

# A Study of the Effect That Different Online Communication Ways of High-school Students Have on Their Social Connections

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## Abstract

This essay set up a formula between the independent variable and the dependent variable to make a quantitative analysis of different online communication approaches and social relationships. In the experiment, eight popular online communication methods were selected as independent variables, and a preference index (FI) was introduced to represent social relationships as the dependent variable. Through the five-day online communication experiment and a post-questionnaire survey of 40 students, this essay evaluates the influence of online communication approaches on the preference index and puts forward some reasonable suggestions for high school students' online communication style.

## Keywords

Social relationship, online communication.

## 1. Introduction

A report from Global Web Index indicated that every 3 minutes of using the internet worldwide includes 1-minute using social media. This report covers more than 50,000 people worldwide, showing that 94% of internet users have at least one social media account. Internet socializing is substantially taking a remarkable weight on building relationships. Social psychologists Schutz proposed the Interpersonal Needs Theory in 1958, which includes affection, inclusion, and control. Schultz thinks the three basic needs are the key to human development, and they must be satisfied at the same time. Anyone not satisfied can create individual psychological trauma, and who failed to meet the needs may be looking for a complement in the virtual world. All this Information indicates that internet socializing is vital to an individual's interpersonal needs and human development.

However, online communication is different from face-to-face communication, as tones and facial expressions cannot be heard or seen. Thus, a specific attitude is hard to convey. People found it hard to express the actual image of themselves via the internet. As a result, they are harming their social relationship. This problem is significant in high school students as they are in puberty. The independent, rebellious, and considerable study pressure may show their frivolous, rebellious, unconventional, and other characteristics through online communication. Thus, causing a significant impact on their social relationship.

This topic dedicates to find the relationship between specific online communication approaches and social relationship. Also, specific ways of online communication are suggested to increase the degree of dependency, credibility, likability, worship, or enjoyment of the users. It can help those people who are struggling in the online social environment to establish good social relationships.

## 2. Features of High School Students' Online Chat

High school students are in a particular period of adolescence, becoming adults but trying to deny adult norms (Eckert, 1998). They often show a high sense of independence, novelty, and rebellion. This also reflects in the use of languages, such as more significant usage of dialects and accents, the appearance of frivolous and self-indulgent, and preference to create and use new terms on the internet. Therefore, high school students are often seen as a focal force for linguistic innovation and change.

As a particular social group, high school students' online communication methods vary from person to person and are often arbitrary. However, some ways of communication can not be acknowledged by others, so the favorable impression is low. Also, online communication is different from the real world. People cannot understand each other's thoughts through facial expressions and body movements. Therefore, sometimes high school students cannot express their thoughts correctly, and they stubbornly refuse to explain their thoughts. According to the survey of students in different Beijing high schools, 85.71% of high school students believe that the way of online chatting will directly affect people's influence on them, thus affecting their social relationships.

## 3. Research Method of the Influence of Online Communication on Social Relationship

To obtain the influence of online communication on the social relationship more accurately, this paper uses the independent variable and dependent variable methods in mathematics to analyze the relationship between the two quantitatively. At the same time, it makes a quantitative assessment of the influence of social, interpersonal relationships.

The relationship between independent variables and dependent variables is shown in Formula 1:

$$y = f(x)$$

in which

X: Independent variable, the online communication approach used by researchers in the experiment subject.

Y: Dependent variable, the change of social relationship caused by the change of the independent variable.

### 3.1. Independent Variable

The difference between online communication and face-to-face communication includes differences in statements, pauses, and conveying emotions. Face-to-face communication allows communicators to see each other's facial expressions, hear their tones facilitating communicators, and utilize time pause between sentences to clarify each other's connotations. However, online communication, which is dominated by text, cannot utilize the same method. In contrast, online communication developed distinct approaches to convey emotions such as emoji, punctuation, and stickers.

According to the current online communication situation, this essay divided the online communication approach into two types: format and element.

Format: This is how sentences are separated (commas, periods, Spaces, carriage returns). For example, the sentence is separated into multiple lines to express, or the sentences are separated by carriage return line to break it into two complete sentences.

Element: Elements include modal particles (only at sentence ending or in the sentence), interjections (can be used at a separate sentence), emoji and stickers, abbreviations.

### 3.2. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is a social relationship, in which we use Favour Index(FI) to evaluate the social relationship. Favor Index consists of five components: the degree of dependency, credibility, likability, worship, and enjoyment. The higher the Favour Index is, the greater the influence of the specific online communication approaches on social relations is. The lower the Favour Index is, the lower the influence of the specific online communication approaches on social relations is.

## 4. Research

### 4.1. Independent Variable

The formats group is selected according to the current popular format type on the internet, and it is shown in Table 1.


The elements group is more complex, including such content, such as appellation, mood, punctuation, abbreviations, colloquial language, parenthesis, and description order. So which one is favored by high school students? In this experiment, we designed a questionnaire about the preference of the elements group on online communication and carried it out in several different high schools. Each participant must choose three favorite elements.

The result shows that interjections, modal particles, and maps are more acceptable and popular among high school students, and thus set up element groups.

Table 1 shows the independent variables selected in the experiment, and four format types and four-element types are selected, respectively.

The independent variable is shown in table 1.

**Table 1.** Expression Mode

Group	Number	Type	Example
Format Group	1	separating messages between 2 sentences	Welcome to the experiment We are Plus U
	2	space punctuation	Welcome to the experiment We are Plus U
	3	Punctuation	Welcome to the experiment! We are Plus U.
	4	separating messages between sentence segments	Welcome to the experiment We are Plus U
Element Group	5	modal particles	欢迎来到 Plus U 的实验呀 modal particles is particular in Chinese 呀, 啊, 嘛, 呐, 诶
	6	interjections	"Gee, that's super!"
	7	emoji and stickers	
	8	abbreviations	"xswl" resembles "lol" in English

## 4.2. Experiment Method

In the experiment, we specifically zoomed into the impact of different online communication approaches on WeChat. Forty volunteers will chat with eight people representing eight different online communication approaches for five days. At the end of the experiment, the participant will fill out a survey evaluating the intimacy of their social relationship.

The experiment has set up eight different online communication approaches. For all four forms of communication approaches in format group, no element should be used, which leaving participants to focus only on format changes. Therefore, the result of the change in social relationships is only caused by certain online communication forms.

This group is used to evaluate the impact on social relationships caused by the change in the format of online communication. All these four ways exclude the use of the elements for the sake of controlling the variables. Consequently, the matching change in social relationships is caused only by a specific format.

Format	element
separating messages between 2 sentences	modal particles
separating messages between 2 sentences	interjections
separating messages between 2 sentences	emoji and stickers
separating messages between 2 sentences	abbreviations
Format	element
separating messages between 2 sentences	N/A
space punctuation	N/A
Punctuation	
separating messages between sentence segments	N/A

In terms of format, most of them preferred "dividing sentences by changing lines (lines feed)." Among the questions that asked the subjects which expression they disliked most, 50% chose "dividing sentences by punctuation," 25% chose "dividing sentences by blank."

In terms of words, 56.25% of the respondents were more interested in "ending with modal words," followed by 46.88% of the respondents tend to have interjections in this way of chatting. Their Favor Index ranks second and third.

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