



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACEBOOK FUNCTION USAGE AND
SOCIAL COHESION, AND THE MODERATING EFFECT OF SOCIAL
GROUP, AMONG RURAL YOUTH VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES IN
MALAYSIA***

HAMIZAH SAHHARON

FBMK 2016 23



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By

HAMIZAH SAHHARON

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Science**

March 2016

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DEDICATION

First of all, thanks to Allah S.W.T for His Greatness and blessing for allowing me to finish this thesis without a hitch. I dedicate this thesis to my beloved family, devoted parents (Mr. Sahharon and Mrs. Hasnah) and friends who trusted in my ability to further my studies. I will not be able to go on this journey without their love and support. I hope this study could be used as a future reference for those who are interested in Communication technology and computer-mediated communication.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for Master of Science

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By

HAMIZAH SAHHARON

March 2016

Chairman: Assoc. Prof. Jusang Bolong, PhD

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

The focus of this study is to determine the moderating effect of social group on the relationship between Facebook functionality usage and social cohesion among rural youth virtual communities. This study focuses on 1Malaysia Wireless Village youths in Peninsular Malaysia. Specifically, the objectives of this research are to 1) determine the level of social cohesion among 1Malaysia Wireless Village rural youth virtual communities; 2) determine the frequency of Facebook functionality usage; 3) identify the significant Facebook functionality usage that most contribute towards the level of social cohesion; 4) test the moderating effect of social group on the relationship between Facebook functionality usage and the level of social cohesion. This study is imperative to understand the efficacy of Facebook usage among rural youth and the outcome of this study could aid in relevant parties in planning for future programmes that involve social cohesion among the youth in Malaysia. Additionally, this study has further looked into the Theory of Interdependence and the Theory of Self Identity by relating them to the motivation for Facebook functionality usage.

This study involved a total of 400 rural youths living within 1Malaysia Wireless Villages in Perlis, Negeri Sembilan, Seremban and Terengganu. This study uses a quantitative method of distributing a set of questionnaires that were developed from previous research findings and instruments. About 30 respondents were selected during the pre-test. This study utilized both SPSS and AMOS for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the socio-demographic background of the respondents, the frequency of Facebook functionality usage and the level of social cohesion among rural youth virtual communities. The rest of the analysis involving correlations and the moderation

effect were done using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in AMOS. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and measurement model in SEM were used in this study to test the reliability and the validity of the constructed model (convergent and discriminant). SEM was utilised to identify the correlation coefficient between the frequent use of the five Facebook functionalities and the inclination towards enhancing social cohesion. Finally, a multi-group analysis was used to test the moderating effect of social group on the causal effect of frequent Facebook functionality usage on social cohesion among the rural youth virtual communities of 1Malaysia Wireless Village.

The findings of this study have shown that the level of social cohesion among 1Malaysia rural youth Facebook virtual community was only moderate ($M = 2.88$), which was highly inclined by the respondent's sense of togetherness ($M = 2.94$) and sense of belonging ($M = 2.93$) towards their virtual community. The most frequently used Facebook functionality among the rural youths of 1Malaysia Wireless Village has been Group ($M=2.93$) and Conversation ($M=2.86$). It was identified that the frequent use of Facebook functionality usage contributed about 76% towards the level of social cohesion, the frequent use of Conversation ($\beta=0.415$), Group ($\beta=0.348$), Identity ($\beta=0.201$) and Reputation ($\beta=0.167$) functionalities would influence the respondent's perceived sense of social cohesion. The frequent use of Conversation functionality usage was seen as the most contributed factor towards these rural youth's sense of social cohesion on Facebook. Furthermore, social group was discovered to have a moderating effect on the relationship between the frequency of Sharing and Reputation functionality on Facebook and enhancing rural youth's sense of social cohesion, members of in-group felt a higher social cohesion towards their Facebook virtual community compared to the out-group.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains

HUBUNGAN ANTARA PENGGUNAAN KEFUNGSIAN FACEBOOK DAN KEJELEKITAN SOSIAL DENGAN KESAN PENYEDERHANA KUMPULAN SOSIAL DALAM KALANGAN KOMUNITI MAYA BELIA LUAR BANDAR MALAYSIA.

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Fokus kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan kesan penyederhana kumpulan sosial terhadap perhubungan antara kekerapan penggunaan kefungsi Facebook dan kejelekitan sosial dalam kalangan komuniti maya belia luar bandar. Kajian memfokus kepada belia luar bandar yang tinggal di Kampung Tanpa Wayar 1Malaysia di Semenanjung. Secara khususnya, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk 1) menentukan tahap kejelekitan sosial dalam kalangan komuniti maya belia luar bandar; 2) menentukan kekerapan penggunaan kefungsi Facebook; 3) mengenal pasti penggunaan kefungsi Facebook yang paling menyumbang kepada tahap kejelekitan sosial; 4) menguji kesan kumpulan sosial terhadap perhubungan antara penggunaan kefungsi Facebook dan kejelekitan sosial dalam kalangan komuniti maya belia luar bandar. Kajian ini adalah penting untuk memahami keberkesanan penggunaan kefungsi Facebook dalam kalangan belia luar bandar dan hasil kajian ini dapat membantu pihak-pihak yang berkaitan dalam menambahbaik kejelekitan sosial dalam kalangan belia di Malaysia. Kajian ini adalah berdasarkan gabungan Teori Kebergantungan (Interdependence Theory) dan Teori *Self Identity* dengan mengaitkan mereka kepada niat penggunaan kefungsi Facebook.

Kajian ini melibatkan 400 belia luar bandar Kampung Tanpa Wayar 1Malaysia dari Perlis, Negeri Sembilan, Seremban dan Terengganu. Ia menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif di mana satu set soal selidik telah dihasilkan melalui dapatan dan instrumen kajian lepas. Seramai 30 orang responden telah dipilih bagi ujian pra-ujji. Kajian ini menggunakan SPSS dan Amos untuk menganalisis data. Statistik deskriptif digunakan untuk menganalisis data berkenaan latar belakang sosio-demografi responden, kekerapan penggunaan kefungsi

Facebook dan tahap kejelekitan sosial dalam kalangan komuniti maya belia luar bandar. Selain itu, kajian ini menggunakan analisis korelasi dan kesan penyederhana kumpulan sosial telah dilakukan dengan menggunakan *Structural Equation Modelling* (SEM). *Confirmatory Factor Analysis* (CFA) dan model pengukuran dalam SEM telah digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk menguji kebolehpercayaan dan kesahihan model yang dibina. SEM telah digunakan untuk mengenalpasti korelasi antara kekerapan penggunaan lima fungsi utama Facebook terhadap kecenderungan untuk meningkatkan kejelekitan sosial. Akhir sekali, analisis *Multigroup* telah digunakan untuk menguji kesan kumpulan sosial terhadap penggunaan kefungsi Facebook dan kejelekitan sosial dalam kalangan komuniti maya belia luar bandar.

Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa tahap kejelekitan sosial dalam kalangan komuniti maya belia luar bandar berada di tahap sederhana ($M = 2.88$), ianya dipengaruhi oleh kecenderungan rasa kebersamaan ($M=2.94$) dan rasa semangat kekitaan ($M=2.93$) responden terhadap komuniti maya Facebook mereka. Kefungsi Facebook yang paling kerap digunakan oleh komuniti maya belia luar bandar adalah Kumpulan ($M = 2.93$) dan Perbualan ($M = 2.86$). Kajian mendapati bahawa kekerapan penggunaan kefungsi Facebook telah menyumbang 76% terhadap kejelekitan sosial, kekerapan penggunaan kefungsi Perbualan ($\beta=0.415$), Kumpulan ($\beta=0.348$), Identiti ($\beta=0.201$) and Reputasi ($\beta=0.167$) responden akan mempengaruhi tahap kejelekitan sosial mereka. Kekerapan penggunaan kefungsi Perbualan adalah faktor utama yang menyumbang kepada tahap kejelekitan sosial komuniti maya belia luar bandar ini di Facebook. Selain itu, kumpulan sosial didapati mempunyai kesan terhadap perhubungan antara kekerapan penggunaan kefungsi Berkongsi dan kefungsi Reputasi dalam Facebook dan meningkatkan rasa kejelekitan sosial komuniti komuniti maya belia luar bandar, malah ahli *in-group* didapati mempunyai rasa kejelekitan sosial yang lebih tinggi berbanding ahli *out-group*.

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I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the people who have guided me throughout my thesis, especially the chairman of my supervisory committee Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jusang bin Bolong and the member Assoc. Prof. Dr. Siti Zobidah binti Omar for their constructive ideas. Without their expertise and assistance, my thesis will not be complete. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Prof. Bahaman Abu Samah, Abang Hadi and Abang Mahazan for their forbearance in teaching and explaining the application of Structural Equation Modelling, to abang Hayrol for his expertise in journal writing, to the staff in the Institute of Social Science Studies for making me feel at home, and last but not least to my fellow friends Kak Farah, Kak Billa, Kak Raidah, Kak Ecah, Kak Mas, Kak Az and Kak Mel for their emotional support.



This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and was accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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Declaration by graduate student

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
AIC	Akaike Information Criteria
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
CMIN	Chi-square
CR	Construct Reliability
DF	Degree of Freedom
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
MCMC	Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commissions
NFI	Normed Fit Index
NPAR	Number of Parameters in the model
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SE	Scalar Estimates
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
α	Cronbach's Alpha
β	Standardized estimates
ρ	Critical ratio

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The existence of diversity within the community in Malaysia was studied by Hedayati, Abdullah, Razak, and Maghsoodi (2014) study somehow focused on social cohesion within a multi-ethnic urban neighbourhood setting. Due to Malaysia's diverse culture and ethnic groups that exists, the patterns of social interaction among residents differ based on ethnic groups. Massoomeh Hedayati Marzbali et al. (2014) claimed that the impact of attitudinal measures on the sense of belonging, perception of safety, social interaction and social trust was weakened through social exclusion. They also found that the Malay residents perceived the lowest level of victimization a higher level of social cohesion compared to the Indian and the Chinese residents. As a result, the study claimed that the collective efficacy within the community indicates that the neighbourhood is portrayed by an intense link of social ties and frequent interactions.

The achievement of assimilation has long been the target of the Malaysian Government, then again, a cohesive citizen is demanding. Putnam (2000) argued that the increasing diversity of ethnics can cause problems with social capital, a key aspect to reciprocity and trustworthiness in social cohesion. He associated ethnic diversity with less trust among neighbours, thus claiming that there is a decline in social cohesion. However, Putnam (2000) and Haythornthwaite (2002) acknowledged that a prolonged mixing of different ethnics within a neighbourhood could create trusting over time.

Diverse community integration is based on four phases of development; level of separation, level of minimal contact, level of working together and last but not least the level of collaboration. In a study by Zahara Aziz, Amla Salleh, & Hardiana Ema Ribu (2010) on 744 Selangor populations, the integration level in 2007 was found to be at the third level ($M = 3.85$), which in comparison to the 1993 study, have decreased. Explicitly the Malays scored the highest, followed by Indian and Chinese. Selangor seems to be at the level where they could compromise within intergroup communication by working together. Yet, inter-ethnic communications have declined due to each ethnics showing bias to other ethnics (Zahara Aziz et al., 2010). Ideally Zahara Aziz et al. (2010) suggested that Malaysia needs to upgrade their integration to level four where each group of ethnics should be able to collaborate to achieve 1Malaysia agenda, which was enunciated by the current Malaysian Prime Minister, Dato' Sri Mohammad *Najib* Tun Abdul Razak in 2010 (Khalim Zainal & Norshidah Mohamad Salleh, 2010).

With the 'One Malaysia concept' put forward in order to establish an integrated multi-ethnic society, Khalim Zainal and Norshidah Mohamad Salleh (2010) discussed about ethnic relations and ethnic behaviours among the youth in Malaysia and found that practically the ethnic relations among youth was at the average level as the feeling of prejudice towards different ethnic groups still lingers in their feelings. The attributes of social cohesion in the Western countries differ from the attributes of Asian values. The Asians are more family oriented, placed the welfare of the society before oneself and more of a privileged society than individualistic aspects (Jenson, 1998; Green, Janmaat, & Han, 2009). Compared to the West, social cohesion within Asian society is more likely to occur in a more ethnically homogenous community than a heterogeneous one as they require binding and shared culture. Green et al. (2009) then argued that intragroup bonding does not necessarily lead to intergroup harmony.

In a study by Zulkefli Ibrahim and Sulaiman Ainin (2009), they found that the rural communities lack awareness, participation and knowledge in possessing the social capital necessary to utilise ICT. As the rural communities were given exposure to advanced technologies and internet access, they survive on reciprocity, social networks and the sense of community that is required to support community technology programmes.

Nowadays, social media functionality evolution is dissolute. Social media usefulness is defined through seven honeycomb functional building blocks, namely; identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Kietzmann (2011) conveyed how online social media users could maintain existing relationships through a simple identification process through 'friend request', whereas others, who was looking to expand their social networking needed to provide more information displayed to make the relationship meaningful.

Facebook allows people to sort their contacts through groups, check and update statuses, check in locations, and more. Consequently, this site consists of people who are connected by sharing objects as a way of interaction and connectedness. Facebook became one of the simple to create and maintain virtual social identities for self-promotion (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Although social media sites tend to have three or four primary blocks, Facebook especially, contains a rich and diverse ecology of social media functionalities (Smith, 2007).

While several studies have indicated the disadvantages to online interactions, such as dysfunctional behaviour, a lack of community and social isolation (Putnam, 2000), studies by Brignall and Valey (2005) and Jusang Bolong (2006) had provided an insight to aural social cues in computer mediated communication such as emoticons could help simulate emotional indications of the intent message.

The Social Interdependence Theory has been widely applied in education and business context (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Previous studies have identified the importance of social connectedness as a cognitive effect in a number of settings such as the workplace (Cockshaw & Shochet, 2010) and school (Shochet, Homel, Cockshaw, & Montgomery, 2008). However, up to date it was unclear whether social connectedness can stem from online social interaction within Social Networking Sites (Grieve, Indian, Witteveen, Anne Tolan, & Marrington, 2013)

In a study by Grieve et al. (2013) on social connectedness and Facebook, it was found that Facebook connectedness was different from face-to-face social connectedness and the study suggested that Facebook usage may provide opportunity to develop and maintain social connectedness within an online community. Gilbert and Karahalios (2009) used Facebook to explain about predicting social ties, but it was unclear how individuals interact and connect using Social Networking Sites.

Another study on Facebook's impact on identity construction by Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) have associated Facebook's role in user's self-presentation. Their study reviewed social groups depending on the culture of its members, compared to individualistic; the collectivist culture prioritizes harmony within their group instead of individual feelings and thoughts. However, not many studies and literature reviews were conducted regarding the difference in Facebook use between individualistic and collectivist cultures (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012).

1.2 Statement of research problem

Since 1969, almost all policy issues in Malaysia have been affected by ethnicity. The government has since been implementing plans on reviving ethnic identities into one Bangsa Malaysia. Managing and reinforcing ethnic identities in Malaysia are considered one of the major research interests in the realm of social cohesion within the Asian context (Hung, 2014). To erode division problems, the Malaysian government has continuously reinforced implementations regarding a united population, followed by Malaysian's full commitment towards achieving a national identity; a united and prosperous nation with shared ambitions (Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi/JPNIN, 2015). Social inclusion is a matter of the National Identity formulation; the population's sense of belonging, sense of togetherness and social trusts, however, to this day social inclusion is low due to low interethnic trust and low social integration (Hung, 2014, JPNIN, 2015). The lack of social contact causes challenges in ensuring continual social cohesion among Malaysians; Hung (2014) insinuated that among the four challenges needed to be addressed, empowering non-Malay/Muslim indigenous people is crucial in fostering social inclusion of a Bangsa Malaysia. Somehow, before empowering the indigenous communities with social inclusion, the level of social cohesion among the indigenous communities should be studied first.

Social cohesion within the rural context in Malaysia is vague as people tend to study the aspect of social capital within the conventional way. Youths especially, play an imperative role in building a community immersed in values, knowledge and self-worth (Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye, 2013). Tan Sri Lee said in order to create Bangsa Malaysia by 2020 is through properly reinforcing social cohesion among youth by encouraging them to frequently interact with each other with the utmost importance of sharing similar values or goals. Most studies tend to focus on ethnic integration and ethnic unity (Khalim Zainal & Norshidah Mohamad Salleh, 2010; Zahara Aziz et al., 2010) but very few would focus the cohesiveness within the cognitive behaviour of these ethnic groups (Massoomeh Hedayati Marzbali et al., 2014). However, Massoomeh Hedayati Marzbali et al. (2014) study found that social cohesion among urban neighbourhood to be only moderate, yet, their study focused more on social cohesion within the urban setting. As mentioned by Anniz Fazli Ibrahim Bajunid, Mohamed Yusoff Abbas & Abdul Hadi Nawawi (2013), there are limited findings on the associations between a closed neighbourhood and the social cohesion of communities within the Malaysian context. As social cohesion is difficult to measure, past studies have focused on the multidimensionality of social cohesion, which embodies social domains but sub-domains such as inclusion, equality, participation, belonging and recognition remains neglected in this field. Notably within the Malaysian context, not many studies focused on social cohesion within a rural setting (Zulkefli Ibrahim & Sulaiman Ainin, 2009). Moreover, most of the previous studies on the cognitive, interpersonal interaction were primarily on the social capital attributes of a group function in an organizational setting (Chow & Chan, 2008).

Although social cohesion and social capital have a similar attribute such as trust and reciprocity, the two concepts have no necessary relation to each other as Green, Preston and Sabates (2003) argued that different groups may be rich in social capital, but it will not necessarily make the group socially cohesive. Social cohesion is distinct from social capital in terms of the social resources of bonding between individuals in a bounded community and groups (Green et al., 2009). Social media phenomenon such as Facebook and Twitter has been actively used by the population to build social networks in Malaysia; it allows access and conduction of public opinion without much government interference. Frequent interactions online was said to cause social inclusion and social connectedness due to the stimulation of emotions and constant communications online.

People tend to define cohesiveness by characterising the psychological outcomes such as levels of anxiety and depression when it is absent and were uncertain about how cohesiveness is conceived, supported and maintained (Bruhn, 2009). As studies on cohesiveness grew over time and various instruments were used to measure it, Bruhn (2009) found that cohesiveness was mostly defined through small scale group cohesion. However, past studies on social cohesion were generally empirical and they focused on the direct effect of the dimensions of social cohesion such as social interaction and social

trust on cognitive behaviour. Not many would focus specifically in detail the causes of social cohesion and which factors could enhance it.

Many studies have focused on social capital factors such as social network, social trust and shared goals in face-to-face interpersonal relationships in an organizational setting (Chow & Chan, 2008) or electronic commerce (Hsu, Ju, Yen & Chang, 2007). However, very few studies would focus on trust (Falcone & Castelfranchi, 2001) within the context of virtual communities (Hsu et al., 2007). Moreover, a variety of virtual communities were explored in their study and Hsu et al. (2007) argued that it is hard to generalize the knowledge sharing behaviour in each virtual community. On the downside, Hsu et al. (2007)'s study only focused on the factor of trust within virtual communities, which is why this study would like to explore broadly on the other dimensions of social cohesion within Facebook virtual communities.

Massoomeh Hedayati Marzbali et al.'s (2014) study somehow focused on social cohesion within a multi-ethnic urban neighbourhood setting and indicates that collective efficacy was portrayed by an intense link of social ties and frequent interactions. Studies on the level of social cohesion in Malaysia were mainly revolved around urban communities and very few on rural communities especially within a virtual community (Zulkefli Ibrahim & Sulaiman Ainin, 2009; Massoomeh Hedayati Marzbali et al. (2014). Thus, leading us to question:

What is the level of social cohesion within the rural youth virtual community in Malaysia?

As mentioned earlier, spending time on Facebook appears to be part of the daily routine of most Malaysian youth (Mustaffa et al. 2011). Previous findings on communication media showed that youth were the most common generation to apply the most media and technology literate sector of the society (Nobaya Ahmad & Samsudin A. Rahim, 2008), spend more time on social networking sites (Norizan, 2009; Zulkefli & Sulaiman 2009; Norizan Abd Razak et al., 2010; Jusang Bolong, 2011; Sharifah Sofiah SZ et al, 2011 & Bahaman Abu Samah et al., 2013). A recent study by Latifah Abd Latib, Jusang Bolong and Akmar Hayati Ahmad Ghazali (2014) found how Facebook usage and functionality have benefitted in employee engagement. They found that out of the seven building blocks of social media, the Group, the Presence and the Reputation building block usage were the predictive factors in engaging the employees. Since previous studies have shown eminent Facebook functionality usage for engagement, in determining which Facebook functionality were mainly used by the 1Malaysia Wireless Village rural youth to feel socially cohesive, the second question was formed:

Which functionality is mainly used in Facebook usage?

Then again, past studies on Facebook mainly focused on the psychological outcomes of Facebook, but did not imply in specific, which functions in Facebook would cause and possibly maintain social connectedness (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Grieve et al., 2013; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). The overview of how Facebook can be used to socially bring a sense of belonging and togetherness is not comprehensive, due to lack of studies on social cohesion through social media. Plus, the literature review on Facebook usage were mostly measured on the effects of its frequent use for the purpose of psychological recognition such as self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012), and self-disclosure (Park, Jin, & Annie Jin, 2011). Moreover, Park et al. (2011) claimed that people might not seek deep relationships through Facebook, and the lack of honesty and intent on self-disclosure might result in the null effect of self-disclosure on intimacy. Given that typical Facebook user would add a more than a thousand of “friends”, it was evident that Facebook is not a place where genuine and deep relationships can be sustained. However, Latifah Abd Latib et al. (2014) recently insinuated that the Group functionality usage was the strongest predictive factor for employee engagement, followed by Presence and Reputation. When these three functionalities were used, the employees felt more engaged. By thoroughly analysing the Honeycomb’s seven building blocks of Facebook, this study would like to explore which of the functional building blocks, if used frequently could enhance social cohesion among the rural youth community. Thus leading us to question:

Can Facebook functionalities enhance social cohesion?

Which Facebook functionality mostly contributes to social cohesion?

Instead of focusing on how the technology itself aid in facilitating communication, this study merely wants to focus on how social media functional building blocks assist in the frequency of Facebook usage, therefore can improve the social cohesion among rural youth virtual communities. Social cohesion brings different people together and makes an individual user feel like a part of a large group, established through social bonds. Social in-group members feel a sense of engagement whom they share similar traits (Jusang Bolong, 2006). One aspect of cohesiveness is based on virtual community members' liking for one another and on their desire to be in the group and share the same goal. Somehow, too much cohesion can possibly lead to social insularity (Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani and Lewis, 2002) and altruism or also known as a homogenous society (Chan et al., 2006, Jusang Bolong, 2006). Thus leading us to question:

Does social group have a moderating effect on the relationship between Facebook functionality usage and social cohesion of its virtual community group members?

1.3 Research questions

1. What is the level of social cohesion within the rural youth virtual community in Malaysia?
2. Which functionality is mainly used in Facebook usage?
3. Can Facebook functionalities enhance social cohesion?
4. Which Facebook functionality mostly contributes to social cohesion?
5. Does social group have a moderating effect on the relationship between Facebook functionality usage and social cohesion of its virtual community group members?

1.4 Research objectives

1.4.1 General objective

The main objective of this research is to determine the moderating effect of social group on the relationship between Facebook functionality usage and social cohesion among 1Malaysia Wireless Village rural youth virtual communities.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the level of social cohesion among 1Malaysia Wireless Village rural youth virtual communities
2. Determine the frequency of Facebook functionality usage
3. Identify the significant Facebook functionality usage that most contributed towards the level of social cohesion
4. Test the moderating effect of social group on Facebook functionality usage and improving the level of social cohesion

1.5 Significance of the study

A cohesive society is hard to achieve, therefore social cohesion is ideal to unite a heterogeneous community. It constantly needs to be nurtured, improved and adapted. With the existence of 1Malaysia Wireless Village Project, it offers free internet connection to bring different people together where an array of people can come together virtually to discuss problems or share concerns regarding their surroundings through social media. Social cohesion can foster social trust among its neighbourhood (Massoomah Hedayati Marzbali et al., 2014), create stronger social ties (Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009), sense of belonging and bring about positive quality of life (Jusang Bolong, 2011; Anniz Fazli Ibrahim Bajunid et al., 2012; Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007). As social cohesion requires adaptation, the young generation has to find a manageable equilibrium of forces to adjust to the changes in their social environment and in ICT (Norizan,

2009; Zulkefli & Sulaiman 2009; Norizan Abd Razak et al., 2010; & Bahaman Abu Samah et al., 2013); therefore social media as an option to combat social exclusion and create solidarity within the population.

1.5.1 Contribution towards knowledge

Accordingly, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by serving as a focal point for information, knowledge, research and development in relation to new media virtual communities in improving social cohesiveness among youths in Malaysia. Data gained can be used to develop knowledge resources relating to the use of networked media outlets by Malaysians. Furthermore, the data gained are expected to demonstrate the potential of new media virtual communities in improving social cohesion among youth in Malaysia.

Secondly, it will be a good reference point for related parties, researchers and students who aim to further ascertain and explore the impacts of new virtual media functionality usage on the level of social cohesion. Other than the impact of social media functionalities in enhancing social cohesion, this study contributes to technological determinism, by empowering the rural youths with technology usage can human communication be more tactical due to its ease of use. Moreover, this study would like to explore more on the Social Interdependence Theory within Asia context and its relevance among collectivist culture as Green et al. (2009) highlighted that social cohesion within an Asian society is more likely to occur in a more ethnically homogenous community than a heterogeneous one as they require binding and shared culture.

1.5.2 Contribution to practice

This study attempts to contribute to social inclusion skills among youths by providing a research base on the impacts of new virtual media functionality on social cohesion. The study provides a platform for social interactions such as collaboration, sharing and exchange of knowledge in the area of networked media content. This study can also instil a positive attitude in the use of social media among rural youth to create social cohesion. Furthermore, data gained can educate and create awareness amongst the general public on the use of communications and multimedia applications, services and facilities encompassing the many benefits of communications technologies and applications in enhancing quality of life and lifelong learning. It contributes to the practice in a sense that it points to key areas that influence social cohesion among youth that can lead to improvement of a community's social cohesion.

Other than social practices, the findings of this study could become the guidance for an upgrade for social media developers. After knowing which of the functionalities were mostly used and could positively contribute or enhance

social cohesion, social media developers from the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission could use the findings to identify and create a new social media application with the most used functionalities. This could instil a more positive use of social media among rural youth, which could increase their interpersonal communication and enhance their social cohesiveness as an additional benefit.

1.5.3 Contribution to policy

Accordingly, by exploring the factors of social media impacts on social cohesion among youths, it can offer valuable data for related parties as it can be used in developing and planning the best strategies to use new virtual media to improve the dimensions of social cohesion that is fit to the youth's interest, need and ability. Furthermore, the data gained can also be used to assess policy effectiveness with regard to networked media.

1.6 Limitation of the study

The limitation of this study is due to the focus of this study, which encompasses on Facebook solely as the social media being studied because only Facebook has the seven active components of social media functionalities (refer to Figure 1), namely; Relationship, Groups, Conversation, Sharing, Identity, Reputation, and Presence functionality. Therefore, findings on the level of social cohesion on Facebook from this study cannot be generalized to other social media.

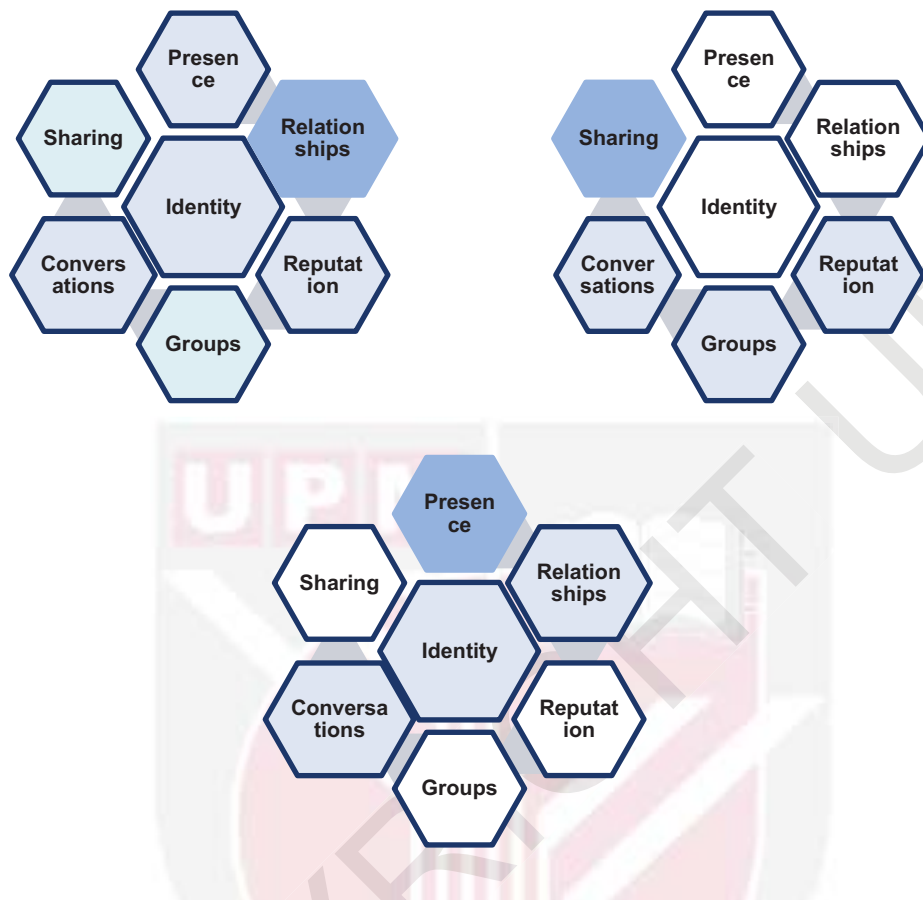


Figure 1: The seven honeycomb building block framework for Facebook, YouTube and Twitter; the darker the colour, the greater the functionality of that site (Kietzmann et al., 2011)

In the context of this study, the communities of 1Malaysia Wireless Village are commonly among the Malays and very few Chinese and Indians. Even if they are cohesive, their cohesiveness revolves around a homogenous group of people and were not integrated. For example, the cohesiveness that exists among rural communities were only between similar ethnics and similar youth group, but they were not cohesively involved as a whole community.

Another limitation that was identified includes the risk of creating bias as a result of participants over or underestimating their responses on the frequency of Facebook usage. Since it is presumed that youth participants are likely to underestimate their responses, caution should be taken when briefing during data collection so they fully understand what is required.

1.7 Definitions of keywords

1.7.1 Social cohesion

Definition of Social Cohesion: A sum of the positive forces that works towards the well-being of all members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility (Woolcock, 2011). Cohesiveness is "the resultant of all forces acting on all the members to remain in the group" (Cartwright, 1968, p. 91) through domains such as social interaction, social trust, sense of togetherness and sense of belonging (Figuroa, Kincaid, Rani and Lewis, 2002; Jusang Bolong, 2006).

1.7.2 Youth

The definition of youth in this study encompasses youths aged between 15-40 years old (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2013), and live within 1Malaysia Wireless Village in rural peninsular Malaysia.

1.7.3 Social group

The definition of social group used in this paper is a collective of individuals interacting with each other whom share a common social identification of themselves, perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, which includes interests, values, social background and kinship ties (Tajfel, 1978).

1.7.4 Social media functionality

The social media phenomenon has been widely discussed topic among fellow sociologists as a platform for modern-day social networking. Social media functionalities involve seven building blocks; identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

As there are varieties of social media, some of them only apply some or all these blocks. Facebook, for instance, encompasses all the seven functionalities (refer to Figure 1). For the purpose of assembling a tentative research framework, the researcher would focus on the social media ecology of Facebook.

Summary

The sole existence of a diverse community in Malaysia was said to cause a decline in social cohesion. Differences in backgrounds could affect the society's trust, plus Asian societies were claimed to be homogenous rather than

heterogeneous. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is known to develop bonding among people. As bonding requires participation and active interactions, the social media functionalities would offer these benefits. The rural communities have been lacking awareness, participation and knowledge in possessing social capital necessary to utilise ICT. Although computer mediated communication and face-to-face interaction may differ in certain aspects, social media similarly allow emotional stimulations on the intended message and to maintain social connectedness.

This chapter explained the level of social cohesion within Malaysia context. It was found that Malaysians have a moderate level of social cohesion. To achieve social cohesion in Malaysia meant to have a positive change in social matter. Previous literature reviews have shown a lot of studies were done on social capital and several studies done on social cohesion were quite general and straightforward (Green et al., 2003). Although there were a few studies done on social cohesion, it was either within an organization, psychological condition or among the inter-ethnic urban neighbourhood, not many would focus within the rural context. Moreover, there were very little understanding of which factors could enhance social cohesion, which was why the study included the features of social media building blocks functionality within the context of Kietzmann's honeycomb framework. There were numerous allegations regarding the use of social media functionalities. Despite several findings from past studies showing that social media functionality usage could influence the psychological state of a person, online interactions also show positive outcomes since frequent Facebook usage may possibly form its' own virtual community that provides emotional support and intimacy among its members such as cohesiveness.

Unfortunately, this study only focused on Facebook functionality usage, thus social media usage pattern found in this study could not be generalized to other social networking sites. The use of Facebook functionality could enhance their sense of social cohesion; hence five research questions were composed for the purpose of formulating the research's objectives.

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