The Relationship between Using Telegram and Interpersonal communication of Islamic Azad University Students of Karaj

Farahnaz Pirouz
Department of Sociology, Central Tehran branch, Payame Noor University, Tehran, IRAN
(Farahnaz.Pirouz@yahoo.com)

Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the relationship between using Telegram and interpersonal communications of university students of Karaj, Iran in 2015. The study, considering its purpose, adopted an applied method, and used descriptive methods and correlation for data collection. The statistical population of this study included 3865 students of Islamic Azad University of Karaj, Iran. Using stratified random sampling and based on Morgan table, 345 students were selected as the research sample. Data were collected using Hirshfiled’s (1997) standardized interpersonal dependence questionnaire. The collected data obtained from questionnaires were then analyzed using SPSS 19 in two parts of descriptive and inferential statistics (logistic regression). According to the obtained results, all three components of interpersonal dependence, the average of the students who are members of Telegram is higher than that of the students who do not use Telegram. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between Telegram and emotional dependence on others while the relationship between Telegram and the lack of self-confidence and the lack of independence was not significant. Hence, it is suggested that universities inform of using Telegram and its various effects on students.

Keywords: Social network, Telegram, Interpersonal communication, University students.
Introduction

With the advent of social networks, the use of these networks is an integral part of the lives of many university students which directly affects all aspects of student life including the study and academic performance (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Thompson et al., 2008).

Since the creation of the first virtual social network, thousands of these kinds of websites have been created worldwide (Boyd and Ellison, 2009). Social networks are now one of the most important means of communication in the society and the world and have a great reputation (Pempek et al., 2009). Today, some social networks, with the applications they have and the services they offer, have turned into news media and have profoundly affected various events in the real world. Social networks also influence the lives of people who use them (Eslami, 2010). One of these popular social networks is Telegram. Today, Telegram, which is a free software based on VoIP technology, is one of the messaging and call software for millions of users around the world, especially for Iranians, since according to the latest reports of Alexa, the majority of Telegram users are Iranians. In addition to free calls and text messages, its users can also form groups and distribution lists, and this has increased its popularity among smart phone users (Fa’ater, 2014).

According to McLuhan, the progress of any society has coincided with the growth of these technologies. And human communities have influenced the media (technology) - from the alphabet to the Internet - and also have been influenced by them (Soorin & Tankard, 2010). Young people's use of social networks is growing (Sylvester & McGlynn, 2010). Social networks provide plenty of opportunities to develop social skills and dependence and profoundly influence users’ social lives. These networks are valuable learning tools, because they enable learners to create, publish and share their activities and simplify the interaction and the collaboration of the learners (Panckhurst & Marsh, 2011). Some people consider social networks as websites through which users can create profiles and communicate with others for personal or professional reasons (Bersin, 2008). The social networks of internet communities are member-based that allow users to share and send personal information and files and also communicate through innovative ways such as sending private or public messages or photo and information exchange (Pempek et al., 2009). For many people, using these networks is a daily routine. Social networks are cites in which people get the opportunity to introduce themselves, express their personality traits and communicate with others and maintain these communications (Boyd & Ellison, 2010 ). These websites, potentially whether at the interpersonal or social relations level, have the ability to make fundamental changes in the social life of each individual (Ellison et al., 2009). In most cases, maintaining and promoting past relations are considered the main impact of these websites (Hampton & Wellman, 2003). However, the role of these websites in the formation of new interpersonal communications must not be ignored (Walther et al., 2002). Interpersonal communications is a progressing unique systematic selective engagement which makes the knowledge of people about each other and is the product of this knowledge and creates common meanings among them (Sajedi, 2009).

On the other hand, although the activity in such networks facilitates communication with friends (Pempek et al., 2009), the reduction of students’ study time causes disruption in their educational
process and interpersonal communications (O’Brien, 2011). Some of the major negative effects of such social networks, especially among students, are increased anxiety and stress (Farahani et al., 2011). However, social networks do not merely have negative effects and using them in the educational or therapeutic processes to attain educational purposes (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011). Some of the main reasons people use such networks include: communication with others (Kim et al., 2008), learning social rules (Boyd, 2007), recreation and exchange of experiences, quick and free news release, increasing the analytical power and reinforcing critical spirit, ability to cross geographical borders, and the formation and reinforcement of the collective wisdom (Eslami, 2010).

A large number of studies have been conducted throughout the world on the effect of using virtual social networks on student’s interpersonal communications, indicating different results. In a study, Pagani et al. (2015) investigated the effect of social networks on students’ social relations. In the era of ubiquitous Mobile computing, humanistic approach can be leveraged to enable new forms of mediated social interactions by personal devices among people. In this context, emerging needs such as content publishing, discovery of social relations and question and answer and communication patterns have not been clearly provided, however, the users of these networks interestingly follow them. Smith (2009), in his study, states that “the quality of individuals’ social communication together in a social network” causes the occurrence of different social emotions in them. For example, those who get divorced or those who are expelled from their favorite groups usually feel sad because of some problems in the quality of social network and losing the relations they like. The results of a study conducted by Tyler (2013) indicate that because of these virtual social networks, a considerable number of people throughout the world have been interacting with one another and have faced alien culture and opinions and are anxious about losing their national and religious identities. University students, after graduation from high school and being accepted in university entrance exam, in a critical period of their development, enter university to pursue their higher education in an environment often far from family (Javadinia et al., 2012). Hence the effects of such networks are manifested more during student life. The Iranians’ membership in social networks has been significantly increasing in recent years, in a way that according to some sources, it is reported that in 2010, about 3% of Iran’s population (250,000) solely use Facebook (Chen & Sali, 2010).

Therefore, cyberspace creates a high capacity to interact with other people and receive information beyond time and place and lets users directly and without any limitation use different information and get familiar with the knowledge and intercultural heritage of other countries. In fact, it provides a source of information and cultural knowledge with its users. The cumulative use of internet and virtual social networks provides direct and inexpensive communications. These new information and communication technologies are considered important identity sources which affect individuals’ cultural identity. The need for recognition of virtual social networks and for research into these networks has provided their application and the type of interpersonal communications in its context. It should be noted that the important role of social sites and exchange of ideas on the internet and using social networks has created new challenges for users, governments and regulatory organizations. As a result, the present study addresses this question: is there any relationship between the use of Telegram and interpersonal communications of university students?
According to theoretical principles, the hypothesis of this study includes:

There is a significant relationship between Telegram and interpersonal communications (emotional dependence on others, lack of self-confidence, and lack of independence).

Hence, considering the research hypothesis, the theoretical framework for the present study is presented below:

The conceptual model of the study: interpersonal dependence of Hirshfiled et al. (1997)

**Methodology**

**The research methodology, statistical population and sample:** The study, considering its purpose, adopts an applied method, and uses descriptive methods and correlation for data collection. It is also quantitative based on the type of collected data. In this regard, some questionnaires were distributed among the participants to get their opinions and the data were gathered. The statistical population of this study included all the students (3865 students) of Azad University of Karaj, Iran who were studying in 2014-2015 academic year. Using stratified random sampling and based on Morgan table, 345 students were selected as the research sample and were given the questionnaire.

The instrument used in the study was Hirshfiled’s (1997) interpersonal questionnaire.

**Hirshfiled’s (1997) interpersonal questionnaire:** The questionnaire was designed by Hirshfiled et al in 1997 with the aim of assessing the thoughts, behavior and feelings associated with having intimate relations with important people in life.
All the questions complied with Likert’s five-scale spectrum designed from 1 “strongly disagree”
to 5 “strongly agree”. To score each scale, the scores of questions related to that scale should be
added up. The questions related to each scale include:

1- The subscale of emotional dependence on others, 2- low self-confidence subscale, 3- lack
of independence subscale.

To standardize the interpersonal dependence questionnaire, it was conducted on 53 groups. The
first group consisted of 88 male and 132 female students with an average age of 24. The second
group consisted of 76 male and 104 female mental patients. The third group consisted of 19 male
and 47 female mental patients (average age of 31), and 64 men and 57 women who were
psychologically healthy (average age of 41). The average scores of these three groups in
interpersonal dependence questionnaire were 176.3 to 210.3. The interpersonal dependence
questionnaire had desirable internal consistency. Reliability coefficient obtained from split-half
was 0.72 to 0.91. In this study, the reliability of questionnaire, using Cronbach's alpha, was
calculated 0.7. Besides, content validity was used to evaluate the validity of the questionnaire,
and to do so, the questionnaire was approved by relevant experts.

To analyze the collected data from questionnaires, SPSS version 19 was used in two parts of
descriptive statistics (mean, variance and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (logistic
regression).

Findings

In this section, considering the main variable (Telegram), the hypothesis is tested using logistic
regression.

The hypothesis: there is a relationship between Telegram and interpersonal communications
(emotional dependence on others, lack of confidence and lack of independence).

Stepwise logistic regression

To investigate the relationship between predictor variables (emotional dependence on others,
lack of confidence and lack of independence) and “Telegram” in a model, logistic regression was
used.

The first output is the Omnibus test calculations. This test shows the evaluation of the whole
model.

Table 1. Omnibus tests to evaluate the whole regression model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Chi-squared test</th>
<th>Step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>Step one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>Block</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the above table, significance in all steps is smaller than 0.05, which is, the regression model, has the required functionality to explain the model. The next output indicates the log-likelihood and Pseudo r-Squared.

Table 2. Log-likelihood and Pseudo r-Squared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nickel’s determination of coefficient</th>
<th>Cox coefficient</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.349</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>64.96</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen in the table 2, predictor variables (emotional dependence on others, lack of confidence and lack of independence) altogether can explain 26.2% to 34.9% of subjects’ membership in Telegram.

In logistic regression, the model’s power in separating individuals in the dependent variable classes can be specified in two ways: 1. The classification table and 2. Classification chart. For this purpose, the classification table has been used in this study. The results are shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Individuals’ classification in dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Viber network</th>
<th>Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total percentage</td>
<td>Not using Telegram</td>
<td>Using Telegram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>Total percentage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information obtained from the above table evaluates the performance predictability model, as it can be seen, individuals’ classification is based on one step. In other words, only when "emotional dependence on others" variable is in the model, the classification accuracy of the model is equal to 71.7 percent.

The next output shows the coefficients of the variables in the model:

Table 4. Coefficients of variables in the model to predict interpersonal communications
Variables in the model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exp</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Variables in the model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3329.5</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>y-intercept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.77</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>-0.147</td>
<td>Emotional dependence on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.978</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.295</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>Lack of self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.953</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td>Lack of independence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to table 4, from the three predictor variables (emotional dependence on others, lack of self-confidence, and lack of independence), only "emotional dependence on others" variable is significant at 0.01. Therefore, based on the table above, the regression equation can be written as follows:

Membership in Telegram (Y) = 8.1 – 0.147 (emotional dependence on others)

As a result, it can be concluded that: there is a significant relationship between Telegram and emotional dependence on others while the relationship between Telegram and the lack of self-confidence and the lack of independence is not significant.

**Result and discussion**

According to the obtained results, in order to investigate the relationship between predictor variables (emotional dependence on others, lack of self-confidence, and lack of independence) and Telegram in a model, logistic regression test was used. Predictor variables (emotional dependence on others, lack of confidence, and lack of independence) altogether could explain 26.2 to 34.9 percent of the membership of the participants in Viber social network. Consequently, in all three components of interpersonal dependence, the average of the students who are members of Telegram is higher than that of the students who do not use Telegram. Furthermore, the results of logistic regression indicated that there was a significant relationship between Telegram and emotional dependence on others while the relationship between Telegram and the lack of self-confidence and the lack of independence was not significant.

Aghili and Poori (2012) conducted a study entitled “the effect of virtual social networks on interpersonal communications of users”. They found out, in future, the individuals’ conditions in media networks will determine their conditions in society. Networks can help the state become more powerful (focus of political power) or can be used to strengthen the power of citizens and to bold the focused interests and recording the documents and evidence. Also, they can be at the service of local independence and citizens’ participation in political decision-makings. Virtual social networks, with all advantages they have, suffer from the lack of leadership and there is not a leading force in them because of their horizontal nature. As a result, each member of the network may act according to his personal views or refer to the behavior of others and be inspired by them. One of damages that social networks may suffer is islanding and acting differently. Of course, this happens if the value of in-group capital of individuals is higher than
individuals’ social capital in other links. The results showed that virtual social networks have a marked effect on the behavior and interpersonal communications of the users of such networks. Shahabi and Bayat (2012) discussed the goals and motives of users’ membership in social networks and stated most users have turned to such social networks in order to facilitate current relationships, revive the traditional communications, create and maintain friendly relations and do not consider the atmosphere of such networks political. However, among other factors, some consequences and political implications in the process of their network acting is tangible. Pagani et al. (2015) also discussed the effect of social networks on social relations students and stated that in this context, emerging needs such as content publishing, discovering social relations and question and answer and communication patterns of social have not been clearly provided, however, the users of these networks interestingly follow them. Larsen (2009) also conducted an experimental research and found out interaction in networks can help to replicate and maintain friendships but girls pay attention to the received opinions and those who send them more than boys. Moreover, in general, it is important for all users whether the received comments are from friends or the people who know the owner of their page or the strangers. Joinson (2008) did a study to find out what motivates an individual to stay in the aforementioned networks. To this end, he interviewed the users of these networks and identified their personal characteristics, beliefs, behavior evaluation, the needs and motivational factors. The study determined that the main reason people use Facebook is to keep in touch.

Therefore, human tendency to sociability and independence and trust in life motivated him to turn the Internet into a virtual community. Now, with the development of virtual environment to create interactive relationship, Viber has emerged in the structure of virtual social networks. Viber new generation of online social networking page that is designed based on the needs of the audience. Viber social network is a new generation of internet pages designed based on the needs of the users. People who enter these virtual networks, enter a new world resulted from and influenced by the real environment and the incidents and discussions are about modern man’s obsessions with the real world.

Thus, according to the literature and research findings, it should be noted that social network of Telegram is a new generation of internet pages designed based on the needs of the users. They do not destroy society. Virtual networks have been designed so that people around the world would communicate better and easier. The affinity and individuals’ presence in real communities which are organized and informed by these virtual social websites not only increase human relations but also play an important role in their affinity. Telegram has been designed according to the wishes and desires of human beings. Since such sites definitely have a web-based platform, they have their own conditions in showing and meeting the demands of people.

Telegram has enabled users to have all the facilities available on the Internet at one site altogether. While you do your work on the Internet, you can also have recreation or entertainment and expand your relations with others and enjoy it. In other words, with the increasing technological and structural development of virtual social networks, those who enter such networks enter a new world resulted from and influence by the real environment. They are the same people in real world who are indicated by the virtual networks. The incidents and discussions are about modern man’s obsessions with the real world, and the users and their
behavior are the same and the environment has only changed. This space is very well manifested in Telegram. The results of this study are in line with the findings of researches conducted by Pagani et al. (2015), Tyler (2013), Thomas (2011), Larsen (2009), Smith (2009), Alipour et al. (2014), Sepehri (2014), Moradi et al. (2014), Khalili Azar (2013), Iman and Shirdel (2013).

Now that Telegram, as modern media, has an effect in youth’s relations and is commonly used by them, authorities should take some measures to strengthen social and national communications of the youth using modern technologies to preserve and strengthen indigenous culture and thereby contributing to cohesion and national unity.
References


