Religiosity and Cyberspace:
A Meta-Analysis on the Studies of Religion and Cyberspace

Mohammad Javad Chitsaz*
Mohammad Hosseini Moghaddam

Abstract

This paper focuses on the impact of cyberspace on religiosity in Iran through reviewing previous studies. The situation of religion in the age of the internet has always been a major matter of concern for Iranian scholars and policy makers. Accordingly, there have been many researchers who have addressed and approached this problem but there has been no comprehensive understanding of the impact of the internet on religiosity, as no comparative study has been conducted to date. This paper applies meta-analysis as the method for reviewing previous attempts while trying to gather all the data by classifying problems, methods, theoretical approaches and more importantly their results. The outcome of this study is to indicate the impact of cyberspace on religiosity and religious identity, apart from classifying and clarifying the status of religiosity in Iran. Having a stronger religious identity causes less online misbehaviors like searching and engaging in pornography. It also indicates using cyberspace for recreational purposes compared to using it for communication or gathering information etc. makes the users more likely to have a weaker religious identity.

Keywords: cyberspace, Iran, meta-analysis, religiosity, religious identity.

Mohammad Javad Chitsaz: (Corresponding author) Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, ACECR Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, Iran- Email: j.chitsaz@gmail.com
Mohammad Hosseini Moghaddam: PhD of Culture and Communications, ACECR Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, Iran- Email: email: Moghaddam.ihss@gmail.com

Introduction

It is true that technology can change a society. During the last century, we have come to know its positive and negative effects. Likewise, the effect of the internet and its capacity to create easy access to information on political, economic, social and cultural fields and low-price communications on is undeniable. This makes us focus more on the different dimensions of modern media and technological tools. Furthermore, it highlights the necessity of planning for the cultural and social effects of digital media and modern information and communication technologies in a way to be fit with national and religious values along with cultural and social capita of the country. Such planning should also take the standards and schemes of Islamic Republic of Iran into account as embodied in the Islamic-Iranian model of progress. Such necessity becomes more significant if we regard the development of technologies provide both opportunities and threats that can transform cultural and social shifts in the society.

Problem Statement

The man of the current age lives in a world of constant shifts and changes (Giddens, 1374: 555). In such an age, the most fascinating phenomena may be the high velocity of social changes (Lenski & Lesnki, 1369: 3). The process of social changes has such a speed and depth that it has even affected the most stable arenas of human life: culture. This has left us in the middle of a drastic cultural change. Information and communication technology has entered the social life of human beings and has affected our societies with varying degrees. According to Castells (1380: 48), modern technologies of information and communication have linked remote parts of world and the computer-mediate communication has shaped a set of cyber societies which as a result can alter all the material and non-material structures of human life. Through advent and development of communication industry and then the internet as a communication and information network, there came a new space in human life which can be called cyberspace or the second space. The development of communication and information technology has caused drastic changes in human life. It has made human beings face a new world in a way that many scholars believe understanding the real world away from the cyber world and vice versa afflicts the observation with too many faults and defects. Indeed, the cyber world has now become a rival for real world and it has been said that the most important change in the current world which will create a foundation for the changes in the upcoming world is the process of competitiveness between the real and the virtual world (Ameli, 1386: 45).

The internet is a vast and complicated world in which many groups and individuals with different believes and tendencies are present. They live there. Here using the verb "live" is not a mistake because this cyber world affects the existence and beliefs of human beings simultaneously and coherently with the real world. The internet is where an individual can export his or her real-world-activities into. Among the prominent features of this cyberspace, one can point to it being timeless and placeless. Omission of distance in time and place along with increase in potentials of exchange and transformation has altered the processes of identification and religiosity (Montazerghaem, 1381: 23).

Recently, all the societies have experienced different levels of expansion of information technologies and online media. The growing use of terms like globalization, cyber communities, information society and cyberspace indicates that during recent years the information technology has provided a new formation for social life. Understanding the changes caused by Man-Internet interaction -which is now prevailing our life- has gradually become one of the most important concerns of social scientists, policy makers and planners of the societies. Another important issue is the association between religion and religious culture with modern technologies which has become a main matter of concern in the Iranian society. Recently, scholars whose fields of study are culture, religion or media have all faced common problems. They have become interested in studying the nature of the internet, religious culture and possible alignments and contradictions between these two. Islam has always had a prominent position in Iran for that religiosity has always been a defining character for Iranian culture, society and history. This even highlights more, the importance of studying the process of alteration in religiosity in contemporary Iran. No doubt the modern media has a great effect on this issue. Because of its popularity and spread, because authorities can have limited control over it, cyberspace and social networks have become an exclusive means for communication. They have created a context in which they can apply their ability to influence others. The users utilize the social networks in accordance to their religious needs and the same way, the utilization of social network influences their style of religiosity, increasing their flexibility about different religious interpretations. On the other hand, online social networks work as a supplier for many cultural and social demands from their members and by rapid diffusing of new values and ideas can cause severe challenges in foundations of identity in different societies. In the last two decades, the field of cyberspace studies has been developed in Iran through the publication of dozens of studies.

Providing an explicit and scientific image and classification of such studies can create an important basis for policy makers. Meta-analysis of the studies of cyberspace and religiosity can depict the aggregation of knowledge about this issue in Iran. By combining former studies, novel ideas and approaches can be suggested to authorities and policy makers whose work involve either cyberspace, religion or both.

Theoretical Framework

Over the vast realm of the internet, users become exposed to various semantic and identifying structures and become informed about many emerging values, beliefs and norms which may have different effects on them. The usage and applications of the internet for religious people are numerous. The internet has changed the understanding of contemporary man from the ideas of subjectivity, society and agency. Scholars like O'leary believe that the development of the internet has had an important role in the expansion of religiosity (Hecht, 2006: 17). However, there are positive (utopian) and negative (dystopian) views about this phenomenon.

Computer-based communication has provided new facilities for religion, religious associations and religious figures, but it must be noted that the concept of the internet for religious people may be different from others. Some may consider it as blessed gift which can be used for spreading religiosity, some may consider it just as a simple tool and some may have very negative views about it and there are pessimists, who consider the internet as something which simultaneously weakens religious societies, disturbs religious traditions and turns the holy into something routine and mundane.

Religion has a great role in the personal and social life of human beings. The historical experience of human life has shown that religion is an inseparable part of life. The oldest civilizations whose archeological reminiscence were ever recorded also had a religion or a cult of some kind. During the history of human civilization there has never been a clan or tribe with no religion or faith. Even the aboriginals of Australia and Indians of Patagonia who have the most primitive style of human life believe in the existence of a spiritual world and have their own prayers (Hume, 1369: 17).

Religiosity is the manifestation of religion in daily life and has attracted many thinkers, policy-makers and researchers. The vast literature on religiosity supports this theory. The importance of religion highlights the need for operationalizing religiosity in researches. To define religiosity, Shojaeezand (1384: 36) has mentioned that being

religious is a general label which can be attributed to any person or phenomenon in which religious values and its signs are detectable. A religious person, on one hand, forces himself to regard and respect religious rulings and on the other hand, paying such attention to religion and religious responsibilities makes him different from other people. Accordingly, that person can be defined in two ways; firstly, through his adherence and commitment to religion and secondly, through the outcomes of committing to religion in one's thoughts and actions.

Testing the level of religiosity has always been a matter of concern for the researchers of this field and they have reached to two different approaches. In the first approach, researchers believe that although the contents and teachings are different in different religions but religiosity means the same for followers of different religions. Accordingly, to test the level of religiosity, a single model can be used for all of them. Glock and Stark's model for measuring religiosity belongs to this approach. In contrast, the second approach asserts that for different societies or at least for followers of different religions, a different model of measuring religiosity should be used. Shojaeezand's model for measuring religiosity in Iran is the first attempt to create a special model for testing Iranian religiosity which obviously follows the second approach. Analyzing researches on religiosity in Iran shows that researchers have used one of the following models:

1. The localized model of Glock and Stark for Iranian Muslim society. In 1996, Serajzadeh provided a localized model through reconciling Glock and Stark's model with Shiite teachings and beliefs. Since then, this model was frequently used by many other researchers. In this model five factors were defined for religiosity, including belief, cognition, experience (spiritual), consequence and ritual.

2. Shojaeezand's model of measuring religiosity. This model tries to make metrics based on Islamic teachings and fit with the social status of Iran. The model also suggests five factors for religiosity including: belief, issues of faith, issues of worship, ethics, and the issues of Sharia

3. Khodayari's (1388) model of measuring religiosity. In 1999 Khodayari made his first attempt to measure religious beliefs and attitudes on university students which he finally completed in 2009 published through a report titled "Preparing a scale for religiousness and assessing the level of religiosity in different social classes of Iranian society". Religiosity in Khodayari's model includes three factors of religious beliefs, religious emotionality

and commitment to and practicing the religious duties.

- Religious beliefs include believing in God, approving the prophets, accepting the hereafter, approving the existence of prophets, and accepting the rulings and laws of God.
- Religious emotionality included two categories of positive and negative emotions:
  1. Positive emotions: a- loving God, prophets and other divine figures, b- religious epiphany
  2. Negative emotions: loathing the enemies of God, prophets and divine figures
- Commitment to and practicing religious duties included: a- prayers (personal, collective) b-ethics (personal, social and ethics of interaction with nature).

4. Taleban's (1388) model for measuring religiosity. Taleban who used to work with the Glock and Stark model, suggested his own model for testing religiosity in 2009 during his co-operation with the ISPA. He also tested religiosity in three factors of beliefs, emotions and actions (behaviors):
   - The beliefs factor included: the principles and ancillaries of the faith
   - The emotions factor included: religious experience, religious identity and religious affection
   - The behavior factor included: issues of Sharia, issues of ethics and issues of prayers.

5. The temple model for measuring religiosity. In 2005, Golzari introduced a model for measuring the level of religiosity called Temple 2. This model contained 81 items covering 6 factors of: practicing the obligatory duties, avoiding the forbidden, practicing the Mustahabb (the recommended duties), avoiding the Makruh (discouraged behaviors), carrying out religious activities and taking decisions based on the laws of religion. What is important about Golzari's model is that he focuses on the actions and behaviors and measures the issues regarding faith and beliefs do not have a differentiating variance.

6. The MRPI model for measuring religiosity. This model was introduced by IPAS and UPM, two research institutes based in Malaysia. This model regarded a process for religiosity starting from accepting Islam to increase of faith and finally reaching Islamic piety. The mode had two separate structures. One regarded Islamic ideology and the other regarded religious characteristics. In MPRI's model, Islamic ideology included

believing in God, believing in the existence of mystical powers, existence of angels, truthfulness of the holy book, the existence of the Day of Judgment, predestinations and comprehensiveness of the religion. The MPRI model for Islamic characteristics include: fulfilling the duties which are about Man-God relationship including Shahada, saying prayers, fasting, Hajj etc. and duties which are about man to man relationships and also relationships of mankind with other creatures including charity, ethics and etc. (Zolfaghari & Aminfar, 1390).

Methodology

This paper applies a method of meta-synthesis to answer the mentioned questions and reach the proposed objectives. For the present study, the statistical population is consisted of all of the existing studies that have focused on "religiosity and cyberspace". The studies were gathered through browsing data bases of scientific papers and Iranian Journal data bases i.e Noormag and IranDoc for keywords like "cyberspace", "religious identity", "religiosity" and "online social networks". In order to complete the paper a research in different libraries and institutes was also undertaken. After reviewing the gathered documents, 30 were chosen based on their relevance with the subject and the goals of the present study. These documents were summarized and categorized based on five basic factors of: 1. their general descriptions, 2. their objectives and questions, 3. their methods of study, 4. their variables and 5. their findings.

Table 1 shows the list of the selected documents.

Table 1. Description of the selected researches

No.	Researcher(s)	Year	Subject
1.	Ahmadpour & Aghazadeh	1389	The impact of cyberspace on religious identity
2.	Bagheri Dowlatabadi & Zareiyan Jazhromi	1392	The association between cyberspace and national/religious identity
3.	Bakhtiyari & Azizkhani	1392	Membership in social network and its impact on weakening the religious values
4.	Baghayi Sarabi & Ghanimati	1392	Studying the impact of cyberspace on identity types of students

No.	Researcher(s)	Year	Subject
5.	Khoshkhuy, Yousofzadeh & Azariyyoun	1392	The association between the amount of media usage and tendency towards hijab
6.	Hariri, Babolhavaeji & Agha Seyyed Javad	1393	Studying the association between religious attitudes and internet addiction among young people
7.	Zaki	1392	Internet and religiosity
8.	Soltani	1395	The association between social networking and social identity
9.	Shafi'pour Motlagh	1390	The association between internet users' tendencies and their web searches
10.	Sabouri Khosrowshahi & Azargoun	1392	Studying the impact of social networking (Facebook) on the social identity of the students
11.	Tarihi & Samadi	1395	The association between media usage in young people and their attitude towards sacrifice and martyrdom
12.	Ameli & Hajijafari	1391	The association between religiosity and social damage
13.	Abbasi Ghari	1386	Internet and the religious identity of the users
14.	Adlipour & Sepehri	1393	The association between membership in Facebook and religiosity of University students
15.	Ghasemi et al.	1391	The association between presence and interaction in social networks with religious identity of youth
16.	Ghasemi et al.	1392	The association between presence and interaction in social networks with social identity of youth
17.	Karamollahi	1389	Internet and religiosity

No.	Researcher(s)	Year	Subject
18.	Karimi & Farahmand	1396	The association between modern technologies of communications and rethinking the religious identity
19.	Kaffashi	1393	Online Social networks and social identity of youth
20.	Koohi & Hassani	1391	The association between using modern ICT with some aspects of identifying for youth and teenagers living in Tabriz
21.	Majidi & Rezayi	1391	Studying the impact of religiosity on the rate of searching for pornography
22.	Mazinani	1393	The association between online social networking and the religious identity of the members
23.	Masoudnia et al.	1395	Internet consumption and religious identity
24.	Memar & Ghorbani	1392	The lived experiences of mothers and fathers about the cultural damages of internet
25.	Memariani & Hassanzadeh	1391	The impact of internet and satellite channels on national and religious identity of high school students
26.	Mirfardi et al.	1396	The rate of religiosity and its association with using online social networks
27.	Najafzadeh et al.	1394	A study on the attitudes of Facebook users towards identity
28.	Nourbakhs et al.	1392	The impact of different media usage on attitudes towards religion and shaping different types of religiosity
29.	Vatani & Saee	1392	The association between internet usage and the rate of commitment to social values
30.	Hedayati et al.	1395	The pathology of the association between the use of mobile-mediated social networks with religious upbringing

Table 2. The description of the method applied by the researchers

No	Method	Statistical population/ Sample size
1	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of Kurdistan University/ 361 questionnaires
2	Survey/ Questionnaire	BA students of Yasuj University/ 340 questionnaires
3	Survey/ online Questionnaire	Iranian members of social networks/ 300 questionnaires
4	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of Islamic Azad University, Rudehen Branch/ 1010 questionnaires
5	Survey/ Questionnaire	Female students of Bu Ali University/ 354 questionnaires
6	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of the faculty of humanities in Khwarizmi University of Karaj
7	Survey/ Questionnaire	Young people of Isfahan/ 384 questionnaires
8	Survey/ Questionnaire	BA students of management in Islamic Azad University, Ilam branch/ 97 questionnaires
9	Survey/ Questionnaire	All of the internet users of Islamic Azad University of Mahallat
10	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of Islamic Azad University, Tehran East/ 250 questionnaires
11	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of year 10 in district 4 of Tabriz/ 366 questionnaires
12	Survey/ online Questionnaire	Iranian users of internet in 1389 (summer)/ 609 online questionnaires
13	Survey/ Questionnaire	a- All of the citizens of Tehran who are above 15 b- all of the costumers of coffee nets/ (a) includes 1316 and (b) includes 200 questionnaires
14	Survey/ Questionnaire	The students of the University of Tehran who were on face book/ 424 questionnaires
15	Survey/ Online Questionnaire	Young members of Facebook in Isfahan/ 424 questionnaires
16	Survey/ Questionnaire	Young residents of Tabriz who were between 18 and 30/ 4240 questionnaires

No	Method	Statistical population/ Sample size
17	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of the faculty of humanities and fundamental sciences in public and Azad universities of Qom/ 334 questionnaires
18	Survey/ Questionnaire	Young residents of Tehran aging between 18 to 30/ 385 questionnaires
19	Survey/ Questionnaire	Members of social networks/ 384 questionnaires
20	Survey/ Questionnaire	Teenagers and youth aging between 14 to 29 living in Tabriz/ 400 questionnaires
21	Survey/ Questionnaire	Users of "iranxlln"/ 275 questionnaires
22	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of the university of Tehran/ 280 questionnaires
23	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of the University of Isfahan/ 331 questionnaires
24	Qualitative, phenomenology	The parents of female high school students of Semirom/ 10 families were interviewed
25	Survey/ Questionnaire	High school students of two districts of Tehran/ 350 questionnaires
26	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of the University of Yasuj/ 400 questionnaires
27	Survey/ Questionnaire	Students of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad/ 300 students including 200 members of facebook and 100 non-members
28	Survey/ Questionnaire	Muslim students of state, Azad and Payam-e Noor Universities/ 2555 questionnaires
29	Survey/ Questionnaire	MA students of Islamic Azad University of Tabriz and Science and research branch of western Azerbaijan/ 368 questionnaires
30	Survey/ Online Questionnaire	High school students of Tabriz who were members of the mobile-mediated social networks/ 400 users

Findings

The Frequency and Time Laps of the Studies

The studies were conducted during 2006-2017. These studies were divided in three time periods and show that most of the studies were carried out between 2011 and 2015. Only ten percent of the studies were carried out during 2006-2010. The remaining 20% were more recent.

Table 3. Time periods of the selected studies

No	Period	Frequency	Percentage
1	2006-2010	3	10
2	2011-2015	21	70
3	2016-2017	6	20
Total		30	100

There was a rush towards studying the associations between religiosity and cyberspace in more recent years. One of the reasons is the increasing rate of internet and mobile-mediated networking in this decade. According to a report published by ICT indicators monitoring system, a subset of Iran's ICT Organization, about 62% of Iranian families have access to the internet which means that there is internet access in 15,051,384 households of Iran. In 2015 this percentage was about 55.5%. There has been a 7% growth in accessing the internet in two years.

Geographical Scope of the Researches

Tehran has been the main focus of existing researches conducted in this field. About 23% of the researches have studied the question of religiosity and cyberspace in Tehran while Tabriz and Isfahan stand in e second and third place.

Table 4. Geographical scope of the selected researches

No	Geographical scope	Frequency	Percentage
1	Tehran	7	23
2	Tabriz	5	16.7
3	Isfahan	4	13.3
4	Yasuj	2	6.7
5	Whole Country (Students)	1	3.3
6	Other Areas	12	40
Total		30	100

Categorizing the Studied Topics
a) Religiosity
Reviewing the topics of research indicate that "the impact of cyberspace on religiosity" has been the main focus of the researchers. 56.7% of the studies were dedicated to this topic. "Social Identity" was another topic that the researchers paid attention to. About 23.3% of the selected researches have studied the impact of cyberspace on social identity.

Table 5. Topics highlighted in the selected researches (religiosity)

No	Topics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Religiosity/ Religious Identity	17	56.7
2	National and Religious Identity	2	6.7
3	Social Identity	7	23.3
4	Others	4	13.3
	Total	30	100

b) Cyberspace
Studying the topics of researches in the field of cyberspace indicates that investigating the 'Internet' has been the main focus of the researchers which contains 46.7% of the selected studies. Online social networks at 40% are in next place. It must be noted that most of the studies on social networking chose Facebook as their case of study.

Table 6. Topics highlighted in the selected researches (Cyberspace)

No	Topics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Internet	14	46.7
2	Online Social Networks	12	40
3	Modern Media	7	23.3
4	Others	4	13.3
	Total	30	100

Applied Methods
Quantitative method was the main method used by the researchers at 96.7%. All the researches applied survey method and questionnaires for collecting data.

Table 7. Methods applied in the selected researches

No	Method	Frequency	Percentage
1	Quantitative (Survey)	29	96.7
2	Qualitative	1	3.3
	Total	30	100

Statistical Populations

Most of the studies focused on the young generation. Even the studies whose statistical populations were members of social networks targeted the youth.

Table 8. Statistical population of the selected researches

No	Statistical population	Frequency	Percentage
1	University Students	14	45
2	Facebook Members	5	17
3	High School Students	3	10
4	Youth	2	7
5	Iranian Users of Internet	1	3.5
6	Citizens	1	3.5
7	Members of Online Social Networks	2	7
8	Parents	1	3.5
9	Users of Iranxlln	1	3.5
Total		30	100

Theoretical Approaches of the Researches

Analyzing the theories applied in the selected researches indicate that theories of "uses and gratifications", "cultivation", Giddens' "Structuration and reflective identity" and Castells' "networked society" have the most frequency. Theoretical views of thinkers like Robertson, Fukuyama, Irving Kaufman (The presentation of self in everyday life), Stuart Hall (Representations), Peter Berger, Richard Jenkins, Daniel Bell (Information society as the post-industrialization), Jurgen Habermas and Denis McQuail were used in these studies. It must be noted that listing the theories of others does not necessary mean that this study has applied such theories. In a number of the selected researches the theories were just reviewed in order to extract the required variables.

The Approach for Measuring Terms

Studying the selected researches indicates that the two terms of "cyberspace" and "religiosity" Were the main focus of prior studies. Below we discuss how these terms were measured.

a) Religiosity

Most of the studies applied the localized model of Glock and Stark. Sometimes all the dimensions introduced in this model were used and sometimes only a selection were applied. The studies the focus was on

the impact of social networks on social and religious identity. Religious identity is a subset of social identity. 'Religious identity' and 'religiosity' were used interchangeably.

b) Cyberspace
Reviewing the selected studies indicates that cyberspace was measured by the following factors:

1. Access or lack of access to the internet
2. Membership or non-membership on social networks
3. The history of using the internet/ social networks (usage history)
4. The amount of internet/ social networks usage (per day or week)
5. Purpose and type of internet usage (i.e. looking for education or scientific information, checking the news, using email, online chat and discussion forums, recreational use, etc.)
6. Purpose and type of usage on social networks (i.e. finding old friends, exchanging information, chat and fun, watching movies, clips and pictures, sending content for others, finding new friends)
7. Users' participation and rate of activity
8. Rate of verisimilitude (considering online content to be true and real)
9. Rate of engagement with pornography.

Discussion
By analyzing the results of the selected studies, the following statements can be made:

1. According to the statistics and findings of the prior studies, it is obvious that the rate of internet usage and specifically activity online social networks has drastically increased. The similarity of online life on virtual networks and the social activity in real life has also increased in a way that many of the real world communications and interactions have been represented there and welcomed by the users. Statistics presented by these studies match the statistics of similar studies undertaken at a national scale.
2. The amount of internet usage is higher in people with higher education.
3. Most of the internet users are the youth and teenagers.
4. The applied model for measuring religiosity was the localized model of Glock and Stark in most studies.

5. Factors examined for measuring cyberspace (internet) activity were: accessing the net, history of usage, amount of usage, type and purpose of usage (i.e. recreational, business, education, research, communication, news, etc.)

6. Factors for measuring online social networks activity were: usage history, amount of usage, type and purpose of usage, the rate of engagement and activity, and the amount of considering the content diffused in such networks to be true (the rate of verisimilitude).

7. Accessing the internet merely does not have any impact on one's religiosity.

8. The type and purpose of internet usage affects the users' religiosity. The results of the selected studies indicate that using the internet for recreational purposes affects the rate of religiosity in users. The association between using the internet for fun and games and religiosity of the users is significantly negative. This means the more one uses the internet for recreational purposes the less religious they become.

9. The most effect of cyberspace is applied on dimensions of consequences and rituals amongst all other dimensions of religiosity. The cognition aspect remains less affected in this type of internet usage.

10. There is also a significant association between the type and amount of media usage (internet, satellite channels, TV) and the attitude of people towards 'martyrdom' and 'sacrifice'. Respectively, when the amount of media usage increase, the positive attitude towards martyrdom and sacrifice decreases. The interesting fact is that although the main studied media was Iran's state TV and the studied subjects were high school students, there was still a significant negative association between these two variables which means that even state media cannot promote a cultural trend in which 'martyrdom' and 'sacrifice' are valued and respected.

11. Cyberspace not only weakens the religious identity but also strengthens the modern and global identity. Studies indicate that there is a significant and positive association between presence in cyberspace (mostly in form of membership on online social networks) and acquiring global identity. More interaction in cyberspace strengthens this identity.

12. Religiosity and strong religious identity of the users affects the type of activities   they engage in cyberspace. In a way those

who are more religious regard ethics and religious values more during online activities.

13. Religiosity and engagement in pornography have a significantly high negative relationship. In a way more religiosity causes less engagement in online pornography.

14. As the rate of religiosity increases, negative experiences on the internet and being harmed via it decreases.

15. There is also a significant association between internet usage and hijab as the usage of internet increases, tendency towards hijab decreases.

16. Cyberspace affects the types of religiosity that users have. Internet usage has a negative effect on revolutionary religiosity, while its effect of spiritual-oriented religiosity is positive. About religious intellectualism one can say there is a positive association between that and internet and satellite channels' usage while its association with TV usage is negative.

17. The results of the selected studies also indicate that the association between history, amount of usage and rate of verisimilitude and users' religiosity is significantly inverse which means that the more the history and amount of their presence on the internet increases, the more they believe the content diffused in cyberspace is true, and hence their religiosity decreases. In other words, religiosity can be affected by the time one spends in cyberspace and by the way he or she contemplates the trustworthiness of online content. Respectively when a user spends more time on the internet or considers more online content to be true, it is more likely to start loathing religious figures and values which in turn reduces the overall rate of religiosity in that user.

Conclusion

This study tried to present a comprehensive description and understanding of studies conducted on cyberspace and religiosity in Iran. These studies indicate that the growth of internet usage is inevitable. The results of a survey, household access and use of internet in 2016, show 13.5 million households or 55.5% of all of the Iranian households can access the internet. Comparing the results of the recent four surveys indicates that internet penetration rate in 2016 increased by 30.33%, 24.4%, 29.4% and 15.3% respectively compared to 2007, 2009 and 2013. A survey on users of online social networks in Iran also indicates the increasing trend of using social networks in Iran in a way

that today among 200 million users of Telegram, there are 40 million Iranians.

Such drastic increase in internet usage became a matter of concern for Iranian researchers and scholars. Consequently, during the last decade, many studies were conducted to study the impact of cyberspace on different aspects of social life of Iranians. One of the areas of interest in cyberspace studies is its association with religiosity. In recent years many of religious figures have expressed their concerns about the negative aspects of cyberspace on religiosity. Here we can summarize the outcome of our analysis on existing studies:

- Studies of cyberspace and religion can be put into two categories: 1- Studies that focused on the association between internet and religiosity which mostly belong to 2000-2010. 2- Studies that focused on the association between social networks (mostly Facebook) and religiosity which were conducted more recently.
- Regarding the frequency, most of the researches are carried out around 2010. The main matter of interest has been the impact of social networks on religiosity.
- Most of the reviewed researches were post graduate dissertations at Masters or Doctorate level.
- Studying the youth was the main matter of concern in most studies. Most of the data has been collected from university students and high school students.
- Almost all of the studies have applied quantitative methods in form of surveys and questionnaires.
- The studies mostly focus on the larger cities across the country and studies were rarely carried out on smaller cities, towns or villages.
- According to the findings of these studies, the amounts of online interactions affect the rate of religiosity. That is to say, when online interaction increases, religious identity becomes less highlighted and the rate of religiosity decreases.
- The purpose of using cyberspace also affects religiosity. Using cyberspace for leisure and playing games weakens users' religiosity. While based on the existing studies, such recreational use is one of the main motivations for users in cyberspace and especially online social networks.
- Religiosity affects the behaviors of users in cyberspace. If the users are more religious, inappropriate behaviors like downloading adult pictures and movies and seeking pornography drastically decreases.

References

Abbasi Ghari, M. (1386 [2007 AD]). Barrasi-e Rabetey-e Estefadeh Az Internet va Hoviyyat-e Dini-e Karbaran [in Persian: A Study on Using Internet and Its Impact on Religious Identity]. Daftar-e Motaleat va Towse-e Rasaneh ha Vezaarat-e farhang va Ershad-e Eslami, Tehran, Iran.

Adlipour, S. & Sepehri, A. (1393 [2014 AD]). Ta'sir-e Facebook bar Mizan-e Dindari-e Daneshjuyan-e Daneshgaah-e Tehran [in Persian: The Impact of Facebook on the Rate of Religiosity among the Students of University of Tehran]. *Proceedings of the First International Congress of Culture and Religious Thoughts*. Tehran.

Ahmadpour, M. & Ghaderzadeh, O. (1389 [2010 AD]). Ta'amol dar Fazaay-e Saayber (Cyber) va Ta'sir-e aan bar Hoviyat-e dini-e Javanan. [in Persian: Interactions in Cyber Space and Its Impact on Religious Identity of the Youth: An Analysis on a Survey done in the University of Kurdistan]. *Semi-Annual Journal of Youth, Culture and Society Studies.* 5.

Ameli, SR. (1386 [2007 AD]). *Do Fazayi Shodan-e Mohit-e Dini va Ertebat-e Darun Dini va Borun Dini* [in Persian: Virtual Religion: Duality of Religious Spaces and Inter vs. Intra Religious Communications] in: Djavadi Yeganeh and Abdollahian (eds), *Din va Resaneh*, Tehran, Tarh-e Ayande: 275-305.

Ameli, SR. & Hadjidjafari, M. (1391 [2012 AD]). Rooykard-e Do Fazaayi be Aasibhay-e Majazi va Din: Negaresh ha va Tajrobeh ha [in Persian: Duality of Religion and Damages of Cyber Space: Attitudes and Experiences]. *Semi-Annual Journal of Religion and Communication*. 19(41).

Bagheri Dowlatabadi, A. & Zareiyan Jahromi, F. (1392 [2013 AD]). Ta'sir-e Fazaay-e Majazi bar Hoviyayt va hambastegi-e Melli. [in Persian: The Impact of Cyber Space on Identity and National Unity]. *Motale'at-e Rahbordi-e Basij.* 16(6).

Baghayi Sarabi, A. & Ghanimati, H. (1392 [2013]). Ta'sir-e Fazaay-e Majazi bar Ab'ad-e Howiyati-e Daneshjuyan. [in Persian: The Impact of Cyber Space on Dimensions of Identity in University Students]. *Intercultural Studies Quarterly.* 8(20).

Bakhtiyari, B. & Azizkhani, E. (1392 [2013 AD]). Barrasi-e Jame'e Shenakhti-e Gerayesh be Arzeshhay-e Gharbi ba Tekye bar Mizan va Now'-e Estefaade az Shabakehay-e Ejtema'i –e Majaazi. [in Persian: A Sociological Study on Tendency towards Western Values Based on Way and Amount of Using Online Social Networks: A Case Study of Khalkhal]. *Sociological Studies Quarterly*. 5(19).

Castells, M. (1380 [2001]). *Information age: Economy, society and culture (Vol. 1).* Persian translation by Ahmad Aligholian and Afshin Khakbaz, Tarh-e No' publications.

Ghasemi, V., Adlipour, S. & Mirmohammad Tabar Divkalani, S.A. (1392 [2013 AD]). Facebook va Taghyirat-e Hoviyyat-e Ejtema'i-e javanan-e Tabriz [in Persian: Facebook and the Shifts in Social Identity of Youth in Tabriz]. *Sociology of Social Institutions Quarterly.* 1(1).

Ghasemi, V., Adlipour, S. & Kianpour, M. (1391 [2012 AD]). Ta'amol dar Fazaay-e majaziye Shabakehay-e Ejtema'i-e Interneti va Ta'sir-e aan bar Hoviyyat-e Dini-e Javanan; Motale'ey-e Moredi-e Facebook va Javanan-e Esfehan (Isfahan) [in Persian: Interactions in Cyberspace of Online Social Networks and Its Impact on the Religious Identity of the Youth; A Study on Facebook and Its Impact on the Isfahani Youth]. *Semi-annual Journal of Religion and Communication.* 42.

Giddens, A. (1374 [1995 AD]). *Sociology.* Persian translation by Manoucher Sabouri, Tehran, Ney Publication.

Hariri, N., Babolhavaeji, F. & Agha Seyyed Djavadi, P. (1393 [2014 AD]). Barrasie Rabetey-e beyn-e Raftaar-e Dini va E'etiyad-e Interneti dar Javanan; Motaale'ey-e Mowredie Daneshkadeye Olum-e Ensaani-e Khawrazmi. [in Persian: A Study on the Association between Religious Attitudes and Internet Addiction among Youth, Case of Study: Students of the Faculty of Humanities, Khawrazmi University]. *Quarterly Journal of Intercultural Studies.* 9(23).

Hecht, RD. (2006). The power of place. *Religion, Violence, Memory and Place*, Ed. By J. Shawn Landers and Oren Steir. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press: 13-36.

Hedayati, A., Zeinivand, Y. & Rasulzadeh, S. (1395 [2016 AD]). Asib Shenasi-e Sahbakehay-e Ejtemaa'i-e Mobayl (Mobile) Mehvar dar Zaminey-e tarbiyat-e Dini (Motaale'ey-e Mowredi-e Maghta'e Motevassetey-e Shahr-e TaBriz) [in Persian: Pathology of Mobile Mediated Social Networking in the Field of Religious Education (case study: Tabriz High School Students)]. *Quarterly Journal of Sociological Studies.* 8(31).

Hume, RE. (1369 [1990 AD]). *The World's living Religions.* Persian translation by Abdolrahim Govahi, Tehran, Publication of Daftar-e Nashr-e Farhang-e Eslami.

Kaffashi, M. (1393 [2014 AD]). Ta'sir-e Estefadeh az Shabakehay-e Ejtema'i-e Majaazi bar Hoviyyat-e Ejtema'i-e javanan-e Shahr-e Tehran [in Persian: The Impact of Using Online Social Networks

on the Social Identity of Youth in Tehran]. *Semi-annual Journal of Religion and Communication.* 21(2), Issue 46.

Karamollahi, N. (1389 [2010 AD]). Barrasi-e Rabet-ye Estefadeh az Internet ba Dindari-e karbaran [in Persian: A Study on the Internet Usage and Religiosity in its Users]. *Quarterly Journal of Socio-Cultural Studies.* 1.

Karimi Manjarmouyi, Y. & Farahmand, M. (1396 [2017 AD]). Barrasi-e Rabet-ye beyne Fanavarihay-e Novin-e Ertebati va Baaz Andishi-e Hoviyyat-e Dini-e Javanan-e Shar-e Tehran [in Persian: A Study on the Association between Modern Communication Technologies and Adolescents of Tehran Rethinking Their Religious Identity], *Social Development Quarterly.* 12(1).

Khodayarifard, M. (1388 [2009 AD]). Amaadeh Saazi-e Meghyase Dindari va Arzyabi-e Sotuh-e Dindari-e Aghshar-e Mokhtalef-e Jame'ey-e Iran [in Persian: Preparing a Scale for Religiosity and Assessing the Levels of Religiosity of Different Classes of Society in Iran], *Quarterly Journal of the Faculty of Psychology and Education (University of Tehran),* 87.

Khoshkhuy, M., Yousofzadeh M.R. & Azariyyoun, P. (1392 [2013 AD]). Barrasi-e Rabet-ye Mizaan-e Estefaade az Resanehay-e Ertebati (Internet, Maahvare, Telephone Hamraah) va Geraayesh-e Daneshjuyan-e Dokhtar-e Daneshgaah-e Bu-Ali Sina be Hejab. [in Persian: A Study on the Association between the amount of Media Usage (i.e. Internet, Satellite TV Channels, Mobiles) and the Level of Tendency towards Hijab in Female Students of Bu-Ali Sina University]. *Religion and Communication Quarterly.* 20(43): 43-65.

Koohi, K. & Hassani, M. (1391 [2012 AD]). Raabeteye Beyn-e Estefaade az Reshanehay-e Novin va Ab'aade Hoviyatti dar Nojavanan-e 14 ta 29 Saaley-e Tabriz [in Persian: The Association between Modern Media Usage and Shifts of Identity Dimensions in Adolescents Aged 14-29 in Tabriz]. *Quarterly Journal of Communicational Studies.* 19(4), Issue 72.

Lenski, G. & Lenski, J. (1369 [1990 AD]). *Human societies: An introduction to macro-sociology.* Persian translation by Nasser Movaffaghian, Tehran, Publication of Markaz-e Amuzesh-e Enghelab-e Eslami.

Majidi, A. & Rezayi, O. (1391[2012 AD]). Dindari va Harzeh Negaari-e Interneti [in Persian: Religiosity and Online Pornography]. *Proceedings of the First National Conference on Cyber Space and Modern Social Damages.* Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

Masoudnia, H., Oghly, M. & Ebrahimipour, H. (1395 [2016 AD]). Barrasi-e Rabetey-e masraf-e Interneti va Hoviyyat-e Dini Dar

Daneshjuyan-e Daneshgaah-e Esfehan (Isfahan) [in Persian: A Study on the Association between Internet Usage and Religious Identity among Isfahan University's Students]. *National Studies Quarterly*. 17(1), Issue 65.

Mazinani, K. (1393 [2014 AD]). Barrasi-e Rabet-ye Estefaade az Shabakehaay-e Ej'temaa'i-e Majaazi va Hoviayyat-e Dini-e Kaarbaraan [in Persian: A Study on the Association between Membership in Online Social Networks and the Religious Identity of the Members]. *Rahaavard Quarterly*. 46(1).

Memar, S. & Ghorbani, F. (1392 [2013 AD]). Tajaareb-e Zistey-e Valedeyn-e Daneshamuzan-e Dokhtar dar Dorey-e Motevassete Dar Khosuse Asibhay-e Ejtemai-e Internet; Mored-e Motale'e Shahre Semirom [in Persian: The Lived Experiences of Female High School Students' Parents About the Cultural Damages of Internet; A Case Study of Semirom High Schools]. *Journal of Communication Studies*. 20(3).

Memariani, Z. & Hassanzadeh, Z. (1391 [2012 AD]). Ta'sir-e Internet va Maahvaare bar Hoviyyat-e Dini va Melli-e daneshamuzan-e Moghta'e Motevassete [in Persian: The Impact of Internet and Satellite TV Channels on National and Religious Identity of High School Students]. *Proceedings of the First National Conference of Cyber Space and Modern Social Damages*. Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

Mirfardi, A., Mokhtari, M. & Valinezhad, A. (1396 [2017 AD]). Mizan-e Dindari va Raabeteye an ba Estefadeh az Shabakehaay-e Ejtema'i-e interneti (Motale'e Moredi-e Daneshgah-e Yasuj) [in Persian: The Level of Religiosity and its Association with the Social Networking on Internet (Case of Study: Students at Yasouj University)]. *Practical Sociology*. 28(2), Issue 66.

Montazerghaem, M. (1381 [2002 AD]). *Amniyat Dar Fazaay-e Majazi* [in Persian: Safety in Cyber Space]. Tehran, Institute of Culture, Art and Communications.

Najafzadeh, M., Entezari, M. & Fathi, E. (1394 [2015 AD]). Barrasi-e Negarey-e Hoviyyati-e Karbaan-e Irani-e Shabakey-e Ejtema'i-e facebook (Daneshjuyan-e Daneshgaah-e Ferdowsi) [in Persian: A Survey on the Identity Issues of Iranian Users of Facebook (Students of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad)]. *Quarterly Journal of National Studies*. 16(3).

Nourbakhs, Y., Mowlayi, M.M. & Talebian, H. (1392 [2013 AD]). Ta'sir-e Anva-e Resaaneh bar Dindari-e Daneshjuyan-e Sarasar-e Keshvar [in Persian: The Impact of Different Types of Media on Religiosity among University Students across the Country]. *Journal of*

Management in Islamic University. 1.

Sabouri Khosrowshahi, H. & Azargoun, N. (1392 [2013 AD]). Ta'sir-e Shabakehay-e Ejtema'i-e Majaazi Bar Hoviyyat-e Ejtema'; Motaale'ey-e Mowredi-e Daneshgah-e Azad-e Eslami [in Persian: The Impact of Facebook on Social Identity: A Case Study of the Students of Islamic Azad University]. *Media Studies Quarterly*. 8(21).

Shafi'pour Motlagh, F. (1390 [2011 AD]). Barrasi-e Rabet-ye Gerayesh-e Mazhabi ba No'e kankaash Interneti' [in Persian: A Study on Users' Religious Orientations and its Association with Contents They Search]. *Quarterly Journal of Culture in Islamic University*. 1(1).

Shojaeezand, AR. (1384 [2005 AD]). Modeli Baray-e Sanjesh-e Dindari Dar Iran. [in Persian: A Model for Measuring Religiosity in Iran]. *Iranian Journal of Sociology*. 6(1).

Soltani, A. (1395 [2016 AD]). Barrasi-e Rabet-ye Estefaade az Sahabake haye Ejtema'i-e Majaazi va Hoviyyat-e Ejtema'i-e Daneshjuyan; Motaley-e Mowredi-e Danmeshjuyan-e Reshtey-e Modiriat-e Daneshgaah-e Azad-e Eslami-e Ilam" [in Persian: A Study on Association between Using Online Social Networks and Social Identity of University Students; Case of Study, Students of the Department of Management in Islamic Azad University, Ilam Branch]. *Farhang-e Ilam Quarterly*. 16 (50 & 51).

Taleban, M. (1388 [2009 AD]). Chaarchubi Mafhumi Baraay-e Peymaayesh-e Dindari Dar Iran. [in Persian: Conceptual Framework for Measuring Religiosity in Iran]. *Journal of Islam and Social Sciences*. 1(2).

Tarihi, N. and Samadi, M. (1395 [2016 AD]). Motale'ey-e Rabetey-e Beyn-e Mizan-e Masraf-e Resane'i-e Nasl-e Javan va Negarehs-e Anha be Ithar va Shahadat [in Persian: A Study on the Association between Media Usage in Youth and its Impact on Their Attitudes towards Sacrifice and Martyrdom]. *Sociological Studies Quarterly*. 8(32).

Vatani, S. & Saei, M. (1392 [2013 AD]). Barrasi-e Rabet-ye Mizane Bahremandi Az Resanehay-e Novin (Internet) va Mizaan-e Paybandi-e Nasl-e Javan be Arzeshhay-e Ejtema'i (ba Ta'kid bar Motale'eye Daneshjuyan-e Daneshgah-e Azad Vahed-e Tabriz va Olum Tahghighat-e Azarbayejan-e Sahrghgi) [in Persian: Investigating the Association between the Rate of Utilizing Modern Media (i.e. Internet) and the Degree of Commitment of the Younger Generation to the Social Values (with Emphasis on the Data of the Students of Islamic Azad University of Tabriz and East Azerbaijan Azad University, Science and Research Branch)]. *Social Studies Quarterly*. 5(18).

Zaki, MA. (1392 [2013 AD]). Internet va Dindari-e Javanan; Motale'eye Dokhtaran va Pesaran-e 19 ta 30 Saley-e Esfehan (Isfahan). [in Persian: Internet and Religiosity of the Youth: A Study on 19-30 Years Old Boys and Girls Living in Isfahan]. *Quarterly Journal of Information and Communication Technology in Education.* 4(2).

Zolfaghari, A. & Aminfar, S. (1390 [2011 AD]). An empirical comparison of MPI religiosity measures with two other frequently used measures*. Rahbord-e Farhang Quarterly.*14 &15.