



## Iranian High School Students' Self-Presentation on a National Educational Social Networking Site: A Reciprocation of "Field", "Habitus", and "Doxa"

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**Abstract:** Rapid growth of national and international social networking sites has generated concerns and issues regarding users' online self-presentation all around the world. Therefore, the present qualitative study seeks to examine the self-disclosure strategies used by Iranian high school students on a national educational social networking site (SNS), called SHAD. For this purpose, a sample of 425 high school students were selected using a random sampling method. The participants' profile texts expressing themselves on SHAD were collected and analyzed through a thematic coding analysis. Results yielded four overarching themes, including "life management and goal setting", "religious prayers and beliefs", "love matters", and "didactic texts and quotations". The extracted themes were carefully discussed in line with Bourdieu's "field", "habitus", and "Doxa" notions. Additionally, the findings evidenced that, due to high exposure of modern students to the world culture through the Internet, the "field" through which the students manifested their "habitus", as situated literacy practices, may be rooted in both the national and international fields. It is evidently clear from the findings that, in order to obtain a wider picture of students' psychological states, incessant investigations into their self-presentation strategies on online spaces are of a high priority for educational psychologists and planners.

**Keywords:** Field, Habitus, Self-representation, SHAD, Social Networking Site

## Introduction

With the outbreak and dissemination of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, face-to-face classes have been replaced by online classes. This unique condition has pushed the education officials to offer the instruction through networking platforms ([Asanov et al., 2020](#)). It is rational to imagine that these networking platforms might have brought about both advantages and disadvantages for different educational stakeholders, most particularly students. One of the critical issues that needs to be considered to mitigate the weaknesses of the networking platforms is students' self-representation. In fact, over the last years, the significant negative influences of students' self-presentation on SNSs have gained noticeable concerns ([Bevan-Dye & Akpojivi, 2016](#); [Bryer & Chen, 2010](#); [Chang & Heo, 2014](#); [Chen & Marcus, 2012](#)). Therefore, the ways in which students disclose their perceptions of networking platforms provide valuable insights for different educational stakeholders.

In keeping up with other countries, in order for the students not to be left out of education, the Ministry of Education in Iran developed a national networking platform with around 15 million student users

([Iran's Ministry of Education, 2020](#)). It is named SHAD, which in Persian stands for students' SNS. In SHAD, students can attend online classes at specified times, enjoy live instructions, and exchange multimedia files. There is also a space on their profiles to represent a description of themselves, their feelings, or their beliefs. The use of SHAD during the COVID-19 pandemic can be investigated from diverse aspects. One of the aspects worth exploring is high school students' self-representation. As this scope is under-researched in Iran, the present study investigated how high school students used SHAD to self-present. It is hoped that the findings of the current study can increase our understanding of high school students' behaviors on SHAD, and, consequently, help us promote its applicability. Moreover, the study's results may provide a better insight into the students' preferences in disclosing their thoughts and presenting themselves on SHAD.

### **SNSs and Education**

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), SNSs are online platforms that allow their users to create public or private profiles, have contacts in connection, and share ideas and posts with other users. On SNSs, the users are allowed to make their profiles either visible or locked for others in connection. SNSs are also used as social media sharing platforms ([Herrero & San Martín, 2017](#)); that is, they are Internet-based platforms enabling individuals to share a selection of multimedia ([Liu & Bakici, 2019](#)). This unique feature of SNSs has created enticements for educational institutes to employ them as training platforms. Having asserted this potential of SNSs for teaching and learning, Oliver (2011) stresses that SNSs have enticed educators to invest on online learning opportunities offered by these platforms. There are also empirical findings supporting the benefits of manipulating SNSs for educational purposes ([Asterhan & Bouton, 2017](#); [Kelly & Antonio, 2016](#); [DiVall & Kirwin, 2012](#); [Manca & Ranieri, 2017](#)). Despite the potencies of SNSs, their applicability has mainly been put under research in sciences, such as communications, information science, sociology compared to its education aspects ([Boyd & Ellison, 2007](#)). Unfortunately, there has been a long-lasting scarcity of studies exploring the possible connections of SNSs and education in creating learners' self-presentation. However, the ruling inclination of the twenty-first century in furnishing the Internet-based education boosts the temptations of knowing more about students' self-presentation on online educational platforms ([Barron, 2006](#)). Besides, various studies have asserted that high school students' self-presentation on SNSs may have consequential impacts on both the students and societies (e. g., [Bevan-Dye & Akpojivi, 2016](#); [De Souza & Dick, 2009](#); [Mehdizadeh, 2010](#)). In this regard, the issue that prioritizes the examination of students' self-presentation on SNSs is a plethora of studies reporting that students' misrepresentation of selves on SNSs can broadcast violence, biased societal views, and extremist perspectives among the younger generation of a society ([Bateman et al., 2011](#); [Nguyen et al., 2012](#); [Nosko et al., 2010](#); [Vitak, 2012](#)).

Therefore, the SNSs with a high number of student users require the meticulous attention of the educational planners and educational psychologist to avoid the possibility of their detrimental effects. One example of such SNSs with a large number of teenage users is the Iranian SHAD, which was primarily developed for educational purposes in a national scope. In 2020 with the sudden proroguing of schools due to the outbreak of the COVID- 19 pandemic, this national SNS, developed by the ministry of education of Iran, was utilized to supersede the prorogued face-to-face classes for around 15 million student users ([Iran's Ministry of Education, 2020](#)). SHAD is a nativized form of Telegram application giving its users the capability of having an account with pictures, names, and a bio, sending and receiving all kinds of multimedia materials, and creating groups and channels. However, its designers claim that they have rendered many adaptations to maximize the educational opportunities for students. For example, being a registered student is required for students; otherwise, their membership will be impossible. Additionally, there are many pre-set channels for the students which offer instructions.

### **Self-Presentation On Social Networking Platforms**

Self-presentation is defined as any purposive self-presenting activity to affect others' impressions ([Forgas, 2011](#), [Schlenker & Wowra, 2003](#); [Schlosser, 2020](#)). Previous studies have evidenced that individuals tend to reveal their own identity and beliefs to set up an appropriate self-presentation to others ([Chan, 2019](#); [Koohikamali et al., 2017](#); [Schlenker & Pontari, 2000](#); [Tong et al., 2020](#)). Throughout in-person communications, individuals are willing to convey their real self to their addressees through presenting personal, private, or intimate information about themselves ([Greene et al., 2006](#)). Recently, by surging the popularity of online communications, SNSs such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Telegram, Instagram, and other local or international platforms have instituted an unparalleled arena for individuals' interpersonal relations. According to the exposed information by Statista website (2020), Facebook has a total of 2.7 billion monthly active users, LinkedIn has reached over 722 million members, Telegram has reached over 400 million international users ([Telegram, 2020](#)); and Instagram has over 850 million active members. This uplifting use of SNSs has created new standpoints toward self-presentation. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in self-presentation on SNSs ([Bevan-Dye & Akpojivi, 2016](#); [Chang & Heo, 2014](#); [Chen & Marcus, 2012](#); [Merunková & Šlerkaa, 2019](#)).

In a non-experimental study carried out by Chen and Marcus (2012), the way university students employ Facebook and the possible role of students' personality and culture in self-disclosure in online SNS-based environments were explored. The results of their study revealed that in the students with a high tendency of online and in-person self-disclosure, culture and personality are at work. They also found that most students use Facebook mainly to keep social relationships with selective use of privacy settings to maintain and monitor their self-disclosure on SNSs. However, their findings did not show how the

students disclosed their personal information. Furthermore, Chang and Heo (2014) investigated some factors drawn from theories and constructs which explain self-disclosure on Facebook. These factors included the users' motive of using Facebook, the time spent on it, the number of Facebook friends, its perceived benefits and risk, the trust, and the gender difference in Facebook. They collected data from American college students via an online questionnaire. Their findings indicated that all the factors inspected in the study more or less explained users' self-disclosure on Facebook. Although this study was valuable in confirming the available theories and constructs related to online self-disclosure, the analysis of how American college students tend to disclose their identity on Facebook would also have been favorable to the literature.

Similarly, in the South African context, Bevan-Dye and Akpojivi (2016) examined the type of information students aged 18 to 25 disclose on Facebook and the possible factors affecting their self-disclosures. Using a descriptive research design, they employed questionnaires to collect data from a sample of 281 students. The results of confirmatory factor analysis revealed that self-disclosure on Facebook comprises four factors, access concerns, site trust, member trust, and self-disclosure.

Additionally, they found that site trust and access policies were predictors of both member trust and the level of self-disclosure on Facebook among the participants. Although this study was rich in statistical analyses, it could not provide enough information about how South African students disclose their information on SNSs. Besides, in a qualitative study guided by Goffman's theory (1959), Merunková and Šlerkaa (2019) investigated how university students use the Facebook and the Twitter to affect their audience's impressions. They analyzed Facebook and Twitter profiles of 50 university students. Their results evidenced that the participants represented their identities in four main forms: the public diary, the influencer, the entertainer, job, education, and hobby. To deepen the findings of this study, eight follow-up interviews with the participants were held. They concluded that Goffman's theory of in person interactions is relevant in the context of SNSs as users showed conscious efforts to produce their desired impressions.

As can be implied from the above-alluded studies, despite the widespread use of SNSs for educational purposes due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, to the best of our knowledge, no research has been conducted to address high school students' self-presentation on SNSs in a local or international scope. Therefore, to fill this gap in, using thematic coding analysis ([Braun & Clarke, 2012](#)) and guided by Bourdieu's (1992) social theory encompassing the concepts of "field", "habitus", and "Doxa", the present study aims to investigate how Iranian high school students present themselves on SHAD launched by the Iranian Ministry of Education.

## **The Framework of the Study**

For Bourdieu, culture is regarded neither “observable structural relations” nor “ideational structure” ([Grenfell, 2012b, p. 65](#)). Bourdieu maintains that the first view toward the culture is too “rigid and static”, not being able to depict a comprehensive picture of culture and the second view is too “idealistic”, seeing “ideology as an imposition of the ruling class in the critical tradition” ([Grenfell, 2012b, p. 65](#)). To mollify the shortcomings of these two approaches to culture, as well as to pinpoint the interaction between them, Bourdieu added two concepts to the literature: “field” and “habitus”. Bourdieu (1990) defined habitus as:

Systems of durable, transposable dispositions,...as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can only be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them. (p. 53)

Also, Bourdieu (1992, p. 97) describes the field as “a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions.” To put it differently, he considers habitus as “dispositions which are impalpably inculcated through a long and slow process of acquisition.” (1991, p.51). Moreover, Bourdieu introduces “Doxa” as a principle in culture “which is beyond question and which each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in accord with social convention”. (1977, p.169). As these cultural concepts, “habitus”, “field”, and “Doxa”, introduced by Bourdieu, are directly connected to the literacy practices, they are of great help in understanding the nature of profile texts in this research by examining the students’ “impalpably inculcated dispositions” in their habitus ([Bourdieu, 1991, p. 51](#)). Adapted to the setting of social networks, what emits as the themes of this study directly show the students’ acquired ideologies and predispositions along with their own modifications or “improvisation” within the internalized cultural dispositions ([Grenfell, 2012b, p. 64](#)). Thus, this research employed thematic coding analysis to examine how Iranian high school students present themselves and their dispositions on the Iranian students’ social networking site, SHAD. In sum, this study aimed at responding to the following questions:

1. What are self-presentation themes observable in high school students’ profiles on SHAD?
2. How can Bourdieu’s habitus, field, and Doxa be used to analyze and unravel the connections of high school students’ self-presentations and the contextual social structures in Iran?

## **Material and Methods**

**Research Design:** Since an open thematic coding approach was used to extract thematic patterns and categories from the collected data, this study can best be regarded as qualitative; however, the frequency of the codes and themes were also presented to elucidate the thematic analysis procedures. To examine

the extracted themes, the discourse analysis approach was used. In line with Gee (2004, p. 7), the focus of analysis was on the big “D” of the discourse viewing discourse as a social practice. In this way, the interpretations of the obtained data were carried out in terms of both textual features of the texts and their socio-historical contexts. Therefore, the discourse-historical approach was used in the data analysis ([Wodak, 2001](#)).

**Setting and Participants:** The present study was conducted in the setting of 5 state high schools in Doroud, a city in western Iran. Using a random sampling method, a total of 425 male and female high school students who were grades 10, 11, and 12 were selected. The underlying reason for choosing the participants was their availability to the researchers. They aged between 15 and 18 and have been taking online classes for two years due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019. To reach the participants, the first researcher referred to the state high schools and explained the present study’s objectives for the school principals in a friendly climate. Having heard the first researcher’s explanation, the school principals agreed that the researchers run the present study in their school settings and to give students’ phone numbers. Then, the researchers contacted the students, introduced themselves, explained the current study’s objectives, and asked if they were willing to participate in this study. To those who agreed to participate willingly in the present study, the researchers sent them a digital written consent in Persian. The students were asked to sign and turn it back to the researchers. It is worthy to note that the researchers informed the school principals and students that their participation was voluntary, their responses would remain confidential, and they would be informed about the final findings.

**Data Collection Procedures:** As mentioned above, prior to analyzing the students’ profile texts, a digital written consent in Persian was sent to the participants. They signed it by voting “Yes” in a digital poll developed in SHAD. Also, to avoid modifications of the Bio texts by the students in reaction to being informed of the objectives of the study, the screenshots of their profiles had been captured before receiving their consent. However, to observe the ethical issues of research, only the profiles of the students who signed the digital written consent were examined and the screenshots of the other profiles were deleted. In general, a total of 425 students agreed to participate in the study. Then, the researchers referred to the texts in the display-like sections on the participants’ profiles labeled as Bio. The texts have been used to display the participants’ thoughts and beliefs about different matters on SHAD. A sum of 395 texts from the students’ profiles were collected and subjected to the thematic coding analysis ([Braun & Clarke, 2012](#)).

**Data Analysis Procedures:** As noted above, the thematic coding analysis, as a valuable data analysis tool to extract the embedded themes in qualitative data ([Braun & Clarke, 2012](#)), was used to extract the overarching patterns and themes in the students’ profiles. According to Braun and Clarke, (2012),



thematic analysis is a data analysis tool which seeks to identify, organize, and offer meaningful patterns or themes across a qualitative data set. It helps researchers to reach collective meanings and patterns in data. In the current study, after collecting a total of 395 profile *Bios* of the participants, the three steps of thematic analysis, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998), were taken to extract the latent patterns and themes in the data. At the open coding stage, having read all the available profile texts, the coders attempted to generate the initial codes which gave rise to identification of an average of 188 codes in the data. Then, open and axial coding were carried out simultaneously for identifying meaningful connections between the codes to extract possible themes; this process is known as nonlinear coding (Glaser, 2011). Next, at the selective coding stage, they reviewed the potential themes to define and name them. Finally, they prepared the final report of four main themes that included a number of texts with similar purposes: *life management and goal setting*, *religious prayers and beliefs*, *love matters*, and *didactic texts and quotations*.

The mentioned process of theme extraction was conducted using ATLAS.ti 9 application. As mentioned earlier, to increase the reliability of the data analysis, all coding processes were conducted by two coders. Then, to ensure the consistency of the data analysis procedure, the inter-coder reliability of the data analysis was measured using ATLAS.ti 9. The findings yielded the overall Krippendorff's alpha coefficient of 0.821, signifying a high agreement between the coders (Table 1). The reliability coefficient known as Krippendorff's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was created to assess the level of agreement among various entities such as observers, coders, judges, raters, or measuring instruments. Its purpose is to determine the consistency in distinguishing typically unstructured phenomena or assigning numerical values to them.

**Table 1.** Overall Inter-Coder Krippendorff's Alpha Coefficient

Coder	Number of Codes	Krippendorff's alpha coefficient
First	185	.0821
Second	191	

## Results and Discussion

After collecting 425 Iranian high school students' profiles on SHAD, 30 of the profiles were excluded from the examination due to vagueness or lack of informative text. As Table 2 shows, the number of profiles that entered the coding process was 395, including 166 females and 229 males. A total of 189 codes were identified by the coders in six languages (Persian, English, Arabic, Italian, Korean, and German). According to Table 2, Prosaic texts showed more popularity among both female and male students with an average percentage of 75%.

**Table 2.** Data summary of students' self-presentation strategies

Variable	Females		Males	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Excluded Profiles (vague content or blank)	12	40%	18	60%
Coded Profiles	166	42%	229	58%
The average number of codes	77	41%	112	59%
Poetic texts	43	25%	61	26%
Prosaic texts	123	75%	168	74%
Total	395			
Languages used	Persian, English, Arabic, Italian, Korean, German		Persian, English, Arabic, Korean	

The thematic analysis of the coded profiles showed that the students tended to represent themselves on a local SNS through the following themes. Moreover, adapted to the framework of the study, the generated themes alongside their example texts were reported and examined to uncover the traces of “field”, “habitus”, and Doxa”.

### Life Management and Goal Setting

As reported in Table 3, a considerable proportion of the students’ profiles were assigned to representing beliefs and opinions about managing life difficulties and goal setting. The examination of the co-occurrence of this theme alongside their textual properties revealed that around 100 and 26 of the participants preferred to disclose their opinions about running life in Persian and English, respectively. Besides, a total of 103 of the students used prosaic language to disclose their life coaching ideas.

**Table 3.** Frequency report of students’ self-presentation through life management and goal setting texts

Prosaic			Poetic		
Per.	En.	Ar.	Per.	En.	Ar.
77	26	0	23	0	1
103			24		

After the Islamic revolution in 1979, Iran’s economy has been afflicted with bone-cracking unfair sanctions from the United States and European countries, which have caused huge burdens and problems for the Iranians (Eybaghi, 2013). One of the most arduous problems is lack of job opportunities for educated youths. This issue producing a domino effect gave rise to another serious problem. It is the tendency of around 55 percent of the test-takers in Iran’s university entrance exam (Konkour) who opt the medical sciences as their guaranteed well-paid career. However, according to the Iranian Examination Organization (2021), only one percent of this mass are admitted in the medical universities. Therefore, the Iranian students who tend to have a lucrative job in the future undergo tedious studies from the early days of senior high school. Given the significance of being admitted in a promising field of study, it is not surprising that a strict studying schedule and hard work are the main concerns of many



Iranian students and, in some cases, unfortunately, this pressure resulted in some critical social traumas such as suicide ([Motamed & Abolhasan Tanhaee, 2018](#)).

Optimistically, the participants mainly attempted to provide tips and tricks which could both give assistance to others and enlighten their contemporary and futuristic mindsets in terms of lifestyle, morals, and planning (see Table 4). These Persian and English texts shed light on the current struggles of Iranian students against a socially-created monster called “Konkour” (Iranian university entrance examination), which directly affects their future occupational life. This becomes worse for Iranian male teenagers as they have the chances of taking this exam only twice before going to two-year mandatory army service. These two years of being away from textbooks inevitably steer them to either freelance jobs or looking for other chances in Konkour. The words “Shekast” as “Failure”, “Sakhti” as “hardship” and “stormy” in Table 4, rows one to three, all depict the unyielding situation in which Iranian students are striving for a better future. They have a strong belief that the winner is only the one who does not give up when encountering a failure. This hope for a jewel-like future is discernable in the other texts by referring to the words “Taghir” as “change”, “hope”, “faith”, “successful”, “Arezoo” as “ambition”.

**Table 4.** Examples of students' self-presentation through life management and goal setting texts

Number	Profile text	Translation
1	شکست ناپذیر کسی نیست که هرگز شکست نمی خورد کسی است که با شکست تسلیم نمی شود و بعد از هر شکست دوباره تلاش می کند حتی اگر هزاران بار شکست بخورد	Undefeatable is not the one who never fails, it is the one who does not back down at the first failure, and after each failure, tries again, even a thousand times.
2	هرگز تسلیم نشوید امروز سخت است و فردا سخت تر اما پس فردا روز روشنی برایتان خواهد بود	Never give up, today is hard, tomorrow harder, but the day after tomorrow will bright for you.
3	STAY FOCUSED ON YOUR DESTINATION EVEN IF YOUR PATH MAY SEEM STORMY TODAY..	-
4	Whatever happens, don't lose hold of two main life's ropes: hope & faith	-
5	تقدیر را با ضربه تغییر می‌شکنم	I will change my destiny
6	I will be successful	-
7	این منم پر آرزو این منم دنبال حال خوب این منم تو خونه های لوکس این منم تو آگه میخوای جا بمون	It's me full of ambitions, it's me looking for a good mood, it's me in luxurious houses, it's me, you can stay behind if you like.
8	اگر جایی را که ایستاده اید، نمی پسندید عوضش کنید شما درخت نیستید	If do not like where you are standing, change it, you are not a tree.
9	Be the change you want To see in the world	-
10	گاهی همون آدمی که هیچکس فکرشو نمیکنه، کاری می کنه که هیچکس فکرشو نمیتونه بکنه!	Sometimes, the one that no one thinks does something that no one has an idea!
11	Nothing can prevent me from doing what I want to do	-

This self-disclosing strategy has been absent in previous studies ([Bevan-Dye & Akpojivi, 2016](#); [Chang & Heo, 2014](#); [Chen & Marcus, 2012](#); [Merunková & Šlerkaa, 2019](#)). It delineates the fact that the

educational purposes of SHAD and the social and economic problems surrounding the SNS users could restrict the students' worldviews and their self-presentation strategies on SNSs. This issue shadows what high school students follow at this age, such as hobbies and entertainment ([Merunková & Šlerkaa, 2019](#)).

### Religious Prayers and Beliefs

Religious texts as the most prevalent self-revelation strategies among the students appeared on 109 of the students' profiles. This category can be arranged into Quranic verses, Islamic prayers, Shi'ite quotations from religious figures, literary texts, and idiosyncratic prayers (Table 5). While the majority of the students who expressed their religious beliefs and feelings on their profiles favored Arabic and Persian (65 & 33, respectively), 5 English prayers and 2 in Italian, 1 in German, and 1 in Korean were also found.

**Table 5.** Frequency report of students' self-presentation through religious prayers and beliefs

Prosaic				Poetic			Numeric
Per.	En.	Ar.	OL	Per.	En.	Ar.	1
20	5	45	4	13	0	20	
74				33			1

Religion is interwoven with the Iranian culture so that it cannot be readily differentiated from Iranian customs and traditions ([Shariatmadari, 2019](#)). Many years before Iranians converted to Islam, the Sassanid Dynasty had established Zoroastrianism as the primary religion of the Persian Empire. It is noteworthy that Iranians regard religion as a major institution for their decisions, which influences every corner of their life and rituals. According to the statistics reported by the Iranian Statistics Center (2016), Islam is the first religion in Iran (around 98 percent of the population), and the majority of these Muslims are Shi'ites. Comprising approximately 15 percent of all Muslims worldwide, Shi'ites predominantly reside in Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. The other prevalent doctrine of Islam in Iran is Sunni which can be differentiated from Shia by their perspectives to the successors of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Whereas the Sunnis assume the four Caliphs as the successors of Mohammad (PBUH), the Shi'ites believe that the only true successor of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was Imam Ali (PBUH). The Shi'ites contend that the Prophet evidently selected his cousin and his eleven descendants in his last journey to Mecca as the true successor of the Prophet. It is worth noting that there are also other readings of Shi'ite which believe in five or seven descendants of Imam Ali (PBUH). The last Shi'ite Imam who is known to be the apocalypse savior of the world, is Mahdi (PBUH). Shi'ites believe that he is alive, however, he disappeared from human sights to rise against the oppression and corruptions in the future of the world.

In the cohort, the religious profile texts manifested three main divisions. The first prayers displayed Quranic verses or other prayers, the second was specified to Shi'ite creeds and Imams, and the last aimed at praising the values of Iran's Islamic revolution, such as the Islamic leader.

**Table 6.** Examples of students' self-presentation through religious prayers and beliefs texts

Number	Profile text	Translation
1	وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَقَفٍ خُسْرٍ أَلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ	I swear by Time Most surely man is in loss Except those who believe and do good deeds
2	فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ	So patiently persevere: for verily the promise of Allah is true
3	لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ.	There is neither might nor power except Allah, the Exalted, the Great.
4	إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي...	I am with you my God...
5	همیشه برای خدا و به یاد خدا باش	Always be with God, and remember him
6	إِلَهِي وَ رَبِّي مَنْ لِي غَيْرُكَ	Oh, Allah, except you who else remains for me
7	گر نگهدار من آنست که من می‌دانم/شیشه را در بغل سنگ نگه میدارد	If my keeper is the one I know, he will keep the glass safe next the rock.
8	I love you Allah Te amo Allah 알라 사랑해 Ich liebe dich Allah	I love you Allah I love you Allah I love you Allah
9	ما را بیت الا جمیلا	I saw nothing but mere beauty
10	گفتم که علی گفت بگو سرالله	I said Ali, you say "the secrets of Allah"
11	اللهم عجل لوليک الفرج	Oh, Allah please accelerate the "Faraj" of your vicegerent
12	۳۱۳	313
13	تا ظهور.....	Till "Zohoor"
14	جانم فدای رهبر	I sacrifice for the leader
15	سید من مولای من حضرت آقا	My master my superior "Hazratte Agha"

As seen in Table 6, rows one to three are examples of Quranic verses, which are recognized by the vowel markings to signify the holiness of the text ([Hasrtai et al., 2014](#)). The first verse in the row emphasizing the significance of the time in humans' lives pinpoints the value of doing good deeds in life. "Salehat", translated in Islamic schools of thought, focuses not only on helping others, but also on helping oneself to reach their bests in life. The texts in rows two and three displaying God's behests denote God's power by the sentences "...the promise of Allah is true" and "There is neither might nor power except Allah". In Islam, such obedience toward Allah's might and will is known as "Tavakol", which is lucid in other prayers, including ones in rows four and five. This obedience, however, does not betoken humans' incapacity of controlling conditions and modifying the quality of their lives. In Islam, it is believed that "Tavakol" facilitates humans' endeavors and solves their unanticipated difficulties ([Arefian & Taghavi, 2020](#)). This way of self-presentation can also be traced in the example texts in rows 4 and 5, which pinpoint the SNS users' profound faith in Allah by appending themselves to him. In row five, the imperative form of the text proclaims the fact that the student not only displays a religious face, but also, through advertising religion, urges others to "be with God". Furthermore, quoting a verse from

*Kumayl* supplication with the same theme (by Kumayl ibn Ziyad, a close companion of the Prophet) in the sixth row, the user ascertains that no one is sustainable for humans except God.

Poetic Persian texts were also available from the Iranian poets, highlighting the formerly-mentioned fathomless belief of the students in God as an undefeatable protecting power. In this regard, the poem in the seventh row by an unknown poet dignifies the value of trusting God despite apparently intricate circumstances. In a multilingual self-presentation, a SHAD user used four languages to disclose humans' love for Allah in row eight. The use of Arabic equivalent of the word God, *Allah*, in four languages other than the users' mother tongue implies the students' willingness to be recognized as a multilingual Muslim. Another sample text referring to the martyrdom of Imam Hossein (PBUH) as the third Imam in Shi'ite draws on the heartfelt Shi'ite belief in the martyrdom for Allah. On Muharram the tenth in 61 Hijri (13 October, 680), Imam Hossein (PBUH) accompanying his family and his 72 followers were attacked by thousands of Caliph's troopers. On that day, which the philosophy of martyrdom stems from, knowing that they did not have any chance against a large number of troopers, they did not succumb and were brutally assassinated. After the war, Imam Hossein's sister, Zeinab (PBUH), was captivated and taken to another city. When she was asked about her experience in *Karbala*, she replied: "ما رايت الا جميلا" as "I saw nothing but mere beauty" (Table 6, row 9). It should be mentioned that every year in the Shi'ite world, the first ten days of Muharram are allocated to remembering and praising the martyrs of Karbala as a religious "Doxa".

Drawing on Shi'ite creed in Imam Ali (PBUH) and his descendants as the true successors of the Prophet, many exemplars of disclosing such belief were found in the collected data, such as calling him as the secrets of Allah, "گفتم كه على گفت بگو سرالله". In rows 11 to 13, another current philosophy of Shi'ite regarding looking forward to Imam Mahdi's reappearance, as "Entezar", has been presented. As mentioned earlier, this belief in the reappearance of the twelfth Imam Mahdi, after a long absence from humans' sights, encourages the Shi'ites not to lose hope for the kingdom of goodness in the future. The students' belief in the apocalypse savior manifested itself in words and numbers, for example, asking Allah to accelerate the "Faraj" or "Zohoor" (reappearance) of the Imam or mentioning the anticipated number of followers of Imam Mahdi at the time of "Zohoor" (313).

Another prevailing self-presentation perspective used by the students was praising Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's Islamic leader. Drawing on sacred titles, including master or majesty ("Agha" and "Hazrat, respectively), the students attempted to present their both political and religious side and their fondness for the leader. Moreover, in some cases, they expressed their love for him as much as they are ready to sacrifice their lives for the leader.

## Love Matters

Emotional quotations and texts which mostly praise love were also found on the students' profiles. A total of 77 and 16 of the texts on the students' profiles emphasized love in Persian and English, respectively (Table 7). No Arabic text was detected in this regard.

**Table 7.** Frequency report of students' self-presentation through love matters

Prosaic			Poetic		
Per.	En.	Ar.	Per.	En.	Ar.
30	16	0	47	0	0
46			47		

The love between men and women is the main theme in Persian poetry, particularly in the works of great poets, such as Hafiz and Sa'adi ([Hillmann, 2018](#); [Mahmoudi & Abbasalizadeh, 2019](#)). With the advent of social networking sites and their advertising culture, such as Instagram, the Iranian culture has been experiencing a moderate change in this regard. Also, parents and the system are more lenient about the teenagers' love relationships. Therefore, many of the students' profiles were occupied with texts concerning love in English and Persian (Table 8).

**Table 8.** Examples of students' self-presentation through love matters texts

Number	Profile text	Translation
1	در طریق عشق‌بازان مشکل آسان کجا	There is no easy problem for lovers
2	من صبورم اما... به خدا دست خوردم نیست اگر می رنجم	I am patient, but... I cannot help getting offended
3	بعد رفتنت فهمیدم چه چیزی را از دست داده ام	When you left, I realized who I have lost
4	هر وقت که بودی همه چی قشنگ شد هر وقت هم که نبودی... نیودی رو و لش کن	Whenever you were here everything was beautiful Whenever you were not here ... Forget about those times
5	نگی به ک ۳۰ خیلی نف ۳۰ از هر کی بپ ۳۰ به این جمله میر ۳۰ که واسه من همه ک ۳۰ نه قرمز، نه مشکی رفیق فقط تو عشقی	Do not tell anyone You are my breath Whoever you ask You will come to this sentence That you are my breath Not red nor black, you are my love buddy
6	BUT TO UNDERSTAND THE WORDS OF SOMEONE WHOSE eyes are BEAUTIFUL IS REALLY HARD...♡	-

In this regard, the students' love-based self-representational texts on their profiles included several subjects, such as the difficulties of love, the meaning of love, praising of the beloved, the failure in love, and the precious moment with their beloved. In the first two rows in Table 8, two poems by unknown poets are shown, portraying the value of being patient against love difficulties. Moreover, referring to the sufferings of separation from the beloved one can be traced in the texts in rows 3 and 4 of Table 8. The first text, implying the separation, seeks to manifest the lover's deep sorrows due to losing the

beloved one. The next denotes the beauties of the beloved one's presence and deviates from imagining the world without the person.

In Iran's classical literature, the word "فراق" pronounced as "Feraq" illustrates a situation in which a lovelorn is separated from their beloved one. Creating a deep connection with the meaning of this word and, subsequently, the "habitus" requires a familiarity with the "field". Use of this kind of "habitus" as a self-presentation strategy, which needs the viewers' familiarity with the "field", highlights the students' awareness and intentions to communicate historically and socially field-dependent "habitus". In the third row of Table 8, the student utilized a poem to convey a tongue-in-the-cheek way of praising the beloved one. In Persian, the number "30" is pronounced /si: /, and this property of this number invoked the poet's creativity to compose five verses with the rhymes ending with the syllable /si: /. This poem is an excellent instance of "multi-layeredness of indexicality", in which different layers of meaning in an utterance should be decoded to understand its intended meaning ([Hasrtai et al., 2014, p. 13](#)). Lastly, there is an English example text which indicates the high fascination of spending the time with the beloved one in a way that the beloved one's eyes are so much beautiful that distracts the lover from the conversation. A study by Cunningham (1986) revealed that the beauty of eyes, including its color, size, and shape, to a great extent, affects humans' overall beauty; therefore, apparently, being astonished by the beauty of the beloved ones can have a "field" as wide as the all the cultures in the world.

### Didactic Texts and Quotations

As reported in Table 9, most of the participants used their profiles to quote texts advising others (N=66). They used Persian (N=42) and English (N=24) to express their worldviews through didactic expressions about social affairs, life, friendship, and self-appraisals.

**Table 9.** Frequency report of students' self-presentation through didactic texts and quotations

Prosaic			Poetic		
Per.	En.	Ar.	Per.	En.	Ar.
42	24	0	0	0	0
66			0		

The given examples in Table 9 show that these self-directed expressions mainly advise audiences. In the texts at the first sixth rows, the pronouns "I" and "me" are centralized to show that these expressions are deeply rooted in an individual's cognition. According to the previous studies (e.g., [Abbuhl, 2012](#), [Hietanen & Hietanen, 2017](#); [Tackman, 2019](#)), this way of putting self at the center of interactions through self-referential pronouns aims to fulfill some objectives such as advising audiences and expressing personal viewpoints.



**Table 10.** Examples of students' self-presentation through didactic texts and quotations

Number	Profile text	Translation
1	مهم نیست من کی هستم من رو از روی کارهایی که میکنم میشناسن	It's not important who I am, everyone knows me by what I do.
2	Today; I am who I am with all of my thoughts and actions	-
3	خیلیا بهم یاد دادن که میتونن باهام بازی کنن..... منم یه روزی بهشون یاد میدم که بازی رفت و برگشت داره	Many taught me that they can play me... someday I will show them that it is a home-and-away game.
4	remember i can be bad too !	-
	خودت باش هیچکس مثل خودت نمیتونه کمکت کنه	Be yourself No one can help you like yourself
5	Hug yourself whenever you are sad!	-

Focusing on the importance of actions, the first text in Table 10 shows that the student believes that names do not describe us, as we are known by what we do. Also, this perspective is disclosed in the second text, signifying what we are at the time being is the outcome of our thoughts and deeds. This “habitus” may be rested on an international “field” as in the English proverb, saying that “Actions Speak Louder than Words”. In this proverb the value of humans’ social actions compared to words is highly admired. This has also been the theme of many Persian literary works such as Rumi’s couplet poems or Saadi’s *Gulistan* and *Bustan*, as well as religious texts such as Quran and hadith (Quotations from Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)). At the third and fourth rows of Table 10, the students pessimistically reacted to possible social problems that might have been caused by other people. Disclosing their dark side (“I can be bad”) or their revengeful motives (“I will show them that it is a home-and-away game”), they threatened their addressee that they will not remain silent against socially-induced problems; therefore, the students who used these expressions have experienced such issues. On the other hand, there were some texts in which the students represented their beliefs in self-reliance when a problem pops up or sadness shadows (Rows 5 and 6 in Table 10). While the text in row five highlights the role of self-reliance in complicated situations, the one at the sixth row, stressing the emotional side of self-reliance, communicates the idea that when people are sad, no one is out there to sympathy; therefore, it is better to hug ourselves. Even though it is internationally accepted that encouraging self-reliance is a predictor of mental health ([Corboy, 2019](#); [Degotardi et al., 1999](#); [Schwanz, 2016](#)), the pessimistic form of it can result in social isolation requiring psychological intervention ([Choo, 2019](#); [Machielse, 2015](#)). This two-sidedness of self-reliance, however, is an undeniable consequence modernization of societies in which humans rely on their own and their smartphones to tackle problems. Although the interplay between “habitus” and ‘field’ is evident here, it should be mentioned that the ‘field’ is not confined to Iran as it is extended throughout all cultures and societies.

## Conclusion and Implications

The incorporation of technological devices in education has created a multimodal channel of communication calling for urgent research to explore it more profoundly from different aspects. As such, this study attempted to examine how high school students disclosed their ideas and sides on a recently developed Iranian social networking platform, known SHAD, for educational purposes. Inspecting Iranian high school students' profiles through thematic coding analysis yielded four overarching themes: life management and goal setting, religious prayers and beliefs, love matters, and didactic expressions and quotations. The socio-historical investigation of some examples extracted for each theme documented an evident interconnection between "habitus" and 'field' ([Hasrtai et al., 2014](#)). The study's results were, however, distinctive, as evidenced that the 'field' on which the students structured their "habitus" was not confined to the Iranian culture and norms. Although it is verifiable for some themes, such as religious or life management texts, the students' self-representations revolved around the current Shi'ite prayers or Iranian teenagers' problems, in love-related and didactic texts, a more comprehensive 'field' was at the play with their "habitus". Formerly, the national borders of societies could be recognized as their cultural borders. In contrast, in the modern world, the borders of culture are being blurred due to the massive amount of intercultural communications between SNS users ([Na, 2020](#); [Sterelny, 2020](#)). Notably, what has remained unchanged is 'Doxa'; therefore, what is now being experienced by the generation who are digital natives is the interplay between the internationally-mediated national 'field' and "habitus".

The present research enriches the literature on online self-presentation by providing related results on an SNS (SHAD); however, this study's findings are valuable in several other ways. Firstly, the available studies in the literature did not benefit from a socio-historical approach to analyze the results. Therefore, this qualitative research can be assumed as the first attempt to examine the self-disclose strategies of the students with a glance at the social values and historical perspectives of its 'field'. Moreover, to the best knowledge of the researchers, this study is the single case in the literature examining high school students' self-presentation on a local SNS for educational purposes. Also, with the help of the present study's findings, educationalists and parents can be well-informed about their students' ongoing intellectual directions such that they can make any required decisions to avoid destructive moral deviation among their students. Finally, analyzing the current study's results might open up promising horizons toward the interplay between Bourdieu's (1992) 'field' and "habitus" in online self-presentation strategies. From an educational perspective, this study's findings are of paramount importance for appreciating high school students' thoughts and behaviors on educational SNSs. Due to the inevitable interconnection of modern education and SNSs, the studies such as the present one can provide insights

for the educationalists to recognize the variations among the students' self-presentation strategies from both cultural and social perspectives. This awareness can direct educational arenas to a safe space where the students and teachers can cooperate and interact efficiently. Additionally, this research may be helpful for educational practitioners and researchers to build an evidential information base to examine the implications of educational SNSs by high school students.

It should be noted that this study came with a range of limitations in terms of design and sample methods. Firstly, the sample size and the regional variety were not large enough to make definitive decisions or conclusions nationwide. Moreover, the possible gender-generated differences among the female and male students were not examined. Therefore, further research aiming at the examination of the possible interactions of gender with self-presentation strategies with a larger sample size on SHAD and other similar SNSs, can add illuminating findings to the literature. Furthermore, as the sample of the present study was limited to high school students, interested research can explore university students' self-representation on SNSs.

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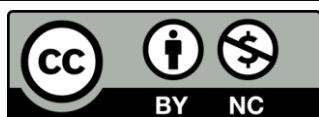
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