



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**REPRESENTATION OF ADOLESCENT IDENTITY STATUS
THROUGH FACEBOOK USE**

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Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

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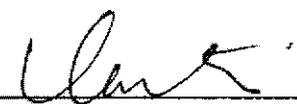


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Representation of Adolescent Identity Status through Facebook Use

Tharisiny A/P Kumaran

This project is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
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The project entitled 'Representation of Adolescent Identity Status through Facebook Use' was prepared by Tharisiny a/p Kumaran and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Cognitive Science).

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study is to identify the purpose of the usage of Facebook by adolescents. Besides that, the representation of Marcia's identity development theory through Facebook use will be studied in this research. This study had used qualitative research design and semi-structured interview were carried out to obtain the data that is needed for this study. The number of informants that is involved in this study were three, each from different identity status which are identity achievement, identity moratorium and identity diffusion respectively. All respondents were interviewed and their Facebook has been observed for one month and two weeks based on the research question formed earlier for this study. The age of respondents basically revolves around 19 to 20 as only adolescents that is in the stage of late adolescence were selectively chosen for this study. The data collected from the interview was analysed based on the thematic analysis. Analysis shows that the purpose of adolescents using Facebook are to stay connected with their peers, get information about university and to promote events that is being handled by them. Moreover, the representation of identity status could be seen if ones is actively involved in Facebook use. The findings from this research would be useful for future research to further enhance the study on the representation of identity status through Facebook use in much varied demographic profile and larger sample size.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti tujuan utama penggunaan Facebook untuk remaja. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga akan menunjukkan perwakilan pembangunan identiti dengan penggunaan Facebook oleh remaja. Kajian ini adalah kajian kualitatif dan menggunakan temu-bual semi berstruktur untuk mengumpul data. Tiga responden telah dipilih sebagai informan untuk kajian ini. Semua informan ditemu bual mengikut soal kajian yang telah direka berdasarkan objektif-objektif kajian. Informan-informan yang dipilih hanya berusia dalam lingkungan 19 hingga 20 tahun. Data yang telah dikumpul dianalisis menggunakan "Thematic Analysis". Hasil kajian ini mendapati bahawa tujuan utama remaja menggunakan laman Facebook adalah untuk berinteraksi dan berhubung dengan kawan, mendapatkan informasi tentang aktiviti yang berlaku di Universiti serta membuat promosi untuk program yang dianjurkan. Di samping itu, jika remaja aktif dalam penggunaan Facebook maka secara tidak langsung ia dapat mewakilkan pembangunan identiti remaja. Kajian ini diharap akan dilanjutkan pada masa hadapan untuk pengetahuan umum tentang perwakilan pembangunan identiti seorang remaja dengan penggunaan laman Facebook.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter discuss the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, definition of key terms and limitations of study.

Background of Study

Adolescence is a stage that is added recently in the human development stages due to the increase in the gap of physical development and the capability for the young adult to take on the adult liability (AlBuhairan, Harrison, Kaufman, & Areemit, 2012). Taking into account of all human development stages, adolescence has been identified as the most significant and multiplex stage where the ultimate changes happens in the human body at different pace which include physical, cognitive and emotional. According to Newman and Newman (2014), the typical processes from early, middle and late adolescence consist of from being a constant opinion receiver by parents, into giving full effort in order to get peer conformity and lastly developing own thoughts and principles to cultivate optimum identity in themselves. Adolescence stage has been categorised as the period of self-discovery and self-exploratory. Erik Erikson developed eight psychosocial stages for all the human development process as he generate the theories by relating it with conflict or crisis, as for the stage for adolescence he called developmental process as conflict identity versus role confusion (Sokol, 2009).

There were plenty of modification been made to Erikson's idea, and one of the theory that is still referred by psychologists is James Marcia's statuses of identity. Identity statuses are terms that is formed through a deep research on Erikson's identity achievement by Marcia. The formation of these identity statuses are through the degree of exploration and commitment made by adolescents which includes *identity diffusion* (low urge in exploration and

commitment), *identity foreclosure* (limited exploration but strong commitment), *identity moratorium* (wide exploration but hesitation in setting commitment) and *identity achievement* (prepared for high commitment after a duration of intense exploration) (Klimstra, Hale III, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2010). Adolescents need to be actively involved in the exploration process in order to make commitment, this has shown that exploration is an essential process that should not be taken lightly. Example of exploration process that usually made by adolescents are their interest on future education, career, own personality traits, spirituality beliefs, roles in the society, sexual desire, choice of lifestyles, own strength and weakness for a clear personal values (Brogan, 2009).

According to Brogan (2009), optimum identity can be achieved through extreme exploration such as active social interaction with peers and society, sense of competency, acceptance of traditional values and own culture. However, due to the advance achievement of communication tools and Information Technology (IT), the quantity of the development of Social Networking Sites (SNS) has escalate too high that it has become one of the platform for adolescents to refine their self-identity and values to the society (Educause Learning Initiative, 2007). The example of SNS are Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, WeChat and so more, these are the platform that has been actively used by teenagers and young adults which the purpose of using it are to communicate with social friends, make plans, to be in touch with old friends, share information and present oneself to others (Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). According to the Pew Research Centre (2015), “92% of teens report going online daily... Facebook remains the most used social media site among American teen’s ages 13 to 17 with 71% of all teens using the site” (p. 1).

Mahadi (2013) had also reported that the highest Facebook users are those aged of 18 – 24 which categorised as late adolescents and young adults and the number of Facebook users has put Malaysia on the eight spot in the entire Asia. The rise in popularity of Facebook has

indirectly influence the process of self-exploration during adolescents' identity development process (Ganda, 2014). Facebook has create an invisible path for adolescents to enquire into their identity and search for the inspiration that could trigger their optimum identity that suits them best. Due to the blooming interest and importance of social network and digital landscapes to the population, Marcia's Identity Statuses have been one of the theories that is being tested upon Facebook to identify the engagement of it with identity statuses. The aim of this study is to identify the online communication patterns that is used in Facebook by adolescents and find the representation of Marcia's Identity Statuses through these patterns. Moreover, this study is to provide a deeper insight to the parents about the importance of Facebook to adolescents' identity development and hence increase the adolescents – parents bond.

Problem Statements

Social media has been playing a huge role as the host of knowledge for the generation nowadays and has been identified as a tool that spreads news about what is happening around the world in split second. As posited by Marcia (1980), rather than identify the stage of adolescent as identity crisis, it will be more appropriate to define it as a period of active exploration of variety life dimensions such as gender roles, religion, occupation, dreams and responsibilities to achieve a desirable identity. Growth of technology had resulted in the easy access to internet for the adolescents and makes the relationship between social media and adolescents denser (Schwartz, 2012). Phenomenon such as negative and positive effect of social media to the adolescents' development especially on self-identity had become the root of the close relationship between these two entities. Example of adverse effect of social media to adolescents can be found in O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) research. They had reported that due to social media there are expression of threatening behaviours among teens such as cyber-bullying, violence, gang fight and so more. However, there are also proves showing the

positive effect of social media to adolescents. The route of social media had shower users with various flexibilities such as seeking for similar passion, expanding of extra knowledge, obscurity and chance for self-advancement (Valdez, 2016). Upsurge on the quantity of social networking sites and the dependency of users on it had generate sense of thought to the developmental researchers to research the effect of social networking sites on the creation of identity patterns in the digital world. The cyber-connections among adolescents has been blooming since the year of 2010 and the disclosure of information in social networking sites in order to explore self-identity was heavily concerned by researcher (Jordan, 2010), the influence of social media towards the identity formation and the portrayal of offline pattern on self-understanding (Ganda, 2014). Moreover, recently a doctoral paper had been written to create an affirmation on the representation of Marcia's Identity Status through Facebook use (Valdez, 2016). These dissertations had produced a small-scale representation model of social networking sites and adolescents' identity formation, more studies need to be done in order to produce an optimum representation. On the other hand, different country possess different cultural perception which could give rise to a different result on the degree of contribution of social media on the development of adolescents' identity.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore Marcia's theory of Identity Status through the use of Facebook.

Research Questions

1. What is the main purpose of Facebook usage to adolescent?
2. Does Marcia's Identity Development Theory explain the adolescent's psychosocial development through Facebook use?

Conceptual Framework of Study

This study mainly focus on adolescents' offline communication patterns in Facebook use and through a thorough analysis process, a correlational of these patterns and Marcia's adolescents' identity statuses will be made. So as a focal point, identity statuses stand as the independent variables in this study, which directly gives the insight of the usage of Facebook being the dependent variable. The visionary framework that is chosen for this study is from the Canadian developmental psychologist James Marcia's Identity Statuses which is a conceptualization extended by Erikson's model. Refer to figure 1, this model deeply explains

		Exploration	
		HIGH	LOW
Commitment	HIGH	Achievement	Foreclosure
	LOW	Moratorium	Diffusion

Figure 1. Marcia's matrix dimension of commitment and exploration. Adapted from "Representation of adolescent identity status through Facebook use: A qualitative multicase study of adolescents' digital behaviour," by Valdez, 2016, p. 29, Retrieved from Graduate Thesis and Dissertation.

that the construction of identity statuses which depends entirely on the degree of the individuals' exploration and the intentionality on expressing the commitment to their innate identity (Klimstra et al., 2010).

During the identity development, it is all depends on the amount adolescents has settled on their choices from the exploration process and the degree of guarantee they invest to those decisions (Learning Theories, n.d.). According to Marcia (1980), "Although the content of individual identities may be interesting, the most crucial area for study is the underlying process: the patterning of more or less disparate parts into a flexible unity" (p. 159). As per

mention by Marcia, the pattern of the identity development during the stage of adolescence is a strenuous part because the factors that could affect the identity development are wide such as learning process in school, interaction with peers, cultural learning social interaction online and offline (Brogan, 2009). Thus in this study, Facebook has been chosen as the platform to identify the patterns during the maturation of adolescents, the handling, changes and manifestation process that aid in their identity development due to the hike in usage of Facebook by adolescents.

According to Schwartz, Mullis, Waterman and Dunham (2000), “Based on these two dimensions, Marcia (1966) derived four identity statuses, each of which represents a juxtaposition of levels of exploration and commitment” (p. 505). The four identity statuses are non-other than identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure and diffusion. (refer to figure 2) These four identity will be express while individual maneuver their ideal identity.

Adolescent Identity			
<u><i>Diffusion</i></u>	<u><i>Moratorium</i></u>	<u><i>Foreclosure</i></u>	<u><i>Achievement</i></u>
The subject “may or may not have experienced a crisis period; his hallmark is a lack of commitment” (Marcia 1966. p. 551)	The subject is “in the crisis period with commitments rather vague” but on an “active struggle” to make those (p. 552).	The subject has preemptively committed himself without “having experienced a crisis” (p. 552).	The subject “has experienced a crisis period and is committed to an occupation and ideology” (Marcia 1966. p. 551).

Figure 2. Marcia’s adolescent identity statuses. Adapted from “Adolescents’ cyberconnections: identity definition and intimacy disclosure on a social networking site,” by Jordan, 2010, p. 12, Retrieved from Graduate Thesis and Dissertation.

A precise finding will be made on the representation of identity status of the respondent through Facebook communication patterns in order to express the strong relationship between

the variables. Moreover, individual perception on the usage of Facebook of different people had resulted in a formation of an additional theoretical framework which is the Social Constructivism. Social constructivism is defined as the understanding of various population and society about the reality and culture and deduce a specific knowledge based on the assumptions made in the end of the research (Kim, 2001). Social constructivism contributes as one of the theoretical framework which a detailed features about how the participants of this study understand the usage of Facebook is to be observed and relatively finding its contribution to their identity status.

Definition of Terms

Adolescence

According to Papalia, Olds and Feldman (2008), adolescence is define as “a developmental transition that involves physical, cognition, emotional, and social changes and takes varying forms in different social, cultural and economic settings” (p. 354). Adolescents are chosen as the participants of the study, due to the various changes that happens in them which results in identity crisis. Moreover according to Mahadi (2013), adolescents are the most frequent user of Facebook.

Identity

There are various explanation of identity, but mostly it is define as a uniqueness and characteristics that could make a person or a thing to mark it as an identity to himself or itself. As identity is a terms that too wide that it has no delimitation in its explanation, according to Marcia (1980), “Identity refers to an existential position, to an inner organization of needs, abilities and self-perceptions as well as to a socio-political stance” (p. 159). According to Brogan (2009), the recognition of self-identity do begins from early childhood stage however Erikson emphasized that the most significant process of identity development happens during

the stage of adolescence. Due to the gradual rising of Facebook usage by adolescents, directly or indirectly Facebook has become one of the platform that could lead to the formation of adolescents' own identity (Ganda, 2014).

Identity achievement

One of the identity status which can only be achieved if the individual knows clearly about their own future plan and have a strong determination on it. According to Marcia (1966), such decision about own future can only be made after a thoughtful evaluation of the possible choices that is available. Moreover, for an individual who had achieved this status, even if a sudden obligation appears they might easily overcome it. In this study, one of the student from the status of identity achievement will be chosen as a respondent and his or hers Facebook communication patterns will be observed.

Identity foreclosure

A self-discovery identity which the individual who hold this identity had set on targeted goals without considering other options that laid in front of them. According to Shaffer and Zalewski (2011), as foreclosure has been identify as an immature identity status, the individuals whom possess such identity has fail in exploring their personal desired identity and indirectly had self-invited themselves to the destruction of their own success. Heavy external influential such as expectations from parents and family could obscure the chances for their kids to seek for their own interest. One of the student from this identity status will be chosen as the respondent for this study.

Identity moratorium

From a wide view, moratorium has been defines as 'delay', 'suspension' or 'halt' (Hike, n.d.), which can be relate to this identity as the person who has this identity they are actively exploring the possibility of their future undertaking but the uncertainty in them delay the

process of them being committed to their own desired choice for their future. According to Kroger (2008), despite from the uncommitted future, moratorium individuals are highly prominent to versatile compare to other identity statuses. The Facebook of the respondent with moratorium identity will be analyse for one month for this study.

Identity diffusion

Diffusion can be classified as 'wide', 'dispersal' or 'dissemination' (Hike, n.d.). However, identity diffusion shown an individual who does not bother to take initiative in either exploring the many choices in pursuing future undertaking or committing on any desired choice. According to Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, and Zamboanga (2012), diffusion individuals either are incompetence in exploring from the various field in pursuing their education or they personally disregard such process during adolescence. In this study, the absenteeism of exploration might be able to be seen through the usage of Facebook of the respondent that is chosen.

Exploration

Exploration is been widely define as 'survey', 'travel' or 'research'. According to Luyckx, Schwartz, Soenens, Vansteenkiste and Goossens (2010), adolescents are involve in the exploration process if and only if the individual active in addressing and thought of identity relevant decisions. The involvement of the process of exploration of respondents involve in their usage of Facebook were to be identified by the end of this study.

Commitment

Commitment is define as 'guarantee', 'responsibility' or 'pledge' (Hike, n.d.). From all the exploration process by adolescents, commitment is the process where adolescents are all prepared to take the responsibility of the choice that they had made and move on with them (Luyckx, Schwartz, Soenens, Vansteenkiste & Goossens, 2010). The commitment that has

been made by respondent and the relation of such choice to their activity in Facebook were to be find out by the end of this study.

Social networking

Individuals that use online social network then they are involuntarily involve in a world where there are no boundaries, the information that is shared by the individual that is in the south pole of the world can be viewed by the individual that is in the north. This is the power of social networking. However, one of the many variation of social networking which is Social Network Sites (SNS) which includes Facebook, Myspace and Twitter are the one that helps people around the world to explore their interests and identity with the aid of the online connection. (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007) Due to the fact that Facebook having the highest number of users which reported by Mahadi (2013), Facebook has been chosen as the platform for this study in order to investigate the possible relationship between adolescents' identity status and Facebook usage.

Digital literacy

According to Eshet-Alkalai (2004), digital literacy includes the skills and knowledge on utilizing the software and digital device or gadget which incorporate vast assortment cognitive and motor skills in order to work the digital efficiently. However, in this study the knowledge that is acquired is the skills of respondents using Facebook and the way they communicate in the digital world. The Facebook behaviours that commonly shown are posting status-update, updates, comments on posts that they are interested, uploading photos and videos as a memory that they cherished to their digital friends. Moreover, by the frequent update of Facebook layout, Facebook Messenger were recently created to ease the users to communicate with their online friends. These are the features that will be further explored in order to identify the representation of identity statuses through these patterns.

Limitation of Study

It has been proven by researchers that either in quantitative or qualitative studies, there will be a certain degree of limitation that could lead to decrement in the reliability and validity of the study. As according to Griffin (2004), "The relationship between qualitative and quantitative research methods has been likened to the tension between the depth and breadth of the analysis respectively" (p. 5). In this study, the main essential activity is to identify the digital behaviour on how adolescence use Facebook in daily live and link such behaviour to identify the identity status of the individuals in order to find out the significant relationship of the Facebook use and their identity development. However, to investigate the behaviour that could reflect the identity is known to be very difficult.

First of all, the naturalistic approach of Facebook users will be the main problem. Around us, we can easily find many passive Facebook users through our circle of friend. They are merely active in Facebook, probably some likes and comments is that much that they do. This could bring a huge problem to this study, as in order to reflect digital behaviour to identity, the verification of status is the most significant digital evidence that would be collected.

Another limitation of this study is the small sample size, a decision has been made to choose four participants each with different identity status. Small sample size would be a problem in conforming the significant relationship between the variables and the reliability in the finding to represent the whole population would be less possible.

Moreover, the semi-structured interview will be the next limitation as during the observation duration, whenever the student post a status in Facebook, they need to write a further explanation like a short diary in order for the study to be more reliable and to avoid misinterpretation of information. However, the information that will be received will merely

depend on the trustworthiness of the student to this study and the information that need to be confidential will be verified beforehand.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the focal section such as background of study, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, conceptual framework of study, definition of key terms and limitation of study are clearly stated. Further explanation about this study will be discussed in the next upcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review begins by focusing on the formation of identity theories and models. The focal purpose of this review is to indicate previous researches which consist correlational studies of identity types and related articles that represent online identity patterns through social networking.

Theories and Models

Conceptualization of adolescent and identity

This section focus on the initial development of the theory that is involved in this study which is identity statuses developed by Marcia at the end 1970's (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2008). The initial concern on the development of the adolescence stage, the main reason of identity crisis that undergone by all the adolescents, the development of identity statuses and the evolutionary changes from one status to another will be discussed in this sub-section.

The word *adolescence* were gotten by Latin which is *adolescere*, which signifies "to grow into adulthood" (Steinberg, 2011). According to Papalia, Olds & Feldman (2008), it was not until the twentieth century when developmental researchers recognized adolescence as one of the stage in the human developmental phase. This is due to the increment in the gap of teenagers in accepting the adult responsibilities and the prolonged period in obtaining educational goals. Historically, psychologists from various theoretical approaches have endeavoured in portraying adolescence from their point of views. Such as psychosexual development by Freud, social learning theory by Bandura, cognitive stage theory by Piaget, sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2008). These are the theories that