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# The Investigation of Relationship between Time Period Spent on Virtual Social Networks and Communication Skills of Librarians of Public Libraries of IRAN Province

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**The Investigation of Relationship between Time Period Spent on Virtual Social  
Networks and Communication Skills of Librarians of Public Libraries of IRAN  
Province**

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**Abstract:**

**Background and Aim:** The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between time period spent on virtual social networks and communication skills of librarians in public libraries of Khuzestan province.

**Methodology:** The present study is a correlation survey- in terms of nature and an applied research in terms of objective. Researcher made questionnaire has been used for data collection. This questionnaire consists of two main parts: the first part includes questions related to demographic characteristics and the second part includes 38 items related to communication skills. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient

and its overall reliability was obtained as 0.87. The statistical population includes librarians of public libraries of Khuzestan province. Using Morgan sampling table, 181 individuals were selected as samples. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS software version 16 and descriptive statistics (frequency, frequency percentage) and analytical statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient) were used for data analysis.

**Findings:** The findings of this study showed that there is a negative significant relationship between duration of using virtual social network and conscious initiation skill, verbal skill and effective listening skill. Moreover, the findings indicated lack of meaningful relationship between duration of using virtual social networks and emotional control and feedback skills.

**Originality / Value:** The present study is the first study dealing with exploration of the relationship between use of social networks and communication skills of librarians in public libraries.

**Keywords:** Communication Skills, Social Networks, Librarians, Public Libraries, Khuzestan Province

## **Introduction**

The emergence and expansion of electronic communications and, consequently, the application of social networks have transformed social interactions. These networks have been considered as providers of a new way of communication and content sharing on Internet and currently there are hundreds of millions subscribers to social media (Zarei et al., 2015). Internet social networks are virtual communities where users can create individual profiles, connect with their friends, get acquainted with new people based on shared experiences (Kuss, 2011). These networks are simply web pages that people can subscribe to and find friends, interact with each other, share photos and videos they like and they get the chance comment on the interests and content of others, publish their own content in accordance with their taste and

opinion and even publish their imaginations in the virtual world of these networks. What highlights social networks and their impact is the general interest of users to these networks such that everyday millions of people in the world subscribe to them and spend hours surfing social networks (Afrasiyabi, 2013).

Concerning the growing trend of users and members of social networks, it is essential to recognize various dimensions of networks and their impact. The advent of technology in countries is along with ups and downs. The use of modern technologies is an opportunity as well as a threat. (Bakhshi, 2013). One of the threats can be the extreme use of social networks which makes more people interested in communicating in cyberspace rather than real space and therefore reduction of their communication skills.

This issue becomes more significant for people engaged in services jobs and high interaction careers such as librarian occupation since libraries, especially public libraries, have a high level of interaction between librarians and users who are from a wide range of community members with different characteristics and as well as various information needs. Therefore, in order to satisfy the information needs of individuals and obtain their satisfaction, there must be a two-way interaction between the librarian and the client. Effective and constructive communication requires communication skills. However, according to previous studies as well as the presented discussion, the extreme use of social networks can affect the communication skills of individuals. Consequently, concerning the importance of this issue in the librarianship and library business, the present study has been conducted to investigate the relationship between the time spent on social networks and communication skills of librarians in public libraries of Khuzestan province. This is the first study that explores the relationship between the length of time spent on virtual social networks (Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram ...) and communication skills of librarians.

## **Theoretical Framework**

"Communication skills" is defined as the ability to communicate with others; as the ability of individuals in achieving their objective of communication. (Rahbari, 2010). In this study the communication skills of librarians are classified into five categories that are presented below:

- 1) Verbal skills: the deliberate use of verbal symbols in order to persuade others to do something (Robbins, 2010, p. 149).
- 2) Effective listening skill: Effective listening is active participation in a dialogue, an active process that includes attention, understanding, evaluation, recall and responding (Doaei, 1994, p. 62).
- 3) Feedback Skill: The last step in communication process is feedback. Feedback is the process whereby the recipient declares communication and expresses his feeling about what the other person has done or said (Shermoran, 1993, 476). In other words, feedback is the return of the consequence and result of the message to the sender so that the sender will be informed of the status of the message being sent and how it is received and understood (Alvani, 2001, 177).
- 4) Emotional control: As another category of communication skills, it plays an important role in establishment, continuity and health of social relationships. The concept of emotional intelligence largely indicates the importance and impact of this aspect of social relations process. This topic refers to the ability to express and control feelings as well as to cope with the emotions of others (Hossein Chari, 2005, p. 24).

- 5) Conscious initiation: it means a person's initiation to communicate with another person. This skill includes all verbal and nonverbal movements and behaviors that the individual consciously expresses in order to communicate with another person.

### **Research hypotheses**

- 1) There is a significant relationship between the duration of using virtual social networks and conscious initiation skills of librarians of public libraries of Khuzestan province.
- 2) There is a significant relationship between the duration of using virtual social networks and the verbal communication skills of librarians of public libraries of Khuzestan province.
- 3) There is a significant relationship between the duration of using virtual social networks and effective listening skills of librarians of public libraries of Khuzestan province.
- 4) There is a significant relationship between the duration of using virtual social networks and emotional control skills of librarians of public libraries of Khuzestan province.
- 5) There is a significant relationship between the duration of using virtual social networks and feedback communication skills of librarians of public libraries of Khuzestan province

### **Literature review**

There are many researches focusing on the impact of Internet and virtual social networks on individuals. However, as far as the present study has investigated the relationship between the use of virtual social networks and communication skills of librarians, some of the most important researches that have examined the impact of social networks on individuals' communication skills have been presented here.

Malek Ahmadi (2012) investigated the role of mass media on communication skills of students studying at Medical Sciences University of Isfahan. The results showed that testing of hypotheses indicates some relations on the rate of using communication mass media. People using Internet and television received a high score in communication skills. Among the variables affecting communication skills, age, rate of using media, socio-economic base, educational level, sex and marital status had higher share and contribution.

Karimzadeh Sorshjani (2012) carried out a study with the aim of investigating the relationship between internet dependency and student social skills. The population of this study included 354 undergraduates from Islamic Azad University of Shahrekord. The results of this study showed that there is a meaningful and reverse relationship between internet dependency and initiation and termination variables, assertiveness, social reinforcement, empathy and collaboration; however, there is no meaningful relationship between Internet dependency and guidance skills.

Rostami Badi (2014) investigated the effects of using virtual social networks (Facebook) on the quality of face-to-face communication for mothers in Tehran. The results showed that: 1. in mothers' opinion, the use of virtual social networks affects the development of verbal skills in face-to-face communication 2. In mothers' opinion, the use of virtual social networks affects the development of non-verbal skills 3. In mothers' opinion, the use of virtual social networks has an impact on reduction of listening skills in a person 4. In mothers' opinion, the use of virtual social networks affects the reduction of individual's contact with group.

Etesamipour (2017), in a research entitled. "The Effect of Social Networks on Communication Skills and Marital Satisfaction", concluded that: according to Friedman test, Pearson correlation coefficient and one-way variance analysis showed that there is a

significant relationship between women and men in terms of using social networks and the amount of using social networks and marital satisfaction, as well as between spouse communication skills with marital satisfaction. There is no significant difference between the level of education of couples and their communication skills.

Hua (2011) investigated and analyzed verbal communication skills in libraries and concluded that more than 80 percent of the library's complaints relate to lack of appropriate communication between librarians and readers; therefore, verbal communication skills play very important role in library services. In his research, he emphasized on learning of verbal skills by librarians.

In general, a review of previous studies showed that there is almost on study dealing with the impact of virtual social networks on librarianship communication skills and this is the first study investigating the relationship between virtual social networks and communication skills of librarians.

### **Research methodology**

The present study is a correlation survey in terms of nature and an applied study in terms of purpose. A researcher-made questionnaire has been used for data collection. Karimi et al. (2013) and Rahmani (2008) studies have been used for construction of questionnaire. It has two main parts: the first part contains questions related to demographic characteristics such as gender, educational level, working record, etc. and the second part consists of 38 items that are divided into 5 main factors (conscious initiation, verbal, effective listening, emotional control and feedback skills) based on the Likert 5-point scale (completely agree, agree, no idea, disagree, completely disagree). The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and its overall reliability was calculated as 0.87.

The statistical population of the study includes librarians of public libraries of Khuzestan province which is in total 380 people out of which 118 individuals were selected as sample using Morgan sampling table. The research questionnaire was distributed in different cities of Khuzestan province to make all cities have a share in this research. Finally, 162 subjects responded to the questionnaire.

Collected data was analyzed using SPSS software version 16. For data analysis descriptive statistics (frequency, frequency percentage) and analytical statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient) were used.

## Findings

### Demographic information

102 (63%) of respondents were female, and 60 were male (37%). In terms of educational level, 2 respondents had diploma (1.2%), 12 had associate degree (7.4%), 93 had BA (57.4%), 53 had MA (32.7%) and 2 respondents had PhD (1.2%). This data along with other descriptive information are listed in Tables 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

**Table 1. Frequency distribution and percentage of respondents by gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	102	63
Male	60	37
Total	162	100

**Table 2. Frequency distribution of respondents by work background**

<b>Work experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percent</b>
Less than 5years	78	48.1
6-10 years	29	17.9
11-15 years	21	13
16-20 years	23	14.2
Over 20 years old	11	6.8
Total	162	100

**Table 3. Frequency distribution of respondents by educational level**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percent</b>
Diploma	2	1.2
Assistant	12	7.4
Bachelor's Degree	93	57.4
Masters	53	32.7
PhD	2	1.2
Total	162	100

Table 4 shows the frequency distribution of respondents in terms of duration of using of virtual social networks.

**Table 4. Frequency distribution of respondents by the duration of using virtual social networks**

<b>using time</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percent</b>
every hour	73	45/06

Once in a day	31	19/13
Once in a week	11	6/79
Once in a month	5	3/08
Once in the year	42	25/92
Total	162	100

**Findings related to the first hypothesis: The examination of relationship between the amount of using virtual social networks and the conscious initiation skill**

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to answer the first hypothesis. The results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. The relationship between the amount of using virtual social networks and conscious initiation**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>correlation coefficient</b>	<b>Significance level (sig)</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Conscious initiation skill period of time	-0/468	0/000	162

According to Table 5, the results of Pearson correlation coefficient test showed that the significance level (sig = 0/000) is less than 0/05, so it can be said with 0.99 confidence and error level of 0.01, there is significant relationship between rate of using virtual social networks and verbal skills. On the other hand, the negative sign of correlation coefficient shows that this relationship is reversed in that the longer is the duration of using virtual social networks is, the lower will be conscious initiation skills.

**Findings related to second hypothesis: The relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and verbal skills**

To answer the second hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Its results are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: The relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and verbal skills**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>correlation coefficient</b>	<b>Significance level (sig)</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Verbal skills period of time	-0/353	0/000	162

According to Table 5, the results of Pearson correlation coefficient test showed that the significance level (sig = 0/000) is less than 0.05; therefore, it can be concluded that with a confidence of 0.99 and an error level of 0.01, there is a significant relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and verbal skills. On the other hand, the negative sign of the correlation coefficient shows that this relationship has been reversed in that the longer is the duration of using virtual social networks is, the lower will be verbal communication skills.

**Findings of the third hypothesis: The relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and effective listening skills**

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to answer third hypothesis, the results of which are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7: The relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and effective listening skills**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>correlation coefficient</b>	<b>Significance level (sig)</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Effective listening skill period of time	-0/344	0/000	162

According to Table 6, the results of Pearson correlation coefficient test showed that the significance level (sig = 0/000) is less than 0.05; therefore, it can be said that with a confidence of 0.99 and an error level of 0.01, there is a significant relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and effective listening skills. On the other hand, the negative sign of the correlation coefficient shows that this relationship has been reversed in such a way that the longer is the duration of using virtual social networks, the less effective will be effective listening communication skills.

**Findings related to fourth hypothesis: the relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and emotional control skills**

Pearson correlation coefficient test was used to answer fourth hypothesis. The results are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: The relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and emotional control skills**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>correlation coefficient</b>	<b>Significance level (sig)</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Emotional control skills period of time	0.168	0.07	162

According to Table 8, the results of Pearson correlation coefficient showed that the significance level (sig = 0.07) was higher than 0.05; therefore, it can be said that with 0.99 confidence and an error level of 0.01; there is not a meaningful relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and emotional control skill.

**Findings related to fifth hypothesis: The relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and feedback skills**

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to answer fifth hypothesis. The results are shown in Table 9.

**Table 9: The relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and feedback skills**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>correlation coefficient</b>	<b>Significance level (sig)</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Feedback Skill period of time	0/149	0/12	162

According to Table 9, the results of Pearson correlation coefficient showed that the significance level (sig = 0.12) is higher than 0.05; therefore, it can be said that with a confidence of 0.99 and an error level of 0.01; there is not a significant relationship between the rate of using virtual social networks and feedback skills.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

**First hypothesis:** The results of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between duration of using virtual social networks and conscious initiation communication skills, so this hypothesis is confirmed. With regard to the value and sign of Pearson correlation coefficient which is equal to -0.468, it is concluded that this relationship is inverse. Therefore,

the greater is the dependency of librarians on virtual social networks; the lower will be their conscious initiation communication skills. The reason might be that too much internet use creates isolation and detachment of individual from communicating in real environment and librarians have little desire to consciously initiate communication in real space. Such a situation is not pleasant, given that the space of public libraries entails the dynamics and interactions between the librarian and the user. As far as in today's world where Internet and digital libraries are considered to be the main rivals of traditional libraries, librarians should be able to maintain their place and become skilled initiators to connect with people and attract people to public libraries. This finding was consistent with the results of Karimzadeh Sorshajani (2012) and Rostam Badi (2015).

**Second hypothesis:** The results of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between the duration of using virtual social networks and verbal communication skills; so this hypothesis is confirmed. Considering the value and sign of Pearson correlation coefficient which is -0.353, it can be concluded that this relation is inverse. Therefore, the greater is the dependency of librarians on virtual social networks; the lower will be their verbal communication skills. As one of the damages of extreme use of Internet and cybercrime is reduction of individual interactions and communications in real world, it affects the verbal skills of the individual as it causes a person to have little or no incline toward chatting in real world. This is a serious problem in librarians' occupation considering the importance of verbal and face-to-face communication because the process of interacting and meeting the needs of users in public libraries is typically triggered by client interviews and the librarians' skill for talking to different users is very important and necessary. This finding was consistent with the results of Karimzadeh Sorshajani (2012) and Rostam Badi (2015).

**Third hypothesis:** The results of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between duration of using virtual social networks and effective listening communication skills,

so this hypothesis is confirmed. Concerning the value and sign of Pearson correlation coefficient that is -0.344, it is concluded that this relation is inverse. Therefore, the greater is the dependency of librarians on virtual social networks, the less effective will be their effective listening communication skills of. As mentioned earlier, one of the disadvantages of Internet and virtual social networks is to reduction of individual communications in real world. Effective listening requires concentration and keen interest of the listener; while, it seems that continuous use of internet and virtual social networks reduce the concentration and desire of the individual to listen and understand the speaker's speech. The importance of this issue is higher among librarians, since the main task of libraries is to satisfy the information needs of individuals, and therefore librarians, who are the mediator between users and sources of information, must have high level of listening skills. This finding was consistent with the results of Karimzadeh Sorshajani (2012) and Rostambadi (2015).

**Fourth hypothesis:** The results of this study showed that there is not a significant relationship between duration of using virtual social networks and emotional control skills so this hypothesis is rejected.

**Fifth hypothesis:** The results of this study showed that there is not a significant relationship between duration of using virtual social networks and feedback communication skills so this hypothesis is rejected.

In sum, the results of this study showed that about half of respondents continuously used virtual social networks every hour. Moreover, the findings showed that there is a meaningful and inverse relation between duration of using virtual social networks and conscious initiation, verbal and effective listening communication skills. In other words, the results showed that the higher is the rate of using virtual social network by librarians of public libraries of Khuzestan province, the lower will be their communication skills in conscious initiation, verbal and

effective listening. Therefore, it can be said that Internet and virtual social networks have led the studied librarians to abandon correct communication in real space and have affected their communication skills in these three dimensions. On the other hand, the results of this study showed lack of significant relationship between duration of using virtual social networks and emotional control and feedback communication skills.

According to the results of this study, it seems that the discussion of proper use of Internet and virtual social networks is an important and serious argument since by society moving toward Internet and cyberspace, librarians are required to attract audiences toward libraries and their information resources through their communication skills. However, according to the results of this research, it seems that librarians themselves have been attracted to virtual space! In such a situation, what future can be expected for public libraries?

### **Recommendations:**

- 1) Holding training courses for librarians to inform them of the effects of virtual social networks on individuals
- 2) Holding training courses on the proper use of virtual social networks
- 3) Holding training courses on ways of confronting with internet addiction for librarians

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