

THE EFFECT OF SELF-DISCLOSURE ON SOCIAL CAPITAL AND WELL-BEING

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to whether self-disclosure amount and depth related to bridging social capital and bonding social capital. And we also investigated the association between social capital and subjective well-being. Our results showed that self-disclosure amount and depth have an association with both bridging and bonding social capital. The increased self-disclosure amount and depth can result in increase of social interaction. This social interaction can contribute to the development of SNS social capital that can positively impact individuals' subjective well-being through creating new relations and strengthening existing relations. Our results proved that social capital built by sharing personal experiences, thoughts, and status through self-disclosure leads subjective well-being. It means that social capital may increase satisfaction with their social contact, interpersonal communication, and daily real life. Therefore, social capital can bring forth positive benefits through both building relations and strengthening with existing relations..

Keywords: Self-disclosure, Bridging social capital, Bonding social capital, Subjective well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the internet have many changes in communication method. Unlike other traditional media, internet has fundamentally changed one way into two way communication. Furthermore, the spread of mobile devices and broadband internet made make the connection of the social interaction possible. Social network service (SNS) is the service forming the relationship between people. SNS has brought lots of changes to media environment and society at large. As the importance of SNS increased, the number of user increased. According to the eMarketer, one in four people will use social networks in 2013. The number of social network users around the world will rise to 2.55 billion by 2017 (emarketer, 2013). The most significant feature of SNS is openness and sharing. SNS can be used to describe individuals interacting with others to form and maintain a relationship capable of receiving or providing information within a bounded system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Many people use SNS in order to communicate and share his or her experiences with others. And they create their profiles containing information about themselves and use social network in order to expand their personal network. Social network service has become an important means for building and maintaining relationship with other people by allowing users to share their thoughts, experiences, and status (Wilcox and Stephen, 2013). In addition to the expansion of the relationship and the destruction of boundaries, free interaction is made possible due to wifi. This interactivity with the social network has a cross-sectional area effect, such as the positive or negative effects on the relationships that are not described. Generally speaking, SNS use not only has a negative impact but also has a positive impact on the relationship. The internet is used to activate the relationship, reducing the loneliness but resulting in negative consequences such as increased social loneliness, and also causing closed relationship to form (Stepanikova et al., 2010).

This study is to investigate the result of online interaction of which many researches did not proceed until now. And we want to know that the use of SNS in leading to some social consequences. Although there is a perceived risk of self-disclosure, people try to build the advanced social relations through SNS. In addition, people want to get positive results in their lives through these social relations (Lee, Noh, & Koo, 2013). This study identified a relationship between the SNS and social capital. What are the social results of self-exposure in SNS? The purposes of the current study in detail are as follows : First, the self-exposure is explored in two dimensions of the amount and the depth. This dimension will analyze the impact of social capital. Second, two

types of social capital will be analyzed to investigate the impact of subjective well-being.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Self-disclosure in SNS

Self-disclosure is theoretically based on social psychology and refer to information which a person communicates to other people (Treppe and Reinecke, 2013). Self-disclosure is defined as a communication process in which one person exclusively provides personal thoughts, needs, and feelings to other people (Berg and Derlega, 1987; Cozby, 1973). Derlega and Grzelak (1979) considered that the people disclosure through the various reasons. They serve different functions including expression, self-clarification, social validation, relationship development, and social control. Altman and Taylor (1973) provided social penetration theory to explain that self-disclosure is inevitable in penetrating into the relationship between people. Because relationship develops systematically and involve exchanges that move from general information to more intimate information about each other (Altman and Taylor, 1973), people attempt self-disclosure to increase intimate information about oneself. However self-disclosure has risk.

Studies on self-exposure in the face-to-face communication are similarly applied in CMC environments. Many researchers have conducted studies on self-exposure in CMC environment (Mckenna and Bargh, 2000). The frequency of self-disclosure can appear more in online compared with face-to-face situations. It has been found that people are more comfortable doing self-exposure online than face-to-face situations (Joinson, 2001; Parks and Floyd, 1996) because of the relative lack of nonverbal and social cues in CMC environments. Individual edits the message in the CMC environment to create the ideal of self-expression about oneself and to aggrandize one's value (Jakobsson, 1999). In CMC environments, information disclosure of individuals affects the information exposure of the other participants. The initial self-exposure causes additional self-exposure and each participant will undergo mutually beneficial activities. If a person exposes their own information to get a positive result, the aspect of self-exposure is in a markedly positive form. The study of self-disclosure is also growing in SNS, like the CMC environment. A number of researchers are going to explain the general phenomena according to self-exposure in SNS (Barak and Gluck-Ofri, 2007) and intent of self-exposure (Joinson, Reips, Buchanan, and Paine Schofield, 2010). In addition, some researchers have conducted a study for explaining the specific psychological characteristics about self-exposure from SNS. According to Treppe and Reinecke (2013), psychological tendencies of online self-exposure have presented results to indicate that there is a significant effect on the SNS used. They found that the SNS users have a different behavior between online activities and intent to use. Some users are very active to create UGC (user-generated content) but in other parts of SNS, users will be markedly more passive. This result means the psychological disposition of the self-exposure appears higher in people who use the SNS actively.

2.2. Social capital in SNS

Social capital has been discussed in various fields including sociology, political science, and communication (Hofer and Aubert, 2013). Social capital is resource embedded in a social structure (Bourdies and Wacquant, 1992) and the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital by focusing social network itself. However other researcher emphasized the functional attributes of network (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001). The researchers who study social capital are agreeing to the diversity of the culture. In this context, Putnam (2000) suggested the two components of social capital: bonding capital and bridging capital.

Social capital is composed of network itself and the effect caused by it. Therefore social capital can be classified as bonding and bridging because the difference of the network induces the effect of social capital (Putnam, 2000). In this perspective, bonding capital refers to the social network between the members of homogeneous groups, bridging capital refer to that of heterogeneous ones.

Social network composed of family, relatives, and close friends refers to the bonding social capital that provides emotional or physical support for the members of the groups. Bonding capital is more exclusive and reinforces exclusive identities and homogeneous groups (Putnam, 2000). However the homogeneity of group makes it difficult for the members of network members to communicate new information valuable. As strong ties reinforce in group loyalty, it restrict entry to people outside the group (Zhong, 2014).

In contrast, bridging capital typically refers to memberships of various voluntary organizations. Bridging social capital includes weak ties that encompass a broad perspective without restrictions of any individual's age, race, and occupation (Steinfeld et al., 2008). It is generally not meant for emotional support, but it provides valuable information and social relationships. Because this group includes people from such different

social and economic backgrounds it has the ability to connect as a result of race, sex, occupation, income, beliefs and other barriers as a whole (Putnam, 2000). These characteristics of the bridging capital are made to expose new information and resources to people. Bonding social capital has exclusivity but the bridging capital is more comprehensive and appears in the form of weak ties between the different members of the network (Hofer and Aubert, 2013).

Offline social interaction is based on the face-to-face communication but online social interaction is based on a computer mediated communication, CMC. Therefore, it is necessary to separate the social capital of both online and offline mediums. Because earlier studies on the social capital theory are based theoretical frames associated with the traditional media such as television, the new internet environment is not suitable. Therefore, it is necessary to separate the offline and online social capital and social capital were also measured for the internet environment (Williams, 2006). Despite the advantage of the internet as a communication tool for research on social capital based on online communication, it has caused a lot of controversy. The use of the internet may promote the formation of social capital but it also weakens the social capital (Ellison et al., 2011). The internet allow people to rebuild their communities by providing the time and space to share common interests. The use of the internet strengthen the connection of peoples communities in both online and offline dominions, and allow them to form meaningful relationships (Best and Krueger, 2006). In addition, because the online interaction can enhance or supplement the social relationship of the offline, online can bridge the communication gap that occurs in face-to-face communication of offline and also creates the opportunity to increase the communication. This means that online communication contributes to the formation and maintenance of the new relationship and also brings about positive changes in our lives (Wellman, Boase, and Chen, 2002).

In contrast, there are some studies claiming a negative relationship between the internet use and social capital. When spending time interacting online, the time used for face-to-face interaction diminishes and inhibits the psychological well-being and the results lead to a weakening of solidarity (Nie, 2001). Because online interaction is done in virtual space, the formation of substantial relationships, maintenance, and development of these is nonconductive and communication quality is not better compared with the face-to-face communication. This means that online interaction is not provide social support as that of offline because of the physical distance. Electronic trust and solidarity that are included in the CMC interaction with the electronic network dropped in quality when compared to offline. Because of that it is difficult to express a true friendship and emotional support.

In contrast to these two kinds of claims, the internet is a complement to the role of social capital development. This aspect is considered that internet is not one of the substitutes but the supplement for the previous interaction tools and performed the additional role of communication (Wellman, Hasse, Witte, and Hampton, 2001). There are no distance and time constraints, the nature of the internet service, which can be used to enhance the range, is combined with other communication forms and by reducing the cost of forming or maintaining a relationship is to strengthen social capital. The claim is emphasizing the internet's role as a means of maintaining existing relationships rather than the forming of new relationships (Koku, Nazer and Wellman, 2001). In addition, SNS reduces the cost of maintaining the social network and this allows the formation of a new social relationship. Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) researched on how offline social capital is formed from online and it has been found that SNS is a tool of social capital formed through relationships between people. Therefore SNS contributes the formation of both bridging and bonding social capital as discussed earlier.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

3.1. Self-disclosure and social capital

One of SNS features facilitates social interactions in online context. The reasons for using SNS reinforce existing social relations, maintain offline connections, and allow individuals to create new social ties. Social capital is conceptualized as resources accumulated from various relationships among social actors (Bourdieu, 1986). The basic concept behind social capital is that an individual can give value through accumulating relationships with other people (Coleman, 1988). Thus, research has indicated that the use of SNS is positively related to individual social capital (Ellison et al., 2007; Steinfield et al., 2008; Kwon, D'Angelo, and McLeod, 2013). Putnam (2000) divided social capital into bridging and bonding capital. Bridging social capital is related to weak ties among individuals. In contrast, bonding social capital is associated with strengthening existing ties among family or close friends. Bridging and bonding social capital associated with individuals who were using the site to initiate new relationships or to maintain existing strong ties. SNS activity has been helped to increase individuals' online social capital by facilitating bridging or bonding for users (Ellison et al., 2011). The use of SNS may develop bridging social capital and lead to development of bonding social capital which existing

relationships are strengthened. Donath and Boyd (2004) suggested that SNS might increase the number of weak tie in social network which is related to bridging social capital. On the other hand SNS had provided an efficient approach to reinforce relationships that already exist. Most users of SNS use the site to connect with people they already know offline rather than forging connections with strangers. Ellison et al. (2007) argued that use of SNS strongly enhanced relationships between individuals they already know offline. Lee (2013) found that SNS allowed their users to solidify bonding social capital as the users interacted with others to share values. Thus, the interaction with friends on SNS contributed to both bonding and bridging social capital.

Hypothesis 1-1: Self-disclosure amount will be positively related to bridging social capital.

Hypothesis 1-2: Self-disclosure amount will be positively related to bonding social capital.

Hypothesis 2-1: Self-disclosure depth will be positively related to bridging social capital.

Hypothesis 2-2: Self-disclosure depth will be positively related to bonding social capital.

3.2. Social capital and subjective well-being

Subjective well-being is defined as people's consciousness and feelings about their lives, including pleasure perception, positive emotions, and higher satisfaction (Diener, Lucas, and Oishi, 2002). Many studies have shown that social capital may influence an individual's subjective well-being (Ko and Kuo, 2009; Sirgy, Lee, and Bae, 2006). Putnam (2007) has interpreted social capital as social network. According to numerous empirical studies, the increase in social relationships and expansion of social network size may yield positive outcome. Individuals who are internet users have also been found to be more involved in community ties in real life, these ties are a component of social capital indicators that have been associated with better mental health. Because the internet can help users by both strengthening connections with close friends and increasing information accessibility related to their interests and the communities (Sirgy et al., 2006). Online interactions have the potential to positively affect those who have difficulty with disclosure and face-to-face communication such as individuals who are shy (Orr, Sicisic, Ross, Simmering, Arseneault, and Orr, 2009). Increased social interaction and online social capital development can positively influence psychological well-being because positive interactions have the potential to provide access to safe positive interpersonal interactions, particularly for individuals suffering from low self-esteem and life satisfaction (Ellison et al., 2007). These findings can be adapted to SNS environment. Researchers have found that people using SNS was more likely to experience connectedness and feel happier (Valkenburg, Peter, and Schouten, 2006). For instance, There are positive relationship between SNS use and individuals' life satisfaction. Prior studies have provided evidence that social capital is important to the efficient functioning of satisfaction with personal life (Narayan and Cassidy, 2001). As a result, the use of internet contributes to the improvement of a user's subjective well-being. Ko and Kuo (2009) found that the both bridging and bonding social capital directly affects user's subjective well-being.

Hypothesis 3-1: Bridging social capital will be positively related to subjective well-being.

Hypothesis 3-2: Bonding social capital will be positively related to subjective well-being.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data collection

Respondents participating in this study were college students from undergraduate advertising course at a university in Korea. 228 college students using SNS at least one or more participated in this study. Among them, 53.1% of respondents were male. Most of the respondents were aged between 20 and 26, and their average age was 23.2. Among the respondents, 86% had accessed the Internet for at least an hour a day. 32.9% of respondents reported that they accessed Internet 1 and 2 hour on an average day. With respect to the use of SNS, 90.4% of participants accessed it every day.

4.2. Measures

The all variables used this study mostly investigated in previous research of self-disclosure (Gibbs et al., 2006; Park et al., 2011; Wheelless, 1978), social capital (Williams, 2006), and subjective well-being (Cao et al., 2013; Lee, 2013; Lin, 1999). All items selected in this study were measured by a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree and modified from previous literature. Self-disclosure was measured with two criteria: amount and depth of self-disclosure. Three items measured the amount of self-disclosure in SNS, including "I often express about myself on SNS". Similarly, the depth of self-disclosure measure included three items such as "I feel that I sometimes do not control my self-disclosure of personal or intimate things I tell about myself on SNS" (Gibbs et al., 2006; Park et al., 2011; Wheelless, 1978). This study categorizes social

capital into two dimensions: bridging and bonding social capital. All of the items were adapted from Williams (2006) and some minor modifications were made to the original scales to suit this study. The bridging social capital measure included six items such as "I use SNS because interacting with people makes me interested in what people unlike me are thinking". In addition, the bonding social capital measure was also comprised of a total six items such as "I use SNS because there is someone that I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions". Subjective well-being was adapted from Cao et al. (2013) and Lin (1999), with three items such as "I feel more life satisfaction after reading the message and looking at the pictures from the SNS".

5. RESULTS

5.1. Test of hypotheses

A structural equation model was adopted to test hypotheses proposed. We compared with the recommended criteria. All fit measures in the model showed an acceptable fit to data ($X^2 = 267.56$ with d.f. 181, $p=0.00$, than $X^2/d.f. = 1.48$, GFI = 0.89, TLI = 0.96, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.048). Results in Table 6 support for all proposed hypotheses H1 to H3. H1-1 expected that self-disclosure amount is positively related to bridging social capital. The result of H1 showed that self-disclosure amount has significant associations with bridging social capital ($\beta = .28$, $t = 3.69$, $p < .001$). Thus, H1 was supported as expected. H1-2 proposed that self-disclosure amount is positively associated with bonding social capital. The result showed self-disclosure amount has influence on bonding social capital ($\beta = .33$, $t = 4.34$, $p < .001$), supporting H1-2. H2-1 and H2-2 predicted that self-disclosure depth is positively associated with bridging and bonding social capital. The result showed that self-disclosure depth has positive and significant association with bridging social capital ($\beta = .39$, $t = 4.90$, $p < .001$) and bonding social capital ($\beta = .14$, $t = 2.01$, $p < .05$). Therefore, H2-1 and H2-2 were supported.

H3-1 dealt with the association between the bridging social capital and subjective well-being. The result indicated that bridging social capital would positively affect subjective well-being, supporting H3-1. H3-2 expected that the bonding social capital is positively related subjective well-being. We found a positive association between bonding social capital and subjective well-being, and thus H3-2 is supported.

5.2. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to whether self-disclosure amount and depth related to bridging social capital and bonding social capital. And we also investigated the association between social capital and subjective well-being.

The hypothesis testing results summarized: First, the amount and depth of self-exposure significantly affected the bridging and bonding social capital. These results showed that the amount and depth of self-exposure expanded social relationships online and enhanced the existing offline relationship. Information disclosure about oneself on the SNS and sharing personal feelings and states results in the expansion of the social network of the other. Expansion of social relationships is a significant and positive related to the bridging social capital. Therefore, interaction with other people through self-exposure maintains the size of the bridging social capital and can be a strategy to develop further.

In addition, our results indicate that individuals' self-disclosure may help them improve existing relations in real life. In other words, self-disclosure helps to enhance individuals' existing relations through bonding social capital. Self-exposure through SNS shows that using a type of communication medium for holding an existing relation. Thus, the self-exposure can play an important role in predicting the social capital. Second, both bonding and bridging social capital has positive association with the subjective well-being (Ko & Kuo, 2009). The results suggest that self-disclosure amount and depth strengthened bridging and bonding social capital in turn predicts subjective well-being. Self-disclosure for extension of social network encourages individuals to engage with other people, drives them to seek more latent social ties, and supports the conversation of the latent ties to weak ties (Ellison et al., 2011). Because the expansion of the social network means more social information support, bridging social capital makes users happy by meeting the needs of them and raises the possibility to improve the quality of life. In addition, interactions with many people cause feelings of emotional support from other. Hofer and Aubert (2013) suggested that the number of follower on twitter has a considerable effect on perceived online bonding social capital. The increased self-disclosure amount and depth can result in increase of social interaction. This social interaction can contribute to the development of SNS social capital that can positively impact individuals' subjective well-being through creating new relations and strengthening existing relations. The findings of this study provide critical theoretical contributions with respect to the associations between the self-disclosure and subjective well-being through social capital in SNS. First, research on social capital in an online environment only deals with the relationship between SNS use and social capital (Ahn, 2012; Kwon et al., 2013). However, this study does not focus on simple use of the SNS, unlike the previous study. This study focused on the specific behaviors of self-exposure on SNS. This

study divided self-disclosure into two dimensions as the amount and depth and investigated the relationship between these two dimensions and social capital. Second, the present study found that both bridging and bonding social capital are positively associated with subjective well-being. In previous research on social capital in the online context, a positive relationship between the SNS usage and bridging social capital was found (Ellison et al., 2011; Ma, MA, & Ito, 2014). In contrast to bridging social capital, bonding social capital maintains a friendly relationship and emotion and includes close ties with family and friends. This relationship requires a lot of time and money spent in order to obtain a mutual trust (Ma et al., 2014). However, this study shows that without mutual trust, only self-exposure is possible to form bonding social capital. Self-exposure is related expansion of the network and strengthens the existing relationships. Our results prove that social capital built by sharing personal experiences, thoughts, and status through self-disclosure leads subjective well-being. It means that social capital may increase satisfaction with their social contact, interpersonal communication, and daily real life. Therefore, social capital can bring forth positive benefits through both building relations and strengthening with existing relations. As a result, there is a possibility for formation and development of people's social interactions online.

5.3. Limitation and future research

Although these findings are useful implications, this study also has some limitations. First, this study collected data from the young college students. To secure the validity of these results, the number and ages of participants should be increased. Second, SNS use is associated with need for cognition and age (Huges, Rowe, Batey, and Lee, 2012), whereas self-disclosure is associated with individuals' traits. Therefore future research has to examine the moderating effects of personality traits on the effects of self-disclosure on social capital on SNS. A last limitation of the present study is related to the motive of self-disclosure use. Accordingly the amount and depth of self-disclosure can be different whether the people disclosure with any kind of purpose. Future studies have to investigate whether the people try to self-disclosure for any purpose and whether they achieve such a purpose.

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