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# Information Sharing Practices of Pakistani Youth: A Mixed Method Study in Everyday Context

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**ABSTRACT**

This study attempts to elaborate the sharing practices of Pakistani Urban youth. This study also attempts to observe the individual, social, cultural and economic factors affecting the youths' everyday information sharing practices. A mixed method research was designed and sequential explanatory method was used. A sample of 1000 urban teen participants for quantitative phase and 25 urban teens for qualitative phase were selected. Cluster sampling was done in the first phase and the Likert scale was used to assess the written questionnaires, and data were analyzed through SPSS-21. For qualitative phase thematic analysis was done using the software NVivo. The urban teenagers were found to share their information keeping in mind that sharing is caring however they preferred selective sharing, this sharing practice also gives them satisfaction. On the other hand, individual, social, cultural and economic factors were found to have great impact on these practices. This study will be helpful for curricula designers, schools, policy makers and for librarians to introduce diverse information services.

## Introduction

Concerns Everyday life information sharing (EIS) is part of everyday information practices. Savolainen (1995) coined the term everyday information seeking (EIS) where information sharing was an integral part of this practice. Wilson (1981) was the first researcher who focused on information exchange and its role. He also introduced that information sharing is multidimensional and this also varies from context to context. Tuominen, Talja, Sanna, and, Savolainen (2005) mentioned that information practices belong to humans, have a social nature. These practices originate from interactions between the members of the community. Wilson (2010) mentioned only a few researchers worked on information sharing in the library science field, these researchers reviewed the literature and stated that due to the World Wide Web many new information sharing devices are introduced. Six hundred papers were reviewed by this researcher and he predicted many latest technologies like information portals, Wikis, Google, and cloud computing will increase the interest of researchers. This research will fill the gap in library science research moreover, it will contribute in the literature of information sharing behaviour. In our research urban youths' everyday information practices will be analyzed and the socio cultural factors affecting these practices will also be analyzed.

## Literature Review

Information sharing is information behavior and varies from culture to culture. The web environment and recent technologies have changed the information-Dion-sharing behavior of youth. These technologies for sharing are social media networks, web tools, blogs, and wikis. Few scales of information sharing are also developed such as Yuen and Shaheen (2007), and Majid and Wey (2011) developed a scale of measuring knowledge sharing patterns of undergraduate students in Singapore. Lu, (2012) prepared a list of 40 social media tools while Mahmood and Richardson (2013) prepared a list of 17 Web 2.0

technologies that are mostly used and LISTA (Library and information science and technology abstract) website has 199 built-in sharing tools.

Pilorot (2012) was having a view that information sharing is a predominant concept and is vague. It is, therefore, difficult to find out its activities and relevant issues. Mohammed and Norman (2017) explored the millennial generation's organizational information sharing practices through semi-structured interviews, think-aloud, and observations. Hanell (2017) measured Facebook activities for information sharing. Two hundred and thirty conversations of 210 students and teachers were analyzed and three identity positions were identified. These positions were including goal-oriented learners, discussion-oriented learners, and customer-oriented learners. Peel and Rowley (2010) measured the information sharing behavior of workers, working for children and young people's organizations. Information sharing attitudes toward personal information sharing were measured. The results of this study showed the participants were well aware of the importance of information seeking and the problems in sharing information were also addressed. Lips and Eppel (2017) shared the behaviors of information sharing, they also mentioned the conditions for which individuals share their personal information in their daily lives. Wei, Choy, Chew, and Yen (2012) mentioned that students used to share the information in response to the questions asked by their peers. They also found the motivational factors behind the information sharing behavior and mentioned that the desire to help others and self- satisfaction are the main factors that motivate the students to share the information with others. Hanif & Warraich (2023) explored that youth is managing their information before sharing it with others.

## Material and Methods

The mixed method (MM) approach was used for the present study. For the quantitative strand, data was collected via questionnaires to know the everyday information sharing practices of urban teens. While for qualitative strands personal semi-structured interviews were conducted for an in-depth explanation of quantitative results and to know how individual, social, cultural and economic level affect their everyday information sharing practices. The research design of this study is a sequential mixed method. The sequential explanatory method is the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative results (Creswell, 2009). The basic reason to select a mixed method was that it provides a good understanding of construct such as sharing and also raises the insight into the influencing factors which is not possible through a single method.

## Data Collection

Quantitative data collection was done online, permission was obtained from the school principals and a link to the questionnaire was sent to the respective classes. All the schools cooperated in this regard and they ensured that students will fill out the questionnaire.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1**
**Frequency of Sharing everyday information: (N=1000)**

| "Information Sharing" I prefer to | Strongly Agree f (%) | Agree f (%) | Undecided f (%) | Disagree f (%) | Strongly Disagree f (%) | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. share my information in everyday life as I believe sharing is caring for others | 289(28.9) | 418(41.8) | 181(18.1) | 89(8.9) | 23(2.3) | 3.86 | 1.00 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. share all information with everyone which I am getting from different sources | 206(20.6) | 464(46.4) | 210(21.0) | 99(9.9) | 21(2.1) | 3.73 | 0.96 |
| 3. Share the information in everyday life because people only share with those who share with them | 193(19.3) | 421(42.1) | 213(21.3) | 138(13.8) | 35(3.5) | 3.59 | 1.05 |
| 4. share my information in everyday life only when somebody asks | 187(18.7) | 420(42.0) | 215(21.5) | 149(14.9) | 29(2.9) | 3.58 | 1.04 |
| 5. avoid sharing information in everyday life | 160(16.0) | 343(34.3) | 202(20.2) | 226(22.6) | 69(6.9) | 3.29 | 1.18 |

Strongly Disagree= 1 - Strongly Agree=5

Results regarding the information sharing behavior of teens are shown in table 1. A total of 5 statements were put forth to know information sharing practices, a large majority was sharing information with others as they were agreeing with the underlying belief that "sharing is caring". The mean score for this statement was (M=3.86, SD=1.00). The second practice of sharing information was, teens are sharing all the information with everyone which they are getting from different sources. Teens were found to be aware of the importance of sharing, as they believed that the sharing of information would be reciprocated on the other end as well. They were sharing the information with others that they obtained from different sources. The mean score for this statement was (M=3.73, SD=0.96), and only 3.5% of students strongly disagreed with the statement.

An intriguing statement was also added to inquire about whether teens are sharing information with everyone or only with those who are sharing with them. The total mean score for this statement was (M=3.59, SD=1.05). One more statement to know their sharing behavior was "I share my information in everyday life only when somebody asks." The score for this statement was (M=3.58, SD=1.04). The analysis shows that teens are also reserved to some extent and do not share information with everyone, but only with those who are sharing with them. The least score was for the statement, where teens were avoiding sharing information in everyday life. The mean score for this statement was (M=3.29, SD=1.18). This response also shows that teens also avoid sharing in their everyday life. From all the responses the highest mean score was for "sharing is caring". Wilson (1981) postulated that information sharing is multidimensional and varies from context to context, as teens are getting information from different sources in their everyday life, they also share their information with others, and this information exchange is called "sharing is caring". This analysis also confirms that everyday information practices are found to be affected by their information sharing behavior.

Since, our second research question was to observe the influence of individual, social, cultural and economic factors on information sharing practices of urban teens through the qualitative way. For this purpose, a total 25 urban teens in the 13 – 19 years' age bracket were taken for the sample population. A semi-structured interview guide was prepared. Face-to-face interviews were conducted and a few interviews were conducted online through scheduled ZOOM meetings due to geographical dispersal. Thematic analysis was done with the help of the software NVivo. The data analysis depicted the following results.
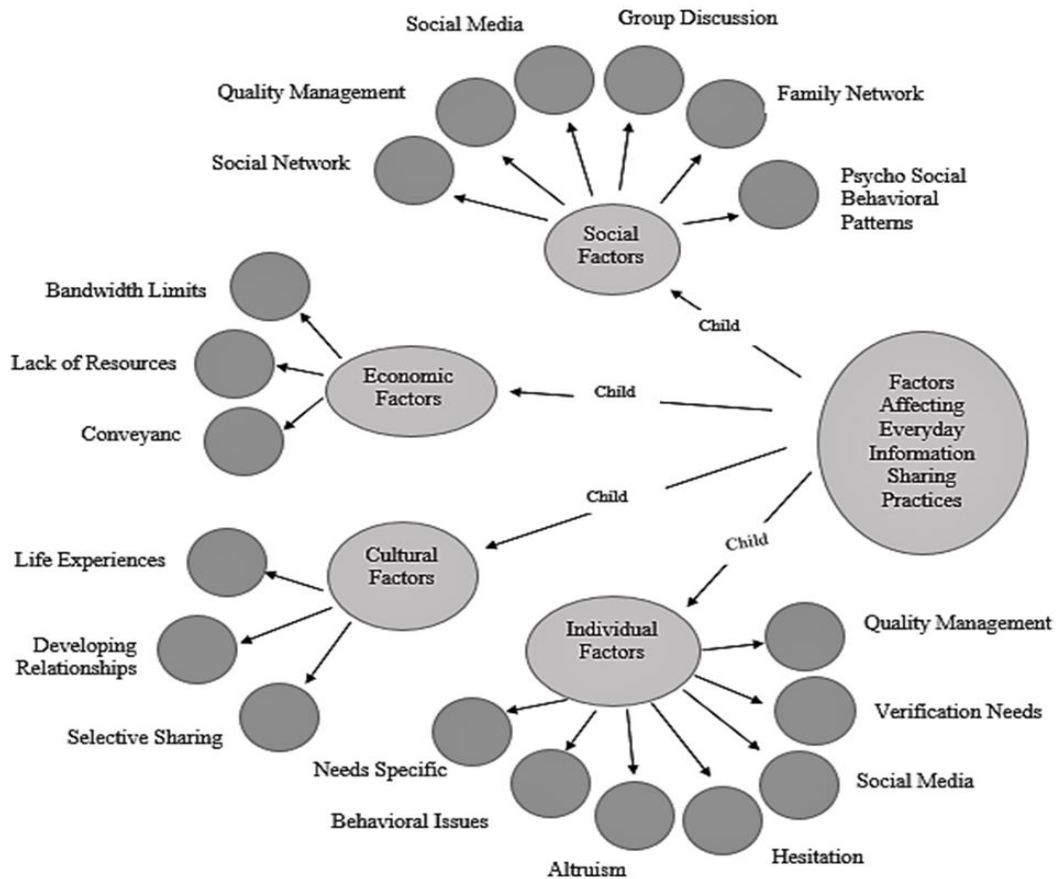
Figure -1: Nodes Diagram for Information Sharing Based on the interviews (NVivo Output)

**Individual Factors**

The following sub-themes emerged under the child node of individual factors.

*Needs to be specific.* Teens were found to share their information only when required, and were not sharing with everyone, as 15 years old stated *"I only share information with selective people, and only at that time when I feel I can help easily"* - *HA-2 (KPK).* A 16-year-old male stated "*For sharing information I can only share some information directly related to that topic,"* – *HA-2.* Punjab. A 13-year-old girl mentioned *"Only selective information can be shared"* – *M.S (Balochistan).*

*Behavioral issues.* Behavioral issues were found to be influencing everyday information sharing practices. A 15-year-old male stated *"I only share information when I am in good mood."*– *HA-2, Punjab.* NA-1, A 19- years old female from Islamabad mentioned "*During a pandemic, we were much restricted to meet each other. In such situation I don't share any information with anyone.".*

*Altruism.* '*Sharing is caring'* factor was also obvious during interviews. A 16- year old argued *"I am used to helping others, and others are also helping me. We feel proud to share information quickly"* _*BR-4 (Sindh).* A 15-year-old boy mentioned, *"Since we are taking online classes, our class fellows are facing some problems in such scenario we should help each other and Alhamdulillah we all are helping each other".* – *H. An (Islamabad).*

*Hesitation.* This distinct factor is observed on an individual level. Some urban teenagers lack the confidence to share information due to the fear of being wrong, they also don't verify information, thinking that people will make fun of their inaccuracy as a 13 years old male stated "*I don't share any information JdSS with anyone if I have a fear that I don't know about its accuracy*" _*SRA-1 (KPK).* A 14-year-old female from Gilgit stated, *"I feel hesitation in*

*sharing information".* A 16-year-old male mentioned, "*I am afraid of sharing information as I feel I may not share the exact information". – HA-2.* Punjab.

**Social media.**  Social media was found common tool for sharing information with everyone among teens. An 18-year-old female stated *"Social media is sharing information within seconds and I also use this media to share my information with others" _BR-4 (KPK).* Many teens had the same opinion about the use of social media to share their personal information. A 13-year-old girl quoted *"Social media is at the top for sharing any information." – M.S (Balochistan).* A 16-year-old male stated, "*Everyone is using social media to receive and share any information*" *– HA-2.* Punjab.

**Verification needs.**  Few respondents mentioned that they shared their information with others to verify its accuracy. One 13-years-old stated "*I verify my information by sharing it with others*" *– AQ-1 (Sindh).* NA-1, A 19- years old female from Islamabad quoted "*The easiest way to confirm any news is to share it with all and ask confirmation from others. People will respond to your question and you will get confirmation of your news."* A 13-year-old girl quoted *"I am used to verifying my information by sharing it with others".  – M.S (Balochistan).*

**Quality of shared Information.** Respondents believed that if they shared unauthentic information others would get to know about their lack of knowledge.  The quality of shared information was important to them as it immediately exposed their level of information to others. A 15-year-old female expressed that *"I cannot share if I don't have quality information, this will ruin my impression." – A.I-2 (Islamabad).* Another 14 -year old male stated *"It's the matter of our repute, so I am sharing only quality information"* – RAR (Punjab).

## Social Factor

**Social networks.** Most teens do have good social circles and have friends and fellows to share information. They also have social media accounts as well. A 14-year-old male mentioned "*me, my friends and the whole family is sharing information, whenever we are gathered, we do share. It increases our knowledge, bonding, and pleasure" – AH -3 (Punjab).*

From a social perspective, teens are also using social media and becoming more conscious as they know social media is exposing things very quickly. Eighteen years old was found to state "*Sharing through social media is very quick, we can share good as well as bad within seconds*" *– SZ-2 (Islamabad).*

**Quality management.** Teens are aware that Sharing information will improve the quality of information. So for quality management teens are sharing information. One 15-year-old gave the opinion that *"either we should share good information or we should not share" – RAR-4 (Punjab).* A 14-year-old female from Gilgit stated, *"I share information with others and get feedback. This feedback is deciding the quality of my information".*

**Group discussion.** Group discussion was a common factor identified, especially for study purposes. A 14-year-male stated *"we are sharing all the information during our group discussion"_ RAR- 4(Punjab).* A 15-year-old boy was found to quote *"Group discussion is the way we are sharing information" – H. An (Islamabad).* One 19-year-old boy HA-3 from Balochistan shared his views regarding information sharing practice. He mentioned, *"I find the best time to share any information at the time of class discussion, even the best time to get any information in this group discussion".*

**Family networks.** Family networks in a social context become very important, where teens have the awareness that they are also observed by their elders. A 19-year-old female stated "*I have to respond and share whenever my cousins are asking anything from me*" *– SS-5(Punjab).* a 15- year old male stated "*Family network is the place where we are sharing our all information happily*" *– HA-2* (Punjab). Another participant quoted *"Family network is a reliable platform to share any information and to get verification" – M.S (Balochistan).*

However, more responses were in favor of sharing the information. This was for getting the confirmation of collected information as one participant mentioned "For getting the authenticity of any information, I am sharing that information on my family group and my family is giving me sincere reply"._ *HA -5 (Sindh)*.

***Psycho-social behavioral patterns.*** From the social perspective, psycho-social behavioral patterns played a key role as a 14-year-female quoted *"My sharing practices depend upon my mood. If I am not in a good mood and others are asking for any information, I will not share and even if I share it, I will only share the highlights of it and advise them to do further research on it" – RA-5 (KPK).* One 19-year-old male identified that "*I have learned that it is not necessary to share all information with everyone, we should help those people who are helping us*" _ HA-3 (Balochistan). One participant mentioned. *"My sharing practice is connected with my relationships, if I have good relation with someone I'll share my information with them" – SZ (18 years, Islamabad).*

## Cultural Factors

***Life experiences.*** The life experiences are directly connected with their sharing practices. A 19-year-old female stated "*we are also sharing our experience with others, if I don't find any product of good quality I'll inform everyone about this*" *– SS-5(Punjab).* An 18-year-old female from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stated *"I amused to share pictures of my shopping with my cousins and they are doing the same. In this way most of the time we are aware of all the products, prices, and discounts." - B.R- 4* (KPK). A 13-years-old female UZ-3 from Balochistan mentioned "*I am used to taking advice from my friends and class fellows, I, therefore used to share everything with them and they are also sharing their work and experience with me*".

***Developing relationship.*** A stronger impression was found among teens that if we will share information with others only then we can develop good relations. An 18-year-old female from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stated *"Since I belong to KPK, it's our culture to help others, we believe in developing strong relationships." - B.R- 4 (KPK)* One 13-years-old stated "*I believe in sharing as this practice develop our relationship with others*" *– AQ-1 (Sindh).* NA-1, A 19- years old female from Islamabad quoted "*The easiest way to develop a relationship with class fellows is to help them and share every information which they are looking for.*" A 13-year-old girl quoted *"I believe sharing is caring".  – M.S (Balochistan).*

***Selective sharing.*** Teens also refrain from sharing information, as they believe that obtaining information is a tedious process that involves hard work and they want to encourage others to do this hard work themselves, also on a cultural note urban teenagers preferred to share selectively, as a 15-year-old stated *"I am sharing only selective information, as sharing more information just create the misunderstanding." - HA-2 (KPK).* One participant mentioned. *"I believe we should share only required information and should not share unnecessary information. I am saving mine time as well as others' time" – SZ (18 years, Islamabad).*

## Economic Factors

***Bandwidth limits****.* Bandwidth issues are commonly related to everyone, especially after a pandemic. A 13-year-old from Punjab stated *"we have started online shopping, so many images are downloaded on daily basis, this is reducing the space of our devices, in such situation, we only keep relevant information and can't save anything for others." – EA-1*(Punjab). An 18-year-old female from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stated *"Since we are taking online classes, so downloading and saving many things has become a common practice. Due to this practice, everyone is facing bandwidth issues." - B.R- 4 (KPK).* Another 13-years-old stated "I am asking my parents to buy a new computer as current PC has space issue" *– AQ-1 (Sindh).*

***Lack of resources.*** Since Financial issues were found to be related to some teens they were not able to share their everyday information with others. One 13-years-old stated "*I don't have enough resources and time to be useful for others, so I am very poor in sharing*" – *AQ-1 (Sindh)*. A 14-year-old male mentioned "*My sharing practice is often affected by the resource limitations*" – *AH -3 (Punjab)*. An eighteen years' old participant stated "*Lack of resources affects everything and sharing information with others is one of them*" – *SZ-2 (Islamabad).*

***Conveyance.*** Teens are mostly dependent on others and conveyance becomes a hurdle in their EIP. These teens were also not so active in their everyday information-sharing practices. A 13-year-old female from Balochistan stated *"Big families can't provide conveyance to all their family members, so they just do important things. So, these teens are neither actively finding information nor sharing actively." MS-1(Balochistan).* One 19-year-old male identified that "My class fellows are doing combine study and having gatherings almost every weekend, but my father is not available on weekend and I am unable to and share or ask anything from them" _ HA-3 (Balochistan). One participant mentioned. *"convenience is mandatory to visit the libraries and resource centers otherwise we will not have anything special to share with others"* – SZ (18 years, Islamabad).

### Findings: Merger of results from both phases

Sharing information has a major role in everyday information practices. Pakistani teens believe that "sharing is caring", they were sharing information to help others and for their self-satisfaction. Information uploading culture was found very common among teens. However, sharing selective information was found as a routine. Some individual factors were affecting the information sharing practice, including, altruism, behavioral issues, social media, quality management, verification needs, and hesitation. Socially teens were found much more supportive of others as they were deliberately sharing all information with their family members and on social media. Sharing information in group discussion was found very common. Economic factors were found to be a challenge during information sharing practice. Teens were found to say that we could have better information sharing with better resources. However, the information sharing practice was found very healthy for developing relationships with others and sharing life experiences.

### Conclusion:

In today's technology-driven society the most preferred information sharing platforms were found the internet and social media. When inquired about, with whom teens wants to share the information, it was found that they like to share with all because they believed that sharing is caring. In our research it was also found that some teens only share their daily information with those who are in sharing with them. While few were found to avoid share their information. This study is a humble endeavor to better understand how socio-cultural factors are effecting their everyday information sharing practices.

### Recommendations:

Findings of the study revealed that a large number of teens share their information with others because of their belief that sharing is caring. To facilitate them and to promote a sharing culture on a larger scale, schools should provide platforms where students may share their work with other interested students. In addition, this culture will also boost their confidence and will enable them to overcome their hesitation. In this way their sharing practice will be enhanced and they will not avoid to share their information.

Since life-word experiences (individual, social, cultural, and economic) are directly affecting teens' everyday information sharing practices. it is recommended that professional student counselors at educational institutions should be provided who can help them in

their career as well as in psychological development. Moreover, special summer programs, after-school clubs and societies, and community-sponsored programs should be announced

## Contributions/Practical Implication

Good awareness of information sharing among youth can play a significant role in their everyday life. This practice will improve their life skills. Moreover, it would be helpful for academicians to understand the teens' information sharing behavior and reasons for their sharing practices. This study will also be helpful for policy makers and for librarians to introduce diverse information sharing services in schools and curricula. The findings of this study may lead to further empirical investigation.

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