Digital Generations: A Comparative Study on Social Media Behavior Among Youths and Adults on Facebook

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ABSTRACT

Digital Generations: A Comparative Study on Social Media Behavior Among Youths and Adults on Facebook investigated the generational variations in Facebook behavior between youths and adults, with a focus on how each group perceived online behavior. The study sought to compare the behavioral judgments, posting behaviors, and interaction standards of teens aged 15-30 and adults aged 40-60 on Facebook. A comparative descriptive research design was used, with forty (40) Filipino respondents split evenly between teenagers and adults, all of whom were active Facebook users. Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, consisting of close-ended and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution, percentage distribution, and weighted mean, while qualitative responses were examined through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes in generational perceptions.

The findings demonstrated that both youth and adults held similar norms for basic Facebook etiquette. Respectful comments, avoiding insults, publishing positive or helpful content, asking permission before tagging, and fact-checking before sharing were all widely accepted habits. Spreading rumors, making harsh or unpleasant comments, disclosing private information, oversharing personal drama, and using improper sarcasm were all considered unacceptable by both groups. Despite these similarities, youths were more likely to post memes, use slang, participate in casual humor, and freely express themselves, whereas adults preferred to offer inspirational or religious content, family-related updates, and political viewpoints, showing their emphasis on values, seriousness, and accountability. while youths and adults adhere to similar underlying principles of ethical online behavior, their different motives, values, and life experiences have a major impact on how they interact with and judge Facebook behavior. The findings highlight the value of mutual understanding, digital savvy, and intergenerational respect in reducing conflict and promoting harmonious engagement in online communities.

Keywords: facebook behaviors, generational differences, youth and adult digital behavior, social norms,

I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital technology has dramatically altered human connections, particularly via social media platforms. In the digital age, communication, self-expression, and relationship-building are increasingly taking place online. Social media platforms like Facebook have transformed traditional socialization by allowing users to maintain large social networks, exchange personal content, and communicate beyond geographical borders (Pedersen, 2024). While digital

interactions occur in virtual worlds, they are fundamentally human, motivated by need for connection, validation, and belonging.

Within this setting, generational variations in Facebook behavior have become more apparent. Youths, sometimes referred to as digital natives, use Facebook for enjoyment, self-expression, and peer engagement, whereas adults, often referred to as digital immigrants, utilize the platform for communication, information sharing, family connection, and value-oriented expression. These distinctions are congruent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which states that people consciously choose media platforms to meet specific needs like amusement, information, or social contact (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

In the Philippine online environment, these generational differences have given rise to recurring themes, including the often voiced term "Dapat hiwalay ang Facebook ng matatanda," which indicates continuous tensions between younger and older users. Rather than reflecting a true desire for platform separation, this statement alluded to deeper concerns such as misinterpretation, diverse beliefs, and conflicting standards of appropriate online behavior.

Given the growing presence of various generations in shared digital spaces, understanding generational disparities in Facebook usage is critical. This study aims to investigate and compare how young people and adults evaluate acceptable and undesirable behavior on Facebook, identify areas of disagreement, and investigate the underlying causes of generational conflict. By examining these behavioral differences, the study hopes to raise awareness, mutual understanding, and courteous interaction across generations in online groups.

II. METHODS

Research Design

This study used a comparative descriptive research approach to explore and evaluate the Facebook habits of young people and adults, including their judgments of acceptable and inappropriate online activity. Descriptive research identifies and describes existing behaviors and views, whereas comparative research highlights the similarities and contrasts between naturally occurring groups without changing factors (Formplus, 2025).

The comparative descriptive approach was chosen for this study because it enabled a systematic examination of generational variations between youths aged 15 to 30 and adults aged 40 to 60. The methodology, which used standardized survey questions, allowed the researchers to collect measurable data on behavioral judgments, interaction patterns, and social norms on Facebook. This method ensured that the findings were organized, dependable, and appropriate for examining generational differences in online participation and behavior.

Source of Data and Research Instrument

The primary source of data for this study were Filipino Facebook users, who were separated into two groups: twenty (20) teenagers aged 15-30 and twenty (20) adults aged 40-60. These groups were chosen to represent both digital natives and digital immigrants, providing for a fair comparison of generational viewpoints on Facebook behavior.

Data was gathered using a standardized survey form administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions, which collected quantitative data on

Facebook use, and open-ended questions, which allowed respondents to discuss their perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of generational disparities. The instrument focused on identifying behaviors considered acceptable or unacceptable, common posting and interaction habits, and perceptions of behavioral differences between youths and adults.

All respondents were active Facebook users; thus, they had ample experience interacting with diverse Facebook habits. Ethical concerns were followed throughout the data gathering process, including informed permission, anonymity, and confidentiality, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

Tools for Data Analysis

The study used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methodologies to ensure a thorough interpretation of the findings. To discover trends and prevalent perceptions among respondents, quantitative responses to closed-ended questions were evaluated using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution, percentage distribution, and weighted mean (Turney, 2022). Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data collected through open-ended questions. Thematic analysis entails recognizing, organizing, and interpreting reoccurring patterns or themes in qualitative answers. This method proved suitable for examining respondents' explanations of moral convictions, generational norms, and perceptions of Facebook behavior. The merging of thematic analysis and quantitative results enabled the study to provide contextual richness while also balancing numerical findings with participants lived experiences.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Data were statistically treated using a descriptive and comparative approach. The frequency distribution was used to determine how frequently particular responses were chosen by the participants, giving an overview of dominant and least-selected behaviors. The percentage distribution was used to show the proportion of respondents who held similar opinions, making generational comparisons clearer and more interpretable. Qualitative responses were rigorously coded and categorized into themes using thematic analysis, allowing for the discovery of reoccurring reasons for generational disputes such as variations in humor, values, political substance, and sarcastic interpretation. The use of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis guaranteed that the findings accurately represented measurable patterns as well as underlying meanings.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3.1 shows the study's findings, which show patterns of agreement and variation in Facebook behavior between juveniles and adults. The evaluation indicates both common standards of acceptable online behavior and significant age disparities in Facebook posting patterns, interaction styles, and content interpretation.

Table 3.1 Summary of Youth and Adult Perceptions of Facebook Behavior

Dimension	Youth Perspective	Adult Perspective

Acceptable Facebook Behaviors	Generally acceptable; flexible standards	Strongly acceptable; stricter standards
Unacceptable Facebook Behaviors	Recognized as improper, but less severe	Strongly disapproved
Posting and Interaction Habits	Memes, slang, casual comments, expressive posts	Inspirational, religious, family, political posts
Interpretation of Humor and Sarcasm	Viewed as normal and humorous	Often seen as disrespectful or inappropriate
Privacy and Oversharing	More tolerant	Strong concern over privacy violations
Perception of Generational Differences	Acknowledged and normalized	Viewed as serious and problematic
Awareness of "Dapat hiwalay ang Facebook ng matatanda"	Mixed reactions (support, oppose, conditional)	Universally aware and experienced

Respectful comments, avoiding insults, uploading positive or helpful information, requesting permission before tagging, and fact-checking before sharing are all appropriate Facebook activities, according to both youngsters and adults. Adults expressed stronger agreement, indicating tougher expectations for online etiquette, but teens displayed greater flexibility in applying these standards.

Spreading rumors, making insulting comments, invading privacy, and oversharing personal information were all considered inappropriate actions by both groups. Adults reported increased anxiety, particularly about privacy and emotional disclosure, whereas youths acknowledged these activities as improper but were more tolerant.

Generational variations were especially noticeable in posting patterns and content interpretation. Youth saw memes, slang, and amusing posts as typical manifestations of identity and social engagement, whereas adults often saw them as excessive or improper. The phrase "Dapat hiwalay ang Facebook ng matatanda" arose as a result of these discrepancies, emphasizing misunderstandings rather than a genuine need for generational division. Overall, the findings highlight the value of awareness and mutual respect in shared digital settings.

IV.CONCLUSION

This study looks at the differences and similarities in Facebook behavior between young people and adults, including their judgments of acceptable and undesirable online behavior. The research found that both generations have similar expectations for ethical Facebook conduct, such as leaving respectful comments, avoiding insults, maintaining privacy, and validating facts before posting. These shared ideals demonstrate that, despite age disparities, there is a shared

sense of appropriate online behavior. However, the study revealed significant generational disparities in posting behaviors, communication methods, and content interpretation. Youths are more likely to interact in expressive, amusing, and informal ways, whereas adults prefer purposeful, value-oriented content like inspirational, religious, family-related, and political posts. These distinctions can lead to misunderstandings, particularly in the perception of humor, sarcasm, and casual online communication.

The frequent use of the phrase "Dapat hiwalay ang Facebook ng matatanda" illustrates current generational tensions in shared digital spaces. Rather than demonstrating a genuine desire for separation, the findings suggest that this perception stems from disparities in values, online norms, and life experience. Finally, the study emphasizes the need for mutual understanding, adaptation, and respect among Facebook users from various generations in promoting healthier and more inclusive online communities.

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