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Investigating the Relationship between the Use of Global Mass Media and Social Cohesion among Citizens of Borazjan City

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The societal stability and continuity depend on the correlation among the constituent elements of the social structure. In order to investigate the relationship between the use of global mass media and social cohesion among the residents of Barazjan city, the present study was conducted.

Methods: The survey was employed as the research method and the data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire. The statistical population of the study consisted of the citizens of Barazjan city who were over 18 years old, with a total number of approximately 85,000. The sample size, based on the sample power method, was determined to be 384.

Results: The findings of the research revealed that there is a negative and significant relationship between the use of global mass media (P = -0.31) and its dimensions, namely the use of the Internet (P = -0.30), the use of satellite (P = -0.38), and the use of social networking (P = 0.31), with the level of social cohesion among the residents of Barazjan city. Furthermore, the results of the structural equation model indicated that the use of global mass media had a negative impact on social cohesion (-0.53) and accounted for 0.28 of the variances in the social cohesion variable.

Conclusions: The practical implications of these findings can be beneficial for social cohesion planners and provide valuable information for social managers.

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Introduction

The stability and continuity of the social and cultural life of a society rely on the correlation between the constituent elements of the social structure of that society. Cohesion is the agreement in values and attitudes and emerges from a social process and rational action. Conversely, social cohesion is not a phenomenon that can be studied definitively; rather, it necessitates continuous reconstruction and reproduction. Previously, a form of social capital connected urban and rural populations, and the social systems were characterized by internal simplicity and coherence. The expansion of social units is associated with an increase in the complexity of their structures (Mahdavi et al., 2018). The growth of societies, marked by population growth, leads to structural and functional differentiation within the society. This ongoing differentiation is accompanied by increased interdependence and integration of components. As the evolutionary process progresses, the correlation of functions intensifies, enabling the functioning of both the whole and its parts. Consequently, when the components have minor differences, they can easily fulfill each other's functions. However, if the components are significantly differentiated, they are unable to perform each other's tasks. Hence, the structure of complex societies is more vulnerable compared to that of simple societies. Consequently, today's society is complex, and its cohesion is more fragile than the simple societies of the past. The presence of gradual and continuous growth in societies with equal access to economic and social resources and opportunities for all segments of society further signifies that economic development is not solely a result of rapid growth, but rather a consequence of social order and cohesion within the society. To enable universal access to economic, social, and political opportunities, and consequently enhance the ability to manage costs and benefits arising from abrupt and severe societal changes, it is imperative to generate novel and efficient ideas while discarding unsuitable ones (Vahdani Nesab & Ebrahimzadeh, 2019).

It is worth noting that social cohesion ensures that individuals, groups, and diverse social classes converge on shared objectives, adhere to societal rules and regulations, utilize communal resources, and reciprocally acknowledge and cultivate their capabilities for the betterment of society. This symbiotic relationship fosters the development of societal capacities and proficiencies. Within such an environment, favorable conditions emerge for the acceptance, application, and testing of new concepts, as well as the embracement of scientific thinking, increased emphasis on productivity and efficiency in planning and policy-making. The latter half

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of the 1990s witnessed a proliferation of internet usage in developed and, to some extent, developing nations, thereby prompting terms such as "Global Village," "Planetary Awareness," and "The End of Geography" to gain popularity within global academic circles. The utilization of emerging communication technologies, particularly satellite and internet capabilities, has ushered in a new era and society over the past few decades. Intellectuals such as Daniel Bell refer to this as the post-industrial society, Emmanuel Castells as the network society, and Tadao Ume Sao as the information society. Presently, the new global media encompasses the attributes of both the "international civil society" (Kane, 1991), characterized by "Technologies of freedom" (Poll, 1983) and "Democratization" (Randall, 1993), as well as the globalization technologies that assimilate weaker cultures into a global (Western) culture.

In their study titled "Comparative evaluation of the impact of social characteristics on the level of social cohesion in the old and new neighborhoods of Yazd city, Saraei and Fallah Hosseini (2019) discovered that income and education levels in Azadshahr contribute to heightened awareness and participation, thereby fostering cohesion. Conversely, Pusht Bagh experiences strengthened sentiments of belonging and cohesion due to factors such as low income, advanced age, and a non-native population, which in turn leads to a decline in cohesion.

As part of the research titled "The role of information and communication technology (Internet games and virtual space) on the social adjustment of students", Bakhtiari (2018) revealed a positive and significant correlation between social adaptation and the utilization of virtual space, internet games, and software and educational games.

In a study conducted by Hamoni et al. (2018), the researchers explored the impact of technology development and information technology on individual and social culture. The research focused on the employees of Farhangian University of Tehran province, with a sample size of 167 individuals. The findings revealed a significant association between information technology and the personal and social culture of the university.

Moharram Zad (2017) conducted a research project titled "The role and application of information and communication technology in promoting the social participation of citizens." The results demonstrated that various factors, such as satisfaction with information and communication technology, access to information and communication technology, and information literacy,

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positively influenced social participation. Consequently, these factors contributed to the improvement of urban management and social development.

In a study by Rockstall and Cog (2017), the researchers investigated the impact of cultural diversity on cohesion within work groups. The sample consisted of 40 work groups, comprising a total of 259 individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. The study revealed that cultural diversity had a negative effect on cohesion between members. However, the researchers identified cultural intelligence as a moderating variable that could mitigate this negative effect.

Trikangas (2017) conducted a comparative research project titled "The impact of cultural diversity on intra-organizational communication." The findings indicated that various aspects of an organization's human resources culture had complex implications for inter-organizational interactions. The author suggested that fostering theoretical participation and promoting a better understanding of different cultural realities could attract more resources to the organization and facilitate greater adaptation.

According to Chu and Lim (2013), students are avid users of social networks, making the discussion of identity among students crucial. The authors emphasized the significance of identity issues in relation to students' extensive networks and connections with diverse individuals and mass communication tools. They argued that traditional and modern identity challenges and the complexities of the information society have a significant influence on students' experiences.

Vergalani (2011) examined the relationship between social cohesion and social inequalities in Europe in a research study titled "Social Cohesion in Europe." The author proposed that inequality has a general impact on social cohesion, particularly in terms of economic inequality. Moreover, other aspects of social inequalities, such as individuals' positions in the social hierarchy and their level of education, also affect this relationship.

In the past half-century, there has been a significant advancement in computer and communication technologies, resulting in substantial transformations across various aspects of human life. Throughout history, humans have consistently utilized technology, particularly information and communication technologies, which have had a profound impact on human existence. Currently, there is a rapid convergence between the domains of communication and information production, facilitating the swift transfer of data and information to every corner of the globe, ultimately benefiting users (Safai Durodkhani, 2019). The mass media and means of mass communication

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have become deeply ingrained in contemporary human life, positioning themselves as social institutions and influential factors in shaping societal norms and values. Consequently, they significantly influence people's attitudes towards the surrounding events. The prevalent use of new media platforms, such as the Internet, satellite, and virtual social networks, has ushered in a new interconnected and multifaceted world. These global transformations have presented various challenges for societies, particularly in the realm of social cohesion (Azizi & Heydarkhani, 2013). Borazjan, situated in Bushehr province, Iran, serves as the administrative center of Dashtestan county and stands as the second most populous city in the province. This city has become a destination for immigrants, with the population growth primarily attributed to the migration of rural residents to urban areas. Additionally, during the war, individuals from Khuzestan relocated to Borazjan and continue to reside there. Consequently, exploring the issue of social cohesion in this city has become paramount, especially in light of the current technological advancements that challenge traditional societal structures. Hence, this research aims to investigate the correlation between the utilization of global mass media and the components of social cohesion in Borazjan. Therefore, based on the aforementioned explanations, examining the relationship between social media usage and social cohesion components is a fundamental inquiry, and this research endeavors to address the primary question of whether a connection exists between mass media usage and social cohesion components in the city of Borazjan (figure 1).

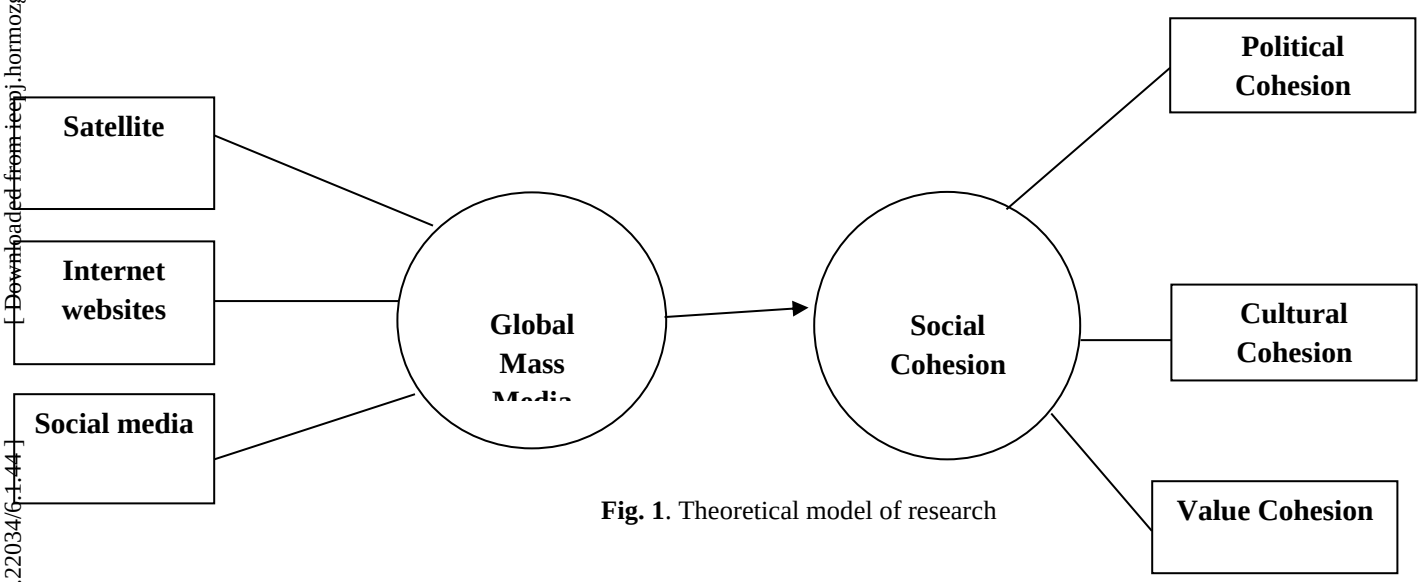


Fig. 1. Theoretical model of research

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Materials and Methods

Based on the type of data collected and analyzed, the present research is quantitative research, and in terms of the type of dealing with the investigated problem and entering into it, it is a field study. The technique used in this research is survey. In the field study, a questionnaire was used to collect the required information. Before the start of the survey, the initial questionnaire was tested and using the obtained results, the existing defects were eliminated and the final questionnaire was prepared. The statistical population of the present study is the citizens of Barazjan city over 18 years of age, whose number is around 85,000 according to the latest census (2015 census). Since naturally it was not possible to study the opinions of all the residents, the method of "sampling" was used to explain the opinions of the people under study, and based on the sample power method, a number of people (384 people) were identified as representative of the statistical population. It has been selected and studied as a sample. The sampling method in the present research is cluster and simple random in two stages. By using cluster sampling, a number of neighborhoods in Brazjan city are selected and the final sample is randomly extracted from each neighborhood. After collecting the data, they were analyzed using SPSS and PLS Smart statistical software, and in this regard, statistical tests were used to test the hypotheses. In this regard, in order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, consulting and taking advantage of the opinions of relevant professors and experts, as well as Cronbach's alpha test for the reliability of the questionnaire, and based on the alpha coefficient, the reliability coefficient of all variables is higher than 0.70.

Results

In order to use parametric tests, there are assumptions, which are: the condition of data being normal. To check the normality of the factors, the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used (table 1).

Table 1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the normality of research variables

Subscales	Internet	Satellite	Social media	Social cohesion
N	384	384	384	384
K-S	2.14	2.01	3.02	2.47
P	0.14	0.21	0.066	0.17

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According to table number 1, it can be concluded that because the values of the significance level of all research variables are more than 0.05, then it can be said that this factor shows the normality of data distribution and can be analyzed Research hypotheses used parametric tests. Pearson's correlation coefficient test was used to check the research hypotheses. The findings are as described in table 2.

Table 2. Correlation between different dimensions of global mass media use and social cohesion

Variable		Social cohesion	
		R	P
Global mass media	Internet use	-0.30	0.002
	Use of satellites	-0.38	0.001
	Use of social networks	-0.31	0.001
	Total	-0.32	0.001

The findings indicate that there is a negative, inverse, and significant relationship between all aspects of global mass media use and its total amount with social cohesion from the perspective of citizens. Meanwhile, the relationship between the use of the Internet and social cohesion (P=-0.30) has the highest correlation coefficient and the relationship between the use of social networks and social cohesion has the lowest correlation coefficient (P=-0.31). Also, the relationship between the use of satellite (P = -0.38) and social cohesion from the citizens' point of view has a negative and significant correlation coefficient. Therefore, it can be argued that the higher the amount of use of global mass media (P = -0.32) and its dimensions, the lower the level of social cohesion of citizens, and all the hypotheses of this research are confirmed.

In order to determine the intensity and to investigate the impact of different aspects of the use of global mass media on social cohesion among the citizens of Barazjan city, a structural equation model has been used. In this research, using the structural equation modeling method, the structural equation models of the research are tested. The approach in this section is a two-step approach. This means that after developing the theoretical research model, it is necessary to discuss the estimation of the model or in other words the estimation of free parameters in the model and the analysis of partial and general indicators of the model in order to determine whether the experimental data supports the theoretical model as a whole. Structural equation modeling using

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the least square method (PLS), unlike the variance-based method (software such as AMOS, LISREL, and EQS), does not have fit indices of the model based on chi-square to check the degree of conformity of the theoretical model with the collected data. It depends on the predictive nature of the PLS axis. Therefore, the fit indices that have been developed along with this approach are related to checking the adequacy of the model in predicting the dependent variables; It is like redundancy and filling indices or GOF index. In fact, these indicators show that for the measurement model the indicators are able to predict their underlying structure, and for the structural model, to what extent and with what quality the exogenous variables are able to predict. Estimates related to the evaluation indicators of the structural model's totality and the main parameters of this model (the variable effect of the use of global mass media and information on social cohesion) are reported in the figure 2 and table 3 and 4.

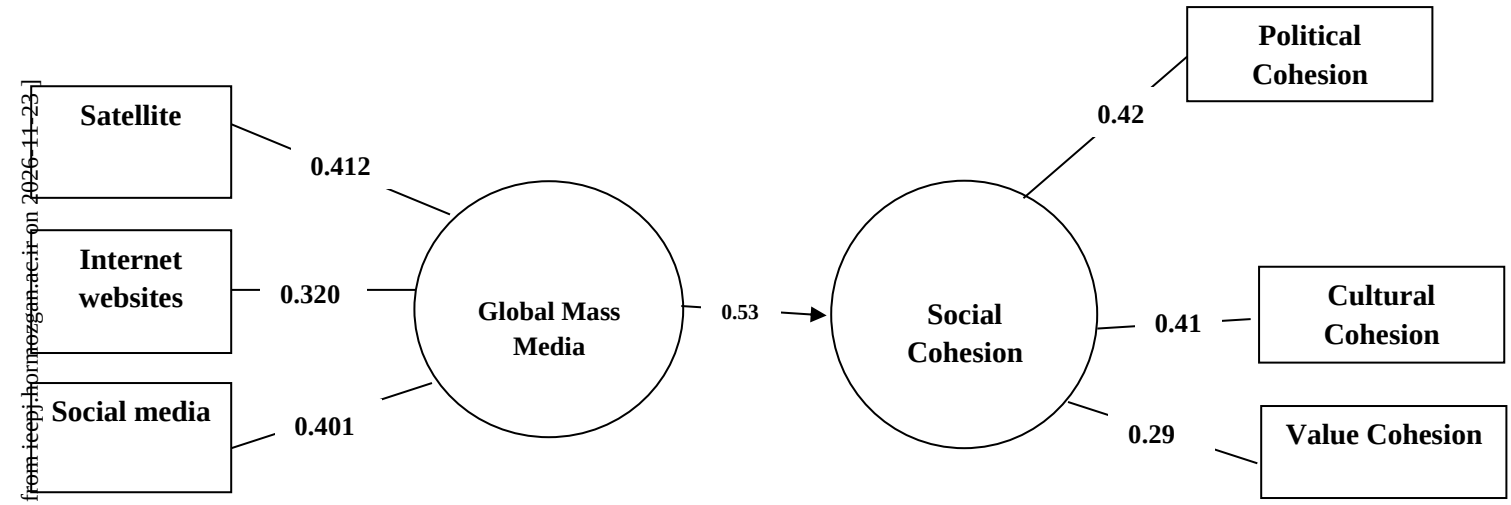


Fig. 2. Structural equation model of the effect of using global mass media on social cohesion

Table 3. Estimation of structural equation model generality evaluation indices

Indices	GOF	SRMR	NFI
Value	0.85	0.083	0.90

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The overall evaluation indices of the structural equation model indicate that the data support the theoretical model of the research, in other words, the fit of the data to the model is established and the indices indicate the desirability of the structural equation model.

Table 4. Estimation of the variable effect of using global mass media on social cohesion

Predictor	Path	Criterion	R^2	Effect coefficient	P
Global mass media	→	Social cohesion	0.280	-0.530	0.002

The estimated values in the table 4 show that: 1) the variable of using global mass media explains a total of -0.53 of the variances of the variable of social cohesion, taking into account the values related to the effect size of the coefficient of determining this value in the average limit is estimated to be (0.28), in other words, the variable of using global mass media in different dimensions has the ability to explain the variance of the variable of social cohesion among citizens. 2) The variable effect of using global mass media on social cohesion among the citizens of Barazjan city is statistically significant. Therefore, the general hypothesis of the research that the variable of using global mass media has an effect on the variable of social cohesion is confirmed. According to the value of the effect coefficient, it can be said that the effect of the variable of use of global mass media on the variable of social cohesion is negative, inverse and moderate, which means that increasing the amount of use of global mass media can lead to reduce the social cohesion among the citizens of Brazjan city.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the correlation between the utilization of global mass media and social cohesion among the residents of Barazjan city. The results demonstrate a significant, inverse, and negative association between all aspects of global mass media usage as well as its overall quantity with social cohesion from the citizens' perspective. Notably, the highest correlation coefficient is observed between internet usage and social cohesion, while the lowest correlation coefficient is found between social network usage and social cohesion. Furthermore, there is a negative and significant correlation coefficient between satellite usage and social cohesion from the viewpoint of citizens. Hence, it can be argued that an increase in global mass

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media usage and its dimensions leads to a decline in the level of social cohesion among citizens, thereby confirming all the hypotheses of this study. Additionally, based on the findings and results obtained from the Smart PLS structural model, the variable of global mass media usage explains 0.53 of the variances in the social cohesion variable, considering the effect size values of the coefficient of determination. This value is estimated to be at an average level of 0.28, indicating that the various dimensions of global mass media have the capacity to explain the variance in the social cohesion variable among citizens.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Bakhtiari (2018), Hamouni et al. (2018), Moharramzad (2017), and Imam Juma et al (2013). Each of these researchers, in their respective studies, recognized the link between mass media and social cohesion. Moreover, the research findings align with the theories proposed by Bell, Castells, Roger Clos, and Lee John, all of whom acknowledged the connection between mass media, social communication, and cohesion.

Therefore, it can be inferred that despite the extensive influence of global mass media on all aspects of human society, it has rapidly transformed the world into an information society. However, it also has a detrimental effect on social unity and diminishes cohesion among individuals. The widespread utilization of new media platforms like the Internet, satellite, and virtual social networks has given rise to a new interconnected and multifaceted global landscape. These global developments have presented various challenges for societies, particularly in the realm of social communication, which is among the most significant challenges faced.

Over the past five decades, significant advancements in computer and communication technologies have brought about profound changes in diverse areas of human existence. Throughout history, humans have consistently harnessed technology, and the historical record is replete with instances of groundbreaking inventions in the realm of information and communication technologies. These technologies are regarded as novel or exceptional due to their unparalleled impact on human life. The widespread adoption of information and communication technology and its far-reaching consequences in contemporary life have led to a reduction in social connections.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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