

## Exploring the Element of Positive Relationships via Facebook

Ooi Shok Hong  
School Of Social Sciences  
Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Email: s.hong\_89@hotmail.com

### Abstract

Positive relationship has opened a new area for scholars to research on human relationships. In positive relationships, elements that can enhance and maintain the positivity of relationships are essentials. This paper aims to review one of the element of positive relationships in the Facebook. Other researchers working in the area of positive relationships have focused on the subject within offline context such as parent-child, teacher-student, couple and friendship relationships. Limited research in positive relationships has been conducted within online context. Yet, it is very important as the advancement of technology in 21st century has changed the method of communication from more offline to more online. Online interactions are important because they have their own rules, language and etiquette. Therefore the elements of offline positive relationships cannot be directly applicable to online world. This paper reviews support as one of the element for positive relationships via Facebook.

**Keywords:** *positive relationships, Facebook, support*

### 1. Introduction

Positive psychology has opened a new area for scholars to research on human relationships that is positive relationships. A positive relationships must able to produce a positive outcomes such as good behaviour, happiness and well-being (Crohn, 2006). Advancement of internet has increased the use of social networking in the late 1990 (Ellison & Boyd, 2013) especially Facebook which has been rate as the most popular social networking sites (Alexa, 2015). Past researches have showed that positive relationships are develop by elements. Therefore, this paper review on one of the element of positive relationships in a Facebook context that is social support.

### 2. Positive relationships

Relationship is the connection which exists between two people that involves mutual awareness and reciprocal reaction. Every major theory of human development identified relationships as central. Attachment theory indicates that the children attachment styles determine children's future relationship style with others (Zeanah, 1990). Besides this, Maslow hierarchy of needs also stated that human need relationships after they have fulfill the basic needs of psychological and safety (Maslow, 1943). Positive relationships enable human gain confident through communication and develop positive self-worth and self-esteem. These theories imply that relationships are the most important thing for a human lives.

Emergence of positive psychology has brought a new area of research in the field of relationships. Positive psychology focus on flourishing and optimal functioning of people has emphasize on positive relationships among people and how positive relationships enhance well-being in human (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Human need to eliminate negative behavior and enhance the positive aspect in a relationships. According to Fredrickson (2009), the positivity can be maintained when positive experiences are more than negative experiences. Human experience both

positive and negative emotions throughout their life; they will satisfy with their relationships when they experience more positive emotion in a relationship. Positive emotions can help to build an individual personal resources and drawn on later life that contribute to an individual's life satisfaction.

Many positive relationships researches had carry out in offline context such as parent-child, student-teacher and peer. All of the studies defined positive relationships based on the elements of positive relationships. Barkley (1997) has carried out a research in parent child context, he identified positive parent child consists elements of warmth, acceptance, positive reinforcement, support, affection and involvement that can contribute to children psychological well-being. In positive teacher-student relationships, Rongers & Renard (1999) identified emotional connection as the most important element in a positive teacher-student relationships. This is because emotional connection can help to foster trust and indirectly develop positive relationships between teacher and students. Moreover, Socrates stated that good emotional bond between teacher and children can facilitate learning and thinking. In positive peer relationships, Fallah (2010) identified companionship, intimacy, support, reliable alliance and emotional security as the elements for positive peer relationships. Past researches had showed that positive relationships build up by elements.

The advancement of technology in 21th century has changed the method of communication from offline to online. This has caused the traditional face to face communication is giving a way to online interactions which have their own rules, language and etiquette (Blaising, 2014). Therefore, elements of offline relationships cannot directly applicable on online relationships. This study identify social support as one of the element for online positive relationship especially in Facebook context. This is because Facebook has been rated as the most popular social networking in this world which has over 1.44 billion active users (Alexa, 2015).

### **3. Social support**

Elements are significant for development of positive relationships especially social support. Psychoanalytic theory showed that supportive is very important in a relationships as human practice it since an infant is born. Early interaction becoming key mechanism for children to be in relationships with others (Shaw & Bell, 1993). Early relationships are internalized and affect future social and emotional competence (Thompson, 2006). This is because most of the caregiver provide support to infant and toddler by sensitive and responsive to their need. Children's need that have fulfil by mother and caregiver tend to develop concept of positive support and facilitate in future interaction. Gottlieb & Bergen (2010) stated that social support is significant in interpersonal relationships because supportive behaviour can lead to a meaningful relationships. Traditionally, social support is defined as "the social resources that that are actually provided to them by non-professionals in the context of both formal support groups and informal helping relationships" (Cohen et al., 1985). Nowadays social support can be provided through offline and online communication such as Facebook.

Computer mediated social support become very common across the internet today (Walther & Boyd, 2002). Most of the adolescents prefer social support from online social network especially Facebook (Spies & Margolin, 2013). Research of Hampton et al., (2011) showed that Facebook users did experience higher level of social support as compared with other internet users. Facebook features such as status updated, pictures and share links are the unique context for adolescents to seek for social support. According to Ellison et, al. (2011), the young adults have at least 300 friends

in their Facebook. Therefore, Facebook user can interact with numerous friends and family members at once and get wider range of diverse feedback. Besides this, most of the adolescents take Facebook as the additional platform for them to look for social support, such as companionship support (Oh, Ozkaya, & LaRose, 2014). This is because Facebook enable users to express the needs at anyplace and anytime that they want.

Barrera (1986) conducted a research reviewed the structural, functional and evaluation on social support. Barrera stated that social support can be studied based on different categories. Researchers can measure social support based on social ties with lay people such as family members, friends and significant other. Besides this, researcher can measure the types of social support received by participants such as emotional, informational, companionship and instrument. Lastly, researcher can also measure perceived support of participants. As we know Facebook introduced a feature which enables users to group different categories of relationships such as acquaintances, best friends, co-workers, romantic partners, and family members in a group which classified as “friends” (Steinfeld, et. al., 2009). It is very difficult for researcher to identify the sources of social support as Facebook “friends” include all types of relationships. Therefore, the following section review the source of social support received by Facebook user.

Facebook user identify specific source of social support. Bokhorst, Sumter, & Westenberg (2010) stated that adolescents recognize particular friends as their important sources of social support. Facebook enables them to stay connected with their particular friends and continue to gain support from them which facilitates supportive relationships among friends. Study of Bender, et al. (2011) also found that breast cancer people joined Facebook cancer groups to get informational and emotional support from other patients. Information provided by other people did not contribute much to them as they found that information from other patients are more reliable. However, research of Wellman & Haythornthwaite (2002) stated that most of the adolescents use SNS to connect with friends and family members.

Facebook users look for friends when they face problem in their life. According to Stone, Hankin, Gibb, & Abela (2011), friends become increasingly important as adolescents frequently discuss personal problems with their friends. This causes the adolescents to be reliance more on social networking sites to get social support as most of the adolescent’s friends are available at social networking sites. Social support provided by friends can increase positive affect in an individual. Although online support groups are characterized by a high level of anonymity but adolescents mainly turn to the people who they know when social support is needed (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003).

Frison, & Eggermont (2015) stated that Facebook users turn to friends for companionship support. Facebook has become a platform for users to search for companionship support. Lampe, et al., (2006) stated that college students never truly alone due to high level of connectedness of today’s technology. An individual can simply log into Facebook and strike up a conversation with online’s friends when they feel isolated or unsupported by a social group. Based on the findings, most students will spend in the vicinity of 30 minutes on Facebook per day and largely use Facebook interact with people they met offline.

According to Sheets & Mohr (2009), the social supports from family and friends are both positively associated with positive emotion and life satisfaction. Friends' support for college students are very important, as students first time away from their family members and shifting their support toward their peer. Research of Fukuoka (2012) mentioned that close friend's support increase positive emotion among college students. As he emphasize the differences between general friends and close friend where close friend is more influential in college student rather than general friends so close friend's support can increase college student's positive emotion and subjective well-being.

Research of Matsuda, Tsuda, Kim & Deng (2014) stated that Facebook users tend to look for family members when they are depress or stressed and the findings had shown that social support from family members can help to reduce the negative emotion. Farnhan (2012) conducted a study on computer mediated social support and found that informational and emotional support from family members enhance an individual subjective well-being especially during times of stress. Help, knowledge and affection through social interaction enable people cope with their stress because individual have family members to discuss about problem that is faced by them. Discussion can reduce an individual stress (lower negative emotion) and increase subjective well-being.

Social support has been shown to play a significant role in the research on relationships and has been cited as a reason human is motivated to form and maintain close personal relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Past research has showed the possibility to get social support from online especially Facebook even though there is the absence of nonverbal cues.

### 3. Conclusion

Positive relationships is an interaction that can bring positive outcomes for both parties. Positive relationships among human are build up by elements therefore this study identify social support as the element of positive relationships.

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