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Title: Motivations to Use a Mobile Virtual Social Networks and its Related Social Capital among College Students: A Cross-sectional Study

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Authors: Majid Barati ¹, Fatemeh Heidari-Moghis ², Babak Moeini ³, Mohammad Babamiri ⁴, Maryam Afshari⁵, Mohammadhasan Saati-Asr⁶, Ghazaleh Kalantarnia⁷, Saba Eslami⁸, Atefe Ostad-Abdollahpour⁹

1. Social Determinants of Health Research Center, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, IR Iran. (Barati@umsha.ac.ir)
2. Department of Public Health, School of Health, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, IR Iran. (heidarifateme180@gmail.com)
3. Social Determinants of Health Research Center, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, IR Iran. (Babak_moeini@umsha.ac.ir)
4. Department of Ergonomics, School of Health, Research Center for Health Sciences, Hamadan, University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, IR Iran. (mohammad.babamiri@yahoo.com)
5. Department of Public Health, School of Health, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, IR Iran. (Corresponding author: afshari_m20@yahoo.com, Tel: +988138380090)
6. Department of Public Health, School of Health, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, IR Iran. (mohammadhasansaati@gmail.com)
7. Department of Public Health, School of Health, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, IR Iran. (Kalantarnia@umsha.ac.ir)
8. Department of Public Health, School of Health, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, IR Iran. (Saba.eslami@umsha.ac.ir)
9. Department of Public Health, School of Health, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, IR Iran. (Atefe.Ostad@umsha.ac.ir)

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Motivations to Use a Mobile Virtual Social Networks and its Related Social Capital Among College Students: A Cross-sectional Study

Background: Due to the increasing use of virtual networks and, on the other hand, ambiguities towards the positive or negative effects of these networks on the level of social interaction and social capital of users.

Objectives: This study aims to determine the relationship between the motivation to use virtual mobile networks and social capital among students of Hamadan University of Medical Sciences.

Materials and Methods: This was a cross-sectional study was carried out on 350 students of Hamadan University of Medical Sciences in 2017. Participants were selected by stratified sampling method with the proportional assignment. Data gathering tools included the demographic variables and questionnaires of motivation to use the virtual networks and social capital, which were completed through the self-reporting by the subjects. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and linear regression tests with SPSS24 software.

Results: Most students used virtual networks for 3 to 5 hours a day (42.6%). Entertainment and pastime were the most reasons and motivations for using the virtual networks among students with 59% and 58.8% of the average score of the maximum achievable score, respectively. There was a positive and significant correlation between bonding and bridging social capital and the rate of virtual networks usage. Among the related factors studied, gender, nativeness, self-disclosure, immersion in the media, pastime, information search, individual status, maintaining relationships, entertainment, and linking social capital have a significant role in explaining the variance of the motivation to use the virtual network among the students ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Considering the increasing use of virtual networks among students and the lack of familiarity of students with other aspects affecting the health and life of these individuals, further research is needed. It is also imperative that the university counselling centres provide the required training for the students about the positive and negative consequences of the use of virtual networks based on the documentation.

Keywords: Internet, Social capital, Students, Iran

Introduction

In the current century, virtual networks have become one of the most important ways of communication and have become popular throughout the world [1]. Virtual social networks are a kind of calling patterns in which interactions and communications between network agents are supported by a technical base and internet infrastructure [2]. In these networks, the purpose, interest or common need can be a bonding element which it provides the possibility for the related factors to feel the presence in a real community, even in the absence of a physical presence [3]. According to statistics, the total number of Internet users in the world was about 1.2 billion in 2000, which increased to 17.7 billion in 2015 [4]. These statistics are slightly different in Iran; according to available statistics, there are over 56 million and 700 thousand internet users in Iran, which it has put Iran at the top of the Internet user countries in the Middle East [5]. In addition, the results of studies conducted in our country indicate that the average time spent for use of the internet is 52 minutes a week, which it reaches 57 minutes for people aged 21 to 24 in the country [6].

Researchers declared that internet usage improves interpersonal relationships with advanced technologies and enhances social networking. One of the greatest potentials of the internet is that it extends beyond the limits of space and time and provides a virtual location for meeting so that, the individuals can maintain their social relationships with others [7]. The Internet allows people to face with a mass audience by expanding the boundaries of social networking from real life to virtual spaces, thus it fosters global interactions among peoples with common interests [8].

Therefore, the membership in virtual social networks and its impact on the social relationships of individuals or, in other words, social capital is important. Researchers believe that, with the membership in virtual social networks, the communication pathways have changed in today's world and increasing the social relationships in online and offline environments have expanded the social capital of users [9]. Research shows that social capital affects a number of non-specific incomes and increases the happiness of people's lives. These findings suggest that having positive relationships with individuals improves life satisfaction and it even increases the social capital among individuals [10]. Massari et al., in their study, showed that the users enter the virtual networks to maintain the existing social relationships and to find new friends and partners and to share experiences. Moreover, the findings of the study conducted by Chosunil et al. showed the ease of access to virtual

networks and simplicity of use and the possibility of using it overnight and anonymity of users is the reasons of using the virtual networks [11].

Considering the increasing use of virtual networks and the uncertainties about the positive or negative effects of these networks on the level of social interaction and social capital of users, the present study aims to determine the motivation to use mobile virtual networks and social capital among students of Hamadan University of Medical Sciences.

Materials and Methods

The present study was a cross-sectional study, conducted on 350 students of Hamadan University of Medical Sciences during April-June 2017. The statistical population consisted of students studying at the faculties of Hamadan University of Medical Sciences. The sample size was calculated based on 95% confidence level, a precision of 5% and the use rate of a virtual social network was 65%. Assuming the values derived from Hasanzadeh study [12], a total sample of 350 students were considered as the final sample.

Sampling was done by stratified random sampling with proportional allocation. First, the list of college students was extracted with the corresponding coordination, and then the number and ratio of female students of each faculty to the whole university were determined. So that faculty with more student numbers were assigned a larger sample size. Also, the sex ratio was considered in the number of samples of each faculty. In the following, the samples were randomly assigned to each faculty.

Inclusion criteria included studying in Hamadan University of Medical Sciences and spent at least one semester. Also, students should be members of one of the virtual social network and have access to the internet at least an hour per day. Also, the exclusion criteria of the study were dissatisfaction with participation in the study. It should be noted that the present study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Hamadan University of Medical Sciences and registered with the code of ethics IR.UMSHA.REC.1395.161.

In this study, two standard questionnaires was used to collect data. Motivation the use of a virtual social network [13] and scale for social capital in an online era (14) were used. All questionnaires were completed by self-reporting by students who were agreeable to participate in the study, after obtaining informed consent.

The first part is associated with demographic and background information including age, gender, marital status, education level, field of study, parent's job, parental education level, location of life, major, academic degree, conditional condition, family monthly income,

nativeness, time use of virtual social network, which was done at the beginning of the appraisal by students.

Gülner et al., (2010) questionnaire was used to collect data about the motivation the use of virtual social network [13]. The motivation use of a virtual social network was assessed by seven subscales with 33 questions. One of the questions of this questionnaire was the sentence "to make a romantic relationship". To answer these questions, 5 answers of I strongly agree, I agree, I have no idea, I disagree, and I strongly disagree with the scores of 5 to 1 were considered. These seven subscales consisted of self-disclosure (8 questions), immersion in the media (7 questions), pastime (5 questions), information search (5 questions), individual status (3 questions), maintaining relationships (3 questions), and entertainment (2 questions). Therefore, the range of scores available for this questionnaire was considered to be 33 to 165. The validity and reliability of the questions of the motivation use of virtual social network have been examined and verified by Moradi et al., [15].

Then, internet social capital scales was used to collect data. The questionnaire was designed and standardized by Williams (14). The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions in the area of bonding social capital and 10 questions for bridging social capital. To answer these questions, 5-point Likert of strongly disagree (1 points), disagree (2 points), no ideas (3 points), agree (4 points), and strongly agree (5 points) were considered. One of the questions of this questionnaire was the sentence "I'm sure that there are many people in the virtual social network and help me solve my problems". To establish the questionnaire's validity, we used content validity ratio (CVR) and content validity index (CVI). Therefore, the questionnaire was given to 10 health promotion and education and psychology professionals to review the questions for assessing the CVR and identifying the questions that obtained the required score. For CVI, relevance, simplicity, and transparency criteria were examined. The items obtained scores of above 79%. It was found that the questionnaire had good content validity. To confirm the reliability of the questionnaire, we used Cronbach's alpha coefficient method. The questionnaire was completed by a sample of 30 students. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.76.

After collecting data and entering data using SPSS software version 24, descriptive information was reported using mean descriptive indexes, data were then analyzed by Pearson correlation and linear regression at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

The responsiveness percentage of female students participating in the study was 100%. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the subjects; the students in the age group of 20-25 years old had the highest population (59.7%). Out of 350 participants, 71.7% were female, and 84.9% were single. Almost half of the students were studying at the bachelor of science level (60%). Most of the participants were in medicine (24.4%). Almost 55.7% of the participants lived in a dormitory. The education level of the parents of the students was respectively university education (35.1%) and below diploma (40.0%). The parents' employment status was respectively free job (30.6%) and housewives (77.1%). The family member number of the majority of subjects was between 4 and 6 (83.5%). Most of the participants were in medicine (24.4%). Location of life the majority of students were in the urban area (88.9%). 10% of students had a conditional record. 42.6% of the students used their virtual social network 3-5 hours daily. The average family monthly income the often of participants was more than 15000000 Iranian rials (49.1%).

Among the studied factors, the entertainment and pastime with 59% and 58.8% of the mean score of the maximum achievable score had the highest frequency of the reasons for using virtual social network were among the students. Self-disclosure factors with 39.9% of the mean score of the maximum achievable score had the lowest frequency. Bonding social capital (with 42.4%) and bridging social capital (58.6%) were evaluated at a moderate level among students (Table 2).

The results of Table 3 show that the use of the virtual social network has a positive and significant correlation with the all subscales for the motivation use of the virtual social network. Also, the use of virtual social network had a positive and significant correlation with the bonding social capital and bridging social capital.

Table 4 shows the analysis of the linear regression test. In total, demographic characteristics and social capital explained 0.96 of the motivation use of virtual social network variance among the studied students. Among the related factors, gender, nativeness, self-disclosure, immersion in the media, pastime, information search, individual status, maintaining relationships, entertainment, and bonding social capital, had a significant contribution to explaining the motivation use of virtual social network variance among the students participating in the study ($P < 0.05$).

Discussion

This research was conducted to determine the effective factors in motivation to use of the mobile virtual networks and social capital associated with it in students of Hamadan. In this study, 63.4% of participants used the internet for 0-5 hours, which was consistent with the results of similar studies [2,12]. The results of studies have shown that increasing the participation and activity of users in virtual networks is led to increasing the common norms and values and the social capital of these individuals, and vice versa [16]. People who use virtual networks have few hours of study, and this has a negative effect on the academic performance of the individuals [17]. According to the survey, 53% of the total population of Iran were members of at least one of the different virtual networks. In this regard, the commonly used virtual network by the Iranian users were Telegraph application with the traffic of 30.8%, which, among the countries of the world, they ranked first in this field and the highest use of these virtual networks was observed to be greater among the educated people compared to others [2].

By the advancement of a variety of mass media, the people can choose and use their intended media, based on their interest and need and their own interests and circumstances, among the variety of mass media [18]. In various studies, researchers have reported various motivations to use the virtual networks. In some studies, the factor of maintaining relationships has been mentioned, which this is related to the theory of social influence and the effect of the relationship on the formation of our concept in cyberspace; so that people, in cyberspace, are mostly seeking to form the groups and when individuals in this space understand similar value with other groups, they are more motivated in line with our concept about the cyberspace. Also, in some studies, entertainment was the most frequent motivation to use the cyberspace [19-21]. In one study, about two-thirds of students which were using the virtual networks had almost 10 friends and, of those, 4 were the opposite sex; it is in line with the factor of maintaining the relationships [18].

Two processes, i.e., domestication and mediatization indicate that most of the leisure time of young people in modern societies is spent on the virtual networks and young people spend most of their time in privacy and they increasingly use the internet and virtual spaces to entertain themselves [22]. On the other hand, given the time that students assign to social media, their academic performance is disrupted. Moreover, the negative effects associated with these networks such as stress and anxiety are observed among the students; however, these virtual networks can also have positive effects and, by the beneficial use of these spaces, it can provide the possibility to take steps towards educational goals [1].

In another study, they concluded that the bridging social capital is stronger in cyberspace, and that bonding social capital is stronger in the real world, and with the introduction of virtual networks into the lives of people, the communications have changed from bonding social capital to bridging social capital [2]. In this study, bridging social capital with an average of 33.47 was obtained to be higher than bonding social capital with an average of 98.96, and there was a relationship between bonding social capital and the motivation to use the virtual networks. The results were similar to other studies in this area [2].

These findings can be due to the type and extent of relationships in social networks. In other words, In other words, the main function of this type of social capital to facilitate the dissemination of information and strengthening the connection with other resources; this is an issue that can be accessed through virtual networks and channels and numerous professional groups. In a study, it was clarified that 42.2% of virtual network users have high social connections and links [16]. It has also clarified that the level of users' desire to use social networking services and facilities is effective on the level of social capital of users [23]. The results of the studies have shown that virtual networks are a suitable platform for the emergence and formation of social capital for users, and active people in these networks have higher social capital than the non-active users. On the other hand, virtual networks have their own norms and rules, e.g., privacy, which is necessary to maintain relationships in these networks; and because of this, and because of this, it is difficult to identify individuals completely and trust people in virtual networks, and even some of the familiarities that take place in these spaces and lead to marriage have also failed. Researchers believe that greater communication between people in cyberspace provides more chance for people to gain more information about each other and more motivation to trust each other [24].

There was a significant relationship between the variables of sex and nativeness with the motivation to use the virtual network. In a study, the motivation to use the virtual network in females was more than males [18,22]. In another study, the females applied mobile phones to deepen their relationship with others, and the males used the mobile for educational purposes and software applications and advanced communications and entertainment [2,25]. **Also**, non-native students made more use of virtual networks. This could be because these students are away from their family and friends. So they spend more time on these networks.

There was a correlation between all the substructures of study and bridging social capital. Also, bonding social capital had a correlation with sub-scales of self-disclosure, immersion in the media, individual status, maintaining relationships, and motivation to use the entire virtual network. A similar relationship was found between the two variables of social capital and virtual social networks among participants in the study [26].

There was a significant and direct correlation between communication with others on Facebook and social capital [23]. As communication with others on Facebook increases, the social capital of these communications will also increase.

Of the limitations of this study, self-reporting can be pointed out so that the subjects may not have complete integrity in answering the questionnaires.

Conclusion

Considering the increasing use of virtual networks among students and the lack of familiarity of students with other aspects affecting the health and life of these individuals, further research is necessary. It is also imperative that the university counselling centre provides the necessary training for the students about the positive and negative consequences of the use of virtual networks based on documentation.

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Authors' contributions

All authors contributed in preparing this article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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Tables

Table 1. Demographic and background characteristics of the participants (n=350)

Characteristics	Number	Percent
Age (year)		
<20	99	28.3
20-25	209	59.7
36-30	33	9.4
≥31	9	2.6
Gender		
Male	99	28.3
Female	251	71.7
Academic degree		
BSc	207	60.0
MSc	80	22.9
GP & PhD	60	17.1
Marital status		
Married	53	15.1
Single	297	84.9
Father education level		
Illiteracy	15	4.3
Below diploma	97	27.7
Diploma	115	32.9
Academic degree	123	35.1
Maternal education level		
Illiteracy	31	8.9
Below diploma	140	40
Diploma	88	25.1
Academic degree	91	26.0
Father occupation status		
Free	107	30.6
Employed	89	25.4
Retired	92	26.3
Unemployed	6	1.7
Farmer and worker	56	16.0
Maternal occupation status		
Housewife	270	70.1
Working	80	22.9
Major		
Medicine	91	26.0
Pharmacy	15	4.3
Dentistry	33	9.4
Nursing and midwifery	75	21.4
Paramedical	55	15.7
Health sciences	81	23.0
Nativeness		
Native	155	44.3
Non-native	195	55.7
location of life		
Urban	311	88.9
Rural	39	11.1
Conditional condition		
I have	35	10.0

I do not have	315	90.0
Time use of virtual social network		
<2	73	20.8
3-5	149	42.6
6-9	85	24.3
>9	43	12.4
Family monthly income (Iranian rials)		
<1000000	38	10.9
1000000-1500000	140	40.0
>1500000	172	49.1

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation, and average percentage of maximum achievable score of study variables

Variabels	Mean	Standard Deviation	Acquired score range	Average percentage of maximum achievable score
Self-disclosure	20.51	6.41	8-40	39.09
Immersion in the media	19.87	5.74	7-35	45.96
Pastime	16.76	4.33	5-25	58.80
Information search	16.34	4.04	5-25	56.70
Individual status	8.41	2.60	3-15	45.08
Maintaining relationships	9.40	2.40	3-15	53.33
Entertainment	6.72	1.87	2-10	59.00
Bonding social capital	26.98	5.91	10-50	42.45
Bridging social capital	33.47	6.90	10-50	58.66

Table 3. The correlations between subscales the motivation use of virtual social network with internet social capital

Variabels	Motivation use of virtual social network	Self-disclosure	Immersion in the media	Spending time	Information search	Individual status	Maintaining relationships	Entertainment	Bonding social capital	Bridging social capital
Motivation use of virtual social network	1									
Self-disclosure	0.182**	1								
Immersion in the media	0.268**	0.651**	1							
Pastime	0.207**	0.298**	0.584**	1						
Information search	0.115*	0.274**	0.482**	0.634**	1					
Individual status	0.138**	0.546**	0.560**	0.413**	0.481**	1				
Maintaining relationships	0.109*	0.384**	0.513**	0.437**	0.461**	0.466**	1			
Entertainment	0.200**	0.314**	0.549**	0.919**	0.619**	0.390**	0.584**	0.432**		
Bonding social capital	0.165**	0.456**	0.354**	0.047	0.323**	0.072	0.177**	0.326**	1	
Bridging social capital	0.228**	0.317**	0.431**	0.444**	0.367**	0.425**	0.329**	0.395**	0.511**	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4. Predicting the motivation use of virtual social network using Linear Regression Analyses (Adjusted R²=0.957)

Variabels	β	B	SE	95% CI		P-value
				Lower	Upper	
Age (year)	0.01	0.09	0.18	-0.27	0.46	0.615
Gender	-0.04	-1.96	0.54	-3.03	-0.89	0.001
Marital status	0.01	0.06	0.74	-1.38	1.51	0.930
Academic degree	-0.03	-1.41	0.74	-2.86	0.04	0.057
Nativeness	-0.05	-1.66	0.83	-3.29	-0.04	0.044
Father education level	-0.01	-0.08	0.31	-0.68	0.52	0.794
Maternal education level	0.01	0.06	0.30	-0.53	0.65	0.841
Father occupation status	-0.01	-0.03	0.126	-0.28	0.22	0.794
Maternal occupation status	-0.01	-0.25	0.64	-1.51	1.00	0.692
location of life	-0.01	-0.13	0.77	-1.65	1.38	0.863
Conditional condition	-0.01	-0.67	0.87	-2.39	1.04	0.442
Major	-0.02	-0.28	0.25	-0.77	0.21	0.254
Time use of virtual social network	-0.01	-0.01	0.07	-0.15	0.17	0.877
Family monthly income	-0.01	-0.11	0.38	-0.86	0.64	0.771
Self-disclosure	0.15	1.41	0.14	1.25	1.78	0.001
Immersion in the media	0.42	1.52	0.06	1.40	1.64	0.001
Pastime	0.13	0.60	0.15	0.32	0.89	0.001
Information search	0.18	0.98	0.08	0.745	1.07	0.001
Individual status	0.20	1.60	0.12	1.34	1.81	0.001
Maintaining relationships	0.13	1.14	0.12	0.90	1.38	0.001
Entertainment	0.16	1.75	0.32	1.13	2.39	0.001
Bonding social capital	0.06	0.19	0.05	0.09	0.29	0.001
Bridging social capital	-0.01	-0.01	0.04	-0.08	0.08	0.967

Note. N =350. β = Beta, B = unstandardized regression coefficient, SE= standard erro

