Analyzing the required social supports from On-line interactions network in chat users in Tehran

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Abstract: Social networks not only help to increase social captials but also expand the communications between people. This is important because we can see erosion of social captials in today world. Developing communication and information technologies provides people to have a virtual social network in a cyber space through their interactions and enjoy its supports. So, this study has tried to analyze the conditions of required social supports from Online Interaction Network in Tehran users in 2010-2011 through Online Questionnaire and ground theory. This study shows that Tehran On-line interactions users in their virtual social network in on-line interactions do not receive many supports from the network. It means that: 1) each person in his own network does not need or expect to receive some kinds of aid 2) companionship and advice is two main aids in this network. Since the social network of the person in real world is his main network and his support source, it seems that social network provides some kinds of supports which the person isn't able to ask for or provide them in the real world. The most required support in Chat On-line interaction users is companionship. Undoubtedly, the received supports from virtual social network help people to compensate some support gaps in real world as well as expanding the communication.

1. Introduction

The process of finding identity has been changed in modern era. In the past, the place has a main role in creating the social identity of people, because people lived in little and close environments and their social identity was formed through face to face interactions with other people in a stable environment. People had few relationships with outer world and native-local traditions were the most part of their identities. Following appearing Modernism and especially new information and interaction technologies, place wasn't the sole important factor in forming identity, anymore, Because media and interaction technologies are able to separate the person from his place and link him to the world. Therefore, people face with many finding identity sources and finding identity process has had a non-local and global form.

Giddens uses the terms of disembedding for explaining the change of place role in later modernism. He believes that separation of time and place in later modernism is a necessary condition for process of disembedding. Disembedding is cutting the social relationships from local and co-action environments and reviving the structure of these environments accordance with unlimited time-place sheets (Giddens, 2005 pp:25).
Using its facilities and capabilities, Internet has created new capacities and been able to evict social interactions from allegiance of time and place in order to people is able to expand their relationship beyond the interactive frames in real world. For this reason, internet is able to expand its presence in all of the world and also between most of society classes. According to Giddens, internet is transforming the face of daily life – making vague the borders of global and local affairs, making new passages for relationships and interaction and making possible doing more tasks through network (Giddens, 2007, pp.682). Although some people believe that spreading internet leads to social isolation, but some other people find internet as a bankroll for new forms of electronic relationships which strengths or complements the current face to face interactions. People can have relationship with their friends and relatives through internet when they are on trip or working abroad. Through internet, distance and separation from dears is more tolerable. Internet provides possibilities for forming some kinds of new relationships and interactions. Anonymous users can visit each other in chat rooms and chat with each other about their favorite topics. Sometimes, these virtual contacts are turned to real and strong friendships and even leads to face to face visits. Most of internet users are members of internet active societies which are different qualitatively with real societies. Some scholars, who know internet as a positive adjunct to humanistic interactions, argue that

internet expands and enriches the people social networks (Giddens, 2007 pp.682-3).

The relationship of on-line users could be strong, average or weak such as face to face relationships. Moreover, social network could be specialized or multiple dimensions, for example: users who have mutual interests and focus on a suitable topic or users who are free to select topics and various interests. The studies on computerized social networks have shown that if there is stronger relationship and more different activities in a network, that network is closer to a society.

Scholars believe that computerized relationships are capable of supporting strong and multiple links between people. Internet is an infra-structure tool which facilitates on-line social interactions such as roads which strengthen the offline commercial interactions. On the other hand, Internet is able to increase social networks through enabling people to establish relationship with more people in comparison with past time (thurlow, et.al, 2010. Pp.183)

Considering importance of expanding social relationships and interactions and also the specific place of virtual space especially internet in this regard, the virtual social network of people in on-line interactions and also their required supports among Chat Users in Tehran have been analyzed.

2.   Social Networks as social support

Social networks are not equal to social supports, but social supports are one of main functions of social networks. Personal networks defend people against life crisis. Lacking of social supports leads to problems such as social damages and deviations. Barry Wellman, who has studied on social supports and comparing the amount and kinds of social supports in small towns and megacities, showed that the amount of support differences resulting from size of resident, is not so meaningful. Classic theoreticians believe that decline in multiple networks and relationships not only have not decreased the supports, but also it has increased tendency to subcultures in modern urban life. People who live in big or small cities don't have great differences in amount of received social supports. But, they are different in their support sources, for example whether theses supports are from relatives or non-relative people. Moreover, people select specific kinds of networks for receiving specific kinds of supports and each of links are suitable for specific kinds of supports. For example, people tend to counsel with their spouses, close relatives and friends. They spend their time with their friends for receiving friendship supports. In Occupational and financial supports, neighbors, colleagues, relatives

and parents support people in different aspects. It is worth of mentioning that supports usually are received from specific parts of network. For example, people usually have good time with their friends but in crisis, they spend more time with their relatives. In time of crisis, old men are received financial supports and peer women are good companion. As Wellman mentions, these laws are not permanent and stable and respondents for each specific support consider a big mass of various people. For example, some people always mention their relatives and some people never be supported by their relatives (Jad Babayi Behbahani, 2006. Pp. 112).

Therefore, different kinds of needs require different kinds of personal networks. Accordance to these different needs, different people select different kinds of networks. It means that different combination of people and their required supports leads to selection different supporters.

People are received various supports from members of their network. Vast studies on social supports demonstrate that relatives, friends, neighbors and colleagues are important sources to be referred to in crisis time. Various links provide various social supports for network members. Therefore, diversity of relationships provides a vast spectrum of various supports for people. Social supports enable people to face with daily problems and crisis of life and overcome them. According to Wellman, the source of support and kinds of links which provide supports is very important (Wellman, 1992. Pp. 210).

Social supports are different:
Fischer emphasizes on three social supports:
- Advice aid (talking about affairs and problems, advice and counseling
- Emotional aid (Friendship)
- Practical or service aid (house keeping, work discussion, helping in house keeping and borrowing money) (Bastani, 2006)

Wellman emphasizes on 6 supports:
- Companionship aid
- Emotional aid
- Service aid
- Financial aid
- Informational aid
- Advice support aid

Each of these supports is received from members of network. Parents, spouses, close relatives, far relatives, friends, neighbors and colleagues are members of the network and provide some social supports.

3.   Functional Characteristics of social network

Social relationships and links are included as social captials and posessions of people in theory of network analysis which enable people to have access on sources and supports in these links. Therefore, the quality of social relationship, amount and manner of interactions and also kind of exchanging supports are so important. (Salehi, 2005).

Brandette believes that social support leads to captial feeling, intimacy, social integration, and access to information, emotional and instrumental supports. Different links provide various social supports for members of the network. Crawl believes through diversity of relationships, people get a vast spectrum of different supports which includes instrumental, emotional, and mental and information supports. Social supports enable people to be capable to face daily problems and life crisis.

The function of social relationships and links is divided into personal and mass levels:

a) In personal level, personal relationship network is a main tool for measuring mental supports which person receives from others. Accordance to this viewpoint, network fills the environment of the person with friends and relatives which make his life meaningful. There are some norms which regulate his behavior; these norms save him and defend him against a non personal and threatening world. Warren believes that social networks have a significant role in meeting physical, mental, social and economical needs. The members of the network are able to fill the gaps in family origin and personal abilities to some extent. They have a significant role in determining the capacity of network in order to provide sources for the person and also structural capacities of the network such as size of links and also the kinds of members. (Crawl, 2004).

One of other main functions of social network is offering some information about opportunities, especially occupational opportunities. Weak links have more important role in occupational opportunities, Because these links connect the person to existing sources in the system (Baret, 1992). Granouetter believes that most of people find their jobs through personal contacts. This is true about hand, master and management jobs (Granouetter, 1984).

b) In mass level of social relationship, the more volunteer support relationship in different dimensions of Palladian (guidance, counseling and education), financial (economical support), emotional (sympathy), esteem (restitution of humanistic greatness), the less social deprivation, suicide, social despair, social exploitation and social passivity in the society.

Helping people who have been deprived in above mentioned dimensions for any reason, enables them to find their potentialities and help them to be useful for themselves and other people. Certainly, successfulness of support relationship of the society is dependent to strength of these relationships and continuing them as a social task and habit. Increasing friendship in the society leads to increase mutual help and common obligation. Obviously, it requires weak links with tendency of universalism as communicative bridges of acquaintance between groups. On the opposite, if inter-personal friendship relationship and specialist bias remains in elementary level, it will be turned to an obstacle for establishing between groups relationships. Therefore, these relationships include non-required links for the society. For example: displacement of rules with relationships, bureaucratic and political decay, between groups conflicts and above all weakness of national coherence. In this case, social relationships in the society will be interfered, social mutual respect limit rights and freedom of popularity in the society. Moreover, relationship interference decreases the strength of society; therefore, people lose their freedom. Disconnecting or connecting people in the society makes them vulnerable to social difficulties, political roughness, economical crisis and natural calamities. To be broken from the society has different social, political, cultural and mental consequences (Chalabi, 1996).

4. Methodology

The nature of this study is combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, so we use documental, survey and field research methods. The statistical population includes online interaction users in Tehran in year 2010.

Samples selected on the basis of data gathering methods through 3 sampling methods:

a) On the basis of grounded theory method, samples were selected among Tehran Online interaction users who chatted frequently through snowball method. In this sampling method, the researcher found a frequent chat user who chatted 10 hours per week minimally. Then, this person introduced another frequent chat user with same condition to researcher for interview. These interviews were open and un-organized at first. But they were done to achieve a preliminary results and recurring replies.

b) The main sample of research includes Chat users in Tehran were questioned through survey method by using an online questionnaire. In current research, the volume of sample has been calculated as 400 people on the basis of cochran formula and considering the confidence space as

95%. In order to facilitate the process of responding and saving time of respondents, the questionnaire was designed on the webpage (www.porseshonline.info). In Iran, the virtual space has not been used as a serious field for research; therefore, online questionnaire have not been responded frequently. So, there is no referring site for this purpose and we had to use virtual group and Iranvich site for introducing porseshonline site and representing the questionnaire. We selected Iranvich site for following reasons:

- It is a Persian site and belongs to Iranian people
- It is the largest virtual network of Iranian people and has 170000 members.
- Since, members of this network are connected in virtual space; it is probable that there are Chat Users among them.
- This site is informative rather than advertising, so it is probable that it emails would be opened and read by members. This is so important because the emails of advertising sites would be non-

replied or omitted by the members.

5. Findings

In this study 67% of respondents are less than 30 years and 46.7% of them are females. Most of respondents are graduated from high school and 58% of them are BA and BSc. Most of chat users in sample are single and the married ones often have been married for more than 5 years. Most of respondents (90%) are

students or clerk office.

Required Supports in virtual Interactions

Borrowing money, keeping the house and child, repairing and displacement (1%) are among supports which usually don't be required by Chat users of Tehran in online interactions. 19.5% of respondents shared their sadness and problems with their network members in online interactions. 19.8% of respondents counseled about their important problems with their social network members. 28% of respondents sought companionship from their network members and 25.3% of them sought information and knowledge from their network members in virtual space.

In total, the most frequent required support is companionship and association with others.

Association between age and kind of required support from virtual network

Table 2 shows that in variance analysis the amount of F is meaningful with a fault less then 0.05. Therefore, there is a meaningful difference between

age and kind of required support from virtual network. Also the average table shows that the people who chat for getting companionship, association and information are older and people who chat and share their sadness and problems with others through chat are younger.

Table 1: distribution of respondents on the basis of required supports in online interaction (Chat)			
Required supports	Frequency	Percent	Total
Borrowing money	-	-	400
Sharing sadness and problems	78	19.5	400
Counseling about important affairs	79	19.8	400
Companionship and association	112	28	400
Information and knowledge	101	25.3	400
Asking help for house keeping, caring baby, repairing and displacement	4	1	400

Table 2: Oneway variance analysis – age and required support from virtual network						
variable		sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
age	Between groups	7102.5	4	1775.6	22.89	0.000
	Within groups	26218.3	338	77.56		
	total	33320.85	342			

Association between sex and required support from online interaction network

According to results of chi-square test, chi-square is meaningful with the fault less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a meaningful association between sex and required support from online interactions network. Frequency table shows that men usually seek companionship and association and also getting information in online interactions. On the contrary, women often share their feeling and counsel about their problems in online interactions. The table also shows that men and women use a group of supports in same proportion.

Table 3: age average considering required support from online interaction network						
variable		Average of variable for real network type				
	Total average	Sharing sadness and problem	Counseling about important affairs	Companionship and association	Information and knowledge	total
Required support from online interaction network	24.7	21.6	28.1	33.65	35.65	25.46

Table 4-frequency distribution according to sex and required support from online interaction network		Virtual social network type					total
		Sharing sadness and problem	Counseling for important affairs	Companionship and association	Getting information and knowledge	total	
sex	female	22	14	28	6	92	162
		6.3%	4%	8%	1.7%	26.3%	46.3%
	male	9	6	42	41	90	188
		2.6%	1.7%	12%	11.7%	25.7%	53.7%
total		31	20	70	47	182	350
		8.9%	5.7%	20%	13.4%	52%	100%

Chi-square	sig
35.0	0.000

Association of education and required support from online interaction network

The result of variance analysis shows that F is meaningful with the fault less than 0.01. Therefore, there is a meaningful difference between education and required support from online interaction network. The table of this variable average shows that the people who seek advice support have higher education and people who want to share their negative feelings have lower education.

Table 5-oneway variance analysis-education and required support from online interaction network						
variable		sum of squares	df	Average square	F	Sig
education	Between groups	21.02	4	5.2	10.19	0.000
	Within groups	177.89	345	0.51		
	total	198.91	349			

Table 6: education average considering required support from online interaction network							
variable		Average of variable for real network type					
		Total average	Sharing sadness and problem	Counseling about important affairs	Companionship and association	Information and knowledge	total
Required support from online interaction network		2.72	2.48	3.4	2.6	3	3

Association of marriage and required support from online interaction network

As results of Chi-square test, resulting Chi-square is meaningful with the fault less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a meaningful relationship between

marriage and required support from online interactions network. The frequency table shows that single people tend to share their negative feeling, counsel for their problems and get information more. In general, single people require and receive complex of supports while chatting more than married people.

Table 7-frequency distribution according to marriage state and required support from online interaction network		Virtual social network type					total
		Sharing sadness and problem	Counseling for important affairs	Companionship and association	Getting information and knowledge	total	
sex	single	26	14	41	21	124	226
		7.4%	4%	11.7%	6%	35.4%	64.6%
	married	5	6	29	26	58	124
		1.4%	1.7%	8.3%	7.4%	16.6%	35.4%
total		31	20	70	47	182	350
		8.9%	5.7%	20%	13.4%	52%	100%

Chi-square	sig
15.5	0.004

The association of chat frequency and required support from online interaction network

Table 8 shows that in variance analysis, the amount of F is meaningful with the fault less than 0.001. Therefore, there is a meaningful difference between kinds of required support from online interactions network considering frequency of chatting. As average table shows, the people who chat more than others require more various supports.

Table 8-one variance analysis-frequency of chatting and required support from online interaction network						
variable		sum of squares	df	Average square	F	Sig
Frequency of chatting	Between groups	55.54	4	13.88	9.2	0.000
	Within groups	513.29	341	0.63		
	total	568.83	345			

Table 9: average of chatting frequency considering required support from online interaction network							
variable		Average of variable for real network type					
		Total average	Sharing sadness and problem	Counseling about important affairs	Companionship and association	Information and knowledge	total
Required support from online interaction network		1.65	2.06	1	2.45	2.34	3.05

Association of duration of chatting and kind of required support from online interactions network

　　Table 10 shows that in variance analysis, the amount of F with fault less than 0.001 are meaningful. Therefore, there is a meaningful difference between kinds of required support from online interactions network considering duration of chatting in a week. As average table shows, the people who chat more in a week require and receive more various supports.

Table 10-oneway variance analysis-duration of chatting in a week and required support from online interaction network					
variable		sum of squares	df	Average square	F	Sig
Frequency of chatting	Between groups	53.77	4	13.44	21.21	0.000
	Within groups	209.13	330	0.63		
	total	262.9	334			

Table 11: average of chatting duration considering required support from online interaction network						
variable		Average of variable for real network type				
		Total average	Sharing sadness and problem	Counseling about important affairs	Companionship and association	Information and knowledge	total
Required support from online interaction network		1.43	1.6	1.2	1.23	1.1	2.06

Expansion of social network in real world and kinds of required support from online interaction network

　　The expansion of social network was measured on the basis of 9 characteristics of virtual and real social network of each person. Results show that people who have more various and longer relationships with others in aspects such as sex, education, residence, economical condition and require different supports, have more spread social network.

　　Results of oneway variance analysis demonstrate that kinds of required support of people from online interactions network is different considering the expansion of social network of them in the real world. The average table of this variable shows that people who seek companionship and information supports, have expanded networks in the real world.

　　The results of oneway variance analysis shows that kinds of required supports of people from online interactions network is different considering

expansion of social network of them. Average table of this variable demonstrates that people who seek for various supports especially sharing the problems have expanded networks in online interactions.

Table 12-oneway variance analysis-network expansion in the real world and required support from online interaction network					
variable		sum of squares	df	Average square	F	Sig
Expansion of real network	Between groups	14.78	4	3.69	16.37	0.000
	Within groups	62.96	279	0.22		
	total	77.74	283			

Table 13: average of network expansion in real world considering required support from online interaction network						
variable		Average of variable for real network type				
		Total average	Sharing sadness and problem	Counseling about important	Companionship and association	Information and knowledge	total
Required support from online interaction network		2.56	1.77	1.71	2.45	2.41	2.27

Table 14-oneway variance analysis-network expansion in online interactions and required support from online interaction network					
variable		sum of squares	df	Average square	F	Sig
Expansion of real network	Between groups	7.88	4	1.97	9.2	0.000
	Within groups	39.7	186	0.22		
	total	47.58	190			

Table 15: average of network expansion in online interactions considering required support from online interaction network						
variable		Average of variable for real network type				
		Total average	Sharing sadness and problem	Counseling about important affairs	Companionship and association	Information and knowledge	total
Required support from online interaction network			2.6	2	2.25	2.27	2.67

6.　Conclusion

　　Social networks are among captials and possessions of the person and he can get various social supports from them. In today world, people not only are able to require and receive various supports from social network in the real world, but also they are able to form virtual networks in cyber space and

enjoy supports of this network, too. This is very important: Since the social relationships have been decreased for individualism and people get less supports especially from relatives, these supports could have a significant role. On the other hand, virtual supports could be as supplementary for real supports. At the end, getting supports from virtual network provides an opportunity for people to meet some of their needs beyond of time and place and relate with different people from the entire world.

The results of studies on online interactions social networks of chat users in Tehran (2010) show that these users don't get various and different supports in their virtual social network in online interactions; it means that people don't need or expect for getting supports in his network. Two main supports in this network are companionship and advice. It seems that virtual network offer supports which people are not able to require or offer them. The most frequent required support is companionship. Old people and women use companionship, association and getting information supports; educated people seek advice support; single people seek emotional support and married people seek companionship supports.

People who chat frequently use more various supports. People who have expanded network require companionship and information supports.

In total, it seems that online interactions users in Tehran don't get various supports from their virtual network because of new space and little specialized time. People tend to companionship support because of some of limitations in relationship in the society. Undoubtedly, getting supports from virtual social network help people to increase their relationships and seek for supports to fill support gaps in real world.

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