

Texting and Teen Aches of the Turbulent Times

Dr. K. R. Subramanian

Professor of Management & Senior

Consultant - Operations, Credait.com

Abstract-The advent of mobile phones has undoubtedly revolutionized the communication process to a large extent, adding to that the overcrowded social media sites and has changed the way people interact with one another. With the introduction of text messaging feature, conversation has become skewed among a large number of youngsters. It has greatly influenced kids and teenagers who view the new add-on as "cool" and become obsessed with it. In less than a decade, teenagers using cell phones and other gadgets such as tablets and laptops have increased considerably. Adolescents like to communicate with their parents over the phone, whereas they love to text to their friends. While texting, the teenagers do not focus on the basic spellings and grammar and even sometimes misspell some words deliberately to appear "cool". This can cause a great damage to their education as some teenagers tend to write in the same way, they text messages. They cannot help it, because after texting messages for a long period of time day in and day out, the writing style is stored in their brain permanently and they commit the mistakes without their knowledge. This research paper deals with the consequences of such a trend.

Key Words-Texting and messaging, trend among teenagers, corruptive influence of texting on spelling and grammar, 'cool', impact on education and social interaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Texting has become an everyday task that many teenagers engage in. Many of those text messages that are sent often contain textism. The use of textism is starting to become more accepted among the younger generation. There have been suggestions from both media sources and educators that texting may have a negative effect on the learning skills of students. Perhaps the biggest problem is that students do not distinguish between times when they need to write full sentences without using textisms, and when they are writing informally where textisms may be acceptable. With more long term studies on the same group of individuals, it may be possible for researchers to determine if the use of textisms does indeed have negative effects on learning and literacy. With long term studies, it may be possible to see if individuals carry the textisms that they use in their personal correspondences into their formal writing in a workplace environment. Until the time such concrete results are obtained, it may be wise to encourage students to reduce their use of textisms, and to use proper grammar and spelling while they are using texting as a form of communication. Many people are against texting as they believe that excessive texting weakens the mental ability of teenagers by making them commit mistakes in spellings and grammar.

Also the latest fad of using abbreviations and short forms in text messaging such as LOL (laughing out loud), ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing), TY (thank you), TC (take care), etc. It has been found out that the students who regularly use abbreviations and short forms while texting are bad spellers and perform below average in grammar tests. The text style of writing has also been found to crop up in teenager students' assignments and tests. The shorthand writing style used by teenagers in their text messages has badly impacted their literacy. Apart from the short style of writing, the large number of mistakes found in punctuations, spellings, grammar, and language have impacted the literacy of the teenage students. 64% of the teens do not pay attention in classes and use texting on the sly in spite of school restrictions on the usage. This raises moral issues of cheating and improper behavior.

Apart from affecting students' literacy, the problems associated with excessive text messaging also have a negative impact on teachers as they have to rate the assignments and tests which at times are found to be written in text messaging style. Statistically, the maximum number of text messages is sent by teenagers compared with the people of all age groups. A survey found out that while teenagers make no more than 203 calls from their cell phones in a month on an average, they text nearly 2272 times during the corresponding period. The same survey cited that about 31% of the teens surveyed send more than 100 text messages daily, 16% of the teens send 51 to 100 text messages, 28% of the teens send 11 to 50 text messages, 22% of the teens send 1 to 10 text messages, while only 3% send no text messages at all.



Figure 1: impact of texting on learning and health

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Today people are talking about the mobile culture and the revolution in some management circles, but in general the public are concerned with the impact of mobile devices on the habits and nature of youngsters. Though the mobile

came as a portable and cordless telephone device, the popularity has increased many folds due to its usage and application pattern in society. Today the youngsters, particularly the teens have taken a fancy to use and own a mobile telephone. This mobile offers several advantages and if properly used and monitored by parents could be a wonderful learning device and for communication and contact with family. Somehow this is not happening. While it is used for communication and contact by family elders for contacting their wards in hostels and schools, the same device is used for texting (sending messages over the phone) by younger generation sometimes to the levels of irritation and disapproval of elders in the family. The present research paper will address some of these concerns. Specifically, for the purpose of the current research paper following key objectives has been identified, as given below:

1. Current environment and developments impacting younger generation.
2. Role of mobile telephones in society and the Turbulence.
3. Present ways of usage by various generations of people.
4. Development of texting culture by younger generation
5. The impact of texting on younger generation
6. Suggestions and recommendation.

The exponential growth of mobiles, sometimes called as 'mobile revolution' is one of the biggest developments in society which has drawn the attention of marketers, advertisers and various educational institutions for attracting what is called a 'traffic flow'. This means the concentration of usage of such devices and how this could be exploited by marketing and sales promotion. With such developments, several social concerns have been simultaneously expressed by parents and social scientists and social organization regarding the usage of such devices. Main concern among all is the growth of text messaging in mobile usage. The brevity of language used in texting is raising concerns of inappropriate short words and sentences without grammar or punctuation. The younger generation seems to have developed their own coded and short language for the purpose of sending messages to friends and peer groups. This has also impacted the youngsters in ways like improper spelling, brevity and aversion of contacting family members and the confidentiality associated with it. It has also seriously impacted relationships – in understanding as well as cultivating. The present research paper addresses these concerns.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Texting, i.e. sending messages through mobiles is the biggest menace of current times found among teenagers around the world. How texting affects the lives and how these things happen or can be controlled can be seen in the literature review. Today the teenagers seem to be victims of 'texting' without their being conscious of it. Figure 2 depicts the current usage of mobiles and in particular texting in several advanced and developing countries. Teens in the age group of 13 – 17 seem to be most affected by the growth in the tendency for texting. Parental concerns are justified from the point of view of the bad effects on youngsters making them lose interest in studies, concentration, and family relations. But it is the new way of digital life among younger people and future generations to come, which we need to accept and appreciate. What is the need of the hour? Reduce the bad impact of texting.

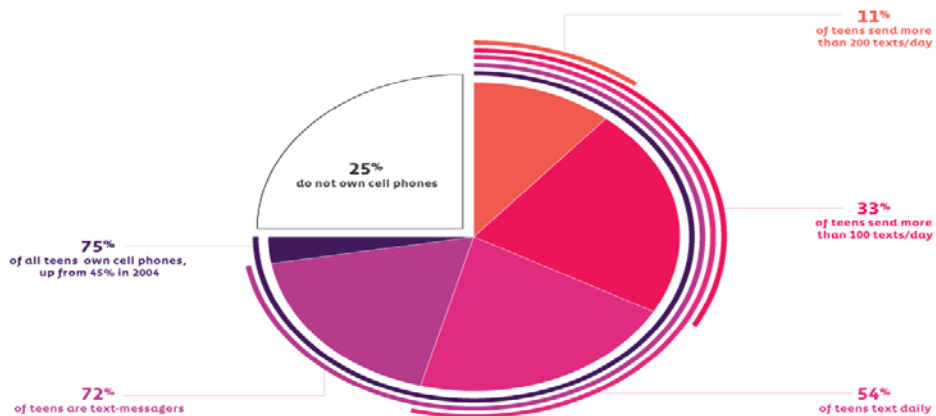
Issues caused by excessive text messaging

64% of teens text message during classroom; though most schools restrict use of cell phones; however it is a moot point when most kids text on the sly, which also raises the concern of cheating and not fully paying attention during class. Even when parents have set a limit for the evening usage, text messages continue to be received at all hours of the night, boundaries being undermined. This lack of a real control ultimately decreases the quality and quantity of sleep. Teens may suffer from increased long-term fatigue from sleep deprivation and as a result, further impacting their academic performance. Texting is a shallow form of communication and can prevent teens from learning how to read other people's emotions and respond empathically. When kids would rather text than talk, it interferes with normal social interaction. Texting can erode self-confidence. Teens who constantly use instant communication to seek advice from friends to make simple decisions are not utilizing their own mental processing skills. Text messaging results in this over dependence on friends, when in the normal course of development and adolescence; they can handle by asserting themselves and forming their opinions independently.

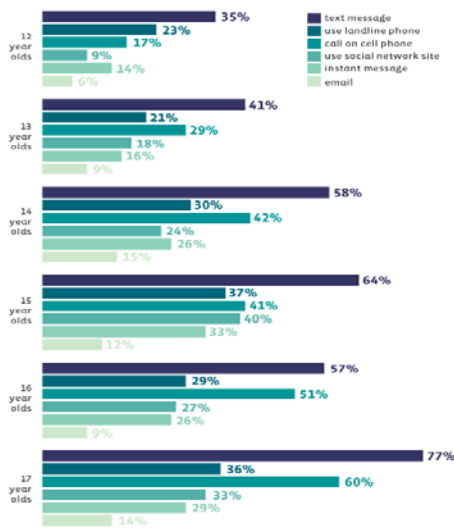
Teenagers sometimes to break friendships as quickly as they make them. Best friends can become enemies overnight. And even worse, these "frenemies," (friendly enemies) can be the very individuals on whom your teen has been relying for advice. In these situations, texting can quickly become harassing or carry threatening messages, causing a situation in which the teen feels unsafe. Texting with sexual connotations is called "Sexting." Texting sexually explicit content or pictures can ultimately cause emotional pain for both the sender and receiver. In addition, sending any sexual explicit content constitutes a felony.

How Are Teens Using Their Cell Phones?

Cell phone use, all teens (ages 12-17)



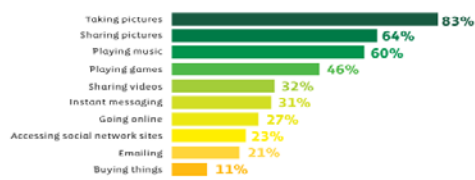
Cell phone usage, by age



Average number of texts sent and received per day, by gender



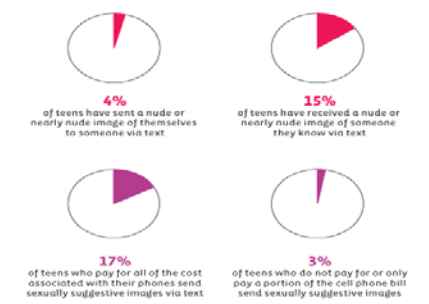
Other ways teens use their cell phones



Parental control



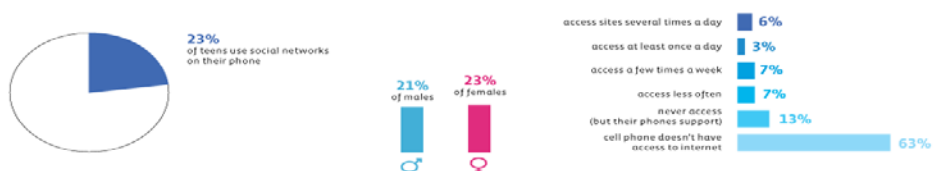
Sexting



Texting while driving



Social media through cell phones



*Numbers represent US Teenagers Source: Pew Internet Research | Floutown.

Figure 2: Usage Pattern of Teen texting

In many countries and places texting while driving is against the law. Research demonstrates that driving distractions are greater for teens. According to the PEW research, 52% of teens stated they text and drive!! 15% of teens send more than 200 texts a day - one text every few

minutes throughout their waking hours. Texting is the first and last thing teens do for the day. Most teens state they can -not live a week without a phone, some say not even ten minutes. As in the case with any excessive behavior, this volume of text messaging can interfere with a teen's

daily life and more important activities such as schoolwork or helping family members. Teens maybe digitally savvy, but they lack the maturity required to handle situations. Monitoring teen's texting habits and setting appropriate limits may help prevent problems. Some tips for parents include: Discuss proper cell phone and texting use before issues arise. Discuss the risks above; many teens are not aware of the possible consequences of their actions. Ask them if anyone has ever sent them an inappropriate picture without them being a willing participant. Provide your teenager with the opportunity to use situational problem solving techniques before they are needed.



Figure 3: Depressing Text messages

Appropriate boundaries need to be set, such as "no texting during class hours" as well as, set limits at home. Your family may decide to set rules such as "no texting allowed during meal times, family gatherings, religious events, or after certain hours." And, of course, teens should be instructed not to text at all while driving. Many mobile phone companies have the capability to restrict texting during certain hours. Read texts occasionally for appropriateness; and although teens need a sense of independence and privacy, remember that parents are ultimately responsible for their well-being. Keep a close eye on the usage with your cell phone bill. As with any issue concerning with teenagers, it's important to:

- Stay involved in their lives.
- Know their friends.
- Monitor their usage.
- Let them know you care and have their best interests at heart.
- Avoiding being a "Helicopter Parent."

Having sent a child to college, when you are setting boundaries for your children, you are also enabling them to become independent individuals. While you want to avoid hovering over your child's every move (hence the

term "helicopter parent"), it is also very important that you remain involved in their lives in a healthy, consistent way. Think about it this way. If you go to a restaurant and open a menu with 20 thousand choices, the array of choices can be dizzying. When the menu narrows down to 4 items, you have a better chance of feeling confident in your decision. When it comes to the health and academic success of your teenager, parents can provide kids with choices but a limited menu of choices.

Furthermore, the texting messages add fuel to a teenage mind. Texting makes it possible to record and manifest every thought that appears, and so teens pay extra attention to their thoughts and are inclined to listen to and formulate every whiff of an idea they experience. As a result, whatever is present in that teenage mind is ignited and strengthened. In the past, perhaps ninety eight percent of a teenager's thoughts might have simply passed through her mind without much attention, without even being remembered, but now such thoughts are celebrated and exacerbated in the process of turning them into texts, formulating the unformulated, and thus feeding the wild teenage mind. In addition, texting gives the teenager an uninterrupted audience for her every thought; it offers immediate feedback and attention. Teens today crave attention at a level that's unprecedented. It is paradoxical really; on the one hand, teens behave as if their every thought is fascinating and worth recording, and yet, they don't seem to be able to maintain a sense of self-worth unless continually validated, attended to, and reflected through likes, followers, and constant online attention. Texting makes it possible for teens to receive that attention 24/7, which is in part why it's so addictive and troublesome for the adolescent mind. Now, because teens are communicating with peers around the clock, outside the earshot and sight of their parents, the secrets and private encounters exist everywhere and all the time. As a result, our teenagers' private lives are impossible to control and difficult to know about, even by the most well-intentioned and loving parent.

The texting relationship is missing three profoundly important relational elements, the key ingredients of connection and empathy. Specifically, the sight of someone's face, the sound of someone's voice and the language of someone's body. Without these three elements, it's extremely difficult to develop or maintain a sense of empathy for another person. Texting relationships, if they are not supplemented with real time together, face to face, eventually, can and do lose a sense of empathy and even reality. The texting teenager shifts from being in relationship with another person to being in a relationship with just themselves. Without visual, auditory, and sensorial cues, the relationship becomes one with their own words and the screen on which they appear. Teenagers need to see, hear, and

experience another person in order to remember that the words coming across their screen indeed belong to someone else real, separate from themselves, with

real feelings. Given below (Figure 4) is a suggested decision diagram for texting relationship.



Figure 4: A frame work for Texting decision

In this new world of nonstop texting teens, parents need to be extra vigilant, to pay serious and focused attention to what their kids are saying, doing, and feeling, and the silences between the words. If your teen is becoming more withdrawn, angry, sullen, distracted, or is spending more time on her phone, more time out of sight, it's critically important to inquire into what's happening in his/her online life. And don't just talk to your teen, talk to the parents of her friends as well, about what they are seeing and hearing. It takes a village to raise a child, and now that their social life goes on outside our reach, we need that village more than ever. As a parent these days we need to be relentless in discovering our children's virtual universe, and specifically, the relationships they are playing out on their screens. We must keep open, or if need be, force open the lines of communication with our teens. Simply trusting and turning the other way, in this new virtually relational world, is no longer an option.

In the age of text messaging, where words are reduced to nonstandard abbreviations and symbols, many people question the future of literacy. But experts point out that, in fact, technology has put new emphasis on reading and writing. Experts also say that technology has added new layers to our understanding of what it means to be literate. In coming years literacy will mean knowing how to choose between print, image, video, sound, and all the potential combinations they could create to make a particular point

with a specific audience. What will not change is the necessity of an individual to be able to find a purpose, correctly analyze an audience, and communicate to that audience with information and in a tone that audience will find persuasive, engaging, and intelligent. Having multiple literacy however, does not only mean being comfortable composing with a variety of media; it also means understanding how to use different facets of language in each situation. Switching from a language appropriate for a text message to a linguistic mode more appropriate for addressing a teacher or writing an essay is a practice young people can easily be comfortable with.

While texting technologies dominate communication between young people, it is not the only trend informing us about how young people read and write. A lack of opportunity to develop in multiple language modes could cause language to develop in one way among one group and make those kids unable to communicate with those who have developed multiple literacy. At the same time, society tramples that creativity for the many oppressed by poverty and racism, and for the young people who have their lives defined by consumerism and mass production. Ironically, the problem may be prevented not by closing the digital divide by ensuring access to text technologies but by providing access to more traditional forms of literacy, like books. Text messaging and instant messaging have grown exponentially among kids, and that is likely a positive development. While the value of all of this new

communication technology is recognized, we need to encourage more cognitive or intellectual technologies—those technologies that do more to help us think more deeply rather than those aimed at more-immediate social sharing of information.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Environmental developments wait for nobody. The most prominent and readily discernible one is that this is a time for younger generation to dominate. Development of mobile technologies has paved the way for younger generation to play a more decisive role in the development of society. While that is being appreciated by companies and they have shaped their marketing and recruiting policies to suit, what is worrying is the unchecked growth of TEXTING. This has caused the most turbulence in current times. Today, the communication among younger people is dominated by mobile texting. There is nothing wrong as such with texting, but this needs continuous monitoring by parents and authorities among adolescents in the age group of 13-17.

As seen from a review of literature, the phenomenal growth of mobile technologies and devices are causing concern for society. As the population consists different generations of people, this needs a careful evaluation. The older generations tend to evaluate life based on their experience and not necessarily on the basis of new development which is the reality of life and all of us have to face! While the speed of communication as a result of these mobile devices has been appreciated, there are various fall out effects which need careful consideration. Several inventions from the start of the wheel have been appreciated and have been useful to society. But the rapid unforeseen development among children i.e. 'texting' has been phenomenal and is not without its share of unfavorable consequences to society. These have been discussed in the review of literature section. The inescapable Conclusion is that this trend needs to be watched and parental control on children has to be reestablished!

With the spread of civilization and industrialization people have been dislocated and they had to settle in new locations because of occupational considerations. This has resulted in unitary families where the generations of people have been divided because of the exigencies of current business environment. Parental control or monitoring of children has become more challenging because of the communication gap and divide that have been developed. Parents are unable to monitor the activities of children, particularly the teens in the absence of wiser counseling of elders and the bond between grand parents and children, which is a natural prescription in such circumstances because of the experiential learning of grandparents.

Children alone are not to be blamed in the current environment, as they have nobody to talk to or seek advice from. So, out of frustration, children have become addicted to texting culture and seek advice and learn from other children in the same situation. Some children become bullies and take advantage of the situation and the lack of communication and open doors for other youngsters make them prey of such bullies. The solution lies in understanding and their problems and has an honest review of one's own actions in the past and present and decide a future course of action. Counseling services from psychologists and child specialists are available and has to be made use of appropriately.

V. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

We have conclusive evidence that all is not well with some of the teenagers today. As parents and grandparents we cannot sit idle and watch the situation deteriorate. After all nobody will dispute that children are the future of any society. Early intervention is the only solution. Children from the small classes and age groups need to be monitored on all their schooling and social contact activities. What is difficult is to monitor their mobile usage, because most of them have the facility of the devices due to parental pampering or careless attitudes. Schools and educational institutions can also help in monitoring and feed back to parents on the activities of their wards. Social organizations and parents and teachers associations can play a vital role. Finally a word of caution to indulging parents – do you really want them to be dependent on you all the time?!

REFERENCES

A. PRINT & PUBLICATIONS

- [1] Blasio PD and Milani L (2008). Computer-mediated communication and persuasion: Peripheral vs. central route to opinion shift. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 24(3), 798-815.
- [2] Battestini, A., Setlur, V. and Sohn, T (2010). A large scale study of text messaging use. In: Marco, de, Aacute, S., Lu, Iacute., Carri, CcedilS., and Nuno, Correia O.,(eds). *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction with Mobile Devices and Services, Mobile HCI 2010*, Lisbon, Portugal, September 7-10, 2010
- [3] Bernicot J, Goumi A, Bert-Erboul A, Volckaert-Legrier O (2014), How do skilled and less-skilled spellers write text messages - A longitudinal study of sixth and seventh graders Running title: Text messages in teenagers. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* , 30:559-76.
- [4] Bushnell C, Kemp N, Martin FH. (2011), Text-messaging practices and links to general spelling skill: A study of Australian children. *Australian Journal of Education & Development Psychology*, 11:27-38.
- [5] Baumgartner SE, Weeda WD, van der Heijden LL, Huizinga M. (2014), The Relationship between Media

- Multitasking and Executive Function in Early Adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 34:1120–44.
- [6] Cingel DP, Sundar SS. (2012), Texting, tech speaks, and teens: The relationship between text messaging and English grammar skills. *New Media Society*, 14:1304–20
- [7] Durkin K, Conti-Ramsden G, Walker AJ. (2011), Texting language: Texting, textism use and literacy abilities in adolescents with and without specific language impairment. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 27:49–57
- [8] Graham CM, Scott Anchors S and Doore BE (2012). Student learning preferences and SMS text messaging: A Web 2.0 large classroom engagement system. *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Research*, 2(8), 638-845.
- [9] Hsu JL. (2013), Exploring the relationships between the use of text message language and the literacy skills of dyslexic and normal students. *Research on Development Disabilities*, 34, 423–30.
- [10] Kemp N, Bushnell C. (2011), Children's text messaging: Abbreviations, input methods and links with literacy. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 27:18–27.
- [11] Plester B, Wood C, Bell V (2008), Text messaging and school literacy: Does texting and knowledge of text abbreviations adversely affect children's literacy attainment? *Literacy*, 42:137–44.
- [12] Plester B, Lerkkanen MK, Linjama LJ, Rasku-Puttonen H, Littleton K. (2011) Finnish and UK English pre-teen children's text message language and its relationship with their literacy skills. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 27:37–48.
- [13] Plester B, Wood C, Joshi P. (2009), Exploring the relationship between children's knowledge of text message abbreviations and school literacy outcomes. *British Journal of Development Psychology*, 27:145–61.
- [14] Pea R, Nass C, Meheula L, Rance M, Kumar A, Bamford H, (2012), et al. Media use, face-to-face communication, media multitasking, and social well-being among 8- to 12-year-old girls. *Development Psychology*, 48:327–36.
- [15] Stowell T. (1999, Words lost and syntax found in headlines: the hidden structure of abbreviated English in headlines, instructions and diaries. Paper Presented at York University, Toronto,
- [16] Verheijen L. 2(013), The Effects of Text Messaging and Instant Messaging on Literacy. *English Studies*, 94: 582–602
- [17] Wood C, Kemp N, Waldron S. (2014), Exploring the longitudinal relationships between the use of grammar in text messaging and performance on grammatical tasks. *British Journal of Development Psychology*, 415–29.
- [18] Wood C, Kemp N, Waldron S, Hart L (2014). Grammatical understanding, literacy and text messaging in school children and undergraduate students: A concurrent analysis. *Computer Education* ;70:281–90
- [19] Wood C, Jackson E, Hart L, Plester B, Wilde L. (2011). The effect of text messaging on 9- and 10-year-old children's reading, spelling and phonological processing skills. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 27:28–36.
- [20] Wood C, Meachem S, Bowyer S, Jackson E, Tarczynski-Bowles ML, Plester B (2011), A longitudinal study of children's text messaging and literacy development. *British Journal of Psychology*, 102:431–42.

B. WEB REFERENCES

- [1] <http://www.technologyreview.com/news/407022/literacy-and-text-messaging/>.
- [2] <http://www2.uwstout.edu/content/lib/thesis/2011/2011baronee.pdf>.
- [3] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273993100_Impact_of_Texting_Over_Teen_Literacy_and_Social_Communication
- [4] <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1347549>.
- [5] http://www.thestar.com/news/2007/02/02/_spells_the_emise_of_attention_span_experts.html.
- [6] http://esjournals.org/journaloftechnology/archive/vol2no8/vol2no8_3.pdf.