

CHAPTER SEVEN
NETWORKING STRATEGIES ACCORDING TO GENDER
AND
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF BLOG INTERACTION

7.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of networking strategies used by gender in a blog that was set-up by the researcher. The chapter begins by presenting the findings on gender participation in blog forums and disclosure of gender identity. This is followed by the networking strategies and participants' choice of strategies based on gender. Where relevant, the networking strategies identified are substantiated with findings from Questionnaire II and interviews. The chapter ends by proposing a general conceptual framework of blog interaction based on all the findings of this study.

7.1 Participation in Blog Issues According to Gender

This section presents the findings of gender participation in the discussion of blog issues categorized as national, social and gender topics. For each of the categories, all blog issues are tabulated to compare the total words contributed by the male and female participants for each category of the topics. For ease of presentation, the list of blog issues under each category is tabulated and ranked according to the highest number of words for each gender. This is followed by a discussion on each of the categories.

The first category that will be presented is participation of gender in blog issues categorized as gender topics because the participants posted the highest total number of words for this category. Blog issues under gender topics are the baffling differences among genders such as equal sharing of power between men and women in economy, gender equality and power struggle.

Table 7.1 below shows the number of words posted for blog issues under the category of gender topics.

Table 7.1: Number of Words on Gender Topics

FEMALE				MALE			
*R	Blog Issues	No. of Words	No. of Participants	R	Blog Issues	No. of Words	No. of Participants
1	Who should Pay on the First Date?	2889	20	1	The Beginning and the Ending	2243	11
2	The Beginning and the Ending	2711	13	2	Who should Pay on the First Date?	1470	13
3	Metro-Sexual Guys	2584	13	3	Metro-Sexual Guys	1381	9
4	To Be or Not to be	2228	14	4	Anybody for a House Husband!!!	1179	10
5	Girls should Make the First Move	2177	20	5	Battle of the Sexes	1148	5
6	Anybody for a House Husband!!!	2081	14	6	Beautiful People	893	9
7	Men Handbags	1930	16	7	To Be or Not to be	794	4
8	Battle of the Sexes	1791	10	8	Girls should Make the First Move	767	8
9	Think Before You Wed	1475	8	9	Men Handbags	686	9
10	Gender Equality	1015	7	10	Gender Equality	579	6
11	Beautiful People	969	7	11	Think Before You Wed	548	5
12	Should Housewives be Paid Salary?	231	2	12	Should Housewives be Paid Salary?	509	5
Total		22081 (64.4%)		Total		12197 (35.6%)	
GRAND TOTAL		34278 (100%)					

*R- Ranking according to number of words

As is seen in Table 7.1, gender topics generated 34278 words and in general, 64.4% (22081 words) out of the total words were from the female participants as compared to 35.6% (12197 words) from the male participants. This shows, the female participants posted more words than the male participants in the discussion of gender topics.

The ranking of the blog issues shows that the top three blog issues: *'Who should Pay on the First Date?'*, *'The Beginning and the Ending'*, and *'Metro-Sexual Guys'* drew the most participation from both the genders. It was probable that these blog issues were high in socio-emotional content that they attracted both the males and females to blog more on these blog issues.

It is interesting to note that the issue *'Should Housewives be Paid Salary?'* drew the least participation from both genders in this study. One would assume that the female gender would be more interested in this topic compared to the male gender and females would be ranked slightly higher than the males. Perhaps, for this particular group of female participants, *'Should Housewives be Paid Salary?'* was a non-issue for them at the time of this study.

Table 7.1 also shows that the females contributed more than 1000 words in 10 out of 12 blog issues in this category whereas the male participants contributed more than 1000 words for the top 5 blog issues. Hence, it is no surprise that the female participants contributed almost twice the number of words contributed by the males.

Next that will be presented are the blog issues categorized under social topics. Social topics are blog issues pertaining to problems faced by people such as issues on *'Mat Rempit (illegal bikers)'*, social obligation and respecting parents.

Table 7.2 below shows the number of words posted for blog issues under the category of social topics.

Table 7.2: Number of Words on Social Topics

FEMALE				MALE			
*R	Blog Issues	No. of Words	No. of Participants	R	Blog Issues	No. of Words	No. of Participants
1	Gay Marriage	1905	15	1	The “Hantu” [ghostly] Affair	1686	11
2	The “Hantu” [ghostly] Affair	1470	14	2	Black Metal	1533	11
3	Mat Rempit (Illegal Bikers)	1414	10	3	Gay Marriage	1467	10
4	Are Chatrooms and SMS Bane or Boon?	1355	7	4	What are the Kids Up to?	1324	5
5	Ban Mobile Phones in Schools	1243	8	5	Kid Violence	1225	10
6	Selfish	1128	11	7	What Feeling is This?	1125	12
7	What are the Kids Up to?	1041	5	8	Ban Mobile Phones in Schools	1002	11
8	What Feeling is This?	1035	9	6	Selfish	890	7
9	Dirty Habits	931	5	9	Cats and Dogs are all PETS!!!	812	6
10	Respect Aging Parents!	878	3	10	Mat Rempit	783	6
11	Kid Violence	776	6	11	Are Chatrooms and SMS Bane or Boon?	711	4
12	What is Happening to Our Moral Values?	755	6	12	What is Happening to Our Moral Values?	687	3
13	Cats and Dogs are all PETS!!!	677	4	13	Dirty Habits	415	4
14	Is it not Hypocrisy?	647	6	14	Is it not Hypocrisy?	379	3
15	Black Metal	351	3	15	Respect ‘Aging Parents!’	371	1
Total		15606 (51.9%)		Total		14410 (49.1%)	
GRAND TOTAL		30016 (100%)					

*R- Ranking according to number of words

As is seen in Table 7.2, social topics generated 30016 words. Unlike the blog issues categorized under gender topics, only the issue on ‘Gay Marriage’ and ‘The “Hantu” [ghostly] Affair’ are found to be similar among the top three blog issues for both genders. In facts, ‘Gay Marriage’ is ranked the highest for female participants (1905 words), but for the male participants ‘Gay Marriage’ is ranked third (1467 words). For the male participants, the blog issue ‘The “Hantu” [ghostly] Affair’ is ranked the highest (1686 words). The ranking

of the blog issues shows that '*Black Metal*' which focuses on the role of the government in banning black metal music interested more male participants and is ranked second. For the female participants, '*Black Metal*' is ranked the lowest (351 words). Perhaps, the issue '*Black Metal*' can be seen as a male orientated topic since, according to Tannen (1990) males and the females can have preferred topics.

However, the topic on illegal biker (*Mat Rempit*) is ranked the third highest for female participants (1414 words), whereas, it is ranked 10th for the males (783 words). This findings show that perhaps the female participants were more concerned with social issues during the time of study. The female participants also showed more concern for the topic '*Respect Aging Parents*' compared to male participants as there were only one participant who blogged on this issue. This too resonates Tannen's (1990) view that males and the females can have preferred topics.

Table 7.2 also shows that social topics generated 15606 words (51.9%) from the female participants and 14410 (48.1%) words from the male participants. This shows that both the male and the female participants, in this study, contributed almost equal number of words in the discussion of social topics.

Table 7.3 below shows the number of words posted for blog issues under the category of national topics. National topics are issues that concern national interest and they were 'hot topics' and relevant to day-to-day living and reflection on problems that plagued society.

Table 7.3: Number of Words on National Topics

FEMALE				MALE			
*R	Blog Issues	No. of Words	No of Participants	R	Blog Issues	No. of Words	No. of Participants
1	Equal Rights to All	3287	17	1	Equal Rights to All	1192	6
2	Sex Education	2798	18	2	What is Happening to Malaysia?	929	11
3	The Sprit of Merdeka	1663	11	3	Malaysian Identity	876	6
4	Malaysian Identity	1349	8	4	Sex Education	851	9
5	English a Malaysian Language	1264	8	5	Give Peace a Chance	745	6
6	What is Happening to Malaysia?	1054	11	6	English a Malaysian Language	644	6
7	Give Peace a Chance	1015	10	7	Bangsa Malaysia	616	8
8	Nuclear Power	489	2	8	Nuclear Power	510	7
9	Bangsa Malaysia	367	3	9	The Sprit of Merdeka	331	3
Total		13286 (66.5%)		Total		6694 (33.5%)	
TOTAL		19980 (100%)					

*R- Ranking according to number of words

Table 7.3 shows that a total of 19980 words were generated from national topics. In general, 66.5% (13286 words) out of the total words were from the female participants as compared to 33.5% (6694 words) from the male participants. This shows that the female participants posted almost twice the number of words than those posted by the male participants in the discussion of national topics.

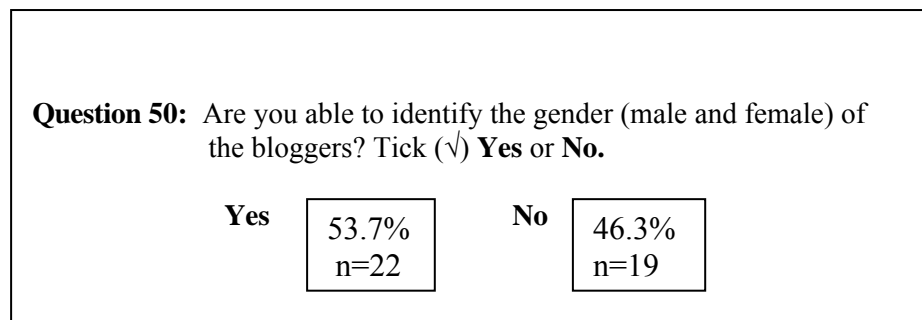
The ranking of the blog issues in Table 7.3 shows that the highest ranking of blog issue for both male and female participants is *'Equal Rights to All'*. However, the next two highest ranking are not similar. It should be noted that the third highest ranking for the females - *'The Sprit of Merdeka'* is ranked the lowest for the males. As seen in the table, the ranking of the blog issues does not show any particular order of interest among the genders.

Table 7.3 also shows that the females contributed more than 1000 words in seven out of 9 blog issues in this category whereas the male participants contributed more than 1000 words only on one blog issues. Hence, it is no surprise that the female participants contributed almost double the number of words contributed by the males.

In all three categories, it can be concluded that females wrote more than males in blog forums. This concurs with the findings of Nowson (2005) that women write more than men in blog forums.

7.2 Disclosure of Participants' Gender

This section presents the findings on how participants disclosed their gender identity in blog forums. In Question 50 of Questionnaire II, the participants were asked if they were able to identify the gender of the bloggers. The responses of the participants to Question 50 of the questionnaire are listed to ease discussion.



N=41

In response to Question 50, 53.7 % (N=41) of the participants indicated that they were able to identify the gender in blog forums. Based on the total responses, the participants indicated that there were three (3) different ways they could guess the gender of the other participants as shown below:

If 'Yes' tick (✓) how you were able to tell the gender (male and female) of the bloggers.

45.8% (n=22)

Through their nicknames

35.4% (n=17)

Through the views given by the bloggers

18.8% (n=9)

When they disclose information about themselves

N=48

The participants indicated that they were able to identify the gender of the participants through nicknames (45.8% n=22), through the views given by them (35.4% n=17) and information disclosed about themselves in their comments (18.8% n=9).

Participants were also interviewed to explore further the findings of Questionnaire II. In Question 12 of the interview, the participants were asked to elaborate how they knew the gender of the participants in the blog postings. As is seen in Extracts 1 – 3, the participants reported that they knew the gender of the participants based on their nicknames.

Extract 1

They use a nickname that we know it's a girl or a boy. . . .

(MB Interviewee 5 Lines: 188)

Extract 2

. . . **the nickname can tell you.** . . . girls like to use nicknames like playgirls

(FM Interviewee 6 Lines: 222 – 225)

Extract 3

The use of nicknames

(FK Interviewee 3 Lines: 112 – 113)

Additionally, as the researcher was aware of the participants' gender as revealed in Questionnaire I, the researcher was able to verify the authenticity of the participants' gender as revealed in the findings. The present study found that the participants disclosed their gender identity through the following ways.

- (a) by being gender specific
- (b) by indirectly disclosing gender

7.2.1 By Being Gender Specific

The findings of the study revealed that the participants in the study disclosed their gender:

- (i) by using real names
- (ii) by directly portraying their gender

In this study, the participants were free to choose a blogging name when they registered in the researcher's blog. The blog site would display their blogging names each time they posted their responses at the blog website. Thus, the names used by the participants served as the primary source of online identity for the participants. In this study, the participants were found to have used real names such as '*nazram*' and '*joe*' in blog forums. These names identified them as males by virtue of the fact that they are names given to males in the Malaysian culture. The data did not find female participants using real names in blog forums.

It was found in the data that the participants informed others of who they were. This seems to be a 'direct way' by which the participants disclosed their identity. This is displayed in Examples 1 - 4 below.

Example 1

if i'm a girl, i surely agree with Heaven, **.but i'm a boy**, so what i want to say. . . .
(MK21 B34:28-29)

Example 2

. . . I don't think its shameful for the girl to pay (**i'm a girl btw**)
(FM8 B19: 3)

Example 3

Even i as a girl, I think i agree. . . .
(FM16 B8:16)

Example 4

. . . **As a guy**, i hate to hear and listen to this humiliating stuff!
(MK26 B18: 90)

In Examples 1 - 4, the participants gave away their gender identity as a male or a female in the course of posting their comments. The data also revealed that participants appear deliberate in identifying themselves with a particular gender. This is seen in Example 5 below from a posting on the blog issue '*Anybody for a House Husband*'.

Example 5

. . . You all must remember that **we (man)** are stronger then women and *better* than women in any cases. Man think carefully about it.....?
(MK19 B17:124 – 126)

In Example 5, the use of the inclusive pronoun '*we*' shows that the participant was deliberate at identifying himself as a '*man*'. The data also revealed that blog participants disclosed their gender identity when they wanted to elicit responses from a particular gender. This is seen in Example 6 from a posting on the blog issue '*Beautiful People*'.

Example 6

Yeah. i mean **do we guys** always look at the physical beauty of a women.
Think about it how long can beauty last? 30 maybe 35
(MM11B4:71 72)

In Example 6 the participant appears to have disclosed his identity as a male with the expression ‘do we guys’ to elicit further comments from male participants on the issue that was discussed.

7.2.2 By Indirectly Disclosing Gender Identity

The data also revealed that the participants can appear unintentional and indirect when they disclosed their gender identity in the blog forums. The findings revealed that the participants in the study indirectly disclosed their gender identity:

- (i) by unintentional self-disclosure
- (ii) by using pseudonyms that reveal gender identity

The findings show, participants disclose their gender identity by unintentionally revealing their gender in the course of blog discussion. As an illustration refer to Example 7 Example 7 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Beautiful People*’.

Example 7

. . . I know inner beauty is important but i also want **my future wife** to be beautiful inside and outside
(MM12 B4:58 - 59)

In Example 7, the phrase “*my future wife*” indicates the participant was a male because it would be a man who would refer to ‘a wife’ Two other examples below illustrates that the participants were females. Examples 8 and 9 from the blog issue on ‘*Men Handbags*’.

Example 8

. . . i really dont mind if **my boyfriend** is wearing a handbag. . .
(FC17 B8:97)

Example 9

. . . i'm trying to imagine **my man** carry a colourful handbag wherever he goes, oh my God, i cant imagine that, cause **my man** refused to carry my orange handbag so it's impossible for him to carry any other pink or purple handbags.

(FC19 B8:163 – 166)

In Examples 8 and 9 the expressions '*my boyfriend*' and '*my man*' clearly indicate that the participants were females.

Additionally, the participants in this study used pseudonyms that reveal their gender identity. For example, the female participants in this study were found to use pseudonyms such as *pussycatdolls*, *playgurls* and *minahharker* which would immediately identify them as females. The male participants, on the other hand, chose pseudonyms such as *terunasejati*, *ensemfroggie* and *fullman* that would indicate them as males.

This study found that the participants in this study could identify the gender of others. In line with the transactional view of communication, it was possible to influence the manner by which the participants interact with one another.

7.3 Networking Strategies in Gender Topics

In this study, it was observed that both the male and female participants were able to share, confront, and discuss differing viewpoints in blog forums. Additionally, as online participants can hide their true identities such as their gender and ethnic group (Chester, 2004; Herring, 2001; Raymond, 2003), it can be expected for women to use male communicative styles online than in person. Additionally, as gender can influence the choice of language and how

people relate to others (Diane & Phil 2008; Kramsch, 1998), it was also possible for male and female participants to use certain interactive strategies and tactics more than the other.

The finding for this section is based on the participation in blog forums categorized under gender topics. As it was mentioned earlier that gender topics contain high socio-emotional content, it is believed that gender topics could attract individual response from the male and female participants. This study found the following set of gender-based networking strategies from the category of gender topics.

- (a) Stereotyping Strategy
- (b) Rapport Building Strategy
- (c) Solidarity Strategy
- (d) Direct Strategy

7.3.1 Stereotyping Strategy

According to Diana and Phil (2008), stereotyping are generalizations or assumptions that people make about the characteristics of all members of a group, based on an image about what people in that group are like. Thus, in stereotyping, people categorize people according to their perception which could influence what they say to the other (Diane & Phil, 2008 Tyler, 1999; Verderber & Verderber 2004; Devito, 2000). It was found in the data that the participants used the following tactics in this strategy:

- (a) by expressing the stereotypical roles of gender
- (b) by defending their stereotypical views
- (c) by quoting each others' viewpoint

Tactic 1: By expressing the stereotypical roles of gender

In using this tactic, the participants express the stereotypical roles of gender. In doing so, their perception reinforced the views given by others on the blog issues. The following examples illustrate this point.

Example 10

Men, as leaders in families should be responsible to have proper work for their family. . .

(FK25 B17:87)

Example 11

. . . a house husband is good as great. . . **a house husband can still be the leader of the family.** . .

(FC19 B17:206; 211)

Examples 10 – 11 are from the posting on the blog issue ‘*House Husband*’. In the examples, the participants seem to express the stereotypical role of men as the leaders of the family. It is possible, that these stereotypical views were based on their perception and worldview (Mulvaney, 1994, Maltz & Borker, 1982). However, the fact that the participants in Examples 10 – 11 expressed similar stereotypical roles of men reinforces the stereotypical view that man should be leaders. This is also illustrated in Examples 12a and 12b below.

Example 12a

nowadays **women are standing at the same level as men**..but what will happen if man stay at home to do the housewife chores?..then they will b called 'house husband'..hehehe.so weird right? **men are leaders** . . .

(FK21 B17:127-130)

Example 12b

. . . in this modern life, **women can stand at the same level with man** . . . we must remember, we can't change the reality what God has made us! . . . it is better for **men to become leaders.** . .

(FB13 B17:131-132)

As is seen in Example 12a, the stereotypical view that ‘*men are leaders*’, even when ‘*women are standing at the same level as men*’ reinforces the view of another participant in Example 12b.

Tactic 2: By defending their stereotypical views

The participants also appear to defend their stereotypical views by making statements in defense of their opinion. In doing so, the stereotypical view of the participant appears logical or believable. This is illustrated in Examples 13 and 14 from the postings on the blog issue ‘*Battle of the Sexes*’

Example 13

. . . i dont want my future wife to have muscles cause it is just a weird thing . . . **women are suppose to have a nice attitude like "sopan santun, lemah lembut"** *[polite and gentle] and etc..

*literal translation

(MK22 B18:122 – 123)

Example 14

. . . women cannot form muscles like men because they had this estrogen hormon in their body. this hormon involve in their well being, making them feminine, soft, gentle and more intrinsic than men. . . . **mother nature create women to be this way.** . . .

(FC19 B18:156 – 160)

In Example 13, participant MK22 viewed women to be soft and polite and therefore it was ‘*weird*’ for them to have muscles. Therefore by defending the stereotypical views that women should be ‘*polite and gentle*’ rather than to having well-built muscles appear to be logical and true. The view of the participant is further reinforced in Example 14 that women should be ‘*soft, gentle and more intrinsic than man*’ because that was what Mother Nature intended them to be. Therefore, by defending her opinion in Example 14, she appears to join the circle of stereotypical people who viewed women as the fairer gender who should be ‘*feminine*’ and not have any male physical attributes such as ‘*muscles*’. This is also illustrated

in the following examples from the postings on the blog issue ‘*Girls Should Make the First Move*’.

Example 15

For me, i think **guy should make the first move**. girls are ashamed to that! most of them are afraid to say how they feel. so it is the responsibility of the men to make the first move . . .

(FC16 B21:59-61)

Example 16

. . . **Guy should still make the first move** because they are leaders since years ago. .

(MB4 B21:97 – 98)

In Examples 15 and 16 the participants perceived that guys ‘*should make the first move*’ as girls were shy and ‘*afraid*’. The participants defended their stereotypical view that ‘*it was the responsibility of the men*’ because ‘*they are leaders*’. Thus by defending their opinions, the participants in Examples 15 and 16 appear logical and this can reinforce similar stereotypical views in blog forums.

Tactic 3: By quoting each others’ viewpoint

The data also revealed that the participants quoted each others' stereotypical view to support and substantiate their views. This could be seen as a way to strengthen the point given by others.

The following Examples 17 and 18 are from the postings on the blog issue ‘*House Husband*’.

Example 17

. . . This should not happen. **man as we all know is the leader in the family institution. man should lead, support his family and give the best to his family** . .

(FC17 B17:3-5)

Example 18

. . . **man as we all know, is the leader in our family instituion. man should lead, support his family and give the best to his family.** . .

(MB7 B17:9-10)

In Example 18, the participant seems to have quoted the exact viewpoint given by the participant in Example 17. By quoting each other, the participants appear to be in agreement with one another and this reinforces each other's stereotypical viewpoint.

The data also revealed that blog participants may also rephrase the expressions given by others to state a point. This is reflected in the following examples from the postings on the blog issue '*Battle of the Sexes*'.

Example 19

Women are suppose to have their own **character as a 'woman' that is given by the creator to nabi [prophet] adam and hawa [eve]** . . .

(MM8 B18:52-54)

Example 20

. . . Normally, we know that women are the **weaker species and that has been proven since the time of adam and eve** . . .

(MK28 B18:86-87)

As is seen in Example 20, the participant rephrased the *expression 'character as a 'woman' . . . given by the creator to nabi [prophet] adam and hawa [eve]'* in Example 19 to '*weaker species . . . since the time of adam and eve*'. Thus by referring to the view points of others by rephrasing the expressions, the participants in this study appear to be in agreement and reinforce each other's stereotypical view.

7.3.2 Rapport Building Strategy

This is the second type of social networking strategy revealed in the data. Coates (1996), Holmes (1995) and Tannen (1990) argue that women are more collaborative than men in gender-based communication. In this study the collaborative acts are referred to as rapport

building strategy because this strategy appears to build rapport when the participants network socially. From the analysis, it was found that the participants used rapport building strategy:

- (a) by expressing their sensitivity to others
- (b) by asking questions
- (c) by apologising
- (d) by expressing agreement and support
- (e) by advising
- (f) by hedging

Tactic 1: By expressing their sensitivity to others

The data revealed that when the participants used expressions to illustrate their sensitivity to the feeling of others, they appear to be concerned for the feelings of others in blog forums. The following example from a posting on the blog issue '*The Beginning and the Ending*' illustrates the case.

Example 21

. . . women are too weak, but this case was show us..that man are most weak then women.**sorry if i hurt someone out there** . . .

(FM2:B32:195-198)

In Example 21 the participant seems to apologize '*to someone out there*' for implying that men were weak in love affairs and relationships. The use of apology shows that the participant was sensitive to the feelings of others in the blog. This could be seen as restoring harmony in blog forums and possibly promote rapport among blog participants.

This idea is also illustrated in Example 22 from a posting on the blog issue *'Beautiful People'*.

Example 22

. . . would you want a handicaped partner plus a very ugly face to become your wife/husband? No bah.. **i know its a little rude to say this** but i believe everyone of us would wish to have a better partner than what i have . . .

(FC17 B4:44-46)

In Example 22, the use of the expression *'i know its a little rude to say this'* gives the idea that the participant was sensitive to the feelings of others. Thus, this too could be seen as an rapport building strategy. This idea is also illustrated in Example 23 below from a posting on the blog issue *'The Beginning and the Ending (of a relationship)'*.

Example 23

. . . We actually don't know what really happen between him and his girlfriend..maybe the girl was a **pisau cukur** [*razor: a metaphor used to describe a woman who lives off a man*] or **'perempuan sundal'** **(morally loose woman)* and the boy found out.....who knows right? . . . **Hope you understand what I mean.**

(MC14 B32:210-212; 217)

In Example 23, the expression *'pisau cukur [razor: a metaphor used to describe a woman who lives off a man]'* and *'perempuan sundal [morally loose woman]'* appear to be crude remarks about women that are socially unacceptable in the Malaysian context. Therefore, the participant adopted a softer approach at the end of his harsh comment that he hoped others would *'understand what I mean'*. This gives the impression that the participant was sensitive to the feelings of others, and hence hoped his words were not taken out of context.

Tactic 2: By asking questions

It was found in gender studies that women tend to ask more questions than men. Studies have shown that women tend to be more collaborative by asking question (Tannen, 1990; Croates, 19996; Holmes, 1995). In this study, as the researcher knew the gender of the participants, it

was revealed that the participants ask questions that appear to bring about rapport among blog participants. By directing questions to each other, the participants appear to be bound to answer the questions and thus could possibly bring about understanding among them. This is illustrated in Example 24a – 24c from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Battle of the Sexes*’.

Example 24a

. . . i believe in future the gab between women and men will come to narrow and **women and men will have the equality** and work side by side in all fields....**what do you girls have to say?** . . .

(MC17 B18:35-37)

Example 24b

Everybody have equal right. So it is up to the women whether they want to build their muscles and body shape or not.

(FC16 B18:48-49)

Example 24c

. . . we heard a lot that what man can do woman cannot? **woman should be given equal rights**, the point is not what they can or not do, it's about being respected at doing something extraordinary . . .

(FM7 B18:75-77)

In Example 24a, the participant directed his question to the ‘*girls*’ in the blog forum on his remarks made on gender equality. This could also be seen as a rapport building strategy because the participant appears to be interested to elicit opinions from the opposite gender. Examples 24b and 24c appear to be the responses given by the female participants to the question in Example 24a. In expressing their agreement the participants in Examples 24b and 24c appear to share similar views with the participant in Example 24a. This is also illustrated in Example 25a and 25b below from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Think Before You Wed*’.

Example 25a

. . . i think marrying someone older bukannya salah pun [*its not wrong*]....if god dah tentukan!!!! [*if god has decided*] how come kita nak tolak,, [*how are we to say no*] **tell me guys????what are we suppose to do??** for me marrying older man is not a mistake lebih2 lagi [*moreover*] if u love that person!!!

(FM11 B34:101-104)

Example 25b

don't do this gurls... Hmm ya for me younger girls are not suppose to marry with an old man. It is not wrong but, it is not good . . .

(MK26 B34:122-123)

As is seen in Example 25a, the participant seems to direct her questions ‘*tell me guys???? what are we suppose to do??*’ on the issues raised in the blog. Thus by asking questions, the participant appear to be interested in eliciting opinion from others and build rapport with them in the blog forums. Therefore, in expressing his advice the participants in Example 26b appears to share similar views with the participant in Example 25a.

Tactic 3: By apologising

According to Mullholland (1993), an apology could serve to rectify a situation when a person was at fault and it could serve to normalize future interaction. This is illustrated in Example 26 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*The Beginning and the Ending (of a relationship)*’.

Example 26

. . . O no! **I was wrong!!** haha "hmm **okay i was wrong a little bit about what i mention before. So sorry..**Thanks to playgurl..Huh . . .

(MK26 B32:310-312)

In Example 26, the participant apologized to the nicknamed participant ‘*playgurl*’ and admitted that he was ‘*wrong*’ in the earlier posting. This could be seen as a tactic to rectify a fault and be in rapport with the people in the blog forum. The data also revealed that the participants also apologized for making ‘rude’ remarks. Example 27a – 27c are from the postings on the blog issue ‘*The Beginning and the Ending (of a relationship)*’.

Example 27a

. . . everybody say that women are more emotional than man...but actualy **men are more controlled by their emotions..**

(FM7 B32:182-183)

Example 27b

. . . hm....i agree with Taurus, **actually man are more emotional** compared to women.

(FM2 B32:194-195)

Example 27c

oo no..please..i totally DISAGREE to both of you **Taurus and pingupink. HUH..how can both of you judge man just because of this???** tooo cruel oo. . . . From here i know both of you are girls..HUH..Wake up la.If **both of you talk like that, both of you will not gonna "KAWIN" [get married]** dat..huh! **Sorry to say that...bye**

(MK26 B32:293-297)

As is seen in the examples, the two participants nicknamed ‘*Taurus*’ (Example 27a) and ‘*pingupink*’ (Example 27b) viewed that men were controlled by emotions. In Example 27c, the participant indicated that the nicknamed participants ‘*Taurus*’ and ‘*pingupink*’ ‘*will not gonna “KAWIN” [get married]*’ if they ‘*talk like that*’. The expression ‘*will not gonna KAWIN [get married]*’ appears rude and therefore, the participant was quick to apologize as an acknowledgment of his fault for making such rude remarks. This can also be seen as an rapport building strategy among the participants. This idea is also illustrated in Example 28 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Should Housewives be Paid Salary?*’. The following posting is a respond to the nicknamed participants ‘*theskems, Fullman, n budakcluster*’ who argued that housewives should not be paid a salary.

Example 28

. . . I totally disagree with **theskems, Fullman, n budakcluster**.. Why did all of u say that housewives shouldn't be paid salary???. . . the answer is what what will happen if u suddently die in the a car crash???. Won't ur wife suffer for **ur pemergian [death]?? Sori to say dat lah** but its true, rite? U expect ur wife to bring up ur kids merempat d tepi jalan (*by the road side*)???. . .

(FK25 B31:41-42; 43 – 45)

In Example 28, the participant argued that housewives should be paid a salary and seems to question the participants ‘*Won't ur wife suffer for ur [your] pemergian [death]*’. Talking about death is taboo in the Malaysian culture and the use of the expression ‘*pemergian [death]*’

appears 'rude'. Therefore, the apology 'Sori to say dat lah' could serve to overcome any resentment among blog members for using such 'rude' terms. This too can be seen as a rapport building tactic.

Tactic 4: By expressing agreement

The data seems to show that expressions of agreement appear to bring about rapport among blog participant. This usually comes in the form of endorsing what was said by others. This is seen in the Examples 29 and 30.

Example 29

. . . i somehow agree with BEST_SHOTA when he/she said "parent should be more open to their children" . . .

(FB10 B32:263 – 264)

Example 30

. . . Like **narnia** said..youth nowadays watch too much tv that can influence their mind and automaticaly they do the same thing like what they have seen . . .

(FB11 B32:283 - 284)

Examples 29 and 30 are from the postings on the blog issue 'The Beginning and the Ending'. In Examples 29 and 30, the participants offered expressions of agreement to the nicknamed participant 'BEST_SHOTA' and 'narnia'. This shows that expressions of agreement and support could be seen as an rapport building strategy among the participants. This is also illustrated in Examples 31 and 32 from the postings on the blog issue 'Girls Should Make the First Move'.

Example 31

I agree with Guesswho that who ever can make the first move either girls or boys . . .

(FM2 B21:126)

Example 32

I think I agree with **Guesswho and blackcode**. Anybody can make the first move. it doesn't matter la . . .

(FM14 B21:184-185)

In Examples 31 and 32 the participants expressed their agreement with the nicknamed participants and this can be seen as a rapport building tactic.

Tactic 5: By advising

It was found in the data that the participants advised each other on the issues discussed in the blog. Example 33 is a posting on the blog issue '*Beautiful People*'

Example 33

Budak subang I really don't understand if it is that important for a person to be beautiful??. . . **Choose the one that can "temankan" u [accompany you] to the end of life not to the end of the semester or half way.. Beauty on the outside doesn't matter but what really important is the inner beauty. . .**

FK25 B4:92; 97 – 101)

In Example 33, the participants directed her advice to a specific participant nicknamed '*Budak_Subang*' on his choice of wife. This establishes a link between the participants and this could be seen as a rapport building strategy. This is further illustrated in Examples 34a and 34b from the postings on the blog issue '*What is Happening to Our Moral Values?*'.

Example 34a

. . . My father is very good person . . . his friend . . . stole my father's car . . . and he couldn't be detected . . . **Still my father didn't report it to police** because I can say the person is my father's close friend . . .

(MK22 B36:19-27)

Example 34b

i feel sorry to hear that Heaven...**why don't you self force your father to make a police report?** . . .

(FK23 B36:35 – 37)

The participants in Examples 34a and 34b appear to have established a link by the advice given by the participant in 34b. This could also be seen as a rapport building tactic.

Tactic 6: By hedging

The data revealed that participants hedged when they gave their views on the blog issues. The use of hedging devices in gender-based interactions is proposed in gender-based studies (Holmes, 1995; Coates, 1996; Herring, 2000). Example 35 is a posting on the blog issue '*The Beginning and the Ending (of a relationship)*'.

Example 35

. . . Hey boys if a girl wants to end a relationship just accept it..**Maybe it is much better** if both of you end the relationship..In this world there are many girl not just your girlfriend . . .

(FC17 B32:232-234)

In Example 35, the expression '*Maybe it is much better*' seem to suggest that the participant was hedging her opinion to soften the impact of her proposition. A possible reason seems to be that ending a relationship was a sensitive matter and therefore it must be dealt with tact. This idea is also illustrated in Example 36 from a posting on the blog issue '*House Husband*'.

Example 36

. . . husband should be the leader in the house and his wife should serve the husband. **i'm not saying** that wife should be treated as a servant **but** it is their job to do all the house work . . .

(MM10 B17:23-25)

In Example 36, the participant pointed out that '*wife should serve the husband*'. However, he was quick to hedge that '*I'm not saying...but*' as a way of softening the impact of his earlier strong words. Thus by hedging, the views of the participant could be seen more acceptable by others in the discussion of the blog issue. This could also be seen as an rapport building tactic.

This is also illustrated in Example 37 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*The Beginning and the Ending (of a relationship)*’.

Example 37

. . . Even experts also say that [*women are emotional*]. **COme on la gurls**..From here i know both of you are girls..HUH..**Wake up la** . . .

(MK26 B32:295-296)

In Example 37 the participant seems to have used the ‘*lah*’ particle (e.g. ‘*COme on la gurls*’ and ‘*wake up la*’) to soften the impact of his proposition. In doing so, the participant could be seen as a collaborative person. This is also illustrated in Example 38 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*The Beginning and the Ending (of a relationship)*’.

Example 38

. . . Think first, before doing something 'sinfull' like dat. . . for **d guys, come on la**...don't do that to ur **girlfriend**...**be nice** with them...

(FK23 B32:228-230)

In Example 38, the participant used the ‘*la*’ particle to soften the impact of her appeal that ‘guys’ should ‘*be nice*’ to their ‘*girlfriend*’. This too could be seen as a rapport building tactic among the participants in blog forums.

7.3.3 Solidarity Strategy

Solidarity strategy as its name implies could bind participants as a team. The present study found that participants seem to interact in a manner that could bring solidarity among blog members.

The data revealed that the participants used the following tactics for this strategy:

- (a) by sharing similar viewpoints
- (b) by quoting each others' viewpoints
- (c) by asking questions
- (d) by using 'we know' and 'you know'

Tactic1: By sharing similar viewpoints

The following two examples are excerpts from the responses to the blog issue '*House Husband*'. In Examples 39 and 40, the participants shared similar viewpoints that '*men can be househusbands*'. Therefore, by sharing similar viewpoints the participants appear to be in solidarity with each other as blog members.

Example 39

. . . why cant men do all the house work...teaching them to take careof the house and kids . . . i agree with that **men can be a househusband** (MC16 B17:17-18; 21)

Example 40

. . . women usually are the housewife and men go to work to earn money for their families.but nowadays, **men can also be house husbands** . . . (FC17 B17:110-112)

The idea as stated above is also illustrated in Examples 41 and 42 below. In the examples, the participants shared their agreement that the '*boundary*' between males and females was lessening. Thus, by sharing an agreement, the participants appear to be in solidarity with each other.

Example 41

The new millenia brings forth new revelations . . . **The boundary between male and female are slowly thinning these days** . . . (MM9 B21:33 – 37)

Example 42

In my opinion, who ever can make the first move either girls or boys. **In this changing world girls and boys are becoming the same** . . . (FK21B21:111-112)

In the following Examples 43 - 45, the participants shared similar viewpoints that men were leaders in a family by making references to their cultural beliefs (*e.g. Islam*). Thus by making reference to their cultural beliefs, it looks like the participants who shared similar culture were in solidarity with one another.

Example 43

hai i do agree with you ancoyz **in Islam** men have to give all the material to his family to the best of his ability. As we know, men is the leader in a family organization This is clear! . . .

(MB2 B17:12-14)

Example 44

. . . but we must remember, we can't change the reality what God has made us! **In Islam** it is better for men to become leaders . . .

(FB13 B17:132-134)

Example 45

. . . **In islam men** have to give all material needs to his family to the best of his ability. We all know that man is the leader in a family instituion. . .

(FM5 B17:39-41)

Tactic 2: By quoting each other's viewpoint

It was also revealed in the data that the participants appear to be in solidarity when they quoted each other's viewpoints. As revealed in the following three Examples 46 - 48, the participant in Examples 47 and 48 quoted the Malay proverb used by a participant nicknamed '*blackcode*' in Example 46.

Example 46

The boy is totally wrong to do such a thing he must calm down and think positively.. If the girl wants to break, just break-up who know maybe it is the best thing for both of them.. ***"Kumbang bukan seekor, Bunga bukan sekuntum"**..Relax man...

(MC14 B32:212-215)

Example 47

. . . Just like what **blackcode** said, ***"bunga bukan sekuntum, kumbang bukan seekor"**. . .

(FC17 B32:235)

Example 48

. . . threatening the girl, just b'coz d girl wanted to end d relationship....what???!
come on laa....there are more other girls in this world...like what people always say,
*"**bunga bukan sekuntum,kumbang bukan seekor**" . . .

(FK23 B32:225 – 228)

*literal translation only: *there isn't a beetle, there isn't a flower*

It was also revealed in the data that participants quoted each other's viewpoint by rephrasing the ideas as it is illustrated in the following examples.

Example 49

. . . i think the youth nowadays **watch too much tv**. they get influenced by it and when they think that they are facing the same situation like the one that they **saw on tv**, they tend to do the same thing, trying on the same solution. . .

(FB10 B32:2-5)

Example 50

. . . i second the idea that narniafreak state that this violence is **in the media** where they show you everything without knowing the positive and negative side of what they show in the cause of entertaining people. . .

(MC17 B32:32-35)

In Example 50, the participant rephrased the words of the participant in Example 49 by rephrasing the word 'tv' with 'media'. This could be seen as a tactic in which the participants were in agreement with one another and this too could promote solidarity among blog participants.

Tactic 3: By asking questions

As expressions of solidarity reduce FTA and is positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978), this study found that participants asked questions to elicit expressions of support on the views given by them. According to Mulholland (1993), when....Examples 51 and 52 are from the postings on the blog issue 'Metro-Sexual Guys'.

Example 51

. . . Grooming for a guy is important, I do not mean guy need to wear make-up that is nonsense, if for artists yes they need that stuff but for ordinary people like us no... absolutly no.. Girls what is your comment about this?... **do you agree with me?** . . .
(MK22 B26:29 – 32)

Example 52

. . . **I want to ask this question to a girl, do you like a guy who look messy or "selekeh" [not groomed] ?** . . .
(MK22 B26:20 – 21)

As is seen in Example 51, the participant directed a question directed to 'girls' whether they agreed that men were not suppose to apply make-up like women. In Example 52 the participant directed a question to girls if they liked guys who are unkempt. This could be seen as a way of seeking solidarity with other blog members. This is also illustrated in Example 53 from a posting on the blog issue 'What is happening to Malaysia'

Example 53

. . . Its better to use the money to build new buildings which can give more comfort to the people in the country. **Do you agree with me?**
(MK20 B9:161 – 163)

In online forums, when questions are asked at the end a forum, they appear to seek or elicit views from others (Davis & Brewers, 1997). In example 53, the participant seems to direct the question to all blog participants as a way of seeking agreement with others and thus the question could be seen as a way he sought others to be in solidarity with him.

Tactic 4: By using 'we know' and 'you know'

According to Mohd Ali (2000) and Holmes (1995), the use of 'you know' could invoke the prior or background knowledge shared by participants. The data seems to impress that the participants used 'we know' and 'you know' because they shared common knowledge on the

blog issues that were discussed. Thus, when participants shared a common background they appear to be in solidarity with one another. Examples 54 and 55 from the blog issue '*Anybody for a House Husband*' reflect this.

Example 54

. . . Normally, **we know** . . . women are always being cheated and raped by guys all over the world . . .

(MK28 B18:86-90)

Example 55

In reality, a husband work and the wife stays at home. **As we know**, today woman are more educated and earns more higher than the husband, so he can decide to stay at home and do everything that a wife does . . .

(MC14 B17:62-64)

It was found in the data that the expression '*we know*' seems to impress on others that they shared the common knowledge with the participants. Therefore, this could also be seen as a solidarity strategy. The data revealed that the expression '*we know*' has its variations such as '*we all know*' and '*all of you know*'. This could be seen Examples 56 and 57 below. Nevertheless, it was found in the data the expressions have the same meaning as 'we know'.

Example 56

This should not happen. man as **we all know** is the leader in the family institution. man should lead, support his family and give the best to his family. . .

(FC17 B17:4-5)

Example 57

Women are suppose to have their own character as a 'woman' that is given by the creator to nabi adam and hawa. Feminity is important to women, that is one of way to atract guys **all of you know** that . . .

(MM8 B18:52-54)

7.3.4 Direct Strategy

Gender studies have shown that men were more direct than women (Tannen, 1990; Croates, 19996; Holmes, 1995). However in online interaction, it was possible for women to be more

direct than men as women could decide not to expose their gender identity. In this study, it was found that the participants used the following tactics in the direct strategy:

- (a) by asking ‘blunt’ questions
- (b) by making assumptions
- (c) by making sexist remarks
- (d) by making ‘blunt’ remark

Tactic: By asking ‘blunt’ questions

In using this strategy, the blog participants questioned others on their views given on the blog issues. In the use of ‘blunt’ questions in this study the participants did not conceal their viewpoints. Example 58 is from the responses to the blog issue ‘*Think Before You Wed*’. The blog issue is about young women who wanted to marry old and widowed men.

Example 58

alright, **do you girls like second hand parts or brand new and original parts [?]** . . .
(MC18 B34:10-11)

As is seen in Example 58 the participant asked a ‘blunt’ question if girls liked a ‘*second hand parts, or brand new and original parts*’ when they got married. In reference to the blog issue, ‘*second hand parts*’ seem to indicate the used body parts of the old and widowed man such as his genital organs. The use of blunt questions is also illustrated in Examples 59 and 60 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Battle of the Sexes*’ and ‘*Gender Equality*’ respectively.

Example 59

. . . **Do you woman like men to see you as a sex toy?**

(FB12 B18:149-151)

Example 60

. . . **Don't you think men should stop playing their sperm card?** Its time for the society to change their perception of equality for men and women . . .

(FM8 B13:43-44)

In Example 59, the question directed to the female participants, if they liked to be seen as sex toys appears direct in the Malaysian context. Similarly, in Example 60, the question whether '*men should stop playing their sperm card?*' appears blunt.

Tactic 2: By making assumptions

It was also revealed in the data that the participants appear to make assumptions as a form of direct strategy. This is illustrated in Examples 61 and 62 from a posting on the blog issue '*Think Before You Wed*' and '*Battle of the Sexes*' respectively.

Example 61

. . . ok think about this gurls [girls], you will not be satisfied if you marry with old man out there because most of them have health difficulties especially in sex. **You will not be "puas" [satisfied] gurls..heheh . . .**

(MK26 B34:123-125)

Example 62

. . . GuyZ like to see women dancing around rather than seeing them controlling the government or being a leader coz guyz think that **MaLe** should be the leader..and the women should follow them as leaders..**FoOL!**

(FM4 B18:179 - 182)

In Example 61, the participant seems to make an assumption that girls will not be satisfied if they married old men. Satisfaction with reference made on the blog issue seems to refer to 'sexual satisfaction'. This is a direct tactic because 'sexual satisfaction' is a personal matter and to discuss this in blog forums can be seen as a direct strategy. Similarly in Example 62, the participant used the expression 'FoOL!' to tick off '*guys*' as the participant assumed that

'guys' liked to see women dancing instead of becoming leaders. This could also be seen as a direct strategy. This use of direct strategy is also illustrated in Examples 64 and 65 from the postings on the blog issues '*Think before You Wed*'.

Example 63

. . . if you marry **older men.. he will die first..** it will only be a short marriage by then..

(MC18 B34:12)

Example 64

. . . and **men don't like 2nd hand items..**so think about it lah.. it's your own life...

(MC18 B34:13)

In Example 63, the participant made the assumption that in the event a young woman married an old man '*he will die first*'. This could also be seen as a direct tactic as to assume someone to die in the Malaysian context is considered rude. In Example 64, the term '*2nd hand items*' seems to point out to women who were probably old, and no longer virgins. Therefore by assuming men do not like '*2nd hand items*', is a direct strategy.

Tactic 3: By making sexist remarks

This study also found that the participants made sexist remarks in the course of discussing the blog issues. Example 65 is from a posting on the blog issue '*Who should Pay on the "First Date"*'.

Example 65

. . . why must guys pay for all that? in fact that the number of guys in the world are decreasing. in contrast, the no. of girl in the world is increasing dramatically. **So what do we get from this is that girls should take are good care of their boyfriends or else they can find new one easily.** Protect the endangered species. do it today or you'll lose it all. take it or leave it but if you leave it you will suffer for the rest of your life.... heheheheh

(MC17 B19:98 - 103)

In the example, the participant made a sexist remark that girls should take care of their boyfriends because guys could find new ones easily. This could be seen as a sexist remark that could offend others. In addition, the participant in Example 65 went on to say that if girls left their boyfriends, they would ‘*suffer for the rest of their lives*’. This is also a direct sexist remark because it implies that girls were emotionally depended on their boyfriends. This view is also illustrated in Example 66 from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Men Handbags*’.

Example 66

. . . please, to **men out there, control your macho, masculinity, and make a lot of awek** [*girlfriend*] . . .

(MC17 B8:88 - 89)

Example 66 could be seen as a sexist remark because the participant seems to indicate that men should ‘*make a lot of awek*’ [*girlfriend*] with their ‘*macho*’ and ‘*masculinity*’. The fact that the participant mentioned that guys should attract more girls, this can be seen as a sexist remark.

Example 67 is from a posting on the blog issue ‘*Think Before You Wed*’. In the example, the participant seems to imply that old women should not marry young guys but young guys could marry old women because of their sexual prowess. This too could be seen as a direct sexual remark.

Example 67

. . . However it is different if a young guy get married with an old gurl..Most of Young Guys will always be "OK" in sex . . .

(MK26 B34:126-128)

Tactic 4: By making ‘blunt’ remark

The data found that blog participants made ‘blunt’ or frank remark in the direct strategy. Examples 68 and 69 are from the postings on the blog issue ‘*The Beginning and the Ending*’.

Example 68

Why guys nowadays can do such things like that...emmm....**guys** learn to end a relationship in a good way laa...don't be a **dumb** to do such things...threatening the girl, just b'coz d girl wanted to end d relationship. . .

(FK23 B32:224-223)

Example 69

. . . we might forget to balanced our heart when we are really in love, but **guys**, please dont act like a **childish**.. even it's really hard to accept the fact of losing him or her, we should act in a mature way . . .

(FC16 B32:146 - 148)

In Examples 68 and 69, the participants appear to pass a remark that 'guys' should not be 'dumb' and 'childish'. Though these are frank remarks, they appear blunt and direct. This is also illustrated in Examples 70 and 71 from the postings on the blog issue '*Girls should Make the First Move*'.

Example 70

These days, it's not wether you've got the "**balls**" to do it, it's wether you've got the "guts" [*bravery*] to do it. The boundary between male and female are slowly thinning these days. To me, it's ok for a girl to make the first move . . .

(MM9 B21:33-35)

Example 71

. . . if the guy ask a girl out he should pay for the meal. It is shameful if the guy does not pay *"**apa la nama ja laki, bikin malu**" [*is he a man, it's shameful*]. . .

(FB9 B19:198-200)

*literal translation only because it is cultural embedded.

In Example 70, the 'blunt' remark could be seen with the use of the expression 'balls' to indicate the guts needed by guys in '*making the first move*'. The term 'balls' seems to refer to the sexual organs of males, without which they may lose their 'vitality'. This too can be seen as blunt and direct sexual remarks. In Example 71, the use of 'blunt' remark as a direct tactic is seen in the expression "*apa la nama ja laki, bikin malu [is he a man, it's shameful]*".

7.4 Choice of Networking Strategies by Gender

This section presents the frequencies of the gender-based networking strategies found in the blog postings. As the female participants in this study have produced more words compared to the males in the national, social and gender blog topics, the analysis for this section is based on not more than 20% differences on the number of words posted in blog forums by the male and the female participants. Table 7.4 shows the blog issues and number of words used in this section of analysis.

Table 7.4: Data Analysis for Networking Strategies Based on Gender

No.	FEMALE		MALE	
	Blog Issues	No. of Words	Blog Issues	No. of Words
1	What is Happening to Malaysia?	1054	What is Happening to Malaysia?	929
2	Nuclear Power	489	Nuclear Power	510
3	The “Hantu” [ghostly] Affair	1470	The “Hantu” [ghostly] Affair	1686
4	Ban Mobile Phones in Schools	1243	Ban Mobile Phones in Schools	1002
5	What are the Kids Up to?	1041	What are the Kids Up to?	1324
6	What Feeling is This?	1035	What Feeling is This?	1125
7	Cats and Dogs are all PETS!!!	677	Cats and Dogs are all PETS!!!	812
8	What is Happening to Our Moral Values?	755	What is Happening to Our Moral Values?	687
9	The Beginning and the Ending	2711	The Beginning and the Ending	2243
10	Battle of the Sexes	1791	Battle of the Sexes	1148
11	Beautiful People	969	Beautiful People	893
	Total	13235	Total	12359

As seen in Table 7.4, data for the analysis on the choice of networking strategies is from 13235 and 12359 words posted in blog forums by the female and the male participants respectively. It was decided to include, the topic ‘Battle of the Sexes’ though the number of words posted exceeded the 20% difference as mentioned earlier, as it was a gender topic. Therefore, the

analysis hopes to reflect the overall gender-based strategies used by the participants in this study. Table 7.5 shows the frequency of stereotyping strategy found in the data.

Table 7.5: Frequency of Stereotyping Strategy

	Stereotyping Strategy								Total	
	Malay		Bajau		**Kdz-Du		Chinese		F	M
	*F	*M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
Total F/M	5	4	4	0	5	6	5	6	16	19
***Fre %	14.3	11.4	11.4	0	14.3	17.1	14.3	17.1	45.7	54.3
Total (%)	9 (25.7)		4 (11.4)		11 (31.4)		11 (31.4)		35 (100)	

*Female/Male **Kadazan-Dusun

***Frequency of Stereotyping Strategy in Percentage

As is seen in Table 7.5, the analysis found a total of 35 stereotyping strategies in the data and they are mostly used by the male (54.3%) and the female (45.7%) participants. In terms of ethnic groups, it was found the strategy was almost equally used by the Malay, Chinese and Kadazan-Dusun participants. Table 7.6 presents the frequency of rapport building strategy found in the data.

Table 7.6: Frequency of Rapport Building Strategy

	Rapport Building Strategy								Total	
	Malay		Bajau		**Kdz-Du		Chinese		F	M
	*F	*M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
Total F/M	6	5	6	3	7	11	4	5	23	24
*Fre %	12.8	10.6	12.8	6.4	14.9	23.4	8.5	10.6	48.9	51.1
Total (%)	11 (23.4)		9 (19.1)		18 (38.3)		9 (19.1)		47 (100)	

*Female/Male **Kadazan-Dusun

*Fre- Frequency of Rapport Building Strategy

As is seen in Table 7.6, the analysis found a total of 47 rapport building strategies in the data and they are almost equally used both by the female (48.9%) and the male participants (51.1%). Table 7.6, also shows that rapport building strategy is almost equally distributed among the Malay (23.4%), Bajau (19.1%) and Chinese (19.1%) participants. Table 7.7 shows the frequency of solidarity strategy found in the data.

Table 7.7: Frequency of Solidarity Strategy

	Solidarity Strategy								Total	
	Malay		Bajau		**Kdz-Du		Chinese		F	M
	*F	*M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
Total F/M	8	5	5	2	5	6	4	6	22	19
*Fre %	19.6	12.2	12.2	4.9	12.2	14.6	9.7	14.6	53.7	43.3
Total (%)	13 (31.7)		7 (17.1)		11 (26.8)		10 (24.4)		41 (100%)	

*Female/Male **Kadazan-Dusun

*Fre - Frequency of Solidarity Strategy

As is shown in Table 7.7, the analysis found a total of 41 solidarity strategies in the data and they are found to be mostly used by the female participants (53.7%) than the male participants (43.3%). The use of solidarity strategy is almost equally distributed among the Malay (31.1%), the Kadazan-Dusun (26.8) and the Chinese (23.4%) participants. Table 7.8 presents the frequency of direct strategy found in the data.

Table 7.8: Frequency of Direct Strategy

	Direct Strategy								Total	
	Malay		Bajau		**Kdz-Du		Chinese		F	M
	*F	*M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
Total F/M	7	3	4	1	5	6	6	7	22	17
*Fre %	17.9	7.6	10.3	2.5	12.8	15.4	15.4	17.9	56.4	43.6
Total (%)	10 (25.6)		5 (12.8)		11 (28.2)		13 (33.3)		39 (100)	

*Female/Male **Kadazan-Dusun

*Fre - Frequency of Direct Strategy

As is seen in Table 78, the analysis found a total of 39 direct strategies in the data and they are used more by the female participants (56.4%) than the male participants (45.6%).

In terms of ethnic groups, this strategy is almost equally distributed among the Malay (25.6%), Kadazan-Dusun (28.2%) and Chinese (33.3%). Table 7.9 is the summary of the distribution of the gender-based strategies among the ethnic groups as found in the data.

Table 7.9: Distribution of Choice of Strategies among the Ethnic Groups

	Gender-Based Strategies								Total	
	Malay		Bajau		**Kdz-Du		Chinese		F	M
	*F	*M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
Total F/M	26	17	19	6	22	29	19	24	83	79
*Dis %	16.0	10.5	11.7	3.7	13.6	17.9	11.7	14.8	51.2	48.8
Total (%)	43 (26.5)		25 (15.4)		51 (31.5)		43 (26.5)		162 (100)	

*Female/Male **Kadazan-Dusun

*Dis - Distribution of Direct Strategy

As seen in Table 7.9, the analysis found a total of 162 gender based strategies in the data. These strategies were almost equally used by the female participants (51.2%) and the male participants (48.8%). In terms of ethnic groups, the strategies were almost equally distributed among the Chinese, Kadazan-Dusun and the Malay participants.

This study suggests that in the discussion of blog issues the use of gender-based strategies may not be predominantly used by a particular gender. For example, the views of that Taanen (1990) that boys and girls have their own communicative styles may not be apparent in CMC. Besides, girls cannot be expected to be more collaborative while boys are expected to be more direct in CMC. This study concurs with the results of the study by Herring (1994) that

women and men can use different interactive styles in CMC but these styles are not exclusively used by women or men. In this study CMC has enabled the male and female participants to share, confront, and discuss differing viewpoints which allows students to engage to partake in blog forum discourse

Additionally, as Lakoff (1975) and Holmes (1995) state that in face-to-face interaction, the language used by men and women is a depiction of what is expected of them in society or community norms, online participants do not need to conform to what expected of them as identity is not stable in CMC. As the female participants in this study, were have found to have used more direct strategy, Example 72 from the blog postings '*Are Chatrooms and SMS Boon or Bane?*' could give a possible reason for the phenomena.

Example 72

i know one girl in my class who is very shy and reserved in class but acts like a totally different person in chatrooms.. **u see these kind of people feels that they are safe because there is some kind of imaginary protective wall to communicate with others..** let me give u an example.. when u wear a mask or a maskot costume, u wont feel shy to go jumping and clowning around in front of people(i know cause i used to arrange ghost houses at my school) . . .

(MC18 B16:96-1101)

As is seen in the above example, the participant claimed of knowing a girl who acted differently in chatrooms. The participant claimed that '*these kind of people feels that they are safe because there is some kind of imaginary protective wall to communicate with others*'. This seems to imply that it was possible for female participants to use more direct strategy in online interactions than they did in face-to-face interaction.

7.5 Conceptual Framework of Blog Interaction

This is the second of the two sections of Chapter Seven. It seeks to propose the conceptual framework of blog interaction emerged from the analysis of data. The chapter begins by revisiting the concept of a discourse community and the theories that are used in the analysis of the data. The final part of the section presents the figurative representation of the conceptual framework of blog interaction that emerged out of this study.

7.5.1 Blog Members as a Discourse Community

The blog discourse community is activated when its members discuss and post views in blog forums. In fact, it is by discussing the blog issues that a particular blog discourse community can take shape and generate blog interactive practices. This study found that, as members of a discourse community, blog members use appropriate social networking strategies and tactics. And when the expectation of using appropriate social networking strategies and tactics is violated, existing blog members can serve as gatekeepers (see Chapter Five).

Membership in the blog discourse community is a matter of choice. This study found that blog members can choose not to be part of the blog discourse community by not adhering to the implicit rules set by members of the community. Though these participants can continue to blog in the manner they wish (*e.g. raising sensitive issues and using foul language*), they may not be seen as members of the blog discourse community. In fact, these participants could be reprimanded for being insensitive to the members who make up the discourse community.

7.5.2 Components of Virtual Blog Discourse Community

As it was mentioned in Chapter Two, the transactional process model of human communication is characterized by the interdependencies of the component parts of the communication system. This study identified at least eleven components of communication in a blog discourse community. They are:

- social presence
- channel
- context
- Noise
- blogger/blog owner
- blog issues
- blog forum
- feedback posting
- field of experience
- gatekeepers

Social presence refers to the feeling of the presence of others in the mediated environment. In this study, *social presence* enabled the participants in this study to sense or to feel the presence of others. For example, it was found, that blog members greeted each other as though they felt the presence of others. Social presence promoted interactivity and it appears to compel blog participants to suit their interactive practices to the *context* of different ethnic groups.

The *channel* to engage in the blog forums is the written symbols that are posted in the internet with the aid of a computer. The message is transmitted to blog members through the typed messages in blog forums.

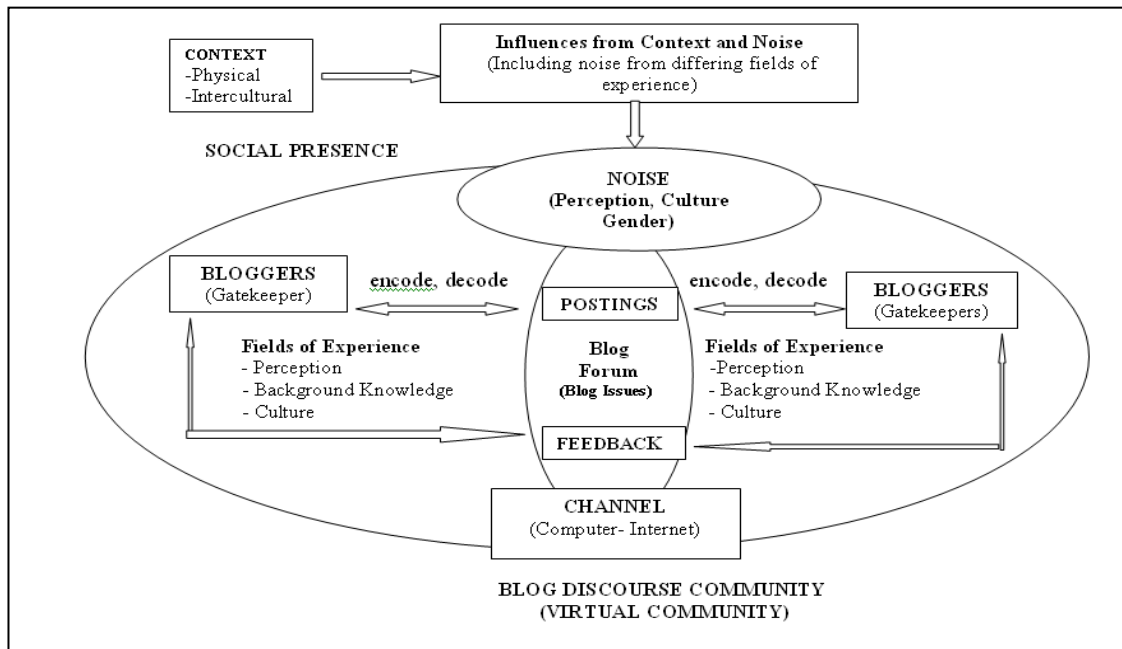
Context refers to the setting of the blog forums. As blog forums are text-based communication, the physical context of the blog forums trigger blog members to communicate more than what is made possible in the forums. For example, it was found that blog members come up with emoticons and unconventional use of punctuation marks to communicate more than what was possible in the physical context of blog forums. Additionally, blog members also come up with interactive strategies suitable to the context of other members in the blog forums.

The transactional process model of communication recognizes *noise* to be present in interpersonal communication due to the differing *fields of experience* between communicators. In this study, noise comes in the form of gender, culture and perception differences which can influence discussions in blog forums. Additionally, there was also physical noise that prevents the message from being clearly received by bloggers - spelling mistakes, interruptions of Internet service.

Blog owner owns the blog and more often than not, the blog owner updates his/her blog with his/her personal thoughts. The personal thoughts of the blog owner are the *blog issues*. *Blog issues* keep the website 'alive' because *bloggers* visit the blog forums to read the blog issues and the comments of other bloggers as well as to post their own views. In this study as the blog owner, chose not to take part in blog forums and to serve as *a gatekeeper*, discussion in blog forums were among bloggers. *Bloggers* in this study seem to monitor their own language and serve as *gatekeepers*. Therefore, bloggers seem to play a critical role at controlling the blog interactive behaviors.

Blog forums are the virtual space where an individual posts his/her thoughts and ideas. This is the space where bloggers read and leave their comments. In this study, it was found that over time blog members generate social networking practices that fostered camaraderie and intercultural interaction. Hence, a blog discourse community takes shape. This concurs with the views of Herring (2004) that when online users interact on a regular basis, they leave textual clues for researchers to shed light on their interactive behaviours.

Feedback postings are the responses bloggers receive to blog postings. The feedback indicates to the author how his/her message in a posting is understood. Therefore, in this study, blog members seem to comment on the blog issues based on the feedback postings. Blog members use both formal and informal language in the blog forums. A diagrammatical representation of the interplay among the component parts in the blog discourse community is represented in Figure 7.1.



Adapted from: Adler and Towne in Tyler, (1999:20).

Figure 7.1: Interplay among the components in the Blog Discourse Community

Figure 7.1 shows the interplay among the components that make up a blog discourse community. The discourse community is activated when bloggers are engaged in blog forums through blog postings and feedback messages. In this study, it was found that bloggers serve as gatekeepers and they appear to expect others to exhibit interactive practices considered appropriate in the blog forums.

7.5.3 Figurative Representation of Blog Interaction Framework

The finding of this study shows that blog interaction is based on the principles shown in Figure 7.2. As is seen in Figure 7.2, the blog interaction is based on social presence which influences interactivity among blog members that brings about social networking strategies.

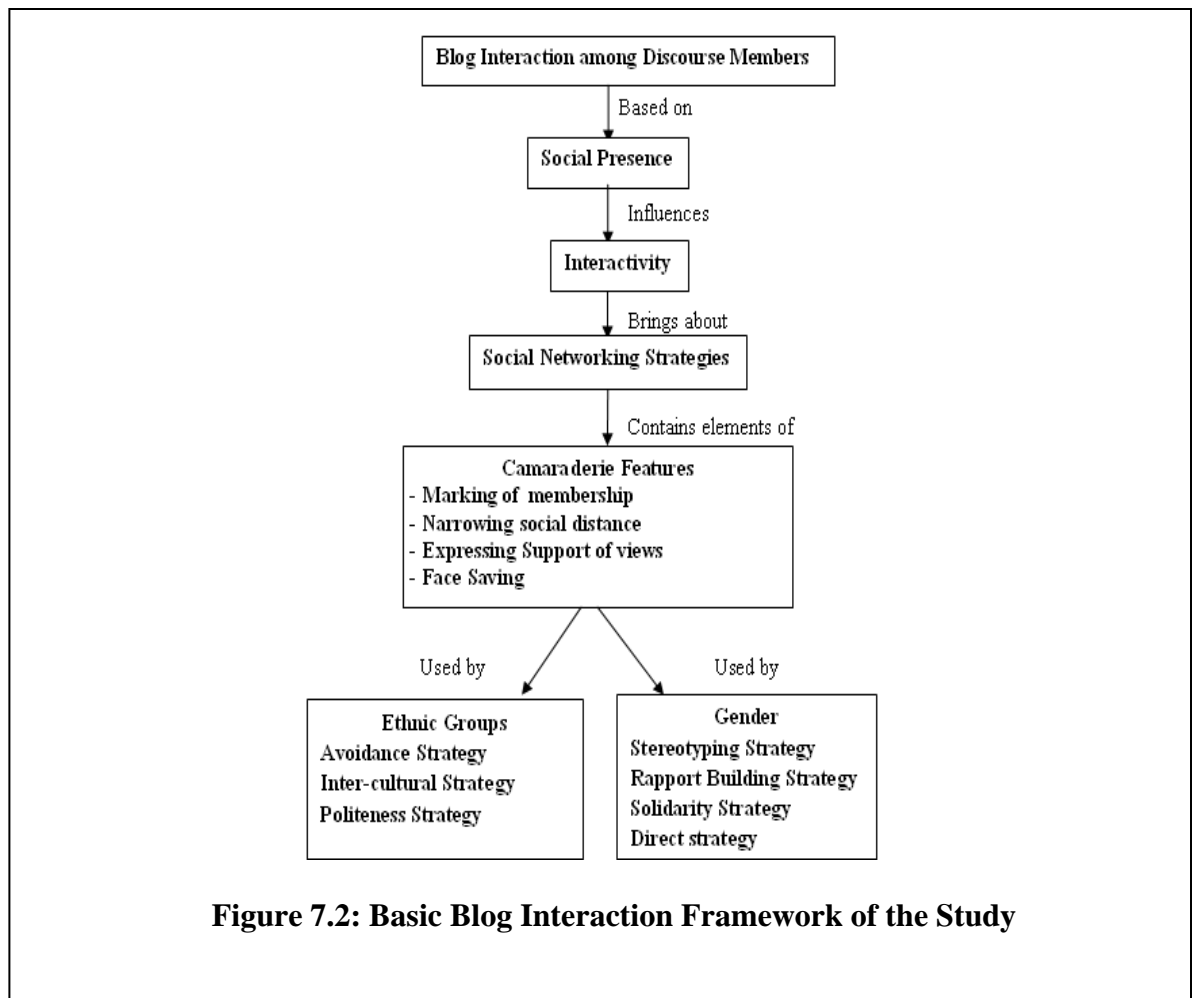


Figure 7.2: Basic Blog Interaction Framework of the Study

This study identified camaraderie tactics such as marking blog participants as members of a blog discourse community and narrowing the social distance among blog participants. The social networking strategies are used by the different ethnic groups and genders in the form of avoidance strategy, inter-cultural strategy, politeness strategy, stereotyping strategy, rapport building strategy, solidarity strategy and direct strategy.

7.6 Summary

This study found that the participants discussed the gender topics with a set of social networking strategies. A summary of the gender-based social networking strategies and the various tactics as found in the data is shown in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10: Summary of Choice of Social Networking Strategies by Gender

Gender-Based Strategies	Tactics
Stereotyping Strategy	by expressing the stereotypical roles of gender by defending their stereotypical views by quoting each others' viewpoint
Rapport Building Strategy	by expressing their sensitivity to others by asking questions by apologising by expressing agreement and support by advising by hedging
Solidarity Strategy	by sharing similar viewpoints by quoting each others' viewpoints by asking questions by using 'we know' and 'you know'
Direct Strategy	by asking 'blunt' questions by making assumptions by making sexist remarks by making 'blunt' remark

As is seen in Table 7.10, this study found there were at least four types of gender-based strategies used by the participants in the discussion of gender topics. The present study found that social networking strategies in the discussion of gender topics were mostly used by the female participants. In terms of ethnic groups it was found that the social networking strategies were almost equally distributed among the Malays, Kadazan-Dusuns and the Chinese. This study found the least number of gender-based strategies used by the Bajau participants.

The underlying theoretical assumptions of social presence theory and speech act theory together with the transaction view of human communication put forward the notion of a blog discourse community, and how interaction is facilitated in blog forums that consisted of participants from various ethnic groups and different genders. Using the arguments of Swales' (1990), discourse community, the participants in this study are seen as blog members who adhered to the collective practices in blog forums.