

Perception of Urban Youth and Role of Family and Friends During Everyday Information Practices: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract:

This study attempts to fill the research gap that exists in the role of family and friends during everyday information practices. It also seeks to explore what is urban teens' perception of the usefulness of acquired information and what factors are affecting this perception. A qualitative study was conducted and Sample was 25 Pakistani urban teenagers aged 13 – 19. The sample was chosen, as Generation Z individuals were targeted in this study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted. Thematic analysis was done using the software NVivo. It was concluded urban teenagers found to be relying upon their family networks for their everyday information practices. some parents support their children in their progress while some parents do not assist. The results showed that teens perceived that these information practices were highly important for their everyday life information needs and academic purposes. Moreover, it was found that individual, social, cultural, and economic factors affect these practice. This study will be useful for educational institutions and will guide trainers to involve family members during trainings and workshops.

Keywords: Information Practices, Family and Friends, Urban teenagers, Pakistani Youth, Gen Z

Introduction:

Everyday information needs are one of those basic needs that youth are trying their best to fulfill for their career and academic purposes. The role of social interaction is often discussed in terms of opportunities for children's development and learning through meaningful activity with others (Jeffery 2021; Plowman, McPake, and Stephen 2010; Rodríguez- de-Dios, van Oosten, and Igartua 2018). Reijo Savolainen (1995) started research into everyday information practices in the mid-1990s. The main concept was to make it meaningful how social and cultural factors, including family culture and friends circle, are shaping information seeking. In 2008, Savolainen introduced the "Model of everyday information practices" Then in 2022 Savolainen and Thomson enhanced the model of information practice by integrating the element of information creation based on Thomson's recent 2018 study for different contexts, numerous attempts have also been made, through which information is sought such as "social roles, tasks, and identities" (Case, 2016).

Youth is known as digitally literate, confident, and having belief in teamwork (Gibbins, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Mawby, Foster, and Ellis (2015) investigated the information search behavior of students' daily lives in their environment and the context of family and social networks. Williamson, Qayyum, Hider, and Liu (2012) examined the impact of information on the daily life of young students (aged 18-25) in Australian universities. Everyday activities are affected by social circle, family, and friends. This study will explore the role of family and

friends during everyday information practices of Pakistani urban youth, the perception of the usefulness of acquired information, and what factors are affecting this perception.

Research Objectives:

The following research questions were explored in this study.

1. What is the Role of Family and Friends During Everyday Information Practices?
2. What is the urban teens' perception of the usefulness of the acquired information to fulfill their everyday information needs?

Purpose of the Study:

This study is designed to explore the urban youth's perception of the usefulness of acquired information and the role that family and friends play during everyday information practices. This study will further explore the factors affecting this perception. The findings obtained from this study would be helpful for the policy makers, curricula designers, and educationists to relate their policies and curricula to per needs of the time and according to their environment. Further new policies and curricula can be designed and such activities and programs can be conducted which will be helpful for family members as well, as they play an important role during their everyday information practices. Information literacy programs can also be introduced. In this way, the youth can take full benefit of these practices.

Literature Review:

There are many studies on the information behavior of teens, especially after the year 2000. Phelan (2009) mentioned it was only in the past decade that the studies on teenagers have been done with real consistency. Further, the author tried to explain that technology has made it easy to seek information and for researchers to observe the process" (p.2). Shenton and Dixon (2003) did their research and developed a typology for the categories of eleven types of information needs for teens and children. Agosto and Hughes-Hassell (2005) presented a typology of urban teens' preferred everyday life information-seeking sources. Agosto and Hughes-Hassell (2006a) did their research on urban teens to know their everyday life information needs, this study was based upon the author's previous work and they proposed a model of behavior with seven reasons and the focus of this model was on the underline reasons of the behaviors. They found family and friends are preferred sources. Agosto and Hughes-Hassell (2006b) the second part of the research focuses on the relationship between both theoretical and empirical models developed by them. They further declared in this research that teens had the same type of information needs across the sociocultural, ethnic, and geographical boundaries which were explored by the previous researchers with more advantaged, nonminority groups. Bowler (2013) adopted a naturalistic method for the information-seeking, use, and evaluation methods adopted by adolescents. This was done on a group of ten students and used Kuhlthau's information search process model. Chung and Neuman (2007) explored the information-seeking and use behavior of high school students while busy with class projects. The students of the suburban with high academic abilities were chosen. Very interesting findings were shared by the authors that students' strategies for information seeking and use were interactive however they tended to use keywords instead of Boolean search. Howard and Jin (2004) surveyed the reading habits and information use behavior of Nova Scotia's teens. They found that teens do not perceive that librarians influence their leisure reading choices. Julien and Barker (2009) tried to find information to find and evaluate the behavior of high school students and discovered that many students were not able to sophisticated information evaluation and

searching. Lilley (2008) explored barriers to information faced by school students. The author finds a lack of trust among the respondents in authority figures and a fear of being culturally ignorant, especially with family members. Meyers, Fisher, and Marcoux (2007) did a unique study of tweens regarding their information-seeking behavior. They highlighted the features of the holistic youth information perspective. In Pakistan, there has been a dearth of research that specializes in everyday life information seeking. From these, Memon, Solangi, and Abro (2018) analyzed the extent of college students' satisfaction with the facilities they have in their hostels. Findings indicated the lifestyles of strong tremendous relationships among the diverse parameters investigated i.e., meals first-rate, cleanliness, water supply, and primary aid, for students living in hostels. Furthermore, it was highlighted that hostel students want to get improved quality services. Iftikhar and Ajmal (2015). carried out qualitative research to take a look at and analyze the effects of hostel lifestyles on students' personalities and behaviors. They observed that hostel lifestyles had a useful effect on the scholars' instructional adventure in addition to their personalities. Students who became part of multicultural social groups during their hostel lives became greater confident, punctual, adaptable, realistic, and social folks who no longer shy away from new challenges. Students' satisfaction with their lives was observed to play a completely critical function in supporting them to attain their instructional goals.

Many studies have been conducted on youth information behavior, especially in the last two decades Howard & Jin (2004), Agosto & Hassel (2006-a), Agosto & Hassell (2006-b), Chung & Neuman (2007), Julien & Barker (2009), Meyers, Fisher, and Marcoux (2009), Sin & Kim (2013), Bowler (2013) and Hanif & Warraich (2019). Phelan (2009) mentioned that it was only in the past decade that the studies on teenagers have been done with real consistency. Hanif & Warraich (2023) mentioned that "For urban teens, everyday information practice is developing a relationship with others". Then again Hanif & Warraich (2024) mentioned that "Urban teenagers mostly relied on friends and family for their information needs".

Research Methodology:

A qualitative method was adopted for this study. Qualitative data analysis is a "process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data" Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1990). Such a process is not an easy task. It is disordered, hard, and time-consuming, even though it is an innovative and captivating method. Qualitative data analysis is pursuing the relationship between categories and themes of data seeking to increase the understanding of the phenomenon. A total of 25 urban teens in the 13 – 19 years age bracket were taken for the sample population. This sample was taken from all provinces of Pakistan namely Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and special territories like Gilgit Baltistan and the Federal Capital Islamabad.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted. For each interview, the duration was 40-50 minutes. The questions regarding the role of family and friends during everyday information practices and the perception of the usefulness of acquired information were asked. Responses were carefully jotted down in the printed interview guides. Follow-up and probing questions were also asked. The researchers strongly felt the saturation point after 25 interviews and meaningful themes were not developing. At the end, each interview was transcribed carefully. The transcribed data were analyzed using the software Nvivo for content analysis because it was considered more appropriate and was widely used for determining and ranking the emerging themes from the qualitative data.

The researcher tried to find an appropriate place for conducting interviews so that interruptions could be managed carefully and silence could be assured for better listening. The participants were asked questions and their responses were carefully jotted down in the printed interview guides. Follow-up and probing questions, listed in the interview guide (for the convenience of the researcher), were also asked. Consent forms were signed by the respondents assuring them of anonymity and confidentiality, moreover, the use of pseudonyms instead of their names was suggested to which they agreed. A semi-structured written interview was conducted with a total of 25 teens, of which five teens each belonged to the provinces of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Punjab, and the special territory of Islamabad. In contrast, only three respondents from Balochistan and two from the special territory Gilgit Baltistan were interviewed. The data obtained was analyzed using the software NVivo. Figure 1 below depicts the number and the distribution of the sample population along with codes generated by NVivo.

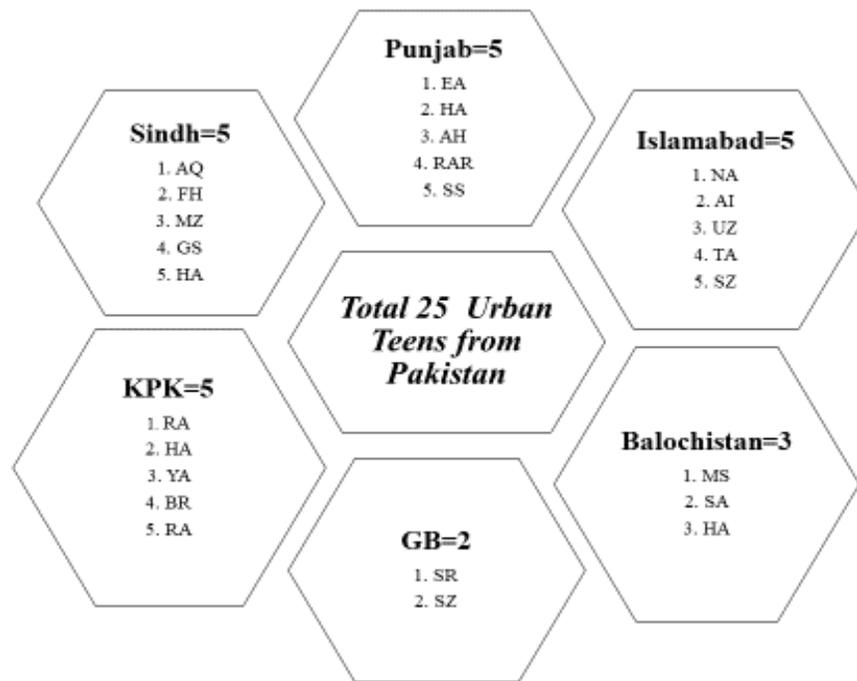


Fig 1 Demographics of qualitative phase respondents

The reasons for obtaining a low response from Gilgit Baltistan and Balochistan refer to the fact of geographical dispersion.

Data Analysis:

Since our research objective was to explore the role of family and friends during everyday information Practices, the urban teenagers were asked about how family and friends play their roles during EIP. The most predominant factor that affected the EIP of urban teenagers was thus found to be the role of their peer and family network. The factors identified are illustrated in the figure.2 below:

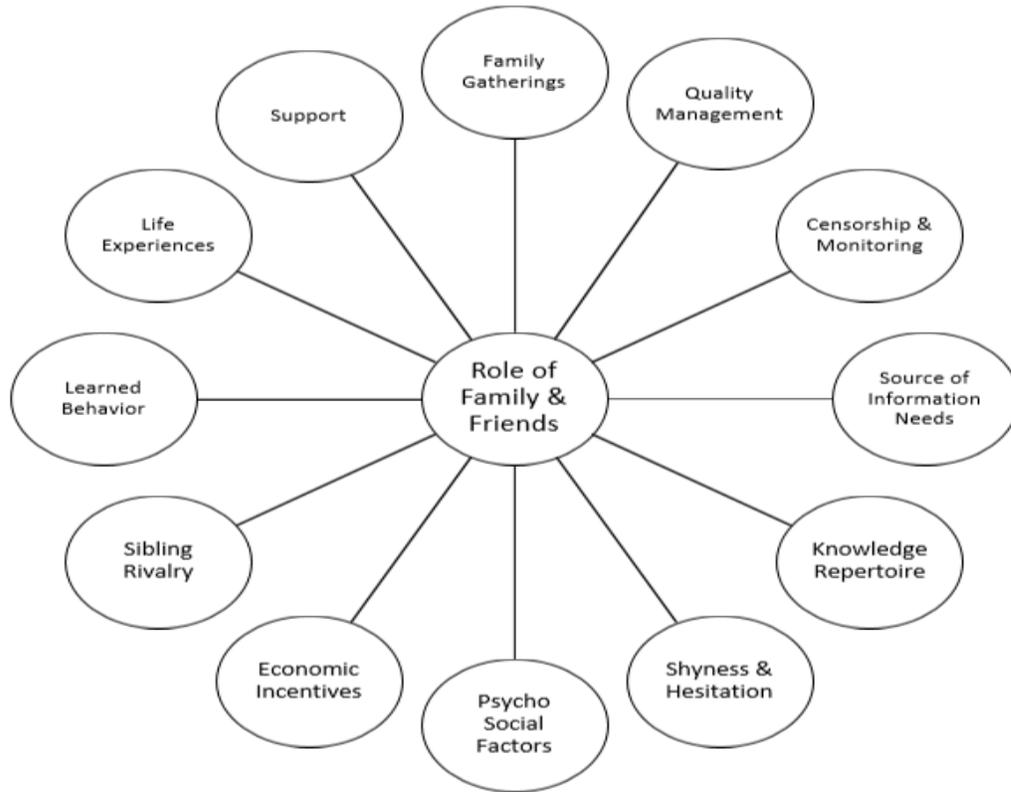


Figure 2 Role of family and friends

The role of family and friends was found to be affecting positively as well as negatively on the everyday information practices of urban teens. Urban teenagers were found to be relying upon their family network for their everyday information practices. This aligned with the cultural practices of Pakistan, where a strong family system exists and nuclear families are sparsely found. Urban teenagers were more relying upon even their grandparents to learn from their life experiences and build their knowledge repertoire based upon the life experiences and knowledge of their grandparents. Urban teenagers learn from family gatherings and interaction with their extended families i.e.; cousins, aunts, uncles, etc. Family was also a very important factor in monitoring the kind of information, the teenager was exposed to. They were also responsible for censoring their exposure to information that was not culture and/or religion-friendly. One factor that was disturbing and was affecting everyday practices was the psychosocial factors in which the environment matters a lot. The students who were facing any issues in their work environment were more likely to be negatively affected in the case of everyday information practices. Students need a repertoire of practice as it refers to the techniques and available tools to search for information. Availability of resources is also provided by families in most cases which helps in increasing everyday information. Some people are shy and hesitant as shyness is an emotion that affects how a person feels and behaves around others. When people feel shy, they might hesitate to say or do something because of the discomfort in their surroundings. It is also one of the reasons which affect teen’s capability in one case the students even told about the support they got from their fellows and family. It is noted that some parents support their

children in their progress while some parents do not assist them so they might learn themselves. Family support was found the most important factor that could bring change in their everyday information practices negatively or vice versa depending on whether the teens were getting it or not. Economic incentives are the things that motivate a child to work and to engage in certain behavior which helps them to stay on the path towards their preferences such as seeking more information or successful life. It helps them increase their everyday information practices. Another factor is the learned behavior of teens in which without any experience they strive to learn more, that is an innate behavior that helps the teens keep going in achieving their goals. Another factor is family gatherings in which people gather and meet each other. They share information that helps teens to get more knowledge and increase their curiosity of knowing more after which they strive to learn more. It helps positively relate to everyday information practices. Quality management is an act of managing all activities and tasks that must be accomplished to maintain a desired level of excellence.

Our second research objective was to know the perception of the usefulness of acquired information. The results showed that teens belonging to lesser developed areas such as Balochistan were not very well versed in the importance of sharing information. Moreover, further using NVivo the parent and child nodes were identified, wherein the perceived usefulness of acquired information was taken as the parent nodes, and the child nodes identified were individual, social, cultural, and economic along with their sub-themes. The details regarding each child node with their subthemes are given below:

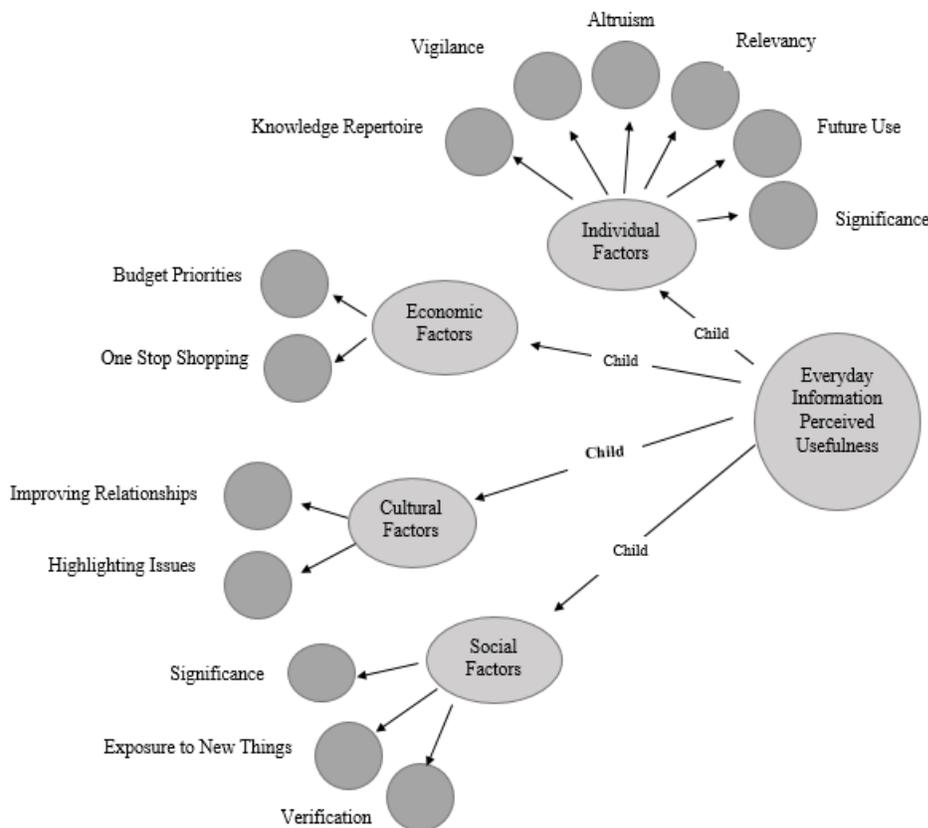


Figure 3 Nodes Diagram for Perceived Usefulness based on the interviews

(Nvivo Output)

At an individual level mostly urban teens considered EIP important as it broadened their knowledge repertoire, a 15-year-old male stated *“If teachers ask me any random question I will have the answer to it, as my general knowledge will be high, so I keep learning to utilize this knowledge in the future.”* – HA-2. Punjab. There was one more strong perception that EIP is very helpful for future use. Vigilance and relevancy were considered to make EIP more useful. The factor of altruism was also discovered as a factor of perceived usefulness.

In a social context, a 19-year-old boy HA-3 from Balochistan emphasized that EIP would improve our exposure to new things, as he stated *“Our all the family believed that EIP improves knowledge and gives us the exposure to new things”*. A good number of students stated that EIP verifies our collected information and makes it significant.

In a cultural context, a 13-year-old female stated *“When I learn something new I share it with my parents, this helps me in improving my relations with them and they also become aware of my information needs.”*. It was also discovered that teens strongly believe that EIP highlights new and important issues.

However, the economic significance of EIP was also known to urban teens as an 18-year-old female stated *“When I learn about discounts on different brands from the internet, I search for malls which have all the brands offering discounts under one roof then I stop searching for further things”* _ HA -5 (Sindh). In the economic context budget priorities were also found as a strong insight as teens were searching, finding, and deciding what they could afford and what they could not.

The following graph in Figure. 4 shows that in the modern era, all teenagers are aware of the importance of everyday information practices, however, the most recorded responses are from Punjab, Sindh, KP, and Islamabad, which shows that teens belonging to the lesser developed areas such as Balochistan are not very well versed with the importance of sharing information.

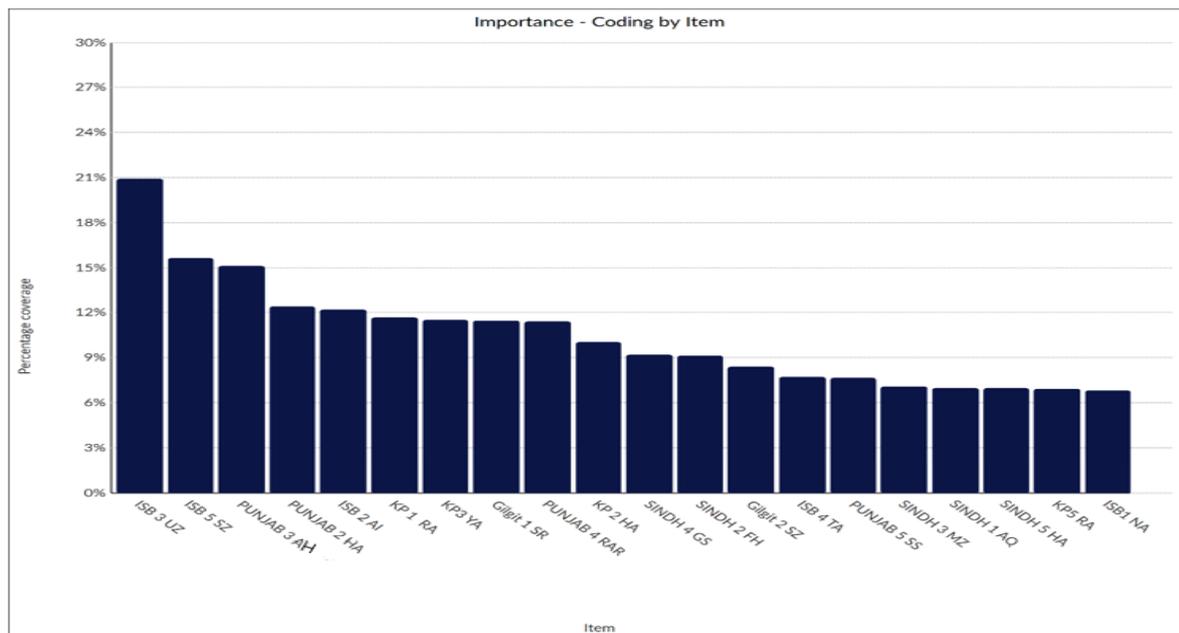


Figure 4 Graph for Perceived Usefulness based on the interviews
(Nvivo Output)

A 19-year-old boy from Quetta stated “ I can’t discuss everything with my grandparents, I feel shy and I mostly refer to my grandparents as they are more knowledgeable and experienced than me” – M.H (Balochistan). Moreover, a 14-year-old female from Gilgit stated “More facilities can improve things and fulfill our informational needs in a better way, but we remain deprived”. This depicts that the teens from underdeveloped regions such as Balochistan and Gilgit are either not aware of the importance of everyday information practices or they don’t have access to them, which is why they are not fully aware of their importance

Factors of perceived usefulness are illustrated in Figure No. 5 below:

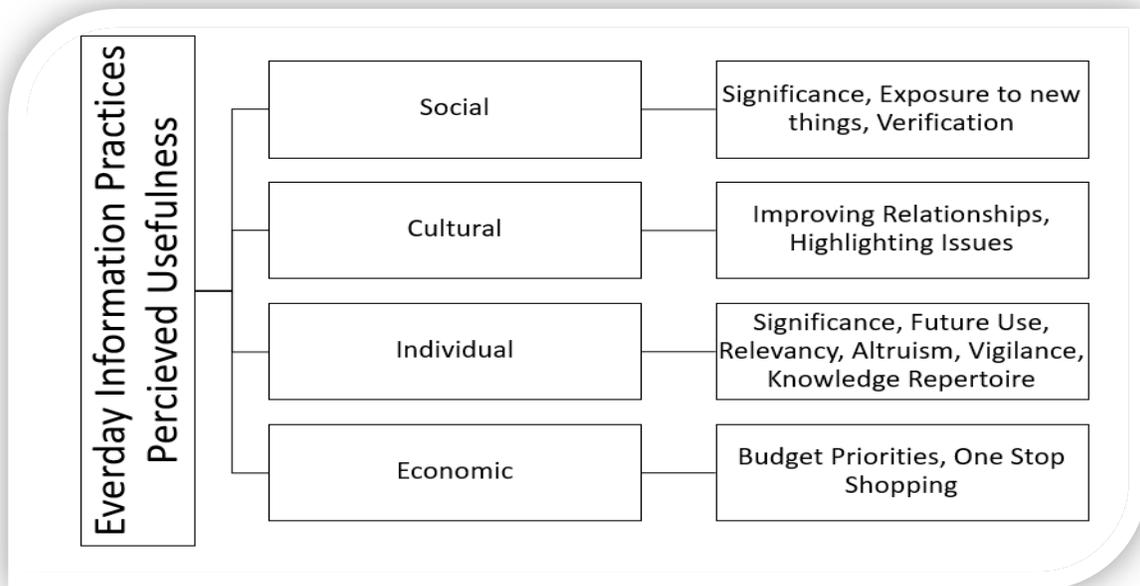


Figure 5. Perceived usefulness of EIP

Based on our findings concerning the usefulness of acquired information, their everyday life information seeking could be described not necessarily in terms of practical and orienting information, but by their needs for essential, circumstantial, and intermittent information.

This finding of the conducted study correlates with the findings of (Chen & Herson, 1982), who have demonstrated the central role of family members, friends, and other people in non-work information seeking. Human sources stand for cases in which information is typically received directly from individuals via face-to-face contacts, telephone calls, or letters. Personal experiences (utilizing one’s knowledge) are also classified as a human source. To study the role of information acquired by contacting experts in organizations such as libraries, schools, universities, and businesses, the category of organizational sources was identified.

As such, there is nothing particularly surprising in the criteria by which the Internet was preferred by urban teens as it accounted for easy accessibility, currency, interactivity, and a

broad repertoire of information. The most central position given to human sources is also clear, as mostly the joint family system exists in Pakistan and urban teenagers look up to their older siblings, parents, and even grandparents for obtaining and/or verifying the obtained information. Friends, experts, and university libraries were ranked as the next important sources, followed by family, employer, and mass media sources.

Recommendations:

This study recommends that family and friends play an important role during information practices, therefore, family members should be a part of school meetings and training so that they will be in a position to learn and understand the challenges and requirements. Since students have their perceptions, these findings will be helpful for policymakers and curricula designers to design the policies accordingly. These policies would be further helpful for designing information literacy programs and curricula.

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