Prof. UAM dr hab. Jacek Pyżalski

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan

Rada Wydziału Psychologii

Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego

The review of the doctoral thesis of Rahkman Ardi (prepared under the supervision of prof. Dominika Maison), *How do Digital Natives Gratify Their Socio-Psychological Needs While Disclosing in Social media? (Investigating the Role of Self-Esteem, Need for Popularity and Network Characteristics in Online Disclosure on Facebook) (pp. 166 with appendices)*

Cyberpsychology and all other „cyber" social science disciplines are nowadays growing rapidly adopting existing scientific methodologies or searching for the new ones. This is a positive trend since online dimensions of human life influence and sometimes modify traditional concepts present in social science. Despite this growth, there are still numerous issues concerning online functioning and its correlates that need further exploration.

Rahkman Ardi in his doctoral thesis has focused on online disclosure in social networking (SN) in young adults and psychological factors that influence that phenomenon. As the number of SN users is still growing and the new instruments of that kind are introduced (not only widely discussed Facebook) the topic of the thesis is vital and sound as a scientific phenomenon. At the same time SN engagement influences people's live when it comes to wellbeing, social relations, social capital, etc. This influence may be as research shows ambiguous by its nature. The potential mechanisms of such influence are rather complicated and multidimensional as for example the classic research of Kraut's team and its follow-up show. Therefore, it is vital to propose reflective studies exploring psychosocial aspects of

human behaviour in SN – the results here can be also useful for proper practice in such fields as education or psychological support. From this perspective the thesis has also a significant potential.

Literature review

Generally, the introductory review of the literature is appropriate. I appreciate the way the Author structures the literature behind the concepts (and the variables stemming from them). The language of the work clarifies all important issues and at the same time is not oversimplifying them. The Author decided to start with the chapter introducing the core concept of the dissertation – the self-disclosure. Rahkman Ardi focuses on online dimensions of this phenomenon. The discussion there is conducted properly. Still – sometimes more critical approach will be useful. By this I mean for example the fact that the impact of computer mediated communication (CMC) and its mechanisms are different due to the fact that there is no single CMC. Numerous contextual factors influence this connection (such as contacting with offline or online-only friends, using rich CMC with visual cues or textual CMC, etc.). Such issues are discussed in the reviewed work but a structured meta-analytical approach describing those aspects would be beneficial there. Generally, treating CMC as a single, solid concept that does not need typology for further explanations was present rather in former research at the beginning of the exploration of this concept (around 2000-2005).

In the subsequent chapters Author gradually introduces variables and concepts adding to the adopted model while describing the background of three preliminary studies and one main study. Such approach is not typical for a doctoral thesis structure but taking into account the structure of the empirical part I find this approach useful and clear – the presentation of all those concepts before all the studies in one chapter could be too complicated. The literature cited in the dissertation is rich and up to date. However, some sources illustrating different perspectives than those of the Author would extend the scope. I mean there e.g. literature on netiquette and social norms implemented in online communities (eg. Taddicken, 2014 - *The 'Privacy Paradox' in the Social Web: The Impact of Privacy Concerns, Individual Characteristics, and the Perceived Social Relevance on Different Forms of Self-Disclosure*).

My criticisms of the introductory part are few, but worth noting here. They are mostly connected to lack of information or „too modest" presentation of the concepts:

1. The main problems concerns Marc Prensky's concept of Digital Natives/Immigrants (also present as a term in the title of the dissertation). It is taken for granted by the Author as a valid concept and used for understanding the specific online attitudes/behaviours of the respondents. Apparently, the concept is more popular science than a scientific theory. Firstly, defined and described in 2001 by Prensky was followed by the severe scientific critics (See e.g. Bennet, Maton, Kervin, 2008 - *The 'digital natives' debate: a critical review of the evidence* or Helsper, Eynon (2009) *Digital natives: where is the evidence?*). There is a growing body of academic research projects that have questioned the validity of the generational interpretation of the digital native concept, particularly when attributed to the whole generation. This discussion is totally absent in the dissertation that I perceive as a lack since this concept is used to explain basic theory for the research.

2. Additionally, there is the age issue understood in two aspects. Firstly, the age limits for being 'a digital native' as stated by Prensky is not the same in all the countries. For example, for Poland being born in the eighties does not mean usually being surrounded by new communication technologies. Secondly, there is lack of detailed information of the age of participants in preliminary studies (and whether they differ from the sample from the main study?). Since the respondents of different ages implement different social media behaviour patterns this seems to be important. From developmental psychology perspective being 18 y.o. and 22 y.o. implicates differences particularly when psychological needs are considered. Again the developmental dimension - though important - is almost completely omitted in the literature review.

   This should be controlled since the sampling methodology adopted in the study does not provide the same age proportions in all the samples by itself. The same problem concerns comparisons between Polish and Indonesian samples. From my perspective statistical analysis of those aspects should be conducted.

3. The cultural perspective concerning collectivist Indonesian culture and individualistic Polish culture is strongly underlined when the data from one of the preliminary

studies is interpreted. From my perspective that cultural aspect is a very interesting dimension usually neglected even in large scale multicultural studies on online behaviour. However, as a background some theory and former studies on this issue should be presented before.

4. I would also appreciate the clear discussion of the paradigm adopted by the Author. What is his position on consistency of online and offline behaviour? Is offline environment understood as a factor that influences needs of a person or just environment where the psychological/developmental needs are fulfilled? Those are the crucial issues since we are now at the time of changing the paradigm from the one treating the online word as the separate distinctive one to the more integrative one. This analysis could have been a part of the introductory chapter or discussion.

Methodology

My general assessment of the methodological concept and adopted methodology is positive. It meets the standards of a doctoral thesis. Below I present the unquestionable strengths of the research planning and implementation of the methods as well as presentation of the results:

1. Three preliminary studies have been planned in the right order and logically add new variables to the model. As such they form a sound basis for the main study. Also standardization of selected methodological aspects adopted in those three studies adds to the quality of the presented research.

2. The Author put a lot of effort to the quality of preparation the language versions of the instruments – particularly translation process in the main study.

3. The statistical analysis is done properly taking into account all important requirements for using specific methods. The Author provided in the appendices the detailed information that is often lacking in doctoral theses.

4. The way that results are presented – particularly in the main study is at the high standard level. The quantitative data are presented clearly and the model and hypotheses are presented in a way that help the reader can use them as "lens" while reading the data. The discussion is interesting and the Author is not tempted to over-interpret the gathered data. The Author also critically listed

some limitations of the research (that are immanently always present) and interestingly drafts implications for further research (mostly concerning self-esteem variables).

I would like to put forward a few issues that from my perspective need further consideration and in some cases further explanation:

1. Volunteer snowballing sample is acceptable in that kind of research. Still, it is not representative and possible impact of such sampling methodology should be at least shortly discussed either in methodology section or when the results are presented. There are numerous research in social science showing that volunteers differ from the general population. Here the question of possible extrapolation of the sample results on general population emerges. The same discussion on limitations should be conducted in relation to the main study sample (students of psychology).

2. Using online version of instruments is of course legible but also needs methodological discussion. The Author should be aware that this aspect of methodology influences the results. Also the psychometric properties of online version of the instruments may differ from their traditional forms. Have they been checked?

3. In case of preliminary studies at list basic information on sociodemographic structure of the samples should be provided. This has been already hinted in the first part of the review. Since this is volunteer sample the Polish and Indonesian groups may differ in terms of age, gender, level of education, etc. Those variables may account for country differences and should be controlled.

4. Hypotheses as such should be formulated in a way that they are either confirmed or not confirmed – partial confirmation should not be stated (as the Author formulates e.g. in the abstract).

5. There are sometimes construction faults in the proposed tools. The example could be intervals in q. 6 (page 115), where the intervals either overlap or leave blank spaces between. What should indicate the person who uses FB for 2,5 years? Similar remarks refer also to q. 5. Actually, the questions that refer to the simplest things as frequency of usage are in the era of mobile devices are usually the most difficult to formulate properly.
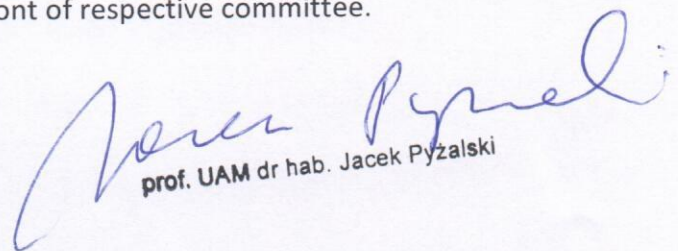
General assessment

To sum up, shortcomings of the dissertation are clearly overbalanced by its strong aspects.

The study brings valuable an credible knowledge in the field of (cyber)psychology and the Author presented sufficient methodological knowledge and skills in the field of conducting scientific psychological research.

After the in-depth analysis I state that the reviewed thesis fulfils all requirements posed on doctoral theses aimed for obtaining PhD degree (according to the the Act of 14 March 2003 on Academic Degrees and Academic Title and Degrees and Title in Art.

This thesis is ready to be defended orally, in front of respective committee.

prof. UAM dr hab. Jacek Pyżalski