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Review of Rahman Ardi dissertation  
„How do Digital Natives Gratify Their Socio-Psychological  
Needs while disclosing in Social Media? “(Investigating the Role of  
Self-Esteem, Need for Popularity and Network Characteristics in  
Online Disclosure on Facebook)  
prepared under the supervision of dr hab. Dominika Maison,  
prof. UW

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The psychology of the Internet is still a *new* domain, leading exploration of crucial problems which are and can be the main research strategy. An analysis of communication processes could be treated as a background issue. The Internet is governed by the rule of frequency and popularity, especially if we think about its specific tools such as an e-mail or Facebook. Thus the dissertation under the review explores a very important and interesting issue which needs scientific, mainly psychological descriptions and explanations. Furthermore, this kind of research has strong pragmatic aspects - social and even political implications as the Internet, in particular social media, are and can be used as a powerful tool to influence people's opinions and attitudes.

The dissertation contains 160 pages and has a rather typical structure. It reports very shortly on several theoretical constructs, most important assumptions and problems, and four studies, three as preliminary, and the last as the main research. The thesis contains the abstract, the list of tables and figures, the list of references and twelve appendixes. The language and discourse are clear; psychological notions are defined and used in proper and correct meanings. The structure of the dissertation proves radical, empirical orientation of the Author.

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The aim of the research project was an exploration of socio–psychological determinants of intimacy – the ways of fulfilling social needs in the situation of an on-line disclosure in social media.

The author conducts three preliminary studies and, the fourth, main study. An idea to carry out such a long preliminary exploration is an element of reliable and appropriate research strategy, which consists of elaboration of several research techniques (questionnaires), to maximize their psychometric qualities and conduct the initial verification of important hypothesis.

The first study involved 613 participants (332 Indonesians and 281 Poles). Hypothetical factors determining realization of social needs *via* Internet social media and intimacy of self-disclosure: the need for popularity, the need to belong, self - esteem, life satisfaction and profile accessibility were measured by several questionnaires. The results confirmed that people who declared <sup>1</sup> (in questionnaire) to higher need for popularity, lower self - esteem and making profile information more accessible, tend to show higher intimacy of self-disclosure. However, the need to belong and life satisfaction weren't predictors of online disclosure.

As in every study in reviewed dissertation, the background of research is not here a theoretical conception, but a set of references to results of investigations on the same topic. Some of them indicate the underlying mechanisms of processes, but theoretical construct of overwhelming specificity of the Internet communication is absent.

A characteristic of “need for popularity” needs some comments, as “need to belong” and “life satisfaction” are phenomenon which are well-known and carefully explained in psychology. We could ask: what is the source of this need? How to describe its different cultural forms? How could it differ from *power* need? However, need for popularity isn't enumerated on the lists of needs or motives. Therefore, we could ask numerous other questions. Nevertheless, the analyses of empirical results concerning the determinants of online self-disclosure were prepared carefully and comprise a coherent set of data, and even a set of regularities.

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<sup>1</sup> I use word „declared” purposely, because Author seems not to take into account what is status of questionnaires data.

The second study involved 646 participants (300 Poles, 346 Indonesians) and was carried out to differentiate the disclosure patterns between these two groups of the Internet users. Cluster analysis was conducted by non-hierarchical (k-mean) method and resulted in the following factors: personal sharing, frequency of using public communication features, accessibility of profile page and need for popularity. Three clusters: *passive-distant users*, *moderate users*, *open attentive users*, differed in most of measured dimensions. The Indonesians tend to be *moderate* and *open-attentive users*, while Poles could be labelled as mainly *passive-distant users*.

The results seem to be very interesting, but the Author's discussion of results is very short, who only repeats clusters characteristics, with a very few explanations, and no references to appropriate Polish or Indonesian research.

The third study aimed to establish which measured variables: need for popularity, collective self-esteem, perceived network size and control of accessibility, determined intimacy of self-disclosure. The participants' were 273 Indonesians and 279 Poles. The results showed that need for popularity, profile accessibility, perceived network size and collective self-esteem could predict intimacy of self-disclosure. The Indonesian participants declared lower level of perceived privacy in comparison to the Poles.

The discussion of the results is short, but contains more references to other research than previously.

The fourth, and the main study (292 Indonesians) tested hypothesis concerning intimacy of self-disclosure of the Indonesian digital natives, based on the results of preliminary studies, however some new variables was included. New variable such as surveillance and social capital enriched the research pattern. All hypothesis were confirmed, some of them – partially. The results showed that subjects, who declared low collective self-esteem, tend to exhibit higher intimacy of self-disclosure on Facebook in the form – as it could be interpreted – of a social compensation. People, who described their need for popularity as high, were also more likely to disclose in a more intimate manner. Bonding (strong ties network providing attachments and emotional support) and bridging social capital (weak ties network providing sources of finding broader information) were crucial determinants of exacerbating intimate disclosure on Facebook. Subjects, who declared higher collective self-esteem, higher need for popularity and bridging social capital were more likely to exhibit surveillance behavior towards others while using Facebook.

To sum up, multiphase research on 2103 Indonesian and Polish Internet users yielded rich and diverse results concerning determinants of gratifying socio-psychological needs in a specific environment of online communication.

#### General remarks:

At the start point, I mean at the moment of formulating basic questions, the Author didn't choose a coherent theoretical background as – for example, which is evident – any theory of communication nor general construct statement (conception/theoretical construct) concerning the ways and moods of need fulfilling, in particular – affiliation need. The dissertation doesn't contain much of theoretical consideration, either. A few theoretical constructs are enumerated very shortly at the beginning: SIDE model, hyperpersonal theory, reduced cues theory and uncertainty reduction theory (pp.8-16), and several references support discussions of results.

The main assumption states: “The overall dissertation focuses on two socio-psychological needs fulfilled by using Facebook as a medium for self-disclosure: need for popularity and the need to satisfy self-esteem, in particular collective self-esteem” (p. 2, some comments – p.8) and in all discourse this assumption has only incidental, incomplete (concerning details, some characteristics, selected processes) theoretical explanations.

There is a big gap between the richness of empirical data and the poverty of their explanation, but relative novelty of research domain partially reduces this unbalance and the Author could continue the analysis of data on the more complex theoretical level. Besides, it seems that these constructs were chosen based on unclear criteria: for example: why uncertainty theory was indicated as being useful in the context of this dissertation instead of any other subtheories of cognitive mechanisms of information processing, e.g. need of closure conception?

Although the weakness of theoretical background is apparent, the results of research in question point to a hidden area of possible, theoretical explanations. Thus, it is next reason/argument to accept a-theoretical discourse of Mr. Rahman Ardi dissertation.

The Author of the dissertation doesn't formulate clear directions nor methodology of future research. Below, several important aspects and general comments concerning dissertations and future research are presented:

The first - new area of research contains two basic questions: how the Internet users could fulfill their social needs using social media? What are crucial personal and contextual determinants of these processes? These questions generate and should generate further new questions and problems. How important? Which ones?

The second - it is necessary to find a good and appropriate explanation of the process of fulfilling social needs (in general, it is still very complicated and unsolved problem) and on the Internet.

The third: what is specific in the process of communication via the Internet (is it symbolic? If yes, - in which sense? Is it impossible to verify? )To what extent is it incidental or coincidental? What is typical for changing information in question-response cycle?

The fourth - the Author should construct and create rich discussion of results in the context of cultural differences (concepts).

The fifth - Author take into considerations Bogdan Wojciszke strategy of "autoreplication" of research project results (without using this notion), but it seems necessary to continue this methodological way.

The sixth - gathering self-description data only is a good solution at the beginning of exploration in a new domain but in the next step of research more sophisticated methods and techniques, such as experiment and behavior monitoring (and so on), should be applied.

What are the Author's ideas of methodological innovation?

The amount of questions, discrepancies, doubts are important in the entire discourse, because an explorative character of research seems to be unexploited enough.

From the methodological point of view, the Author of the dissertation uses, similarly to many other research, mainly self-report techniques and presents the same kind of naïve realism by identification of questionnaire response with real psychological states, expectations and attitudes of subjects. However, it is very common routine, research reviewers and - what is more important - people who will use the results of research should receive some comments.

Advantages of the research are:

it shows a good, precise and conscientious preparation of three pilot studies. Some lack of theoretical background finds there specific cognitive compensation, empirical arguments for importance of choosing variables as correlates or even determinants of processes in research;

it is a very interesting comparison of Polish and Indonesian samples, however these differences are not explained from the point of typical for the domain of cross-cultural comparisons. We find references to the most popular Triandis' conception who divides individualistic and collectivistic societies, but this way of data explanation seems not incomplete, too short and cursory.

a set of gathered data is very rich (2103 subjects, and has still very big theoretical potential as only partially explaining psychological and sociological phenomenon how "intimate" relationships are created and sustained via the Internet.

The data obtained in the study comprise a very big set of information, which has been presented in very clear way. Variables in the research, if enumerating only most important ones, were: need for popularity, need to belong, self-esteem, life satisfaction, profile availability, positivity of self-disclosure, intimacy of self-disclosure, collective self-esteem, control accessibility, perceived network size, perceived privacy of information in profile page (e.g., compound indicator (composed of 14 information), on line surveillances behavior, social capital (individual and collective aspects), social-psychological characteristics and so on. Compound variables were constructed by choosing detailed behavior or information quality. For example: Self-disclosure was investigated in tree domains of sharing behavior on selfhood: the frequency of sharing personal issues the of using public communication, profile accessibility. Every variable had a detailed operationalization (cf. table - 3.10 Perceived Privacy of Information in profile, p.55). Each statistics was chosen according to well-known and accepted rules. Statistical analysis is complete, and allows to induce all necessary information.

The dissertation and the research (in lesser extend theoretical background and interpretation) confirm to some extent methodological and merit competencies of the Author: detailed knowledge, methodological skills concerning projecting and leading appropriate and complicated research projects, to some extent original in researched domain. Legal criteria are sufficiently fulfilled.

I could conclude that Mr. Rahman Ardi PhD's dissertation entitled „How do Digital Natives Gratify Their Socio-Psychological Needs while disclosing in Social Media?“(Investigating the Role of Self-Esteem, Need for Popularity and Network Characteristics in Online Disclosure on Facebook), prepared under the supervision of dr hab. Dominika Maison, prof. UW, meets the requirements stated in Academic and Artistic Degrees and Titles Act and I conclude with admission of Mr. Rahman Ardi PhD dissertation to further stages of doctoral procedure.

A. Toherz

Cracow, 14th November, 2016.