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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Role of Social Media in the Adherence of Tehrani Youth to National Identity

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction:

National identity constitutes a pivotal concern in the destiny of any society and is regarded as one of the fundamental pillars of national unity and solidarity. In contemporary societies, this identity is influenced by various factors, among which media- particularly social media- play a significant role. With the expansion of new communication technologies, identity-related challenges have intensified across societies, while traditional resources of identity formation have been progressively weakened. This phenomenon is pronounced in developing countries, where local values and norms have been subjected to the influence of foreign cultures, potentially giving rise to a form of identity crisis. In Iran, the transformations resulting from global processes have profoundly affected individuals' lives and may have contributed to an identity crisis among the younger generation. Given the significance of national identity and the role of social media in

shaping it, the present research aims to examine the relationship between the level of social media use and adherence to national identity.

Method:

This research is descriptive in terms of approach, applied in terms of purpose, and quantitative in terms of method. The statistical population comprises young adults aged 18 to 35 residing in Tehran. For sampling, the sample size was initially determined as 400 individuals using the Cochran formula, and participants were selected and studied through stratified random sampling. Data collection was conducted using a survey method and a questionnaire instrument. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through content validity, and its reliability was verified using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software (version 25). For this purpose, the findings were first described, and subsequently, the correlational relationships between variables were analyzed using appropriate statistical tests.

Results:

In this research, social media consumption is considered the independent variable and encompasses individuals' use of social networking sites and messaging applications. According to the results, foreign messaging applications exhibited the highest usage rate, with a mean score of 3.63. This was followed by foreign social networks (mean = 3.37), domestic messaging applications (mean = 1.83), and domestic social networks (mean = 1.49). Commitment to national identity was defined as the dependent variable in this research. The results indicate that 0.5% of respondents demonstrated a very low level, 2.8% a low level, 11.5% a moderate level, 38% a high level, and 47.3% a very high level of commitment to national identity. The mean commitment of young people to national identity was 4.05, which falls within the high range. Among the components of national identity, pride in national symbols and figures ranked highest (mean = 4.40), followed by pride in nationality (mean = 4.27), art and civilization (mean = 4.24), customs and traditions (mean = 4.06), language and literature (mean = 3.78), and belonging to the land (mean = 3.58), in descending order.

The result of the main hypothesis test, which posited a correlation between the level of social media use and adherence to national identity, revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.005 and a significance level of 0.914, indicating no statistically significant correlation between these two variables. Subsequently, the sub-hypotheses of the research were tested. The first sub-hypothesis evaluated the relationship between the use of domestic social media and adherence to national identity. The results of the statistical test indicated a direct, positive relationship between the use of these media and adherence to national identity. The aforementioned test was also conducted regarding the use of domestic social media in relation to each of the components of national identity. The results demonstrated that in all tests, the correlation coefficients were positive and the significance level was 0.000. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a direct correlation between the use of domestic social media and adherence to national identity and its components. The second sub-hypothesis addressed the relationship between the level of use of foreign social media and adherence to national identity. The results of the statistical test indicated an inverse relationship between the use of these media and adherence to national identity. The aforementioned test was also conducted regarding the use of foreign social media in relation to each component of national identity. The results showed that in all tests, the correlation

coefficients were negative and the significance level was less than 0.05. This indicates that as the use of foreign social media increases, individuals' adherence to national identity and its components decreases.

Conclusions:

The analysis of the results demonstrates that the mere duration of social media usage cannot fully explain young people's commitment to national identity. Rather, the media's dependence on the political structure and the content it provides play a key role. Domestic social media can enhance national identity and increase young people's awareness of history, culture, and national customs. Content related to cultural heritage strengthens a sense of belonging and national pride among users and encourages them to actively participate in social affairs. In contrast, foreign social media typically promote global and multicultural content, which can exert negative effects on young people's national identity. The continuous use of these media may reduce the sense of belonging to national values and lead users to adopt foreign cultural elements. Furthermore, foreign content may create misleading comparisons between the social and economic status of the country and that of other nations, thereby reinforcing social dissatisfaction. The findings of the research underscore the importance of consciously selecting the type of social media and recognizing their role in preserving or undermining national identity. The use of domestic social media can serve as an effective tool for strengthening national identity, and there is a pressing need to enhance awareness and media literacy in confronting the negative impacts of foreign media.

Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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