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# Development of Charity and Humanitarian Activities Through Social Networks

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## Abstract

The current research was conducted with the aim to investigate the effect of social networks on charitable activities. This research was done using the survey method, and a questionnaire was used in order to collect data. The obtained results show that there is a relationship between different aspects of social networks with charitable activities at three levels of awareness, acceptance and implementation. The positive value  $r = 0.73$  indicates that changes in both variables -charitable activities and social media usage- occur simultaneously. It can be concluded that this relationship is valid at the 99 % level.

**Keywords:** Networks, Charitable Activities, Collective Goodness.

## Desarrollo de actividades benéficas y humanitarias a través de redes sociales

### Resumen

La investigación actual se realizó con el objetivo de investigar el efecto de las redes sociales en las actividades caritativas. Esta investigación se realizó utilizando el método de encuesta y se utilizó un cuestionario para recopilar datos. Los resultados obtenidos muestran que existe una relación entre los diferentes aspectos de las redes sociales con actividades caritativas en tres niveles de conciencia, aceptación e implementación. El valor positivo  $r = 0.73$  indica que los cambios en ambas variables, actividades caritativas y uso de redes sociales, ocurren simultáneamente. Se puede concluir que esta relación es válida al nivel del 99%.

**Palabras clave:** redes, actividades benéficas, bondad colectiva.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *1.1 Problem statement*

Charity or benefaction provides assistance to people or creatures that need it. Contributions and financial aid or other material aid to the poor with humanitarian motives is also considered a charity work. Charity is an admirable deed and has been strongly recommended in different religions and schools of thought. Benefaction and charitable activities that occur in every society, like good phenomena, are influenced by beliefs, values, culture, and customs of that society. Hence, one of the effects and manifestations of social engagement (social participation) and charitable activities in Islamic culture is the

tradition of endowment (waqf) (Siddiquiarfaei, 2012). Theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that human charitable actions have largely rooted in the beliefs of citizens. In addition, cultural and social beliefs can affect the altruism and voluntary/charitable behaviors of citizens. Berger believes that citizens with strong religious beliefs have contributed more than others to charitable activities and have supported people from vulnerable and needy strata.

Nowadays, mass media is one of the most important sources for creating values, such as trust and social engagement. Riseman believes that the mass media can neutralize the static mode of following social norms and urges individuals to engage themselves in social issues and participate in political life. Some theorists believe that media can produce culture like a quasi-reality such as a product in advertising, and to replace culture and social values with a hyper-reality (Mohagheghi et al., 2012). According to estimates, 400 million people all over the world are using WeChat to chat and send audio and video freely. According to Mahmoud Vaezi, one percent of these users is equivalent to four million Iranian users. In a sense, more than one million Iranian Bazaar users have downloaded these applications. Activists believe that the number of Apple users who have downloaded such applications hit more than 300,000 people. Counting the number of subscribers of Android apps, it seems nearly 1,5 million Iranians are members of these social networks. One of the three sources of information is mass media, which interpret and teach information as well as produce it. Losing trust in some entities may be due to the increasing power of the media, as the information source

and interpreter. It is important to find linkages between the social media usage and charitable activities. Having identified the relationship between charitable activities and the dimensions of social media usage, we can strengthen the level of charitable activities by people throughout the country by planning to improve these indicators.

## **2. DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPTS**

### *2.1 Medium*

The medium is a device through which the sender conveys the meaning and concept of the message to the receiver. In other words, the medium is a device carrying the message from the sender to the receiver. Books, newspapers, magazines, photographs, films, audio and video tape, radio, television, satellite and etc. are several examples of media (Teymoori, 1998). In addition to common characteristics, the mass media have their own advantages and disadvantages. Concerning the common features of social media, the following characteristics have made mass media a unique means of communication, says Sandi Maid:

1. The number of mass media users (receivers) is relatively high.
2. The composition of the users is highly diverse.

3. By sending messages through mass media (mass communication), there is a diversity of messages (some message proliferation would occur).
  
4. The message distribution is fast.
  
5. The expenditures are low for the consumer (Mohsenianrad, 2001).

## *2.2 Social networks*

Social networks is not a new concept. Humans had been building social networks centuries ago when they sat round the fire and told each other stories. But what has caused a greater interest in social networks today is the emergence of digital tools and their contribution to the development of social networks. Therefore, to define social networks, we first need to separate three concepts:

1. Social networks as a human communication network (HCN);
  
2. Social networking services
  
3. Digital social networking services

Social networks are social structures that consist of generally individual or organizational groups, connected to each other based on

different affiliations and interests. The term social networks developed for the first time by Bares A. J. in 1954, and thereafter rapidly became a key procedure in the research and studies of modern sociology, social psychology, organizational studies, management, and etc. The advances in information and communication technology, in addition to the means of communication, have had a direct influence on the quality, scope, and culture among individuals in networks. What has made such networks enjoy a good position is their social flavor because humans are a social creature.

Many people around the world use social media as a means of expressing their views and discourse on different issues. These networks can create a form of civic engagement for the citizens. The citizens try to attach themselves to these virtual networks and use them as a vehicle to comment on various aspects of life; in other words, social networks have created an arena that provides a suitable space for disadvantaged social groups to express their identity. This new public sphere is important in terms of attention to groups that cannot participate in the public arena for different reasons, including local dimension and other forms of social deprivation. The development of these new social networks has provided a good opportunity for scattered groups to express their identity. These communities have now found the possibility of strengthening their collective identity by means of communication. This can especially be considered important is in our country which has abundant land area and ethnic diversity, to facilitate cultural exchange through these social networks. The ability to rapidly transfer information is one of the advantages of social



networks. This enables people to get informed while doing anything. In addition, the users present in thousands of groups and social networks can easily find their favorite and professional topics and join them. Here, the media somehow serve the audience and establish a careful interaction with him/her. Moreover, from the economic point of view, social networks are capable of making money. This will be possible by imposing a membership fee or advertisement as well as the direct relationship between the buyer and the seller. Today, nearly 2 billion people are members of at least one social network (Vahedifard, 2015).

Scholars consider five important functions to cyberspace:

- **Communication:** It is the primary goal of the participant in the cybernetic space.
- **Education:** Not only is formal education transformed (revolutionized) by the cyberspace, but it goes far beyond it; it is a pleasurable education that is associated with entertainment.
- **Entertainment:** The cyberspace is fun, recreational, and exhilarating, either directly or by the online means of entertainment or by computer games, of course, mobile phones or participation in favorite chats. In addition, easy access to different types of arts and tools that are not possible to

experience in real life are several factors which lead to the attractiveness in cyberspace.

- **Facilitating affairs:** The cyberspace facilitates daily communication by enabling remote communication, research, correspondence, transactions, and even working.
- **E-commerce:** The electronic purchase and electronic banking are among the most important types of new e-commerce that have not been possible with this quality before (Vahedifard, 2015).

### *2.3 Social trust*

In the English-American law, trust is the connection between people in situations where one has authority, management, and assets, and the other demands for utilizing these concessions. Trudy Govier considers social trust as the basis of a principled life of morality, responsibility, and merit. He believes that social ties are formed and constructed via trust. In his book *social trust and human communication*, Govier explores the trust and distrust in human social relations. He studies the role of trust in relationships between physicians and patients, or politicians and institutions (Mohagheghi, 2006). Fukuyama (2000) classifies the false trust defined by Govier in dividing social capital resources in the category of built-up and rational resources. Communist governments, such as the Soviet Union

and China were responsible for the very final intellectual structuration form.... The Bolsheviks not only had hoped to create official political institutions, but also to create a new council, which would divert from selfish personal interests and seek the happiness of all humanity... The 70-year-old experience in such a huge program in the area of social construction faced with complete failure, and everyone knows it. Billions of rubles and years of manpower for the biased promotion and socialization led to the fact that the population has become more selfish, more hived, and more individualistic than the era before the Bolsheviks, Fukuyama says. Giddens identifies the trust as “confidence in or reliance on some quality or attributes of a person or thing or trust of a statement.” (Giddens, 1998: 18).

Giddens (1998) remarks a special place to trust in an interpretation of the modern world, perhaps that he is among the most recognized socio-political thinkers who explicitly views movement towards development in terms of trust. He considers the form of trust in modern societies different from pre-modern societies and introduces active trust. In the old world, for example, only thirty years ago, if you were a man or a woman, you had certain roles in society that would stabilize your relationship, and these relations were based on those already established entities. But now we need to build relationships based on communication. That is to say, one has to gain the trust of the others.

#### *2.4. Social solidarity*

Social solidarity is equivalent to social solidarity in Latin. Literally, it means unity, consensus, and loyalty resulting from interests, feelings, empathy and shared actions. Different definitions have been offered for social solidarity, such as mutual responsibility between a few people or a group of people who enjoy self-determination, including human bonds and fraternity among human beings in general and even their mutual dependence of their life and interests. In sociological terms, it is a phenomenon based on which members of a group or a community are dependent on each other (Nasrabadi, 2000).

#### *2.5 Public participation*

A variety of definitions have been proposed for participation. One definition is: the participation is a deliberate and willing cooperation to achieve a specific goal. In other words, a voluntary participation is a collective action with responsibility based on the use of information and opportunities. August Comte, the French sociologist, believes that the criterion for the formation of consensus and social solidarity is the consensus of the minds of men. Furthermore, he maintains that there will be no society unless its members have similar beliefs. Ideas govern and transform the world. In other words, all social devices are built on the basis of beliefs, and the political crises of modern societies are the result of the human

intellectual chaos. Émile Durkheim, another French sociologist, believes that social solidarity and national consensus are based on the values and norms and acceptance of these values by the majority of the people of society, and the inconspicuous role of religion in society and individualism in modern societies is a major curse of social consensus (Nasrabadi, 2000; Inchamnan, 2019).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

In this study, according to the subject and research facilities, the survey methodology will be the most appropriate one, the main and the documentary methodologies will serve as complementary to the different stages of the research. Provided that each of these methods handled properly and with enough prior training, they will be capable of dealing with and scrutinizing the subject properly. Basically, as Max Weber stresses it, the research subject will determine the research method. The research method determines the technique used in acquiring information (acquisition of information). As the information required by the research is both in terms of theoretical and the statistical population dimensions, the main research technique is a questionnaire, interview, and supplementary desk study. Moreover, in most studies on social capital, questionnaires were used in the literature, as the World Bank researches which were carried out in the form of detailed questionnaires. In this study, after reviewing and using the formulated questionnaires in this regard, a questionnaire has

been prepared in which different open-ended and closed-ended questions are brought up when necessary and according to research objectives and assumptions.

### *3.1 Research tools*

As the information required for the research is based on the operational definitions of the research is both in terms of theoretical and the statistical population dimensions, therefore, the research main tool is a questionnaire. Here, research tool is a questionnaire based on the researcher's previous studies which includes 60 items.

### *3.2 Characteristics of the statistical population*

In this research, the statistical population is 19-65-year-old citizens of Tehran whose sample size is 210. The random sampling method was used. The individuals were randomly selected in different regions of the city, i.e., the north, downtown, and the south in the streets, shopping centers, and transportation.

### *3.3 Statistical methods*

Upon surveying the statistical methods and considering the subject, the assumptions, and the theoretical framework, the statistical methods should be provided. To understand the respondents' opinions, frequency distribution tables, correlation coefficients, and Pearson test have been used in this research in order to explain and interpret data.

### *3.4 Reliability and Validity*

The reliability and validity of the research are important tools in each research by which we can trust the results obtained from the research. The results of the research can be trusted by measuring validity.

### *3.5 Content validity*

Content validity means using valid measurement tools in other similar researches. The present study tries as well to preserve the content validity of the present study using the previous researches.

### *3.6 Research reliability*

There are several methods for calculating the research reliability. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha method has been applied

in order to calculate the research reliability. The most appropriate method for assessing the validity is the alpha Likert scale which is based on the inter-item correlation matrix.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the research items.

Research items	Cronbach's alpha
Charitable activities (the awareness rate)	0.80
Charitable activities (the acceptance rate)	0.82
Charitable activities (implementation)	0.76

Cronbach's alpha varies from 0 to 1. The closer it was to 1, the higher the validity an item had; however, the closer it was to 0, the lower the validity an item had. In addition, the acceptable alpha coefficient for a spectrum is over 70 %. This study was conducted using Cronbach's alpha method in two stages.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Table 2: The first hypothesis: There is a link between the social media usage and charitable activities.

		Charitable activities (the awareness rate)	Social media usage
<b>Charitable activities</b>	Pearson	1	0.823
	Significance level		0.000
	Count	210	210
<b>Social media usage</b>	Pearson	0.823	1
	Significance level	0.000	
	Count	210	210



To investigate the result of the above hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to study the result of the aforementioned hypothesis with respect to whether the dependent variable of the charitable activities (the awareness rate) is on the quasi-interval level and the independent variable (the social media usage) is on the quasi-interval level. This coefficient calculates the correlation coefficient between the two interval or rational variables, the value for which is between +1 and -1. The results from the above table (sig = 0.00) indicate that there is a relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, the positive value  $r = 0.823$  indicates that changes in both variables occur simultaneously. It can be concluded that this relationship is valid at the 99 % level.

Table 3: The second hypothesis: There is a link between the social media usage and charitable activities (the acceptance rate).

		<b>Charitable activities (the acceptance rate)</b>	<b>Social media usage</b>
<b>Charitable activities (the acceptance rate)</b>	Pearson	1	0.801
	Significance level		0.000
	Count	210	210
<b>Social media usage</b>	Pearson	0.801	1
	Significance level	0.000	
	Count	210	210

To investigate the result of the above hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to study the result of the

aforementioned hypothesis with respect to whether the dependent variable (the acceptance rate) at quasi-interval level and the independent variable (the social media usage) at quasi-interval level. This coefficient calculates the correlation coefficient between the two interval or rational variables, the value between +1 and -1. The results from the above table (sig = 0.00) indicate that there is a relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, the positive value  $r = 0.801$  indicates that changes in both variables occur simultaneously. It can be concluded that this relationship is valid at the 99 % level.

Table 4: The third hypothesis: There is a link between the social media usage and charitable activities (the implementation rate).

		<b>Charitable activities (the implementation rate)</b>	<b>Social media usage</b>
<b>Charitable activities (the implementation rate)</b>	Pearson	1	0.73
	Significance level		0.01
	Count	210	210
<b>Social media usage</b>	Pearson	0.73	1
	Significance level	0.01	
	Count	210	210

To investigate the result of the above hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to study the result of the aforementioned hypothesis with respect to whether the dependent variable (the implementation rate) at quasi-interval level and the independent variable (the social media usage) at quasi-interval level.

This coefficient calculates the correlation coefficient between the two interval or rational variables, the value between +1 and -1. The results from the above table (sig = 0.01) indicate that there is a relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, the positive value  $r = 0.73$  indicates that changes in both variables occur simultaneously. It can be concluded that this relationship is valid at the 99 % level.

#### *4.1 Recommendations*

Social networks can greatly contribute to public participation at different levels, due to its widespread and epidemiological (pandemic) context.

##### 1. Getting financial aid

Getting financial aid is a top priority for charities. This can be done in the realm of social media. A research by Ipsos revealed that 22% of social media users are more likely to make a purchase from a brand if they see a friend on their Facebook page or Twitter page. Social networks can have an impact on whether to make a purchase or not. Keep this in mind, charities can collect financial aid .

##### 2. Getting professional advice

The use of expertise is always required in any organization. Organizations and charities can communicate with them and benefit from their contributions by making contact with experts.

### 3. Getting help in the fields of advertising and information

Many publications and news websites will dedicate a part of their space to free advertising for the common good. Charities can make use of this advertising sector.

### 4. Getting non-cash support

Many people have supplies that do not work for them anymore. Charities can request them for the needy by raising the issue on social networks.

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