The Role of the Youth’s National Identity in Reducing Social Harms and Internet Crime

Ahmad Khorrami, Mostafa Foroutan, Mehrzad Sarfarazi

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study seeks to answer how national identity contributes to reducing social harms and internet crime. At first, a literature review is provided, and following developing a theoretical framework, the role of national identity in reducing social harms and internet crime among the youth, from the point of view of the students of Larestan Azad University. Method: The study is an applied one in terms of objectives, and a descriptive field survey in terms of methodology. The sample size was calculated through the Cochran formula. Out of the distributed samples, 358 were answered. Data gathered through questionnaires are analyzed through two methods: first, they were analyzed on the basis of descriptive statistics, represented through graphs and tables. Then, the students’ opinions were presented in the form of statistical tables. Results: according to the findings, all hypotheses were proved.

INTRODUCTION

With a review of the literature on internet use, satellite programs, and computer games and their impacts on the audiences, it could be concluded that they can be both useful and harmful to the society. On the internet, these effects include:
- Disturbing people’s social interaction and growth of individualism and isolationism.
- Watching obscene images and carnal contents by teenagers, contributing to early puberty. Pornography on the internet gives rise to sexual and psychological illnesses including children’s sexual abuse, rape, and a generally sexual-minded society. It also negatively affects healthy family and married lives.
- Watching murder and violence by children, which negatively affects their mental condition.
- The internet is a tool for fraud and gambling. It results in time and money waste, reduced productivity, easy money laundry, and shiftlessness.
- Excessive use of the Internet characterized as internet addiction which disturbs the users’ social interactions and contributes to sadness, depression, and irritation in the case of not using the internet.
Satellite programs which are not broadcast by the national TV can have the following negative impacts:
- Propagation of a dominant culture in the name of globalization and weakening local cultures, creating identity crisis, and lack of self-consciousness.
- Publishing false news against governments and boosting social processes such as tension, agreement, homogeneity, and competition as social values in both national and international respects.
- Computer games predominantly instill violence and aggression in children and teenagers.

Although highly important, this issue has not widely been investigated, especially on college students and the youth, so that identifying impacts of satellite programs on the youth contributes to boosting Iranian identity.

The present study seeks to answer what impacts national identity has on reducing social harms and internet crime among the youth.

Identity crisis among the youth:
Being faced with considerable amounts of options and facilities on the internet, they constantly learn new forms of behaviors. Such a context creates an unclear and constantly changing identity, especially for a
generation which is facing more stimuli than the previous ones. At a critical age, when they seek to discover and internalize values, the youth are bombarded with information on the internet and have to develop their identities in this way. The internet might negatively influence the process.

Furthermore, occasionally, some personality traits including age, education, location, and even gender fade; for instance, most people chatting in chat rooms create false identities, and speak as a fake personality they have made up and affect each other through these unknown personalities [6].

Internet social harms:
1- The internet and value clashes:
   One of the most important cultural issues is the values. Values involve the socially accepted beliefs on what is good and what is bad. They are highly important in that they affect norms and behaviors of the members of the society. If personal values are preferred over public values, actions are biased toward individual preferences. As a phenomenon rising from the West, the Internet seeks to propagate western values. The culture of a society is reflected in its system of values. Every culture has its own values and norms [7].

   Normally, technological and social changes also create changes in the culture (i.e. values and norms). One of the challenges faced by cultures is how to deal with such changes. Basically, the introduction of the Internet together with western values into the society creates challenges for the countries. Since a number of the values associated with this phenomenon are naturally in contrast with the target culture (here, Iranian and Islamic values), a large number of potential harms are expected. For instance, the introduction of the Internet into the family can change the value system of the families. Individualism vs. collectivism, non-religious values vs. religious values, importance placed on the parents' opinions, friend-making values, selecting mates, passing free time with the family are among the impacts of this phenomenon [2].

2- Internet crime:
   Internet crime refers to the actions through which computers or communication networks are the tools, targets or the locations of conducting a criminal or illegal act. "Virtual crime" is used to describe action in which computers or communication tools are the main component of crime.

   Instances of virtual crime in which the computer is the ultimate target of the illegal act include illegal uses of credit cards, internet gambling, fake trades, illegal access to information, sending disturbing messages, hacking internet databases, and taking control of a website or online service-provider. Also organized crimes such as virtual terrorism, espionage to steal military, economic, and political secrets from strategic defense centers, ministries, and non-government institutions conducted through the internet [11].

   An investigation of the world internet crimes indicates that during 1996-1999, some countries experienced a 1600-percent growth in these crimes including illegal entrance, decoding, publishing offensive images or ads, causing people losses, fraud in internet shopping, violating intellectual property rights.

3- Sexual abuse:
   Another serious danger threatening the youth and children is sexual abuse through the internet. Especially in developed countries where it is possible to access the internet at home and school, children get sexually abused through chat rooms [4]. Studies conducted in the west indicate that most students sexually abused are under 18 and most of the time they received arousing images through chat or cellphones, and then, they were invited to go to a special place, eventually getting abused.

4- Harassment:
   A new phenomenon recently arisen is the online harassment which is spreading in various forms. Creating social, family, and career problems are among the initial consequences of the phenomenon with women as its primary victims. Basically, it has not been comprehensively defined although it can be defined as continuously threatening or distressing a person through the internet or other communication tools [3]. The existence of numerous websites which provide people’s personal information to the public creates a suitable context for these crimes. These harassments can be observed in various forms. The most common form is the spams with obscene, lascivious, or threatening content. These harassments have widespread consequences threatening the individuals’ social and personal lives. Changing residence, workplace, phone number, and refraining from going to public places are such consequences. The victims typically face psychological problems, as well. They include sleep disorders, headache, fatigue, and fear [5].

5- Making privacy public:
   Privacy involves a part of people’s lives which cannot be invaded based on the requirements of the society. In other words, the right of the people, groups, or institutes regarding when, how, and to what extent their information can be revealed to others is called privacy. People’s control over their honor is the most important
indicator of privacy. What has concerned most scholars is the fading boundary between public and private areas in modern societies. Most people are concerned about their privacy to be invaded since the internet is not a place where personal information such as ID information, images and films, social and political beliefs and attitudes, and family relations can remain safe.

6- The internet and social isolation:

Another harm threatening people on the internet is social isolation. According to Orleans and Laney, the internet isolates people from the society. They reported that the internet isolated children under the age of 10 and disturbs their growth in other areas. It has replaced friends and relatives. People who spend plenty of time on the internet violate many social values since they stop other social actions and start doing personal activities [12]. Excessive use of the internet boosts the tendency to isolate from the society and become an individualist. Occasionally, it makes children involve in daydreaming so that they can hardly communicate with the real world. Findings have shown that excessive use of the internet is associated with weak social bonds. In contrast, users who connect to the internet less often are remarkably more connected to their parents and friends. This can partly reflect the use and abuse of the internet [3].

Identity:

We know that with the ability to interact with “self”, individuals can have an image of their “selves”. Having a self-image, they can answer the fundamental identity question, “who am I?”

National identity:

National identity involves the conscious answers a nation gives to questions regarding their past, quality, time, belonging, main and constant origin, civilization area, political, cultural, and history-inspired values. It can be also known as a set of material, biological, cultural, and psychological signs which distinguish one society from another [11].

Aspects of national identity:

As mentioned previously, national identity is of a multi-faceted nature; however, traditional scholars have taken account of one or more facets, based on their own interests. Although a number of scholars have tried to enumerate, investigate, or measure all aspects of national identity, it is still conceptually incomplete and there are no solid framework and comprehensive approaches toward identity and its components. Due to the impact of the components of identity in accurately measuring the issue, it seems essential to enumerate and rank all aspects in terms of their roles. These aspects are the nodes of national identity which form and boost ties among citizens. According to investigations, the aspects of Iranian identity can be represented as follows.

Analytical model:

Graph 1: two variables and their indexes.

Methodology:

This is an applied study in terms of purposes, a survey in terms of data gathering, and correlative in terms of implementing.

Population and sample:

The population consisted of all media and communication professors of Iran Broadcasting University. Since the number of the professors was 50, all members of the population were selected as the sample and sampling was conducted purposefully and using the full counting method.

Data analysis:

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. They were described and demonstrated through graphs and were analyzed using the Pearson test, based on the hypotheses.

Purposes of the study:

Primary purpose:

Identifying the role of the youth’s national identity in reducing social harms and internet crime
Secondary purposes:
1- Identifying the role of the youth’s social identity in reducing social harms and internet crime
2- the role of the youth’s historical identity in reducing social harms and internet crime
3- the role of the youth’s cultural identity in reducing social harms and internet crime
4- the role of the youth’s political identity in reducing social harms and internet crime

Hypotheses:
Primary hypothesis:
The youth’s national identity and reducing social harms and internet crime are correlated.

Secondary hypotheses:
1- The youth’s social identity and reducing social harms and internet crime are correlated.
2- The youth’s historical identity and reducing social harms and internet crime are correlated.
3- The youth’s cultural identity and reducing social harms and internet crime are correlated.
4- The youth’s political identity and reducing social harms and internet crime are correlated.

Findings:
The youth’s social identity and reducing social harms and internet crime are correlated.

Table 1: Pearson’s correlation coefficient between youth’s social identity and reducing social harms and internet crime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social harms and internet crime</th>
<th>Statistical indexes</th>
<th>variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.778</td>
<td>Pearson’s correlation coefficient</td>
<td>Youth’s social identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Two-domain Significance level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>358</td>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the figures, the correlation coefficient of these two variables is 0.77 and significant at 0.000, revealing a correlation between the two. In other words, as the youth continue to form social identity, social harms and internet crime reduce. However, only in 77% of the cases this is true and can be generalized. Therefore, the first hypothesis is approved. The relationship between these variables is high (0.778).

The youth’s historical identity and reducing social harms and internet crime are correlated.

Table 2: Pearson’s correlation coefficient for historical identity and reducing social harms and internet crime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social harms and internet crime</th>
<th>Statistical indexes</th>
<th>variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>Pearson’s coefficient</td>
<td>Historical identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Two-domain significance</td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>358</td>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the figures, the correlation coefficient of these two variables is 0.87 and significant at 0.000, revealing a correlation between the two. In other words, as the youth continue to form historical identity, social harms and internet crime reduce. However, only in 87% of the cases this is true and can be generalized. Therefore, the second hypothesis is approved. The relationship between these variables is high (0.87).

The youth’s cultural identity and reducing social harms and internet crime are correlated.

Table 3: Pearson’s correlation coefficient for cultural identity and reducing social harms and internet crime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social harms and internet crime</th>
<th>Statistical indexes</th>
<th>variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.799</td>
<td>Pearson’s coefficient</td>
<td>cultural identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Two-domain significance</td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>358</td>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the figures, the correlation coefficient of these two variables is 0.79 and significant at 0.000, revealing a correlation between the two. In other words, as the youth continue to form cultural identity, social harms and internet crime reduce. However, only in 79% of the cases this is true and can be generalized. Therefore, the third hypothesis is approved. The relationship between these variables is high (0.79).

The youth’s political identity and reducing social harms and internet crime are correlated.

Table 4: Pearson’s correlation coefficient for political identity and reducing social harms and internet crime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social harms and internet crime</th>
<th>Statistical indexes</th>
<th>variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.7150</td>
<td>Pearson’s coefficient</td>
<td>political identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Two-domain significance</td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>358</td>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the figures, the correlation coefficient of these two variables is 0.71 and significant at 0.000, revealing a correlation between the two. In other words, as the youth continue to form political identity, social
Conclusions:
Affected by the widespread uses of communicative media around the world, today’s world is called the age of communication and information, reflected in humanities by such terms as the age of wisdom, information explosion, information revolution, and information society. The increasing expansion of the media and modern technology in the primary institutions of the society, i.e. the culture, politics, relationships, social relations, and education, has exerted major impacts.

The emergence and expansion of computer communications as one of the most remarkable achievements of modern communication-information technology have given communications new significance and have brought about substantial changes in social interactions. So far, physical presence has been the distinguishing factor of interaction and communication. Communication implies an interpersonal one capable of being maintained through the aspects of physical theory. Even in telephone communications which are the previous generation of today’s computers, the partners interact in a virtual context, without seeing each other. This is especially the case in situations which involve even less physical contacts, i.e. computer communications. This way, communication, interaction, and relationship are redefined and distinguished. Communication, as a form of interaction, overcomes time and place limitations. Like the past communication media, the emergence of computer communications has provoked considerable discussions over their individual, social, long-term, short-term, deep, temporary, positive, or negative impacts.

Such factors as the development of communication technologies and informational society, have not only changed people’s lives, but also made identity an essential element to help individuals organize their lives and world. The globalization of the media results from an intellectual basis and a modern attitude in thinking which developed in the 1990’s in western scientific, political, economic, and cultural associations (especially in the U.S). Globalization is a social change in which geographical boundaries and social-cultural norms fade away and human relations take on a timeless and boundary-free quality. The proponents of this theory use mass media such as the satellite, the internet, and e-mail as primary tools to achieve their goals. Therefore, the globalization of media, or in other words international mass media, (such as the internet and TV) leads to the decline of cultural and national identities.

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