

Impacts of Social Media (Facebook) on Human Communication and Relationships: A View on Behavioral Change and Social Unity

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ABSTRACT

The impact of social networking is varied from good to bad. Online activities have also been categorized into pros and cons of social networking, either as reported as hiding Internet activities among teenagers or killing loneliness among elderly. In terms of relationships, there have been argument over its closeness and quality of an online relationship in Internet settings. Looking at the contradiction in an innovative interaction between classic community communication and social media, there is an unknown scent of the future struggling and challenging both human communication and relationships in the presence of digital culture. This research uses Diffusion of Innovation to study the wide and continuous spread of digital culture in human communication; and, Media Dependency in learning and structuring the cognitive, affective and behavioral effects of social media on each person uses the media in different ways. This research will be using online survey to gain opinions from a social network site as an update of views and reflection of self-awareness to all levels of people. Social media like Facebook (FB) is perceived as a good tool of communication that it is able to bring closeness among the family members. The results show that social media like FB brings positive impact towards family members; it would help to build a better and harmonic society; and, relationships among family members and communication shall be improved and enhanced to the level of a united society.

1. Introduction

Miltenberger (2012) has defined characteristics of behavior as that it involves a person's action (what people do or say). It has one or more dimensions that can be measured, that is where we can count the number of times a behavior occurs. Behaviors can be observed, described, and recorded by others or by the person engaging in the behavior. It has an impact on the environment, including the physical or the social environment. Behavior is lawful that its occurrence is systematically

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influenced by environmental events. It may be overt or covert, where overt is an action that can be observed and recorded by a person, whereas covert is a behavior that cannot be observed and recorded.

The characteristics of behaviors can be interrelated to the change of behavior in the near environment of online context in terms of communication. Beebe, Beebe, and Redmond (2005) have stated that interactions among friends and family members have been dramatically altered by the introduction of the personal computer and computer-mediated communication (CMC). "It is a typical scene in modern families these days that the father may be watching the news on the television, the mother is busy fiddling with her smart phone, the sons are fighting aliens on the game console and the daughter is playing with the applications on her tablet. Every eyeball is looking at some sort of screen" (Shout, 2012). It is stated by Devito (2005) regarding online context to human relationship that "perhaps even more obvious than culture or gender is the influence of technology on interpersonal relationships"; "not surprisingly, those who communicated (online) more frequently formed more relationships".

Devito's view is here a counterpart to a research conducted by Hsu, Wang, and Tai (2011). It is disclosed that Facebook (FB) is a mechanism for new friends, rather than close friends, to become more acquainted. They have also stated that people will behave differently according to who they are interacting with, what kind of relationships they have, and other scenarios. Another emphasis from their research is that their respondents tended to use the Internet to make contacts with distant social circle and to utilize face-to-face contacts with local social circles. This is demonstrating that the relationship influences users' social behaviors.

Online communication may bring to a bad experience on online behavior too. It is stated by Christofides, Muise, and Desmarais (2012) that postings on FB may also lead to feelings of regret if negative consequences such as loss of opportunity or punishment are experienced. Online disclosures may also result in negative consequences for romantic relationships that "those who spend more time on FB are more likely to experience jealousy in response to ambiguous information that they see on the site, which may have consequences for their intimate relationships" (Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2012).

In contrast to the view of how FB can lead to a bad experience in an online behavior and negative consequences for romantic relationships, Kryan, Moore, and Zill (1990) have suggested some characteristics found among successful families. Of all the characteristics suggested, communication is the key characteristic of strong families. Family Dynamics Institute (2013) has highlighted that the key to family communication is building trust. Trust is the best friend when it comes to building an environment that fosters open communication. As leading into a wider scope of family unit and family communication, "the family has traditionally and commonly been seen as the fundamental unit in society" (Leung et al., 2003). Haralambos, Holborn and Heald (2000) have stated that "the family has often been regarded as the cornerstone of society. In pre-modern and modern societies alike it has been seen as the most basic unit of social organization..." From the both views attached, one can infer the important role of the family in social cohesion, where the concept of social cohesion refers to a condition of social unity or solidarity, and the parts fit together to form a united whole.

This research paper studies the behavioral change in the near environment and online context relevant to human communications. Social media, FB in the context of this research, is to reflect the use of it in either constructing or damaging a family communication which might be leading to a scenario of social cohesion in Malaysia.

This research is hereby looking into the scope of behavioral change and social cohesion while it is believed that SNS can alter an individual's interpersonal communication in the areas of family communication, lifestyle and attitudes. In view to the contradicting outcome of using SNS, this research studies the struggles and challenges of human communications and relationships in this digital era, as it is the initial relationship through human communication that forms a small group cohesion which can potentially be extended to a national cohesion.

The secondary objective of this research is to study the extensive use of SNS, here it is at the context of using FB, among Malaysians for the purpose of social life, which is also leading into a possible social cohesion atmosphere in a country.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Human Communication and Successful Family Communication

Human communications are of intrapersonal communication and interpersonal communication. Intrapersonal communication is the communication you have with yourself, whereas interpersonal communication occurs when one interacts with a person whom he or she has some kind of relationship, it can be face-to-face as well as through electronic channels (DeVito, 2005). This is where mediated-communication brought up to the understanding that it occurs when one sends a message through some electronic device to a receiver.

When human communication is discussed, there are a few principles of communication one has to be familiar with as they would have implications for an effective communication. DeVito (2008) has identified the first principle as a process of adjustment. It is so to reflect very much on intercultural communication when one has a different cultural background with different signals and meanings. The process of adjustment is to hinder the gap by understanding to make communication meaningful and successful. Communication is ambiguous, as the message can be interpreted in many different ways. The most common ambiguity created would be on grammar. Therefore native language would be the easiest form of communication in the principle to reduce such ambiguity, the concept of accommodating is brought up to overcome the hindrance. The key principles of communication for this research would be that communication involves content and relationship dimensions. A communication that involves the relationship between the speaker and the listener; and, the content of the communication, likewise this research is trying to study the impacts of social media based on this principle. The following principle would be that communication has a power dimension. It is to say about one's ability in influencing or controlling the behavior of another person, likewise the ability of ones using social media in influencing other users whether in a positive or negative way. Communication is punctuated, where it entails the cause and effects of a communication,

where this research is looking at the impacts of social media in the same form. Communication is purposeful. The common purposes of communication as explained by DeVito (2008) are that to learn, to relate, to help, to influence and to play. The same purposes shall be applicable to the context of social media as presumed by the researchers. Last principle is that communication is inevitable, irreversible, and unrepeatable. The idea about it is where interaction is always on going all the time, where, what is said, cannot be reversed and repeated, taking an example of a message posted up on FB, to what extent it can be reversed and repeated, though the concept of copy-and-paste is always there. It is the impacts regarded in this study.

Human communications like interpersonal communications are interrelated to interpersonal relationships. In between, conversation is bridging the two (DeVito, 2008). Whether online or offline, conversation may start in a process of five steps, namely opening, feedforward, business, feedback and closing. The focal point of conversations to this research is its principles. Other than the usual turn-taking and dialogue, it is the principle of immediacy that creates an effective communication. The idea of immediacy is about togetherness, a sense of interest and attention, a liking for and an attraction to the other person. Immediacy may be conveyed through psychological closeness and openness, use the person's name, orient the conversation, acknowledge the presence and importance of the person, communicate expressiveness and of all, the actions are to be done with cultural sensitivity (DeVito, 2008). Looking at the principles, immediacy shall be carried out either face-to-face or through online. This research studies the principles to reflect on the scenario of social media in today's communication through FB, whether an effective online communication shall further enhance relationships at this point.

When interpersonal relationship is raised, again the idea of DeVito (2008) surfaced. There are stages in interpersonal relationships of human communication. Relationships start from the contact stage, it is an important stage to begin to know a person physically, whether with the qualities of friendliness, warmth, openness, and dynamics. This part creates perception on a person. In an online space, relationships may begin without a physical evaluation. Somehow perception is formed through online signals and meaning, which is not where this research is studying on. Second phase would be involvement, where it is a sense of mutuality, of being connected, develops. This phase allows a further development of a relationship. This may happen through social media. It allows social media users get to know others more in depth, assuming that the content posted is genuine. This research does not analyze the content of social media. It looks at the possibility of social media helps develop a relationship. Third phase of interpersonal relationships would be intimacy, where it involves interpersonal commitment and social bonding. An individual commits in a close relationship, may make it public through social media. The last phase would be either repairing the relationships, deteriorating with dissatisfaction or dissolution with separations. The stages of interpersonal relationships are initial stages for family cohesion. It is crucial to every individual to take cautious step in every stage for a social unity. Whichever stage of a relationship is in, relationships have their common characteristics at all levels of human communications that the researchers are concerning too. According to Tubbs (2010), the first characteristic of relationships is its context. Context refers to the setting and the social-psychological environment of a relationship that takes place. Setting is always referred to as the physical environment and social-psychological

context is the confirmation of content. This simile is put to the ambience of social media at its online space and the acceptance of relationship through the message posted in social media. Supportiveness and defensiveness climate is another element to the context discussed. The climate reflects the acceptance of a relationship. When it is discussed in this research, the behavior is studied rather than to analyze the meaning of a piece of content posted in social media though it is co-related to the level of a relationship.

Another characteristic of relationships is time (Tubbs, 2010). The longer time is taken the further a relationship is developed in the aspects of interdependence, trust, and commitment. It is now the trend of such elements developed through social media over time. There is no affirmative answer to form a statement to assure such change as positive or negative to a social cohesion. This research is only to detect the changes. "Communication style tends to change with the passage of time," (Tubbs, 2010). Therefore researches like this shall be on going to update its information. The last characteristic of a relationship is trust. Lying and deception are the factors that kill trust. This research is not going to analyze to the extent of deceptive content. It will be looking at the extensiveness of using social media and users' view to reflect this aspect.

Looking through the basic idea of human communications, interpersonal communications, interpersonal relationships and the characteristics of relationships, and how they are related to this research, there are other views compiled to further discuss on this matter.

There are many articles documented on successful relationships and the importance of communication. Family Dynamics Institute (2013) indicates that the key to family communication is building trust. Dhavale (2011) has stated that "lack of communication affects your relationships with your family members, friends as well as at your work place". Krysan, Moore, and Zill (1990) have also characterized communication patterns of strong families as clear, open and frequent. Matthews (1994) has suggested six characteristics of strong families, and one of the characteristics is effective communication. "Members of strong families work at developing good communication skills and spend a lot of time talking with each other. They talk about the small, trivial things as well as the deep, important issues of life. Communication is the lifeblood of relationships. It is the way that love and other emotions are expressed. Relationships are played out in the context of communication. We cannot help but communicate, and it is largely up to us whether the communication in our families will be effective or ineffective" (Matthews, 1994). It is further endorsed that effective communication means being open and honest, yet kind; listening carefully, without distraction; checking the meaning of messages which are not clear; avoiding 'mind-reading'; walking a mile in the other person's shoes; trusting one another; avoiding criticizing, evaluating, and acting superior; dealing with one issue at a time; dealing with specifics rather than generalities; attacking the problem, not each other; and, having an understanding attitude.

Communication in interpersonal relationships has been influenced by technology with its advantages and disadvantages (DeVito, 2005). "There are times when the one-on-one communication between human beings falls through the cracks and technology can take control over a family" (Sorensen, 2010). It is also stated that social interactive online networking such as FB and MySpace has changed the way families communicate. The concern is that the influence of technology can be a hindrance to interpersonal relationships but to McQuillen, the advent of the Internet has made the world smaller

in terms of global interaction but wider in terms of one-on-one relationships. Madianou and Miller (2013) have discussed that the profound transformation in the usage of increasingly converged communication technologies has implications for the ways interpersonal communication is enacted and experienced. It is concluded by Madianou and Miller (2013) that “...as media literacies develop, then people start to see the reasons why any particular person has chosen any particular medium as a social act - something that is found to be fundamental in actually constituting that social relationship.”

2.2 Internet Has Changed Social Life and Behaviors

“For at least a segment of our population, a number of face-to-face transactions are now mediated by computers and other interactive technologies” (Tubbs, 2010). Tubbs (2010) further elaborated that Internet has been viewed a rapidly diffusing technology that extends social contact. That is also where some people do go online and develop interpersonal relationships. A few examples attached are that people who use Internet at home showed a higher level of loneliness and depression; and, it is correlated to less family interaction and declining number of friends, though there are also better outcomes stated the well-being and connectedness reflected among the users. In view to the contradicting opinions around, this part of this research intends to study the change and evolution in human behaviors at the presence of social media, and looking forward to the change in social life that may affect social cohesion in any part of a country.

Referring to Mustafa and Hamzah (2011), Internet is increasingly being used and has become a must for some people. Other than information purposes, the medium is also used as an effective means of communication tool in social interaction. “Communication modes are changing and have now crossed such distances with the help of computerization and digital technology especially the emergence of Internet and its various new applications. Communication and interaction may now take place through online or in virtual world or cyberspace without having to face each other at the same place and same time. Many more people use the new media technology, the Internet in particular, to meet their psychological and social needs. Internet is the place to meet and interact and form relationships. In fact, this form of social interaction or communication has become increasingly common in our daily lives” (Mustafa & Hamzah, 2011). This view has indicated the pattern of behavior at the advancement of technologies. The use of social network sites (SNS) is designed to connect people with friends, family, and other strong ties, as well as to efficiently keep in touch with a larger set of acquaintances and new ties (Burke, Kraut, & Marlow, 2011).

Based on the research of Gross & Acquisti (2005), SNS has dramatically increased in recent years. “Services such as Friendster, Tribe or the Facebook allow millions of individuals to create online profile and share personal information with vast networks of friends” (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). It is especially significant when people around the world could not meet their friends and families in face-to-face due to their hectic lifestyle. It is also a norm where family members are catching up their individual screen time on different interests. There are variables contributed to the use of SNS in today’s life style. Although SNS offer openness in profile and personal data

sharing, it is at the same time endangered the users' profile being revealed and intruded. Gross & Acquisti (2005) in his research studies on the privacy than behavioral of SNS users. This also implies the needs of looking at behavioral change when SNS is widely used and when social media has come into daily life.

Up to this point, it is still questionable whether Internet is changing social life or staying the same. Tyler (2002) has articulated that the basic nature of people's relationships with others may have changed less because of the Internet than is often suggested. Rather than turning to the Internet as a way of hiding from real life, those who are socially anxious and those who are lonely, turn to the Internet as a means of forming close and meaningful relationships with others in a nonthreatening environment. The Internet offers features that enable users to have added efficiencies in their communications. It is used together with other channels like telephone and mail communications. When a relationship is developed to a certain level, users will bring the relationship to the real life. It is also highlighted that "whether the Internet is, in fact, a social-leveling technology depends not upon the technology itself, but upon the political and social framework within which it is implemented" (Tyler, 2002).

DeAndrea (2012) has indicated that people use an abundance of SNS, personal blogs, and other web sites to interact with family, friends, acquaintance, and coworkers. These basic motives, manifested through communication, are not vanquished because social interaction occurs online. It is the web site owners who can greatly influence the extent to which they are held accountable for the contribution of others by simply acknowledging their awareness of them. Talpos (2011) have defined social network as a community structure based on individuals or organization connected through Internet by specific types of interdependencies such as friendship, family, common interests, financial operations, dislikes, acquaintances or prestige.

Wright and Zdinak (2012) have also articulated the impact of change on Internet users. Attitudes of Internet users now are different from those days. As in general, they are now active in creating and sharing online content, can express opinions, peer-to-peer communication tools are used, able to connect from various devices and often they are connected online all the time. For these businesses, the spread of broadband and online services brings new revenue opportunities. However, it also threatens current business models. In terms of behaviors, impacts on behaviors of online users are that there is a shift of attitudes, growth in broadband connection, content being delivered free of charge, online social networking as a new communication domain, fragmentation of consumer markets, the Internet as the main source and transmitter of knowledge and Internet privacy, online security and data ownership (Wright & Zdinak, 2012). It is also foreseen that online advertising will grow in further, bear in mind that advertising is also a form of communication. In the future, mobile Internet use will become a key driver of this trend and is rapidly becoming the preferred method of Internet access globally.

Arguments arise in its benefits and setbacks. This research is hereby looking into the scope of behavioral change and social cohesion while we believe SNS can alter an individual's interpersonal communication in the areas of family communication, lifestyle, behavior, attitudes and eventually towards social cohesion.

2.3 Malaysian Context: Heavy FB Users and Impact on Human Communication and Social Cohesion

Diaz, Evans, and Gallagher (2011) endorsed that FB can actually enhance people's ability to connect with others and form positive relationships with peers. Other than that, FB has the potential to allow people to interact with more thoughts as they could see how people respond to each other, and the consequences and causes of a failed communication.

Burke, Kraut & Marlow (2011) have conducted a research on online behavior based on FB log-in. It is stated that the activity is a directed communication with individual friends consisted of personal one-on-one exchanges, such as instant message which FB is also supporting targeted communication through messages, wall posts and synchronous chat. Directed communication is a way to improve bonding, particularly the one-on-one messages that are seemed to strengthen relationships.

Telegraph (2008) claims that FB helps encouraging long-distance relationships and helps people keep in touch. "Three quarters of those in such relationships said they were easier to maintain through websites such as Facebook or MySpace where pictures can be shared and video phone calls via computer" (Telegraph, 2008). AARP (2010) has shown positive result that most of the family members getting closer after their elder family members have adopted the social network site like FB. "Although social media is largely seen as a positive development (as indicated by 63 per cent of community survey respondents), it also is causing relationship problems largely around privacy, time demands and communication" (Probono Australia, 2012).

There are weaknesses of FB too when it comes to human communication of one-to-one that it has often become weaker of even failed a family communication when technology has taken control over a family. Diaz, Evans, and Gallagher (2011) have highlighted that FB has brought up people who like to escape from negative interactions and this cause heavy impact to family relationships and eventually people might turn to be antisocial.

According to a study of Chou and Edge (2012), FB is a powerful influence in digital lives nowadays. It has changed their users' perceptions of the lives of friends and family members. The highlight is that the longer the people log on FB, the more they start to believe that others have a better life than they do. This may even cause most of them having bad impression and looking down on their family members which eventually leads to a negative conversation and relationships. Prono Australia (2012) has further elaborated the negative aspect of social media use. "Our practitioners say that separating and divorced families often use Facebook, email and mobile phones unconstructively. Abuse and bullying of previous partners through these methods is a common issue, where guidance may be required to ensure that such contact is less emotional, more business-like and productive" (Prono Australia, 2012).

The above mentioned about the indications of FB shall be reflected in the context of Malaysian FB users while studying on its impacts towards Malaysian locals. Back in Malaysia, the Internet users has been at 3,700,000 as on 31st December 2000 and 17,723,000 as on 30th June 2012 with its country's population as 29,179,952 (Internet World Statistics, 2013). On the other hand we look at the number of Malaysians using social networking particularly through FB has reached

13,589,520 on 31st December 2012 (Internet World Statistics, 2013), with the penetration of 46.6% from its population. The figures here are mainly to reflect on the possible and high penetration of Malaysians in social networking using CMC and the possible exposure of social network users related to the two interpersonal goals.

Raj (2012) has indicated that Malaysians have the highest number of FB friends, with an average of 233 friends in each account. Malaysians spend averagely nine hours per week on FB, which is one of the highest compared to other countries. NewStraitsTime.com (2011) has also indicated that Malaysians are spending more time interacting on the virtual world. Most of them will log in to FB through smart phone when they are waiting, on bed and they are addicted to the SNS. Roslan (2011) has endorsed that youths and teenagers who are addicted to FB are categorized as addictive Facebookers who spend more than 4 hours per day. Those who spend less than 3 hours per day are using FB as a need than an addiction.

Mustaffa et al. (2011) have stated that FB is only a means of communication with other friends and as a way to reconnect them to their old friends. It is somehow that FB does not only have implication for young people themselves, it also affects their relationships within the family and between generations. FB improves family communication as it provides a platform to Malaysians to discuss issues that they never talk face-to-face.

Chen (2011) has structured the pros' and cons' of selected SNS based on its effectiveness to the users. In this context, it is only FB being studied here to reflect its effectiveness in communication. FB has high visibility, as there are a lot of people spending lots of their time on FB itself. The figure of users and time spent have been increasing so far. Another strength of FB is that it is a form of virtual word of mouth. It is to say, when a friend shares something, which then it gets shared by his or her friends, which in turn later it gets further shared by his or her friends. To this research, the strengths of FB's features enable the sharing of content among friends and family. On the other hand, there are weaknesses of FB described. It may be lost in transit, where there is a possibility of FB profile updates being lost in a person's newsfeed. The more negative aspects would be users keeping in mind of competition against friends' statuses, baby photos and much more; and, cleaning up, refers to negative comments that are more noticeable, so it is good to have a term of use in info tab to protect you when deleting a comment.

As cited in Ezaleila and Hamzah (2011) on McQuail's (1994) view that there is a relationship between the dominant communication technologies in each era with the important features of community. Thus this would lead to a significant change in human life and society. We are now in the fifth era of human communication (Brody, 1990), where it is emphasizing on interactive communication. Many people now are involving in the use of new media technology, the Internet in particular, to meet their psychological and social needs. Interpersonal communication is the main cause that fosters such use (Kraut et al., 1998).

Telegraph (2012a) reports that four in five teenagers 'hide Internet activity from parents'. On the other hand, Telegraph (2012b) has also reported that getting pensioners online could solve elderly loneliness crisis. Baym et al. (2007) has stated that online relationships are of a low quality than offline relationships, whereas in an interpersonal communication research, closeness and intimacy are critical to a strong relationship. Kelly et al. (1983) refer to closeness as strong, frequent, varied,

and enduring relationships that have been revised and are encountered in Internet settings. Looking at the contradiction in an innovative interaction between classic community communication and social media, there is an unknown scent of the future struggling and challenging both human communication and relationships in the presence of digital culture.

In an online research conducted by Little (2011), the Internet is helping to create new pathways of social cohesion in a contemporary society. In his research poll, 70% of respondents strongly agreed that the Internet creates a basis for new forms of social cohesion. Quoting the example of Egypt, the use of FB during the democracy demonstrations in Egypt provides a positive indication. FB has enabled real time communication and social expression of Egyptians to support the activists. On the other hand, social media might be seen to enhance small group cohesion while undermining national cohesion.

This research is looking at how social media like FB affecting family communication and relationship in the aspect of human communication. It is the initial relationship that brings human communication to a social cohesion, be it small group cohesion that eventually brings to a national cohesion.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Media Dependency Theory

DeFleur (1989) have defined Media Dependency Theory as that an individual will be more depending on the media which have his or her needs fulfilled. In between the need fulfillment, there is a link between media, audience and social system. It is to be seen as dependency relationships with each other. The theory emphasizes on both individual characteristics and on interpersonal relationships among individuals. The theory suggests that when people are getting more dependent on media, the influence of media on users' perceptions and behaviors become stronger. It is to say that dependency on media changes as environment and goal change. In this research context, when media is running in a cyberspace, and the purposes of engaging in social media changed, the dependency of users on social media should be changing too. Due to the change, media users have shifted media use to social media and there comes the impact of social media on users' perceptions and behaviors. This is where this research intends to find out. Miller (2005) has provided an example of such relationships giving a scenario where an individual relies on newspaper (part of the media system) or rumors spread by friends (part of the interpersonal network) to provide information about what apartments are available for rent. When such a scenario is put to this research, this research is changing the components to other components. Newspaper is replaced by social media; rumors spread by friends is replaced by the content spread by online community or the friend list in SNS; and, the information of apartment may remain unchanged. What remain unchanged is the dependency relationships of the theory that the researchers study on. There on further the study is on the outcome of such dependency relationships. There is one important point in this theory would be that Media Dependency Theory can be applied to dependency relationships at a variety of levels like group, organizational, and societal. When all the components are put

in, the process of this theory is that, firstly, media attracts individuals by offering the content which is able to fulfill the audience needs for understanding, entertainment and information. The next stage is the stage of strength in dependence relationship. It is depending on the cognitive level of the users who realize the importance of media to them. It also encourages the individuals to maintain the level of attention and also the affective motivation influenced by the emotional reactions that the media bring to them, and that it will enhance the level of satisfaction. Both cognitive and affective motivation is putting the audience to a higher level of involvement in the process of information.

Burrus (2010) has agreed that people become more dependent on social networking sites like FB and Twitter. It is to gain latest information of friends and to maintain relationship with friends and family. It has shown that people nowadays are becoming more and more dependent on FB in terms of time spent on FB. It is also about information, happiness and sadness, social life and cohesion that bring them to the heavy use of FB. This research is hereby to look into the extensive use of FB and to what extent Malaysians are depending on FB for the purpose of social life which also leads to social cohesion.

3.2 Diffusion of Innovation

According to Rogers (1983), diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. It is a special type of communication where messages are new ideas and communication is a process of creating and sharing information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding. "It explains the diffusing process across all of the medium, contexts of interpersonal, small group, public speaking, organizational, mass and intercultural communication" (Cragan & Shields, 1998). Few key words highlighted in this theory are that new ideas refer to newness, with some degree of uncertainty, whereas uncertainty refers to a number of alternatives, a lack of predictability, of structure, of information. Diffusion is also a kind of social change, which is defined as the process by which alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system.

Rogers (1983) indicated that communication is the essential elements of the process whether diffusion is spontaneous or planned. The essence involves a few conditions. First of all, an innovation must be existed; second, an individual or social unit with knowledge of or experience with the innovation must be present; third, adoption, where the individual or the social unit with the potential to adopt; lastly, either interpersonal or mass communication channel, must connect the two individuals or units. In a simile to this theory, diffusion of innovation introduces four key elements, namely the innovation of new idea; communication channels; time; and, a social system. "To survive, members of a collectivity actively seek, understand, experiment, and eventually adopt new practices" (Cragan & Shields, 1998).

Based on these four key elements, Mustaffa et al. (2011) have conducted a research on the adoption of FB among youth in Malaysia. The study examines the FB adoption rate, the factors that influence youth to adopt FB and the purpose of using it among youth. As indicated by Cragan and Shields (1998), the perceived value of an innovation affects its rate of adoption. This research

paper is not looking at the mathematical reflection of innovation and adoption. Somehow it is co-related in its impact towards the users.

To this research paper, it is highlighting on a different area using the same theory to study the use of FB among Malaysians. Instead of adoption rate, factors and purpose of using FB, this research focuses more on the social system, its impact toward human communication, mainly interpersonal communication through social media and its lead to social cohesion.

4. Methodology

Online survey is the research method used in this study. The rationales of using this method are based on the guideline of Wimmer and Dominick (2011) that surveys are to investigate problems in realistic settings where consumer behavior patterns can be examined where they happen rather than in a laboratory or screening room under artificial conditions; the cost of surveys is reasonable, where online survey is indeed near to zero; a large amount of data can be collected with relative ease from a variety of people; they are not constrained by geographic boundaries, they can be conducted almost anywhere; and, data helpful to survey research already exist. Due to the advantages of surveys to this research, the researchers pick up this method to proceed and minimize all other possible setbacks of this method.

The questionnaire is composed in four parts. There are a total of 28 questions in the questionnaire designed. The questionnaire is formatted according to the research objectives which are to study the use of social media like FB and its impact on human communication and relationships. The focus of human communication is on interpersonal and family communication and relationships which are co-related to social cohesion and further to social unity. The questionnaire is also set to meet the study on the behavioral change of Malaysians.

This research is volunteering basis in data collection. The questionnaire is attached in a FB account of a student volunteer who has 217 friends in her FB friend list. The questionnaire is distributed to all in the friend list, which means those who have FB accounts too, and volunteered to become a sample of this research. The subjects in the friend list are ranging from the age of 18 to 34. This research is conducted regardless of the subject's gender, educational background and occupations. The subjects are to have contact with their family members before and after the use of FB. Another criterion for the subjects is that they are using FB mainly for the purpose of social activities and human communication. The period of responding is from 4th November 2012 to 18th November 2012. The volunteer sampling collection stops at the time frame set and the analysis is to be carried out at the point when the sample collected is from 89 respondents of the friend list of 217 of them. If the number of 217 is the base of this research, the response rate is meeting at 41%. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), the response rate of Internet surveys shall be in the range of 5% to 80%. 41% of response rate is therefore taken into account to proceed with the analysis. The sample of questionnaire is attached as Appendix A.

5. Results

The questionnaire used in the online survey of this research paper is divided into four parts, namely respondents' profile, pattern of use on FB, general family communication and the use of FB for the purpose of family communication. There are 217 friends in the volunteer's FB friend list. Of 217 friends, there are 89 of them responding to the online survey, which is 41% of the overall sample.

5.1 Respondents' Profile

This research of online survey eventually is replied by the respondents of 89 in total over 217 friends in the name list. As mentioned earlier, gender and educational background are not the variables of this research. All respondents are from the group aged 18 to 34 years old. The respondents are assumed to have contact with their family members before and after the use of FB. Another criterion for the respondents is that they are using FB mainly for the purpose of social activities and human communication. The criterion are reflected on the statement of the questionnaire as an invitation to participate.

5.2 Pattern of Use on Facebook (FB)

Of 89 respondents, there are 62.3% of them using smart phones to connect to FB and most of them tend to have FB as the first and the last activities they do in a day. 80.3% of the respondents agree that FB is important in their daily life while 11.5% rated very important to them. 50.5% of them think that they are addicted to FB. Averagely 4.3 hours is spent daily in FB.

The reasons of using FB among the respondents are to communicate with friends at 35% of the respondents, to communicate with family at 11%, to get to know new friends at 7%, to read articles and news at 26%, to play games at 1% and to access to entertainment at 20%.

Rosiah (2011) has labeled FB users who spend more than 4 hours in FB per day as FB addicts. Referring to the reply of the respondents, 36% of them are considered addicts with daily time spent of more than 4 hours. There are 10% of them who spend less than an hour per day. 54% of them are average users who spend mostly 2 to 4 hours per day. Somehow the average hours spent in FB daily is as high as 4.3 hours.

There are 49.2% of the respondents agreed that FB is the first and the last activities they do in a day. 61% of them log in FB accounts on a 24x7 basis. Most of them tend to check their FB accounts every one or two hours.

The highlight of this part is the load of use of FB and its adoption, and the activities involved. There are actually 36% of the respondents using FB for more than 4 hours daily, who are labelled as FB addict though 50.5% have found themselves addicted to it. The adoption is prominent as there are 61% of them log in FB on a 24x7 basis. It has become a habit and sooner or later a behavior of FB as most of them have formed such habit of interval FB checking or browsing between one to two hours.

FB is used as a tool to communicate with friends and family. There are more than half of the respondents utilizing FB for other forms of Uses and Gratification instead of relationship building. At the advancement of devices like smart phones, more than half of the respondents logging in FB through it. There comes an assumption alongside to this research that technology plays at a more important role than FB. New technology will always take over the role of communication as in Diffusion of Innovation where innovation refers to the new technology.

5.3 Family Communication - Reviews of Users on FB

Table 1. Reviews of Users on FB

Question Number	Questions	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
C1	FB helps to deliver your message successfully all the time.	73	27
C2	Your family understands the message that you intend to deliver.	64	36
C3	FB helps to convey your thoughts easily.	71	29
C4	The response rate from your family members in FB is higher than other way of communications like emails, phone calls, letters and others.	80	20
C5	You get to know your family members better through FB.	75	25
C6	FB is a good platform to communicate and connect with your family members.	53	47
C7	You spend more time communicating with your family members ever since you have created a FB account.	53	47
C8	FB is a good tool to communicate with your family.	75	25
C9	You have been spending more time communicating through FB than face-to-face.	89	11
C10	You have become closer to your family members ever since you start using FB.	49	51

Based on the data collected, 71% of them agree that FB helps to convey thought easily. It is also reflecting that FB is able to deliver messages successfully at all time. 64% of them think that their family members would understand the message that they intend to deliver. The response rate from family members in FB is higher than other forms of communications. 53% of the respondents find that FB is a good platform to communicate and to connect with family members and from that they get to know more about their family members too. It is where the respondents spend more time communicating with family members ever since they have created a FB account. In that sense, FB has been a good tool to communicate with their families.

49% of the respondents agree that they spend more time on FB than with family after owning a FB account. This anyhow does not lessen their time to communicate with family members as the family is always their priority. As in overall, 89% of the respondents prefer to communicate with family members by FB than face-to-face.

FB at that point of time of research, is perceived a tool of communication. Respondents are spending more time on it to relate themselves to their friends and family than face-to-face. Somehow it is at almost a debatable point to assume that FB is able to make users become closer to their family. Though the percentages have shown the level of dependency on it. FB has at certain point increased the activities of communication among friends and families.

5.4 Family Communication via FB

The data collected shown that FB usage has impacts towards the relationship between the family members. It is divided into two categories, direct impact and indirect impact.

92% of the respondents agree that they get to know more about their family members through FB. In this view, FB has helped the users to interact more with their family members. One hand FB is enhancing the interpersonal relationships among friends and family members, on the other hand the usage of FB has negative impact too. There are 8% of the respondents agree that they have abused time spent on FB and it has become ignorant to other family members.

50% of the respondents agree that FB helps to connect with family members indirectly like a middle person. The family members' perceptions towards FB have been changed slowly as they begin to realize that FB has helped to enhance the communication among family members and their relationships have become closer. There are respondents who do not find FB a good tool to communicate with family who are staying under the same roof. Parents or guardians tend to monitor their children's FB activities and that has become a source of conflict which brings negative impact to the family members. Respondents prefer to communicate with their family members through inbox message. FB is an efficient channel to reach family members for a family reunion and photo sharing among them.

Most respondents have started to spend more time in FB but time spent with family members through FB are relatively increased though not sure of the amount of time increased. The respondents generally prefer to communicate with family members through FB than face-to-face.

6. Conclusion

Referring to Media Dependency Theory applied in this research, it indicates that the more a person becomes dependent on the media to fulfill these needs, the more important the media is for that particular individual. This situation is reflected in this research that most respondents are depending on FB in their daily life. Social media like FB is playing the role of building relationships with friends and family members though it has some constraints when FB is abused. Other than communications, FB is seen as the main source of information from personal news to global news without verifying its trustworthiness. Users are also depending on social media in game playing, accessing to audio and video clips and reading articles. When the interaction is growing in the online community, inevitably people are depending more on the social media while interpersonal relationships grows simultaneously with the interpersonal communications.

There is also an obvious diffusion process of the social networking site from a great number of people and the pattern of diffusion is not limited by the age range and different culture of the adopter. It is found that the diffusion process in FB users is from the early majority to the late majority and eventually laggards. It is due to the fact that most of the friends in their daily life own a FB account, that then they adopt the use of FB, and slowly the trend of this new idea is diffused to family members.

FB is used as a tool to communicate with friends and family. Human communication and interpersonal communication are not new ideas. They can be further expressed and developed through the advancement of technologies. When social media, FB exists as a communication channel, among the online community offline human relationships, over time the relationships shall be influenced. Further to this, it will contribute to a cohesive society. There comes another assumption which is not set in this research is that technology plays at a more important role than FB.

FB is perceived a good tool of communication that is able to bring closeness among the family members. FB usage brings positive impact towards family members, with the continuously increasing number of local FB users, FB would help to build a better and harmonic society, where the understanding of harmonic society are majorly contributed by happy and successful families. Through the use of FB, relationships among family members and communication shall be improved and enhanced to the level of a united society.

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[Appendix A]

Thank you for spending time in this online survey which is on Impacts of Social Media (Facebook) on Human Communication and Relationships: A View on Behavioral Change and Social Unity. Your identity and personal information will be kept as confidential. This survey is suitable only for respondents who are having contact with their family members before and after the use of FB. Another criterion for the respondent is that you are using FB mainly for the purpose of social activities and human communication / interpersonal communication.

Instruction: Respondents are to circle only an answer until that special request is stated.

A: Respondents' Profile

A1. Specify your gender

- a. Male
- b. Female

A2. Specify your age

- a. In between 13 to 15 years old
- b. In between 16 to 17 years old
- c. In between 18 to 24 years old
- d. In between 25 to 34 years old
- e. In between 35 to 44 years old
- f. In between 45 to 54 years old
- g. 55 years old and above

B: Pattern of Use on Facebook (FB)

B1. How much time do you spend on FB per day? (Regardless of any devices and activities)

- a. Less than 30 minutes
- b. More than 30 minutes

B2. Which device(s) do you use to log in to FB daily? (May circle more than one answers)

- a. Smart phones
 - b. Laptops
 - c. Others
-

B3. Why are you logging in to FB every day? (May circle more than one answer)

- a. To communicate with friends
- b. To communicate with family
- c. To know new friends
- d. To read articles and news
- e. To play games
- f. To access to entertainment like music and video

B4. Do you think FB is important to you in your daily life?

- a. Not important
- b. Important
- c. Very important

Why? _____

B5. How frequent do you communicate with your family members through FB?

- a. Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Frequently

B6. Is FB the first and the last activity of your online routine of a day?

- a. Yes
- b. No

B7. Would you consider yourself addicted to FB?

- a. Yes
- b. No

B8. What are the activities you usually do in FB? (Hints: checking news feed, sharing articles, chatting, playing games, updating profile and others)

B9. How much time do you spend on FB alone per day?

B10. What is the interval time between your last log-in and the next log-in to your FB account?
Or, If you hang your FB accounted logged in, how frequent you check your FB? (Hints: every 30 minutes you check your FB once)

C: Family Communication - Reviews of Users on FB

Kindly tick your answers at either AGREE or DISAGREE. Thank you.

Question Number	Questions	Agree	Disagree
C1	FB helps to deliver your message successfully all the time.		
C2	Your family understands the message that you intend to deliver.		
C3	FB helps to convey your thoughts easily.		
C4	The response rate from your family members in FB is higher than other way of communications like emails, phone calls, letters and others.		
C5	You get to know your family members better through FB.		
C6	FB is a good platform to communicate and connect with your family members.		
C7	You spend more time communicating with your family members ever since you have created a FB account.		
C8	FB is a good tool to communicate with your family.		
C9	You have been spending more time communicating through FB than face-to-face.		
C10	You have become closer to your family members ever since you start using FB.		

D: Family Communication Via FB

Kindly type your answers on the lines provided. Thank you.

D1. Has FB helped you to interact with your family members? If yes, please explain how? If no, please explain why?

D2. Has FB usage affected the relationship between you and your family members? If yes, please explain how.

D3. What are the features of FB you usually use to interact with your family members? (For instance, inbox message, post status, comments on photo, tag). Why?

D4. Comparing the amount of time you spend on FB to the amount of time you spend with your family members, are you now spending more time on FB than with your family members ever since you own a FB account?

D5. Do you prefer to communicate with your family members by FB than face-to-face? Why?

D6. What is the impact of FB to you and your family?

Thank you for participating in this online survey.