How social media influence social skills of generation z

Aiym Kemperbayeva

Nazarbayev Intellectual School of Chemistry and Biology in Ust-Kamenogorsk

Word count: 4458

**Introduction:**

It is estimated that people, who use social media, spent 685 billion hours on Social Network during 2018 and next year’s research shows that 41 million messages are sent out every minute. Are not these numbers terrifying? (Damjan Jugovic Spajic, Dec. 11, 2019, *Text, Don’t Call: Messaging Apps Statistics for 2020*, Retrieved from <https://kommandotech.com/statistics/messaging-apps-statistics/> )

Nowadays social media has become an indispensable part of people’s lives and it is difficult to find the person who does not use it, especially among teenagers. From the moment when social networks began to gain their popularity, people started to be interested in their influence on different areas of life. According to previous researches social media have a huge impact on social skills of Generation Z. Since users can communicate with each other wherever they are via social nets, teenagers prefer to socialize on-line. The majority of young people even rarely meet with friends face to face, instead of that they are concerned with ‘chatting’.

On the lesson of GPPW my groupmates and I, have discussed the problems of Generation Z after watching a video about that. The issue of deterioration in social skills because of social media has drawn my attention as from my experience in communicating with friends and classmates I have noticed that they have problems with expressing their own thoughts. That is why I become interested in this problem and I would like to know how social media influence social skills of young generation and how to reduce the negative impact of it.

I can be biased during the research work, because as far as I am concerned social media has only negative impact on communication skills of Generation Z, because most of young people have problems with creating a clear, understandable speech. Furthermore, comparing the generations, for instance Z and X, the significant difference in social skills can be distinguished between them. On the Internet many videos can be found, where representatives of Generation X, being the same age as Generation Z, communicate excellently during interviews and their manner of speech is impressive. It is known that Generation X did not use social networks and have good access to Internet.

This research will be beneficial for parents and teachers because they are playing a significant role in child-rearing. As research will give advice on how they should handle the situation and problem of their kids. Moreover research should be read by teenagers too as they must understand the importance of having good social skills. Young people cannot develop if they are not possible even to formulate their ideas in correct way and from this paper they will see how to stop the negative impact of social media on communication skills and become more active in real life.

**Context:**

The social media is an essential communication tool that is used in everyday life by people. By using social media it is able to interact with person who is on the other side of the world and it made people’s lives more convenient. According to the Pew Research Center survey 45% of 750 teenagers between 13 and 17 years are using it almost constantly; moreover 97% are users of such platforms as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. It shows that young generation spends most of their time on social media and even socializes with friends online. In addition to that, about 93% of communication today has become nonverbal and people have problems with understanding the emotions of each other while they are texting. That is why the problem which is related to the lack of social skills of Generation Z is occurring now. (Belmont R., Jan.7, 2019, *The Effect of Social Media on Social Skill*, Retrieved from <https://lhshorizon.com/2828/opinions/the-effect-of-social-media-on-social-skills/> )

To begin with, ‘Generation Z’ is a group of people born between 1995 and 2012 perceived as being familiar with the internet from a childhood (Hughes J., Nov.13, 2018, *Communicating with Generation Z: Everything You Need to Know*, Retrieved from <https://www.keystoneacademic.com/news/communicating-with-generation-z-everything-you-need-to-know> ). Technology is a part of the Gen Z’s life and representatives are used to modern devices, changes in this sphere that distinguish a big difference between Gen Z and previous generations.

As Gen Z does not know the life without gadgets and internet, the impact of modern technologies can be defined by this generation exactly. PRC survey found that teens are sure that social networks only affect them and their communication skills in positive way. 81% of teens claim that social media connect them with friends more deeply as they can observe what they do via SM and they can support each other at any time (Anderson M., Jiang J., Nov. 28, 2018, *Teens and their experiences on social media*, Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/11/28/teens-and-their-experiences-on-social-media/> ). However, research results suggest otherwise, since technology become popular, teenagers’ ability to communicate effectively has weakened. Social media usage and ‘chatting’ can isolate young people and interfere with improving social skills that are essential in the real world. Representatives of Gen Z are struggling with reading emotions of interlocutor and expressing their own as they do not socialize with person in life and cannot analyze his/her actions, facial expressions. This may prevent them from solving any problems and building up new relationships. (HealthyMePA, Jun 4, 2018, *Impact of Social Media on Kids and Teens – Communication is Key*, Retrieved from <https://www.healthymepa.com/2018/06/04/impact-social-media-kids-teens-communication-key/> )

Exploring this problem through social lens shows that changes in social skills influence daily life of people, because it might spoil relationships between older and young generation. Generation Y and X are used to group working and prefer face-to-face communication, while Gen Z prefers to solve work problems on-line by calling or emailing. This may cause misunderstandings at the workplaces and it is not surprising that it causes arguments in family too. (NDMU | Communication, Feb.6, 2019, *The Evolution of Communication Across Generations,* Retrieved from <https://online.ndm.edu/news/communication/evolution-of-communication/> )

From cultural lens, culture is special because of its language, its heritage of the writers - their works and the eloquence of the people. Unfortunately, in conversation people mostly use shortened versions of words, in addition neglect grammar and syntax. Such use of language destroys its beauty and reduces the value. (Chetan R. Bhamare, 2019, *Effects of Social Media on Communication Skills*, Retrieved from <https://theknowledgereview.com/effects-social-media-communication-skills/> )

Specialists in Education sphere are especially interested in this issue as deterioration in social skills contributes to students’ low activity at the lessons and it can lead to a bigger problem related to recruiting. Gen Z has weak soft skills as they are isolated from the real world and that is why they are not demanded as older generation with perfect communication skills. Gen Z and older workers come into conflict because of handling some work problems on-line by using modern gadgets instead of face-to-face conversations. Specialists may include in the educational program subjects or curriculums that will teach how to communicate properly. (Schawbel D., Nov 5, 2019, *Why Gen Z is Unprepared for the Jobs of the Future*, Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-gen-z-unprepared-jobs-future-dan-schawbel>) Furthermore, psychologists find this topic essential and are looking for positive aspects of impact of social media on Gen Z’s social skills. They claim that there is a less harmful effect of social media rather than positive ones as people can always be in touch with their close people and communicate with anybody. Moreover, recommendations of psychologists about preventing loneliness and anxiety could solve problems of most young people who are suffering because of lack of communication skills. (Marilyn Price-Mitchell, Apr 15, 2020, *Are Young People's Social Skills Declining?* Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-moment-youth/202004/are-young-peoples-social-skills-declining>)

Usage of social media is becoming more and more serious problem. In the US 70% of teenagers (13-17) check social media more than two times a day, in contrast to 2012 this number was 34%. (Richter F., Oct 9, 2018, *Teens' Social Media Usage Is Drastically Increasing,* Retrieved from<https://www.statista.com/chart/15720/frequency-of-teenagers-social-media-use/> ) 97% of Gen Z were using WhatsApp in the Netherlands in 2020, that confirms young people socialize on-line too often with each other. Therefore, it is not surprising that the problem of poor social skills is common among young people. (H. Tankovska, Jan 25, 2021, *Most popular social media platforms for Generation Z in the Netherlands 2020*, Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1097357/gen-z-most-used-social-media/>)

According to the research that was conducted in every region of Kazakhstan 33% of young people prefer to express their thoughts and experiences on-line rather than in-person. That reflects lack of communication skills and fear of real social relationships. (Orazbekova A., Feb. 18 2020*, How social network affect young Kazakhstanis*, Retrieved from <https://newtimes.kz/obshchestvo/105474-kak-sotsseti-vliiaiut-na-malenkikh-kazakhstantsev-issledovanie>)

**Aims:**

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of using the social media on social skills of Generation Z. Overall research aim is to evaluate the communication style of teenagers and the changes of it depending on the impact of social networking sites. In order to achieve the aim, the following research questions have been drafted:

1. Which negative effects of social media could be defined?
2. Is there any good impact of social media on social skills?
3. How has communication style changed through several generations?

The hypothesis predicts that social media influence is harmful to teenagers and contribute to deterioration in their social skills that may lead to other issues. Furthermore, the outcomes of research will be useful beyond parents to the organizations in the field of education as troubles with social skills can also affect student’s academic performance.

**Methods:**

To gather the data, three types of methods were used: survey, interview and focus group discussion. The survey was used to determine public opinion about the influence of social media on social skills of Gen Z. The interview was chosen as the second method to get more data, distinguish how communication skills have changed through generations and find out the cause of changes and the last research tool was applied to identify different perspectives on the problem of deterioration in social skills and possible solutions to this problem.

The title of the survey was “The Gen Z and social media” and answers were conducted anonymously by Google forms among Kazakhstan people aged 12-60 from the Nur-Sultan and Oskemen cities. Even if this topic is related to young generation, it was essential to consider both young and older generation viewpoints. Because the problem must be explored through different angles and perspectives. One hundred and eight people have responded and shared their own thoughts not only in closed-ended questions, but also in two open-ended questions. Thus, by conducting the survey online both quantitative and qualitative data were collected, the former prevailed. The questionnaire gave not only statistics, but also answers one of the research questions, which is ‘Is there any good impact of social media on social skills?’. Furthermore, it was very fast and comfortable to get answers from over a hundred persons. However, analyzing the answers for open-ended questions it is seen that some responses are too short and meaningless as the survey was anonymous and people did not bother with the answers.

To get more detailed information about the research topic and check out the survey results the interview was conducted as in answering question specialists participated and their opinion was considered. Three people with connections to Generation Z were interviewed. Namely, Oskemen citizens: a teacher who is in regular contact with children,a school psychologist who knows how to approach and monitor children, and a parent who has often noticed problems with children's communication skills. This sample group was chosen because they are clearly introduced with the research problem and adults can share not biased opinion. The main purpose of the interview was not only to find out what the respondents think about the problem of generation Z, but also to note the difference in social skills between the different generations. Therefore, by interviewing the research question ‘How has communication style changed through several generations?’ was answered. The Interview included four open-ended questions that required full answer and all of them were dependent on experiences of respondents, thus only qualitative information was gathered. It was simple to get all the questions answered in a short time and it was easier to analyze them in text form. However, as the interview was conducted online it was difficult to get in touch with some of the people interviewed.

The focus group discussion was held to consolidate all the information, propose solutions, and to hear the views of Generation Z themselves, in addition to verify the interview results. The interview showed that social skills of generation Z have decreased, and the discussion confirmed it and participants of it tried to find out solutions to this problem. Due to pandemic situation the focus group discussion took place online on the Microsoft Teams platform. Four 11th grade students of NIS participated in the focus group because they are personally familiar with the problem of declining social skills and it was important to get their perspectives on the problem also to suggest possible solutions. Four questions were asked to each participant and they were aimed most at collecting qualitative data related to predicting the future of the problem, also what can be made to solve it. The discussion lasted about 15 minutes in good atmosphere. The question ‘Which negative effects of social media could be defined?’ was answered during hot discussion of participants. Discussing problem with the students was comfortable and interesting, nobody was shy to speak out. But there were some difficulties as noting responses and generalizing all of them.

**Results:**

The primary research was conducted to collect data and answer the research questions.

The survey was conducted among Kazakhstan people aged 12-60. As a result, 110 people were surveyed by using Google forms. This research method determined that 57,3% of respondents have from 2 to 4 social media accounts and 30,9% have more than 5, this numbers shows that a lot of people are fond of social media (image 1). There is another statistic which confirms overusing the internet sources: 42,7% of participants spend in average 3-4 hours in a day on SM while with a little difference in 5.4% people confess about using the SM over 5 hours (image 2). This results clearly show that today people use social media too much often.



Image 1. The number of social media accounts that respondents have.



Image 2. Average time spent on social media by respondents.

 The next question answers demonstrate that in most cases people prefer to socialize in person, however their preferences depend on the situation. It is noticeable that as the time spent on SM increases there is an increase in number of people who prefer to communicate online (Table1). Despite this fact more than a half prefer face to face interactions. Also, people's views on the negative impact of social media on social skills are evenly divided and they consider that social media have plenty positive aspects on improving social skills. For example: there is an opportunity to learn about different points of view from your own; there are many blogs that teach proper socialization, healthy relationships. According to this answers, social media affect social skills of Generation Z both in negative and positive ways, moreover the main good aspect is that people claim that social media help person to feel free. Therefore, ‘Is there any good impact of social media on social skills?’ research question was answered by the survey.

The focused group discussion was held as the second tool in research. 3 11th Grade students of NIS participated and shared their opinion. The results of discussion show that students are familiar with the problem of deterioration in social skills of Generation Z. The table above (Table 2) represents short version of students’ answers, thus there was additional discussion about the negative effects of social media. Students said that using the social media influence the way of communicating of young generation. The main consequence of overusing the social media is that in future it is possible that people will move away from face-to-face communication in favor of online communication. Another research question about the negative effects of social media was answered, in addition during the focus group discussion students give their suggestions on how to stop the situation worsening. Some of them are make people aware of problem and its seriousness, apply new technologies which will allow to improve social skills. From this point, social media have awful negative impact however it can be stopped or reduced by spreading a data about problem.



Table 1. Cross tabulation



Table 2. Student responses to FGD questions

 The third research question, which asks how the communication style has changed through several generations, was answered by the interview. It was conducted with schoolteacher, psychologist, and parent of representative of Generation Z. All three interviewees agreed that Generation Z has weak social skills and find it difficult to form logically correct speech. To say about the differences the same situation occurs, adults claim that the younger generation is less literate than their generation. The speech of Generation Z is not as fluent and clear as speech of previous generations. Parent without a doubt said that it is because of an influence of using the internet sources by young people. They do not even read books now as they used up to receive simple texts and images from the friends. There is no socialization said parent. Schoolteacher mentioned that not only the social media influence the social skills of Generation Z, but also video games have harmful effect personality. School psychologist does not support this idea fully, because all young people are different and some of them might have low social skills because of some traumas. All in all, there is a decreasing trend in social skills of Generation Z and it cannot be neglected.

All three methods results demonstrate that the changes in communication can be distinguished and people understand that especially elder generation. The most important thing that was learned by conducting the methods is that majority of teenagers do not consider that they have problems with social skills and see the need to explore this issue.

**Conclusion:**

The research aim, which is to investigate the effect of using the social media on social skills of Generation Z and to evaluate the changes in communication styles, was reached. The hypothesis was partially confirmed as it was predicted that impact of social media is harmful which may lead to deterioration of social skills, but according to primary research work social media have positive aspects too and it is not the only reason for lack of communication.

The answers for the following questions were received:

**Which negative effects of social media could be defined?**

The research of Belmont R. suggests that the main disadvantage of social media is that people have noticed problems expressing emotions, as communication is now mostly non-verbal. Focus group discussion results support this idea, adding that excessive use of social media and technology improvement will make conversations even shorter than they are now, thus people should be aware of the consequences that may occur. These results were deduced for a reason and prove that social media has many negative effects on social skills of young generation, also that confirms the significance of solving the problem. The solutions of it can be very simple such as informing people about the problem, encourage people to communicate in real life and so on.

**Is there any good impact of social media on social skills?**

Based on the survey results, both adults and children believe that the main advantages of social media are that people can easily express themselves and communicate with others online despite their shyness and complexities. Surprisingly, the secondary research found that Gen Z feels more at ease with online communication and are happy to be able to watch their friends all day long. This shows that people find a lot of good out of this situation and not everyone thinks that social networking affects the deterioration of social skills. Therefore, the problem of low social skills of Generation Z can be neglected by public and that will influence the process of handling this issue.

**How has communication style changed through several generations?**

There are clear differences in communication between generations, starting with the fact that Generation Z is tied to technology and its devices from birth. Secondary survey shows that there is a lot of generational conflict because Generation Z members are more comfortable solving work issues in an online format while older workers are more comfortable solving problems by talking and discussing with their colleagues. The results from the more narrower sample group interview are similar to the Secondary survey, with experts also noting that they often notice less grammatical speech from the younger generation, and speech is illogical. Speech quality is deteriorating from generation to generation and adults understand the seriousness of the problem much more than young people.

To conclude, the results of this study show that people are divided on the issue of low communication skills of Generation Z. Nevertheless, this problem must be heard, since the changes in the literacy and behaver of the generation Z are already visible, and it is important to understand that this is largely influenced by the overuse of social media. To preserve the normal communication and beauty of the languages it is important to start paying attention to this problem not only to generation Z but also to the state which can help stimulate people to take action. This results’ confidence is high as there is no doubt that this problem is essential and will remain be like that until people will get start to solve it. Moreover, the methods, which were conducted, covered more than a hundred people and the secondary research many times more, thus the information can be generalized quite extensive. All process: collecting the data, analyzing, interpreting, helped to understand the research problem deeply and to consider it from different angles as at the beginning of the research work, only one side of the problem was evaluated.

**Evaluation:**

This research could be assessed as a work of high quality as all research questions were answered as properly as they could.

To begin with, the survey was conducted among people aged 12-60, thus sample group helped to determine the views of young and elder generation on problem. The open-ended questions were useful to receive full answers to the question about the negative aspects of social media and by this understand the position of respondents. Nevertheless, after asking the question about the connection of Generation Z’s difficulties in expressing thoughts/opinion with increasing the consuming of the internet sources, was some tricky to analyze as people just claimed yes or no. It would be better to ask about the level of impact of social media on communication not just about the existence of connection, because it is what is needed to identify at the end of the survey.

With the help of next method, the interview, the opinion of specialists was identified. The strength of the interview is that it included questions about the difference in communication between generations depending on early internet use, so the information was more detailed, which helped to explore the theme of changes in communication. However, it is possible to improve this method by increasing the number of participants and the sample of this method must be the same (teachers, school psychologist, parents of representatives of Gen Z). In this way even more opinions are considered, perhaps among the new participants there will be those who think that there is no change at all.

The third method of focus groups was successful in selecting high school students (grade 11), as they themselves are members of Generation Z, soberly assessing the situation and not being one-sided when discussing the impact of social networks on their and their friends' communication. There were also detailed answers to the question of how the situation can change in the future and what can be done to prevent this. However, there was a weakness that stood out in that it was sometimes difficult for everyone to get their point across due to time constraints, so it would have been better to increase the time for discussion and give everyone a chance to speak up.

The personal perspectives were confirmed and further modified in the study, the bias had no effect on the quality of the work. Therefore, it is safe to say that this work was done well and the results can be used to study people's communication and as a warning to the younger generation that most of them are badly influenced by social media. Moreover, the sample sizes of all methods are enough to generalize all results and make conclusions in a proper way.

**Further research:**

This research has some weak points that can be fixed to make a good result.

Firstly, in case of further research it would be better to add new research questions as the questions presented in this work do not cover fully the idea of the research work. There were some difficulties in parsing and analyzing the methods and relating each question to them. To remedy this, another question could be added: What are the evident changes in social skills due to social media and how do young people feel about it? as it would be able to explore the topic in more depth.

Secondly, the way in which data was collected for the secondary research should be changed, as the main purpose of collecting information was to find the right information and reliability was not important, for example the information was used even if the author of the article is not listed. However, it is necessary to keep these two aspects at the same level of importance so that the results of this work are relevant and credible.

The following can be noted that the primary research was conducted only among citizens of Kazakhstan, it would be better to conduct at least a survey among residents of other countries in order to find out the attitude to the problem of weak social skills of Generation Z. This would help to investigate the problem on a global level and find out whether the relevance is different. As it can help to unite forces of countries to stop the harmful influence of social networks on communication of young people.

The personal perspectives have been influenced slightly, in that new information was gained during the study about the beneficial effects of social media on people's communication skills and this was not even considered at the beginning of the work, whereas other aspects about the changes and consequences of low social skills were totally confirmed. The problem of declining of the social skills exists and must be considered as important over the world.

**Bibliography:**

* Damjan Jugovic Spajic, Dec. 11, 2019, Text, Don’t Call: Messaging Apps Statistics for 2020, Retrieved from <https://kommandotech.com/statistics/messaging-apps-statistics/>
* Belmont R., Jan.7, 2019, *The Effect of Social Media on Social Skill* <https://lhshorizon.com/2828/opinions/the-effect-of-social-media-on-social-skills/>
* Hughes J., Nov.13, 2018, *Communicating with Generation Z: Everything You Need to Know* <https://www.keystoneacademic.com/news/communicating-with-generation-z-everything-you-need-to-know>
* Anderson M., Jiang J., Nov. 28, 2018, *Teens and their experiences on social media*

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/11/28/teens-and-their-experiences-on-social-media/>

* HealthyMePA, Jun 4, 2018, *Impact of Social Media on Kids and Teens – Communication is Key* <https://www.healthymepa.com/2018/06/04/impact-social-media-kids-teens-communication-key/>
* NDMU | Communication, Feb.6, 2019, *The Evolution of Communication Across Generations* <https://online.ndm.edu/news/communication/evolution-of-communication/>
* Chetan R. Bhamare, 2019, Effects of Social Media on Communication Skills <https://theknowledgereview.com/effects-social-media-communication-skills/>
* Schawbel D., Nov 5, 2019, *Why Gen Z is Unprepared for the Jobs of the Future* <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-gen-z-unprepared-jobs-future-dan-schawbel>
* Richter F., Oct 9, 2018, *Teens' Social Media Usage Is Drastically Increasing* <https://www.statista.com/chart/15720/frequency-of-teenagers-social-media-use/>
* H. Tankovska, Jan 25, 2021, *Most popular social media platforms for Generation Z in the Netherlands 2020*

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1097357/gen-z-most-used-social-media/>

* Orazbekova A., Feb. 18 2020*, How social network affect young Kazakhstanis* <https://newtimes.kz/obshchestvo/105474-kak-sotsseti-vliiaiut-na-malenkikh-kazakhstantsev-issledovanie>
* Marilyn Price-Mitchell, Apr 15, 2020, *Are Young People's Social Skills Declining?* Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-moment-youth/202004/are-young-peoples-social-skills-declining>

**Appendices:**

**Appendix 1 – Survey**



**Appendix 2 –** **Focus Group Discussion**



**Appendix 3 – Interview**