SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES IMPACTS ON
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
SKILLS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Pritta Chasombat

A Thesis Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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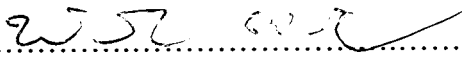**National Institute of Development Administration**

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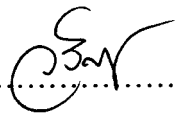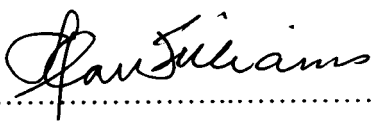
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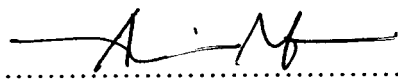
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ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis	Social Networking Sites Impacts On Interpersonal Communication Skills And Relationships
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The use of social networking sites and other mobile applications have been growing intensively, not to mention, several researches indicated that it is one of the factors that impact the relationship maintenance between one another. It is highly desirable for all citizens to have a good interpersonal communication to maintain and develop further relationships. Bad communication skills may have harmed the interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, when talking about social networking sites like facebook and what it does to the society, people instantly thought of a smaller world or a communication platform with no boundaries. Regardless of their benefits in connecting people around the globe, scholars have been studying its impact on user's mental health and society using quantitative approaches with western university students. Nevertheless, thai users stated that their phubbing behaviors do no harm to their relationships. This paper aimed to filled gaps and limitations of previous researches, with qualitative approach by interviews and observations of thai users along with their interpersonal communication skills. Qualitative method was chose to gain understandings of the underlying reasons and motivations of the users which provide explanations that quantitative method could not do. The interviews were conducted in both one on one and small focused group, consisted of ten participants in total. Results are that facebook have both positive and negative sides to the users, while it virtually brings people together but in also drift away their loved ones in reality. There would be certain thoughts and feeling they choose to express on facebook and texts but face to face is still needed for serious and personal

conversations. It is undeniable that facebook has been with human beings for almost a decade that users have almost forgotten their lives without it. Sometimes, to turn off is to connect with others in order to build strong interpersonal relationships.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Originally, people use internet for informational knowledge but somehow nowadays, it was used for communication and news updates for trends and/or as entertainment channels. Thai people use Internet and Social Networking Sites to connect and communicate with each other because of the easy Internet access. Since everything is updated on the Internet or Social Network for almost twenty-four hours a day, therefore, the users may feel the pressure to be online all the time to be part of the mainstream or the social norms.

The use of Social Networking Sites and other mobile applications have been growing intensively and it is highly desirable for all citizens (Users) to have a good interpersonal communication while virtually communicating with others in order to maintain and develop further relationships on- and offline. Bad communication skills may have harmed the interpersonal relationships.

As defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), "Social Networking Sites are applications that enable users to connect with each other by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles and sending emails and instant messages between each other." Content of these profiles are information like photos, videos, and personal blogs. Social Networking Sites are platforms where user can create a webpage with personal information to interact with friends both realistically and virtually which allows them meet the people that have the same interests (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Because of the innovation of Social Networking Sites, the communication method has shifted from face to face communication to computer or smart phone mediated communication. The new communication method continuously impacts interpersonal communication of people around the globe. Scholars have proven that people who spend great amount of time on the Internet would spend less time talking to others in any methods (Turnbull, 2010) which can lead to loneliness and isolation. Tone of voice, postures, gestures or facial expressions is the key of the richness of communication.

In the past decades, Social Networking Sites has been one of the top academic areas researchers and scholars worked and studied in. Aspects of Social Networking Sites were being examined, including impacts on psychology and society and the growing usage intensity. These studies were conducted using probability samples in Universities in North America and Europe (Peerayuth Charoensukmonkol, 2014). Good communication is one of the factors that help to maintain and develop relationships with others. Bad communication skills may have harmed the interpersonal relationships and not to mention one's work career. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the affects of Social Networking Sites on Interpersonal Communication skills by constructing in-depth interviews with non-probability samples (purposive sampling). Thai samples were selected for one on one or small focus group interviews as previous studies in Thailand are mostly done quantitatively. Qualitative method can gain understanding of underlying reasons and motivations of the users and to provide explanations for the previous quantitative researches.

Since this study is uniquely done in qualitative method, providing explanations and rationales behind users' behaviors. The result can help to understand the impacts of excessive online activities on interpersonal communication skills and relationships. This paper can be used for further deep insights analysis in various aspects of Communication and for organizations that would like to explore in using virtual communication and relationship development.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Berlinger (2000), virtual life experiences can blind us the importance of human contact we need for our physical, psychological and social well-being. The more time user spent online, the less time user spent with authentic relationships. Social Networking Sites are the extension of people's relationships virtually and realistically, in contrast, it can drift apart from their love ones. Kruat et al. (1998) found that frequent use of Social Networking Sites would result in a social circle declination. A study released in February 2000 by the Stanford Institute for the Quantitative Study of Society by Prof. Norman Nie, support the finding that the Internet contributed to social alienation. Regular Internet users attended fewer social events, watched less television, and spent less time with friends and family (Raney 2000).

Moreover, Social Networking Sites users tend to communicate through Social Network mobile applications even when they are having face to face meetings with their friends. Generation Y (birth year between 1980 to 2000) seem to lose an actual social interaction and communicate through messages; some even had an anxiety and feel frustrated if one's Internet-accessed mobile devices has been taken away or lose the access to internet (Busko, 2009). It is almost impossible to find users walking around without mobile devices in their hands. There are several studies suggesting that young adults today have very low media literacy because they would take Social Networking Sites as their personal space and act as they wish and may cause mental health problem for the excessive users (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Most of the findings that are available indicated that the users' behaviors changes over time.

2.1 Related Theories

There are several theories that should be introduced in this paper for they are strongly related to the content which can help explain the users' behaviors. The theories are Technology Determinism, Social Penetration and Uses and Gratification.

2.1.1 Technology Determinism

Technological Determinism is the beliefs by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) that technology determines social and cultural changes (history), and that it is the key governing force in society. Technological Determinism Theory explained how technology advances impacts every aspects of society including methods of communication. The five key beliefs of Technological Determinism (Warat Karuchit, 2013):

1. Technology causes social changes, past, present, and future.

2. Technology is autonomous, self-controlled and independent. It has its own momentum while blindly shape the society.

3. The impact of technology is inevitable, new technology transform society at every level, institution, social interaction and individuals.

4. Technology is non-neutral. "Technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral," (Melvin Kranzberg, 1917-1995).

5. Effect of technology is universal. All societies affected the same way regardless of their backgrounds in which degrees of the effects may vary. It is due to interaction between inherent (Physical) properties of the medium and the inherent (Physiological) properties of human beings.

As stated by Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian literary scholar during 1960s, it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action (Warat Karuchit, 2013). He proclaimed that media is an extensions of man, extending a man's vision, hearing and touch through time and space. Electronic media would provide new experiences and vision for average people and enable us to be anywhere at any time.

2.1.2 Social Penetration

Altman and Taylor's (1973) Social Penetration theory was made describe the development of interpersonal relationships that refers to the interchange process of behaviors between two or more parties who are in the process of developing a relationship. Interpersonal intimacy is a slow process. Lasting relationship requires consistence, continual and mutual vulnerability through breadth and depth of self disclosure. The theory is also known as Onion Theory, like onions, personalities have layers from outside (what other perceived) to the inner core (private), and as the relationship develops, the layers of personalities will peeled off one by one. Computer mediated communication has speed up the intimacy process because computers allowed individual communication to be more open that engaged personal characteristics.

Studies have been studying self-disclosure in face to face interactions aspects but not many have talked about how people disclose information over social networking sites. Facebook, for example, users are able to set their privacy level (self-disclosure) (McCarthy, 2009). While setting the privacy, people share information and develop intimate relationship by Facebook messages and creating closed group. Facebook users self-disclose and share personal information by posting pictures, updating statuses (thoughts and feelings), hobbies, and messages. Face to Face interactions is a rather slow process in disclosing personal thoughts, emotions, and feelings to others, but in the virtual world it allow users to share and disclose personal information immediately.

People are more likely to disclose more personal information on Social Networking Sites than they would in face to face communication because the level of control is higher (Ledbetter et al., 2011). Those with poor social skills may prefer to express themselves Facebook. This may lead to an avoidance of face to face communication, which is harmful to interpersonal relationships.

2.1.3 Uses and Gratifications

In order to understand the motivation and the purpose of Social Networking usage, Uses and Gratifications theory (UGT) (Trowbridge, 1976) was being

examined. This theory stands on the audience's point of view, based on these basic theatrical and methodological assumptions:

      1. The audience is active and goal oriented, taking the proactive role in deciding how to use media in their lives.

      2. The audience knows their needs and is choosing the media to meet their own needs by linking their need to specific medium.

      3. The media is competing with other resources for need of satisfaction.

      4. The audience is well-aware of their usage, interests and value judgments.

The Four basic needs of UGT: Information, Entertainment, Personal Identity, and Personal Relationship and Social Interaction. Facebook and its function serves all four the gratifications. It is where users socialize, finding friends and connecting with loved ones from afar. Unlike the old web-surfing, users can now express themselves on their personal status and receive online responses (likes and comments) from their group of friends. Often enough, users find their sense of humor by following Facebook pages that have funny quotes and pictures amuse them. Since there are Facebook pages to subscribe, and it is practically online twenty-four hours a day, users receive information from their preferred sources i.e. news, fun facts, up-coming events etc. (Warat Karuchit, 2013)

2.2 Interpersonal Communication

Communication is one of the basic needs of our lives. We communicate to satisfy our needs: physical, identity, and social well-being. Those who fail to communicate report negative life satisfaction, early death, lack of identity and low relationship development (Turnbull, 2010). Interpersonal Communication means using both verbal and nonverbal messages to exchange meaning and emotions (mostly in face to face communication) between two or more parties. Interpersonal communication is not only what is being said but how it is said using tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures and body language in which it can be learned and improved. People receive messages through such forms of nonverbal behavior by

observing cues of posture, facial expression, and dress to form an impression of the other's role, emotional state, personality and/or intentions. Sender and receiver have to interact with each other, sending back and forth both verbal and nonverbal messages in order to understand each other. For example, while one is listening, he or she may be sending out responses using nonverbal cues by smiling or nodding. By that, the sender (Speaker) will perceive that the receiver (listener) has agreed or understand the intended message. When the message being sent and understood by both parties will considered as a successful communication.

Message does not only means speech or information, but also the nonverbal cues like facial expressions, tone of voice, and body languages. They can convey additional information about the verbal message and reveal emotional attitudes that underlie the content of speech. Noise refers to anything that distorts the message and meaning which distort the meaning intended by the speaker. The use of inappropriate body language, lack of attention or disinterest, and cultural differences can be considered noise in nonverbal cues context. Feedback consists of messages the receiver returns in their reactions. The receiver may respond to the cues just like how they would response to the verbal message, indicating to the sender of the receiver's feeling towards the message. Frequently, verbal and nonverbal messages contradict each other, and when it happens, the nonverbal message is most likely to be believed.

2.3 Social Networking Activities, Communication and Relationships

Before personal computers, internet and mobile devices, people developed and maintain relationships by meeting in real life and communicating face-to-face. Real-life interaction is and has always been serving as crucial steps in developing relationships. With later inventions and innovation of Information Age where people can conveniently access and exchange information online for free, the communication process have transformed. With the change of communication trend, society required less real life interactions with others. The mobile devices have become the medium and communication channel between people and knowledge or entertainment. Through computers and mobile devices, society shifted from face to face interactions

with little social networking activities to social networking activities with little face to face interactions.

Interpersonal communication is both spoken and written words along with nonverbal cues to develop and maintain relationships with friends and family. Although online interaction have many benefits, scholars are saying as the learning of relational skills continues, people who rely on online relationships are losing the ability to interact with others in real life. The ability to talk or communicate face to face is becoming eradicated. The inability to effectively communicate may harm relational the interpersonal communication skills of young adults. This can potentially impact family relationships, socialization, school performance, and employment. Scholars are raising concerns of the negative effects of Internet among the younger generations and their potential risks to safety, well-being, and skill development (Drussel, 2012). Moreover, Selfout, Branje, Delsing, ter Bogt and Meeus (2009) reported that excessive computer use among adolescents resulted in low friendship quality and are at higher risks of depression and social anxiety due to the limitation in exploration of one's real life environment and impact the growth of relationship development.

Social Networking Sites can be used to maintain and develop relationships that already exist Virtual world allow individuals to interact with others, both personally known and unknown (anonymous). Because Social Networking Sites like Facebook allow users to connect with other individuals or groups virtually as if they were meeting face to face (Giffords, 2009). Social Networking Sites allow its users to virtually interact and does not require the presence of their friends and family, which "resulted in an inability to access interpersonal behavior and signals to facilitate communication," (Drussel, 2012). In addition, adolescents consider their online relationships to be very real as relationships in their real lives which can be long-term trusting and very meaningful (Mishna, Mcluckie & Saini, 2009). Because of the attached meaning and emotions to these virtual relationships, human interactions in the future become very unpredictable.

Many researchers agreed that excessive use of Internet and Social Networking Sites may limit the proper interpersonal skill development (Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2003). When interpersonal communication skills are depleted, conflict

resolution and problem solving skills are also in declination. Chung and Asher (1996) indicated that responses to hypothetical conflict situations are similar to responses observed in real-life experiences (Johnson, Lavoie, Eggenburg, Mahoney & Pounds, 2001). The increase of adolescence reliance on technology for communication with the declination of face to face interaction will result in decreased ability to handle real-life conflicts. Adolescents that have close online relationships, they were reported high amounts of conflict and felt frightened or were in significant trouble did not reach out and communicate with their parents (Wolak et al., 2003; Mishna et al., 2009). The ineffective problem solving skills can jeopardize safety and lead to series violence acts (Woody, 2001; Bastian & Taylor, 1991; Opotow, 1989).

A study published by American Psychologist (Kraut et. al., 1998) was one of the earliest researches to examine the relationship between Internet use and social involvement and psychological well-being. The study was conducted of ninety-three families, consisted of 256 people, in their first twelve to eighteen months of being online. Results were found that increased Internet use has affected in the decreased of social involvement, feeling lonelier, and in depressive symptoms were increase. The higher the Internet use, the less communication among family members.

The Pediatrics Journal warns of teens that excessively spend time Facebook that they may suffer from Facebook Depression Syndrome. The scholars from American Academy of Pediatrics argue that being rejected on Facebook can be more harmful than being ignored by their actual friends which could be followed by mental illness and would commit a suicide. Moreover, study led by Joanne Davila at Stony Brook University found that texting, email and social networking sites can negatively impact teens to obsess over certain issues rather than solving conflicts. "One of the things we are finding is that there are people who are at a greater risk to the negative interactions in social networking and consequently feeling depressed or sad afterwards," (Petrillo, 2011).

A study conducted by Turnbull in 2010 have concluded that Generation Y and Baby Boomers both see face-to-face communication as an ideal way to communicate but the changing of today's lifestyle made it less and less possible to face to face communication. However, Gen Y likes to communicate through texting and is

missing out the conversation quality for it is lacked of non-verbal cues that help clarity meaning and identify emotions.

Essex researchers showed that by discussing personally meaningful topics with the use of smart phone is jeopardizing the relationships. Personal talks are more vulnerable and speaker would be threatened if listener is being distracted by the smart phone, "may inhibit relationship formation by reducing individuals' engagement and attention for their partners, and discouraging partners' perceptions that any self-disclosure had been met with care and empathy," (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013).

2.4 Phubbing

The Macquarie Dictionary (Australian national dictionary) (Phubbing: A Word is Born, 2013) claimed that phubbing behavior have been around the society since 2007 but no one have talked about such bad behavior because there was no one to describe it. In May 2012, the dictionary and the McCann Melbourn, the advertising agency of the campaign, invited a number of lexicologist, phoneticians, cruciverbalist (cross-word maker profession), authors, and poets to find a word to describe the behavior of ignoring others by using your phone.

Phubbing (Verb) is the act of snubbing someone in a social setting by looking at your phone instead of paying attention (Phubbing: A Word is Born, 2013). In another word, phubbing is the action of ignoring others during social events and hours by using smart phones, whether it is checking Facebook or using other chatting applications. Phubbing can be seen anywhere during human beings daily activities, i.e. during meals, meetings, lectures, or social gatherings with friends and family. Phubbers (those who phub) often neglect and ignore the importance of maintaining and/or developing relationships by not communicating with others.

Chanvit Pornnoppadol (2013), the Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, from the Department of Psychiatry, Mahidol University, were sponsored by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Rajanagarindra Institute and Thai Health Promotion Foundation to research the children and adolescents mental health regarding technology and games aspects under the website called Heathygamer.net in 2006. He provided the explanation of phubbing that human beings like to stay connected and

communicated all the time and afraid of being mentally alone and we like to be the center of the attention. By phubbing, the user checks Facebook or other smart phone applications to feel connected and as if he/she being paid attention to. However, there are times where phubbers use their smart phones as an escape from social group to avoid discomfort in the crowd or so called the awkward silent, like, in the elevator or traveling alone to work by bus and they are bored at a party. Moreover, He believed that phubbing is also contagious, for example, phubbing caused discomfort to others so they might as well phub all at the same time to avoid the awkward silent (Chanvit Pornnoppadol, 2013).

Jintarin Jaidee, the psychiatrist from Bangkok Hospital, summarized the negative impacts of phubbing: declination of quality relationships with friends and family, jeopardizing one's own responsibility and the performing of tasks, ergonomically harmed, increase of accidents (not paying attention to the surrounding), the habit of constantly checking smart phones, anxious, and may lead to other addiction like online games, mobile applications and Social Networking Sites (iT24Hrs, 2014).

2.5 The Model

Researcher from Pittsburg University, Young (1998), the founder of Center for Online Addiction, has studied Internet Addiction and gave the definition of Facebook Addiction as follow: "Facebook Addiction Disorder or Social Networking Sites Addiction Disorder is an addiction criteria, such as neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, escapism, mood modifying experiences, tolerance, and concealing the addictive behavior, appear to be present in some people who use SNSs excessively," (Young, 2009). Dr. Young have adapted Ivan Golberg's Internet Addiction criteria (Reddy, 2002), a parody of pathological gambling and has identified 8 major symptoms of Internet addiction as follows:

1) Preoccupation: Constant thinking about previous online activity or looking forward to the next online session.

2) Increased use: Time spent on online has increased significantly to achieve satisfaction.

3) Inability to stop: With several attempts, user could not reduce the time spent online.

4) Withdrawal symptoms: Restlessness or depressed when attempting to reduce internet use.

5) Lost sense of time: Without noticing, users lost track of time when online.

6) Risky behaviors: Relationships and educational or career opportunity are being jeopardized by the use of Internet.

7) Lies: Lying to family and friends to conceal the excessive Internet use.

8) Escape to the Internet: Use of Internet as a way to escape depression and stress.

2.6 Situation in Thailand

Every country and region is unique in cultural differences and values, therefore, has each would have different users' profiles and statistics. When talking about Social Networking Sites, Thai users would think of Facebook on top of their heads. Recently, Facebook was not a communication platform where users can share and exchange personal experiences, but it has become a platform where business can provide customer service and promotion.

ZocialRank under Zocial inc. have summarized the statistics of the year 2014 (approximately January to March) that Facebook have the total population of 1,191 million (worldwide). Thailand was ranked the third in Asia Pacific with total population of 26 million Facebook users (85.63% active and 14.73. inactive), 14.4 million users in Bangkok, followed by Chiang Mai (860,000 users) and Chonburi (500,000 users). Thai users like to share and or post pictures (57%), check-in (33%), share link from another website (21%), videos (3%) and status update (2%), and these activities mostly happened at 2 PM, 5 PM and 10 AM consecutively (It24hrs, 2014). Thai users like to check, share and show. Check, meaning check-ins on Facebook to tell their Facebook friends of their whereabouts. Although checking in has not been popular for other countries, but it is ranked as the top four of Facebook activities for

Thailand. Share is to share links, pictures, status for their followers and friends or to call out attention from the virtual world. The Wall Street Journal (2013) published an article of Thai people taking 'selfies' (self-taken pictures).

Surangkana Wayuparb (Electronic Transactions Development Agency (Public Organization), 2014) the Chief Executive Officer of Electronic Transactions Development Agency (Public Organization) (Thailand) or ETDA (2014), reported the findings of survey in 2014 year to date. The average time spent on the Internet grown from 32.2 hours per week or 4.6 hours a day to 50.4 hours per week or 7.2 hours per day which could be calculated to one third of each day. Smart phones are the most used device, on average of 6.6 hours per day, for entertainment (chatting via smart phone application 78.2%, news updates 57.6% and research/search engines 56.5%) and communication for information (sending and replying e-mails 82.6%, research for information and e-novels 73.3%, and reading news update and e-novels 63.8%).

Hotels.com (2014) examined the digital vacationing habits across 28 countries globally, trying to identify the countries that find it most difficult to achieve work/life. The survey revealed Thais are the most attached to their mobile devices when traveling or on vacation (85%). When it comes to exaggerating travelling experiences, Thai travelers ranked the fifth (46%) and respondents have admitted to exaggerate their stories to make their traveling experiences more interesting to engage listeners.

Drawing conclusion from the above Literature Reviews and situation in Thailand in 2014, Thai users and their habits are on the edge of being addict Internet and/or Social Networking Sites. Previous models have been constructed to mainly suitable for severe cases and for identifying patients that are in need of treatment. In addition, there is a high possibility that the available models are mainly based on users' profiles from European and North American countries. According to the statistics, Facebook have become the dominant Social Networking Site in Thailand with more than 26 million users, not to mention, their unique activities on Facebook and phubbing behaviors. Their activities on Facebook and time spent online were taken to account. The researcher suggest to modifying the model that it is suitable for Thai users and their habits, by setting the criteria for those who considered to be using Social Networking Sites excessively but not as severely addict as the presented

model. The researcher would like to propose the modified model for Thai users and their Facebook habits as follow:

1) Preoccupation: obsessively checking Facebook's newsfeeds all the time.

2) Lost control: user is unable to control one's phubbing behaviors.

3) Escape to the Internet: use of Internet as a way to escape depression and stress.

4) Check, Like and Share: the habit of constantly checking, liking and sharing personal information on Facebook.

5) Self-Expression: voluntarily disclose personal information to build, develop and maintain relationships.

6) Social Influence: users' emotions, opinions, or behaviors are affected by their friends and other social trends.

7) Substitution: using Facebook as communication substitution to develop and maintain face to face relationships.

8) Function impairment: neglecting personal relationships and responsibilities.

Thai users voluntarily check, like and share personal interests on their Facebook profiles, leading them to constantly check for friends' comments as well as responding them. They are highly likely to be influenced by their friends and what they think are the social norms while expressing one's identity. Phubbing is one of the major factors of functional impairment, using too much smart phones may negatively impact others around the users. Unknowingly, some used Facebook as an escape from depression and stress or when the users believed they are unoccupied. In addition, they like to use Facebook as a substitution of communication when being away from family and friends, like, when studying abroad.

The modified model will be used to identify the interview participants of this paper. Of those who the writer have been identified to meet at least seven of the criteria will be interviewed and conclude a data analysis from. The model should be called, "the model" in this paper.

This research will look into how Thai users' interpersonal skills and habits have been affected by Facebook by answering these questions: How do Facebook and phubbing behaviors effect on Interpersonal Communication?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In order to determine how Facebook has influences interpersonal communication, in-depth interviews were conducted to gain deep insight into the motive, feelings, and reason why users have chosen Facebook and to obtain clear understanding by reading between the lines in non-verbal cues (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). The participants were selected based on non-probability or purposive sampling, because they were selected based on their behavior that is suitable for the study (Babbie, 2001).These participants were chosen based on the model that was recreated to suit Thailand's situation. The interviews are conducted in both one-on-one and focused group and were interviewed face-to-face and via video calls to enable interactions between interviewer and interviewee(s).

In the total of ten interviewees, five men and women were asked to interview. Six of them participated in the focused group interview, one man and five women and all in the age of twenty three and twenty four with different occupations. Regardless of their differences, they have one thing in common, their frequent usage of Facebook and phubbing behaviors. One of the participants from the focused group were asked to re-interviewed individually to see whether or how much of her opinions were influenced by others during the focused group interview session. The other four participants, two females and two males were interviewed individually; two females were interviewed face to face while two males were interviewed via video calls. Due to the difficulties of time arrangement and location, video calls were taken place to allow interviewer to see interviewees' interactions and non verbal cues.

To reduce the age gap, similar age range was one of the main factors of selecting these interviewees (no more of less than five years from the researcher). As they were grown and lived during the years of communication shifts from phone calls, to textings, desktop's online chatting software and application to Social Networking Sites. The researcher sees this as an advantage to approach which will allow the

interviewees to open their emotions which will also allow a better understanding for both parties to communicate.

The interview questions were open questions which are changed and adapted according to the situation and the flow of the interview, allowing natural flows of the conversation and for the interviewees to feel comfortable to discuss their feelings (Appendix).

CHAPTER 4

OBSERATIONS

4.1 Focus Group Interview Session

The focus group was selected for their behaviors on Facebook. They were selected based on the author's observation via Facebook. All of the participants from the group have liked, commented and share statuses frequently (regardless that two of the participants have limit access of Facebook while studying aboard in People's Republic of China). Moreover, they fit into the model that has been modified as mentioned above (Situation in Thailand).

The conversation of the interview session went in the same direction, with little to no rejections and conflicts within the group. The direction of the answers and responses depend on the first answer or the dominant speaker. Once the first response has been heard, the rest of the participants would agree and add additional comments. There were times that interviewees would think carefully and try to be optimistic before answering. The question was, "what if I (the interviewer) started to phub?" The response from one of the participants was "I would ask you what is more interesting on Facebook than me? Or why are you on Facebook and not talking to us (the group)?" and all agreed to the answer. However, when the interviewer deliberately checked Facebook or phubbed for more than a few minutes, no one asked the question.

Some of their answers contradict their behaviors were seen during the session i.e. phubbings, constantly checking Facebook or other mobile chatting applications. Interviewer equivocally asked the participants to stop phubbing, "How would you feel if your friends and family asked you to stop phubbing at the dinner table?" and, "do you consider phubbing as rude?" Those who were phubbing stopped and response to the question which they believed that it is rude to phub therefore it is okay to be asked to stop.

The group agreed and believed that the best way to communicate and build and maintain relationships is through face-to-face conversations but still rely on Facebook to communicate with each other daily. Facebook can be seen as a substitution for face-to-face for chitchatting and greetings but they would still have to arrange time to meet up with each other. One interviewee mentioned that she have pictured her long lost friend based on the text messages and personal statuses. Facebook allows her to have small chitchats with her friend using comment features. When meeting with the friend, conversations does not flow as smoothly as those comments on Facebook.

Participants admitted to check Facebook whenever they are unoccupied or as an escape from disinterest conversations, like during the meetings and classrooms. The repetition of such behaviors may have lead to a habit of checking during dinner with family and friends. They claimed phubbing to be contagious – they phub if others phub. As they check Facebook and other mobile applications, their attention and interests in the conversation have dropped while they would find an interesting topic from Facebook and would start a new conversation instead.

Similar questions were asked, first, at the beginning of the session and second were asked half way during the session. First question, "do you think Facebook has any impact on interpersonal communication skills?" The response from one of the participants was, "No, I still talk to my friends and family normally, nevertheless, it is almost the only contact point when I was studying abroad." Next, interviewer added facts and findings from previous researches with the same question in different wordings. "There were findings indicated that Facebook have made interpersonal communication skills decline because users were communicating much less with incomplete sentences or one word answer whereas the older generations used figurative languages and proper sentences to communicate whether online or offline. Do you agree with the finding [that it impact interpersonal communication skill]?" The same participant was phubbing while the question was asked, and the time between questions and his response were longer than the first question. The responses were slightly different and believably that he misunderstood the question. The response was, "it depends on the person. No matter how well you were taught to use the language in school, it is their free choice of how to communicate," Another

participant added, "the technology advancements and the tight schedule during the day changed the way we communicate. Abbreviations and one word answers should be enough for the receiver to understand the message."

On the other hand, the participants believe that sharing personal statuses to express their feelings may harm the relationship development. Sharing personal status on Facebook is one of the ways to express their feelings when they have no one to talk to or say something indirectly to someone. Interviewees were asked why they chose to share personal status rather than talk to one of their best friends. One of the participants explained her reasons: everyone is occupied with their own lives and I am uncertain whether they would care to or have the time to listen. Another participant said that he would delete a post if no one 'Likes' within ten to fifteen minutes because he felt ignored. According to their answers, although they admit to be hearing their friends' voices when reading the comments, but there are times where messages were misunderstood because of the missing nonverbal cues, like, messages that were meant to be humorous but were seen as criticism.

4.2 One-On-One Interview Sessions

4.2.1 Female One

One of the participants was separately interviewed individually after the focused group session. She stated some of the answers she heard during the discussion were unpractical and too many opinions were shared which dominated her opinions. The questions were similar to the questions that were asked during the focus group session.

She strongly agreed that communication should be face to face more than texts but Facebook has helped maintain the relationship, with no further progression or development. According to her response, her mother have been excessively phubbing and neglected the time spent together. "My mom was phubbing so much during lunch and totally ignored what I said. Sometime, in the middle of my story, she would pick up her phone and stop listening. I tried talking to her which she heard me, but her response was, 'wait …,' so instead, I ignored her too. I mean, I talk to my mom as much as before but mostly through textings and mostly short conversations – frequent

but short." Similar with her conversations with others, Facebook talks and other mobile applications are for short conversations and are in substitution for phone calls.

On the other hand, when asked of her phubbing behaviors, the participant strongly believed that she has been phubbing appropriately, "I phub when I have nothing to do or when I'm bored. I know when to and when not to phub." She was asked how much she is listening out of a hundred percent when she phub. She claimed to be listening forty percent of the conversation's keywords and will put her smart phone down if the ongoing conversation is interesting.

The participant used Facebook to interact with her friends which allows her to see her friends' life events, pictures and/or thoughts about certain topics. She does not have to call or text to her friends individually to know what they are up to but instead she checks on her newsfeed or their profiles. Facebook would be a platform where she can express herself and does not expect likes and/or comments on her personal statuses. She claimed that she would think before sharing status, filtering words and thoughts that might have been too personal. Serious talks and conversations would happen privately via phone calls and or dinner with her family and friends.

4.2.2 Female Two

This female participant likes to share notes, pictures, status or check-ins on Facebook, at least once or twice a day. She has self claimed that she is an active user, more than anything, her clear phubbing behaviors in workplace and social hours has been visible to the author. By referring to the model, the author sees her as a candidate for interview.

"I checked Facebook as soon as I'm awake," said the interviewee. Her behaviors of constantly checking her Facebook are also visible during the interview. Facebook is her source of information and news updates from governmental issues to her friend's wedding. She often use Facebook to stay in touch with her friends and family abroad. She believed that Facebook provide additional channel for its users to communicate to each other.

Just like any other participants, she has been phubbed and has negative feelings toward the behaviors. She have asked her boyfriend nicely to stop phubbing during dinner but never asked her family members and friends to do the same. She

reasoned her family talks to each other a lot and it does not hurt to have personal spaces. So, the participant would have phubbed, if she has been phubbed by the others first. She claimed she listens to keywords of the conversation and while using smart phone, her responses were not always in an instance after the message has been transferred by the sender.

Her personal statuses on Facebook are thoughts of the moments when she was alone and has no one physically present to talk to. Facebook is her friend when the participant is alone. Frequently enough, she used the note features to write and describe her thoughts about a certain topics. Therefore, this participant strongly believed that her interpersonal communication skills have not been affected by Facebook for she can still communicate effectively. Although nonverbal cues and emotions are not presence on Facebook, it does not concern her for Facebook is where she can act foolishly absurd and carefree (for relaxing purposes). The participant preferred face to face conversation with full attention, possibly with no phubbings, for personal or serious topics.

4.2.3 Male One

The author has noticed the participant's activities and behaviors on Facebook and other Social Networking Sites or smart phone applications. Evidently, he frequently used Facebook and admitted to be phubbing at times which meet the requirement of the author's model. He claimed that by using Facebook, he feels more connected to the world and his friends – he likes, comments and talks to his friends via Facebook more than any other methods of communication available on his smart phone.

Facebook is a platform where the participant can express feelings and thoughts to his friends and to the world which also allows him to see the others' as well. It is where he can social without actually socializing. The relationships that already have been established offline would be stabilized on Facebook. He stated that sometimes it can make two people closer to each other by commenting and liking on Facebook. The interviewee believed that Facebook have made his social circle smaller and closer to his friends.

When asked about phubbing, he claimed that he has not been phubbed in the presence of his family and friends but he actively checks Facebook during lectures. He says he listens about fifty-fifty percent of the lecture and reasoned that the topic was boring, too fast, and advanced. The participant was asked if he was having a meal with the other two friends and one of them decided to phub, what would he do? "I'd ignore the guy. If he was not interested to what I was saying, then I could not make him to listen. It is his choice." Although the interviewee would ignore his phubbing friend, he could not deny the negative feelings when he has been phubbed by his friends.

During the interview session, the participant gave his full attention and able to understand what was being said regardless of the internet signals. Because he was using his smart phone to make the video call, he has been asked if he was anxious to get back on Facebook. He answered: No. I know I'm on Facebook all the time and I actually think I am addicted to Facebook but it is not like I cannot live without it. Time changed, people changed, communication changed.

His response led directly to the last interview question, how Facebook affect interpersonal communication skills of its users? The participant does not have a clear answer to the question but he claimed that Facebook have both positive and negative effects. He stated:

> Facebook have changed the way we communicate to each other, it is convenient and very fast. Facebook is the new technology and it changed us. Nevertheless, Facebook have dominated the conversation's topics, like, what is on Facebook rather than personal interests. The emotion is also missing. If you ask me if I talk to my mother less than before there was Facebook, I would say, I talk to her the same as before just different method.

4.2.4 Male Two

The author has noticed the participant's activities and behaviors on Facebook and other Social Networking Sites or smart phone applications. Evidently, he frequently used Facebook and admitted to be phubbing at times which meet the

requirement of the author's model. He claimed that by using Facebook, he feels more connected to the world and his friends – he likes, comments and talks to his friends via Facebook more than any other methods of communication available on his smart phone.

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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS

There are as many negatives to the positives impacts of Facebook on the users. Facebook has been one of the communication methods between users that are from different locations. This paper have can summarized the causality between social networking sites' impact on communication and relationship as follow:
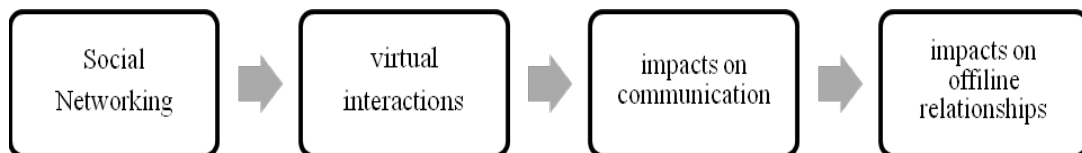

Figure 5.1 The Causality of Facebook Impacts on Communication and Offline
          Relationships

Social Networking Sites allow virtual interactions between users which highly impact on one's communication skills and relationships. Users can see their friends' activities and personal thoughts by looking through newsfeeds and interactions. From the observation above, this study has been consistent with other previous works that users willingly self-disclose personal information and like the attention. Because of the technological advances, communication shifted from casual hangouts to online chats, liking and posting comments.

According to Technological Determinism, Social Penetration and UGT, there are reasons behind such behaviors of using Facebook and phubbings. Since Social Networking Sites have been introduced, less face to face communication is required as well as other source of information. Users used these sites as communication channel with friends and family, daily news updates, and knowledge. On the other hand, users self-disclose personal information including likes and comments that

engaged self characteristics which may have speed the process of relationship intimacy. Facebook users self-disclose and share personal because users have higher controls than face to face communication. This would result the avoidance of face to face communication jeopardizing interpersonal relationships and communication. As stated in Social Penetration theory, users sometime choose to express feelings because they would not have to experience the unwanted reactions from which they are sending messages to (more control of the conversation). In contrast, the freely self-disclose and personal status updates as one's emotion changes may influence how one restrain emotions to family and friends. The habit of blurting feelings on Facebook would result in aggressive communications.

Like mentioned earlier, the participants have been selected based on the frequent used to Facebook as the author has seen on Facebook. Most of the participants have been chosen be in the same generation as the author to avoid uncomfortable situations due to the age gap during the interview. It is clear that almost all the participants see that Facebook has more benefits and do not think they are using Facebook excessively, i.e. reconnecting people and communication substitution. They believed that Facebook does not impact negatively on them but without knowingly, Facebook have impact their relationships with their friends and family. Most users are in denial of their behaviors on Facebook or phubbing because 1) they do not want to admit their bad habits of phubbing, 2) they claimed that they would only phub when they think they are free and does not see how this would impact their personal health, mental and society, 3) last but not least, they strongly believed that Facebook is one of the necessities of their lives for communicating, study, and work in order to maintain good relationships for people afar. Simply put, users think they are using Facebook appropriately, especially when they are unoccupied, which has no impact on their relationships with friends and family and their interpersonal communication skills.

As for the relationship maintenance and development, users agreed that Facebook and other mobile chatting applications are good for small talks and greetings. They use these applications to virtually interact and maintain the relationships that have been established offline. Facebook is fast and easy to get his or her messages across to their friends using one word or sentence to answer. Instead of

making phone calls, they can text and comments on each other posts on Facebook to show interests and concerns. On the other hand, drawing conclusion from the interview sessions, participants all agree to some extent that Facebook have affected the interpersonal communication skills. Communicating through Facebook, whether liking, sharing and commenting, have all affected the way they communicate with each other. The participants claimed that they still communicate effectively on and off Facebook. Also, Facebook allow them to communicate and interact with more than one friend at a time. However, the absence of face to face conversations may disrupt the interpersonal communication skills as text-based communication lacks in nonverbal cues. Nonverbal cues is essential in clarifying the underlie message. The way they communicate on Facebook becomes the habit users communicate offline. Participants expressed that sometimes they have to guess the tone of voice and emotions through texts and are having a hard time differentiating sarcasm from sincerity.

At first, slangs, abbreviations, and missed-typed words were used to mock up the dialects and accents. The emergence of new slangs and abbreviations, or as known as the cyber-slang happened on Facebook then become widely used in users' offline daily lives when texting or on Facebook. The habit highly affects their written and spoken languages when have to communicate with authorities and writing official documents or academic papers because users incautiously adapted and familiarized with using such cyber languages and communicated as they were on Facebook (Lytle, 2011). Not to mention if these slangs and abbreviations were used in real life, parents and elders are having difficulties understanding the new words, creating gap of communication and misunderstandings.

CHAPTER 6

CONTRIBUTION, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 Contribution

Since Social Networking Sites have been introduced, society have experience many beneficial aspects of virtual community and interactions. With such beneficial from virtual world, it is desirable for all users to be able to maintain good relationships offline by using good communication skills. In the past, there have been studies conducted quantitatively with correlations and variables' relationships with little on Thai users' profiles and their motivations. This paper has designed to conduct qualitatively to explore the deep insights and rationales to provide explanations and understandings of the impacts of excessive online activities on interpersonal communication skills and relationships. This paper can be used for further deep insights analysis in various aspects of Communication and for organizations that would like to explore in using virtual communication, and relationship maintenance and development.

6.2 Recommendations

Virtual interactions can be very beneficial for users to connect with each other and it can help maintaining their relationships. While trying to virtually maintain friendships on Social Networking Sites, such interactions have declined the communication between family and friends and neglect their offline relationships. Not to mention that Facebook is lack of nonverbal cues that help users express their emotions.

Smart phones and/or Facebook can be used depending on the appropriateness time and place. For example, waiting for an appointment, personal spaces like homes

or bedrooms, during breaks at work or at school and university, emergencies, traveling by public transportation (after being safely seated and stood). Places and situations that should not be phubbing are during meals or social events with family and friends. During the meetings and lectures, or at a seminar, smart phones should not be used to honor the speaker.

Like any other mental illnesses, the patient will have to admit the one have been diagnosed and ready to be treated. Same with phubbing, users have to admit that he or she has a bad habit of phubbing and/or checking Facebook. When users are ready to be treated or changed, they will also be well-aware of their own habits, and constantly reminding themselves not to carry out such bad habits. While phubbing becomes a bad habit, the interpersonal communication skills dropped. The first step is the willing to change. Second, observe the way you communicate and act (phub) towards others. Third, actively try to improve your communication, like, reduce phubbings.

Users have to remind themselves to turn off such applications to be able to turn on the face to face communication channel. Always be cautioned that no communication can take place if you are not listening, instead of multitasking by phubbing, concentrate on what the speaker is saying or pay more attention to friends and family at presence. Other offline activities like, reading your favorite novels, baking, or gardening. There should be an offline and devices-free day for family events or during dinner to promote communication within family. Elders in the family should set themselves as good role models for using their smart phones appropriately i.e. check their newsfeeds during personal time and not at the dinner table.

6.3 Limitations

The participants were known to the interviewer and were selected based on purposive sampling. Although the result may not be generalized and unable to represent the big population but the participants are in the age range of twenty three to twenty seven which can represent users from similar range of age.

All the sessions were conducted in casual settings and open space of time and place for interviewees' comfort. Although interviews have a lot of advantages for

nonverbal cues, like facial expressions and reactions, there are a lot of limitations as well. First, focused group interviews are hard to control and keep everyone interested throughout the session. There were a lot of side talks, irrelevant discussions and phubbings during the session. The directions of the answers would depend on the dominant speaker of the group even though their reactions would say otherwise but others would remain silent. The response was mostly add-ons comments and opinions. Sometimes the interactions between interviewer and the interviewees moved forward too fast for all the response to be heard. The responses were also not as in-depth as individual interviews. Second, individual interviews allowed the participants' opinions not to be dominated by others but half on the personal interviews happened via video calls. This limited the interviewer's observations and interactions not to mention the poor internet signal of both parties.

Because the questions have not been pretested, many essentials that may help improving this research are missing. Firstly, the questions were originally written in English but had to verbally translate into Thai spot-on for the sessions. When translated to Thai, some of the main points might have been miscommunicated and misunderstood. There is also a high possibility that interviewees do not understand the questions, with or without their phubbing behaviors. Also, 'phubbing' should not have been used in the questions for its perceived negative meaning and may have led to the denial.

6.4 Future Research

This research also offers some direction for future studies. It is clear that other Social Networking Sites and other mobile applications should be taken into account to compare whether they have different and similar causality and/or effect on users' behaviors. Larger samples with extended age range, occupations and cultures should be selected to represent the population which will allow a better comparison between different groups of users. Also, to ensure that participants are providing authentic thoughts and their phubbing behaviors, their friends and family should also be interviewed. Finally, users' personalities should be examined in order to provide a better causality and explanations.

6.5 Conclusion

This paper has concluded how Facebook and phubbing behaviors affect Thai users' interpersonal communication skills and relationships. With many benefits of Social Networking Sites presented, there are numbers of negative impacts as well. Unknowingly, constantly checking Facebook and phubbing behaviors have been harming how humans' maintenance and development of their offline relationships. Social Networking Sites have changed the way we communicate by relying on virtual interactions and required less face to face communication. To build and maintain a relationship, it is a process of communicating and the level of revelation of personal thoughts and feelings. Bad communication is one of the major factors that harm interpersonal relationships and phubbing (noise in communication) limits the ability of listening. Facebook strongly lacks nonverbal cues and emotions (reactions) which are the extension of listening in communication. No communication is taken place if not no one is listening. Good communication of the sender and receiver results in maintaining and developing deep relationship intimacies.

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APPENDIX

BASIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is Facebook to you?

       i. What do you do on Facebook?

       ii. How often do you check Facebook?

2. Why do you choose Facebook?

3. What do you do when you are offline/not on Facebook?

4. What do you do when you see something that you do not like on your newsfeed?

       i. How do you feel?

5. Have you been phubbeb before?

       i. What does it feel like?

7. If there were three people (including you) in which all of you are having a conversation and someone decided to phub, what would you do?

8. Do you phub?

       i. Why?

       ii. When?

       iii. Why?

9. How do you feel if you have been asked to stop phubbing by your friends and family?

10. Do you think Facebook has any affect your relationships with friends and family?

BIOGRAPHY

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