

Can women benefit from cyberspace as a public space?

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Introduction

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Introduction

- ❖ From a socio-cultural perspective, public spaces are places of interaction and communication.
- ❖ Public space is part of the public sphere and shares a significant role in:
 - establishment of civil society
 - developing citizenship
 - increasing social inclusion
- ❖ Women are a disadvantaged group in terms of public space.
- ❖ Similar to public space, cyberspace provides a place of interaction and communication.
- ❖ Cyberspace offers new forms of communication that potentially enable women to break through their often isolated social situation.

Purpose of the research

- ❖ In this study we have assessed cyberspace's potential in compensating women's disadvantages in public spaces.

- ❖ We try to figure out :
 - Women's motivation in using cyberspace
 - Cyberspace and public space's aspects that women are more prosperous at them
 - The role of cyberspace in increasing social inclusion

Research Methodology

- ❖ Qualitative based research
- ❖ **Data collecting technique:** semi-structured interview (carried out between January 2012 and March 2013)
- ❖ **Sampling method:** theoretical sampling method
- ❖ **Sample size:** 38 women, aged between 15 – 33, physical access to internet at home, at least use one of items including: social network sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), e-mail, Yahoo Messenger, Google Talk, Skype, and OOVVOO.
- ❖ **Method of analyzing data:** thematic coding

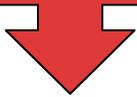
Table : Extracted categories from interviews

	Categories	Description
Limitation in access to public spaces	Place- time limitation	Going to remote place. Leaving home at noon or at late night. Having friends in remote place.
	Normative limitation	Limitation in communicating with men. Social norm about women behaviors.
	Insecurity and distrust feeling	Concerns about to be judged, visibility, accessibility, strangers, and harassment.
	Family limitation	Forcing Hijjab. Wifehood and motherhood duties. Controlling girls in terms of their relationships and their presence in public spaces.
	Government limitation	Moral police. Segregate place based on gender.
	Non-interactive public space	Lack of place for getting acquainted with new people, creating groups, and access to people with common concerns.
Aspects of virtual communication	Interaction	Getting acquainted with new people, diverse people, and people with common concerns.
	Maintaining relationship	Improving current relationship. Communicating with formal friends. Communicating with acquaintances living in remote places. Visiting cyberspace friends in public space.
	Participation	Group membership. Creating new groups. Group activities. Searching favorite groups.
	Access to good listener	Access to different people with different ideas and attitudes.
Social inclusion	Lonely feeling	Access to ones for confabulating and consulting.
	Support	Emotional supports. Educational supports. Occupational supports. Financial supports.
	Group activity	Group membership. Creating new groups. Group activities. Searching favorite groups.
	Solidarity	Feelings of closeness, sympathy, membership, similarity.

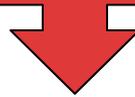
Findings

Women cannot benefit fully from cyberspace because of:

ruining the trust between men and women



purpose of connecting with opposite sex



experiencing public space and cyberspace indirectly



lacking social trust and insecurity feeling

non beneficial interactions that mostly oriented to sexual matters

Exacerbating insecurity feeling

mending the lost social trust between men and women

diminishing normative and government limitation around women and men relationship

Motivating to experience real world and virtual world directly

Findings

- ❖ **Connecting public space with cyberspace is the most fruitful way to proliferate the advantages of each because these two spaces can:**
 - ❖ compensating the disadvantages of the other and mutually develop
 - ❖ transforming into more creative places by increasing social capital
 - ❖ decreasing lack of interest and insecurity feeling.

- ❖ Those who have high access to cyberspace intend to connect their social and virtual lives more than others.

- ❖ It appears that for motivating women to connect their social and virtual lives decision makers should concentrate on:
 - ❖ ICT regulation
 - ❖ bridging digital divide
 - ❖ respecting people's privacy
 - ❖ stopping sites blocking

Findings

- ❖ **Women do not add new ones and new potential to their social networks as a consequences of:**
 - ❖ lack of trust
 - ❖ insecurity feelings
 - ❖ lack of interest toward virtual communication

- ❖ students or employees are more active in starting a new relationship specially in educational and occupational context.

- ❖ women with no involvement in educational and occupational work and limited access to public space search for personal, emotional, and sexual relationship in cyberspace.

- ❖ Involving women in social and cultural activity (e.g. NGOs, charity foundations), make them more prosperous in cyberspace.

Findings

- ❖ **Women who do not feel safe or do not participate in group activity in public space behave almost in the same manner in cyberspace.**
- ❖ Those who are disadvantage in public space usually are not advantage in cyberspace.
- ❖ There is no place for practicing democracy. People in cyberspace hence cannot behave in a democratic manner.
- ❖ It seems that empowering women to be more active and creative citizen lead to their prosperity in cyberspace.



Thank you

Q&A

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