demographic groups.

Further, this is an exploratory study that was conducted to identify variables that might be impacting the use of mobile phones. So although this study identifies variables such as urban ecology, socio-cultural environment, lifestyle factors and gendered use of technology and communication that might be responsible for differential use of mobile phones in two areas, the analyses have not been conducted to show the exact relationships among the variables.

Another limitation of this study is the time-period during which this study was conducted. The quantitative and qualitative data were collected within the time period of March, 2011 to May, 2013. Mobile phones are advancing at a rapid pace, and by the time this dissertation is written, the technology may have definitely changed from that in use when the research was conducted. And then perhaps the results of this study may not be applicable in the same way in present day.

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