Identification of the Functions of Using Virtual Social Networks in Promoting Social Capital

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to identify the functions of using virtual social networks (VSNs) in promoting social capital. The research method used was exploratory mixed. In the first stage (qualitative), semi-structured interviews with phenomenological approach were conducted with 18 research participants including professors of communication sciences, media experts, officials of media organizations and professors and experts in the field of social sciences and sociology, and the results were extracted using Colaizzi's seven-step method. Then a focus group consisting of 10 scholars and professors was used to determine the dimensions of qualitative research findings related to the research topic and effective in promoting social capital. The dimensions obtained from the focus group indicated that the most important functions of using VSNs in promoting social capital are the possibility of mass communication and dialogue, increasing sociopolitical participation, the possibility of interaction between people and government by VSNs, promoting norms in virtual space, user access to transparent information, creating solidarity, social cohesion, and so on.

Then for the other purpose of the study - ranking (prioritization) of these functions according to the users - quantitative approach was used and a questionnaire was developed based on the dimensions extracted from the qualitative part of the study. While confirming the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, and after distributing it among the population - 384 citizens over 15 years of age in Isfahan and based on Friedman test and analysis of the responses in SPSS - the results showed that the role of media literacy has the highest and accountability towards users' doubts and questions the lowest ranks in promoting social capital.

Keywords: Social networks, social media, VSNs, social capital, communication

1. Introduction

In recent years, as a social phenomenon, VSNs have been an issue that has attracted the attention of many thinkers. These networks are a new generation of Internet websites bringing about the possibility of reaching a new way of communicating and sharing content on the Internet virtually and in absentia.

Indeed, "the new media is a distinct set of communication technologies with the common feature of being digital and citizens' extensive access for personal use" (Mehdizadeh, 2013: 319).

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Ziae Parvar (2009) stated some of the features of virtual networks to be sharing, mobilizing and organizing, friendship, trust, audience coteries, citations and generalizations, multimedia, chat, ruthless criticism, following and being followed, prestige, re-publication, collective wisdom, being global, entertainment, democratic structure, power of social capital, social mobility and initiative and creativity (Hakimi, 2011: 68).

This is while according to the analysis of reports and opinion polls conducted over the past two years, 52.18% of Iranian households have access to the Internet, and 55 out of every 100 Iranian men and 51 out of every 100 Iranian women are members of social networks and overall 53% of Iranians have been members of at least one mobile social network, which is increasing. This shows that the effect of using VSNs o the lives of users has increased with increase in the Internet penetration and the number of users (Gholizadeh and Zamani, 2017: 108).

One can state that social capital has elements and components with which one can pave the way for improvement and development in other sectors if strengthened. Awareness and information, values and norms, trust, mutual relations, participation, sense of responsibility, formal and informal networks, help and assistance, cooperation and collaboration, religious beliefs, orderliness, rational thinking, respecting each other, government efficiency, feelings of security, government adherence to laws and regulations, altruism, honesty, fidelity, rule of law, peace and friendship, joint efforts, and so on are some of the elements and components considered as indices of social capital, among which trust and participation have been emphasized more than the other components (Jasebi, 2001: 125).

In sum, one can state that VSNs have various dimensions, components and consequences and functions that can be used only to reduce the harm and increase the social capital of users by using only a correct scientific model. Accordingly, by qualitative as well as quantitative studies of users' use of VSNs in promoting social capital, the scholar tries to answer the questions: "What are the functions of using VSNs in promoting social capital?" and "What is the significance or ranking of these functions in promoting social capital according to the users?"

2. Theoretical foundations

2.1. Virtual Social Networks (VSNs)

A virtual social network is a set of web-based services allowing the individuals to create public or private descriptions for them, or communicate with other members of the network, share their resources with them and from among other people's general descriptions, look for new connections (Soltanifar, 2010: 53).

Regarding this, McQuail identifies and introduces the important dimensions and features of new media as 1) interactivity, 2) social presence, 3) media richness, 4) independence (autonomy), 5) playfulness, 6) privacy, and 7) being personal and four main categories of new media: interpersonal media, interactive-role media, media and information retrieval, and mass participatory media. According to this theory, the total needs and motivations of the audience in using media can be placed in four main categories: 1) awareness and monitoring, 2) personal relationships, 3) personal identity, and 4) entertaining and escaping from reality (Mehdizadeh, 2013: 84).

Here, one can state the theory of "dissemination of innovations" to explain the pervasiveness of VSNs. The theory studies the dissemination of the social process of innovation, including new ideas and methods of using tools, and achieving them and spread them in a social system. Rogers E defines innovation as an idea, action, goal, means, or adaptation to a changing state that one assumes is new. To him, dissemination is a special kind of communication that focuses on the spread of innovation. Rogers E considers the process of disseminating innovations to have five steps: 1- awareness stage, 2- stimulation stage, 3- decision stage, 4- execution stage, and 5- the stabilization stage seen in using social media and new media (Rogers, 1995: 124).

Turkle (2016) believes that cyberspace "is taking human to a postmodern culture based on distinction and dispersal, as presence in cyberspace allows its user to easily play multiple and different roles at different times and with different settings of interest because of its specific features like being anonymous and elimination of physical signs." Moreover, cyberspace is

somewhat liberating in his view as it allows the user to be the creator, actor, director, producer and overall function of the show at the same time (Zare Shahabadi and Zare Beigi, 2013: 40).

In studying the advantages and disadvantages of using social media in the European Union, Drahošováa & Balco (2017) showed that the most widely used web 2 platforms in the EU are wiki systems, video sharing websites, search engines and social networking sites. Moreover, the three most widely used social media in the European Union are Facebook, Google Plus and Instagram, respectively.

In this study, the advantages of social media, respectively, are the exchange of information and communication, information sharing, education, teamwork and work from home and services, and the disadvantages, respectively, are Internet addiction, insecurity, excessive information and the loss of social communication (Drahošováa & Balco, 2017: 1006).

2.2. Social Capital

Social capital is one of the concepts that was first discussed by Hanifan L J in the field of social sciences and highlighted by the application of Putnam R (Jamshidiha, 2004: 67).

The base of social capital issue is based on the value of connections and relationships between individuals and groups. Overall, social capital is the hidden wealth and assets existing in social relations among the actors of society arising from the quality of relationships and the way they interact, and causes the relationships between individuals to change in a way that facilitates action (Shojaee Baghini, 2008: 9).

By studying the effects of social capital produced, one can mention "social confidence", "social union" and "social participation" as components of social capital that are interrelated (Putnam, 2001: 36).

Patnam (1993) believes that "All the social characteristics of institutions and organizations like confidence, norms and social networks are called social capital."

Against Patnam's definition, social capital in Bourdieu's (1983) definition refers to the investment of individuals in social networks. In this definition, social capital is a private commodity that can be transformed into cultural capital, real wealth, or "symbolic capital" showing social status. Thus, the level of individual benefit from social capital determines a very significant part of his power in society (Jamshidiha, 2004: 66).

In a division, five types of social capital - 1- Linked social capital, 2- bridging social capital, 3- synergistic social capital, 4- intra-group (limited) social capital, and 5. Extra-group (connecting) social capital - have been identified that can be used to identify resources and analyze them (Shojaee Baghini, 2008: 47).

This is while, with a little reflection on today's society, one can figure out that VSNs affect various aspects of social capital.

3. Research Background

In their study entitled "Social capital in VSNs (social capital of the network)" with a survey method and using a questionnaire whose population was all virtual Persian social networks and sample size of 386 people selected using non-probabilistic snowball sampling method, Tavassoli and Klarijani Amani (2012) concluded that the social capital state was different in various dimensions and in each of the structural, interactive and functional dimensions, results were obtained that may be different from the social capital situation in the real world. The effect of some social and contextual variables on the social capital of the network in this study confirmed the research hypotheses and formed the causal model of research with mutual interaction.

In their study entitled "The effect of VSNs on the social capital of students: Case study of students of the University of Science and Research" using correlational research method and questionnaire and the population of Faculty of Management and Economics, University of Science and Research, Islamic Azad University of Tehran and sample size of 172 people selected by random sampling method in proportion to volume, Mortazavi Oskoui et al. (2014) concluded that the effect of virtual network on social capital components (participation, confidecne and

cooperation) of students of Azad University of Science and Research Islamic Tehran was less than the average. The main hypothesis test showed that electronic social networks have a relatively strong effect on social capital components like participation, collaboration, and confidence.

In his paper entitled "Social capital in real and VSNs (Case study: Female student of Tehran universities)" by comparatively measuring the social capital of female students in real and virtual space using Dmitry Williams' ISCS survey method, Shaverdi (2017) selected 819 people from the population using Cochran's method and multi-step sampling method. The results showed that the average of all the components of social capital was in favor of the social capital of the real society. Moreover, the bridging social capital in the real society with an average of 38.4 had the highest level of social capital and the associated social capital in the virtual society with an average of 26.8 had the lowest level of social capital among them.

In their research entitled "Telegram's social software in campaigning for the twelfth presidential election from the perspective of voters" with cluster purposive sampling of professors and experts in the field of media and sociology among 384 state university professors of Tehran (13 universities affiliated with the Ministry of Science), Mehdizadeh Taleshi et al. (2017) showed a significant relationship between attracting attention to animations and "Telegram" advertising videos and participating in elections.

In their study entitled "Sharing digital visual media: privacy concerns and confidence among young people" using a quantitative survey research method to compare the attitude of college students regarding privacy and confidence in sharing digital images and videos through the Internet-based media in three forms - Facebook, social media, and mobile phones, Zemmels & Khey (2014) showed that the confidence in the recipient of images sent via mobile was significantly higher than that of other media.

In a study entitled "Convergence of virtual reality and social networks: A threat to privacy and freedom" with a qualitative phenomenological approach focusing on ethical issues related to the possible convergence of virtual reality, social networks and ultimately VSNs given the rapid development of technology and the popularity of new forms of social interaction, O' Brolchaim et al. (2015) concluded that the convergence of virtual reality in VSNs was associated with moral problems like privacy threats and threats to audience freedom.

In a study entitled "Analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of using social media in the European Union" by a survey social media use, Drahošováa & Balco (2017) showed that the biggest advantage of using social media is sharing information and communication. This was the biggest advantage for 97.7% of the respondents in the European Union. The second major advantage of social media to 83.3% of respondents is data sharing.

Moreover, the disadvantages according to the participants were insecurity, Internet addiction, information overload, loss of social communication and increasing the percentage of time spent on social media.

In a study entitled "The effect of using new media on user personality characteristics" by sampling in Shanghai using structural equation model (SEM) to data, Ke Xue et al. (2018) examined the effect of data penetration and concluded that using new media has a significant positive effect on being extroverted, open-minded and agreeable through the senses, and has negative effects on emotional stability and self-awareness through self-monitoring.

Additionally, the user's gender significantly moderates the relationship between using new media and the sense of belonging: the relationship is greater for women than for men.

4. Research question

4.1. Main question

What are the functions of using VSNs in promoting social capital?

4.2. Sub-question

What is the importance (ranking) of the functions of using VSNs in promoting social capital according to the users?

5. Method

In this study, the research method used was exploratory mixed. In the qualitative section, data collection methods were library and field. The library method was used to collect information on the background of internal and studies abroad, and in the field method, the researcher continued to collect information by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with a phenomenological approach to the theoretical saturation of information.

The research population in the qualitative section was professors of communication sciences, media experts, officials of media organizations and professors and experts in the field of social sciences and sociology, of whom 18 were selected using purposive sampling method.

The analyses of this section were performed using the seven-step classification method of Colaizzi as follows:

First, the description of all the participants was read and recorded to feel the empathy.

Second, each of the protocols was referred to and the important terms were extracted where 183 sentences were extracted.

Third, the meaning or the implication of each important item was done as the adjusted concepts by the researcher where 231 primary concepts were extracted.

Fourth, the adjusted concepts were organized within thematic categories.

Fifth, the findings were integrated into a comprehensive description of the phenomenon in question and organized as the main themes.

Sixth, the comprehensive description of the phenomenon studied was stated as a clear and vivid statement and the components of using VSNs were stated in using social capital.

In the final stage, the results were given to the participants and they were asked about the findings.

After that, the validity and reliability of the content was confirmed. Thus, to confirm the validity by using the member control technique, by presenting data analysis and its results to the respondents to inform and use their reactions in writing reports, the findings were shown to the participants and their comments were received and used.

Moreover, to confirm the reliability of the findings, the researcher showed the extracted concepts to several researchers and professors in this field as a guide committee and ensured their consensus in the objective and scientific evaluation of the findings.

The final table of the qualitative part obtained from the seven-step classification method is presented in Table (1).

Then, the focus group, 10 researchers and professors, was used to determine the dimensions of qualitative research findings associated with the subject of the study effective in promoting social capital. One of the data collection methods in qualitative designs is focus groups. The focus group is one of the qualitative interview techniques designed to create interaction between group members to provide motivation for deeper discussion and to reveal various and new aspects of the topic under discussion (Corbetta, 2003). To this end, a questionnaire obtained from the qualitative section of the study was provided to the members of the focus group. After discussing and eliminating the dimensions unrelated to the research topic, the main effective dimensions in promoting social capital were extracted. According to the dimensions obtained from the focus group, a questionnaire with 54 questions (items) was designed to be used in the quantitative section of the study to measure the significance or ranking of VSNs use functions in promoting social capital.

Then the validity and reliability of the questionnaire were confirmed according to the dimensions extracted from the qualitative section (obtained by the focus group).

The opinion of the experts was used to confirm the validity of the questionnaire, and the relevant questionnaire was given to the experts. After reviewing the opinions of each of them, the questionnaire was modified. Finally, after applying their final opinions, the final questionnaire was developed and thus the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed.

Moreover, to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, 30 questionnaires were initially distributed and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for 54 questions was 0.932using SPSS software. Cronbach's alpha coefficient fluctuates between 0 and 1, based on which the closer the value to 1,

the greater the alignment of the items of a scale that shows the acceptable reliability of the variables examined.

Then, in the next step, the final questionnaire obtained from the qualitative section of the study was examined as field for fit to identify the significance coefficient (ranking) of each of the functions of using VSNs in promoting social capital,.

The volume of population in the quantitative section based on the latest official statistics for citizens over 15 years of age in Isfahan was 1.570,000 people. According to Krejcie and Morgan sampling table, 384 questionnaires were distributed to the population using cluster sampling method and SPSS was used to perform data analyses based on Friedman test. The results of the quantitative section are presented in Tables (2) and (3).

6. Results

This study was conducted to identify the functions of using VSNs in promoting social capital, with the most significant findings presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1. Final Results of the Qualitative Section (from Colaizzi's Seven Steps)

Row	Initial concept	Category	Theme	Aspect
1	The possibility of commenting freely in front of the ruling media on virtual networks	The possibility of communication and collective talk	Positive consequences	Factors that strengthen (promote) social capital
2	Responding to the needs of the audience in cyberspace by the elite			
3	The possibility of connecting the audience with celebrities in cyberspace			
4	Easy interaction and communication is the most significant feature of virtual networks			
5	Strengthening friendly communication in cyberspace			
6	Cyberspace is a platform to meet the needs of real space			
7	People's sense of freedom is the most significant feature of VSNs			
8	The possibility of free activity given the postmodern structure of social networks			
9	Audience chance is attracted to cyberspace			
10	The significance of data transfer speeds on VSNs	Fast, easy and cheap service	Positive background factor	
11	The possibility of communicating in minimal time in a cheap and easy way by virtual networks			
12	Access to virtual networks without time and space limitations			
13	The significance of easy access to VSNs services			
14	The existence of different tools for conveying messages on VSNs			

15	Learning without time and space limitations in cyberspace			
16	Cheap services in cyberspace			
17	Modification of the behavior of rulers, introduction to increasing social confidence	The need for rational confrontation by the government		
18	Transparency and honesty of governance is a prerequisite for cyberspace management			
19	Prohibition of the government is the reason for the increase in people's use of virtual networks			
20	Wrong government policy-making is the cause of the current turmoil in cyberspace			
21	Proper use and management of cyberspace by officials			
22	The need to increase the tolerance threshold for governance to gain people confidence			
23	Intelligent use of cyberspace is a condition for social and political participation by the government			
24	Public confidence in using VSNs			
25	The negative reaction of the people to the filtering of virtual networks by the government			
26	Fighting the cyberspace and threatening it by the government			
27	The lack of seriousness of the officials about the significance and necessity of cyberspace			
28	Late and poor internal messaging			
29	Lack of sense of the need to work in cyberspace in the government			
30	Elite training in the field of content production for impact in cyberspace	Elite training in content production		
31	The need to acquire knowledge about cyberspace for active actors			
32	The relative effect of virtual networks on participation given increased media literacy	The role of media literacy	Positive background factor	Factors that strengthen (promote) social capital
33	People's being affected by the cyberspace dependence on the level of media literacy			
34	Media literacy determines the active or passive user in cyberspace			
35	Being an active and knowledgeable actor is an effective condition in cyberspace			
36	Differences in the quantity and quality of using of virtual networks based on people's skills and knowledge			

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37	High speed of interaction and access to information in cyberspace	Ease of use social networks		
38	The ease of working with VSNs for all people compared to other systems			
39	The role of celebrities and famous people in cyberspace in promoting social participation	Increasing sociopolitical participation		
40	Using celebrities for political purposes is a reason for media coverage of politics			
41	The possibility of forming informal and non-governmental groups in virtual networks			
42	The possibility of streamlining through VSNs			
43	Creating a wave by VSNs in the political arena			
44	The possibility of political space to invite more political participation than to invite cultural participation			
45	The power of VSNs in creating waves and social participation			
46	VSNs are the base for the development of social participation			
47	The role of VSNs in mobilizing and involving people	Establishing solidarity and social cohesion		
48	The possibility to connect more people with the society through VSNs			
49	The power of networking and social solidarity through VSNs			
50	The possibility of expanding traditional communication in cyberspace			
51	The possibility of receiving fast and cheap feedback from the society through social media for governance	The possibility of interaction between people and the government	Positive consequences	
52	Creating a two-way flow between people and governance through virtual networks			
53	Breaking the media monopoly by virtual networks			
54	The role of cyberspace in promoting social norms	Promoting norms		
55	Transmitting moral concepts to family members in cyberspace			
56	The possibility of expressing emotions to family members in cyberspace			
57	Creating change in society according to technological change	Socialization of individuals		
58	The role of the media in socializing people			

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59	The effect of age and people's experience on the effectiveness of VSNs			
60	The possibility of gradual change of beliefs in cyberspace because of lack of response to the doubts raised	Accountability towards users' doubts and questions	Positive consequences	Factors that strengthen (promote) social capital
61	The possibility of a gradual change in the norm by cyberspace because of the provision of specific contents			
62	The role of VSNs in giving information to people	User access to transparent information		
63	The power of streamline cyberspace in notification			
64	Raising public awareness through cyberspace			
65	Relieving from the feeling of loneliness in cyberspace	Avoiding social isolation		
66	Avoiding social isolation by VSNs			
67	The dual and contradictory policies of the government are the cause of distrust of the government	Transparency and modification of the function of government		
68	Dissemination of corrupt officials' actions in cyberspace has led to mistrust			
69	Lack of transparency in dealing with violations by officials is a cause of distrust of rulers			
70	Anonymity in cyberspace creates lack of identity	User presence with a fake identity	Negative background factor	Factors that inhibiting social capital
71	The possibility of participating in cyberspace with a fake identity			
72	Fake identity is the reason why people feel free in cyberspace			
73	Distrust between users due to fake identities			
74	Fake identity causes a decrease in trust and social capital			
75	Low social capital of domestic social networks due to lack of sense of freedom and security in them	Distrust of internal social networks		
76	Lack of trust of people in domestic social networks			
77	Lack of sense of freedom and security of the people in using internal VSNs			
78	Fear of leaking information is a cause for distrust in the domestic social media networks			
79	Distrust of the government is the reason for distrust of domestic messengers			
80	The enemy's negative propaganda is one of the reasons for people's distrust of domestic messengers			

81	The possibility of government access to people's personal information is a reason for distrust to internal social networks			
82	Management by the government is the reason for people's distrust of internal social networks			
83	Dealing with negative points and conflicts in cyberspace because of the existence of cultural roots in people	Publish negative news for cultural reasons	Negative background factor	
84	Reducing social trust by publishing negative news in cyberspace			
85	Negative functioning of VSNs due to the existence of a destructive cultural context			
86	The publication of negative news in cyberspace is a reaction to the unacceptable actions of the authorities	People's distrust to the government		Barriers to the promotion of social capital
87	The contradiction in the behavior and claims of the rulers is the cause of distrust of the government			
88	The negative behaviors of people in cyberspace due to past tyranny and the feeling of freedom today			
89	Unfamiliarity with cyberspace is the reason for removing elite people from cyberspace	The inability of the elite		
90	The inability of some elites to take advantage of cyberspace			
91	The role of the quasi-elite in the absence of active elite action in cyberspace			
92	There is a negative view of VSNs because of the digital divide between the old and the new generation	Negative look to cyberspace		
93	Some elites have a negative view towards cyberspace			
94	The cultural delay of society in the face of cyberspace		Negative background factor	
95	The lack of a single internal messenger reduces solidarity among individuals	Weakness in internal messengers		
96	Weakness in providing internal messaging services			
97	Decreasing social trust by increasing unrealistic information in cyberspace	Distrust due to invalid contents		
98	Most cyberspace users are consumers of the content			
99	Uncertainty of content production resources in cyberspace			
100	Enormous use of cyberspace by the enemy for political and social participation	More effective use of the enemy		
101	Cyberspace is a modern colonial tool			

102	Publishing immoral images in cyberspace	The spread of abnormal communications	Negative consequences	Background Negative consequences factor	Barriers to the promotion of social capital
103	The possibility of easy communication with the opposite gender in cyberspace				
104	Cyberspace promotes immoral views in society				
105	Playing the negative role of VSNs with personal preference on collective interests	The spread of individualism			
106	The possibility of expanding individuality in cyberspace				
107	Reversing reality by cyberspace	Reversing reality			
108	Unrealistic representation of topics by the media				
109	Creating weak and short-term links in cyberspace	Weakening traditional social capital			
110	VSNs are the cause of the loss of traditional social capital				
111	Damage to social capital with the virtualization of social relations				
112	The challenge of social capital by virtual networks				
113	Virtual networks are a tool to intensify the decline of social trust				
114	Normalization of insults in cyberspace	Weakening moral principles			
115	Normalization of violence in cyberspace				
116	The neglect of moral values in cyberspace				
117	People's lack of interest in Iranian traditions and norms	Threatening traditions and indigenous customs			
118	Expressing people's interest in Western customs				
119	The traditional social interactions loss of significance				
120	Conversion of some concepts and culture in cyberspace to the official culture of the community	Promoting non-native literature			
121	The effect of cyberspace on the real space of society				
122	Changing beliefs over time through VSNs	Change in positive user beliefs			
123	The effect of belief changes on the behavior of cyberspace users				
124	The power of the media to change people's beliefs				
125	The effect of soft power (belief) on cyberspace				
126	Leading the world's public opinion by the West through VSNs	The tool of Western domination			
127	The possibility of reproduce social modes (social states and moods) by VSNs	Behavioral ability of social networks	The two-way background factor	The two-way consequence	Two-way indices in promoting social capital
128	Possibility of behavior building by VSNs				
129	The role of VSNs in shaping people's behavior				
130	The importance of trust in network managers in creating and developing partnerships virtual social network or vice versa	The role of managers networks			
131	The role of cyberspace managers in reducing or improving the social capital of the network				

No.	Statement	Category			
132	User needs and concerns are the reasons for using VSNs	The importance of need and user goals			
133	The user encountering cyberspace in line with their goals				
134	Strengthening the user's previous mindset in the face of cyberspace				
135	The role of virtual network content in determining their positive or negative function	The role of content in network functionality			
136	The variety of content producers in cyberspace				
		Prioritize people			
137	The feeling of freedom and the absence of limitations are the cause of people's nature in cyberspace	Real self-expression o individual and society			
138	The possibility of expressing the nature of people and facts in cyberspace				
139	The possibility of the emergence of some of the realities of society in cyberspace				
140	The possibility of taste making and prioritizing by the media	Determining people priority			
141	The ability of VSNs to unify people's priorities		The two-way		
142	Changing the people's social life by cyberspace	Create a new lifestyle	The two-way		
143	The possibility of creating new lifestyles by VSNs				
144	Having a single and strong internal messenger	Indigenous messenger unit			
145	Control and management of the indigenous cyberspace		two-way The components		Two-way indices in promoting social capital
146	VSNs are a double-edged sword for the governments	Decreasing or increasing social capital			
147	The possibility of decreasing or increasing social capital by cyberspace				
148	The existence of relationship between security, trust and social capital	The relationship of social change with social capital	two-way		
149	The existence of relationship between social capital and social change				
150	The need to pay attention to the logic of media (being on media agenda) in social phenomena	Media logic in phenomena	The two-way components	The background d factor	

As already stated, after extracting the findings of the qualitative section using Colaizzi's seven-step method (Table 1), the focus group including 10 researchers and professors was turned to for determining the dimensions of the qualitative research findings associated with the subject of this research: effective dimensions in promoting social capital. The final findings and main variables, evaluated in the quantitative section as a questionnaire, were the possibility of mass communication and dialogue, increase in political and social participation, the possibility of people's interaction and governance by VSNs, promoting norms in cyberspace, user access to transparent information, creating social solidarity and cohesion, fast, easy and cheap services, elite training in content production, role of media literacy, socialization of individuals, ease of using

virtual networks, avoidance of social isolation and the need for rational confrontation of governance with cyberspace, transparency and reform of governance and accountability towards users' doubts and questions.

These dimensions were evaluated in a quantitative section where the results were presented based on Friedman test after analysis by the software in Tables (2) and (3):

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Main Variables

Variables	Sample size	Mean	SD
The possibility of communication and group conversations	384	3.207	0.725
Fast, easy and cheap services	384	3.495	0.954
The need for rational confrontation by the government	384	3.253	0.778
Elite training in content production	384	3.624	0.860
The role of media literacy	384	3.710	0.906
Ease of using virtual networks	384	3.605	0.831
Increase in sociopolitical participation	384	3.259	0.678
Creating solidarity and social cohesion	384	3.262	0.743
The possibility of interaction between the people and the government	384	3.147	0.798
Promoting norms	384	3.432	0.936
Socialization of individuals	384	3.378	0.807
Accountability towards users' doubts and questions	384	3.071	0.845
The possibility of access the user's transparent information	384	3.469	0.772
Avoiding social isolation	384	3.324	0.808
Transparency and modification of governance functioning	384	3.062	0.940

Table 3. Ranking the Main Variables (Friedman Test)

Dimensions	Rank	Mean rank
The possibility of communication and group conversations	12	7.04
Fast, easy and cheap services	4	9.02
The need for rational confrontation by the government	9	7.47
Elite training in content production	2	9.91
The role of media literacy	1	10.10
Ease of using virtual networks	3	9.64
Increasing political and social participation	10	7.23
Creating solidarity and social cohesion	11	7.14
The possibility of interaction between the people and the government	13	6.71
Promoting norms	7	8.11
Socialization of individuals	6	8.25
Accountability towards users' doubts and questions	15	6.24
The possibility of user's access to transparent information	5	8.81

| Avoiding social isolation | 8 | 7.88 |
| Transparency and reform of governance | 14 | 6.44 |

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study in the qualitative section showed that the most significant functions of using VSNs in promoting social capital are the possibility of communication and collective dialogues, increasing political and social participation, the possibility of interaction between people and government by VSNs, promoting norms in space, the possibility of access to transparent information, creating social solidarity and cohesion, fast, easy and cheap services, training elites in content production, the role of media literacy, socialization of individuals, the ease of using virtual networks, avoiding social isolation, and the need for rational confrontation of the governance with cyberspace, transparency and modification of governance performance and accountability towards users' doubts and questions.

The results showed that using VSNs, it is possible to promote social capital by increasing communication and collective dialogue, which is a significant part of social capital.

Moreover, because of the presence and invitation of celebrities in cyberspace, it is possible to increase sociopolitical participation in the community. By modification of the behavior of the rulers in confronting cyberspace and in the case of rational confrontation with the honesty and transparency of the government regarding cyberspace, people's trust in the government will enhance.

The possibility of more people connection to the community through VSNs and networking capability and social solidarity by these networks has a great role in creating social solidarity and cohesion.

Creating a two-way flow between the people and the government through virtual networks and breaking the media monopoly by virtual networks, and the possibility of quick and cheap feedback from society by social networks for governance, the cause of interaction between people and governance and thus increase in social capital becomes available in society.

Transferring moral concepts to individuals and the possibility of expressing emotions to family members in cyberspace indicate the important role of cyberspace in promoting social norms as a significant part of social capital.

The high speed of interaction and ease of access to information in cyberspace, and the convenience of working with virtual networks for all people compared to other systems are of the components influencing users' use of VSNs to learn these networks.

The role of VSNs in informing people, the possibility of flow making in virtual space in informing the public and raising public awareness by cyberspace show the significant dimension of the user's access to transparent information by cyberspace.

Elite training in content production to affect cyberspace and the need to acquire knowledge about cyberspace for active actors is of the significant findings of this study as it affects elites in cyberspace is conditional on gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to face VSNs.

The possibility of forming informal and non-governmental virtual groups in virtual networks, the possibility of invitation to political participation by cyberspace, and the creation of waves by VSNs in the political arena are of the effective factors in increasing people's sociopolitical participation.

Moreover, some findings show that because of the increase in people's media literacy, virtual networks have a relative effect on people's participation, and people being affected in cyberspace depends greatly on their media literacy.

Releasing from the feeling of loneliness in cyberspace and the possibility avoid social isolation by VSNs are of the underlying factors for avoiding social isolation of VSNs users and an introduction to increasing social participation as a component of social capital.

Concerning the possibility of accountability towards users' doubts and questions, it has to be noted that with the expansion of information technology applications in everyday life, we see the formation of a new generation of Internet tools that bring about more facilities for mutual relations, negotiation, dialogue and communication in general and two-way communication, overall. It is

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clear that there is the possibility of gradual change of beliefs in cyberspace because of the lack of response to the doubts raised and the possibility of gradual change of the norm by cyberspace because of the provision of special contents in virtual networks.

Transparency and supervision over the performance of government officials is a significant matter that has long been stressed as a deterrent to corruption. Besides political and legal thinkers, religious leaders have emphasized this too. In spite of the negative pressures related to the role and function of social networks in society and some of its adverse effects, the role of fast and immediate news information in this space must not be overlooked. At the moment, social networks act as an invisible camera where all the behaviors and actions of individuals, personalities and public institutions, especially sensitive individuals and institutions, are recorded and broadcast, which can have disclosure, embarrassing and at the same time deterrent roles. If this space is properly managed and the laws related to how it works in the country are formulated and implemented, it will have an effective role in combating corruption, especially financial corruption. This was well seen in the case of paychecks. In other words, the power of the media outweighed the power of regulatory and security agencies.

Concerning the results of the quantitative section according to Table 3 based on the Friedman test, it is shown that to the users, the role of media literacy with an average rank of 10.10 has the highest rank and accountability towards users' doubts and questions with an average rank of 6.24 the lowest in promoting social capital regarding the functions of using VSNs.

In this section, media literacy ranked first. Concerning media literacy as one dimension of the dimensions of using virtual networks in promoting social capital, one has to note that today, besides educating citizens for a national society; there is the need to prepare citizens to live in a global society as an educational necessity. Teaching media literacy to citizens in the age of globalization is a general concept that relies on media, cultural, social, historical, political, and technological studies, and it can educating better ways to live in the information and communication age, used specifically in a society and in the world generally. Establishing an efficient citizenship education system tailored to the needs of the globalization age and focus on media literacy of users in using social networks can have the greatest effect on promoting social capital.

In the second rank was elite education in content production and the significance of education and the significance of content production. Content is one of the most significant elements an audience can trust in a brand or social network due to its attractiveness and interactivity. Content production is creating a paper, designing an image, making a marketed video or any other food that while being attractive has a high quality. Content production involves many stages like research, market research, determining the attractiveness of the subject, and countless other issues.

The ease of using virtual networks ranked the third. Ease of access to information and other users could enhance the relationships among the individuals, and thus can enhance social capital. This variable ranked third because social capital arises from human communication, the type and technology of which change from time to time. With the communication revolution, many changes have occurred in communication technology like computers, cell phones, the Internet, fax, satellite, and so on that have overhauled issues from people social relationships to how they spend their free time. Moreover, unlike other types of capital stored against physical tools and in the actors themselves, social capital is developed and carries on in the communication networks among the actors and can be converted into other types of capital.

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