

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF FAMILY MONITORING IN THE EFFECT OF VIRTUAL LEISURE AND COMPUTER GAMES ON TEENAGERS RELIGIOUS IDENTITY OF IRAN

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to investigate the effect of online computer games on teenagers' religiosity, religious identity, and the type of their relationships with their families And answers to this question how far the Iranian family is monitoring the type of computer games played by their children And answers to this question how far the Iranian family is monitoring the type of computer games played by their children. Following this aim, Castelles' theory, Sherry Turkle's theory of *The Second Self*, Thurlow's theory of *Johari Window*, and *Mask of Identity* theory of BrandaDunt, Stark have been used in theoretical bases. This article is the result of a research done on 830 female high school students and 15-17-year-old male students in 2015. The results show that there is a significant positive relationship between online and computer games and the religious identity and level of religiosity of teenage boys and girls. This study shows that the high use of cyberspace and uncontrolled use of computer games has had a significant impact on teenagers' tendencies towards secularism and tolerance and tolerance in attitudes and behaviors. On average 33% of Iranian families have no control over their children's presence in the virtual space. Iranian families have more control over their daughters' children in virtual space.

Keywords: Digital leisure, religiosity, religious identity, teenagers, virtual leisure.

INTRODUCTION

Culture and religious teachings have always been respected in Iranian society. Religion, as a dynamic phenomenon, is the linchpin of cultural and social identity in Iranian society, and plays an important role in shaping teenagers' identity. Virtual social networks such as Facebook have changed social values and made a dramatic transformation in the way people's and groups' religious identity is formed. As a matter of fact, the effects of cyber space on families and teenagers are one of the most serious concerns of the cultural managers of Iranian society. Undoubtedly, the growing use of cyber space by women and teenagers as well as the evidence presented by security and disciplinary institutions confirm the above mentioned effect. One of the characteristics of contemporary society is the widespread and profound changes in various cultural and social spheres with the help of technology and technical knowledge, including virtual and computer space.

“Getting addicted to media”, digital world, or cyber space, is the term to describe the way teenagers spend most of their leisure time in today's societies.

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The youth spend their leisure time alone more than before and increasingly rely on the new media like computer games and online games to be entertained (Gelfgren and Hutchings, 2014). Rapid and inevitable changes in media communications field have caused a profound transformation in social relations and cultural changes, and overshadowed several social and cultural fields with its network power. What is noteworthy beside these trends is the importance of maintaining teenagers' leisure time and adding variety to it. We must consider the current generation as the first generation being familiar with computer and communication technologies. Many of them are able to work with a wide range of computer software and understand them easily. In addition to influencing people's enthusiasm, taste, and communicational need, these technological changes have also affected the way they spend their leisure time (Haughey, R., and H. Campbell. 2013). This effect has been so significant and profound that has introduced new phenomena such as virtual identity, second life, digital family, etc. What has concerned families and experts more than others is the effect that joining cyber space and playing online games have on teenagers and users' personality, cultural behavior, and religious identity, especially because teenagers and users are often looking for a new structure of social and cultural identity these days, and this powerful tool can undoubtedly provide its users with ample opportunities for defining, presenting, and expressing themselves. Cyber space and digital space have replaced common forms of political and social cooperation in true scenes of society with new forms of declarative and emotional cooperations² (Siurala, 2000).

The significance of these changes has been noticed by many social science and cultural studies experts. Giddens, Castells, McLuhan, and others have expressed the impressibility of the societies' general processes by social networks and information society in different ways. Monitoring and observing the impressibility level of Iranian society by cyber space and computer games have been emphasized by the government's managers and authorities. In the postmodern era, gradually the virtual space becomes a serious challenge as a new reference group and one of the most important actors in the transformation of values and norms, family and family monitoring, and their traditional and historical role. The current article, excerpted from a national research, aims at investigating the effect of computer games and online games on teenagers' religious identity and religiosity, and finding the answer to this question that And answers to this question how far the Iranian family is monitoring the type of computer games played by their children And answers to this question how far the Iranian family is monitoring the type of computer games played by their children.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

In “Interaction in Social Networks and its effect on the Youth’s Religious Identity”, Ghasemi and Adlipoor found that there is a significant relationship between the youth’s using Facebook and their religious identity. According to the results of the above study, “There is a significant inverse relationship between the duration of membership in Facebook and how much they make use of it. However, there is a significant positive relationship between the users’ considering the content of virtual social networks to be real and their religious identity, i.e. the more the duration of membership in Facebook and its usage increases, the weaker the users’ religious identity becomes.” (Ghasemi et al, 392). In “The Investigation of the relationship between Virtual Social Networks and the Users’ Religious Identity” done on the students of different fields of study and grades in the universities of Tehran. Mazinani found that in five areas of emotion, belief, close relations with family, educational performance of parents regarding religion, and parents’ conformity to religious values and beliefs, sheer participation in and using virtual social networks do not have any significant effects on the weakening of the users’ religious identity, but the way these networks are used, i.e. practically or just for fun, long duration of presence in the social networks, the reason why they use them as well as their social class are effective in the weakening of the users’ religious identity and their tendency towards transforming from original and traditional religious identity into reflective and modern identity or, at least, doubt about their original identity in some areas (Mazinani, 2014).

In “the Investigation of the Youth’s Motivation to Participate in Cyber Space”, Zokaei found entertainment and conversing to be the youth’s motivation. He also found that the youth and teenagers trust cyber space more than their families (Zokaei, 2004). In his research, Azari came to the conclusion that there is no significant relationship between the usage of Facebook, homogeneity of user friends in Facebook, and social capital. The results of multivariate regression demonstrated that the level of relationship with others has the most effect on social capital in that research (Azari, 2010). In her research entitled “Social Network and Online Interactions” done in Tehran, Zare investigated teenagers and families’ participation in cyber space and its effects on identity; as a result, she found that the extent of teenagers and families’ participation in cyber space has led to the teenagers’ pessimism and individualism (Zare, 2012). Torbati carried out a research on the effect of interpersonal relationships in cyber space and realized that computer games can encourage introversion and result in lack of trust (Torbati, 2010). In addition, in his thesis, Rezanian studied the experience of self by women in online games and found that online games are a tool and opportunity for teenage girls to display their femininity, and that is why it can be a threat to gender identity in

this age (Rezania, 2010). Foreign research has also paid particular attention to this issue and investigated important variables. Based on the results of some of those studies, online virtual games to the reduction of social capital, isolation and avoiding real cooperation (Kraut et al, 1998; n. wairing, 2000), leaving familiar societies and groups for network societies (Maffelosi, 1996; Welman, 2001), the youth's orientation towards mosaic education, and extreme fragmentation of tastes and subcultures and consequently, massification (Shills, 1963; Neuman, 1991) (Sagone, Caroli, 2013). Khani (2015) found that social capital and the level of university students' media literacy was above average, but the usage of cyber space by them was high. She also realized that the variables of media literacy level and usage of cyber space had a significant positive relationship with the university students' social capital. In a research done on 400 Americans, the researchers discovered that the Internet users spent less time with their families in comparison with those who were not the Internet users. According to the results of that study, the Internet has made the border between home and personal affairs indeterminate (Giddens, 2000). In his research conducted in Sweden, Jacob came to the conclusion that the more cyber space is used, the less trustful and intimate women will be to their husbands (Jacob, 2002).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In addition to Castelles' theory, in order to explain the effects of computer games on teenagers' cultural and religious identity, Sherry Turkle's theory of *The Second Self*, Thurlow's theory of *Johari Window*, and *Mask of Identity* theory of Brenda Dunt are employed.. Based on Castelles' theory, in the process of identity creation, cyber space has produced several various social resources, made traditional identity creation difficult, taken away "time" persistence, subject "unity" is manipulated, and given human a feeling of being transient and variant. Moreover, cyber space has spread uncertainty and hesitancy across all areas of cultural life and even the area of scientific knowledge, and brought about widespread fear and insecurity. Also, it has expanded the realm of social life relationships, made people's social world much bigger than the past, and evoked the feeling of this world's getting uncontrollable in the people. Transformation, variation, and speed have become the most important factors of cyber space participants' social life, and threaten their epistemological security (Castelles, 55, 2001). From Terkel's point of view, virtual space is due to features such as the possibility of life with anonymity, the removal of physical signs, enjoyable space and liberation. Because it allows a person to play multiple roles. (Turkle, 41, 2005).

Thurlow In *Johari Window* theory, emphasizes this point that concentration on important aspects of a game weakens interpersonal relationships including perception and openness. Johari Window reveals two major dimensions through

which we clearly conceptualize ourselves for others and organize our self. Thurlow points out that Johari Window reminds us of hard decisions about self-openness in online or of line games (Thurlow, 170, 2010).

In *Cyber Society* book, Brenda Dunt explains *Identity Masks* theory and considers text as a mask while investigating gender, game, and performance issue on the Internet. She makes this point that Internet game provide the players with an opportunity to be able to display their emotions differently. According to this theory, through online games, players have the opportunity to easily play with or instead of their opposite sex. They seek to make use of online games as a source for having pleasure in sexual relations in a different way. Dunt believes that virtual culture is a simulation of images that are not necessarily the physical reality 6 (Dunt, 44, 2011).

Greenflend and Mark define religious-social identity as individual psychological experience from a religious-social group. In their opinion, frequent interactions with religious groups through official religious participation develop a person's religious-social identity, and identity development, by itself, has a positive role in individuals' mental health . Greenflend et al. (2007)

According to Recently, Ashmoor et al. (2004), individual and collective identities consist of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components, but they are distinguished by their function for people. Accordingly, Templeton et al. (2006) raised religious identity as collective identity, and spiritual identity as individual identity. Spiritual identity is personal identity because it involves particular spiritual traits of an individual rather than the common traits of a group. Furthermore, spiritual identity does not have a direct relationship with the feeling of belonging to a religious group. Religious identity is collective identity, for people having religious identity believe that they are a member of one religious group, and their identity can change based on the acceptance of ideologies, the acceptance of religious values importance, commitment to the religious group, and religion-related deeds. The basis of purpose and meaning in life is the most important product and outcome of religious identity. During the process of religious socialization, people exploit doctrine and society resources in order to develop their identities and reach psychological comfort (ibid). Glarke and Stark have considered 5 dimensions for religiosity-related features that have guided us in this study. These dimensions are as follows: Considering the fact that one of the features of identity is being multidimensional.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Religious identity is characterized by understanding the values and a person's sense of belonging to joining a particular religious community (Jacobson, 14, 1998). It can also be said that religious identity is a relatively fixed set of perspectives that a person has in mind as a result of his/her relationship with religion. Religious identity, as a collective identity, requires that degree of religiosity that agrees with

collective “we” or religious community or nation of religion (Hajiani, 2009: 437). As mentioned so far, religious identity is a person’s reliance on a belief system that affects that person’s orientation in different areas. It is a process through which the members of a group preserve their fidelity to religion by having common religion and teachings, and shape and consolidate it with willingness to perform pervasive religious ceremonies and rituals. This type of identity can be observed in fidelity to the nature of religion, symbolic religious values, pervasiveness of values, collective and public interest in religious rituals, ceremonies, institutions, symbols, practical cooperation, and practical willingness to religious rituals. As said before, religious identity is a person’s reliance on a belief system that affects that person’s orientation in different areas. In other words, religious identity is an interpretation and image that every person has about religious issues. It is a process through which the members of a group preserve their fidelity to religion by having common religion and teachings, and shape and consolidate it with willingness to perform pervasive religious ceremonies and rituals. This type of identity can be observed in fidelity to the nature of religion, symbolic religious values, pervasiveness of values, collective and public interest in religious rituals, ceremonies, institutions, symbols, practical cooperation, and practical willingness to religious rituals.

Kellogg’s and Stark’s localized model evaluates belief, ritual, empirical, intellectual or scientific, and outcome dimensions of religion. This scale has been used in several studies, and it is kind of the most original and common scale used in research on religious identity.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is a survey research. Female and male 15-17-year-old high school students of Iran’s metropolises make up statistical population of this research among which 3800 students were selected as the statistical sample through quota and then random sampling. A questionnaire, pretested with 30 samples, was employed as the instrument of data collection. In order to analyze data, appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics were used.

Evaluation Method of Religious Identity

In most of the researches under study, religious identity has been evaluated with three basic concepts of religiosity, religious culture, and religious commitment and beliefs as follows:

a) Religiosity

Religiosity is a component which has been evaluated in almost all studies. Religiosity, itself, consists of separate dimensions, components, and indicators.

(Insert Figure 1 here)

TABLE 1: RELIGIOSITY DIMENSIONS AND INDICATORS

<i>Dimensions and Components</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Belief	Believing in God, Quran, prophecy, and resurrection; Considering oneself religious, Accepting God’s rules
Ritual	Performing individual and collective prayers (saying prayers, fasting, going to mosque, congregation prayer, participation in religious ceremonies, pilgrimage)
Emotional (Empirical)	Religious tendencies, interests, and emotions including feeling proud of being Muslim, sympathy with other Muslims, Feeling calm while praying, feeling proud of being Shiite, feeling positive about God and His prophets, feeling negative about God’s enemies, feeling close to God, talking to God, considering God to be observing our deeds, and requesting God for help
Outcome	The outcomes of religious belief, action, and knowledge in life (abiding by religiously lawful and unlawful things, avoiding telling lie, observing the rule of hijab, avoiding drinking alcoholic drinks, etc.)
Theoretical Commitment to Religion	Considering Islam to be important; necessity of having information about Islam; being interested in Islam; resenting the distortion of Islam
Practical Commitment to Religion	Joining and participating in Islam’s fan groups; attempting to learn Islam; commitment to rules and regulations of religion
Ethics	Individual and social aspects of morality in life and the necessity of observing them

b) Religious Culture

This component consists of accepting religious beliefs, accepting holy texts and religious leaders, believing in religion’s usefulness and practical commitment to religion, accepting religious values, referring to religion in life affairs, learning about religion, type of attitude towards religion, and noticing religious symbols.

c) Religious Commitment and Dependency

Commitment to religious community, cooperation in religious activities and joining them, mental and theoretical involvement in religious issues, religious tolerance, promoting religious beliefs and defending them, commitment and effort to modify the society and the effect of different social, economic, and cultural situations of the society on religion, feeling of dependency on and membership in religious community and considering oneself to be religious, feeling proud of or hatred

towards membership in religious community, willingness to pay money and have commitment in order to preserve the religious community, feeling responsible for the destiny of the religious community.

Data Analysis and Results

This research was carried out on 830 member of 15-17-year-old high school students in Tehran, Isfahan, Tabriz, Ahwaz, Mashhad, Shiraz in 2015. 48 percent of the sample was made up of girls and 50.5 percent of it was made up of boys. The average time spent on online games was estimated to be 71 minutes by girls and 105 minutes by boys.. 60 percent of the sample under study considered themselves to be belonging to the middle class, 11 percent to the upper social class, and 29 percent to the lower class. 88 percent of the students had personal computers and all of the students had personal cell phones. In addition, 61 percent of the population reported that they had private rooms. 38 percent of the population reported their only leisure time to be playing online games. 18 percent of the students played with their parents, and 41 percent of them reported that their parents monitored their games or repeatedly warned them.

Inferential Analysis of Variables Relations

TABLE 2: COMPARISON BETWEEN THE AVERAGE EFFECT OF PLAYING ONLINE GAMES AND FAMILY RELATIONS

	<i>Usage of Online Games</i>		<i>T Statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Low (up to 1 hour)</i>	<i>High (+26 hours)</i>		
Religious Commitment and Dependency	3.5	3.1	13.2	0.000
Belief	4.7	4.7	11.4	0.000
Cognitive	4.4	4.4	11.8	0.000
Emotional	4.5	4.5	14.7	0.000
Outcome	4.3	4.3	14.4	0.000
Behavioral	3.3	3.5	13.8	0.000
Ethics	4	4.1	13.5	0.000
Religious Culture	3.9	3.9	13.4	0.000
Trust in Friend	3.5	3.6	9.2	0.000
Hope for Future	3.3	3.7	9.6	0.000
Satisfaction with Life	4	3.4	7.3	0.000

The table indicates statistical significant relations between the degrees of playing online games and religious identity and teenagers’ social relations with family and social groups. As a matter of fact, boys and girls have been affected to the same extent. Based on the research data, as the degree of playing online games increases, the teenagers’ religious desire and identity regress, and their hope for future decreases. Furthermore, their satisfaction with life and feeling of calmness become less, they sympathize less with the society, and have less cooperation in home affairs.

TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF STATISTICAL SAMPLE IN TERMS OF FAMILY MONITORING

<i>Do not monitor at all or very little</i>	<i>Sometimes they monitor</i>	<i>Are fully monitored</i>	<i>Family Surveillance</i>
29.5%	29%	44.5%	girls
35%	27%	41%	Boys

The data from this table show that the Iranian family has more control over the children of their daughters. 35% of boys and 27% of Iranian girl girls are playing and playing without family supervision.

TABLE 4: COMPARISON BETWEEN AVERAGE EFFECT OF PLAYING ONLINE GAMES AND FAMILY RELATIONS ACCORDING TO GENDER

	<i>Usage of Online Games</i>				<i>T Statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Low (up to 1 hour)</i>		<i>High (+26 hours)</i>			
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>		
Religiosity	4	4.4	3.4	3.8	14.4	0.000
Religious Commitment and Dependency	3.6	3.9	3	3.4	13.8	0.000
Religious Culture	4.1	4.2	3.6	3.9	13.5	0.000
Trust in Family	2.2	4	1.8	3.2	13.4	0.000
Satisfaction with Life	3.7	3.7	3.2	3.2	9.2	0.000
Hope for Future	3.4	3.6	2.9	3.3	9.6	0.000

The table above shows that although girls have been affected less than boys in some indicators, the overall trend suggests that playing online games by girls and boys has had similar negative effects on their religious identity, degree of calmness, and satisfaction with life, while the extent of parents’ observation of female users has been more than their observation of male users.

TABLE 5: REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEENAGERS' RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND AVERAGE USAGE OF CYBER SPACE BY THEM

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Standard Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Constant Value	8.4	0.265		27.32	.000
Religious Commitment and Dependency	0.229	0.076	0.020		.000
Average Usage of Cyber Space by Teenagers	0.312	0.009	0.021	18.3	.000
Religiosity	0.211	0.045	0.024	5.4	.001

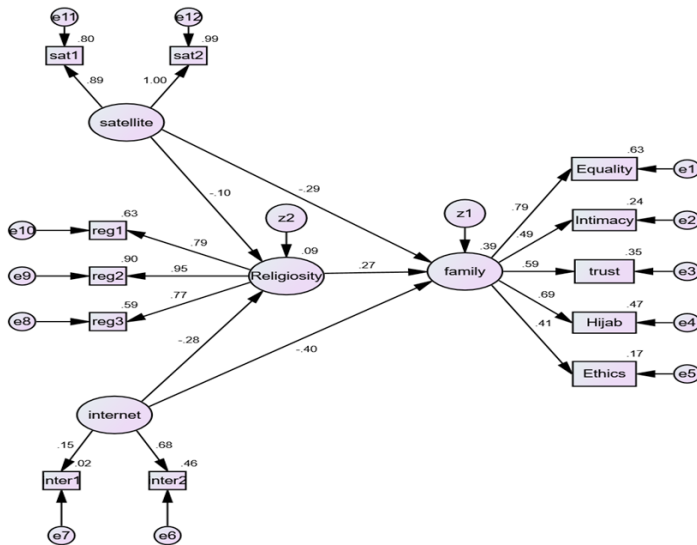
Variance Analysis to determine the significance of regression equation

<i>Source of Change</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Average of Squares</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Degree of Freedom</i>	<i>Level of Significance</i>
Regression	13444.762	1322.433	116	10	.000 (a)
Remainder	165763.14	10.76		14537	
Total	178754.3			14165	

Summary of regression model of effective variables on teenagers' religious identity

<i>R</i>	<i>2R</i>	<i>Adjusted R-Square</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
0.281	0.087	0.087	2.34

STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING



CONCLUSION:

The data and results of this research show that the virtual environment and its users experience a new form of religiousness and religious identity. It seems that one of the most important hidden functions of computer games and the use of cyberspace is the secularization of religious teachings and tolerance and tolerance in teenagers' religiosity. The high use and uncontrolled use of cyberspace and computer games can be a good platform for secularism and devaluation of identity for teenagers. The game in the virtual space has led to an ever-increasing number of people playing in the Iranian community.

Undoubtedly, cyber space is a source of assuming new identity, and a serious and tough rival for traditional reference groups including religious identity-making sources in modern societies. New communication technologies and information highways, especially the Internet and virtual social networks lead to the evolution of humans' relations degree all around the world. Although the emergence of such a phenomenon, itself, has been the result of several evolutions, it has led to many identity evolutions. One of those evolutions is in the meaning and concept of identity and people's, especially the youth's, religious and social identity. The research data revealed that the usage of online and computer games by teenage boy and girls had a direct effect on their method of interactions with their families, and the more time they spent playing online games, the more their social and religious distance with their families, friends, and society would become. They would also have a more negative judgment and attitude towards the religious values and norms of the society, family, and future.

One of the main purposes of this article is to point out that this increasing trend and less control of families and lack of social observation by official social control resources suggest that these games and cyber space, as a new reference group, are able to and have the capacity to replace religious values which always used to be the most important reference group in the society.

Analysis of the role of cyber space in weakening the users' religious identity demonstrated that using facilities like the Internet and virtual social networks freely was probably common in those families whose beliefs and faiths and consequently religious identity were weaker than other families. This issue, however, results from another factor, i.e. the Internet, virtual social networks, and satellite are not used logically in our society, and these media and information and communication facilities mostly promote western materialistic, hedonistic, and individualistic culture one of whose damaging impacts is the shortage of ethical and religious affiliation and religious identity in teenagers and the youth. Therefore, this matter has to be considered by authorities so as to resist the western media attack which is aiming at weakening and spoiling religion and religious beliefs of Muslim nations, especially the youth, and their major purpose is to uproot religious thoughts and leave

nothing called religion and spirituality for the future generations. Practical solutions, also, have to be proposed by the authorities to solve the abovementioned problem.

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