The Role of Virtual Media in Changing Social Values with an Emphasis on Telegram and Facebook Social Networks

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the role played by social networks, including Facebook and Telegram, in changing the social life styles of the young and middle-aged generations of Iranian society. The research method consists of survey group of 512 people of the young and middle-aged generations selected from 5 provinces using multi-stage cluster sampling. Data were collected using a research-made questionnaire. The results show that there is a close relationship between the use of social networks, including Facebook and Telegram, and their difference in intergenerational value. But in most cases, this convergence is not positive and reduces the tendency of young people towards the values of the Iranian society. According to the research findings, there is a direct and significant relationship between the use of the social networks, including Facebook and Telegram, the social values of individualism, selection of modern clothes, and criteria of spouse selection among the young and middle-aged generation. Moreover, there is an inverse and significant relationship between social values of legalism, religiosity and accountability, ethical criteria for spouse selection, and selection of traditional clothes.

Keywords: Values, Social values, Virtual media, Telegram, Facebook.

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1. Introduction

Value system is considered as the core belief which influences the individuals' goals and behaviors. According to Ball-Rokeach, the value system includes a hierarchical ideal; So that an adult has thousand beliefs, but the level of values is low. Donald Super considers the relationship between the needs, values and interests in a hierarchical model (Ghanbari et al., 2011). Goleman considers the value system as an ideal system which is organized in order of importance. When a value is internalized, it is changed into a criterion for guiding behavior, evolution and consolidation of thinking about objects and situations related to people (Dariapour, 2007).

Rapid changes in information and communication technologies and the important role of the media in the private lives of individuals and groups have produced different results.

One of the results is the change in social, cultural, ethical, legal, and religious values. Identical clothes of young people and pop music are examples of the effect of media in changing behavior and lifestyle aspect of the present generation and lack of adherence to traditions and its cultural values (Yousefi, 2004: 114).

Expansions of social spaces, generalization of the specific affairs, and interrelatedness of the world have caused people to be faced with many problems when choosing a coherent identity. Due to the appeal of cyberspace (Internet) and experience and continuous presence in this environment with different needs and motivations (scientific, educational, entertainment and news), the entry of new cultural elements have led to the reproduction of virtual tastes (Farokhnia et al., 201: 20).

Considering the role of cyberspace in the development of communities in our society, a great importance has been given to information and communication technology in recent years. However, in this regard, there are serious damages and consequences which their investigation is essential. Thus, the research question is posed here:

"What is the effect of using virtual social media on social values?"

The research hypotheses are as follows:

1. There is a significant difference between the social values among the young and middle-aged generations using Facebook and Telegram in terms of the felt relations.

2. There is a significant difference between the social values among the young and middle-aged generations using Facebook and Telegram in terms of the felt intimacy.

3. There is a significant difference between the social values among the young and middle-aged generations using Facebook and Telegram in terms of concealing the identity.

4. There is a significant difference between the social values among the young and middle-aged generation using Facebook and Telegram in terms of the level of the use.

2. Theoretical Foundations
2.1 Social values

In sociology, social value refers to something that is widely accepted. According to George Ritzer, social values are considered as the social facts which are immaterial (Ritzer, 2004: 73). According to the Smelser, social values are also considered as cultural standards determining the generally favorable targets for the organized social life. Social values represent the concept and legitimacy of social security and behaviors (Mohseni, 1995: 597).

However, Vosoughi unlike Smelser and Ritzer considers social values as material and spiritual materials. He believes that the social values are all the human interests that are favorable or unfavorable. Any material or spiritual in society which meets the material and spiritual needs of people, or any precious and useful thing are considered as social values (Vosoughi, 2002: 192). Henry Madras believes that social value is a self-evident and absolute phenomenon that cannot be denied (Madras, 2005, 162).

The social values refer to issues, concepts and theories accepted by the majority community. Social values consist of different parts of values, including beliefs, customs and culture.

Different societies have different social values and social values of a society may be in conflict with other values of the society, such as Hijab and traditionalism which are considered valuable in one society (*Islamic)* and valueless in other societies.

Allen Birou in his book entitled "The Culture of Social Sciences," considers social values as models of behavior, collective rules and norms that are generally accepted by the human community. According to Birou, personal, cultural, and judicial values are not necessarily distinct social values.

People with social values spend their social life with community members and reach a kind of consensus for these values. According to this sociology expert, these social values in the narrower sense are considered as moral, cultural, and religious values which reinforce the social integration (Birou, 1996, 386). Based on his definition, collective acceptance of community members and the dynamics of group life will lead to the social cohesion. However, eastern sociologists define the social values more emotionally.

According to Ogburn and Nimkoff, social value is considered as something that is rejected by the society. Social values are motivated by "social orientation". Social

trends are general tendencies that arise in individual and affect perceptions, emotions and actions (Ogburn & Nimkoff, 2009, 193).

- Social values have certain characteristics that distinguish them from individual values

- Social values are the essence of any culture.

- Any change in the political, economic, religious or social values are associated with social changes.

- Social values legitimize different norms. For as much as social norms are based on social values agreed by people and they are accepted in the community.

- Rewards and punishments for each community are based on the values of the community. Killing a corrupted person is rewarded, while killing an innocent person leads to the death or life imprisonment.(it is a law)

- Values are relative. In sociology, real values are those which exist in a specific society, and they are ideals for people. This principle is not true for all the values.

- Values are emotional; in other words, tendency towards a value is not necessarily reasonable and it is a spontaneous and immediate intuition in which emotions play an important role.

- The nature of the social values includes cultural and historical factors which cannot be adapted and imitated by other nations. For example, we cannot imitate the expression of politeness in a European or African country. We say that it is similar to our country.

- Social values are vague and ambiguous; because the words associated with them (good and bad, happy and unhappy) are very vague.

Social values have organic relationship with other values. Disrupting the communications network leads to disappearing vital signs of values. Sanei believes that any normal and healthy person cannot use all its efforts for providing a single value; for example, if a person is only seeking the value of power and making no effort to obtain other values such as knowledge and skill acquisition, he/she gradually loses the ability to obtain the value of power (Sanei, 2009, p.43).

2.2 Virtual social networks

Virtual social networks are the product of Web2 technologies. A Web 2.0 site may allow users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community, in contrast to Web sites where people are limited to the passive viewing of content. Examples of Web 2.0

include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, video sharing sites, hosted services, and Web applications (Ziaeeparvar & Aqil, 2001, 24).

Social networks have made some kind of public participation and provided people with the ability to engage and interact with each other (Ghasabi, 2012, 30). Social network is one of the most influential new communication technologies that affect all aspects of human life. All aspects of our individual and collective lives are affected by this communication technology.

The network is a complex collection of smaller networks that exchange information with each other (Halen 1997, 21).

Social networks are multi-dimensional and give users the ability to exchange instant and personal messages and upload their generated content such as blogs, images, and video and also find old and new friends.

These capabilities are public and what happens in the life of individuals in an online social network is a kind of online life (Ziaeeparvar & Aqil, 2001, 26). Social networks can be considered as new media which create the social, cultural, economic and political changes. The challenges with which social networks are faced in recent years affect areas far beyond cyberspace. Social networks as a kind of social media provide interactive features for Internet users and are effective in increasing citizen participation in some processes.

What is being discussed (*more effective*) is that social networks remove boundaries between the public and private domains. One of the main results of the extensive involvement with technological devices is that people lose their attention to the environment (Hatoka, 2014, 3).

Social networks provide context to find old friends and keep in touch with them, find new friends, and communicate and exchange comments.

Therefore, understanding the performance of networks in the modern era provides the chance for their creators to disclose those aspects of identity which previously were hidden. In this way, users of social networks suggests that the "**Real me**" is displayed (Chang 2000, 44).

Researchers seeking to understand the nature of virtual communication give a special attention to the difference between the previous and present generations. Their main motivation is that such groups are leading users for using the new technologies. For example, Castells believes that young people have more capacity to use technologies compared with other generations because they are eager for acceptance and use of new technologies (Bertell, 2013, 299).

Social network sites encourage their users through computer-mediated discussions to be in touch with other community members and friends and exchange their comments. In fact, new technologies have helped users to produce and distribute their original content through different networks on the Internet. Through the online community, users become the members of social networks and influence the other members.

Most social networks have created a mechanism through which users can leave a message on their friends' profile pages. This issue includes leaving comments, although some bases have chosen different names for this feature. Moreover, social networks often have a possibility to leave messages. Although leaving messages and comments on most social sites are done by users, this option is not available globally in all countries.

2.3 Iranian status in social networks

Unfortunately, there is no official authority to cite statistics on the penetration of virtual social networks in Iran. Some statistics announced by the websites such as Alexa represent ranking of social websites in countries such as Iran. However Iranians are always placed in the highest rank among Internet users and in particular the use of features such as Web development (Rasank, 2009).

During events such as refining (filtering) large databases or political events and social network sites are very popular because they are the only way for the instant communication.

Linkdoni also considered a virtual social network in Iran that 001% of users use it. Through such websites, the hottest and the most interesting discussions are provided in the web space (Donna and Allison, 2007).

Iranians are also considered as one of the most active user groups in virtual social networks such as Telegram and Facebook (Ziaeeparvar & Aqil, 2001). According to data adopted from Parsineh website, Facebook involves more than 25 million members and Telegram consists of 13 million members in late 2015 (Parsineh, 2015).

3. Methodology

The research method is survey. According to balanced factors such as time, material costs, workforces, and the level of research and accuracy for analysis, 512 people among the young and middle-aged generation in 5 provinces were selected using multi-stage cluster sampling. Social values in the study were adopted from the

categories McDougall and Lasswell, Allport, Schwartz, Inglehart, Manochehr Mohseni and Hossein Lotfabadi.

After the combination of the information from the above mentioned experts, 35 social values were extracted and presented in the form of a questionnaire. Then, the questionnaire was given to authoritative experts and scholars in Social Sciences to determine the value of consistency between social values and local conditions in Iranian society.

4. Findings

According to the research findings, 48.4 % of respondents were female and 51.6 % of them were male. In terms of the age, 10.9% of the respondents were 16-20 years old, 30.5% of them were 21-25 years old, 11.7% of them were 26-30 years old, 24% of them were 31-35 years old, 16.4% of them were 36-40 years old and 6.4% of them were 41-45 years old. 9.8 % of the users used Facebook and Telegram all day. 46.7 % of them used them once or more times a day. 30.9 % of the users used Facebook and Telegram two to three times a week. 46.7 % of them used once or several times a day. 30.9 % of the users used Facebook and Telegram two to three times a week.

5. Investigating the research hypotheses

First hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the social values among the young and middle-aged generations using Facebook and Telegram in terms of the felt relations.

Table 1. Test results of two-way ANOVA between age and the felt relations in Facebook and Telegram

Sources	Total scores	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Beta coefficient
Age	107.881	1	107.881	0.453	0.501	0.001
Felt relations	6905.294	1	6905.294	29.004	0.000	0.054
interaction between age and the felt relations	147.826	1	147.826	0.621	0.431	0.001
Error	120946.725	508	238.284			
Total	15274318.000	512				

Results of the above table indicate that the age is not significant ($F=0.453$, $P>0.05$). According to test results of two-way ANOVA for the variables of the interaction between age and the felt relations, there is no significant difference

between the social values based on the interaction between age and the felt relations in telegram.

Second hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the social values among the young and middle-aged generations using Facebook and Telegram in terms of the felt intimacy.

Table 2. Test results of two-way ANOVA between age and the felt intimacy in Facebook and Telegram

Sources	Total scores	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Beta coefficient
Age	253.944	1	253.944	1.071	0.301	0.002
Felt intimacy	5965.063	1	5965.063	25.154	0.000	0.047
interaction between age and the felt intimacy	2467.721	1	2467.721	10.406	0.001	0.020
Error	120469.305	508	237.144			
Total	15274318.000	512				

Results of the above table indicate that the variable age is not significant (F=1.071, P> 0.05). The variable felt intimacy is significant (F=25.154, P 0.05). According to test results of Two-way ANOVA for the variable of the interaction between age and the felt intimacy (0.05), there is no significant difference between the social values based on the interaction between age and the felt intimacy in telegram. Although the Eta coefficient is low (0.020), a comparison between two groups of lower than thirty years (171.58) and higher than thirty-one years (172.46) showed that the group higher than thirty-one years gives more attention to social values. Moreover, a comparison between the low use (174.46) and a high use (167.98) showed that the low use reflects attention to the social values.

Third hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the social values among the young and middle-aged generation using Facebook and telegram in terms of concealing the identity.

Table 3. Test results of two-way ANOVA between age and concealing the identity in Facebook and Telegram

Sources	Total scores	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Beta coefficient
Age	495.532	1	495.532	2.092	0.149	0.004
concealing the identity	6473.870	1	6473.870	27.335	0.000	0.051
interaction between age and concealing the identity	2405.689	1	2405.689	10.158	0.002	0.020
Error	120313.475	508	236.838			
Total	15274318.000	512				

Results of the above table indicate that the variable age is not significant (F=2.092, P> 0.05). The variable concealing the identity is significant (F=10.158, P□ 0.05). According to test results of Two-way ANOVA for the variable of the interaction between age and concealing the identity, there is no significant difference between the social values based on the interaction between age and concealing the identity in Facebook.

Fourth hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the social values among the young and middle-aged generation using Facebook and Telegram in terms of the level of the use.

Table 4. correlation between social values based on the use of Telegram and Facebook among young and middle-aged generations

Social values		The use of social networks					
		Young			Middle-aged		
		Pearson coefficient	Significant coefficient	Number of samples	Pearson coefficient	Significant coefficient	Number of samples
Spouse selection	Appearance creation	0.361	0.000	256	0.124	0.017	256
	Ethical criterion	0.294	0.000	256	0.299	0.000	256
Individualism		0.208	0.010	256	0.103	0.069	256
Clothes	Traditional	0.211	0.017	256	0.223	0.003	256
	Modern	0.362	0.000	256	0.355	0.000	256
Legalism		0.401	0.000	256	0.231	0.001	256
Religiosity		0.354	0.000	256	0.278	0.000	256
Accountability		0.112	0.001	256	0.286	0.001	256
Social trust		0.136	0.013	256	0.241	0.032	256
Altruism		0.120	0.000	256	0.098	0.326	256
Luxury-orientation		0.368	0.028	256	0.356	0.215	256

According to the above table, correlation analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between the use of Telegram and social values such as spouse selection appearance and ethical criteria among both groups. This relationship is direct with the appearance criteria, and inverse with the ethical criteria. According to the correlation test, there is a direct relationship between the use of telegram and individualism and this value is more evident among the young generation.

Based on the findings and correlation analysis, there is a significant relationship between the use of Telegram and the criteria of clothes selection in terms of increasing the importance of modern standards and decreasing the importance of traditional values among young and middle-ages generations. However, there are two significant differences in this regard. First, this relationship is direct with the importance of modern standards, and inverse with the importance of traditional values. In other words, the use of telegram has a positive effect on the young generation to have a tendency towards modern standards.

On the other hand, the adults have a tendency towards traditional values. Second, the intensity of the relationship is stronger for the importance of modernization among the young generations and the relationship is stronger for the importance of traditionalism among middle-aged generations.

Furthermore, the findings and correlation analysis show that there is a significant relationship between the use of telegram and social values of legality, religiosity, responsibility and the social trust among young and middle-ages generations. However, there are several significant differences in this regard.

First, this relationship is inversely for all variables. In other words, the use of telegram declines the tendency towards legality, religiosity, responsibility and the social trust.

Second, the intensity of the relationship is stronger for the importance of legalism and religiosity among young generations and the relationship is stronger for the importance of responsibility and social trust among middle-aged generations. In addition, there is a significant relationship between the use of telegram and luxury ordination and altruism among the young generations, but this relationship is not significant among middle-aged generations.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the role played by social networks, including Facebook and Telegram, in changing the social life styles of the young and middle-aged generations of Iranian society. Sociology scholars believe that the media are considered as the main reason for the change in the values in society and there is no causative relationship between the changing values and media. However, there are other factors affecting in this regard. If the social values are considered as the infrastructure for community attitudes and behavior, based on the results we can say that the use of social networks lead to convergence in social values among the young and middle-aged generations. If this convergence is not positive, the reason can be that it is associated with the low level of the tendency towards the social values.

The social network of telegram is effective in an increase in modernization and decreasing traditionalism among young and middle-aged generations. This result is consistent with Rogers' view. He believes that the media carry innovative ideas and values in society and challenge the traditional values. The results of this study are also consistent with the cultivation theory proposed by Graebner. According to Graebner, The primary proposition of cultivation theory states that the more time people spend living in the television world, the more likely they are to believe social reality portrayed on television.

Under this umbrella, perceptions of the world are heavily influenced by the images and ideological messages transmitted through popular television media. Graebner believes that television has gradual, long-term, compact, and powerful effects on the behaviors and attitudes.

Moreover, the effect of social networks, including Facebook and Telegram, on intergenerational social values can be analyzed by Giddens' perspective. According to Giddens, it can be concluded that it is not only the social change which determines the speed of the transformation of personal identity and lifestyles. Media and technologies play a key role in the creation and diffusion of different lifestyles.

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