Gender Difference in the Motives for the Use of Facebook

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ABSTRACT—*Young people as active users of Facebook risk becoming Facebook addicts, neglecting study and professional development. For successful prevention of Facebook addiction the motives of Facebook use should be studied. Current study aimed at revealing gender differences in the motives for the use of Facebook. 150 female (Group 1) and 150 male (Group 2) university students were asked to rate the importance of each of the given motives on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). The total of maximal rate, as well as, percentage of actual rating for each motive was calculated. Gender differences were observed in these motives: Passing time: 35.3% - Group 1, 51 % - Group 2; Making new relationships: 44% - Group 1, 61.2 % - in Group 2; Maintaining contact with friends: 90.5 - Group 1, 80.9% – Group 2; Uploading pictures: 57.7% - Group 1, 35.1% - Group 2. Statistical processing of data obtained confirmed the gender difference in the motives of the use of Facebook: females give preference to contacting existing friends and uploading pictures, while males prefer making new relationships and passing time.*

Keywords: Facebook, motives, gender, students
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1.   INTRODUCTION

All around the world scientists point to the increasing risk of young generation becoming addicted to the internet. It is well established, that pathological use of the internet results in negative life consequences such as psychological and psychiatric disorders as well as academic failure in young people (Young, 1996, 1997c, 1998, 2009; Chen et al., 2003; Lin and Tsai, 2002; Wang et al., 2003; Pallanti et al., 2006; Yen at al., 2007; Rogers, 1997a,b; Weinstein and Lejoveux, 2010, Beutel et al., 2011; Kuss and Griffiths, 2011; Ko et al., 2012).

The overall goal of the current study is protection of young people from addictive behavior when using the Facebook. In particular, we focus on the motives for the use of Facebook. The more we learn about reasons behind visiting social sites, the better we are capable of regulating on-line behavior.

People can become addicted to almost any behavior. However, internet has particular characteristics that makes people easily addicted to it. These characteristics are as follows: presence of immediate reinforcement or gratification, a quality of concentrated focus while engaged in the behavior, an emotional attachment to the activity in social network; easy availability of the substance or activity, anonymity, or the ability to hide the behavior from others.

The internet possesses all of the above mentioned characteristics. Immediacy of reinforcement is present when people are playing online, have online chats or are surfing the web. Emotional attachment to social network develops rapidly, especially in the case of cyber-relationships or cybersex. Easy availability is a characteristic of the internet both in terms of its low cost and access (we can navigate in social network 24 hours from just about anywhere). When used

in the privacy of home, internet guarantees hidden or false identity and faceless interaction. No outward signs of past use remains when the computer is turned off (Young, 1996, 1997c, 1998, 2009; Chen et al., 2003; Lin and Tsai, 2002; Wang et al., 2003; Pallanti et al., 2006; Yen et al., 2007; Rogers, 1997a,b; Weinstein and Lejoveux, 2010, Beutel et al., 2011; Kuss and Griffiths, 2011; Ko et al., 2012).

In modern society, Facebook has become an important part of human life as a personal showcase where users share whatever goes on in their life, upload their pictures and spread news about themselves, get in touch with friends and unknown people, express and share their ideas and opinions and even try to influence the minds of people in contact. Facebook users can chat freely, send "pokes" attracting the attention from other users, "like" others pictures and status updates , and themselves publish pictures and status updates. Facebook users can also write on friends walls and send personal messages. Facebook users can track where their friends are when they leave the house and can themselves also let their friends know where they spend their leisure time by "checking in" from different places. Altogether, communication on Facebook between users is more or less transparent and constantly accessible – anyone can contact a user or find out what user is doing at any time. On one hand, study shows that the successful spread of Facebook might be associated with specific positive affective states experienced by social network users (Mauri et al., 2011).On the other hand, positive affective state experiences may drive people to spend more time on Facebook. Person is addicted to Facebook when one finds constant pleasure from the experience. Preoccupation with Facebook may turn into Facebook addiction when addiction criteria, such as neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, escapism, mood modifying experiences, tolerance, and concealing the addictive behavior, appear to be present in people who use Facebook excessively (An Anti Facebook Blog, 2010; Kuss and Griffiths, 2011).

Young people - school pupils as well as university students are considered to be the most active users of Facebook and therefore, they risk becoming Facebook addicts, which can lead to neglecting study and professional development. Facebook addiction may be considered as a particular type of internet addiction. For successful prevention of Facebook addiction we should learn what the motives of Facebook use are, why is this social network so attractive for young people and what are the differences in the use of Facebook based on age, gender and culture.

Facebook use is determined by the great variety of principal motives. It is shown that the main purpose for using Facebook is to be aware of activities in their social network (Passer et al., 2008). Other authors found that the most prominent habits of Facebook users were status updating, connecting with friends and family (Joinson, 2008; Quan-Haase and Young, 2010). At the same time Facebook users are interested in getting to know new people and be informed about social events, upload pictures and look at others uploads, get to know more people, find out about people met offline, get away from things they ought to do, keep track of the actions, beliefs and interests of the community, to which the user belongs, and seek self-status and self-manifestation (Elison et al., 2007; Lampe et al., 2007; Raacke et al., 2008; Joinson 2008; Park et al., 2009; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Quan-Haase and Young, 2010; Denti et al., 2012). People use social networks to communicate with the like-minded people, join groups with shared interests, organize or join events, play games (Joinson, 2008).

The motives for the use of Facebook may be grouped under seven categories such as: keeping in touch, passive contact, social surveillance, reacquiring lost contacts, communication, photographs, designing related uses, perpetual contacts and making new contacts (Joinson, 2008). Sweden's largest Facebook study (Denti et al., 2012) revealed some principal motives for Facebook use among Swedish population. According to the authors the main reason for using Facebook is maintaining existing social contacts and networks, while getting away from pressure and responsibilities, as well as tagging people in pictures and visiting unknown people are reported to be less important motives for using Facebook.

At the same time, there are distinct cultural differences in the motives of the use of Facebook. According to authors (Jackson and Wang, 2013), differences in cultural values together with the theory on motivations for social networking site use (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008), suggest that there are reasons to expect differences in social networking site use between different cultures. Authors studied the differences in the time spent, importance and motives for the use of social networking site between members of individualistic and collectivistic cultures (US and China citizens respectively). According to the authors, all of the motives for the use of social networking site were rated higher by Facebook users from US as compared to users from China. Students of other than Caucasian origin use social network sites more frequently than their Caucasian counterparts (Strayhorn, 2009). According to Strayhorn (2009) it may be the case that students of not Caucasian origin, particularly those in predominantly Caucasian environments, use online networks to keep in touch with family and friends who live at a distance or to nurture friendships that existed prior to enrolling in college (e.g., old high school friends). It has been reported that Greek Facebook users give less importance to status updates as compared to British, Italian, French and US users, while for Italian users, joining groups and applications within Facebook was found more important as compared to US users (Vasalou et al., 2010). French Facebook users regarded "keeping in touch" more important compared to Hong Kong users, while Hong Kong users displayed preference to communicating, seeking and sharing information through the Facebook (Tsoi and Chen, 2011).

Men spend more time online than women (Bimber, 2000; Jackson et al., 2001; Ono and Zavodny, 2003; Hargittai and Shafer, 2006). However, to our knowledge, less is known about the gender differences in the motives of the use of Facebook and about the uses of Facebook in the former Soviet countries, Georgia in particular. To extend data in this

direction, study presented aimed to reveal differences in the motives for the use of Facebook between male and female university students who use Facebook.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The sample was drawn from two institutions in the two largest cities of Georgia (Tbilisi - the capital, and Kutaisi). Two groups of students, all Caucasian, 150 female (Group 1, 78 subjects from Tbilisi, 72 from Kutaisi) and 150 male (Group 2, 80 subjects from Tbilisi, 70 from Kutaisi), whose mean age is 23, were recruited by random selection. The independent variable, given the study's focus, was gender. Gender was measured using two categories: 1 ("female") and 2 ("male"). The dependent variable in this analysis measured the motives of the participants for the use of Facebook. Subjects were asked to fulfill a paper and pencil self-administrated questionnaire. In the questionnaire, 16 motives for the use of Facebook were given: Maintaining contact with friends; Reading status updates; Looking at others pictures; Getting to know what other people do; Passing time; Visiting profiles of friends; Getting away from things one ought to do; Showing encouragement; Getting to know more people; Uploading pictures; Getting away from pressure and responsibility; Visiting profiles of people one does not know; Visiting friends' friends; Tagging people in pictures; Writing status updates and Letting others know one cares about them. Questionnaire was adopted from Sweden's largest Facebook study (Denti et al., 2012), translated into Georgian and adapted to local population. The respondents had to rate the importance of each of these motives on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). The total of maximal rate for each motive in Groups 1 and 2 was calculated as 150 (number of experimental subjects in each group) times 5 (maximal rate for the motive). The percentage of rating, made by the total of 150 subjects in Groups 1 and 2 for each motive was calculated as well. Data obtained was coded and analyzed in SPSS. Means, standard deviations and inter-correlations for the study variables (Facebook usage, gender) were calculated as well.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results obtained are represented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of rates, given to 16 motives in the Groups 1 and 2

N	Motives	Group 1	Group 2
1	Maintaining contact with friends	90.5	80.9
2	Reading status updates	27.8	30.4
3	Looking at others pictures	53.9	55
4	Getting to know what other people do	40	36.9
5	Passing time	35.3	51
6	Visiting profiles of friends	55.7	60
7	Getting away from things I ought to do	11.9	10.2
8	Showing encouragement	57.3	60
9	Getting to know more people	44	61.2
10	Uploading pictures	57.7	35.1
11	Getting away from pressure and responsibility	15.2	12.8
12	Visiting profiles of people I don't know	20.1	18
13	Visiting friends' friends	28.5	30
14	Tagging people in pictures	31	27.4
15	Writing status updates	38.1	36
16	Letting others know I care about them	48.7	51.3

All questions in the questionnaire got some rating (high or low) from each respondent in both Group 1 as well as Group 2. No question was rated 0 on a 6-point Likert scale. Data obtained confirms the reports on the big variety of reasons for the use of Facebook (Elison et al., 2007; Lampe et al., 2007; Raacke et al., 2008; Joinson, 2008; Park et al., 2009; Quan-Haase and Young, 2010; Denti et al., 2012). At the same time, it is clear that questionnaire used in the current study did not cover all possible motives for use of Facebook.

Male subjects (Group 2) rated passing time more important than females (Group 1), while females rated uploading pictures more important than males. The lowest rates were registered for motives such as: "Getting away from things I ought to do " and "Getting away from pressure and responsibility". No difference in the ratings of these motives between the Groups 1 and 2 was found. Data obtained coincides with reports of Elison et al.(2007), Lampe et al.(2007), Raacke and Bonds-Raacke(2008), Joinson (2000), Park et al. (2009), Quan-Haase and Young (2010) and Denti et al. (2012).

Data obtained is convincing that male and female students have different motives for visiting Facebook: males rated passing time higher than females, females rated uploading pictures higher than males. At the same time, data shows that male respondents use social network extensively for making new friends and relationships while females prefer keeping in touch with existing friends, which coincides with the results of the experiments by Turkish authors (Thelwall, 2008; Mazman and Usluel, 2011). According to Mazman and Usluel (2011), the reasons behind this finding could be explained

by the possibility that females tend to hide their identities and personal information to keep their privacy in the Internet environment. Similarly, Mazman et al. (2009) found that social influence on the decisions of females is higher than personal decisions while personal decisions are more dominant over social influence in males. This finding is in line with a report on significant differences between males and females on the usage of social networks by Tüfekci (2009). In particular, it was shown that females are more likely to use social networks to keep in touch with friends either living nearby or in other schools while males are more likely to use social networks to find potential friends and find people who have similar interests.

Now the question is if data obtained in the current study could be explained in terms of the social differences between men and women in more collectivistic rather than individualistic cultures. According to sociological criteria (Hofstede,1983), Georgian culture could have been characterized as collectivistic in the 20[th]century. However, in the contemporary Georgian society, socialization goals have changed from the defense of traditional values to the development of autonomy in the adolescents and their adaptation to the rapid changes in the society. In the near past the main goal of socialization was defense and transmission of traditional values and norms. On the contrary, nowadays the vast majority of young people and their parents reject former knowledge and experience and label it as outdated. They think that the main goal of socialization is the development of independence and initiative in the adolescents, as well as their successful adaptation to the modern international society. Therefore, the elders now tend to take into account the youth's opinion more often. Moreover, 37% of the young people and 42% of their parents and grandparents think that today the young people are capable of being completely independent from the elders. Evidently we deal with the increase of individualist tendencies in the contemporary Georgian society and modern Georgian culture can be considered as an example of transition from traditional-collectivistic to modern-individualistic orientations (Tsuladze, 2006). Taken together, data obtained in our study, as well as data reported by Turkish authors (Thelwall, 2008; Mazman and Usluel, 2011) could be considered specific to cultures, where traditions and collectivistic tendencies are still strong and valued. However, men are more prone to seek new relationships in social network environments than females do in typical individualistic cultures(Fallows, 2005; Lenhart and Madden, 2007). Taken together, the abovementioned data does not speak in favor of the socio-cultural explanation of gender differences in the motives for using the Facebook. In our opinion, the difference stems from the specific psychological differences between men and women in general. We hope that further investigation will shed more light on this issue.

There are several limitations to the present study. First, the sample was drawn from two universities in two of the largest cities of Georgia (Tbilisi the capital, and Kutaisi), universities best characterized as large , public and research-extensive. Therefore, results of the study may not be representative of those who attend other universities. At the same time, results obtained refer to university students (mean age 23) and cannot be generalized to school pupils.

4. CONCLUSIONS

There are variety of reasons for the use of Facebook in the group of Georgian students examined. Irrespective of the sex of the Facebook users, making contacts within the Facebook is considered as the most important motive, while escapism has the lowest significance as a motive for the use of Facebook. As for gender differences in the motives for the use of Facebook: Male Facebook users give preference to passing time more than females. Female students prefer uploading pictures more than male students. Females give more importance to maintaining contacts with existing friends compared to males, while male students prefer making new contacts within Facebook. Data obtained are not specific to Georgian culture and does not reflect the influence of collectivistic/individualistic tendencies but rather stems from specifics of women's psychology in general.

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