



UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR
VIA FACEBOOK AMONG DISTANCE LEARNERS AT
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

BY

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the degree of Master of Education in Instructional
Technology

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ABSTRACT

The pervasive use of Facebook had become a popular social network as a means of communication among young people and adults. Researchers had shown interest in investigating the benefits of Facebook to be used in learning, particularly in distance learning. The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of communicative behavior on affective learning. The second objective was to find the extent to which International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Program Pensiswazahan Guru (PPG) students used Facebook for interactions in their learning. The third objective was to explore IIUM PPG students' self-disclosure with regard to their gender. A purposive sampling survey was carried out among the PPG students of IIUM. There were 450 students, out of which 425 students participated in the research. Three types of analyses were applied to the three research questions in order to find the answers from the empirical data. For the first question, "What is the intensity of Facebook usage for interactions among distance learners of IIUM?" a descriptive analysis was performed. For the second question (Does communication behavior namely self-disclosure, the consequences of self-disclosure and interactive interaction, via Facebook, have influence on IIUM Distance learners' affective learning?) A multiple regression was employed. The third question "Is there any difference of students' self-disclosure on Facebook with regard to their gender?" was dealt with by an independent t-test. The findings reveal that, communication behaviors such as self-disclosure, consequences of self-disclosure and interactions influence affective learning. In addition many types of interactions take place in Facebook regarding learning. However interactions between students and instructor seem to be very low. Moreover, the study has concluded that there are no significant differences of gender with regard to IIUM PPG students.

ملخص البحث

لقد شاع استعمال الفيسبوك بصورة دائمة كشبكة اجتماعية، حتى أصبحت من أشهر الوسائل التواصلية بين الصغار والكبار. وقد أبدى الباحثون عن رغبتهم في البحث عن فوائد استعمال الفيسبوك في التعليم، خصوصاً في التعليم عن بعد. يهدف هذا البحث أولاً إلى دراسة تأثير سلوك التواصل على التعلم المثمر. أما الهدف الثاني فهو معرفة مدى استعمال طلاب PPG من الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا للفيسبوك في التفاعل مع دراستهم. والهدف الثالث هو البحث عن مدى كشف طلاب PPG لمعلوماتهم الشخصية فيما يتعلق بجنسهم. وقد اعتمد البحث على منهجية أخذ العينات الهادفة في جمع البيانات من طلاب PPG من الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا. وقد اشترك في الدراسة ٤٢٥ طالباً من بين ٤٥٠ طالباً. هذا، وقد تم استخدام ثلاثة أنواع من التحليل، للتوصل إلى نتائج البحث. فيما يتعلق بالسؤال الأول للبحث، "ما مدى كثافة استعمال الفيسبوك للتفاعل بين الدارسين عن بعد؟" فقد استعمل الأسلوب الوصفي لتحليل نتيجة السؤال. وأما السؤال الثاني، "هل يؤثر سلوك التواصل (الكشف عن المعلومات الشخصية، ومخاطر الكشف عن المعلومات الشخصية، والتفاعل التفاعلي) على التعلم الفعال لدى الطلاب الدارسين عن بعد؟ وقد استخدم تحليل الانحدار المتعدد في تحليل هذا السؤال. أما السؤال الثالث "هل هناك فرق بين المعلومات الشخصية للطلاب على الفيسبوك بخصوص جنسهم؟" فتم تحليله باستعمال الـ (t-test). أظهرت نتائج البحث تأثير التعلم المثمر بسلوك التواصل مثل: إظهار المعلومات الشخصية، وعواقب الظهور الشخصي، والتفاعل. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، هناك تفاعلات تحدث في الفيسبوك بخصوص التعلم. إلا أن حدوث التفاعل بين الطلاب والمدرّب فيبدو أنه في نطاق ضيق. وقد خلصت الدراسة إلى عدم وجود فروق كبيرة بين طلاب PPG من الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا فيما يتعلق بالجنس.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conformed to acceptable standard of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education (Instructional Technology).

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Dean, Kulliyah of Education

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the findings of this study are the product of my research effort. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or any other institution.

Mohamed Solih

Signature.....

Date.....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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AMONG DISTANCE LEARNERS AT INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC
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This research work is DEDICATED to my precious Family

My beloved mother and father

My dear wife and kids

&

My Brothers and Sisters

Shameema Mohamed

Solih Mohamed

Aafiya Saleem

Maayan Binthi Mohamed Solih

Maeen Binthi Mohamed Solih

Abdul Momin Naseer

Ibrahim Solih

Moosa Solih

Ali Solih

Ahmed Solih

Aminath Solih

Aishath Solih

Who gives me strength,

Who provide unswerving supports and doa'

Your heartiness, love and understanding are irreplaceable

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Distance education offers a lifelong learning opportunity that allows people to pursue professional development in their careers. With the digital era and globalization, education has opened a new challenge to teachers all over the world. Distance learning becomes the platform for Malaysian teachers to escalate their qualifications and teaching quality in Higher Learning Institutions. Two modes of teaching namely face to face (F-F) and online learning offer a blended mode to allow flexible learning to ensure school teachers can work and learn at the same time. Computer mediated communication or CMC is used to create an interactive learning environment. In CMC and mobile technology mediated communication, social networks such as Facebook become common communication platforms for interaction between students and students, students and lecturers and students with the learning content. Managing online communication is essential as it encourages students to think critically and act maturely. This chapter will elaborate on how CMC relates to the process of human communication behavior via computer and shapes the learning environment. .

Communication is the main factor in teaching and learning. The concept has been studied widely in the field of Communication and Information Technology. However, the issue is not well addressed in educational research. (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004) conceptualizes communication as the idea of a sender, a message and a receiver, in which the meaning differs according to context, place and from person to person. In the context of social media such as Facebook, students can learn from each

other through the exchange of information and create a social rapport with their lecturers. They can either send long messages in private or in groups and make attachments for notes and document files. Another social network site such as Twitter facilitates students to create online communities by sending short texts and messages where they can update news and important information. According to Gentile, Twenge, Freeman and Campbell (2012), spending more time on social media such as Facebook can help users to improve their communication and develop their personality.

Understanding a student's behavior is to analyze his or her communication. Previous researchers in psychology have studied communication trends and how they reflect human behavior (Brent, Ruben, Lea and Steward 2010). Communication behavior has been interchangeably used as communicative behavior. Petronio (2002) relates communication behavior to managing private information through the behavior of self-disclosing and the consequences of self-disclosing. General communicative behaviors observed on social network sites include self-disclosing, awareness on the impact of self-disclosing and interactions. Self-disclosing is sharing personal information on social networks in such a way that viewers can identify the person from the shared information. The impact of self-disclosing involves negative and positive outcomes. Thus, a lecturer's competence in the social network environment will ensure students are engaged in learning. Inappropriate behaviors and negative reactions towards lecturers will not occur if the lecturer can detect learning problems earlier. In an online environment, students not only learn from students-students, students-teacher and students- content as proposed by Moore (1993), a lecturer will also learn from the communication behavior of students so he or she can improve teaching strategies.

Facebook is the most popular social networking site in Malaysia (Mugahed Al rahmi, Shahizan Othman & Alhaji Musa, 2014; Embi, Gabarre, Gabarre, Hamat & Din, 2014). The communication tools present in Facebook have made it a pervasive technology among distance learning students (Din & Haron, 2012). There are two types of communication behavior shown in Facebook, namely social behavior and academic behavior. To a certain extent, online learners benefit from these behaviors. Social behavior includes self-disclosure (Lam, 2012b) and relationship building (Arabacioglu & Akar-Vural, 2014). In an online learning environment, these aspects help to build the social presence of students (Sazmand Asfaranjan, Shirzad, Baradari, Salimi & Salehi, 2013) and extend social communities (Lim, 2010). They help to generate students' motivation, satisfaction and engagement (Arabacioglu, 2014; Lam, 2012; Lim, 2010). The academic behavior observed on Facebook makes distance learners to be autonomous and self-directed learners (Lam, 2012b). Therefore, distance learners use Facebook for interaction, downloading learning materials, submitting assignments, arranging face to face meetings and group discussions (SazmandAsfaranjan et al., 2013; Lam, 2012; Aubry, 2014).

Social networking sites such as Facebook provide a platform for communication. This communication needs to be studied further to reveal the kinds of communicative behavior that contribute to learning. Communication and connectedness that build social rapport (Kayode, Zamzami & Olowolayemo, 2012) help students to share information and reflect their own learning activities through debates, discussions and forums. In information sharing, instructional content delivering (Mugahed Al rahmi et al., 2014), sharing of photos ,videos and ideas (Embi et al., 2014) are included. Debates and discussions involve effective academic group discussions, chat sessions and posting comments on online forums and groups.

In Malaysia, there are private and government institutions which provide distance education in a blended mode (Tung, 2012; Teoh, Sai, Liau, Lin & Belaja, 2013). The objective is to provide educational opportunities to working adults to pursue their education without sacrificing work and family commitments (Tung, 2012). Previously it was believed that distance-learning courses were only meant for adult learners. However, young people have started to join the distance learning programs (Duncan, Blvd, Barczyk & Resources, 2013; Buus, 2012). The reason could be the aforementioned factors and the use of sophisticated innovation technology in distance learning. Communication via Facebook is ubiquitous among young people in Malaysia (Lampe, Wohn, Vitak, Ellison & Wash, 2011; Wilson, Boe, Sala, Puttaswamy & Zhao, 2009; Huang, Yang, Huang & Hsiao, 2010) .Other than Facebook many other innovations are being used in the distance learning platforms of many Universities in Malaysia. These include video-conferencing (Via, Technology & Hajar, 2014), e- content in LMS (Aziz et al., 2014) etc.

DISTANCE EDUCATION AT KOED IN IIUM

International Islamic University Malaysia has offered a Distance Learning Programme for teachers since 2011. The technological advancement in mobile and computer mediated communication technology have provided a wider communication platform for the distance learning environment. In the Distance Learning Programme, adults can learn without compromising their jobs and family responsibilities (Teoh et al., 2013).

Teachers who enrol in the distance learning programme take three specializations namely Islamic Education, Counselling and English at the Kulliyyah of Education (KOED). The distance education program is known as Program

Pensiswazahan Guru (PPG). PPG is organized by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in collaboration with local universities and institutions in the field of education. PPG students study in a blended mode where they meet the lecturer once in four weeks while other learning hours are spent in online classes. Presently, there are 450 PPG students who are studying at KOED. Technical problems in the early version of Learning Management System have caused the lecturer to migrate the communication platform to Facebook (Ustati & Hassan, 2013; Hassan & Hashim, 2014). The administration of the PPG has also set up an official facebook account for the PPG students to interact with the administrators .

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Distance learning students are facing many problems to communicate with their lectures, peers and University online. Studies have shown that some of the distance learners have quit and dropped out, due to the difficulties in communication (Tung, 2012; Teoh et al., 2013). Facebook has started to be used effectively for bridging the communication gap between students, peers, lecturers and the University, in order to facilitate learning (Buus, 2012; Mikulec, 2012; Chambers, 2012; Brobst, 2013). Thus, this present research will investigate the extent of communication in Facebook among distance learners.

Students are highly distracted from the learning contents available on Facebook use because of its popular social use among students. In addition, there are neither strategies nor guidelines available for using Facebook in online learning (Noh, Siraj & Ridhuan, 2013; Mugahed Al rahmi et al., 2014). Therefore, communication that contributes to learning is still an issue in the 21st century (Mugahed Al rahmi et al., 2014). Moreover, educational studies scarcely address the issue of communication

in learning. Thus, this study investigates the students' communication behavior on Facebook that contributes to learning.

Interactive communications on Facebook will enhance effective teaching during online learning. Hence, distance learners have been investigated in the context of interactions among students and lecturers (Paul & Cochran, 2013; J. Wang, 2013; Farhan, 2014; Ustati & Hassan, 2013). However relevant studies to relate students to students' communication and how they behave online are yet to be carried out. Thus, this study will provide the information on students' communication behavior in the context of self-disclosure.

Self-disclosure is vital among youth and adults in an online environment using Facebook. Self-disclosure is about sharing private information about oneself to ensure a close relationship among students, teachers and their social network friends. Previous studies have found that self-disclosure can also contribute in communication behavior in learning via using Facebook (Rimland, 2013; Paul & Cochran, 2013). Students use their Facebook profile to communicate with a lecturer or peers or the University (Kayode et al., 2012). A virtual picture of the self is created with the help of the profile by self-disclosure. Therefore, appropriate self-disclosure is very important in order to maintain professionalism and avoid the risk of consequences of inappropriate communication behavior among students.

There are studies that show women tend to disclose personal information more than men (H. Wang, 2004). Moreover, research shows that there were cases of inappropriate self-disclosure that had lead the teacher to such an embarrassment of losing the job (Mikulec, 2012). Though distance learners show awareness in their online communication behavior in learning (Zakariah, Alias, Aziz & Ismail, 2012; Farhan, 2014), there are differences of learning style and usage of innovation among

gender in distance education (Halili et al., 2014; Hajar et al., 2014). Since there are few studies about the awareness of self-disclosure on Facebook (Mikulec, 2012), this study investigates the gender difference with regard to awareness of the risk of self-disclosure.

When the distance learners learn online using Facebook, they are aware that information related to study materials and feedback will be given through Facebook. However this feedback is not well utilized and addressed. On the other hand, if they are not given any feedback, learners become very annoyed and start expressing their dissatisfaction towards lecturer or peers or University, ranking the lecturer or peers or University with lower marks (Sammel, Weir & Klopper, 2014; Arabacioglu, 2014). Therefore, this study will help to reveal the extent of this online behavior by obtaining students' expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction towards their peers or lecturers or University through a survey.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study has been designed to focus on three objectives. The objectives were based on investigating the Distance learning students who are studying at KOED in IIUM.

1. To determine the intensity of Facebook usage for communication in learning among distance learners.
2. To examine the students' communication behavior based on their self-disclosure, awareness and interactions on affective learning.
3. To investigate the difference in self-disclosure between male and female distance learners with regard to the learning environment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The study will address the following three research questions.

Research questions

1. What is the intensity of Facebook usage for learning interactions among distance learners of IIUM?
2. Does communication behavior (self-disclosure, awareness of consequences on self-disclosure, interactive interaction) via Facebook have an influence on IIUM Distance learners' affective learning?
3. Is there any difference of students' self-disclosure on Facebook with regard to their gender in the learning environment?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are developed to answer Research questions two and three.

This is based on the proposed model of communication behavior on affective learning.

H_{2A}: self-disclosure on Facebook has a significant influence on affective learning.

H_{2B}: awareness of consequences of self-disclosure on Facebook has a significant influence on affective learning.

H_{2C}: interaction on Facebook has a significant influence on affective learning.

Hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c are determined using Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA).

H_{3A}: There is a difference in students' self-disclosure on Facebook with regard to their gender in the learning environment.

Hypothesis 3a is investigated using the independent t-test. That is to answer the third research question of the present study. The summary of the three research questions and the three hypotheses of the study are displayed in the Table 1.1

Table 1.1
Summary of the research Questions and hypotheses of the study

Research Questions	Hypotheses of the study
1. What is the level of using Facebook as a learning tool among distance learners of IIUM?	Descriptive: No Hypothesis is involved.
2. Do self-disclosure on Facebook, awareness of consequences on self-disclosure on Facebook, and interactive interactions on Facebook have an influence on affective learning using Facebook?	<p>Hypothesis 2_a: self-disclosure on Facebook has a significant influence on affective learning of distance learners.</p> <p>Hypothesis 2_b: Awareness of consequences of self-disclosure on Facebook has a significant influence on affective learning of distance learners.</p> <p>Hypothesis 2_c: Interaction on Facebook has a significant influence on affective learning of distance learners.</p>
3. Is there any difference of students' self-disclosure on Facebook with regard to their gender in the learning environment?	Hypothesis 3 _a : There is a difference in students' self-disclosure on Facebook with regard to their gender in the learning environment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present research uses mainly two theories to underpin the research framework namely Communication Privacy management theory (CPMT) of Petronio's and Moore's transactional distance theory (TDT). Based on the concept that communication behavior is the way people interact, a model has been proposed to explain Petronio's communication management theory depicted as Communication Privacy management (CPM) and Moore's transactional distance theory (TDT). Affective learning based on engagement theory is the outcome of the communication behavior when learning online via Facebook. In the communication privacy management theory (CPMT), Petronio and Durham, (2008) explain about privacy boundaries and how self-disclosing takes place through these boundaries. They have

five basic principles in order to disclose private information as shown in Table 1.2. The first three principles explain about self-disclosure and the fourth and fifth principles elaborate more on consequences of self-disclosure.

Table 1.2
Petronio&Durham(2008) , self-disclosure and consequences of self-disclosure

Theory	Principles	Extracted Factors
Communication Privacy Management Theory (CPMT)	1.Ownership and control of private information	
	2.Rules for concealing and revealing	Self-disclosure
	3.Disclosure creates a confident co-owner	
	4.Coordinating mutual privacy boundaries	Consequences of self-disclosure
	5.Boundary turbulence-relationship at risk	

In the field of distance education, Moore’s three types of interaction (Moore, 1993) take place namely: (a) learner–content interaction, (b) learner–instructor interaction, and (c) learner–learner interaction. It is shown in Figure 1.1.

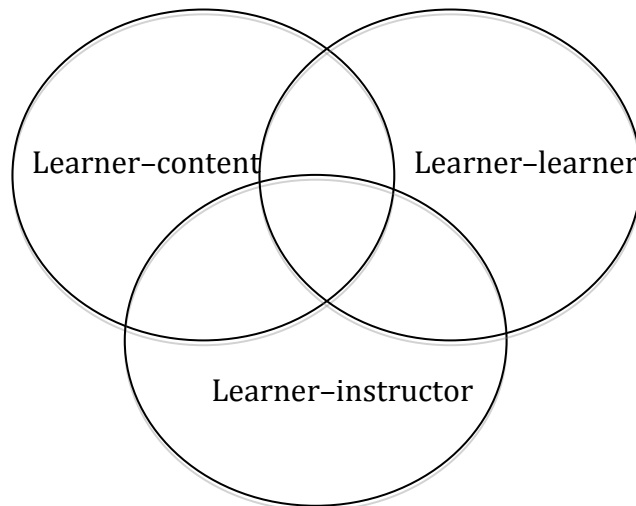


Figure 1.1: Moore (1993)

In the predicted model, communication behavior factors (self-disclosure and awareness of consequences of self-disclosure) on affective learning will be investigated. In addition, three types of interactions described in Moore’s transactional theory on affective learning are examined. The predicted model, with the theories by Petronio’s CPMT and Moore’s TDT will be tested on affective learning of students in online education. This is shown in Figure 1.2

Communication behavior Learning (communication for social interaction and learning)

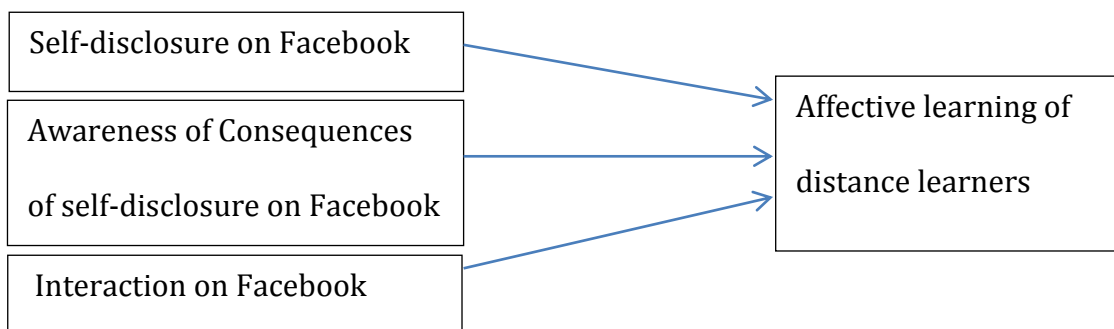


Figure 1.2: The predicted model of communicative behavior on affective learning.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There are many studies which explain Facebook use in learning (Arabacioglu, 2014; Wiboolyasarin, 2014; Aubry, 2013; Duncan et al., 2013). However there are few studies which explain Facebook use in distance learning, specifically in the Malaysian context (Gupta et al., 2013; Wang, 2013). Therefore this study will find out how Facebook can be used in the teaching and learning of distance education in the Malaysian context. In addition, this study can be helpful in finding out about the IIUM distance learners' interactions using Facebook.

In different Universities in Malaysia, it has been found that there are gender differences in using different technology in an online environment in distance education (Hajar et al., 2014). In addition, there are studies which show awareness of communication behaviors such as self-disclosure (Farhan, 2014) and impact of self-disclosure (Sue & Neely, 2011; Mikulec, 2012). However, there are no studies, which reveal the gender differences of self-disclosure in IIUM. Hence, this study will show, if any, gender difference, of IIUM distance learners, with regard to self-disclosure. Therefore this study will be helpful for administrators to improve communications with learners and lecturers by observing their interactive communications on Facebook.

Facebook exhibits two kinds of communicative behaviors such as social interaction and academic interaction. If the distance-learning students' appropriately use the communicative behavior on Facebook, their academic performance will be better (Mugahed Al rahmi et al., 2014). Therefore, this study will help IIUM's distance education administrators to predict the appropriate use of communicative behavior of the distance-learning students of KOED. The results of this study may contribute in developing a guide or strategies to use Facebook in a distance education