Effect of Social Media on Communication and Quality of Life of Young Adults with Hearing Impairment (HI)

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Abstract

Social media where the data was only to share with close ones, today, became an essential and globally popular. It is used for campaigning, education, learning, gathering and sharing information. It is accessible to all as a choice of communication for those who find it difficult to communicate otherwise. It allows the people with HI to communicate with the other people better. Social media’s reach is far and wide but to the large disability population, it takes time to obtain a set of effects that the social media platforms have on the communication and quality of life of the hearing impaired. The present study checked the effect of social media on communication and quality of life in young adults with HI, through a questionnaire developed by the authors and validated by 5 same skill professionals. It was administered with the help of sign language interpreter on 30 young adults (15 males, 15 females) of 18-30 years in age with pre lingual hearing impaired studying in special education college. It was observed that quality of life in young HI adults improves significantly including daily living and education.

Keywords
Social Media; Communication; Pre-Lingual

Introduction
Social media is a medium that allows people to communicate in not one, but various modes, including texts, images and videos. It has become the most common mode of communication, surpassing letters, texts and e-mails. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre [1, 2] explain that the reasons people use social media generally revolve around the need to create, modify, share and discuss internet content in a particular situation. Margaret Rouse [3, 4] stated that social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Whereas Daniel Nations [5] states that Social media are web-based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by both sharing and consuming information. Social media is a computer-mediated platform that allows people to express their emotions, needs and ideas and share them with other...
people. Social media originally began as a personal platform, where the data was only shared with close the ones, but today, having become a global phenomenon; it can be used for various ends, including campaigning, advertising and much more.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates [6], there are 360 million people or 5.3% of world’s population that has disabling hearing loss. Out of these, 91% are adults and 9% are children. The document also stated that the highest prevalence of disabling hearing loss is in South Asia (27%) followed by East Asia (22%) and Asia Pacific (10%). It is the third most common disability in the world [3]. The National Sample Survey (2001) concluded that 1,261,722 people in India had hearing disability. Since hearing is an integral part of the communication process as it affects both speech and language, it becomes a very significant sensory impairment. While the adults are with post-lingual hearing loss have a greater ability to cope with the difficulties in speech, the hearing impairment has a more significant impact on the communication of pre-lingually hearing impaired. There are four major ways in which hearing impairment can affect pre-lingually deaf: by causing a delay in expressive and receptive speech and language skills, by causing learning problems due to language deficits, by causing the children to get socially isolated and by impacting the vocational choices of the person.

The Facebook.com in 2004 exclusively for Harvard University students and after realizing its potential, he released for the world in 2006. The micro-blogging site Twitter was launched in the same year. By 2010, more social media platforms were launched. Today, social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, Instagram, and Snap chat have become all the rage these days. The popularity of Facebook is such that it had more than 2 billion monthly active users as reported by TechCrunch [7].

There is no debate over the fact that social media has greatly altered the face of communication for everyone. A survey done by Media Access Australia (2011) stated that most social media platforms did not have special features to enable the easy access of the platforms for the differently able, especially those with sensory impairments. However, today, various enhancements and advancements have been done to these platforms to ease the access of the differently able. Sarah Anderson [8], a fashion blogger states that social media has proven to be a drastic improvement in the lives of differently abled. It has enabled them to share stories, hear others, meet likeminded people who can relate to your experiences, spreading the word about disability in a new way, being heard, gaining information regarding their community, get involved new campaigns and challenging the myth that differently able do not have fun. Given the anonymity and independence that is offered by social media, it is evident that more and more people are attracted towards it. Moreover, it has also been observed that with so many support groups and people with similar tendencies that can found online, social media may also help in improving the self esteem and boost their confidence.

An article done by BBC Ouch! (2011) discussed the view of four people with disabilities towards the social media platforms, where they said that these platforms helped them engage with people of their community, have more eligibility towards jobs, to access information at all times and to raise awareness.

A study by Moorhead et al [9] has shown some benefits of using social media such as increased interactions with others, increased accessibility and widening access to health information, peer/social/emotional support, public health surveillance, and potential to influence health policy. On the contrary, Forbes magazine (2017) lists the ill-effects of social media as its addictiveness, triggering more sadness, comparative complexes, causative of jealousy; getting caught in delusions and ill effects of have plenty of friends on social media. In addition, there is lack of reliability, confidentiality and privacy.

Social media has become the rage of today among the youngsters. An article in Tech In India Asia (2016) states that India has 462 million active internet users. Out of these, 153 million are active social media users and 130 are mobile social media users. In Live Mint [10] it was stated that India has the largest user base of Facebook. In 2017, The Tech Portal stated that India was the topmost user of WhatsApp calling with more than 50 million users. Even though social media platforms are so popular in India, any study on the impact of social media has not been conducted on the communication of people has not been conducted yet. Nor has any study been conducted on the impact of social media on the differently able adults.

Social media of today is accessible to all, and naturally, is a choice of communication for those who find it difficult to communicate otherwise. Thus, it may allow the people with any impairment such as speech and hearing impairment to be able to communicate with the other people better. The mode of communication may be
texting, videos, image sharing etc. Several recent studies showed both positive and negative impact of the social media platforms on the people without any impairment. Since in Indian scenario, there is a lack of literature in this regard, hence it becomes essential to determine its impact on the people with hearing impairment.

**Aims and Objectives**
Aim of the present study was to check the effect of social media on communication, and quality of life on young adults with hearing impairment.

**Methodology**

**Participants**
Thirty young adults, prelingually deaf participated in the study. 15 were males and 15 females within the age range of 18-30 yrs (mean age of male 25.7 and female 21.3). All of them are from one special college in Secunderabad. And they belong to middle socio economic status. All the participants owned a personal Smartphone.

**Tools**
A questionnaire was compiled by the authors of the study that comprised of 20 questions and was validated by 5 ASLP professionals with minimum of 5 years experience. It assessed the preferences of the participants for different social media platforms, quantity of social media used by the hearing impaired, utility of social media for their communication , the quality of communication attained by the hearing impaired through the use of social media, learning new things through social media, helps in study by sharing documents and sharing getting information related to their personal views and finally does social media improves your quality of life in a daily living. The questionnaire also assessed which mode of communication over social media is preferred by the participants and if they find communication over social media platforms as effective as face to face communication. The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2016.

**Procedure**
Permission for administration of the questionnaire was taken from the educational institutions and participants. A copy of the questionnaire was distributed to the participants. This questionnaire was then explained to the participants with the help of Indian sign language interpreters and verbally as well. 95% participants were pre-lingually deaf and h/o hearing aid they all previously used hearing aid. The questionnaire was administered in the survey format and was collected after being filled.

**Result and Discussion**
Out of these, 15 were males with a mean age of 25.7 years and 15 were females of 21.3 years. The people with hearing impairment spend an average of 2.16 hours per day on the social media platforms.

**Graph 1:** Social Media Platform Preferred
It is Observed that the most Common Social Media Platform is Observed to be WhatsApp with 28.75% users, Followed by Facebook with 27.50% users, Messenger with 17.5%, Imo with 16.25% users and Instagram with 10% users. Whereas 2.5% People said that they “Sometimes” used Social Media Platforms for Professional uses, while 97.5% said that they “Never” used it for Professional Purposes. These Professional Purposes Entail the Acquisition and Maintenance of Jobs through Social Media and not Sharing Personal Views Regarding the Jobs.
Graph 2: Friends on Basis of Application Suggestions. Question Number Five asked the Participants if they made Friends Based on the Suggestions made by Social Media Platforms, without knowing the Person Physically or Personally. To this 20% Participants Said that they Never Followed Application Suggestions, 38.17% Said that they Sometimes Accepted Application Suggestions, 28.75% said that they Often made Friends Based on Application Suggestions, 6.25% said that they Accepted Application Suggestions for Friends many times and 6.25% said that they Always Sent Friend Requests to those who were Suggested to them by the Social Media Application Despite not knowing the Person Personally. Question Number Six asked the Participants how often did they Post on Social Media Platforms Regarding Education

Graph 3: Types of Posts Shared on Social Media. In Question Number Seven, the Participants were asked which type of Posts did they Share on Social Media. 13.75% Students said that they Shared their Personal Views for on Social Media Platforms, 45% said that they Shared Professional Views on Social Media, However, these Posts are their Personal Opinions on different Professional Aspects, 35% Stated that they Shared Other Peoples’ Posts on Social Media and 6.25% said that they Shared Photographs on Social Media Platforms

Graph 4: Social Media Platform Preferred by Participants. When asked as to which Social Media Platform did the Participants Preferred from the given Options in Question Eight, 28.75% Participants each said that they Preferred Facebook and WhatsApp, whereas 26.25% said that they Preferred Messenger, 10% Preferred Instagram and 6.25% Preferred IMO. No Participants Stated that they Preferred Hike, Twitter and Skype
Graph 5: Social Media Platform Most Commonly used. On Being asked as to which Social Media Platforms they used Maximum in Question Nine, 40% Participants Stated that they Preferred Facebook, 39% Participants said that they Preferred WhatsApp, 9% Participants said that they Preferred Instagram and 6.25% People said that they Preferred Messenger and 6.25% said that they Preferred IMO. Since WhatsApp Offers all the Services of Texting, Video Calling, Video Sharing and Image Sharing all in One, this may be the Reason why this Platform is more Popular than all other Platforms.

Graph 6: Communication Method used by Hearing Impaired. Question Number Ten asked the People that as to which Communication Method was most Popular Among Hearing Impaired Over Social Media. 58.75% said that they Preferred Texting, 6.25% Preferred Video Sharing and the same Number Preferred Image Sharing and 28.75% Preferred Video Calling. On an Average, the Participants had 114.48 Friends.

Graph 7: When asked as to how Often did the Participants Prefer using Video Calling in Question Number Twelve, 15% Participants said that they never used the Video Calling Feature, 57.5% said that they Preferred Video Calling Sometimes, 22.5% said that they Preferred using Video Calling Feature Often, 3.75% Participants said that they Preferred Video Calling Feature many Times.
Graph 8: Social Media Platform Preferred for Video Calling. On Being asked which Platform did the Participants Prefer for Video Calling, 51% said WhatsApp, 11% said Facebook and 34% said IMO. 2% Participants Stated that they Preferred Hike and 11% said that Messenger was most Preferable.

Graph 9: Social Media Communication Effectiveness with HI and without HI. In Question Sixteen, the Participants were asked if they Found Communication with other Hearing-Impaired Persons as Effective as Face to Face Communication. To this, 87.5% said that they did Find Communication through Social Media as Effective as Face-to-Face Interaction. 6.25% Participants Stated that they did not Find Communication through Social Media Effective and the same Amount said that they were not Sure. When asked if the Participants Found Social Media Interaction as Effective as Face-to-Face Interaction with Persons without Hearing Impairment in Question Seventeen, 70.59% said Yes, 8.82% said maybe and 11.76% said No.

Graph 10: Form of Social Media Preferred for Communication with People Without Hearing Impairment. Question Eighteen Assessed as to which form of Social Media was Preferred by the Participants to Interact with Persons with no Hearing Impairment. 48.75% Participants Stated that they Preferred Chatting, 22.5% said that they Preferred Texting and 28.75% said that they Preferred Video Calling.
Graph 11: Effectiveness of Social Media in Ninetieth Question was Administered to Check if the Participants Believed that Social Media had Helped them in Improving Communication with Others. 87.5% Participants said that it did, 6.25% said that this was not the Case and 6.25% said that they were not Sure. Also, it was Observed that 83.81% People said that they Believed that Social Media had Improved their Quality of Education and also Improve their Communication with Non-Hearing Impaired Population

Graph 12: Effectiveness of Social Media On Quality Of Life The Twentieth Questions Assessed to Check Overall Effectiveness of Social Media that the 70% Participants Believed that Social Media had Helped them in Improving their Quality of life with Easy Access, 62% Agree with Simple Usage, 70% Agree with 24*7 Availability Makes their Living Style Better and also give Positive Impact on Communication with Others so here Majority of the Population Agree that Social Media Improves their Quality of Life

Discussion

It is found in the present study that the persons with hearing impairment accessed social media 2.16 hours which is less, in comparison to approximately 3.07 hours of a normal hearing person which was reported by The Telegraph (2015). It is also found that the most popular social media platforms in India are WhatsApp and Facebook with a total of approximately 79% using social media on a regular basis. This concurs with an article written by Kahn (2017) stating that nearly 1 billion people use WhatsApp daily and an article by Constine [11] stating that Facebook has 2 billion monthly active users. 100% participants used social media as a personal means of communication. A study by John Drussel (2012) stated that though normal hearing persons preferred to sort out conflicts face to face; the most preferred mode of communication was still preferred texts over other types of communication over social media. Whereas, it was found in the study that the persons with hearing impaired found texting very helpful. Hence, it can be said that this factor of comparison also rings true for both, the normal hearing and hearing impaired.

Today, this number is likely to have increased, given the popularity of social media and increased access to smartphones. In the current scenario, social media platforms have become the most popular mode of communication among the younger generation. The social media allows people to build a new image for themselves on social media. This
often proves to be a booster for self-esteem for even the normal people. Hence, these social media websites may be quite useful for differently abled persons. According to the final analysis of the data, it can be observed that the people with hearing impairment use social media less as compared to the persons with normal hearing sensitivity. The persons with hearing impairment preferred WhatsApp and Facebook more times on an average for activities like video, texting calling and communication were benefiting from the easy accessibility of the social media platforms. They used social media platforms to perform various tasks that were important to them, including communication, information sharing, learning and expressing their personal views yet, the youth of today does not use social media to its full extent for their benefits, in terms of acquiring jobs and work experiences. It was observed that they preferred using social media for communication over other modes of communication with people with and without normal hearing and these all factors gives a major impact on improving quality of life on each HI individual by easy accessibility and simple usability. Also, with the growing popularity of these platforms, it can be said that the usage of these platforms will only increase with passing time, not only among normally able but also differently able persons.

**Future Implication**

However, as it has been seen with other studies, the social media platforms are highly addictive and deprecating to the self-esteem of the people hence, it can be established that though the people with hearing impairment are benefiting all over in terms of communication through social media, it is important to monitor its effects on the mental health of the hearing-impaired persons.

**Advantage**

This is a first of its kind study in the country to assess the impact of social media on the differently able.

**Limitation**

The data size of this research is very small, especially given the population size of hearing impaired in India.

**References**

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