



FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

**The effect of social media usage on academic learning and social anxiety
in university students**

Submitted by: Syed Fakhar Ali
Roll Number: 231-467619
Supervisor: Dr Sara Jafree

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Abstract

This research assessed the effect of social media use on academic learning and social anxiety in university students. This study will explore the relationship between the usage of social media by university students to support their academic activities and social anxiety which is considered one of the most prevalent classes of mental disorders. Literature suggests that social media usage for academic learning has a significant effect on university students and it causes social anxiety amongst them. This research will hypothesize that higher usage of social media for academic learning causes social anxiety among university students. For the theoretical framework of this research, the Theory by Woods and Scott, 2016 has been used. For the data collection, a convenient sampling technique has been used, to gather data from 150 university students of FCCU, based on their permission and willingness. SPSS has been used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics have been used to present frequencies and percentages. Reliability tests have been used to check the reliability of the study scales. Additionally, attempts were made to sample university students from different departments and majors to make the sample representative. In the scope of Pakistan, where social anxiety is not only prevalent but highly stigmatized, this research aims to be a useful addition to scholarly research on social anxiety among young people in higher education institutes.

Keywords: Social Anxiety, Social media usage, University students

Introduction

The use of social media for academic learning purposes is very significant and essential in numerous ways. It directly affects the education and academics of university students by providing them with methods and convenience (Abu Elnasr Sobaih, 2016). Academics have always been hard for students, especially for students from universities who have already undergone more than a decade of academics. University students establish and maintain fluid mentor/mentee relationships around academic activities and related interactions through social media. Social media comprises websites that allow profile creation and visibility of relationships between users which constitutes web-based applications that provide functionality for sharing, relationships, groups, conversation, and profiles (Elison, 2007). The use of such web-based applications is assistive for university students in their academic learning because the internet and social media can be accessed anytime with convenience and provide learning more swiftly as compared to other learning methods. WhatsApp, Facebook, Google, and YouTube are considered the most frequently used social media among university students for academic learning and they are normally accessed via smartphones, computers, and laptops. Academic learning and education have become dependent on social media and the use of social media aids their ability to collaborate in learning and communication with their peers and others in academia according to (Abu Elnasr Sobaih, 2016). Some of the main academic purposes for which university students use social media include learning, personal growth, personal research/development, and assignments. Social media also helps in communication amongst students and teachers which is very significant and essential for university education.

Social anxiety is a mental disorder that causes both mental and physical health problems. It is an intense, persistent, and uncontrollable fear of being watched and judged by people which causes discomfort (Yared Reta, 2020). It is the third most common mental disorder after depression and alcohol usage. For a place such as a university, this fear can lead to numerous problems for the students. The students with social anxiety are concerned and fear that their friends, family, or teachers will say or do something that will result in their humiliation or embarrassment. Social anxiety kills confidence and promotes shyness which refrains university students from interactions which is an integral part of survival and personal growth, especially in a university environment where an individual spends at least 4 years with almost the same people around him. Social anxiety or social phobia does not only affect university life, but it also causes significant impairment in other educational achievements, occupational performance, social interaction, relationships, quality of life, and lower income and reduces individuals' quality of life (Yared Reta, 2020). Students with social anxiety showed low performance in exams and have reported depressive symptoms. It raises exposure to the frequent use of harmful substances which may later result in employment difficulties in future lives. Social anxiety is one of the most prevailing anxiety disorders amongst adolescents and youths, which might hold back the individual's performance if left untreated.

This study will explore the role of social media usage for academic learning in causing social anxiety among university students while also exploring the dimensions in which social anxiety is triggered by social media usage among students in a university environment. Social anxiety is a serious mental disorder which not only affects the individual mentally but physically as well. For an individual who's

about to start his practical/professional life i.e., a university student, social anxiety is a dangerous problem and one of the causes is the usage of social media for academic learning. Social anxiety also has a bad effect on the relationships of an individual, even with his friends and family. Some researchers have named social media usage as an addiction that causes deficits in emotion regulation and susceptibility to substance addiction, somatic symptoms, anxiety, insomnia, depression, and social dysfunction (Dobrean, 2016). Using social media for academic learning may give an individual a good grade or a degree, but it is harmful to his mental and physical health which will certainly affect his quality of life in a bad way.

Significance of study

This study aims to investigate the impact of social media usage on university students' social anxiety and its causes of academic underperformance. It will help identify strategies for enhancing academic achievement and overcoming social anxiety. The research is significant as social anxiety can lead to negative consequences on physical and mental health, relationships, and overall quality of life. It will also contribute to creating policies that benefit teachers and students in universities.

Research Question

“To investigate the relationship between social media usage for academic learning and social anxiety amongst university students of Pakistan.”

Aim of Study

This research aims to explore whether there is a relationship between social media usage for academic learning and social anxiety among university students in Pakistan.

Literature Review

According to a study, 93.8% of respondents in a university had very high social media and internet usage, whereas social anxiety was present in more than one-third of the participants (Abhishek Jaiswal, 2020). The findings of this study support my research that social anxiety disorder was found to be associated with social media addiction whereas both social anxiety and usage of social media are very common among university students.

Another study suggests that social media has changed how we interact with each other, and it harms our intimate relationships (Fisherman, 2013). According to this study, people who score high on narcissism tests are especially active on social media. Social media usage leads to numerous personality problems in individuals and it has a bad impact on our close relationships.

In another study, it was discovered that social media harms academic performance amongst students from different universities in Lahore which supports my research. The decline in results was reported with the increase in social media usage, hence social media has an inverse relationship with the academic performance of university students (Hira Hasnain, 2015). The research also shows that higher usage and regular basis usage harm academic performance.

Another study aims to identify the relationship between social anxiety and social media addiction in a group of Chinese college students. A sample of 4,677 students from five major regions of China participated in this survey. The findings revealed that social anxiety had a direct effect on social media usage and addiction (Songdong Ye, 2021). The levels of social anxiety and social media usage came out different among students of different majors and age groups. The study also revealed that regular and active

participation in any kind of physical exercise can relieve social anxiety and social media addiction effectively.

J.A. Paul's study results revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between time spent by students on online social media websites and their academic performance (Jomon Aliyas Paul, 2012). According to this study, the time spent on social media was heavily influenced by the attention span of the students in their academics.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, I have used the Theory by Woods and Scott (2016), which suggests that social media use is positively correlated with social anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and poor sleep quality. As per this theory, people (especially adolescents/students) who have an emotional investment in social media are at an increased risk for anxiety and depression due to feeling isolated and distressed when they are not on social media (Woods, 2016). The positive correlation between the two variables (social anxiety and social media usage) implies that the higher the social media usage, the higher the experience of social anxiety. According to this theory, social media usage triggers/causes social anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem which implies that social media usage is related to several aspects of wellbeing amongst adolescents. This study revealed that social anxiety and depression are the most strongly linked with emotional investment in social media sites used by adolescents and students which makes this theory valid for my research. This study supports my argument that the increase in social media usage for academic purposes can lead to social anxiety and have a hazardous effect on the mental and physical health of students/adolescents.

Methodology

Research Design

This small-scale study is cross-sectional research using a quantitative research design, and data has been collected through surveys administered to students from Forman Christian College (Chartered University) after IRB had provided permission for data collection. The survey questions were aimed at testing the hypothesis that undergraduate students who have higher social media usage for academic learning have higher social anxiety.

Research Ethics

This study received ethics clearance from the Department Ethics Committee and the FCCU IRB (Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter). All ethical considerations were observed by the researcher, including confidentiality and anonymity. All participant information has been kept securely with the researcher. There was no physical or emotional harm to any of the participants. They were not compelled to participate and were given an informed consent form to sign before participation. They were given information about the study's goals, objectives, and their role in it. Their queries were answered honestly and fully. The participants were free to leave the study at any time and the researcher upheld their integrity and respect. Participants were assured that the information they provided would not be shared with anyone else.

Sample

The sample for this study is 150 university students from FCCU. Convenience sampling technique is used, and attempts are made to sample both male and female students equally and students from all departments or faculties of the university.

Data collection

The data was collected during the summer- June to August 2023. The data was collected by using a Google Forms survey, based on convenience and responses.

Instrument

The collected data has been analyzed by using SPSS 25.0 and a significant level of $p < 0.05$ has been considered significant. The independent variable for this study is social media usage for academic learning and the dependent variable is social anxiety. A research survey questionnaire was administered consisting of three portions covering demographic information, social media usage for academic learning, and social anxiety respectively.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is H1: The more use of social media for academic learning, the higher the experience of social anxiety in university students (Songdong Ye, 2021).

Data Analysis

There are three sections to this survey. Using a Likert scale, the first section evaluated demographic information of the respondent, the second section evaluated perceived social media usage for academic purposes, and the third section evaluated social anxiety. A five-point Likert scale has been used to evaluate social media usage for academic purposes and social anxiety (Strongly agree to Strongly disagree), scoring 1 for

strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree. Descriptive statistics and regression have been reported and a significance level of $p < 0.05$ has been considered significant. The reliability results for the two scales of this study are satisfactory with Cronbach alpha values for Social Media Usage for Academic Purposes at 0.653 and for Social Anxiety at 0.640 (Table 1).

Table 1: Reliability results

Variables	Cronbach Alpha
Social Media Usage for Academic Purposes (IV)	.653
Social Anxiety (DV)	.640

Results

Sociodemographic results

Table 2 presents and summarizes the socio-demographic information of the participants. According to the result, the number of female respondents is 44.7% and male respondents are 55.3%. Among the respondents, 54.7% belong to the age group 18-24 years and 34.7% belong to the age group 25-35 years. 20.7% are in freshman year, less than 1% are Sophomores, 22% are in Junior Year and the remaining majority of 56.7% are in Senior Year. Most of the respondents (117 out of 150) are Single (78%). Among them, the majority have a monthly household income between PKR 100,000-140,000 per month. With regards to the current residence, 82% represent Homes, 17.3% belong to Dorms and less than 1% are residing somewhere else. Results are elaborated in Table 2.

Table 2:

Sociodemographic results of the study sample (N= 150)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	67	44.7
Male	83	55.3
Age		
18-24	82	54.7
25-35	52	34.7
Above 35	16	10.7
Education		
Freshmen year	31	20.7
Sophomore year	1	0.7

Junior year	33	22
Senior year	85	56.7
Marital Status		
Divorced	4	2.7
Married	29	19.3
Single	117	78.0
Monthly Household Income		
(PKR)		
20,000-50,000	13	8.7
60,000-90,000	1	7
100,000-140,000	66	44.0
150,000-190,000	44	29.3
Above 2 lacs	26	17.3
Current Residence		
Dorm	26	17.3
Others	1	0.7
Home	123	82.0

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for social media usage. According to most of the respondents (35.3%), they rarely used social networking sites to solve their academic problems. About half of them (49.3%) used social networking sites to do research work. 32% of the respondents rarely used social networking sites for online academic group discussion and 38% of them communicated with their friends via social networking sites for preparation of exams. use social networking sites for collaborative learning. Most respondents (38.7%) think that they rarely use social networking sites to learn about my curricular aspect. More than half of respondents, never (28%) or rarely (28.7%) use social networking sites to seek help from their teachers. Results are elaborated in Table 3.

Table 3:**Descriptive statistics for social media usage**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
I use social networking sites to solve my academic problems.		
Never	42	28.0
Rarely	53	35.3
Sometime	34	22.7
Always	21	14.0
I use social networking sites to do research work.		
Never	28	18.7
Rarely	74	49.3
Sometime	21	14
Often	10	6.7
Always	17	11.3
I use social networking sites for online academic group discussions.		
Never	33	22.0
Rarely	48	32.0
Sometime	40	26.7
Often	15	10.0
Always	14	9.3
I communicate with my friends via social networking sites in preparation for exams.		
Never	27	18
Rarely	58	38.7
Sometime	49	28.7
Often	10	6.7
Always	12	8

I use social networking sites for collaborative learning.		
Never	50	33.3
Rarely	66	44
Sometime	14	9.3
Often	8	5.3
Always	12	8
I use social networking sites to learn about my curricular aspect.		
Never	45	30
Rarely	58	38.7
Sometime	28	18.7
Often	4	2.7
Always	15	10
I use social networking sites to seek help from my teachers		
Never	42	28
Rarely	43	28.7
Sometime	36	24
Often	14	9.3
Always	15	10

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for social anxiety. According to one-third of the respondents (33.3%), they face slight difficulty in speaking in public. Almost the same number of respondents (34%) have responded that they become highly socially anxious while participating in a meeting with people in authority. 52 out of 150 respondents (34.7%) find it difficult to make new friends. On the other hand, as per the most common response (28%), respondents are comfortable when they have to speak in class, at work, or in a meeting. For 51 respondents, making a mistake in front of other people is a slight cause

of social discomfort for them. Attending a social event while knowing only one person is a moderate cause of social anxiety for 30% of the respondents. Being reprimanded about something done wrong by them slightly causes social anxiety amongst about 40% of the survey respondents. The response to the last 2 questions of this survey, indicated the 2 most common and responded as 'extremely high' causes of social anxiety i.e., telling someone that their behavior bothers and asking them to stop (by 41.3% or 62 respondents) and talking to someone from the opposite gender (by 40% or 60 out of 150 respondents). Results are elaborated in Table 4.

Table 4:
Descriptive statistics for social anxiety

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Speaking in public		
Not at all / Very Slight	9	6
Slight	50	33.3
Moderate	2	1.3
High	53	35.3
Very high / Extremely High	36	24
Participating in a meeting with people in authority		
Not at all / Very Slight	21	14
Slight	34	22.7
Moderate	11	7.3
High	51	34
Very high / Extremely High	33	22
Making new friends		
Not at all / Very Slight	5	3.3
Slight	22	14.7

Moderate	37	24.7
High	52	34.7
Very high / Extremely High	34	22.7
Having to speak in class, at work, or in a meeting		
Not at all / Very Slight	42	28
Slight	38	25.3
Moderate	10	6.7
High	38	25.3
Very high / Extremely High	22	14.7
Making a mistake in front of other people		
Not at all / Very Slight	3	2
Slight	51	34
Moderate	24	16
High	49	32.7
Very high / Extremely High	23	15.3
Attending a social event where I know only one person		
Not at all / Very Slight	5	3.3
Slight	27	18
Moderate	45	30
High	29	19.3
Very high / Extremely High	44	29.3
Being reprimanded about something I have done wrong		
Not at all / Very Slight	10	6.7
Slight	60	40
Moderate	12	8
High	44	29.3
Very high / Extremely High	24	16

Telling someone that their behavior bothers me and asking them to stop

Not at all / Very Slight	7	4.7
Slight	10	6.7
Moderate	24	16
High	47	31.3
Very high / Extremely High	62	41.3

Talking to someone from the opposite gender

Not at all / Very Slight	11	7.3
Slight	17	11.3
Moderate	40	26.7
High	22	14.7
Very high / Extremely High	60	40

Regression Analysis

Table 5 reports simple linear regression results for the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety. The R² value of .303 reveals that the predictor variable explains 30% variance in the outcome variable, which is social anxiety, with $F(1,148) = 64.39, p < .001$. The findings suggest that when social media usage is high for academic learning, social anxiety is low ($\beta = -.551, p < .001$).

Table 4

Regression results study variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig</i>	95 % Confidence interval for <i>B</i>
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	B	Std. Error	β			<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
Constant	41.56	1.42		29.189	.000	38.65	44.26
Social media usage	-.66	.082	-.551	-8.025	.000	-.822	-.497
R^2		.303					

Discussion

Contrary to the initial hypothesis, the findings revealed a negative correlation, indicating that higher social media usage for academic purposes is associated with lower levels of social anxiety. The study aimed to explore the relationship between social media usage for academic learning and social anxiety among university students. These unexpected results prompt a thorough discussion of potential explanations and implications. It has been statistically revealed that the most common response for the usage of social media for academic purposes is 'rarely' and the sample body of this research was quite on-point as per the demographic information section. One probable interpretation is that students in the sample are utilizing social media as a constructive tool for academic support (Abu Elnasr Sobaih, 2016), rather than experiencing it as a source of stress or anxiety. The results challenge the Woods and Scott theory (Woods, 2016), suggesting a more complex and context-dependent relationship between social media use and social anxiety. It appears that the nuanced perspective of purposeful social media use for academic goals may contribute to reduced social anxiety.

The literature review highlighted the negative impact of social anxiety on various aspects of a student's life, including academic performance and mental health. However,

this study's findings imply that social media use in college students may not always be associated with increased social anxiety (Buyukyilmaz, 2017). Students are using social media for academic support, as evidenced by the survey's dimensions on collaborative learning and asking teachers for help. These findings highlight the importance of differentiating between intentional and excessive social media use. While addressing the possible drawbacks of excessive use, educational institutions should think about promoting a balanced approach to social media usage, highlighting its potential advantages for academic collaboration. The unexpected findings challenge the theoretical framework and call for a reconsideration of the relationship between social media usage and social anxiety. It emphasizes the need to delve deeper into how students use social media, the platforms they engage with, and the nature of their academic activities online. According to this study, a more nuanced understanding of these variables is essential to understanding how they affect students' well-being. Additionally, as the sample size of the student suggests, most of the respondents were single, belonging to the age group 15-24 years, having an average household income, one of their senior years in university, and residing in homes, which indicates the credibility and subtleness of data and this research.

Academic institutions should incorporate teaching practices that increase awareness of effective time management, setting boundaries, and using social media as a tool for academic collaboration (Abhishek Jaiswal, 2020). Counseling services should concentrate on issues related to social anxiety, teaching pupils how to manage their tension and build their confidence in social situations. Incorporating parent participation via workshops may additionally enhance the establishment of a nurturing atmosphere for pupils. The study admits its shortcomings, including its limited sample size and

dependence on self-report data, despite the insightful information it offers. Since a cross-sectional design only provides a snapshot, it is advised that subsequent longitudinal studies be conducted to fully comprehend the dynamics over time. Furthermore, more research examining these connections in various educational contexts is guaranteed.

According to a different study (Fengxia Lai, 2023), using social media in a way that makes it easier for peers to become friends and connect with you, especially those who help you achieve your networking and academic goals plays a positive impact in building social support. According to the findings of this study, stability in managing academic activities can be fostered by using social media to create interactions and connections. Also, the use of social media platforms by people to establish connections with friends and peers who are involved in both their academic and social networks strengthens their social support system as a whole (Fengxia Lai, 2023) and creates a more stable and encouraging atmosphere for managing their academic endeavors.

This research challenges conventional assumptions about the detrimental effects of higher social media usage on social anxiety among university students. Instead, it implies that social media can enhance academic experience when utilized purposefully and moderately, without having a major negative impact on mental health. In the setting of universities, further study is necessary to fully understand the complex relationship between social media usage and social anxiety, especially qualitative studies, and longitudinal investigations. However, very few or no studies in Pakistan have explored this link qualitatively.

Limitations

Some of the study's limitations can be the self-report nature of the data, small sample size, and perception-based survey responses which are more prone to answer biases. As the study will be limited to a specific region, it might not be representative of all students from the university. The study is cross-sectional, not longitudinal, and has fewer major variables than longitudinal models.

Recommendations

Academic institutions should encourage students to use social media for learning in a balanced way that keeps their focus on their academic objectives and discourages over-engagement. Technology is indeed a blessing but it's unnecessary and overuse can become a curse in no time. Instructional initiatives should be established, such as time management techniques and boundary-setting, to increase public knowledge of the advantages and dangers of social media use. Students should be provided with counseling services to address their social anxiety, which will assist them in managing their stress and developing social confidence. Parents and family play a huge role in determining the link and raising awareness. A balance should be maintained right from the beginning of the children's counseling. To help parents understand how social media affects academic learning and mental health, they should be encouraged to be included in workshops and awareness campaigns regarding social media usage for academic learning and social anxiety. Additionally, qualitative studies and longitudinal methods are needed to investigate the complex interaction between social media use and social anxiety.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the findings of this research challenge the assumption that higher social media usage for academic learning leads to increased social anxiety among university students. Instead, it suggests that when used purposefully and in moderation, social media can contribute positively to the academic experience, offering support and collaboration without detrimental effects on mental health. This shows that the relationship between social media use and social anxiety is more complex than previously believed, highlighting the importance of how and how much social media is utilized in deciding how it affects university students' well-being. This sophisticated understanding promotes a thoughtful and balanced approach to social media integration in academic settings, recognizing the possible advantages while avoiding the presumptive drawbacks.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Date: _____

Dear Participants,

You are invited to participate in a study titled: "The Effect of social media usage for academic learning and social anxiety in university students?" The study aims to know if there's a relationship between social anxiety and social media among university students in Pakistan. The purpose of the study is to know the effects of social media on university students and understand how it causes social anxiety.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to answer. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any kind of known risk. Your names are not required for participation and none of your data will be disclosed or shared. The data will remain with the researcher and be analyzed without compromising confidentiality or anonymity.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from answering the survey at any point.

By signing this form, you are agreeing that you have read the above information and are indicating your consent to participate in this research study.

Thank you!

Researcher: Syed Fakhar Ali

BSc. Hon Student, Department of Sociology, Forman Christian College

231467619@formanite.fccollege.edu.pk

Signed consent of the participant: _____

Appendix B: IRB Approval Certificate



FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

IRB Ref: IRB-459/6-2023

Date: 22-06-2023

Project Title: The Effect of social media use for academic learning and social anxiety in university students

Principal Investigator: Syed Fakhar Ali

Supervisor: Dr. Sara Rizvi Jafree

The Institutional Review Board has examined your project in the IRB meeting held on 22-06-2023 and has approved the proposed study. If during the conduct of your research, any changes occur related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent, or any other change then IRB must be notified immediately.

Please be sure to include the IRB reference number in all correspondence.

Dr. Sharoon Hanook
Convener – IRB
Chairperson, Department of Statistics
Forman Christian College
(A Chartered University)
Lahore

For Further Correspondence:

📍 Ferozapur Road, Lahore-54600
📞 042-99231581-8 Ext: 504 & 531
✉ irb@fccollege.edu.pk
🌐 www.fccollege.edu.pk

Appendix C: Survey

Section 1: Demographic Information

Socio-Demographic Question	Response Categories
1. Age	18-24, 25-35, None of the mentioned
2. Gender	Male, Female, Others
3. Marital Status	Single, Married, Divorced
4. Department name/ major name	
5. Academic Year	Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior
6. Household Income	
7. Living in a dorm or homes	Dorm versus home

Section 2: Social Media Usage for Academic Purposes (Gupta, 2008)

Sr. No	Questions	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	
1.	I use social networking sites to solve my academic problem						
2.	I use social networking sites to do research work.						
3.	I use social networking sites for online academic group discussion						
4.	I communicate with my friends via social networking sites for preparation for exam.						
5.	I use social networking sites for collaborative learning						
6.	I use social networking sites to learn about my curricular aspect.						
7.	I use social networking sites to						

	seek help from my teachers						
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Section 3: Social Anxiety (Caballo, 2012)

Sr. No	Questions	Not at all or very slight (1)	Slight (2)	Moderate (3)	High (4)	Very high or extremely high (5)	
1.	Speaking in public						
2.	Participating in a meeting with people in authority						
3.	Making new friends						
4.	Having to speak in class, at work, or in a meeting						
5.	Making a mistake in front of other people						
6.	Attending a social event where I know only one person						
7.	Being reprimanded about something I have done wrong						
8.	Telling someone that their behavior bothers me and asking them to stop						
9.	Talking to someone from the opposite gender						
