'WHY DIDN'T YOU ANSWER?'; PATTERNS IN ACCEPTING AND DECLINING MOBILE CALLS AND TEXTS

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Abstract

Mobile phones or currently popular smart phones are seen as one of the most significant means of socialization lately. Affecting our daily lives and relationship patterns, sometimes mobile phones replace the vivid people around us with those on the other end of the phones. The mobile allows users actually to evaluate situations and people through decisions to respond to or decline calls or messages, that decisions 'evaluates people in our lives'. This study uses interviews and survey questionnaire data to explore how absent people have control over our lives through peoples' mobile phone usages. Further, does the form of communication (calls versus texts) make a difference in the decision to accept incoming communication? Survey questionnaires were administered to 891 people over the age of 18 in Istanbul, asking respondents to reflect on the situations in which they decline calls or messages on their mobile phones. This paper compares the categories of people more likely to be declined, versus those who are not declined, that is those who have more control over our lives when they are absent. People declined or not declined were found to be associated with age groups, differences in types, preferences, conditions, environments and usage rates of mobile phones in our daily lives. These little tools claim to free people, allowing us to socialize more and to approach each other. Ironically, our study finds that mobile phones increase social distance. Examining the relationship patterns of usage is critical for understanding and developing awareness of how our mobile phones direct our lives and how absent people may have influence on. The ironic quality in the effects of new technology—often those innovations that are claimed to give us greater autonomy simultaneously tie us more tightly to the normative structure.

Keywords: mobile phones, smart phones, communication, relationships, call, message, decline

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary life is closely related to the development and mass distribution of information and communication technologies. They are of great importance for the organization of the social structure and its transformations. M. Salazar (2010) noted that telecommunication products and applications have great influence on the ways people behave, perceive and construct their social identity and relationships.

Statistics provided by the TurkStat show that of the mass of information and communication technology in Turkey is becoming a mobile phone. In 1994 number of fixed telephone subscribers was 12,305,760 and mobile phone subscribers 81.276, while in 2014 as of September the number of fixed telephone numbers 12,741,947 and number of mobile phone subscribers 71,908,742 TurkStat, 2014). On the one hand, the new communication technologies play a crucial role in the industrial production, determine the economic and political dynamics, and on the other, computers and mobile phones have become an integral part of everyday life of large numbers of people. Given the dynamics of growth in the number of new users of mobile phones, it is necessary to interpret the process sociologically, because fast spread of new forms of mass communication in social structural categories. In this regard, it seems important to understand what changes introduce new communication technologies in the daily life of their users, as daily life lies at the basis of social reality (Schutz, 1982).

Since communication is a fundamental basis of human activities (Castells, 2004), the modification of the communication process has led to really profound social transformations. Rapid and widespread mobile

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communications, which in 15-20 years of its existence in Turkey was comparable in the number of subscribers to the fixed telephone network (TurkStat, 2014) requires timely sociological interpretation. It is important to describe and analyze the social consequences of the spread of mobile telephony on the micro-level of everyday life that have not yet done in the domestic material.

Relevance of the study is, we will focus on how patterns of communication through mobile phones are affecting our behaviors. Understanding social transformations and continuities requires an understanding of established ways of communication, power dynamics and the ways that structures and behaviors have already been challenged, fractured or undermined (Marshall and Notley, 2014). Therefore we wanted to explore one of these power dynamics among communication ways through mobile phones that is to decline a call or a message. These specific behavioristic patterns needs understanding for awareness and develop communication ways through right manners. Unlike other sociological discussions, our research develops a new question and helps to understand how much absent people have control over us. Furthermore, as Gladarev noted (2006), the study of mobile phones on the micro-level of everyday life will allow a better understanding of the mechanisms of transformation of such an important social process of communication, as well as to find out the impact of new communication mechanisms technology for the organization of the social structure of modern society.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Studies show that mobile phones and digital mobility (connectivity through smart phones) develop every day, thus it become critical to discover how mobile devices shapes daily life behavioral patterns of people. The availability and use of mobile phone began in 1994 in Turkey. Since then, usage has increased rapidly. In 1994, the number of people using mobile phones was 80.000, in 2000 it reached 8 million users, 5.5% of total population. Also in 2001, 50,2% houses in Turkey had at least one mobile phone user but by 2010 this number has increased to 90,5% (Özaşçılar, 2012). One study in the United States investigating the growth of ownership of these devices collected survey data over several years from teenagers. The study shows that in 2004, 45% had a cell phone, rising to 63 % in fall of 2006 and then to71% in early 2008. (Lenhart, 2009) In same year 77%, and in 2009 85% of all adults had a cell phone or other mobile device (Lenhart, 2009). Phone use continues to mount steadily: in 2012, 87% of the EU adult population used a mobile phone or a smart phone. (DAE, 2013) According to the Mobile Behavior Report of Salesforce, in 2014 85% of people say that mobile devices are a central part of their life- and 90% of those aged 18-24 agreed (Report 2014). The same report shows that smart phones are used most frequently in the hours 8 a.m. – 12 p.m. during the day, and the most during Sunday and Monday in a week (Report 2014) .

The majority of people with a mobile phone use it to make or receive calls (97%) with slightly fewer (83%) using it for text messaging. And just over two-fifths (44%) say they use the internet via their mobile phone (Ofcom Report 2013). Among the reasons given for using smart phones are mostly for checking emails, using internet for search and social networking, then watching tv, videos or movies, getting news alerts, playing games, listening to music, reading and getting directions. More than 90% of respondents access their email through their mobile phones, (Mb. Report 2014); [see EU report -three quarters of people having internet communicating by email (DAE, 2013)] 90% use text messaging, and 75% reach social media on their smartphones at least once a day, which are the most often performed activities on smartphones more than calls or texts (Mb. Report 2014). According to the MTV Circuits of Cool report (2008), 82% of youth use their cell phones to take pictures, and 66% of youth send pictures and videos to their friends. As well, 20% of youth globally are interested in viewing “Clips from other people on sites like YouTube” on their phones. Mobile phones are now multimedia mini-printing presses, capable of authoring and sharing content (Salazar, 2010). As the study about type and frequency of mobile access to the internet in the EU shows, most users in an EU study are frequent users, accessing the internet via a mobile device every day or almost every day (DAE, 2013).

Who people do communicate with? A study in Australia offers some useful statistics; an analysis of calls made reveals that only a small proportion (16%) of the 9,714 calls made were work-related. Conversely, the mobile phone is used overwhelming for contacting family (48%) and friends (26%). Among calls to family members, for both men and women, the highest proportion is calls to one’s spouse (18%). Women are disproportionately likely to phone their children (11%), parents (12%) and extended family (11%). On the other hand, in general, men are more likely to use the mobile for work-related calls, and this holds true even when employment is taken into account. Employed men devote 23% of their calls to work-related purposes, while for employed women the percentage is 15% (Wajcman, Bittman, Jones, Johnstone and Brown, 2007). Thus a significant difference occurs for genders for getting news alerts on smartphones; 72% of male respondents versus 54% of female respondents receive news alerts daily or nearly every day (Mb. Report

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2014). These display how much applications influence people's daily interaction, particularly construction of communication and habitus.

Age makes a difference in mobile usage. A recent report shows that people aged 18-24 are significantly more likely to spend more time on their smart phones than are people over the age of 25: younger people reported 5.2 hours a day of phone usage compared to the 3.3 hours a day of respondents overall (in a research which all participants claimed to own smart phones) (Mb. Report 2014). Some differences in patterns of usage appear with age. Younger people aged 16-34 are significantly more likely than those aged 35-54 or 55+ to use their phone on a daily basis for voice calls, text messaging and accessing the internet (Ofcom Report 2013); as age decreases, adopting mobile internet use increases. While 63% of the people aged 16-24 used the internet on the move, for individuals aged 55 to 74 it is less than 15 %.(DAE, 2013) The Main reasons for internet access through hand-held devices are to access social media--which are themselves also important means of communication . In 2012, 58% of people who used the internet on the move with a handled device participated in social networks (DAE, 2013), two main activities marked differences in rates of use by age. Around 80% of young people who used internet while on the move with a hand-held device were active on these social networks. Age difference come up during daily mobile occupy. Playing games, downloading music, videos or images illustrate further differences in ways of communication and social activities ; 58% of those aged 16-24 are active when compared to those aged 55 to 74 (22%). Listening to music on mobile devices also varies by age: respondents aged 18-34 listen to music 19% more often when compared to total respondents and nearly 50% more than people aged 55+ (Mb. Report 2014).

3. METHOD

This cross-sectional study explores how absent people have controls over our lives through mobile phone usage patterns in İstanbul, Turkey. We examine brands, types and differences, preferences along with the people of connection, reasons of usage (talking, chatting, social media et cetera). Percentages of usage of mobile phones, average of declining people on mobile phone, people and situations they decline a phone call or message are also queried. We used observation, interviews, and survey research in our study.

This study grows from a semester long set of activities in a spring 2014 undergraduate social research methods class. The class is required of all sociology majors in our university. The student researchers, research assistants and their instructor designed a survey instrument including both open and closed questions (semi-structured interviews) to operationalize our variables. Thus we gathered both quantitative and qualitative data.

In the surveys, respondents were asked to note their ages Our questionnaire items focused on two areas: in which situations people decline calls or messages on their mobile phones; and which categories of people are more likely to have their mobile calls or messages declined. This paper focuses on the people who are declined. The survey questions were drafted and pretested in English. Then two research assistants in sociology who were native speakers of Turkish and fluent in English translated and revised the Turkish version for syntax, grammar and connotation of vocabulary.

The survey questionnaires were administrated face-to-face to a quota sample of 891 Turkish adult residents in Istanbul. The students were instructed to select a roughly equal number of female and male respondents and to choose roughly equal numbers of respondents from four age-groupings: younger than 20, between 20 and 30, between 31 and 50, and over age 50.

The purpose of the survey-interviews was explained to the respondents and they were asked for their consent to be voluntary participants. The survey was conducted in May of 2014. About 30 students each administered 25 questionnaires to non-students selected in public places throughout Istanbul. A total of 819 surveys were collected.

At the completion of the surveys, student researchers thanked the informants and asked if they had any questions about our project. Students provided our professor's name and offered to translate any inquiries from the informants. No informant asked to contact him.

We do not claim that our sample represents a larger population. Our study is exploratory and we did not have the resources to draw a representative sample. Our findings, then, should be seen as illustrative and tentative: no further generalization to a larger population can be drawn. However, this sample provides a useful set of respondents and is adequate to our study's purposes.

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4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

Our respondents mostly come from the same locations as our students' places of residence, spread across different areas in Istanbul. Age groups of the 819 respondents are almost equally divided. Of our respondents, 31% are between 20-30 years, 25% are younger than 20, another 25% are between 31 and 50, and 18% of our respondents are older than 50.

While all participants are active mobile phone users, very few (6%) have a second mobile phone. Of those with a second phone, the main reasons for the second phone are their job/school (56%), 19% to communicate with partners, and 13% with parents. Brands make quite difference among users. 40% of respondents preferred Samsung, 24% iPhone and 18% preferred using Nokia brands. Remarkably IPhone users drop with the age increases (31% users younger than 20 – 8% users older than 50), and Nokia users rise together with the age (8% users who are younger than 20 – 42% users found older than 50). Age becomes effective for choosing products and applications which help to shape people's social identity and relations.

Participants mentioned mostly applications, quality, speed (internet), image, voice, charge, memory and prices when asked about criteria in choosing their primary phone. The most frequently mentioned social application on the respondents' phones wex re "whatsapp". 34% of respondents accessorize their mobile phones, mostly with headphones and colorful and fancy covers. The majority of participants preferred to use smart phones. Three quarters of respondents (76%) have smart phones as their primary phone. Nine out of ten who are younger than 30 prefer to use smart phones, and seven out of ten within 31-50 age group use smart phones. Reasons preferring smart phones are mainly to access the internet accessibility, functional applications, access to programs such as Word and Power point, touchscreen and sound/reception quality.

Younger respondents prefer to access Social networks, which are significant means for communication, online through mobile phone. Almost 80% (younger than 30) of respondents use their phones to access social networks. Among applications, Facebook is the most used social network (52.7%), followed by Twitter (22.6%) and Instagram (11.9%) of usage of total respondents. As age advances we observed an increase in Facebook utilization rates; 45% of young users (under age20) as their first social media application, 70% of old users (aged 50or more) preferred it as well. According to our findings, 43% of respondents spend less than one hour on social media per day, 33% spend between 1 and 3 hours, and 24% spend more than 3 hours with social networking. As the age increases, social media use decreases. While 28 % of the age group younger than 20 spends less than 1 hour on social media, it is 69% of the age group older than 50. In other words, 9% of the people older than 50 spend more than 3 hours on social media in a day, while the rate is 38% for teenagers (younger than 20), spend more than 3 hours. Time becomes important in communication; how much time do people spend on calling then? Of our all participants, more than half of them (52%) report spending less than 1 hour in a day speaking on their mobile phones. Another 32% spend between 1 and 3 hours, and 16% of respondents spend more than 3 hours in a day for calling. Main usage reasons of their first mobile phone are to communicate with family members (36%), with partners (23%), with friends (17%), with colleagues or school friends (14%) or with others (9%). Respondents reported that the main reasons for using their mobile phone in last 24 hours were making calls (mostly for work, family and friends), texting, social media, taking a photo and listening to music.

One of our main questions in this research was when and where people have tendency to decline a call? When we asked the last time respondents declined a call, 33% of them don't remember the time, 27% claim they declined "today", 25% claim "yesterday" and rest of them claimed to decline this and last week (8%, 7% respectively). A total of more than 52% claim to have declined a call within the previous 48 hours.

5. ANALYSIS AGE FACTOR FOR DECLINING A CALL OR TEXT

While analyzing the categories of people who are declined, we coded our data into two groups, family and non-family. The Family group contains mother, father and spouse or partner; the non-family group includes best friend, colleague or school friend, and others like doctor, banker, renter or landlord, et cetera. We named the age groups in order to ease mentioning again in each case. We call teenagers the group under age 20, young adults the respondents aged between 20 and 30, middle-aged adults those aged between 31 and 50, and adults those aged over 50.

Participants were asked about their declining of mobile phone calls and texts. The questionnaire item asked whether they agree with the statement, "I never ignore/decline a call from my mother/father/partner." of respondent group categories 32.5% of young adults, 27% of middle-aged adults, 23% of teenagers and 18% of adults over 50 agreed.

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We used the Chi-square statistic to test whether age and declining calls were independent. The calculated chi-square is 18.860, with 12 degree of freedom and p< 0.092. We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that age makes a difference in the likelihood of declining calls and texts. Young adults were most likely to decline and adults over 50 were least likely to decline a call or text.

The percentages of respondent who never ignored a call from family members are respectively 36% of young adults, 24% of teenagers, 22% of middle-aged adults and 18% of adults over 50. In other words, 63% of people younger than 20 agree with the statement and 14% disagree. Of those aged between 20 and 30, 69% agree and 13% disagrees with not declining; further, 73% of those aged between 31 and 50 agree and 8% of them disagree; and 68% of people older than 50 agree, 10% disagree with the statement. We may say, family members mean a lot for our respondents and seen quite important to them, since seven people out of ten rejects to decline a call from their family members, while just one out of ten claims to ignore. (See Table.1)

Table. 1 (Family calls and Age Crosstabulation)

			age				
			Under 20 years old	Btw 20-30 years old	Btw 31-50 years old	Over 50 years old	Total
family_call	strongly agree	Count	41	66	66	48	221
		% within age	21,8%	27,0%	35,9%	35,8%	29,5%
	agree	Count	78	102	68	43	291
		% within age	41,5%	41,8%	37,0%	32,1%	38,8%
	neutral	Count	42	45	35	29	151
		% within age	22,3%	18,4%	19,0%	21,6%	20,1%
	disagree	Count	25	26	11	11	73
		% within age	13,3%	10,7%	6,0%	8,2%	9,7%
	strongly disagree	Count	2	5	4	3	14
		% within age	1,1%	2,0%	2,2%	2,2%	1,9%
Total		Count	188	244	184	134	750
		% within age	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

We find that for ignoring messages, results are nearly same with calls from family members. Seven people out of ten agree with the statement “I never ignore/decline a message from my mother/father/partner”, two out of ten feel neutral about it. (Chi-square is 19.359, df =12, p< .080)

Participants were asked about declining calls d from non-family members, with the statement “I never ignore/decline a call from my best friend/colleague/school friend/other”, averagely 4 out of ten people (40% of teenagers, 36% of young adults, 32% of middle-aged adults, 34% of adults over 50) nor agree neither disagree with the statement. (See Table.2)

Again, the Chi square statistic was used to test for independence. The calculated chi-square is 15.573, df =12, p< .212) We fail to reject the null hypothesis. We cannot conclude that the two variables are related. People who agree are 23% of teenagers, 29% of young teenagers, 35% of middle-aged adults and 37.5 of adults over 50. As seen from findings, we see that while the age of the respondent makes a difference in declining or accepting calls and texts from family members, age does not make a difference for non-family members.

Table.2 (Non-family calls and Age Crosstabulation)

			age				
			Under 20 years old	Btw 20-30 years old	Btw 31-50 years old	Over 50 years old	Total
nonfamily_call	strongly agree	Count	14	18	20	19	71
		% within age	7,3%	7,7%	10,8%	13,5%	9,4%
	agree	Count	31	50	45	34	160
		% within age	16,1%	21,4%	24,3%	24,1%	21,3%
	neutral	Count	77	84	60	48	269
		% within age	40,1%	35,9%	32,4%	34,0%	35,8%
	disagree	Count	65	68	53	34	220
		% within age	33,9%	29,1%	28,6%	24,1%	29,3%
	strongly disagree	Count	5	14	7	6	32
		% within age	2,6%	6,0%	3,8%	4,3%	4,3%
Total		Count	192	234	185	141	752

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Table.2 (Non-family calls and Age Crosstabulation)

			age				
			Under 20 years old	Btw 20-30 years old	Btw 31-50 years old	Over 50 years old	Total
nonfamily_call	strongly agree	Count	14	18	20	19	71
		% within age	7,3%	7,7%	10,8%	13,5%	9,4%
	agree	Count	31	50	45	34	160
		% within age	16,1%	21,4%	24,3%	24,1%	21,3%
	neutral	Count	77	84	60	48	269
		% within age	40,1%	35,9%	32,4%	34,0%	35,8%
	disagree	Count	65	68	53	34	220
		% within age	33,9%	29,1%	28,6%	24,1%	29,3%
	strongly disagree	Count	5	14	7	6	32
		% within age	2,6%	6,0%	3,8%	4,3%	4,3%
Total		Count	192	234	185	141	752
		% within age	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Age is a powerful predictor of tendency to decline a call or messages for family members. The Chi square statistic was used to test whether ages of respondents makes difference, are significant. In the following paragraphs, calculated chi-squares, F scores and level of significance are reported for those differences which reach levels of significance lower than 0.05. We reject hypothesis of independence that is for each age group respondents were less likely to decline calls from family members than from non-family members (Chi square = 268.366, df = 16, alpha = .000), ignore messages (Chi square = 222.135, df = 16, alpha = .000), therefore age makes difference and the variables are associated.

6. FAMILY OR NON-FAMILY MEMBERS AND SOCIAL SPACE

Respondents were asked several questions in order to find out whether their responses to receiving or declining calls differ in different social spaces.

Of our sample, we calculated hypothesis of independence among age groups of declining calls or texts from family members along with some specific situations or environments like the recipient being in a meeting, at the cinema, on public transportation, or at night. There were some powerful and moderate associations between them. For family members calls in a cinema (See Table.3), whether people had tendency to decline a call or text (Chi square = 67.535, df = 20, alpha = .000), in a meeting (Chi square = 87.590, df = 16, alpha = .000), on a transportation vehicle (Chi square = 35.328, df = 16, alpha = .004) and at nights (Chi square = 40.433, df = 20, alpha = .000), therefor we reject the null hypothesis of independence. Further, these differences become more pronounced as people age: these differences are greater among some situations.

We tested whether there was a difference in declining calls and texts from non-family members, we again used the Chi square statistic to test whether the variables were independent . Further there are more associations among age groups of declining calls or texts from non-family members along with a meeting (Chi square = 55.751, df = 16, alpha = .000), with nights (Chi square = 40.118, df = 20, alpha = .005), with cinema (Chi square = 36.759, df = 20, alpha = .013), with transportation vehicles (Chi square = 28.375, df = 16, alpha = .029). Accordingly we reject hypothesis of independence, that is for each age group respondent were more likely to decline calls or texts from non-family members in specific conditions. [Table of calculated chi square –for family calls vs. cinema- as a sample is herein below.]

Table.3 (Chi Square Measurement for Family call at Cinema along with Age)

		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	67,535[e]	20	,000
	Likelihood Ratio	66,218	20	,000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	9,751	1	,002
	N of Valid Cases	736		

7. CONCLUSION

This exploratory study of people in Istanbul answering questions about specific conditions in which these little tools support other studies looking for behavioral patterns of mobile phone usage. A survey conducted in May 2014 elicited responses from 891 adult from across the city. All our respondents are active users and state an opinion about their usage reasons, frequencies, patterns and tendencies.

In order to find out which people have control over others, and how much they have, we asked participants

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about whether they decline calls or texts from different categories of people. While most respondents disagreed that they ever ignore calls or texts from their family members (almost %70), many respondents state, on the other hand, that they decline calls or texts from non-family members. Family influence or "control" over peoples' lives are obvious, since the rates differ with other people out of families, even friends. Non-family members are seen to be less "effective" controllers than are family members. However, age makes significant differences in ignoring calls and texts from non-family members. The higher peoples' age, the more likely they not to decline calls or texts from non-family members.

We used the Chi square statistic to test for independence between our variables. Age was main factor since we took it as our basic independent variable and calculated whether it is associated with declining calls or messages in general and in specific environments. Age and social space were found not to be independent. A major finding of our study opens new insights about patterns of mobile phone usage. This study was conducted in Istanbul: supplementary research to determine if similar patterns occur in other towns and in rural areas would be fruitful. Further, we choose age as an independent variable, but gender, level of education and place of residence would be fruitfully studied.

Claiming to socialize people more and approach them each other, actually mobile devices show up increasing social distance among individuals. Sample of our study displays this with family relationships and rates of declining them. The obvious influence of "controllers" who actually are absent, not ignoring calls or texts from them may estrange people with other people that are physically present. Developments in telecommunication technologies, products or applications lead people to act more autonomously; but connect them to devices and normative structure at the same time. Therefore these innovations affect behavioral patterns and construction of social identity and relationships to a large extent.

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