INNOVATIONS

Perception and Attitude of Academic Community Employees Using Computer-Mediated Communication in Information Sharing During the Covid-19 Pandemic

NIkki Ann V. Macabontoc[1], Danilo S. Vargas[2], Chrysl Avegail N. Vallejo[3]
Bulacan Agricultural State College, Philippines[1]
Central Luzon State University,Philippines[2]
Central Luzon State University,Philippines[3]
Email: **nikkimacabontoc@gmail.com[1],dsvargas@clsu.edu.ph[2],canvallejo@clsu.edu.ph[3]**

Abstract

To determine the respondents' perception andattitude of academic community employees using computer-mediatedcommunicationin information sharing during the Covid-19 Pandemic.The respondents of this study were the teaching and non-teaching employees of Bulacan Agricultural State College (BASC). This study used a mixed-method of quantitative and qualitative research. The total number of respondents for the teaching staff was 116, while the respondents for the non-teaching team were 75. Most of the respondents are female in terms of sex and age, ranging from 31-to 35 years old.For the educational attainment, 24.6% earned units in their Master's Degree; in terms of years in service,22.5% of the respondents have been working with BASC for 1-5 years, while for the academic and administrative rank, 43.1% of the respondents are under the academic rank as Instructors 1-3, while for the executivelevel, 47% are under the category as support staff.Regarding the respondents' attitude towards thecomputer-mediatedcommunication(CMC) platforms used in their organization, the statement "I am very knowledgeable in using Group Chat, Email, Facebook, Text Messaging and Zoom/Google Meet as a form of communication" had the highest mean recorded. Unlike perception, different statements had obtained the highest mean per platform for the attitude variable. The following comments were as follow: GC - "I am more fond in using GC than other forms," Email – "I don't enjoy using email in our organization," Facebook – "If I can avoid using FB for communicating, I do," and for Text Messaging and Zoom/Google Meet – "I look forward in composing messages using text messaging and Zoom."For the respondents' CMC preferences in sharing new policies to be implemented by the BASC Administration, the respondents chose Group Chat (GC) followed by Email with,Zoom, and Google Meet. Most respondents preferred using Group Chat and Facebook to share information about the pandemic college announcements and personal concerns.

Introduction

Communication is how people attempt to share meanings using transmitting symbolic messages. It also refers to the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver with the information understood by both. The communication process is essential to people who occupy the position of management because it helps them carry out the various aspects of management.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, it is evident that the majority of the organizations were all obliged to surpass the communication barriers brought by the pandemic. Flexible working arrangements became a trend and necessity in many workforces. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was utilized to manage the flow of knowledge and information sharing among the organizations; hence, communication and technology emerged as the lifeblood of organizational management. Effective communication will not be possible for an organization to achieve without technology. Thus, in this technological era, along with the development of information and communication technology (ICT),the emergence of computer-mediated communication (CMC) is constantly associated with the organization's competence in terms of knowledge sharing and management (Canare, 2020).

CMC (computer-mediated communication) is a powerful instrument that has transformed people's daily lives, work, and learning. It facilitates communication with people from all around the world. CMC activities can be asynchronous, such as composing emails or publishing comments to an online discussion board, or virtual synchronous, such as conversations held in chat rooms. Computer advancements have opened up new avenues for language learning that are not available in regular classrooms. Many different venues have been created to aid language acquisition.

It involves exchanging information in textual, audio, and video formats transmitted and controlled by computer and telecommunication technology (Babkirket al., 2015). According to Rowley (1992), CMC, primarily in e-mail, has become a dominant mode of communication both in and between organizations in the last few years.Moreover, Grof (2001) indicated that one of the most significant communication functions is to transmit information for interpretation purposes or share data between communicating parties.

The utilization of the various CMC platforms to the Covid-19 pandemic, which occurred against the Work From Home (WFH) policy, has boosted the widespread use of communication technology and altered communication patterns.

WFH communication patterns have shifted from face-to-face to computer-mediated communication (CMC), and the critical elements for WFH success also shifted well. This new societal culture emphasizes the internet's fundamental and essential role in advancing information and communication technology.

In comparison to customary conditions, the phenomena in society reveal that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a vital role in every part of life during the pandemic.

Looking at the availability of various CMC tools currently used in the researcher's workplace, and based on the derived related literature and studies, the concept of knowledge sharing raises the question of how the employees of the Bulacan Agricultural State College (BASC) use the CMC tools as a communication platform in the workplace. The researcher was motivated to conduct this study because BASC has no currentresearch and sufficient knowledge sharing about CMC. Furthermore, the results of this study will serve as baseline data in terms of improving the knowledge management system of the College.

Objectives of the Study

1. To describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.
2. To describe the respondents' perception and attitude on computer-mediated knowledge sharing.
3. To determine the respondents' preferred CMC tool in communicating and sharing information with their colleagues.

Review of Related Literature

Knowledge Sharing is one of the most critical aspects of the knowledge management process. It helps an organization to improve performance and achieve its mission. This opinion aligns with the success of knowledge management initiatives depending on knowledge sharing (Rohman, 2020). Activities that cover knowledge sharing allow the group members to exchange ideas and work together, and in this way, the success of their organization's performance can be maximized. Sharing knowledge is defined as group activities that facilitate learning and enhance the group's ability to achieve goals.

The principle of knowledge sharing is a process meant to obtain experience from others, know how to collaborate with others to facilitate people, and develop/obtain new ideas (Razak, 2014).

According to James et al., knowledge residing in people's minds has no value until it is utilized and shared among other employees of an organization. In addition, Davenport et al. (1998) stressed that "knowledge is created invisibly in the human brain and only right organizational climate can persuade people to create, reveal, share and use it."

A study conducted by Anderson (2006) showed that trust influences a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and employees' performance. The high value of faith will also affect the value of knowledge sharing.

One of the advantages of embedding knowledge-sharing practice in an organization is attitude. Kuo and Young (2008) stated that perspective is critical for knowledge-sharing practices because knowledge about solving organizational problems could influence others. Chowdhury (2004) reportedthe importance of sharing expertise with peers and people in workplaces. People may also consider sharing their knowledge in an organization if they believe this will be personally important and valuable.

The mediated nature of CMC allows participants to perform a more careful construction of personal information; the delayed nature of CMC allows its participants to review, revise or cancel their communications before the data is sent (Heisler and Crabill, 2006). Besides, CMC is a form of asynchronous communication that has the advantages ofeliminating problems created by barriers of time and space, is cost-effective and easy to use, and has the potential to be more personal (Provenzo, 1986). In a nutshell, "the new communication technologies offer organizational participants a wide array of interaction and decision-making options that can differ substantially from the traditional ways of working" (Miller, 2009: 241).

Teachers can utilize Facebook to further their professional development in the academic field. It also allows them to share material via Facebook profiles and join groups, helping them advance professionally despite the restricted time available

(Phillips, Baird, & Fogg, 2011). Facebook allows instructors to self-direct learning and information for many teachers, especially in underdeveloped nations where resources are limited (Mushayikwa&Lubben, 2009). In a study conducted in Brazil by Cunha, van Kruistum, and van Oers (2016), it was discovered that Facebook enhances communication between teachers and pupils.

In April 2016, Facebook opened up its Messenger platform. Since then, Facebook Messenger has grown to nearly 1.3 billion monthly users (Constine, 2018), with businesses and customers exchanging 8 billion messages per day (Johnson, 2018). The main benefit of deploying a Facebook Messenger chat is that the author and his target audience have a low barrier to entry. Facebook Messenger is the third most popular smartphone app globally, with 68 percent of its users (Hartmans, 2017). Users benefit from a familiar interface, the elimination of the need to download and install additional software, and the availability of the service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Interference from other chats in the instant messaging application is a disadvantage (Pereira &Daz, 2018).

When E-mailwas initially launched, many people believed that it would be impossible to engage in anything other than the exchange of short task-oriented communications. Surprisingly, when the telephone was initially introduced, a similar sentiment prevailed. Because there are no nonverbal cues, it is assumed that not all information is fully conveyed (McKenna &Bargh, 2000). One of the benefits of nonverbal cues in face-to-face communication is that they lessen message ambiguity. Depending on the tone, emphasis, and emotional expression, the exact vocal phrases can convey multiple messages (Lee & Wagner, 2002). E-mail communication is restricted to the former, whereas face-to-face communication is concerned with both what is said and how it is said.

One of the earliest forms of CMC was text messaging(also known as 'SMS' or 'texting'). It is the most popular and widely used mobile phone application. Since the late 1990s, text messaging has grown at an exponential rate. It is widely used since it is inexpensive, personal, and unobtrusive. However, it is essential to note the interaction between what technology allows and what communicators contribute to technology (Altohami, 2020).

Methodology

This study used a mixed-method of quantitative and qualitative research. For the quantitative method, a descriptive survey research designwas used focusing on the present and prevailing condition of knowledge sharing of the employees, assessing the perception and attitude of the participants in using CMC to knowledge sharing. A focus group discussion was also conducted to gather additional qualitative data.The total number of respondents for the teaching staff was 116, while the respondents for the non-teaching team were 75.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

The profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. In terms of sex and age, most of the respondents are female, with ages ranging from 31-35 years old, as indicated by the highest frequency of 40 or 21%.These age ranges belong to the Millennial Generation, which according to Dimhock (2018), is the age of the internet explosion. In addition, more than nine in ten Millennials (93%) own smartphones, compared with 90%

of Gen Xers, 68% of Baby Boomers, and 40% of the Silent Generation, according to a new analysis of a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted in early 2019. Respondents born before the emergence of the digital age (before 1980: also called digital immigrants) may experience a technological gap, particularly in using internet-related means. The digital age was born after 1980 may have a technological advantage since they were raised during the digital period. Age difference affects preference/familiarity/skills in using more recent CMC technologies (Canare, 2019).

For the respondents' educational attainment, 24.6% earned units in their Master's Degree, 22.5% completed their Master's Degree, and 16.8% have already earned their Doctorate Degree. In addition, most of the respondents (32.5%) hold a permanent/regular employment status for teaching and non-teaching positions.

As shown for the years in service, 22.5% of the respondents worked with BASC for 1-5 years. This is followed by 18.3% for working less than a year and more than 6-10 years. And lastly, for the academic and administrative rank, 43.1% of the respondents are under the academic rank as Instructors 1-3, while 47% are under the category of support staff.

Respondents' Attitude and Perception in using Facebook Messenger Group Chat

Employers have had to deal with difficulties of employee internet use through organizational ICT infrastructures for several years. The issues related to online social networking (OSN) technology and the nature of the information on such sites confront employers with a challenge in the workplace. Like those in other organizations, employees at tertiary education institutions have varying computer and internet knowledge and skill (Ferreira, 2009).

For this study, the respondents' perceptions and attitudes in Group Chat are presented in table 2. The highest obtained mean, 4.77 is under the perception statement "I am very knowledgeable in using Group Chat as a form of communication" with a verbal interpretation of *strongly agree*. Moreover, for the attitude aspect, the highest obtained mean (4.40) was for the statement "I don't enjoy using Group in our organization" with a verbal interpretation of *strongly agree.*

Moreover, for the statement "Group Chat help me get my work done," the mean obtained was 2.40 with a verbal interpretation *disagree*. The respondents believed that using Group Chat does not help them accomplish their work. This particular attitude can be attributed to the study of Brooks (2015), wherein it is possible that when individuals use Social Networking Sites during labor, they are unable to concentrate on their jobs In this regard, some studies have also claimed that SNS use in the workplace negatively affects individuals' or companies' performance (Accountemps 2010; Brooks 2015; Nucleus 2009; Rooksby et al. 2009; Shepherd 2011).

The overall mean obtained for the respondents' perceptionof Group Chat is 4.22 with a verbal interpretation of strongly agree, while the attitude is 3.70 with an oralperformance of *agree.*

Respondents' Attitude and Perception in using Email

Table 3 shows the attitude of the respondents in using Email. 4.54 was the highest obtained mean under the perception statement "I am very knowledgeable using Email as a form of communication" with a verbal interpretation of *strongly agree*. In contrast, the highest obtained mean for the attitude statement was 4.56 under the statement "I don't enjoy using Email in our organization," also with a verbal interpretation of *strongly agree.* Results showed that most of the statements on Email got a mean score between *strongly*

agree and *agree.* Overall, the mean score for both perception and attitude is strongly *agreed.*

Respondents' Attitude and Perception in using Facebook

As presented in table 4, the highest mean obtained was 4.56 under the attitude statement "If I can avoid using Facebook for communicating, I do" with a verbal interpretation of *strongly agree.* Two words follow this, "I am very knowledgeable using Facebook as a form of communication" and "Using Facebook is essential in our organization," which both obtained 4.45 mean with a verbal interpretation of *strongly agree,* which are both under the perception statements.

Based on the overall results for perception and attitude, it can be noted that the general. Responses' verbal interpretation is only "*agree,"* which means that although the respondents have a positive perception and attitude towards Facebook, it is not that strong. Even though Facebook has a wide range of functions (Smock et al. 2011; Choi and Chung 2013), it lacks the richness of face-to-face communication, telephone conversations, or instant messaging (Kishi 2008; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Koo, Wati, and Jung 2011; Snoeijers, Poels, and Nicolay 2014). As a result, with substantial task ambiguity, the positive effect of Facebook use on job performance may diminish.

Respondents' Attitude and Perception in using Text Messaging

Table 5 shows the perception and attitude of the respondents for Text Messaging, wherein the highest obtained mean for the perception statement was 4.59 under "I am very knowledgeable using cellular phone and sending text messages as a form of communication" with a verbal interpretation of *strongly agree*, however, the lowest mean obtained was 2.52 for the statement "My text message interactions are more productive than my face to face interactions," with a verbal interpretation of *disagree.* Between the two variables, the overall mean recorded under the attitude was the lowest with 3.14 and oral performance of *somewhat agree.*

Respondents' Attitude and Perception in using Zoom and Google Meet

For this study, respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards Zoom and Google Meet platforms are presented in table 6. As shown, the highest obtained mean was 4.43 under the perception statement "Using Zoom and Google Meet is essential in our organization" with a verbal interpretation of *strongly agree*, while the lowest mean recorded was 2.51 with an oral performance of *disagreeing* under the attitude statement "I don't enjoy using Zoom and Google Meet in our organization." However, this statement earned the lowest mean; it has a positive denotation because it can be deduced that since the respondents disagreed with this statement, the respondents somehow enjoy using these platforms in their organization.

Respondents' Computer-Mediated Communication Preferences

The respondents were asked about their three CMC preferences (Table 7) in sharing new policies, information about the Covid-19 pandemic, college announcements, and personal concerns. Their responses are presented in the table below. In sharing new approaches to be implemented by the BASC Administration, the respondents choose Group Chat (GC) with 93.7%, followed by Email with 80.1% and 79.6% for Zoom and Google Meet. Respondents preferred GC and Email because they are always using them

for their work, and they are more familiar with navigating its features. On the other hand, they choose Zoom and Google Meet because they prefer hearing the authorities' new policies directly. After all, it gives them a sense of assurance and responsibility.

Under this global crisis, data sharing of the COVID-19 information are urgently needed and critical not just for researchers, epidemiologists, physicians, funding agencies, and governments but for everyone as well to the working class for them to know the various strategies for the prevention and treatment of this deadly and rapidly spreading disease. Hence, this study showed that 92.7% of the respondents preferred sharing information about the pandemic using Group Chat, followed by Facebook with 87.4%. This significantly shows that the massive use of Facebook affects respondents' preference sets. However, Ahmad (2020) reported that social media has a significant impact on spreading fear and panic related to the COVID-19 outbreak, potentially negatively influencing people's mental health and psychological well-being.

Moreover, as presented in the table below for sharing College Announcements, 98% of the respondents preferred using Group Chat and Facebook with 81.2%. Lastly, in sharing their Concerns, it is evident that 81.2% chose Group Chat, specifically their own private Group Chats, not the organization's GC. It can also be noted that among the four categories of knowledge sharing using CMC, only under the Personal Concerns, there spondents preferred using Text Messaging with 80.6%.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were made:

1. The respondents were knowledgeable about using the current CMC platforms in their organization.
2. For the respondents' perception and attitude towards Group Chat, the results showed that the respondents' perception and perspective in using this CMC platform are positive.
3. While using Email, the mean score for both perception and attitude is between *strongly agree* and *agree,*which shows that the respondents have a positive outlook on both variables.
4. Based on the overall results for the respondents' perception and attitude in using Facebook, it can be noted that the general responses verbal interpretation is only "*agree,"* which means that although the respondents have a positive perception and attitude towards Facebook, it is not that strong.
5. In connection with the Social Presence Theory, themedia with a higher degree of social presence can be categorized under the video conferencing applications such as Zoom Google Meet. Skype, while Text and Chat messages can be classified as media with a lower degree of social presence, it can be observed that based on the results of this study, the video conferencing applications which were considered with a higher degree of social reality, did not support the theory entirely because the increase in the awareness of the respondents can only be attributed to the CMC platforms with a lower degree of social presence such as Facebook and Group Chat.
6. The video conferencing applications Zoom and Google Meet, only used in conducting meetings, conferences, and classes, were not significantly related to the respondents' awareness.

Recommendation

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. For the BASC Administration, they should;
    a. Conduct training that could help all the BASC employees maximize the use of Computer-Mediated Communication, especially in diagnosing or fixing problems.
    b. Implement policies including CMC interactions to maintain harmonious communication relationships.
    c. Implement the use of Zoom and Google Meet in disseminating knowledge within the organization.
    d. Implement transparency in the dissemination of various knowledge.
2. For future research on the same field;
    a. Assess the impact of the seminars and trainingregarding Computer-Mediated Communication.
    b. Conduct a focus group discussion within the location of the study to further understand the constraints of the various CMC platforms.
    c. Explore the existing behavior and communication patterns of the users of the CMC platforms.

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Table 1 to 7 of the study

Table 1: Socio demographic characteristics of the respondents

Age	**Frequency**	**%**
21-25	33	17.3
26-30	37	19.4
31-35	40	21
36-40	25	13
41-45	18	9.4
46-50	15	7.9
51-55	12	6.3
56-60	9	4.7
61-65	2	1
Total	191	100
Sex		
Female	102	53.4
Male	85	44.5
I prefer not to say	4	2.1
Total	191	100
Educational attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	35	18.3
Master's Degree	43	22.5
Earned Units in Master's Degree	47	24.6
Doctorate Degree	32	16.8
Earned Units in Doctorate Degree	34	17.8
Total	191	100
Employment status		
Job Order	30	15.7
Contractual	49	25.7
Temporary	50	26.2
Permanent	62	32.5
Total	191	100
Years in Service		
Less than 1	35	18.3
1-5 years	43	22.5
6-10 years	35	18.3
11-15 years	34	17.8
16-20 years	25	13
21-25 years	10	5.2

26-30 years	7	3.7
31 above	2	1
Total	191	100
Academic rank (teaching)		
Instructor	50	43.1
Assistant Professor	43	37
Associate Professor	21	18.1
Professor	2	1.8
Total	116	100
Administrative rank (non-teaching)		
Support Staff	35	47
Technical Staff	23	31
Admin Aide	10	13
Admin Officer	7	9
Total	32	100

Table 2: Respondents' Perceptions in using Messenger Group Chat

Perception Statements	**Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
I am very knowledgeable in using Group Chat as a form of communication.	4.77	SA
I feel completely capable of using Group Chat.	4.66	SA
I am comfortable using Group Chat in exchanging information with my colleagues.	4.42	SA
My interactions using Group Chat is accurate, consistent, and clear	4.14	A
My Group Chat interactions are always appropriate to the relationship.	4.02	A
Using Group Chat is essential in our organization.	3.31	SWA
OVERALL MEAN	**4.22**	**SA**
Attitude Statements		
I look forward to composing messages on Group Chat.	3.91	A
I am more fond of using Group Chat than other forms of communication.	4.06	A
Group Chat helps me get my work done.	2.40	D
I don't enjoy using Group Chat in our organization.	4.40	SA
OVERALL MEAN	**3.70**	**A**

Legend:

Verbal Description	Rating scale
Strongly disagree (SD)	1.00-1.80
Disagree (D)	1.81-2.60
Somewhat agree (SWA)	2.61-3.40
Agree (A)	3.41-4.20
Strongly agree (SA)	4.21-5.00

Table 3: Respondents' Attitude and Perception in using Email

Perception Statements	**Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
I am very knowledgeable about using Email as a form of communication.	4.54	SA
I feel completely capable of using Email.	4.34	SA
I am comfortable using Email to exchange information with my colleagues.	4.24	SA
My interactions using Email are accurate, consistent, and transparent.	4.10	A
My Email interactions are always appropriate.	4.23	SA
Using Email is essential in our organization	4.45	SA
OVERALL MEAN	**4.32**	**SA**
Attitude Statements		
I look forward to composing messages on Email.	3.47	A
I am more fond of using Email than other forms of communication.	3.76	A
I waste a lot of time composing a message on an Email.	4.01	A
I don't enjoy using Email in our organization.	4.56	SA
OVERALL MEAN	**3.95**	**A**

Table 4. Respondents' Attitude and Perception in using Facebook

Perception Statements	***Mean***	***Verbal Interpretation***
I am very knowledgeable about using Facebook as a form of communication.	4.45	SA
I am a heavy user of Facebook.	2.80	SWA
I am comfortable using Facebook to exchange information with my colleagues.	3.49	A
My interactions using Facebook are accurate, consistent, and transparent.	3.57	A
Using Facebook is essential in our organization	4.45	SA
My Facebook interactions are more productive than my face-to-face interactions.	3.76	A
OVERALL MEAN	**3.75**	**A**
Attitude Statements		
I look forward to composing posts on Facebook.	3.24	SWA
I am more fond of using Facebook than other forms of communication.	3.21	SWA
I don't enjoy using Facebook in our organization.	4.01	A
If I can avoid using Facebook for communicating, I do.	4.56	SA
OVERALL MEAN	**3.75**	**A**

Table 5: Respondents' Attitude and Perception in using Text Messaging

Perception Statements	**Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
I am very knowledgeable about using cell phones and sending text messages as a form of communication.	4.59	SA
I have no trouble expressing my opinions in text messages.	3.88	A
I am comfortable using text messaging on exchanging information with my colleagues.	3.82	A
My interactions using text messages are accurate, consistent, and transparent.	3.73	A
Using text messaging is essential in our organization.	3.82	A
My text message interactions are more productive than my face-to-face interactions.	2.52	D
OVERALL MEAN	**3.73**	**A**
Attitude Statements		
I look forward to composing text messages.	3.57	A
I am more fond of using text messages than other forms of communication.	3.08	SWA
I don't enjoy using text messages in our organization.	2.78	SWA
OVERALL MEAN	**3.14**	**SWA**

Table 6: Respondents' Attitude and Perception in using Zoom and Google Meet

Attitude Statements		
I look forward to using Zoom and Google Meet in communicating with my colleagues.	3.79	A
I am more efficient using Zoom and Google Meet than other forms of communication.	3.36	SWA
My Zoom and Google Meet interactions are more productive than my face-to-face interactions.	2.82	SWA
I don't enjoy using Zoom and Google Meet in our organization.	2.51	D
OVERALL MEAN	**3.12**	**SWA**

Perception Statements		
I am very knowledgeable about using Zoom and Google Meet as a form of communication.	4.12	A
I am comfortable using Zoom and Google Meet to exchange information with my colleagues.	3.90	A
I can't diagnose or fix the problem when my Zoom and Google Meet account don't work.	2.93	SWA
My Zoom and Google Meet interactions are accurate, consistent, and transparent.	3.73	A
Using Zoom and Google Meet is essential in our organization.	4.43	SA
OVERALL MEAN	**3.82**	**A**

Table 7: Respondents'Computer-Mediated Communication Preferences

New Policies	**Frequency (out of the 191 respondents)**	**Percentage**
Group Chat	179	93.7
Email	153	80.1
Text messaging	107	56
Facebook	128	67
Zoom and Google Meet	152	79.6
Covid-19 Pandemic		
Group Chat	177	92.7
Email	123	64.4
Text messaging	121	63.4
Facebook	167	87.4
Zoom and Google Meet	129	67.5
College Announcements		
Group Chat	187	98
Email	133	69.6
Text messaging	126	66
Facebook	155	81.2
Zoom and Google Meet	115	60.2
Personal Concerns		
Group Chat	155	81.2
Email	138	72.3
Text messaging	154	80.6
Facebook	120	62.8
Zoom and Google Meet	110	57.60