Group Dynamics in the Cyberspace (Case Study on 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' and 'Loenpia Dot Net')

Dinamika Kelompok dalam Dunia Maya (Studi Kasus pada 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' dan 'Loenpia Dot Net')

Ayu Amalia[1], Filosa Gita Sukmono[1]
[1]Study Program of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Jl. Brawijaya, Kasihan, Bantul, Yogyakarta 55183, Indonesia
*Corresponding author, e-mail: ami.khavid@umy.ac.id

Abstract

Context of this study derived from communication studies, emphasizes on the perspective of 'a cultural shift' as a result of the 'cyberspace' phenomenon as an impact of the current-computing technology, and the changing patterns of information transmission and communication. Researchers conducted indepth interviews, towards the members of a bloggers community, such as 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' (bloggerjogja.org), and 'Loenpia Dot Net' (loenpia.net/blog) which is a bloggers community based in Semarang. This research use qualitative analysis with descriptive approach. As results, 'group dynamics' that are developed by each community, corresponds with the community character and nature, to maintain the self-existence. Member of bloggers community maintain the existence of his/her bloggers community, conducted by interacting on a regular basis amongst community members, as well as build awareness for the netizens by upload various information on his/her personal blog, linked with community web page.
Keywords*: Group Dynamics, Cyberspace, Bloggers Community.*

Abstrak

Konteks penelitian ini berasal dari studi komunikasi, menekankan pada perspektif 'pergeseran budaya' sebagai akibat dari fenomena 'dunia maya' sebagai dampak dari teknologi komputasi saat ini, dan perubahan pola transmisi informasi serta komunikasi. Peneliti melakukan wawancara mendalam, terhadap anggota komunitas blogger, seperti 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' (bloggerjogja.org), dan 'Loenpia Dot Net' (loenpia.net/blog) yang merupakan komunitas blogger berbasis di Semarang. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Temuannya yaitu adanya dinamika kelompok yang menjadi penciri masing-masing komunitas, dikembangkan sesuai dengan karakter dan sifat anggota komunitas secara komunal. Tugas masing-masing anggota komunitas adalah mempertahankan keberadaan komunitas bloggernya, yang dilakukan dengan berinteraksi secara rutin di antara anggota komunitas, serta membangun kesadaran netizen dengan mengunggah berbagai informasi di blog pribadinya, terkait dengan halaman web komunitas.
Kata Kunci*: Dinamika Kelompok, Dunia Maya, Komunitas Blogger.*

Introduction

Communication is currently experiencing a charging shift, affected by the current computing technology. Determined by its digitalization, interactivity and connectivity of wireless media, affecting emergence a series of other phenomena, such as the emergence

of the internet, which was initially to fulfill electronic transmission, which turns into a wave channel energy and human expression that exist everywhere and touches on many aspects of human life. Every minute, hundreds of millions of people creating and absorbing the digital content, this implies the emergence of new capabilities for expression and move information freely, forming virtual environment running side-by-side with social reality.

Indonesia has surprisingly large internet users, as shown by the results of research Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII) in collaboration with the Computer Research Center ('*Pusat Kajian Komputer'*/Puskakom)--Universitas Indonesia (APJII & Puskakom, 2015). During 2014, there were 88.1 million internet users in Indonesia, increase about, 16.2 million from 71.9 million, with penetration rate 34,9 %.

Internet users, has played an active role in building the civilization of cyberspace itself, by providing content that fills the platform provided by the Internet Platform Provider, known as 'user-generated-content' phenomenon. Survey organized by the Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association. (APJII) in 2012, showed that 2.2% of internet users in Indonesia, or about 1.2 million people, has done content uploading activities on their personal blogs, regularly, using various kinds of weblog platforms (APJII & Puskakom, 2013).

Klaffke (2014): *"On over 5M blogs, Indonesians discuss politics, food, culture, lifestyle, fashion trends, and more."* Those who are actively doing blogging activity, usually upload articles, reviews about politics, culinary, culture, lifestyle, fashion trends, and much more. These indicates that the blog is a mean of self-expression, integrate number of ideas and interests of the blog owner, which is like a personal journal, uploaded online, and allows others to access them online.

All the websites we've visited, all sent emails, the narrative read online, a planned trip, job vacancies were discovered, these activities enable us to understand every aspect of life that has changed, ranging from trivial details of everyday life to the question of identity, and relationships. Online experiences became as real as real-life-experience, or even better. Humans consider it as 'an escapism' from the daily routines. It encourages people to have a double 'citizenship', those are, 'real citizenship', related to the social reality, and 'digital citizenship', related to the virtual world (cyberspace).

Citizenship's defined as membership in a community, or the quality of an individual's response to membership in a community (Citizenship, (n.d.)). Digital Citizenship also interpreted as the quality response to membership in a digital community (Heick, 2013).

This 'Citizenship' helps people to realize the values, beliefs, and even identities in the real world and digital world. 'Digital Citizenship' plays as code-of-conduct for members on a community. Where in the community itself, consists of several members with various characters, with shared-visions and shared-interests.

Community is a group characterized with specific common interests. Valued from its constituent aspects, namely interaction, shared interest and mutual understanding, community defined as our senses of belonging to social groups which often extend beyond the boundaries of specific place to include taste, consumption, shared interest and shared discursive codes. Used here to describe groups of internet users sharing a common interest connected via networked digital media (Lister, Giddings, Dovey, Grant, & Kelly, 2008).

Community, assessed by its shared identity, which in turns, encouraging sense of belonging amongst community members towards their community, as stated a group is a

social system involving regular interaction among members and a common group identity. This means that groups have a sense of 'weness' that enables members to identify themselves as belonging to a distinct entity (Forsyth, 2006).

Kurt Lewin (1943, 1948, 1951), the founder of the movement to study groups scientifically, chose the word dynamic. Groups tend to be powerful rather than weak, active rather than passive, fluid rather than static, and catalyzing rather than reifying. Lewin used the termgroup dynamics to stress the powerful impact of these complex social processes on group members (Forsyth, 2006).

Kurt Lewin's (1951) field theory of group dynamics assumed that groups are more than the sum of their parts. Field theory premised on the principle of interactionism, which assumes that the behavior of people in groups is determined by the interaction of the person and the environment. The formula $B = f(P,E)$ summarizes this assumption. In a group context, this formula implies that the behavior (B) of group members is a function (f) of the interaction of their personal characteristics (P) with environmental factors (E), which include features of the group, the group members, and the situation. According to Lewin, whenever a group comes into existence, it becomes a unified system with emergent properties that not be understood by separate examination. Lewin noted that, *"The whole is greater than the sum of the parts,"* to groups (Forsyth, 2006).

Group dynamics research based on the phenomenon of communication that occurs due to the rapid development of cyberspace is quite interesting to observed and analyzed. Several studies have attempted to answer the development of 'Group Dynamics' phenomenon. Research conducted by Bouas and Arrow (1995); McKenna and Green (2002); Blanchard and Markus (2004); Koh, Kim, and Kim (2003); and last Yohana and Wulandari (2014). Those preliminary studies have not touched on how online community engaged in activities in the virtual world, therefore, this research, answers some aspects that have not discussed by previous studies.

Based on previous studies and quest for various references related to group dynamics and cyberspace, this research in the context of Indonesia is quite important. Some of the underlying reasons are, research on 'group dynamics' and 'cyberspace' are quite limited, controvert with the outgrowing numbers of virtual groups in cyberspace. Another reason to conduct this research is the fact that, subsequent emergence of groups that were once in the real world suddenly moved to cyberspace, which still carrying out their activities in two distinct realms, that is the real world and cyberspace.

Methodology

This study, applies case study approach. Datas and informations, collected by conducting indepth interviews towards members of 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' (http://bloggerjogja.org) and 'Komunitas Blogger Semarang Loenpia Dot Net' (http://loenpia.net/blog). Informants selected within these criterias: become member since the community was formed, members who are registered on the mailing lists or other Social Media platform which is used as a means of communication amongst members of the community, and members who actively participating on several events organized by the community.

Data collectiong process held by conducting indepth interview towards founder and co-founder of both blogger communities. Informants are, Achmad Zulfikar (http://blog.kabarfikar.com) co-founder of 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja', second informant is, Budiyono (http://budiyono.net) were interviewed online, whilst undertaking ongoing project on his job for technological corporate abroad, and the third informant is

Mohammad Sani Suprayogi (https://yogie.id) interviewed on his workplace.

This study seeks to explain 'group dynamics' in the blogger community, as well as describe the way both of communities operate internally to maintain cohesiveness, which become part of 'group dynamics' itself, and how both communities serve their purpose to prevail as representation of their hometown on the World Wide Web, amongst online communities.

This research use qualitative analysis with descriptive approach. Methodological quality was assessed using Lincoln and Guba (1985) checklist for trustworthiness. Through strategies such as, triangulation of data, prolonged observation, through documentation, this methodology and its analyses met the criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research.

Result and Discussion
Blogging in Cyberspace

Cyberspace corresponds with any sense of digitally generated 'space' from the World Wide Web to Virtual Reality (Lister et al., 2008). Blog as part of 'cyberspace', is an alternative media that expressed independent voice in any reviews. Blogs could indicate a person's identity, sometimes it is inevitable that identity expressed on blog, contains certain interest, passion, and label.

The core-content is to share the good things about themselves or something that involves the interests of many people, blog has provided a space, which is free from any kinds of intervention, because the contents of a blog mainly depends on the owner of the blog in line with Huffaker and Calvert (2005) notion about blog, that it could provide feedbank, thus can foster a sense of peer group relationship (Lister et al., 2008).

'Group Dynamics' on Online Community
Cohesiveness and Identity

Community is a group characterized with specific common interests. Valued from its constituent aspects, namely interaction, shared interest and mutual understanding, community defined as our senses of belonging to social groups which often extend beyond the boundaries of specific place to include taste, consumption, shared interest and shared discursive codes. Used here to describe groups of internet users sharing a common interest connected via networked digital media (Lister et al., 2008).

Community, assessed by its shared identity, which in turns, encouraging sense of belonging amongst community members towards their community, as stated a group is a social system involving regular interaction among members and a common group identity. This means that groups have a sense of 'weness' that enables members to identify themselves as belonging to a distinct entity (Johnson on (Forsyth, 2006)).

'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' and 'Loenpia Dot Net' experienced certain phenomenon as a community at large, with the increasing number of members, gap between each generation of members will affect the cohesiveness of the group, but whilst under the same 'flags', the cohesion is considered solid, endorsing community as their label. As expressed by Budiyono, founder of 'Loenpia Dot Net' which considering 'Loenpia Dot Net' as home for its members.

> *"When we established this community, it was marked by the establishment of our 'home', which is 'loenpia.net'. 'Loenpia.net' became our home, our joint property that we keep together, as a place to learn and grow. We decorate this house, as well as possible, with the most sophisticated devices. This particular house also became our identity. One of the visions*

that we had at that time was … 'our house' (Loenpia.net) became Semarang's identity on world-wide-web (internet), and we made it happen, for example one of our projects, documenting places, or … landmarks in Semarang that we described in semarangan.loenpia.net" (Interview with Budiyono).

Quoting from Lewin's notion, series of complex social processes on group members are fundamental for 'group dynamics'. Kurt Lewin (1943, 1948, 1951), the founder of the movement to study groups scientifically, chose the word dynamic. Groups tend to be powerful rather than weak, active rather than passive, fluid rather than static, and catalyzing rather than reifying. Lewin used the term group dynamics to stress the powerful impact of these complex social processes on group members (Forsyth, 2006).

Whereas members of a community surpassing several phases, starting with initiation, adaptation and adoption, marked by group values internalization, then proceeded with the formation of sense of 'we'-ness among group members towards each other and toward community itself, which characterized with sense of interdependence and group cohesiveness, as supported by the informants, below:

"Naturally, establishment of a community comes from mutual interest in certain matter, therefore the sense of mutual dependence and cooperation is certainly very significant for community growth" (Interview with Mohammad Sani Suprayogi).

"I think that is natural phenomena in an open community. Reliance among members is not a permanent thing in loenpia.net (Interview with Budiyono).

Proposed by Mohammad Sani Suprayogi, co-founder of 'Loenpia Dot Net' that independently-formed community on the basis of 'shared interest' will carrying out its activities as a whole, relevant to the 'nature' of the community itself, which is open-community, where each member motivates others, to move dynamicly promoting community existence, as stated by Budiyono.

Slightly different from the description of the members of the 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja', Achmad Zulfikar:

"Cohesiveness in a community is certainly inseparable from the structure itself. As known, Yogyakarta is a region with a high level of cultural diversity, collateral with internal conditions in the 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja'. I realize that a community not only dominated by sole ethnic group, and 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' is a heterogeneous environment. It takes certain organization to embed it through experience in managing blogs. This makes community members interact with each other and exchange information with enthusiasm and mutual respect, also equipped with a set of written rules that become a common reference so that cohesiveness can be maintained' (Interview with Achmad Zulfikar).

In a group context, Lewin's formula implies that the behavior of group members is a function of the interaction of their personal characteristics, related with environmental factors, which include features of the group, the group members, and the situation (Forsyth, 2006). Addressed with informants explanation on community nature and functionality, with slightly unrestrained interaction model, both communities require set of values and principles to serve as decent organization, accommodating heterogeneous personalities and also backgrounds represent by their members.

As stated by founders of 'Loenpia Dot Net', shared-interest develop as sizing-matter that hold this particular community together. Shared interest represented by displaying Semarang's point of interests, locals habbit, recent informations, and local wisdom, on 'Semarangan' feature. As locals, these members contribute to spread informations related to Semarang within the World Wide Web, as well as nourished these particular informations, local habbit, commemorate it as part of their communality and collective identity. As an example, there's feature articles within 'loenpia.net' webpage, collected in a coloumn called 'Semarangan', one of the article discuss about Semarang local and distinctive dialect, as token of celebration and admiration, to accentuate Semarang's locals identity through out cyberspace.

'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' with Yogyakarta as its hometown, take on rather different oncoming. Striking feature of Yogyakarta as one of the special regions in Indonesia is the cultural diversity aspect, derived from its heterogenous society. Yogyakarta has resemblance with Indonesia itself, which is multiculture, with diverse ethnicity, region, religion/belief, tradition. Hence, diversity is a distinctive mark that will be embed with Yogyakarta features, this also applies to 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' as diverse community, to maintain cohesiveness in such distinct bakcgrounds amongs its members, and the founders set specific rule, such as mutual respect, honouring each others with mutual understanding.

Openness and Exchange

'Komunitas Blogger Jogja', along with members more heterogeneous members, would require greater effort managing group cohesiveness, as proposed by Achmad Zulfikar. There is a set of written rules that must be understood and practiced upon members interactions, focusing on the exchange of information in the community, as an indicator of Group Dynamics sustainability, an integral part of a group or community as forwarded by Lewin (1951) in (Forsyth, 2006). Group Dynamics, is an integral part of the group itself, as stated by Kurt Lewin (1951), the way groups and individuals act and react towards changing circumstances. In the study of communication, 'group dynamics' explained and examined in a series of phenomena, that is the transmission of information in groups, discussion, decision making, problems in communication process, and networking (Forsyth, 2006).

In accordance with the nature of the 'Loenpia Dot Net' and 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja', which is an open community, then openness become community's fundamental model amongst its members to develop model of communication by performing information exchanging, discussion, decision-making, as stated by the informants, as follows:

> *"... we formed 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' as a forum for any blogger in Yogyakarta and outside Yogya who would like to join. Precisely, 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' is the pioneer of open membership blogger community"* (Interview with Achmad Zulfikar).

> *"Communication model that occur, is open to each other, in accordance with the nature and basic of Loenpia.net itself as an open community, that includes, community management, technical matters about the loenpia.net website, sharing daily routines done through mailing lists/messengers"* (Interview with Budiyono).

Information exchange among members of this community takes place by utilizing various media, started with mailing list group, a media based on email subscriptions, widely popular on early 2000s, nowadays members bloggers community tend to utilizes

much more practical platforms, such as messenger, like Whatsapp messenger and social media, such as Facebook Group as summarized from the interview follows:

>*"Mailing lists, Whatsapp Messenger Group, and meeting"* (Interview with Mohammad Sani Suprayogi).

>*"Media to interact among community members, generally speaking would be Facebook group at Facebook/Blogger Jogja which is intended for 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' members"* (Interview with Achmad Zulfikar).

These informations not only addressed to 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' members, also for public. Especially for those who needs certain information related to Yogyakarta and Semarang, as hometown for 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' (http://bloggerjogja.org/) and 'Loenpia Dot Net' (http://loenpia.net/). Providing informations related to their hometown, also educating Yogyakarta and Semarang citizens at large about internet and cyberspace, which makes both communities positioned themselves as entities that represent Yogyakarta and Semarang.

>*"We use the http://bloggerjogja.org weblog as a means to convey the latest information and activities from the 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' to the public. In addition, we also provide a web aggregator that functions as a window to display the latest updates from the 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' member blogs'* (Interview with Achmad Zulfikar).

>*"Loenpia.net has a vision become Semarang's representative on the internet. Displays Semarang's features on the internet, as an entity that provide answers about Semarang on the internet, and educating the public about the internet"* (Interview with Budiyono).

Interaction and Cooperation

Both communities that represents group as a social unit at large, surely experiencing certain conflict. Usually these conflict among members of community are the constructive ones, regarding that both communities have a certain fundamental values maintaining good relationships among its members, as mentioned by the informant from 'Loenpia Dot Net' that mutual understanding, becomes key factor to interact. Whereas, each member, eventually develop friendship, even family bonds. Informants of 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' pointed out that the basic rules of the community members to interact is *'unggah-ungguh'* (manners in Javanese), and *'handarbeni'* (sense of belonging in Javanese), encouraging each members appreciating each other as a family, based on the principles of togetherness and sharing.

>*"The most important is, mutual understanding, in any kinds of matter"* (Interview with Mohammad Sani Suprayogi).

>*"Yes, we certainly have fundamental-mutually-agreed specific rules to maintain cohesiveness within the community, known as 'unggah-ungguh' or manners"* (Interview with Achmad Zulfikar).

Three words that can represent the meaning of community for each informant in the following interview excerpt is an illustration of the sense of belonging, as stated by informants towards 'Loenpia Dot Net' and 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' which become their 'home'.

>*"Kinship, togetherness, and mutual understanding, as well as sharing"* (Interview with Achmad Zulfikar).

>*"Family, companion, friend"* (Interview with Mohammad Sani Suprayogi).

Kurt Lewin's (1951) field theory of 'group dynamics' assumed that groups are more than the sum of their parts. Field theory premised on the principle of interactionism, which assumes that the behavior of people in groups is determined by the interaction of the person and the environment. The formula $B = f(P,E)$ summarizes this assumption. In a group context, this formula implies that the behavior (B) of group members is a function (f) of the interaction of their personal characteristics (P) with environmental factors (E), which include features of the group, the group members, and the situation. According to Lewin, whenever a group comes into existence, it becomes a unified system with emergent properties that not be fully understood by separate examination. Lewin noted that, "*The whole is greater than the sum of the parts,*" to groups (Forsyth, 2006).

As stated by Kurt Lewin, above, behavior (B) of each member of the community is a manifestation of personal character (P) function or role (*f*) from each members within the community that adapts to the community environment (E), consists of characters (rules) basic group, the group members, and the particular situation faced by these communities.

Fundamental rules such as mutual understanding, maintaining good relations, *'unggah-ungguh'* (manners in Javanese), and *'handarbeni'* (sense of belonging in Javanese) commonly understood and carried out by members of the group, eventually affect the way each member of the community enabling their personal character on one another or in certain situations. By the notion of mutual understanding, each member of the community who would like to keep bonded to the community, consequently, they will internalize values and fundamental rules developed in the community as part of their identities, as part of 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' and 'Komunitas Blogger Semarang Loenpia Dot Net.'

Sense of Community

Overall, according to, McMillan and Chavis (1986), 'Loenpia Dot Net' and 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' would fall under communities of interest. This findings corresponds with both communities founders that stated, members of both communities shared the same interest, which is blogging activity, and very much agree to become part of both communities, indirectly to stands as representation of Yogyakarta as hometown to 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja', and Semarang as hometown to 'Loenpia Dot Net'.

As communities, naturally, 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' and 'Loenpia Dot Net' would develop and maintain 'Sense of Community' as explained by McMillan and Chavis (1986). This particular 'Sense of Community' (SOC) defined as a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith the members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together. In this notion, SOC has four criterions:

a.	Feelings of membership: feelings of belonging to, and identifying with, the community.

Proven by the emergence and growth of *'handarbeni'* particular term widely known among Javanese, which roughly translated to 'sense of belonging', that become written rule that been consensually agreed by members of 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja'.

b.	Feelings of influence: feelings of having influence on, and being-influenced-by, the community.

Exemplified by statement from co-founder of 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja', that, *"…community members interact with each other and exchanging information with enthusiasm and mutual respect…"* (Interview with Ahmad Zulfikar).

Occasionally, both of communities held *'Kopi Darat'* which is a regular meet and greet event within community. Usually, this particular event functions as sharing session, as well as charity session, this event allow presents members of both communities influencing and be-influenced by fellow members and by the community itself.

c.   Integration and fulfillment of needs: feelings of being-supported by others in the community while also supporting them.

The third criteria is in accordance with founder 'Loenpia Dot Net' statement, *"when we established this community, it was marked by the establishment of our 'home', which is 'loenpia.net'. 'Loenpia.net' became our home, our joint property that we keep together, as a place to learn and grow. This particular house also became our identity"* (Interview with Budiyono).

It all started with mutual agreement to establish community together, side-by-side with fellow members. Whereas each member, contribute towards the development and growth of their 'home' which is their community.

d.   Shared emotional connection: feelings of relationships, shared history, and a 'spirit' of community.

With the passing time, member of each communities experienced certain sensation, which in turn grew stronger, as their commitment to the community develop much sturdier, the spirit of 'we'-ness get substantial, which in turn resolve as communality and shared identity. Supported with statement from co-founder of 'Loenpia Dot Net', summarized community roles for him, personally, by mentioning the community as, *"family, companion, friend"* (Interview with Mohammad Sani Suprayogi).

Conclusions

Informants of 'Komunitas Blogger Jogja', and 'Komunitas Blogger Semarang Loenpia Dot Net', indirectly, as a representation of Yogyakarta and Semarang in cyberspace, managed to portray 'individual persona' as the blog owner (blogger) and 'collective persona' as members of the bloggers community, carrying the role as 'excellent host' in the cyberspace, provides valuable information related to Yogyakarta and Semarang for netizens at large. Identity developed by members of the bloggers community indirectly affecting the 'output' of the group dynamics that are developed by each community correspond with the community character and nature.

'Komunitas Blogger Jogja' dan 'Loenpia Dot Net' has dual roles, as 'physical container' for bloggers, whereas community as a group, serves as a 'shelter' to internalize community values, develop good relations, encouraging bonds with the spirit sense of belonging to preserve community existence, and also performing 'collective persona' to represents Yogyakarta and Semarang as communities hometown. On the other hand, these bloggers community become an unifying unit, which provides 'fame and reputation' in cyberspace for its members, also as shelter to explore the 'individuals persona' based on displayed 'online profiles', both communities also accomodates validation for its members to develop competence in the cyberspace, as evidenced in the uploaded content on a personal blog or in the community blog page

This study put basic notion for 'group dynamics' research here and forth, by explaining 'group dynamics' within local perspective, attributing several local values, such as *'unggah-ungguh'* and *'handarbeni'*, which in turn, highlighting distinctive mark for almost every community established in Indonesia by Indonesian, and that mark is, 'communality'. Especially, community that built and developed around shared-interest. Naturally, technological evolution will take 'sense of community' within the community

itself to the whole new level, transforming shared interest, into shared-identity, into reputation, that could be expanded on to the next studies in 'group dynamics' discussion.

Acknowledgement

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