كليـــة الدراســـــات المصرفيـــة والماليـــة
College of Banking and Financial Studies

E-TEXTING: IS THERE A GENDER BIAS AMONG

UNDER-GRADUATE STUDENTS?

Dr. Ashok Kumar G Nair

WORKING PAPER

No. 201/206-17

**Postgraduate Studies and Research Department
College of Banking and Financial Studies
PO Box 3122, Ruwi, Postal Code 112
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman**

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College of Banking and Financial Studies

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ABSTRACT

Text messaging has become a preferred tool for communication and, hence, a significant social phenomenon. This makes it worthy of serious investigation. Communications theories are well suited to this type of research because text messaging serves as both mediated and interpersonal communications. This kind of research can also contribute to a deeper understanding of communication differences between genders. The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether there are gender differences in the use of text messaging and, if so, what the differences are. Participants for the study were recruited via convenience sampling. The sample consisted of 27 participants in the age group 18–35; 14 were female and 13 were male. Data was collected from the participants via the focus group approach. The participants were divided into four groups for better focus group interaction. Two of the groups consisted of females, and two consisted of males. Transcripts of the focus group sessions were analysed using the constant comparative approach. This approach involves continually sorting through the data, comparing categories, and analysing the resulting information. Gender dichotomy was found to exist in the choice of the text messaging usage, and characteristics of the text messages composed by males and females. The females were found to indulge in texting behaviours more frequently, with more inclination towards entertainment for using text services, and also used more emoticons when texting. Males were found to be more task oriented, also indulged in less frequent texting behaviours. Both the genders preferred respondents who responded timely, with females expecting instantaneous responses. Moreover, females preferred arguing over texts whereas males preferred arguing over phone calls. These findings provide new insights in the areas of text messaging and gender studies.

Keywords: *text messaging, gender, constant comparative approach, focus group, typography, gender biasness*

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1.1 Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed the most development in communication with the mobile phones assuming the role of the preferred tool for this. The invention of mobile communication devices, introduction of attractive plans by telecommunication companies, promoted the continued connectivity among masses. The last decade has seen yet another trend, which has taken the users around the globe by storm, that is, e-texting. With the advent of e-texting facilities the fundamentals of daily communication have witnessed massive change. The advances in communication technology have resulted in high levels of convenience and facilitated communication, thus garnering significant credentials. The mannerisms of communication have had considerable impact on the cultural perceptions of communication. Hence, the topic has received attention from researchers, who continue to examine the different spheres of the cultural phenomenon.

1.1.1 E-texting: conceptualizing the term

The academic interest in the phenomenon of texting has turned it into a literary concept. The concept of "Texting" came into light with the practice of availing Short Message Service (SMS) that is, sending and receiving of text messages. It offered cheap and easily accessible mode of communication, with text messages being sent and received for variety of reasons (Balakrishnan & Yeow 2007). However, with the availability of affordable internet connections the text messaging practice has evolved further, with continuously thousands of messages being exchanged between people across borders and time zones.

Electronic texts have been designated as anarchic, hyper-textual, and decentralized, characterized with instantaneous exchange (Ulmer 1989; Winkelmann 1995). It has been postulated that the understanding developed from an e-text is independent of only a single way of comprehending the meaning, and the reader can interpret the meaning in more than way (Meskill et al. 1999). The practice of messaging could be traced back to the time when engineer's utilized computer based messaging to facilitate communication within the primitive software. Later on the practice reached general masses, but was still bifurcated between chatting on computer systems, and texting on phones. The cropping up of social networks, smart phones, and mobile chat apps changed the communication scenario as it is in the present times, eliminating the bifurcation(Wilson & Oren 2014).

Texting is preferred over other modes of communication as it possesses many advantages such as it is a silent mode of communication, and thus has higher feasibility at any time and any place. The practice of texting is less time consuming, and a large number of people could be contacted in a single instance (Ceccucci et al. 2010).The practice of texting is undertaken by multiple users, having varied backgrounds and demographic profiles, which influence their mental processes. The user characteristics tend to

influence their usage patterns and attitudes towards the service, with different platforms enabling one to one and many to many communication(Wilson & Oren 2014). Also, the manner of input of text messages, and the language used is also postulated to be influenced by the demographics of an individual, with age and gender seen as having higher impact.

1.1.2 Gender biasness with respect to e-texting

The communication research has focused upon unravelling the gender based difference in text messaging habits. The research has produced relevant results, wherein it has been indicated that marked differences exist between language, vocabulary and grammar, of the two genders. This gender based demarcation in the language patterns, has been thought to occur at an early developmental age(Ladegaard & Bleses 2003). Men and women have also been perceived to belong to different sociolinguistic subcultures pertaining to the differences in the interaction styles of the two genders(Maltz & Borker 1982).The researchers through their investigations have also concluded the differences in texting habits of adolescent males and females, wherein females tend to soften the ending of conversations by using courtesy markers, whereas males believe in ending the conversation when the relevant point has been put across (Baron & Ling 2011). The analyses of texts have revealed that women are more likely to resort to texting then men, exhibiting higher usage of emoticons and typographic characters, initialisms (Lyddy et al. 2014).

1.1.3 Need for study

The gender differences in the communication styles have been explored by researchers, where they analysed the different aspects such as elements of speech, use of language, narrative and linguistic styles, blogging habits, and others(Wouk 1999; Ogierman 2008; Pedersen & Macafee 2007; Muchnik & Stavans 2009).The researchers with respect to texting have investigated the use of punctuation marks, role of psychological symptoms, and frequency of texting(Wyber et al. 2013; Baron & Ling 2011). However, in the present era where texting has become the basic mode of communication between the youngsters, little research has been conducted on the same and thus the topic calls for even deeper research. The entire world population is differentiated into genders of male and female, and this basic demarcation influences almost all the activities, characterized with male and female specific behaviours. Hence, taking into consideration the widespread phenomenon of texting and gender based influences on communication patterns the present study assumes an important stance in generating relevant information on the same. Furthermore, the researcher also proposes to exploit the widespread usage of text lingo to design marketing strategies, meant for attracting the students towards university courses.

1.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives were defined keeping in view the research problem and the academic needs to be satisfied by the study. The present research with the aim of exploring the gender biasness in e-texting has the following research objectives:

- To ascertain whether there are any gender differences in the use of text messaging.

- To identify the differences in the texting habits between genders in terms of need, language, and context.

1.3 Literature review

The present study deals with the brand of communications research which is aimed at studying and understanding the texting habits exhibited by the social participants of emerging mobile culture. Texting could be perceived as a type of computer mediated communication, which has become vital for the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Since, the interpersonal communication has lost the human touch the communication research has thus focused upon studying the impact of socio-cultural and behavioural factors by analysing the digital habits of individuals(Walther 2011).

1.3.1 Theoretical framework

For the purpose of studying the gender differences, an appropriate theoretical framework was desirable which enabled the researcher in analysing the gender based attributes in performing the text based communication. The usage of text messaging by the individuals could not be contained to a single theory. Hence, the four different models of human behaviour have been taken to explain the different themes explored by the researcher, as shown in Figure 1.
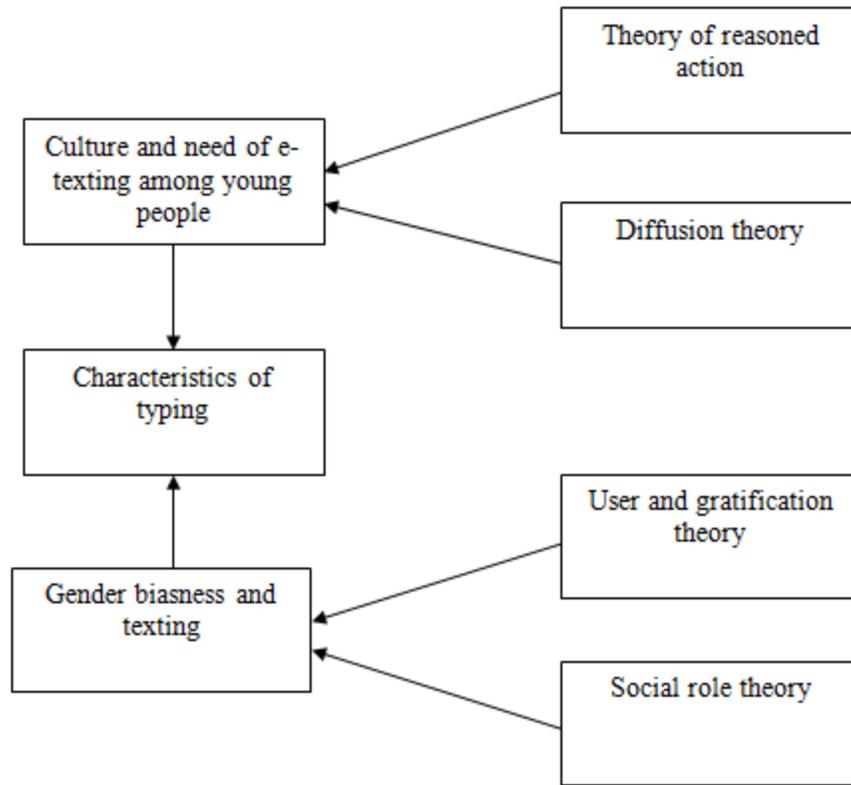
Figure 1: Theoretical framework

1.3.1.1 Culture and the need of e-texting among young people:

Theory of reasoned action and Diffusion theory have been associated with this dimension, in order to understand the behavioural tendencies of the young university students. The theory of reasoned action states that an individual's behavioural intentions depend upon the attitudes regarding the behaviour and subjective norms(Hale et al. 2002). The diffusion theory on the other hand is related to the communication of innovation through certain channels among the different members of the social system. These theories together aided in comprehension of gender based attitudinal differences, defining the male and female usage patterns. It has been seen in previous research that the theory of reasoned action has proven to be useful in determining the gender specific perception of social norms, and intrinsic motives in using text based messaging (Nysveen et al. 2005). The diffusion theory relates to the ease of use and visibility of instant messaging as weighed upon by members of different genders, defining their usage needs and patterns (Peslak, A. et al. 2010).

1.3.1.2 Gender biasness and texting:

The uses and gratification theory and social role theory were deemed fit for comprehending the gender biasness in texting habits. The uses and gratification theory presents a psychological perspective of communications, wherein the individuals utilizes select media and content to fulfil personal

needs(Ruggiero 2000). The influence of social and psychological characteristics on usage of media could be related with the gender schema of the person, and the associated gratifications achieved by them in using the text services. A previous research applied the theory to understand the reason and purpose of using text messaging by students of Indiana university (Grellhesl & Punyanunt-Carter 2012). The Social role theory deals with the social psychological aspect of human existence. The gender based roles have been defined, and role related processes are established, which influence the behavioural tendencies of the member s of two genders (Eckes & Trautner 2000). The differences in texting styles have been assumed to be in line with the social role theory, wherein the male attributes result in independent and task focused texting, and the female attributes influence establishing bonds(Kimbrough et al. 2013).

1.3.1.3 Characteristics of typing:

The characteristics of typing have been indicated as influenced by the factors of culture and gender biasness. The studies over the time have investigated the differences in the lexical choices made by men and women, drawing light upon the linguistic choices of the two genders. The difference in the communication styles could be defined by the social roles which influence the psychology of individual, and also the different needs for gratification. The differences in communication styles are yet to be associated solely to either differences in interpretive capabilities, or linguistic choice (Rafi 2008). The specific dimension was implored upon by the author in the light of cultural and personal preferences of two genders while texting.

1.3.2   The culture of texting among young people

Text messaging has become a significant social phenomenon with wide reach of mobile phones. The availability of wireless technology has also contributed to the boom in texting practices, by enabling the users to connect with others anytime anywhere. The mobile phone design and functionalities have also evolved over the time, to suit the needs of avid texters, such as the introduction of QWERTY keypads, and compact and advanced technologies. The change in design also enticed the younger generations to embrace the technology, making it a hallmark of their generation (Skierkowski & Wood 2012). The culture of texting has also gained importance as in extending the interpersonal communication channels, and helped in overcoming the limitation of time and space, altering the manner in which people communicate with each other (Kim 2002). The studies among the college students have shown that text services indeed help the students to remain easily available to each other, providing a sense of intimacy and closeness overcoming the physical constraints. The young generations see texting as crucial in maintaining friendships and relations over distance.

The text messaging services over mobile devices also provide freedom from any physical constraints of constantly using a computer device (Lin & Tong 2007).The young people also find texting as a resort to escape from adult surveillance, communicating freely, avoiding the codes of conduct and other regulatory inhibitions imposed upon them. Young couples prefer texting to gain intimacy and control over private conversations (Ito & Daisuke 2003). The reciprocity of text messages is also considered as an expression of gift exchange, engaging the sender and receiver of messages in a moral relationship rather than a strategic one. The usage of texting services is also preferred as the young people identify it as a necessity, a cost efficient solution, secure, and dependable manner of communication. The

researchers have also identified motivational themes relating to the texting behaviours (Chakraborty 2006). The practice of text messaging has also been found to have relationship with the level of development of identity, cognitive autonomy and self-esteem of the users (Davis 2009).

1.3.3   Characteristics of text messaging

The enthusiastic and wide use of texting by young adults, has led to the inception of specialized text language, characterized with a multitude of abbreviations. The text language has become so widespread that researchers aim at identifying difference in the language on the basis of age, gender, and other demographic variables. The usual written language has been modified by the young users in such a manner so as to suit a wide array of communicative functions. The texts script is characterized by *semi-coded messages with hybridized orthography*, achieved by the creative use of alphabets, numerical and emoticons (Pietrini 2001; Galan Rodriguez 2001)\. Many researchers have argued that this language should be viewed under the light of a novel and creative language, presenting a hybridized view of literacy, rather than simple annotation as broken form of traditional language. These SMS thus involve the radical fragmentation of text lexia characterized with unpredictable series of text (Goggin 2004). However, another segment of society has concerns over the possible detrimental effects of using the short coded text language on the quality of literacy.

There are several reasons for the different standard of texting language from the traditional language use. The computer mediated communication demands speed over efficiency of language, and also the limit on message size makes it imperative to compact the information. Also, the orthographic deviations are used as a paralinguistic feature, to compensate for the absence of alterations of speech and body gestures, to emphasize upon expressions (Thurlow & Brown 2003). The occasional deviation from the standard codes of language usage also add colour and fun to conversation, a characteristic of youth culture (Bergs 2009).

The abbreviated writing practiced by youngsters is referred to as *Textese,* characterized by use of *Textisms.* Textese does not have a well-defined spelling system, and plausible abbreviations written in various manners, such as shortening of because to *cause, cus, bcus, bcs, bc, becos, coz, bcoz. Textisms* can be further divided into logograms, emoticons, initialisms, contraction, clipping, truncation, phonetic respelling, replacement, extension such as homophones, reduplications, stylization, inanity, and standard abbreviations (Verheijen 2015).The use of Textisms among youth is also not well defined, and the use may depend on the device being used, and the type of keypad, such as an alphanumeric keypad or QWERTY keypad. Although, consistent manner of usage of Textisms by a particular individual could be observed(De Jonge & Kemp 2012).

The graphological deviation from the standard language is not universal in nature, rather the extent of deviation of the users has been attributed to various factors of age, gender, personal preferences, regional background, personal preferences and ethnic backgrounds. The deviations may also be dependent of the situational factors, such as recipient, intent of communication and the degree of discourse from the topic (Crystal 2006). The stylistic diversity of the computer mediated communications can also be associated with the particulars of the medium of communication such as the limit on message size, level on interaction, synchronicity, and the technology being used (Verheijen 2015).

1.3.4 Use of text messaging among young people

Text messaging usage is popular among young people due to the cost effective, non-intrusive and personal nature of communication of the same. It is mostly used for navigating between the social relationships and has many purposes associated with its usage. The maintenance of social ties, communicating romantic interests, as a means of escape, social breaching by contacting someone else in presence of others, maleficent interests, and conveying sexually explicit themes, are some of the purposes for which texting is used by young people (Harrison & Gilmore 2012). The usage of texting as a form of communication allows the youth to multi task, engaging in multiple activities at once, besides allowing interactions to take place at non-traditional times.

The usage patterns have also been observed to show distinction between the two genders, as shown by different researchers analysing the text usage behaviours. Balakrishnan and Yeow conducted their study to analyse the impact of gender differences upon the texting satisfaction levels. The results showed that the gender constraint affected the speed of entry method, wherein females were more satisfied than males. Also, women are observed to send longer messages in comparison to males, with higher usage of emoticons, less adherence to standard spellings, and opt to higher orthographic deviations while texting. Another study from Korea, investigated the usage of emoticons, whether the usage tendencies were influenced by gender differences. It was found that females were more likely to use emoticons as a means of socio-emotional expression The emoticons usage was opted to add more meaning to the conversation, to express humour, express friendliness, intimacy, make conversations softer and simpler (Hwang 2014).

Rafi in his study showed that significant difference existed between the linguistic properties of text messages send out by males and females. Females were found to be more skilful in writing long, complex messages, with long and dense lexicology. The gender differences with respect to perception and resultant usage of text have also been investigated. The study showed that men focused more on completion of tasks while sending out messages, whereas women were more focused on fulfilling the social aspects. Thus, the gender psychologies are seen as playing a crucial role in how the usage intentions were influenced by perceived advantages of the technology (Ilie et al. 2005; Peslak, A. et al. 2010).

The gratification needs and preferences for texting also differed among men and women. Grellhesl and Punyanunt-Carter indicated the same and found differences in gratification needs of the two genders. This first difference was with respect to access and mobility which was attributed to the fact that females conversed more with family members and in detail as opposed to male's usage of more focused approach. The second area was that of escape, wherein females resorted to texting practice to attain relaxation or as a route of escape more than males. This was attributed to female's tendencies of sharing details with other females and being more spontaneous. Males have also been seen as opting to texting practices to avoid lengthy phone conversations, and contacting multiple people at same time.

1.4 Methodology

The research methodology was designed to establish a suitable outline of the workflow to be followed, comprising of philosophical stances and other pre-requisites. A pre-defined research design is essential to gain familiarity with the phenomenon to be explored, accurate portrayal of the characteristics of research, defining the diagnostic purposes, and accurate definition of hypothesis and testing of relationships. The focus group approach was used for the present study as it served as an effective tool for triangulation of comparisons for analysing different perspectives. The focus group approach has been rewarded with the ability to the produced rich, detailed data, of significant validity leaving the perspectives of the participants intact(Bender & Ewbank 1994).

1.4.1 Study design

The present study follows the focus group research design, involving the intersection of interpretive and pedagogical enquiries. The present focus group approach followed complementary interaction, allowing for the principles of the social world to emerge and help in understanding the participant's attitudes. The study design involved the moderator, navigating across the communication, exploring the differences in perceptions and working with the participants to uncover the facts. The focus group study design allowed the researcher to explore the themes of testing behaviours, tendencies, and mannerisms (Liamputtong 2011). Hence, the researcher adopted the Positivist stance, and adopted descriptive and exploratory purposes, along with qualitative and descriptive approaches for collection and analysis of data (Kumar 2011).

1.4.1.1 Geographic area of research

Sultanate of Oman is one of the most developed countries in Middle Eastern region, having a population of 3.21 million, with the youth comprising 30% of the total population(Sultan et al. 2019). Oman has been designated as having a high rate of e-literacy, and government continually undertakes initiatives to promote the usage of electronics services. As a result of Government initiatives the country has a diverse range of media platforms developed to meet the demands of education, information and entertainment (Mehmood & Taswir 2013). The mobile technology is also emerging as a significant platform of communication, and has assumed national importance in facilitating the development process of nation. The Muscat Municipality and the Oman Mobile company have together launched the SMS-Parking facility to provide mobile services to the citizens, promoting the adaption of M-services (Naqvi et al. 2011).

1.4.1.2 Study duration

The study was conducted for the time period of May 2017 to Oct 2017, including the performance of all the tasks since initiation to execution, to the completion of the study. The tasks of developing the purpose, identifying the participants, developing the participant list, selecting the facilitator, development of questions and script, and pilot testing took 8 weeks. The task of obtaining approval from relevant organization, identifying the site of focus group, inviting participants, verification, and

final organization of the meeting also took 10 weeks. The analysis of the information, drawing relevant conclusions and formation of thesis ensued and was completed within the relevant time frame.

1.4.1.3 Study tools

The study tools included the means to collect the relevant information, which in the present study was facilitated by the means of carrying out in depth interviews with the members of focus groups. The data was recorded by stenography, accompanied with audio recording to avoid any loss of information. The secondary data was collected by the means of electronic search and manual probing of available literature.

1.4.2   Data collection approach

The researcher collected both primary and secondary data, wherein the primary data was collected from the in depth focus group interviews. The secondary data was collected by conducting in depth review of the literature collected from valid and accredited journals, books, reports, and magazine articles. The focus group interviews were conducted using the semi-structures questionnaire (Appendix I).

1.4.2.1 Study population and sample size

The study population comprised of young adults currently enrolled in undergraduate courses in University of Nizwa. The researcher approached 3 colleges, and 27 participants, 14 females and 13 males, were eventually identified for the study. The two genders formed separate focus groups to facilitate the fulfilment of study objectives.

1.4.2.2 Measuring instrument

The measuring instrument in the present study was the semi-structured survey questionnaire, which was developed following the review of literature. The questionnaire consisted of four sections with Section A pertaining to demographic profile of participants, Section B aimed at analysing the culture and need of E-texting in young people, Section C analysed the characteristics of texting and Section D focused upon investigating the Genders biasness in texting.

1.4.2.3 Interview protocol

The interview comprised of three stages: Pre-Session, Facilitation, and Closing. The Pre-session stage provided the opportunity for the group participants to become familiar with each other. It also provided the facilitator the opportunity to take note of the dynamics of the group, ensuring the success of focus group. The Facilitation stage followed the Pre-Session, where the facilitator proceeded with the script to open the session, making the participants acquainted with the rules and other formalities of group discussion. The opening session was followed by administration of question, and recording of responses. After completion, the session was closed using the text from the script.

1.4.3 Data analysis procedures

The data was analysed for examining the various themes with respect to texting behaviours, with high levels of efficiency using the qualitative data analysis. Thematic analysis was used for the analysis which serves as a tool for efficient data management and aids in the examination of the recorded text in a highly focused manner. Besides simple descriptive analysis, the data was also subjected to query answering, with visualization of data to allow the identification of content or structure of the idea presented in the text.

1.5 Data analysis and interpretation

1.5.1 Demographic details

The study population was divided into two focus groups on the basis of gender, with one group consisting of 14 females, and other group consisting of 13 males. With respect to age, 56% of the respondent population belonged to the age group of 18-22 years, 30% to 23-27 years and 14% belonged to 28-35 years of age, as shown in Figure 2. 60% of the respondents were enrolled in full time courses and 40% belonged to part time courses, as shown in Figure 3.
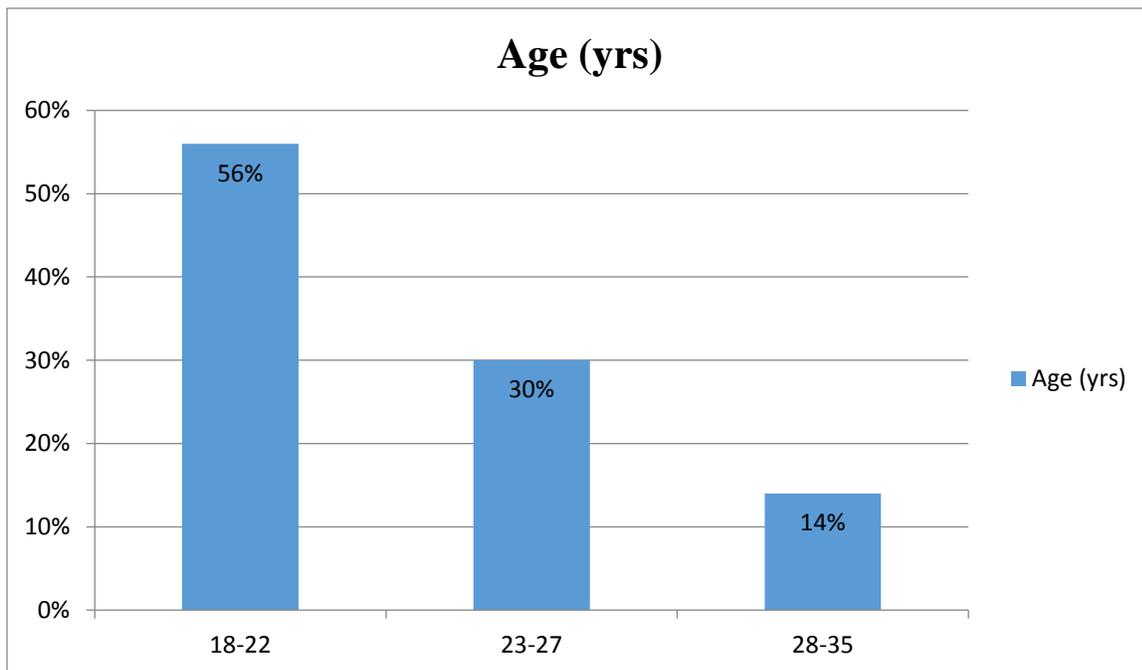

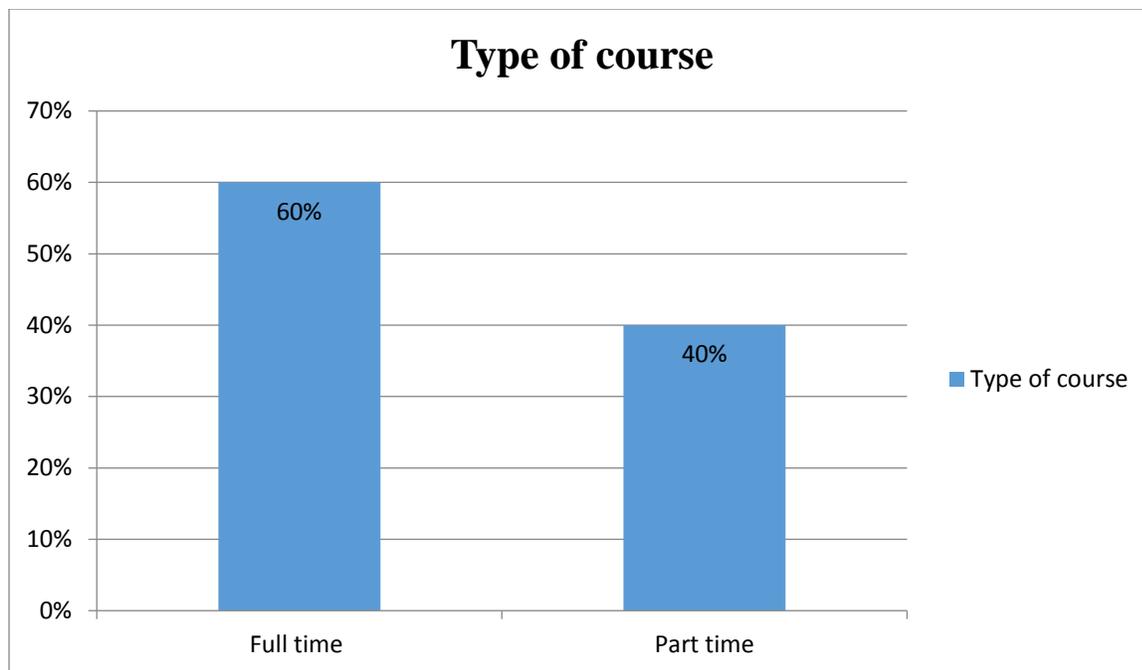Figure 2 : Percentage distribution of respondents by Age

Figure 3 : Percentage distribution of respondents according to type of course

1.5.2 Culture and need of e-texting in young people

The subjective data obtained from the focus group interviews was fed into the software and the responses were differentiated into the major ideas presented by the respondents. The respondents were enquired about the daily frequency of texts exchanged by them, and the results showed a very distinct demarcation in the texting behaviours of males and females. A high proportion (48%) of females confirmed to performing texting practices the entire day, whereas only 21% of the male population showed the tendency to text the entire day. A fair distribution of genders resorting to texting after the college hours was seen, as shown in Table 1. Males were observed to have less frequent texting behaviours, as observed from high proportion of males, confirming to texting only twice or thrice a day. Hence, as seen in Figure 4 both genders showing different patterns of behaviours with respect to decreasing frequency of texting, where the graph for females reflects higher tendency to text frequently. The previous researches have also reflected similar results, where females frequently resort to texting practices (Forgays et al. 2014; Balakrishnan & Yeow 2007).

Daily frequency of texting			
	Almost entire day	After college	Thrice or twice during the entire day
Male	21%	36%	43%
Female	48%	32%	20%

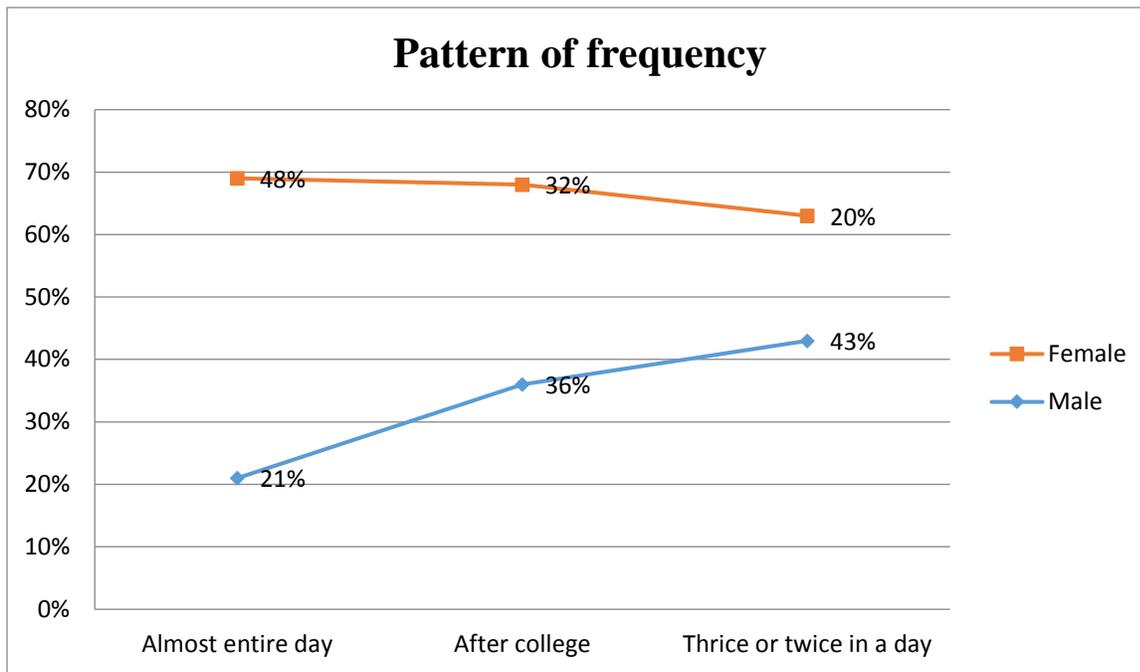Table 1: Gender differences in daily frequency of texting

Figure 4 : Gender differences in pattern of frequency of texting

The participants were interviewed to gain an insight into time of day preferred by them for texting. No gender specific differences were observed with respect to the time of the day chosen by the participants in resorting to texting practices, as shown in Table 2. Both the genders were seen to text more actively at night, rather than morning times. Also, it was seen that certain proportion of participants showed no inclination towards a specific time of day in their texting behaviours. The higher tendencies to text at night could be related to the high proportion of students enrolled in regular courses, where they are expected to attend classes in the morning. This could be a plausible explanation for undergraduate students showing high inclination to text at night. Also, studies have indicated that youngsters exercised texting at night to avoid being heard, having conflict with parents, and to ensure secure and private communication, especially with significant others or members of opposite sex (Shuter 2012; Grinter & Eldridge 2003).

Preferred time of day			
	Morning	Night	No preferred time
Male	20%	58%	22%
Female	15%	60%	25%

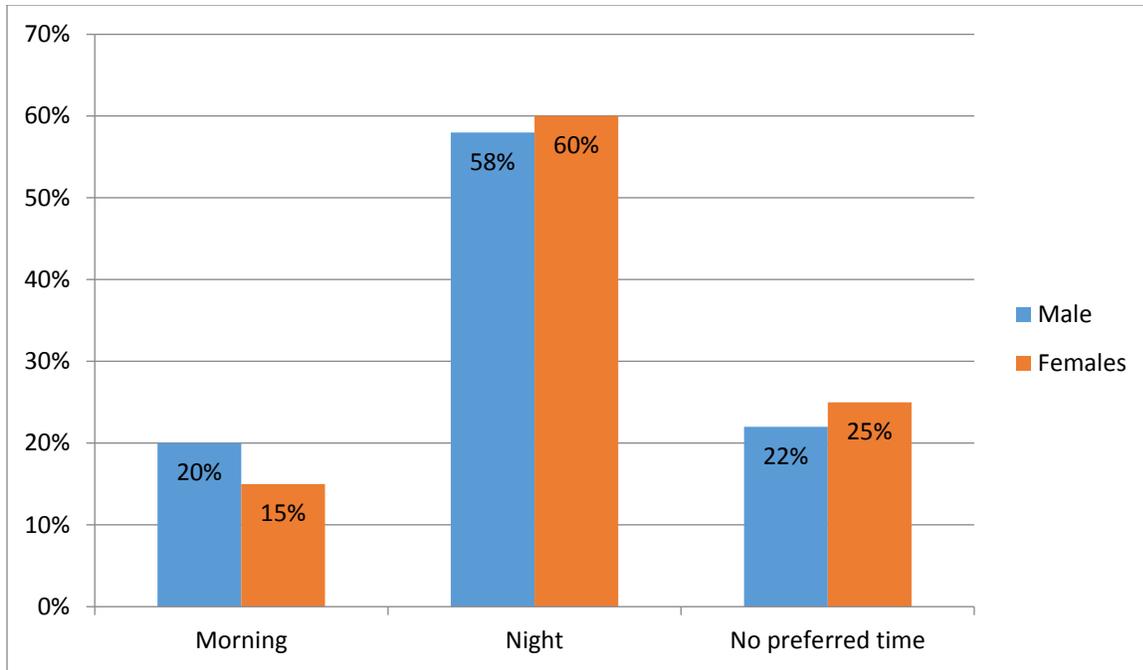Table 2 : Gender differences in preferred time of texting

Figure 5: Gender difference in preferred time of texting

The participants were questioned to know their recipient preference in texting, and it was seen that high proportion of males (38%) texted their friends, whereas large proportion of female participants used texting to mostly remain in contact with their family members (40%). Within both the groups the least proportion of respondents confirmed to opt for texting practices to get in touch with special someone. Also, both the genders showed fair distribution of participants with respect to the usages of texting to stay in touch with friends, as shown in Table 3. Grellhesl and Punyanunt-Carter indicated similar findings wherein with respect to the dimension of access and mobility females were found to converse more with family members.

Frequently contacted			
	Friends	Family	Special someone
Male	38%	30%	32%
Female	36%	40%	24%

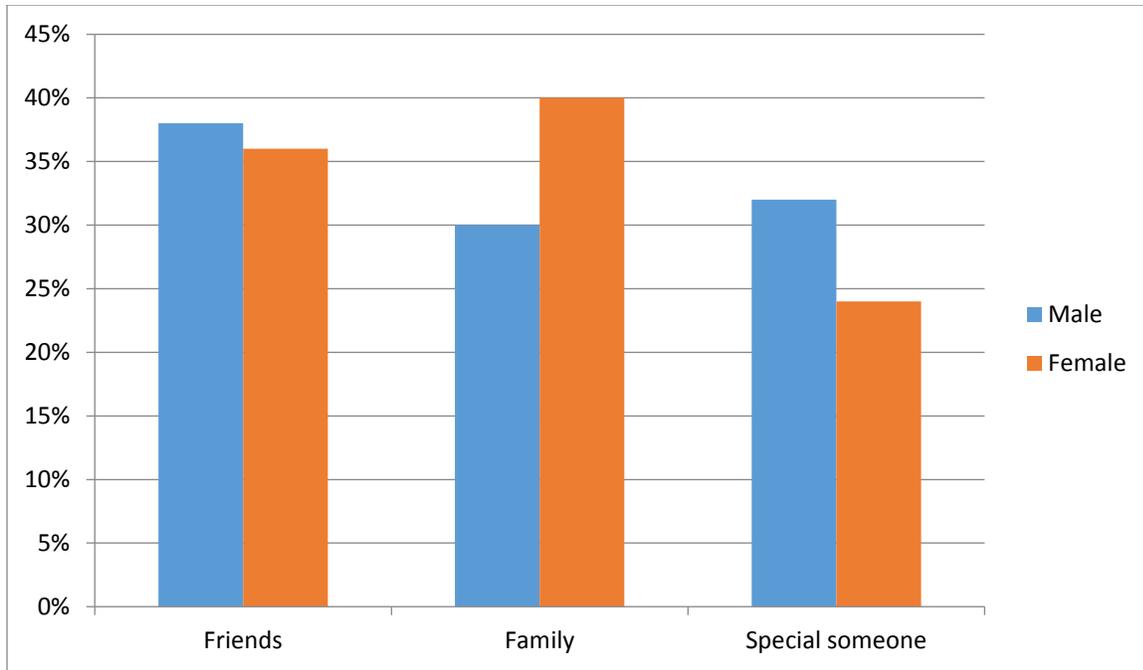Table 3: Gender differences in recipient selection

Figure 6 : Gender differences in recipient selection

The participant's attitudes were explored to know their expectations with respect to the response time, to their texts. The gender dichotomy was evident and it was seen that higher proportion of (30%) females expected instantaneous responses to their texts, whereas only 21% of male participant expected an instant reply. Also, male participants were found to have more relaxed attitudes towards response expectation and highest proportion of male participants (54%) confirmed that they expected a reply eventually, as per the responder's preference of time. The highest proportion of female (45%) expected reply to their text messages within a while, again overcoming the males who constituted only 25% of the population with respect to same, as shown in Table 4. The response times and related expectation have even been found to have a relation with the maintenance of romantic relationships and establishment of texting identity (Berusch 2016).

Response expectation			
	Instantaneous	Within a while	Eventually
Male	21%	25%	54%
Female	30%	45%	25%

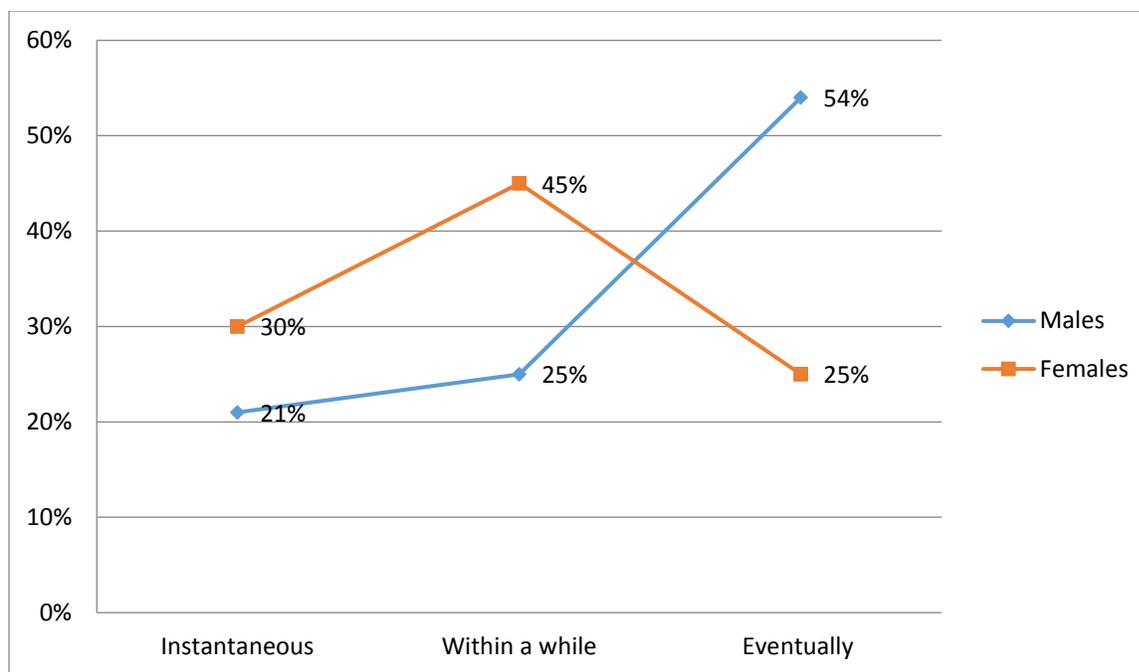Table 4: Gender differences in response expectation

Figure 7 : Gender differences in response expectation

The researcher also explored different purpose which the young college students used texting for. The various purposes encountered in the present investigation were that of entertainment, important communication, means of escape, carry out intimate conversations, and other maleficent purposes of bullying, teasing, stalking. The percentage distribution of the respondents did not show significant gender dichotomy with respect to the different texting behaviours, as shown in Table 5. However, it was seen that slightly higher proportion of females resorted to texting for carrying out important communication (30%), entertainment (23%), and carrying out intimate conversations (19%), with respect to males.

However, no gender dichotomy was seen with respect to the different entertainment purposes associated with texting which included *teasing, trolling, social entertainment, friendly irritation, forwarding funny texts and jokes*.

Main purpose of texting					
	Entertainment	Important communication	Means of escape	Intimate conversations	Other maleficent purposes
Male	23%	27%	20%	17%	13%
Female	26%	30%	15%	19%	10%

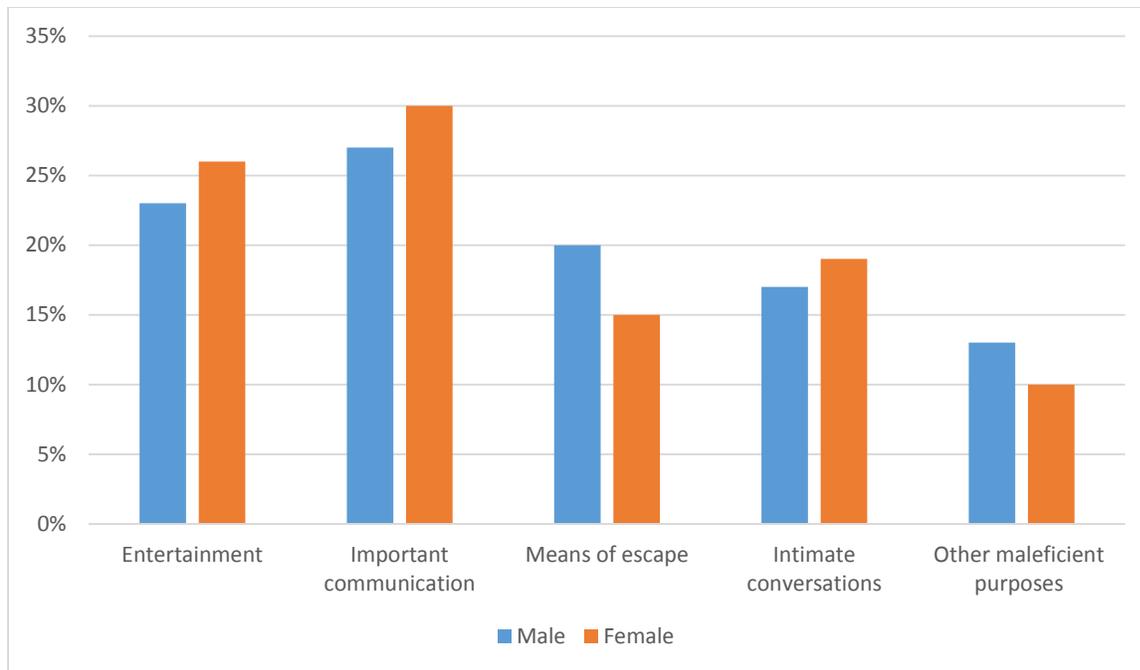Table 5: Gender differences in main purpose of texting

Figure 8 : Gender differences in main purpose of texting

1.5.3   Characteristics of texting

The focus group discussion following the dialog on need and culture of texting, involved unravelling the gender specific difference in characteristics of texting. The examination involved detecting the differences in typographical and non-standard use of traditional language. The participants were asked to express their usage traits with respect to the use of abbreviations, slangs, avoiding subject pronoun, verb and article, with respect to the non-standard usage of traditional language. It was found that males showed higher tendencies to deviated from the traditional rules of language while texting, as use of slang, avoidance of pronoun (78%), verb (70%), and articles (79%), very often, as shown in Table 6. However, females were found to use abbreviation more often than males (78%). Also, males exhibited higher tendency to resort to typographical deviations, as they emphasized more on phonetics (79%). Females were seen as using punctuations more often than males (25%), and also used emoticons more than males (80%), as indicated by previous studies (Al Rousan et al. 2011; Hwang 2014).

	Male			Female		
	Very often	Sometimes	Never	Very often	Sometimes	Never
Use of abbreviations	74%	21%	5%	78%	18%	4%
Use of slang	72%	23%	5%	70%	32%	38%
Avoiding subject pronoun	78%	25%	53%	74%	20%	54%
Avoiding verb	70%	21%	49%	65%	24%	41%
Avoiding articles	79%	24%	55%	73%	23%	50%
Emphasis on phonetics	79%	30%	49%	75%	34%	41%

Use of punctuations	20%	38%	42%	25%	30%	45%
Use of emoticons	60%	31%	29%	80%	15%	65%

Table 6: Gender differences in characteristics of typing

1.5.4 Gender biasness in Texting

Selecting recipients: The participants were enquired about their preferences while selecting recipients for texting. The participants were seen as selecting recipients based upon the purpose they preferred to fulfil via texting. Males were found to select recipients in a more task oriented manner, texting when necessary, until unless contacting romantic partner or a friend, in which case they intended upon entertainment or fulfil intimate conversations. However, the females did not indicate any specification with respect to relationship status while texting an individual. Both the genders selected recipients for the purpose of information gathering, which was also facilitated by the ability to review the gathered information easily on texts. Also, both the genders were more interested in selecting the recipients who showed frequent tendency to reply, delayed replies annoyed the senders.

Type of conversations: The participants resorted to texting to perform different types of conversation, and they specifically indulged in the same to facilitate conversations in awkward situations. Females were found to indulge more in "*fun conversations", "to kill time", "conversations forming social bonds", and "to gossip"*. Males indulged in texting practices to "*announce something", "reply to questions", "exchange important conversations", "planning meetings",* and *"unwinding from stress"*. However, both the genders accepted sexting and indulging in intimate conversations, via texting. They also accepted to using texting practices to carry out conversations which they felt shy to conduct in person, such as expressing intimate feelings.

Unfit conversations: The participants accepted that breaking up over text was not deemed fit, regarding it as inappropriate. However, they also accepted that it was often practiced by them. Both the genders regarded it is "*disrespectful", "inappropriate",* and *"cowardly"*. Males showed higher tendency to break up over text, than females. Also, conversations of high importance, such as discussing *"important college projects"*, *"discussing assignments"*, and *"important formal engagements"* was also not preferred through texting, and both the genders preferred conducting such conversations over phone.

Arguing: Both the genders accepted to argue over text messages, to avoid the lack of heat prevalent in the face to face arguments. Females states they preferred arguing over text to *"avoid physical altercation"*, *"having the freedom to wake away from the conversation",* and *"avoiding saying mean things".* Males stated that texting allowed them to *"stay level-headed", "retract from heated messaging".* However, males showed preference to argue over phone than messages, to avoid misunderstandings and avoiding counterproductive things in arguments. However, abusing behaviours were not found to be very prevalent, as both the genders did not confirm to abusing while arguing.

1.6 Discussions and Conclusions

The present study was focused upon investigating the texting behaviours of young college going students, as very little research is available on the same. The findings showed that texting practices were quite prevalent among the young adults, and the gender based dichotomy was also seen. The young culture of daily frequent texting often practiced at night was seen, where gender dichotomy with respect to recipient selection was observed. Females remained in touch with family member more often, as per their social roles which often promote preference of familial relations over other. Further, both the genders contacted romantic partners and friends somewhat equally, as per their gratification needs. These gender specific differences in usage were found to be very well in agreement with the theoretical framework proposed by the researcher to investigate the issue.

The different characteristics of typing were also found to be prevalent among young population, who often resorted to orthographic deviation, typographical features, and deviations from traditional language usage. The preference of semi coded messages, and Textisms is related to their relative ease, allowing the user to form spellings as per their leisure. Further language biasness was seen when males and females selected recipients for texting and types of conversations conducted by them. These findings aligned with the theoretical concepts and findings from the previous researches, which indicate that social roles define psychologies, and the resultant lexical choices and styles of communication.

The prevalent usage of texting and preference of youngsters to the text route of communication could be exploited in various fields to resonate with the ideologies and thoughts of youngsters. The new text language is viewed by different researchers as a novice language of modified literary characteristics, seen in a positive light. This language could be used to design relevant marketing strategies which appeal the youngsters, and interest them in the different college degrees. A commonality between the language often used by them in daily communication, and the college promotion, would entice them, and inculcate a feeling of belongingness, curbing the gap between college authorities and students.

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Section A: Demographic Profile

1. Age
   - ☐ 18-22
   - ☐ 23-27
   - ☐ 28-35

2. Gender
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female

3. Type of course
   - ☐ Full Time
   - ☐ Part Time

Section B: Culture and Need of E-texting among young people

4. What is your daily frequency of texting?

   _____

   _____

5. Is there any particular time of day when you text more often than other?

   _____

   _____

6. Who do you text often to? (Friends, special someone or family)?

   _____

   _____

7. How quickly is a response expected? Does it vary between friends, family and someone special?

   _____

   _____

8. What is the main purpose of texting for you??

   _____

   _____

9. So, since you text for entertainment, what sort of messages can lead to entertainment? (trolling, teasing, etc)

_____

_____

Section C: Characteristics of Texting

1. How often do you use abbreviations and acronyms?

_____

_____

2. Do you prefer using slang while texting?

_____

_____

3. How often do you avoid subject pronoun when texting?

_____

_____

4. How often do you avoid verb while texting?

_____

_____

5. How often do you avoid using articles while texting?

_____

_____

6. Do you give emphasis on phonetic spelling over actual spelling?

_____

_____

7. What is the importance of punctuation in your texts?

_____

_____

8. What is the importance of emoticons in your texts? How often do you use them?

_____

_____

Section D: Gender Biasedness and Texting

9. How do you select recipients for texting? Are there any specific characteristics of receiver?

    _____

    _____

10. Is there any type of conversation well suited for texting? If so, does it vary between gender?

    _____

    _____

11. Which conversation is not deemed fit for texting? Especially with opposite gender?

    _____

    _____

12. Do you argue using texts? Does it even include abusing? If so, how often?

    _____

    _____

Any other

comments?_____

_____

_____

Thanks for your time

About the Author

Dr Ashok Kumar as head of the Academic Support Centre is actively involved in developing and delivering academic skill enhancement programmes. He has language skills training and teaching experience of over three decades in India, in East Africa and in Oman. He has been associated with a UN programme in Ethiopia, which involved community teaching during the great famine of the 80's. His doctoral study was on communicative language, and his master's was in English. He holds IELTS Training certification and a diploma in teaching English. He has presented and published research papers at international conferences. He is a member of the World Association for On-line Education (WAOE)