



AENSI Journals

Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture

ISSN 1816-9112

Journal home page: www.aensiweb.com/jasa/index.html



An Examination of the Challenges and Opportunities of Students' Identity in Virtual Space

¹Manijheh Karami and ²Mina Karami

¹Department of Social Science, Abhar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Abhar, Iran.

²Senior Expert At National Library and archives, Tehran, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 January 2013

Received in revised form 11

March 2014

Accepted 19 March 2014

Available online 1 April 2014

Keywords:

Iranian identity; Challenge; Virtual space; Opportunity.

ABSTRACT

Background: Apart from the positive or negative effects, considering virtual space, particularly the Internet, is inevitable. **Objective:** National identity as the most essential component of social life is one of the factor that is strongly influenced by the virtual world of the Internet. **Results:** The present study is done in 2014 to investigate and identify the challenges and opportunities of Iranian students' identity in virtual space. Research methodology is descriptive survey. The population of this study consisted of 112 male and female students of Islamic Azad University of abhar in the first semester of the academic year 1392-93 who have completed a self-administered questionnaire by random sampling method. The research instrument is questionnaire. After completing the questionnaires, SPSS software was used for data analysis and data has been analyzed with descriptive statistics indexes (frequency, percentage, etc.) and inferential statistics indexes Data (Pearson and Spearman tests, Kolmogrov-Smirnov test.). **Conclusion:** In summary, in order of priority, the results include. There is a significant and positive relationship between presence in virtual space and less attention to moral values and norms and ethical customs. There is a significant and positive relationship between presence in virtual space and influencing from foreigners. There is a significant and positive relationship between opportunities in virtual space and extension of Islamic and national values.

© 2014 AENSI Publisher All rights reserved.

To Cite This Article: Manijheh Karami, Mina Karami., An Examination of the Challenges and Opportunities of Students' Identity in Virtual Space. *J. Appl. Sci. & Agric.*, 9(3): 1078-1082, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Human social life requires identity and there is no possibility of the development of human beings without an understanding himself/ herself (Kajoiyan, 2006). William Martin has introduced informational society as a society in which, as social changes and economical development perspectives, life quality increasingly is dependent on information and using it. In such a society, standards of living, work and leisure patterns, the educational system and the labor market quite sensibly were overshadowed by developments in the realm of information and knowledge (Navabakhsh *et al* 2011) from Mohseni, 2002).

In this regard, John Meyers has noted a revolution has been occurred in information and communications in the world and has affected the life of all human on the Earth; a computer-based revolution which has widespread economic, political and cultural effects; that means on the one hand it makes information as a business and profitable product that its acquisition makes people powerful and on the other hand, it has permanent influences on the human personality and identity (Feeder, 2002).

Besides causing a positive change in the areas of economy, industry, information and transport, information society and the increasing development of new media which expands decentralization and lack of time and place, have contributed to identity concerns at different countries; and maintenance of the components of identity for various communities has been seriously introduced.

Questions:

Parallel to the development and spread of an outbreak of virtual space, finding its undeniable role in human life, communication scholars and sociologists have been faced with a very important and necessary question that whether multiple and diverse identities have a place to stay in this new society?

Deleted and lost identities which have been the source of stability and life of many human beings and have valuable history and background of human life have which adverse consequences in the networking community for human society?

Corresponding Author: Manijheh Karami, Abhar branch, Islamic Azad University, Abhar, Iran.

Ph: 09127414977

E-mail: Karamibahar70@yahoo.com

In this regard a question that attracts most attention is that in today's interconnected world, how religious and national identity can be maintained with avoidance of international tensions and achievement of sustainable development in all aspects?

Now, our problem here is that what are the opportunities and challenges surrounding the Iranian identity in virtual space?

Background of the Study:

The study by Mojtaba Abbasi Ghadi (2012) entitled "The impact of the Internet on users' religious identity" concluded that data obtained from path analysis for all research hypotheses regarding the existence of variables such as the time of using Internet by users, the amount of using Internet by users, type of use, motivation and users' purpose, participation of users, real consideration of the content of websites by users, economical- social base of users, their education and their religious identity, have been approved.

In the study by Hafez Nia *et al* (2007) entitled "The impact of globalization on national identity," the authors concluded that today, with an emphasis on "internet and satellite", globalization processes has weakened national interests of students. Students, as one the most populated reference groups of the country, are influenced by information technology and communications and this affection is a base for those parts of identity which have been defined as local- ethnic identity. This process has led to a weakening of national identity of students.

In Khatibi's study (2006) entitled "The relationship of the presence in virtual space and modern identity" it is concluded that the strongest and most complete achievement of the modern identity can be seen among professional maker users with more background in virtual space. Also, due to the anonymity of users in virtual space, they provide an identity different from their real identity in the real world; in fact, they manage and provide themselves, that this method presentation have a relationship with their usage on the one hand and with the quantity and quality of various effects that person accepts on the shadow of presence in the particular virtual space in identity aspects.

In Ahangari's study (2007) entitled "A sociological study of the impact of the information society (satellite and internet) on the identity of the young girls in the city of Sanandaj" the research hypotheses include:

- Utilization of the facilities of information society is affecting the family identity.
- Utilization of the facilities of information society is affecting the religious identity.
- Utilization of the facilities of information society is affecting the individual identity.
- Utilization of the facilities of information society is affecting the national identity.

All of the above mentioned hypotheses have been approved. The result is that the information society and its values gradually enters influencing phase in society and are changing the identity of people.

Research Questions:

- What are the challenges of Iranian identity in virtual space?
- How can we use virtual space to reinforce Iranian identity?

Research Hypothesis:

- There is a significant relationship between Iranian identity challenges and use of the virtual space.
- There is a significant relationship between Iranian identity and the opportunities in the virtual space.

The Sub-Hypotheses:

- There is a significant relationship between virtual space and less attention to the values and norms.
- There is a significant relationship between virtual space and the effectiveness of the foreigners.
- There is a significant relationship between virtual space and the development of national and religious values.
- There is a significant relationship between virtual space and easy and rapid providing of cultural products.
- There is a significant relationship between virtual space and spreading Islamic and national values.
- There is a significant relationship between virtual space and change of users' opinions.

Research Methodology:

This study is a descriptive survey. In this study, identity challenges of one unit of the society that means male and female students of Islamic Azad University of abhar about virtual space, was considered. The statistical population of this study was consisted of the students of the Islamic Azad University of Abhar who enrolled in the first semester of the 2013- 14 academic year and a sample size of 112 patients was estimated by Kokoran formula. To collect data, a 43 items questionnaire made by the researcher was used in this study.

SPSS software was used for data analysis. Data have been analyzed with descriptive statistics indexes such as (frequency, percentage and table) and inferential statistics indexes (Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficient and Kolmogorov-Smirnov).

Research Findings:

To check normality of research variables, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used. Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is as follows:

H0: Normality of variables

H1: Non-normality of variables.

Table 1: The results of the k.s test.

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic	Significance level
Virtual space	1.295	0.070
Iranian identity	1.140	0.148
Opportunities in virtual space	1.081	0.193
Iranian identity challenges	0.853	0.461

Table 1 shows the statistics of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the test significance level. Since the test significant level for individual variables is more than the acceptable rate of error ($\alpha = 0.05$), so H0 can not be rejected. That means all variables are normal.

Given the normality of research variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess research hypotheses.

Research Findings:

First research hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Iranian identity challenges and the virtual space.

H0: There is no significant relationship between Iranian identity challenges and the virtual space.

Table 2: Distribution of the sample people in terms of education, sex, length and type of using Internet.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Education	Foundation	4.5
	Bachelor	83.9
	Master	11.6
Sex	Men	60.7
	Women	39.3
Duration of using Internet	Less than 2 hours	34.8
	2 to 5 hours	21
	5 to 10 hours	20
	More than 10 hours	24.1
Type of using Internet	Search for scientific and educational information	58.9
	Gaining news	18.8
	Chat	15.2
	E-mail	7.1

Table 3: Distribution of coefficients, values and significance level of the variables.

No.	Hypotheses	Coefficients	Coefficient values	significance level	Number of data (Number of people who answered)
1	Virtual space, Iranian identity challenges	Spearman	0.638	0.000	112
2	Virtual space, Iranian opportunity and identity	Spearman	0.188	0.047	112
3	Virtual space and less attention to the values and norms	Spearman	0.315	0.001	112
4	Virtual space and the influence of foreigners	Spearman	0.353	0.000	112
5	Virtual space and the development of national and religious values	Spearman	0.025	0.797	112
6	Cyberspace and easy and rapid providing of cultural products	Spearman	0.041	0.665	112
7	Virtual space and spreading Islamic values	Spearman	0.307	0.001	112
8	Virtual space, change of users' idea	Spearman	0.371	0.000	112

As Table 2 shows, the distribution of samples based on contextual demographic variables is as follows:

1. The highest education level is related to bachelor and the lowest is related to foundation degree.
2. Based on sex, 7/6% is men and 3/39 percent is women.

3. The maximum length of using Internet is 5 to 10 hours and the least is less than for 2 hours.
4. The most common use of internet is searching scientific and educational information with the 9/58% and the minimum use of internet is related to e-mail with 7.1%.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between Iranian identity challenges and virtual space. The second hypothesis indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between Iranian identity and opportunities in virtual space. About the third hypothesis we can say that there is a significant and positive relationship between virtual space and less attention to the values and norms.

Similarly, a positive and significant relationship can be seen between the influence of foreigners and virtual space. It can be said certainly that there is no positive and significant relationship between virtual space and the development of national and religious values and between virtual space and providing easy and rapid cultural products. About opportunities in virtual space and spreading Islamic values, there is a significant positive relationship. Finally, there is a significant and positive relationship between virtual space and change of opinions among users.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Nowadays, need of people to virtual space, especially the Internet, is inevitable. People use it according to their learned and adapted interests and values and according to their intellectual capacity and facilities. Presence in virtual space and the Internet, especially by young people, is of great importance and by reviewing research hypotheses; most of the research variables have a significant relationship with the dependent variable.

By proofing the first hypothesis regarding the fact that there is a positive and significant relationship between presence and use of the Internet and the challenges of Iranian identity, which includes variables such as non-compliance with the law, spreading of immoral pattern, avoidance of traits such as truthfulness, honesty, integrity, opposition to national values, membership in abnormal groups, illicit relationships and opposition to values, norms and tradition. It means that the less the presence and use of virtual space by students, the more identity challenges they will have.

The third hypothesis demonstrates the point that there is a positive and significant relationship between the presence in virtual space and less attention to the values and norms. That means, more use of virtual space by users, will cause more weakening in their national identity and they are neglected values and norms of Iranian society.

The fifth hypothesis suggests that there is a positive and significant relationship between the degree of presence in virtual space and influence of foreigners.

It is evidential that the more people be exposed to the virtual space; the more likely is the influence of other cultures.

The sixth hypothesis suggests that there is a significant and positive relationship between the presence in virtual space and change of users' opinions. Therefore, it can be said that searching in a virtual world leads to the changing of users' thoughts and ideas and will eventually weaken the Iranian identity of users.

This study followed the research on Golaleh Ahangari (2007), and also research of Abbas. Ghadi (2012) and Hafez Nia *et al* (2007). The authors have concluded that the use of virtual space with an emphasis on internet and satellite weaken the students' interests and is undermining national and local identity.

Overall, the results indicated that virtual space is effective in weakening national identity and as the beneficial effects that can not be ignored in today's world; its negative effects can not be neglected, too.

REFERENCES

Ahangari, G., 2007. "Sociological study of the impact of the elements of information society (satellite and internet) on the identity of the young girls in the city of Sanandaj". M.A. Thesis, Tehran: Faculty of Social Sciences.

Alikhani, A., 2005. "Principles of identity and identity crisis". Social and Human Sciences Research Institute, Tehran, Jahad-e-Daneshgahi.

Alikhani, A., 2005. "Identity in Iran". Social and Human Sciences Research Institute, Tehran, Jahad-e-Daneshgahi.

Feeder, J., 2002. "Information Society". Translated by: Ali Radbaveh and Abbas Gilvardi. Ketabdar publications.

Ghadi, A., M. Khashani, Kh, Kashani, 2012. "The impact of Internet on national identity". Center for Strategic Studies.

Ghanbariyan Bazriyan, A., 2005. "Cognitive aspects of identity". Youth Study and Intergenerational Relations Center, Jahad-e-Daneshgahi.

Ghasemi, F., 2005. "Components of hierarchy and identity". Proceedings of theoretical foundations of the crisis and identity. Youth Study and Intergenerational Relations Center, Jahad-e-Daneshgahi.

Hafez Niya *et al.*, 2007. "The impact of globalization on national identity, a case study for students of government universities of Tehran". *Jeopolitic Quarterly*, no. 3-4.

Heydari, M., 2005. "National identity and security". *Proceedings of Identity and Identity Crisis, Youth Study and Intergenerational Relations Center, Jahad-e-Daneshgahi*.

Kajouyian, H., 2006. "Theories of culture and globalization: From approach to reality". *Cultural Studies and Communications Quarterly*, No. 2 and 3.

Khatibi, F., 2006. "The relationship of presence in virtual space and modern identity". M.A. Thesis. Sociology Course, Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaiee University.

Moidfar, S., 2001. "Sociology of contemporary social problems". Sarzamine Ma Publication.

Navabakhsh, M., *et al.*, 2011. "An investigation of the effects Internet and mobile phones on changing the identity of youth with the age of 29-15 years old in Mazandaran province". *Sociology Journal of Youth Studies Quarterly*, 1: 146-170.

Saroukhani, B., A. Tavasoli, A. Seyyed Arabi Nejad, 2009. "The impact of virtual spaces on social behaviors of young female students". *Social Science research*, 134: 1.