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Mobile Phones and Social Behavior among Millennials – future teachers

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Abstract/Povzetek The increased number of mobile devices changes the communication habits and lifestyle. Consequently, social norms and values change. Millennials define new patterns in social behavior, communication, interpersonal relationships, and interaction. Simultaneous e-communication in the presence of another person and lack or rejection of face-to-face contact are just the most common kinds of social behavior. Appropriate social behavior when using a mobile phone is crucial for Millennial future teachers, who will be teaching Millennials. The results of this study show current and changing patterns of social behavior induced by the use of mobile phones among future teachers. Ignorance, simultaneous e-communication and replacement of face-to-face contact are all present. These results also reveal the desire for close contact with a beloved person. The extensive daily use of mobile phones for about 5 hours or more is the second undesired finding among future teachers.

Uporaba mobilnih telefonov in socialni odnosi milenijcev – bodočih učiteljev Povečano število mobilnih naprav prinaša spremembe v način komunikacije in življenjskega sloga. Posledično se spreminjajo tudi družbene norme in vrednote. Generacije milenijcev prinašajo nove vzorce družbenega vedenja, komunikacije, medosebnih odnosov in interakcij. Hkratna e-komunikacija med prisotnostjo druge osebe in pomanjkanje ali zavračanje neposrednih osebnih stikov sta najpogostejša pojava. Primerno socialno vedenje ob uporabi mobilnega telefona je ključno za bodoče učitelje milenijce, ki bodo poučevali milenijce. Rezultati pričujoče raziskave kažejo na že prisotne in spremenjene vzorce družbenega vedenja, ki jih povzroča uporaba mobilnih telefonov, tudi med bodočimi učitelji. Prisotni so ignoranca, hkratna e-komunikacija, nadomestilo osebnega stika, prav tako pa tudi želja po osebnem stiku z ljubljenimi osebami. Obsežna, približno peturna vsakodnevna uporaba mobilnih telefonov, je druga neželena ugotovitev med bodočimi učitelji.

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Introduction

Internet and mobile devices are an integral part of an individual's life in the modern information society. A critical component is communication, the basis of which is the internet. Communication technology enables electronic communication. The term electronic communication covers various forms of information exchange, like e-mail, text messages, faxes, and even social networking (Iannarelly & O'Shaughnessy, 2015). As used below, the term e-communication represents contemporary forms of electronic communication services involving mobile devices. As a medium, the internet provides access to information and connectivity between mobile devices. The concept of mobile devices denotes all types of mobile internet-connected devices that allow both access to information and communication between individuals or groups of individuals. The age of the users who exploit the internet as a source of information and as the means of interaction is increasingly blurred, and the age criterion can no longer be used as a dividing line. Data on the growth in the number of internet users in June 2019 show the increasing accessibility of this medium in environments that have been in a subordinate position for technological reasons. In Africa, the penetration rate of the internet reached just under 40%, in Asia nearly 52%, and Europe recorded an 86.8% penetration rate, which is close to North America with 89.4% (Internet Usage Statistics, 2019). With an increase in the number of internet users, a significant increase in the number of mobile devices is present. According to We Are Social (2017), the annual increment of mobile users is 5%, while the number of mobile devices in 2017 is just under 5 billion. In the period between 2017 and 2022, seven-fold growth in mobile data traffic is expected (Clement, 2019). Some estimates predict that in 79% of cases, the internet will be accessed from mobile devices (Worldwide Internet and Mobile Users, 2017). Young people own mobile phones even before the start of their formal education. In the meantime, the capabilities of these devices have already exceeded the original purpose and enable many other interpersonal interaction modes. Attractive software on these devices and their capacity have thus significantly changed both forms of communication and lifestyle. (Matijević & Topolovćan, 2019).

The large number of mobile devices and their use results in new social norms and a redefinition of many existing social values. When using mobile phones as communication tools, we encounter new patterns in communication between individuals, which undoubtedly affects interpersonal relationships at all levels of interaction between participants. Patterns and norms are shifting sharply in new directions with the involvement of younger generations in interpersonal interaction. Many of the usage patterns are already being incubated for these generations.

From the educational perspective, with reasonable extent and guidance, the capacities of mobile phones can be used effectively in various didactic approaches. It is imperative to be aware that what is called mobile learning is more complex than traditional forms of learning. It represents an endless combination of experiential stimuli and a digital, intangible world. (Cotič, Zuljan, & Plazar, 2019)

Mobile phones and communication

Based on statistical data, we can confirm the expansion of mobile phone usage, which has consequences from the perspective of social and cultural significance. Specific communication patterns are permanently creating or changing and consequently influencing each individual's life. A new concept of relationships is emerging, where people no longer say that they are in a relationship, but that they are connected (Ule, 2009).

Earlier views on communicating with mobile phones or mobile communications predicted such an impact on interpersonal relations. Fortunati (2007) shared the opinion that frequent mobile communication would change the depth of interpersonal communication and lead to a lack of social reciprocity. As early as 2002, Gergen (2002) believed that the prevalence of mobile phone use reduced the extent of direct social interaction in public spaces.

Now, there is virtually no place where mobile phones are not present, and the ringing of the mobile phone has become part of our everyday life. In past times, it was impolite to interrupt someone in the middle of a conversation. Unlike earlier times, people today immediately respond to a call from a mobile phone and start a

conversation with a person who is not physically present by instantly excluding the physically present person from the ongoing discussion.

The functionality of mobile phones as devices is primary and secondary. The primary function is the ability to perform voice communication. Secondary functionality utilizes technology to access information online and perform activities through dedicated software or applications. Todays' mobile phones are a combination of both functionalities and are known as smartphones.

In the present article, the focus is more on the functionality that enables interpersonal communication. Therefore, the term mobile phone is used below instead of smartphone, regardless of the fact that mobile phones as simple communication devices are barely present.

The use of a mobile phone significantly influences the life and habits of an individual. From the perspective of the primary function, it enables mobility, availability and maintaining contacts. It is also essential to highlight the possibility of close personal conversations with partners or friends. The secondary and more visible functionality enables quick acquisition of information from a range of areas and social interactions. Social interactions include the use of social networks as an additional option--occasionally as virtual entertainment in case of loneliness or boredom. Secondary functionality undoubtedly means the use of many applications that facilitate day-to-day tasks and enhance the individual's efficiency.

Apart from its primary and secondary functionality, the mobile phone can also represent a status symbol for an individual. According to Kuhar (2007), the popularity of a particular brand, as well as the price range, are among the determining factors. With a choice of shape, color, and accessories, the mobile phone can also be a fashion accessory. To other people, however, the choice of a mobile phone means fulfilling technological needs or only enthusiasm for a phone's technical characteristics.

Mobile Telephony and Millennials

The primary functionality of mobile phones is becoming less important to increase capacity and application offerings on these devices. While some older users still feel certain constraints and resistance to mobile devices and communication, with the arrival of generations of young people who understand it as daily life and lifestyle, secondary functionality is continuously gaining in importance. The literature designates the contemporary generation of young people as Millennials, Generation Y, or the Net Generation. Sources describe these generations as people born between 1995 and 2012 and reaching adulthood in the 21st century (Rouse, 2014). The fact is that Millennials have already developed the skills and knowledge to use mobile phones. Millennials use mobile phones as a tool for various types of communication, accessing information, exchanging content of any kind, shopping, etc. Consequently, the secondary functionality of mobile phones is growing in extent. The Millennials' attitude toward the exploitation of mobile phones' capabilities and technology will be reflected in their later entering the workplace with more confidence and less care about regulations (Nichols & Smith, 2015).

The method of using mobile phones has changed Millennials' way of life and behavior. Owing to the imaginary necessity for keeping constant contact or availability and establishing friendly ties with as many people as possible, the negative consequences are becoming more and more frequent. These are mainly manifested on the interpersonal level. The very presence of a mobile phone causes the occurrence of a failure to establish a deeper interpersonal connection with others.

Interpersonal Relations and Mobile Telephony Habits

Mobile phones are almost regularly in use during meetings or conversations, sometimes even during sexual intercourse, thus deteriorating relationships with family and friends (Štrukelj, 2017). Mobile technology, in many cases, is a substitute for a face-to-face conversation for Millennials. Individualism grows, which can result in many problems at the level of partnership relations. Research studies mention dependence on mobile devices, but some studies suggest that this is more

a matter of lifestyle than dependency, since the mobile phone represents an essential part of the life of Millennials (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). One of the newly discovered patterns of social behavior is Phubbing. This new word describes the habit of ignoring someone in favor of a mobile phone (Roberts & David, 2016). In most cases, the Phubbing is present among partners. According to the research, including 450 people in the USA, the phenomenon appear regularly among about 46% of partners. Among them, about 23% have serious conflicts (Sežun, 2018).

The next phenomenon caused by extensive use of mobile phones among Millennials is Nomophobia (No Mobile Phone Phobia), the fear of being without a mobile device, or being unreachable for mobile phone contact (Arpaci, Baloglu, & Kesici, 2019). The effects of the phenomenon are severe, causing discomfort, dependence, low self-esteem, and a feeling of rejection. In some cases, it can even trigger panic disorder (King, et al., 2014). Aside from the serious disorders caused by mobile phones' extensive use, our focus should be on permanent occurrences of problematic behavior. The first of these is favoring the relation with the mobile phone by ignoring or neglecting a real person or persons who are present. Most concerning is the general acceptance of such behavior, as no one feels affected by such condition. The second concerning aspect is conscious or unconscious replacement of interpersonal contacts by indirect contacts by using a dedicated application or social networks.

From the perspective of teacher education, we need to consider a remarkable fact. Millennial pre-service teachers will soon be teaching children who are also part of this generation. Many of them already show such social behavior. Therefore, pre-service teachers must be aware of their role as educators and as living examples of appropriate social behavior. Regarding the perspective of Millennials as pre-service teachers, the focus of the present article is to describe the current state of social behavior among contemporary pre-service teachers. These pre-service teachers are students attending educational training to achieve teaching competencies required to perform lessons.

Methodology

Purpose

The study sought to gain insight into the extent of the most common social behaviors among the Millennial generation of pre-service teachers induced by the use of mobile phones. The focus of the research was on social interaction between two persons and the interaction between a person and a group of persons.
The following research questions were posed:

- What is the most common device for interpersonal communication?
- How many hours do students use mobile phones per day?
- Do students simultaneously e-communicate during face-to-face contact with another person?
- Do students simultaneously e-communicate during contact with several persons?
- Is simultaneous e-communication dependent on the number of associated persons?
- What is the preferred way of e-communication with a beloved person?
- How often do students use text messages instead of voice calls?

Selected answers were analyzed for any differences by study program.

Sample

The sample includes 185 pre-service teachers (hereafter, students) of Elementary Education and Preschool Education at the Faculty of Education in Maribor and students of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Arts in Maribor. These students were attending the first year of study in the academic year 2018/19. The average age of the students is 19 years. The structure of the sample by study program is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Students in the sample by study program

	Frequency	Percent
Elementary education	89	48.1
Preschool education	58	31.4
Pedagogy	38	20.5
Total	185	100.0

Data collection

Data were collected using the online surveying tool, which was used to provide students with the questionnaire. To exclude the eventual effect of the uncertainty of novice students, they received the questionnaires during lectures after four months of attendance. Data were processed using SPSS statistical software. The statistical methods of descriptive statistics, chi-square test, and ANOVA were used, while chosen non-parametric tests were performed for analysis of the rating scales.

Results

Devices for interpersonal communication and daily usage

Students were asked to select the most common device they use for communication, from a list of mobile devices. After the selection of the preferred device, we asked them to estimate the extent of daily usage (in hours) for the selected device.

Table 2: Device used for interpersonal communication

	Frequency	Percent
Notebook	5	2.7
Tablet	5	2.7
Mobile phone	173	93.5
Personal computer	2	1.1
Total	185	100.0

Mobile phones are the most common device used for interpersonal communication. The results in Table 2 correspond with the theoretical background on the increasing number of mobile phones in use. Analysis of the estimated time spent using mobile phones shows an average usage time of 4.23 hours in a range from 1 hour up to 20 hours. About 46% of students estimate their use of mobile phones between 2 and 3 hours per day, where 3 hours of usage is the prevailing estimate.

Table 3: Average daily use of mobile phones in hours by study program (ANOVA)

Study program	N	Mean	Std.Dev	F
Elementary Education	89	3.74	2.377	
Preschool Education	58	4.81	2.953	2.844
Pedagogy	38	4.50	3.203	
Total	181	4.23	2.775	
P>0,05, df=2				

Table 3 gives the results of ANOVA used for the analysis of differences in the average time of daily use between study programs and shows a tendency (P=0,060) toward less usage among students of Elementary Education. Students estimate their daily usage between 4 and 5 hours, where 5 hours is the prevailing estimate. Students of Preschool Education and Pedagogy use mobile phones between around 4.50 and 4.80 hours per day on average. The students in the Elementary Education study program use mobile phones 3.74 hours per day on average. The results in Table 3 correspond with the research reports emphasizing average usage times between 2 and 4 hours (Kiran, Sanjana, & Reddy, 2019).

Simultaneous e-communication during face-to-face contact with another person

Simultaneous e-communication by other means like e-mail, social networks, and messaging in the presence of another person is a common type of social behavior. The students were asked to use a five-level scale to estimate how often this happens to them. The estimation scale range is from Never to Always.

Table 4: Simultaneous e-communication during face-to-face contact with another person

	Frequency	Percent
Never	25	13.5
Rare	94	50.8
Occasionally	60	32.4
Very often	6	3.2
Total	185	100.0

Simultaneous e-communication during face-to-face contact with another person is thus an established fact. The results in Table 4 show that about one-third (32.4%) of students occasionally e-communicate simultaneously despite the presence of another person. Although 50.8% do this rarely, they still do. Just 13.5% of students avoid this temptation and devote themselves to the other person. Additional analysis shows no statistically significant differences (P=0.268) between study programs. The students of Elementary Education (55.1%) and Pedagogy (50%) both e-communicate rarely. The students of Preschool Education are most often among the occasional simultaneous e-communicators (41.4%). The differences between study programs are not statistically significant (P=0.730). From the perspective of social relations, the result is far from encouraging. According to the result in Table 3 and research, we can speculate that other persons tolerate such behavior in general or do not feel affected by the situation.

Simultaneous e-communication during contact with several persons

Contact with several persons enables the opportunity for simultaneous e-communication by other means like e-mail, social networks, and messaging. Many people can hardly resist this temptation. The students were asked to use the five-level scale to estimate how often such social behavior happens to them. The estimation scale range is from Never to Always.

Table 5: Simultaneous e-communication during contact with several persons

	Frequency	Percent
Never	8	4.3
Rare	67	36.2
Occasionally	91	49.2
Very often	19	10.3
Total	185	100.0

The results in Table 5 show the presence of simultaneous e-communication during contact with several persons. In comparison with the results for a single persons' presence, we have to deal with more occasional attempts. Almost 50% of students occasionally simultaneously e-communicate when they are in contact with several persons. More than one-third (36.4%) of students do the same rarely. Slightly less than 10% of students very often take advantage of the opportunity and simultaneously e-communicate during contact. Just a handful of them never behave in this unsocial manner. The Chi-Square test shows that students of Pedagogy simultaneously e-communicate more often than other students. Most of the students who simultaneously e-communicate occasionally are from the Preschool Education program (55.2%). Nevertheless, the differences between study programs are not statistically significant (P=0.730).

Simultaneous e-communication by the number of associated persons

The comparison of results in Table 4 and Table 5 reveals the significantly higher frequency of occasional simultaneous e-communication during interpersonal contact. Given the presence of multiple persons, the category "Occasionally" appears in about 50% of cases and less than one-third of cases during face-to-face contact. If several persons are present, simultaneous e-communication appears "very often" in about 9.2% of cases, compared to 3.2% during face-to-face contact. According to the Wilcoxson Npar test (Z=6,885), differences in the occurrence of categories between types of contacts are statistically significant (P=0.001). Based on the result, we assume that the frequency of simultaneous e-communication is dependent on the number of persons involved in personal interaction.

Preferred ways of communication with a beloved

The previous analysis deals with interpersonal contact between less affiliated persons. We assume that contact and communication among loved ones would be more personally oriented and prefer close personal interaction. Students were asked to review the offered options and select their preferred way of communication with a beloved person or persons.

Table 6: Preferences in communication with a beloved person

	Frequency	Percent
Prefer electronic way	1	0.5
Prefer close personal contact	110	59.5
Both ways equally	14	7.6
Adapt communication to needs and possibilities	60	32.4
Total	185	100.0

Unlike the previous results about the social behavior of neglecting someone during personal contact, the preferences toward the closest person are significantly changed (Table 6). The prevailing preference (59.5%) is for close personal contact. If required, students adapt the means of communication to suit the needs and current possibilities (32.4%). Only 7.6% have no preference and communicate with a beloved person in both ways. Analysis of differences in preferences between study programs shows no statistically significant differences (P=0.573). Students in all study programs mostly prefer close personal contact (60% or more) or adapt the form of communication when necessary in around 35% of cases. Despite the expected individualism and introversion based on many studies, this result is very encouraging. Millennials still feel the desire for close personal contact with a beloved person. This finding is very likely the consequence of a precisely targeted question that rules out other close relatives.

Messaging instead of voice call

Communication services like text messaging, multimedia messages, or social networks are convenient tools for sending various messages. Owing to changing patterns of social behavior, such communication services are frequently in use to avoid conversation. To discover how often students use messages instead of voice conversation, they were asked to use the five-level scale to estimate how often they do this. The estimation scale range is from Never to Always.

Table 7: Sending written messages instead of voice calls by study program

Frequency of sending messages instead of voice call	Study course		
	Elementary Education	Preschool Education	Pedagogy
Rare	12 (13.5%)	7 (12.1%)	5 (13.2%)
Occasionally	32 (36.0%)	16 (27.6%)	12 (31.6%)
Very often	41 (46.1%)	32 (55.2%)	18 (74.4%)
Always	4 (4.5%)	3 (5.2%)	3 (7.9%)

The results in Table 7 show a widespread trend towards avoiding direct conversation during voice calls by sending messages of some kind. According to the sum of the frequencies, about 49.2% (n=91) of students send messages rather than have voice conversations very often. Approximately 32.4% (n=60), however, do this occasionally. The option "Never" was not selected, showing the constant presence of such behavior. Regular sending of messages instead of a voice call is most common among students of Pedagogy (74.4%), while others do the same at levels of 55.2% and 46.1%, respectively. About 36% of students of Elementary Education send messages instead of voice calls occasionally, followed by students of Pedagogy and Preschool Education. According to the Chi-square test, this behavior is not dependent on the study program. Students of all study programs show a general tendency to avoid direct personal contact, with minor deviations. The results point to the presence of negative social behavior by having direct personal contact only when necessary.

Discussion

Among these Millennial students, the mobile phone is a predominant communication device. This finding is expected, as mobile phones are multifunction devices. The findings of this research show that the students' estimated time of use corresponds with research results in similar studies. Students estimate their usage of mobile devices at more than 4.5 hours per day. In doing so, students of Pre-school Education and Pedagogy use mobile phones slightly longer than students in the Elementary Education study program. Because of the expansion in mobile phone usage, social behavior during contact with other people has also changed. Results show that users use mobile phones to e-communicate simultaneously with other people even when they are face to face with one person or more. This pattern of behavior when using mobile phones was revealed in other available research and is also present among students of the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Arts covered in our study. In analyzing the differences in such social behavior between students of study programs at both faculties, we found no statistically significant differences. The results show that students are more likely to simultaneously e-communicate with mobile phones when they are in the company of several people. The analysis of the influence of mobile phones on social behavior when communicating with a beloved person shows the predominant desire for close personal contact. If this is not possible, students adapt the communication according to the needs and possibilities. However, when conversation during phone calls is required, we discover the phenomenon of sending messages instead of having conversation. This phenomenon is present among students of all study programs.

In contrast to this phenomenon, the students of all programs equally desire close personal contact when communicating with a beloved person. This result shows that Millennial pre-service teachers still have the desire for personal contact, which is a prerequisite for successful working with children. Despite these positive findings, simultaneous e-communication during direct personal contact and avoidance of voice contact are still too often present.

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