

## Using Virtual Social Networks and Social Tolerance among Youths in Tehran

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### *Abstract*

Difference and diversity are phenomena existing from the very first days human communities have been formed. Under such condition, what provides for necessity of coexistence between different individuals and groups to become possible is tolerance. On the other hand, wide range development in terms of communication and providing information are going on in today's world. This evolution called by many as revolutionary evolution in the field of communication and a starting point to a new paradigm in the life of today's communities. The most important and obvious product of it is the internet and virtual social media. Meanwhile, political and cultural effects and consequences of such technologies especially virtual social networks also have found importance. So, the question asked in present study is related to one of the indicators of healthy social, political, and cultural life and effect of virtual social networks on it: "How using virtual social networks affect on the level of social tolerance in four religious, political, ethnical, and moral dimensions among Tehran citizens?" Statistical population of the research includes youths residing in Tehran. According to Chochran's formula and with highest variance, sample size has been included 400 persons. Using multistage and random systematic sampling methods, statistical population has been specified; and, after verification of validity and reliability of the questionnaire, data have been collected through survey and then analyzed. According to the findings, variables of social dialogue, managing usage made of the network, and level of usage made of networks separately affect on dependent research variable. So, it can be concluded that cyberspace and social networks provide the opportunity for communication and dialogue as an appropriate mechanism to strengthen cultural, social, and political bonds among subcultures and different groups in society. Hence, tolerance among them would be promoted.

**Keywords:** Social tolerance, Social networks, Cyberspace, Public sphere, Social dialogue, Political tolerance.

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## 1. Introduction

Tolerance in terms of contemporary scientific and political dialogue is sometimes identified as equal to the word “tolerance”. Tolerance in English language means forbearance, making no objection, and being flexible.

In present study, concept of “tolerance” is equal to “forbearance” in terms of a social virtue which provides the possibility for peaceful coexistence among individuals and groups with different perspectives, living in one society but through different methods.

Tolerance and forbearance are key concepts in social policy; and, collective life in multicultural societies would be difficult without them. Also, collective life with other people will become very difficult without it.

Considering the current realities, it can be suggested that today’s world is subjected to severe crises including problems resulted from violent behavior found in every society which are not specific to a certain class of people. Expansion of domain of occurrence of violence and aggression in Iranian society especially during recent years are from among the most serious social damages, as well; and, promotion of social tolerance and institutionalizing it is the most important mechanism to eradicate the phenomenon.

According to Iranian Society of Pathology, one of the serious crises in Iranian society is severe increase in verbal and physical violence. Based on statistics reported by judicial authorities, battery is one of the first five crimes in the country; and minimum 200 cases of fights in Tehran are recorded on daily basis. High numbers of lawsuits filed can be resulted from lack of forbearance and tolerance in society. Divorce, domestic violence, 15 millions of lawsuits filed and deaths of 17000 people due to accident in the country is resulted from lack of social tolerance and forbearance. In other words, social tolerance can be considered as key factor in foundation of civil society; and without which social system would be disturbed.

On the other hand, the role played by media in terms of social tolerance is an undeniable reality being ignored. From among methods of increasing social tolerance, relationship with different groups and individuals as well as enjoying diverse social networks can be referred to the expansion of culture of dialogue. Also, emersion of multiple identities as one of the features of the new world is

from among reasons that make clear the necessity for continuous dialogue among activists with different identities. Some of sociologists consider creation of social forbearance a solution to form understanding and “dialogue”.

Nowadays, cyberspace as a new information space is working to complete public available space. From Habermas perspective, as far as boundaries of new community just make presence of a few numbers of citizens possible; media have changed to main institutions in public sphere (Khodayari et al., 2014).

Public sphere by Habermas is an arena in which people come together to participate in open discussions; and, communicative actions will be realized through talks and dialogues. Generally, internet can be considered as a separate virtual public sphere due to its special features in relation to other media. From among the most important of these features is this media being interactive. People can directly communicate with each other and being informed, they can participate in public discussions as well. In interactive internet environments, Habermas’s concept of “ideal speech situation” would be realized (Kaffashi, 2010, p.138).

Considering the abovementioned and based on functions of media, it seems that dialogue in virtual social networks can lead to increase of social tolerance level. From this perspective, the research has studied social tolerance based on effect of social networks on this important subject through a new perspective regarding how the environment for social dialogue is formed in virtual social networks; and effort has been made for the problem to be explained.

## **2. Research Objectives**

Identifying social tolerance level and its dimensions among youths residing in Tehran;

- Identifying amount and type of usage made of social networks (managed and purposive usage and vulgar consumption) among youths residing in Tehran;
- Measuring how much dialogue space is realized in social networks among youths residing in Tehran;

- Finding the relationship between amount of usage, type of usage, and realization of social dialogue space in virtual networks and social tolerance among youths residing in Tehran;
- Finding the relationship between amount of usage, type of usage, and realization of social dialogue space in virtual networks and political tolerance among youths residing in Tehran;
- Finding the relationship between amount of usage, type of usage, and realization of social dialogue space in virtual networks and identity tolerance among youths residing in Tehran;
- Finding the relationship between amount of usage, type of usage, and realization of social dialogue space in virtual networks and ethical-behavioral tolerance among youths residing in Tehran;
- Finding the relationship between using social networks and social tolerance in its different dimensions among youths residing in Tehran based on background variables including age, gender, income, and education.

### **3. Research Background**

#### **3.1. Researches Performed inside the Country**

A research has been done by Firouzjaian et al., (2016) through Theory of Action and Field developed by Bourdieu to the aim of studying effect of cultural capital on interpersonal communications via emphasis on social tolerance and specifically behavioral tolerance. The relationship between ethnocentrism and social tolerance also has been studied by Maryam Khalili (2016). According to the results, there is a positive and significant relationship between cultural and socio-economic ethnocentrism and social tolerance. However, there is no significant relationship between political ethnocentrism and social tolerance. In a research performed by Boroujerdi and Sedigh (2017), effect of cyberspace on national and ethnical identity in Iran has been studied and after meta-analyses of available researches in this respect, positive effect of cyberspace on ethnical identity has been confirmed. Khaniki and Khojir (2018), in a research titled “the role played by virtual social networks on development of Iranian civil society”, have been dealt with identification of

positive and negative roles played by virtual social networks in development of Iranian civil society, and how much each of them are used by civil activists in Tehran? According to their findings, 12 positive and 10 negative functions have been introduced by interviewees as for the role played by virtual social networks in development of Iranian Civil society. Also, a part of another research performed by Khaniki and Khojir (2019) on the subject of dialogue in virtual social networks through systematic analysis of related researches is indicative of the point that realization of dialogue in social networks requires the way to be paved by governments and open space to be created for dialogue, users to be trained with dialogue skills in real and virtual world, literacy of using new media to be taught.

The results from a research performed by Parvaneh Shateri (2013) to the aim of studying the role played by new social networks in transforming women's behavior in Iran showed that type of activity performed by users in such space plays a role in creating communicative understanding concerned by Habermas. The results from another research performed by Davood Mir Mohammadi (2011) titled "effect of cyberspace on National identity of Iranian people based on their structural position" showed that main part of changes in national identity variable are affected by variables related to usage made of cyberspace.

In a research performed by Mohammad Gholi Minavand (2006) titled "internet and political development: public sphere in cybernetic space", effort has been made for the following to be answered: "Is internet communication through computers capable of providing the ground for political development and strengthening the democracy through revival of public sphere?" He studied theoretical works and researches performed during recent years. In each of which some of conceptual dimensions of public sphere have been taken into consideration and used in review of the relationship between internet and politics and power as well as their mutual effects; and, according to the results, concept of public sphere from perspective of most researchers is an appropriate pattern. However, except for some minor cases, the pattern has been considered by all writers to be in need of modification or adaptation with certain

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conditions in computer communications and recent evolutions in different societies.

### **3.2. Researchers Performed outside the Country**

Such thinkers as Mark Poster (1995) and Sherry Turkle defend internet as it creates a space to look for a new identity in. That is, various media technologies provide different facilities for their performance. In another research titled “religiosity and tolerance in USA and Poland”, effect of religiosity on tolerance in both countries has been dealt with by Karpov (2005). In the research, tolerance has been measured through granting some rights such as public lecturing, teaching in college, having some books regarding atheists, militarists, racists, and homosexuals in the library. The findings from research performed by Steiber (2001) titled “effect of religious factors on civil tolerance” shows that personal pietism has negative effect on tolerance. In a research titled “predicting tolerances in new religious movements” performed as a multivariate analysis by O’ Donnell (2006), it was reported that religious commitment reduces tolerance against new religious movements. A research has been performed by Elison and Musick (2009) to the aim of reviewing “effects of religious fundamentalism on lack of tolerance”; and, Williams et al., have studied profiles of young people in social network and found that these users are mostly aimed at creating personal communication networks. According to Barbels (1993), during a communicative process which can be recognized as being dialogue-oriented, the two factors of participants and content of communication exchanged between them are of importance.

Denis Gaynor from among researchers in the field of political communications in George Town University (USA) is from among those people considering concept of public sphere very appropriate for sociological studies in relation to computer communications and internet. In his research, he considers positive and negative dimensions of political and social effects of internet (Gaynor, 1996, p. 77).

### 3.3. Research Theoretical Framework

Tolerance has been discussed from different philosophical, political, religious, and sociological perspectives. From political and religious perspectives, such theorists as John Locke, John Stewart Mill, Antonio Gramsci, David Hume, Pierre Bayle, Sebastien Castellion, John Rawls, and Sada-Zhandron have studied the subject through different approaches. In sociological approach as well, different dimensions of tolerance have been explained by such theorists as Paul Vagett, Peter King, Chickering and Reisser, Scarman, Goldsmith, and Chalabi.

It can be suggested that Locke has been first political philosopher who has defended political tolerance (Bashirieh, 1995, p. 77); while, having a political perspective to confirm it not a theological one. In a letter about “tolerance” (Epistolade tolerentia) published in 1689 not bearing the name of author, Locke intends to separate tasks related to government and church proportionate to the goal followed by each of them. The only task of government or ruler according to Locke is supplying security and health in society as well as protecting life and money of people. He considers forced faith of having no foundations (Sada-Zhandron, 2003, pp.99-100).

Tolerance as a concept reaches to its perfection in the mind of Mill. He has followed those paths depicted by Locke in terms of tolerance with more power, putting aside most of limitations considered by him in terms of tolerance concept. Only one justification is acceptable by him to interfere with other people’s freedom and not to tolerate. That is, through individual freedom, freedom of other people would be endangered. He believes that governments based on will of the people and supported by public opinions are not still authorized to suppress those with opposite thoughts and they are not permitted to forcefully kill an idea (Golshahi, 1998, p.34).

Gramsci also believes in tolerance and considers it as a condition for social group commitment and political practice, as well as opposite point of indifference. That is, tolerance from his perspective is a method of dialogue among those people who are basically in agreement and try to coordinate between their common scientific principles and the action that has to be taken jointly.

According to David Hade, tolerance means that a group will grow just upon existence of another different group. Pierre Bill also has dealt with religious tolerance and provided his theory in a book titled “A thesis about public tolerance” (1686), suggesting that forcing a nation having other religious beliefs is not consistent with wisdom; so, it cannot be defended (Golshahi, 1998, pp. 26-27).

According to Rawls, tolerance is resulted from principle of equal freedom for all people. He believes that only the person being agreed with justice as equity deserves tolerance (Sada-Zhandron, 1999, pp. 193-196).

In a general classification performed by Sada-Zhandron, tolerance is divided into two religious and civil domains. However, he believes that “civil tolerance” and “religious tolerance” are inseparable. Civil tolerance is freely granted by government to people.

Social tolerance means tolerating different human traits whether those being with him from his time of birth such as skin color, nationality, etc. or those gained during life through social processes such as language to talk. From his perspective, four components of social tolerance are religious tolerance, ethnic tolerance, nationality based tolerance, and public social tolerance.

According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), tolerance against other people’s ideas and actions both in private and public spheres overlaps with what are considered by Vagett as political and ethical tolerance.

Tolerance has been divided into two positive and negative categories by Scarman (1987). Negative tolerance means lack of intervention in people’s affair and leaving people unattended. According to this point of view, any person is completely free in relation to different issues in life, selections, and decision makings and nobody is permitted to interfere with individuals’ freedom (Scarman, 1978; quoted by Afshani, 2002). On the other hand, positive tolerance means supporting the rights and freedom of people to achieve their life goals; and, people especially minorities to have equal opportunities in the society (Afshani, 2002).

Social tolerance has been also divided by Goldsmith (1971) into active and passive tolerances. Active tolerance in turn would be divided into two



categories of abstract and objective tolerances. Abstract active tolerance means a person verbally believing in tolerance against other different people. When person verbally believes in tolerance against other people and practically also shows his tolerance; it will be turned to objective active tolerance. Passive tolerance also is indicative of some kind of indifference of people against each other such as citizens walking in the street with no attention paid to each other (Goldsmith, 1972, p. 161).

Concept of tolerance is separated from similar behaviors by King. According to King, there are three dimensions of social tolerance, identity tolerance, political tolerance and ethical-behavioral tolerance for social tolerance which seems to be more comprehensive than other models. From this point of view, present research has made use of Peter King Theory from among theories and mechanisms studied to explain tolerance. These dimensions being considered as the basis for the research also include political tolerance, identity tolerance and ethical-behavioral tolerance.

- Political tolerance: It shows the right to make objection for those groups not confirmed by an individual and it includes respecting other people's civil freedoms (Phelps, 2004, p. 26);

- Identity tolerance: Tolerance against involuntary characteristics of other people such as nationality, gender, race, tribe, language, religion, and etc.;

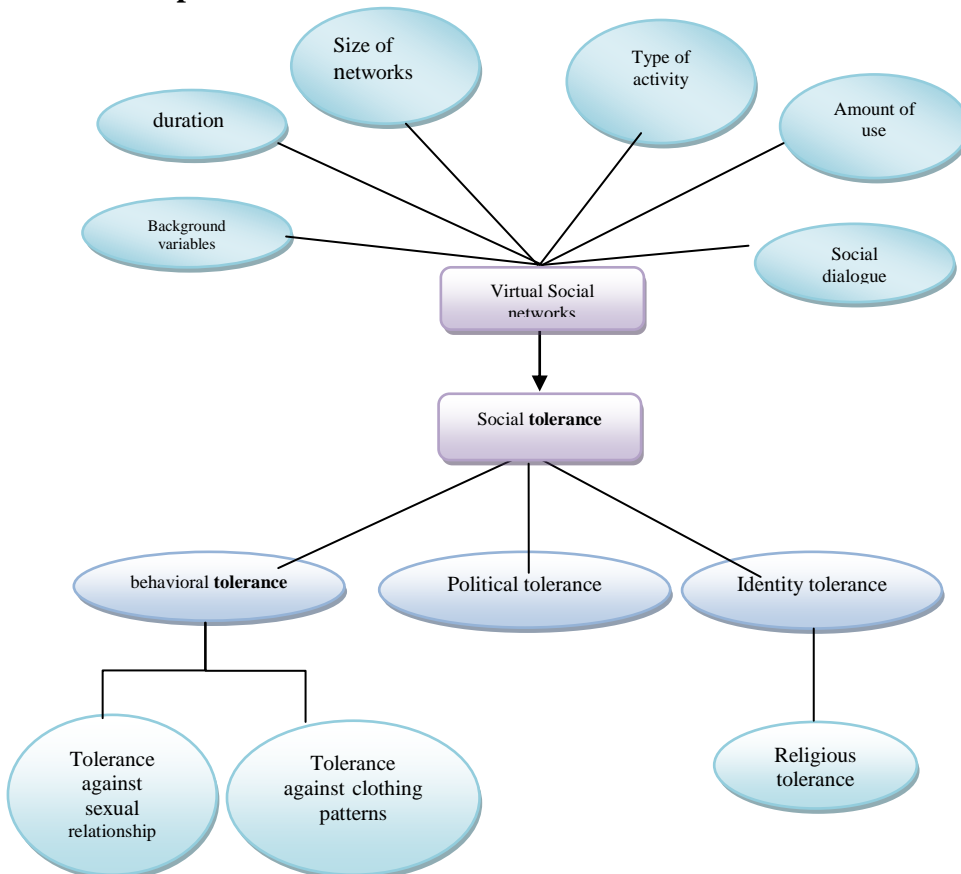
- Ethical-behavioral tolerance: Tolerance against other people's various behaviors (legal-illegal).

In present research, political tolerance and ethical-behavioral tolerance (two components: tolerance against patterns of sexual relationships and tolerance against clothing styles) have been taken into consideration, in addition to religious dimension from identity tolerance.

Internet is a media institution that establishes desirable verbal situation in terms of freedom of speech, and writing; and, it causes people to exchange information regarding economic, political, social, cultural, religious, and sociological fields via the best way possible (Sarookhani, 2016, pp.193-194). This has to be noted that other media other than internet are dependent, from hegemonic and ideological perspectives; however, this dependence would be eliminated in internet. Creating similar environment for all people independent

from any apparel and inner difference creates equal rights and facilities in using the tool for discussion i.e. a tool in conversation and freedom of speech as Habermas believes in it (Sarookhani, 2016, p. 194). According to researchers, internet having its own features has opened a window towards a new public space which is continuation of public sphere of Habermas public sphere. In new public space created by internet, new dialogue spaces have been created that help formation of cooperative ideas and consensus, and provide opportunities to revive public domain. Generally, internet can be considered as virtual public sphere because of having special features in relation to other media.

#### 4. Conceptual Model



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## 5. Hypotheses

- It seems that there is a relationship between amount of usage made of social networks and social tolerance in terms of its various dimensions (political, identity, ethical-behavioral) among youths residing in Tehran.
- It seems there is a relationship between type of usage made of social networks (managed and purposive vs. vulgar usage) and social tolerance in terms of its different dimensions (political, identity, and ethical) among youths residing in Tehran. That is, increasing managed usage will lead to increase in social tolerance level.
- It seems that realization of dialogue environment in social networks will lead to increase in social tolerance in terms of its various dimensions (political, identity, ethical-behavioral) among youths in Tehran.
- It seems that there is a relationship between using social networks and various dimensions of social tolerance among youths residing in Tehran based on background variables including age, gender, income, and education.

## 6. Defining the Concepts

### 6.1. Dependent Variable: Social Tolerance

Tolerance in contemporary scientific and political dialogues sometimes is introduced as equal to tolerance. Tolerance in English language means forbearance, making no objection, and being flexible.

Tolerance means observing freedom of other people or refraining from annoying them. That is, a person having the power to interfere and prevent a work or thought but taking no action. In general, tolerance can be accompanied by such components like 1) Existence of diversity and difference; 2) Discontent and dissatisfaction; 3) Existence of awareness and intention; 4) Existence of power and capability for intervention; and, finally self-control and self-inhibition in terms of intervention and resistance.

Conceptual dimensions of tolerance studied in present research are:

1) Political tolerance: Tolerance against what people do in public sphere or respecting civil freedoms of other people;

2) Identity tolerance: Tolerance against involuntary features of other people such as nationality, gender, race, tribe, language, religion, and etc. In present study, religious has been considered as a component of identity tolerance;

3) Ethical-behavioral tolerance: In general, it means lack of strictness against some of behavioral patterns considered as incorrect by a person.

Components of ethical-behavioral tolerance in the research are tolerance against sexual relationship patterns and also clothing and behavioral patterns.

## **6.2. Independent variables:**

### **6.2.1. Virtual Social Networks**

Upon emersion of modern technologies, especially internet and social networks entering the life of people a new type of interpersonal relationships called virtual communication has been formed. In fact, this interpersonal virtual communication in form of social networking is based on public contribution. Creation of mass and interpersonal communications, formation of virtual communities, providing information, exchange of information and views are from the most known functions of these spaces (Forghani and Mohajeri, 2017, p. 262).

### **6.2.2. Usage Amount of Virtual Social Networks**

This means amount of time a user is online in the space using it. To measure the time, the two following items have been used: duration of presence of user and number of times the he joins social networks.

### **6.2.3. Types of Usage**

- Managed usage:

To measure this variable, following indicators have been used:

Purposive selection of networks, capability and dominance level in using networks, active presence in cyberspace, as well as scientific, training and educational usage made of networks and etc.

-Vulgar usage:

This means non-purposive, habitual and unplanned usage made of cyberspace to escape from problems, spend time and etc. with no attention paid to the network content.

#### **6.2.4. Communicative Understanding and Social Dialogue**

From Habermas perspective, dialogue is the central core to communicative action; because, according to him, communicative action is looking for realization of understanding through dialogue.

According to Habermas, modern human would be rescued from his problems through realm of language, specifically dialogue and negotiation; and, he believes in intrinsic end of human speech to be achievement of understanding (Habermas, 1985, p.392).

Presenting the theory, Habermas is looking for creation of a community in which activists can communicate with each other without distortion and based on reasoning and logic; and, no types of political, cultural, social, economic, and subjective force to be entangled with it (Kamalizadeh, 2015, p. 134).

### **7. Research Method**

This is a cross sectional survey in relation to “amount and type of usage made of social networks as well as how much dialogue space has been realized in virtual social network in terms of social tolerance among youths residing in Tehran.

From data collection perspective, this is a non-experimental descriptive research. Statistical population includes youths residing in Tehran specified through multistage and systematic random sampling methods. Sample size calculated through Cochran’s formula includes 400 persons. Here, face to face questionnaire has been used to collect data.

### **8. Findings**

39.5% of respondents have been male and 60.5% of them have been female. women have been 21% more than men. Most respondents (46.1%) have been within the age range of 27-29 years; and, only 4.4% of them have been within age range of 15-17 years. That is age groups of 15-17 has had the minimum

frequency and 27-29 has had maximum frequency. Most respondents (48.7%) have had “Associate and Bachelor’s degree” and, only 0.1% of them have had elementary and middle school education. 8.1% of respondents have had Master’s degree, doctorate and higher. According to the findings, 71.8% of respondents have been at least 2 hours active in social networks and 91.5% of them have been joining the virtual social networks for several times a day. 69.3% of respondents also declared very high level of presence in networks. 57.28% of sample population has been using the networks in managed and purposive way; and, this is higher than average vulgar usage made of virtual social networks. Variables in the study have been standardized and their scope of change has been between zero and one hundred.

**Table 1. Descriptive information related to independent and dependent variables**

Variables	Number of respondents	orders					statistics		
		Very low	Low	To some extent	High	High	Average	Median	Standard deviation
Social tolerance	395	8.9	24.6	29.9	23.0	13.7	51.26	48.09	23.02
Political tolerance	395	5.6	17.5	25.1	28.4	23.5	58.77	60.60	22.72
Identity tolerance	396	6.8	17.9	18.2	26.5	30.6	61.24	64.58	26.00
Ethical-behavioral tolerance	399	7.8	21.1	33.8	19.5	17.8	53.99	51.92	23.75
Religious tolerance	399	6.3	12.3	15.3	25.8	40.4	67.15	72.22	25.69
Tolerance against sexual relationship patterns	399	10.3	21.8	35.1	17.5	15.3	5.75	50.00	25.281
Tolerance against clothing pattern	399	10.8	21.8	23.3	21.1	23.1	57.569	60.00	27.68
Communicative understanding and social dialogue	394	2.8	11.9	31.5	39.6	14.2	59.90	61.97	19.22
Managed and purposive use of networks	399	5.0	15.3	31.6	34.8	13.3	57.28	58.33	21.04
Vulgar use of networks	398	27.4	33.4	22.9	11.1	5.3	35.69	33.33	23.92
Amount of use	400	.5	.8	13.0	16.5	69.3	76.0	60.00	14.96

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Considering data provided in above table, mean value of social tolerance is equal to 51.26. It would be concluded that social tolerance among sample population under study is higher than average. From among dimensions of dependent variable, religious tolerance has highest mean value (67.15) which compared to other dimensions of tolerance and tolerance against sexual relationship patterns (51.75) has minimum mean value compared to other dimensions of tolerance.

From among those cases related to type of usage made of virtual social networks, managed and purposive use have higher mean values compared to vulgar usage; and, social dialogue variable in networks is also of high mean value (59.90) compared to other independent variables. So, it can be suggested that communicative understanding and formation of desirable dialogue space have been considered by respondents to be higher than average and near 60%. Meanwhile, amount of usage made by users with mean value of 76.0 is indicative of relatively high level of usage made of social networks by sample population.

According to the results observed in above table, from among three dimensions of social tolerance (political, identity, ethical-behavioral), mean value of ethical tolerance has been minimum and that of identity tolerance has been maximum.

From among components of ethical-behavioral tolerance (tolerance against sexual relationship patterns and clothing patterns), respondents have shown lower level of tolerance against clothing patterns.

From among dependent variables, minimum standard deviation is related to political dimension of social tolerance i.e. there is lower diversity of views compared to other dimensions; and, consensus regarding this variable is higher than other dimensions. Meanwhile, maximum standard deviation is related to one of components of ethical-behavioral tolerance i.e. tolerance against clothing patterns. That is, in this case diversity of views is higher than other dimensions and consensus is lower.

**Table 2. Percentage distribution, central indicators and dispersion of duration of use of virtual social networks by user**

item	Orders				Statistics		
	Number of respondents	Lower than one year	1-5 years	More than 5 years	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
Presence record of user in networks (absolute frequency)	400	21	243	138	64.37	50.00	27.86
Presence record of user in networks (valid percentage)	100.0	5.3	60.8	34.0			

The variable mean is also equal to 64.37 i.e. presence record of research respondents in social networks is higher than average.

### 8.1. Coefficients of Correlation and Testing Hypotheses

**Table 3. Correlation coefficient of all independent and dependent variables**

		Main dependent variable	Dimensions of dependent variables		
Independent		Social tolerance	Political tolerance	Identity tolerance	Ethical-behavioral tolerance
Amount of use	Pearson Correlation	.148**	.192**	.218**	.294**
	Significance level	.003	.000	.000	.000
	Number	395	395	396	399
Vulgar usage	Pearson Correlation	.243**	.183**	.178**	.234**
	Significance level	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Number	395	395	396	397
Managed use	Pearson Correlation	.406**	.481**	.398**	.184**
	Significance level	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Number	394	394	395	398
Social dialogue	Pearson Correlation	.448**	.550**	.431**	.197**
	Significance level	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Number	392	392	393	394
Size of network	Pearson Correlation	.257**	.185**	.207**	.242**
	Significance level	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Number	395	395	396	399
Duration of use	Pearson Correlation	.192**	.162**	.128*	.193*
	Significance level	.000	.001	.011	.000
	Number	395	395	396	399



According to the results, there are significant direct relationship between all independent variables and social tolerance and its various dimensions (political, identity, and ethical-behavioral tolerance), at 99% confidence level. On the other hand, the conclusion that correlation between vulgar variable and dimensions of social tolerance is at lower level of correlation between variable of managed use and dimensions of dependent variable shows that internet users with more specified motivations and goals will take more benefit of their relationship with internet and they will be more affected. On the contrary, the more non-purposive and habitual use of internet will lead to users to be less probably affected by the internet.

Significant relationship between variable of dialogue in social networks and social tolerance and its different dimensions shows that from among methods of increasing social tolerance reference can be made to relationship with different individuals and groups as well as expansion of dialogue culture. In other words, emersion of multiple identities as one of characteristics of the new world is one of the reasons making clear the necessity for continuous dialogue among activists with multiple identities. Strengthening social tolerance also requires formation of understanding and “dialogue”; and, media in social arena plays role in formation of effective dialogues.

Another part of results refers to existence of significant relationship between variable of network size, social tolerance and its various dimensions. This is consistent with view of Chalabi regarding tolerance. Expansion of social relations is considered by Masoud Chalabi as foundation for creation of tolerance. In fact, he believes that the bigger would be network of intergroup interactions of a person; it would be resulted in acceptance of pluralism and increase of toleration against differences (Bahmanpoor, Soraya, 1999; Sharifi, 2014, p.33).

## **8.2. Correlation Coefficients between Contextual Variables and Dependent Variables**

Due to the fact that the scale of the dependent variable is at the distance level and the scale of the independent variable is qualitative and at the nominal level,

the T test is used to investigate the relationship between gender and social tolerance.

**Table 4. Independent Samples Test**

t-test for Equality of Means							Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Std. Error Difference	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)	Df	T	Sig.	F	
Upper	Lower								
7.977	-1.351	2.37240	3.31	.163	393	1.39	.072	3.25	assumption equal variances
7.899	-1.273	2.33196	3.31	.156	344.41	1.42			Not assumption equal variances

Considering that the significance level of Leven test is greater than 0.05, so we use the results of the first row, which accepts the assumption of equality of variance between the two groups. In this row, the significance level of t-test is more than 0.05 and indicates that there is no significant difference between the means of men and women in terms of social tolerance.

**Table 5. The average of women and men in terms of social tolerance**

Standard deviation	average	Number	gender	variable
23.67160	52.5564	241	Female	Social tolerance
21.89508	49.2434	154	male	

Based on the results of the above tables, it can be concluded that there is no relationship between gender and social tolerance.

### 8.3. Correlation Coefficient between the Variable of Education Level and Social Tolerance

Spearman test used to investigate the relationship between education level and social tolerance.

**Table 6. Spearman test results on the relationship between education level and social tolerance**

Social tolerance		Dependence	
Number	The significance level	Spearman correlation	Independent
395	.246	.059	Level of education

According to the results of the above table, considering that the level of significance is more than 0.05, there is no significant relationship between the two variables of education level and social tolerance.

#### 8.4. Correlation Coefficient between Age, Income and Social Tolerance Variables

**Table 7. Age, income and social tolerance**

Social tolerance		Dependence	
Number	The significance level	Spearman correlation	Independent
387	.013	-.127*	Age
394	.903	.006	Income

The results show that there is a significant negative relationship between age and social tolerance at the level of error less than 0.05 and confidence at 0.95. In other words, the respondents who were in the younger age group were more tolerant than the older ones.

But there is no significant relationship between income and social tolerance. Because its significance level is more than 0.05.

#### 8.5. Regression analysis of independent and dependent variables (social tolerance)

In this step, we have entered the variables: consumption rate, type of consumption, social dialogue and contextual variables as an independent variable and social tolerance variable as a dependent variable. Based on the step-by-step method, the least effective variables are removed and only the variables that are eligible to be present in the model remain. The results of this study are as follows.

**Table 8. Results of regression analysis and beta rate regarding independent and contextual variables on social tolerance**

Sig	t test value	Standardized Coefficient	Unstandardized Coefficient		variables	
..001	3.446	Beta	Standard error	B		
			3.90	13.45	Constant value	
.000	5.418	.315	.071	.382	Social dialogue	X1
.000	4.518	.203	.048	.215	Usage of network	X2
.006	2.786	.163	.064	.179	Managed usage	X3
.043	-2.035	-.091	.056	-.114	Age	X4

Finally, the regression equation of social tolerance is:

age-.(.114) managed consumption.(.179) +usage value.(.215) + dialogue.(.382 + 13.45= Social tolerance

The results show that the social dialogue variable with the highest coefficient compared to other variables included in the above model increases the social tolerance. And according to the coefficient of age variable, which is equal to -.114, it can be said that the level of social tolerance in people of younger ages is higher than people of older ages.

## 9. Conclusion

Iran is one of the countries in the world in where there are different ethnicities, religions and social groups. In such circumstances, what makes it possible for coexistence between different individuals and groups is tolerance. In this regard, this study aims to examine the society. Cognitive virtual social networks and social tolerance, with emphasis on the formation of social dialogue in virtual social networks, has been done.

Because of the social changes in our society in transition for a variety of reasons, people in society can spend less time interacting with each other. New communication systems (social networks) are easier, and more accessible, and therefore, the use of these new technologies is more attractive to users and the lack of interpersonal communication in society is easily compensated through this system.

Millions of people are now members of virtual social networks and spend a significant portion of their daily time on it. In fact, these networks have become as a part of people's daily lives that it is difficult to distinguish between online and offline.

In this regard, according to the findings of this study and the results of the final model of path analysis, it can be said that among the independent variables of this study, the most impact was related to the managed use of virtual social networks. In a way that with the increase of managed usage, the amount of dependent variable also increases. The social dialogue variable also shows the greatest impact after the variable of managed use of social networks. This variable has only a direct path and affects the dependent variable with a path coefficient of 0.340. In other words, 34% of the changes related to social tolerance in the sample population of this study are explained by the social dialogue variable in social networks. Research findings also show that the variable of popular consumption is associated with an increase in the dependent variable. However, the effect of this variable is much less than the managed usage variable, and this confirms that the more specific the goals of Internet users, the more they benefit from their relationship with the Internet. Conversely, the more habitually and non-purposefully people use the Internet, the less likely they are to be affected. Responsible education variable, in addition to a positive and direct effect on the dependent variable, will also indirectly increase tolerance. Among the sample population of this study, increasing the age variable reduces the dependent variable so that people who are older have shown less social tolerance. On the other hand, age has a negative effect on consumption. And these results indicate that the consumption of virtual social networks, among people with younger ages, has a higher rate than people with older ages, and with increasing age, the amount of popular and non-targeted consumption also decrease. While this variable is positively related to managed use as well as social dialogue. This means that the use of virtual social networks has become more targeted among older people and, consequently, has led to more social dialogue. Finally, according to the research findings, it can be argued that internet, social networks and the possibility of communication and dialogue as a suitable mechanism to

strengthen cultural, social and political ties between subcultures provide different groups in society and consequently promote tolerance between them. Thus, one of the ways to increase social tolerance is to communicate with different groups and individuals.

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