



## CHAIR-WRITING; SEMANTIC RECONSTRUCTION OF CHAIR-WRITING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE: A CASE STUDY OF PAYAM NOOR SAQEZ UNIVERSITY

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### Abstract

Chair-Writing has become more and more prevalent in academic environments, intensifying in recent decades. Chair-Writing has become a form of social anomaly and has shaped various forms of impressionism. The present study utilizes Filed Theory to understand the conditions, interactions and consequences of chair-writing in the classrooms of Payam Noor Saqez University. For the purpose of present study, and for the theoretical saturation method, chair-writing content analysis was used and in-depth interview with 58 chair-writing students was performed by sampling method. Data collection was coded and analyzed in terms of concepts, major legal categories. According to the findings of the study, the majority of chair-writing students are in the age group 18-22 with 32.8%, men with 55.2%, single men with 67.2%, unemployed with 72.4%, humanities group with 67.2% and those medium socio-economic base with 55.2%. Interviews with chair-writing students showed that the subjects, i.e. chair-writers turned to writing on the chairs to respond to "livelihood stress", "social relationship disorder", and "university problems". "Lack of legal prohibition at the university" served as facilitating conditions and "influence of friends" as grounds for intervention. Students experience and comprehend chair-writing as "communicating with others", "critical tools", "new risk communication channel", "hidden practices", "fun tools", "cost-less tools" and "hidden resistance". The subjects view "awareness", "chair-as-a-medium" and "covert resistance" as positive consequences of and "economic harm" and "inappropriate academic manifestation" as negative consequences of chair-writing.

**Keywords:** Char-writing, Student, Communication Channel, Field Theory, Chair as a Medium, Legal Prohibition.

### Introduction

Humans have, over time, for a variety of reasons tended to write on instruments, especially stones, in caves or in archaeological sites, and "inscriptions on caves and ancient artifacts in present-day conditions show how people lived and interacted in ancient times" (Zandi, 2014). In every historical period, certain factors have been involved in this, and in the era of regimes changes, the occurrence of revolutions, and the invasion of aliens, writing slogans on the walls to express opposition was common" (Mohammadi Webabai, 2015). In accordance with the social, political, economic and cultural conditions prevailing in society, actors have applied such manners as graffiti and chair-writing to express and interpret actions.

Chair-writing in the academic space tells of a new paradigm of collective action, that is chair-writing is to represent the meaning of the actions and meanings of the actors that are appropriate to their goals and objectives. Chair-writing is an intertwined, non-standardized, unregulated action as an act that makes an irrational, meaningful, emotional, and media-based use of the highly exchangeable cultural innovation, i.e., chairs, and has obvious and covert functions and consequences.

In today's complex and stressful world, social actors act as culture makers in the face of the social world, and their action has specific consequences. Tampering with chairs and their consequent depreciation impose huge costs on the scientific community. Writings on chairs, in addition to creating a non-beautiful face in classrooms, provides damage to the students' understanding. Signs, pictures, sentences, and words written on chairs, around boards, on doors, in desks, etc. could in many cases, engage the reader's mind and provide them with learning questions that will pressure them while learning. This new collective action is important because it not only informs the emergence of new trends in individuals, but also signals a change in the cultural reserve and is a meaningful symbolism and



manifestation of the work of the chair-writers. Frequent chair-writing over time, in addition to damaging public facilities, damaging academic space equipment, imposing high economic costs on the scientific community, has increased the importance of dealing with actors, and the consequences of chair-writing has brought about increased motivations and intentions of the actors, the actions of the actors, and in-depth processing.

The present study seeks to understand the semantic system of chair-writing actors in order to extract a contextual field theory by using qualitative methods, identifying the conditions involved in chair writing, the reasons behind this inappropriate action, and the effects and consequences of chair-writing. So that measures are made available for this challenge in the academic community because this important issue in the academic community has been deprived of serious consideration.

Kowsari (2010) concludes with a semiotic study of graffiti in Iran as follows. In large cities like Tehran, Shiraz, and Mashhad, most of this graffiti art has political themes and social functions. In his view, graffiti represents culture. It is the youth who have a critical character and are suppressed by formal structures.

The results of Maghsoudi and Bani Fatemeh's research (2004) on the walls of Kerman's Shahid Bahonar University classroom through content analysis indicated that among the literary and social concepts, love was most frequent and then the relationship between the two sexes, educational issues like cheating and criticizing professors were ranked next.

According to research by Mohsen Tabrizi (2000), writing and engraving on the walls of public institutions, on the seats of city buses, and writing all kinds of memorabilia on the walls and pillars and ancient and historical places are signs of vandalism.

Bagheri Banjar and Heshmati (2011) have expressed views on wall-writing, door-to-door writing and WCs and maintained that these writings have included: "Political issues (slogan against government, slogan against governmental persons), sexual subjects (man and woman porn, sexual body images, illegal sexual relations), numbers (figures, hours, dates, telephone numbers, days of the week), miscellaneous (memorabilia, signatures, names), advertisements (ads for body fitness, Goldquest, among other things), ethnicity (ethnocentrism, negation of other ethnicity), jokes and bad words, and country (interest in a city or neighborhood), etc.

Balali et al. (2013) concluded that cheating and writing mementos was the first priority of vandalism behavior at Hamadan Azad University and Azad University. Romance and ethnic norms were in the next ranks and many behaviors were a response to one's frustration and failure in life, job and social future.

Taheri Kia and Rezaea (2013) with the study of Iranian graffiti have come to the conclusion that graffiti has the characteristic of resisting the formal structures of urban space appropriation and is a means of expressing the graffiti writers' views.

Chair-writing has been considered as destructive behavior in most researches, considering the pathological and positivist frameworks and the actors' interpretations of the writing practice. In the present study, according to the non-positive paradigm, that is, social constructionism, Blumer and Mead's commentators' views have been used to interpret actors' practices about their actions, namely, chair writing.

According to Blumer, in modern societies that are filled with interactions, situations usually arise where individuals' interactions are not pre-regulated or standardized (Jalipour and Mohammadi, 2015). Blumer believes that knowledge of society requires knowledge of the creator's interpretations, and humans interact with them in terms of the meaning of the objects, and in order to understand them, one must penetrate qualitatively and deliberately into the systems of common meanings of individuals (Crype, 2017). One's perception of an object and its inferential meaning affect how the thought, design, and concept he has in order to accomplish the goals through social action (Ashley and Orenstein, 2004). According to Mead, any action involves the process of interpreting the meaning of things and situations from the point of view of individuals, then acting according to the meanings assigned to them (Bryman, 2010). The meaningful process is not arbitrary but based on pre-existing concepts and concepts with meanings added by the ancients to culture. Mead and Blumer, as predecessors of Social Constructionism, speak of two kinds



of non-symbolic interaction and symbolic interaction (Tavassoli, 2017). People's interpretations of others and various objects are either varied or repetitive, and in new interpretations, actors face a new situation (confrontation with new things) or a changed semantic system, and new interpretations follow two acts of conversation with others (speech) and action with others (practice). During a conversation, two live interactions take place with the reciprocal interactions delayed.

Chair-writing actors face a delayed-imaginary interaction during a reciprocal interaction, and write meaningful material on the chair. In the process of action, they also interpret, select, and make meaning in the selection of the unconventional tools, as different writing involves interpretation of meaningful signifiers.

In symbolic interactionism, chair-writing actors use a tool to present themselves to others, sometimes by explicitly inserting their name, they show "their explicit presentation", or by not inserting their names, they reveal the anonymity or non-disclosure of the action. In the process of action, mentioning the name reveals 'the subjective me', and lack of which reveals anonymous 'the subjective me'.

**Figure (1) Conceptual Framework**

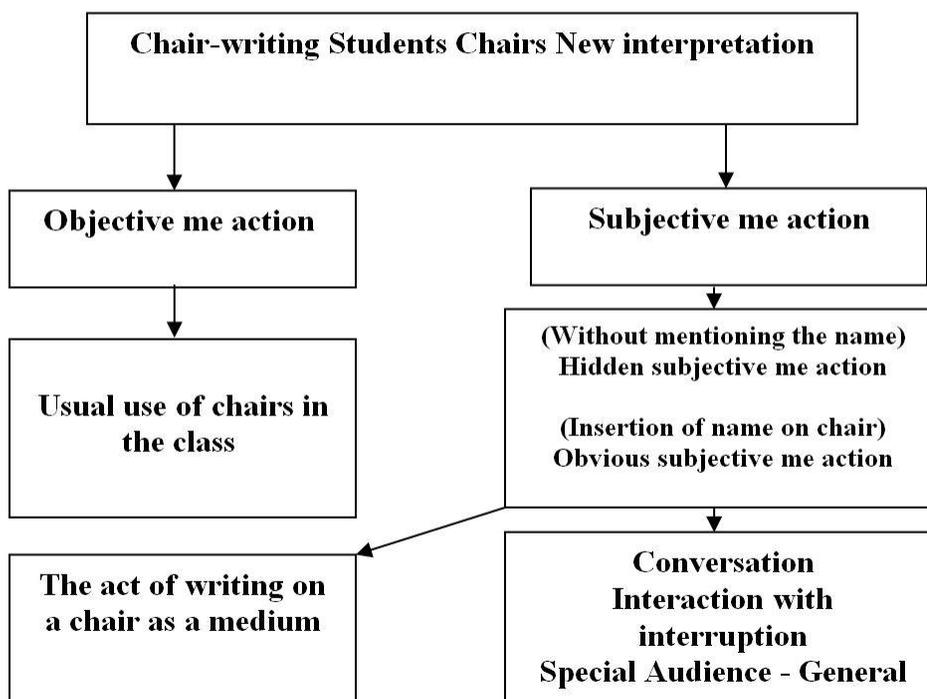


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

According to the theoretical model (Figure 1), if the actors' interpretations of chair-writing remain the same, it could be as usual, and the functioning was just a tool for classroom work. But new interpretations of the nature of the role of the chair have given rise to new acts. During the action process, in addition to the act of chair-writing, there could



be a delayed interaction with two audiences. Chair-writers have the concern of "delivering the message to" and in front of a general audience, the concern of "delivering the message".

### Research Methodology

The present study seeks to extract from the data collected in a systematic and analytical way the "Field Theory", one of the ways of conducting qualitative research. Due to the applicability of the research and the researcher's familiarity with the environment and the ability to interact deeply with the chair-writing actors, the ideographic or unobtrusive method was used. The theoretical sampling method and the interviewers were selected based on research questions and theoretical sensitivity. Researchers selected respondents based on the researcher's knowledge of the study community and relied on two criteria of experience of chair-writing and transfer of this experience to other chair writers (Snowball method). The content analysis method was analyzed using explicit and quantitative content of 983 chairs. After examining the chair writings, the entries appeared in 4 axes (economic, social, political and cultural). In this study, students with experience in chair-writing were used and analyzed based on 58 interviews.

### Research Findings

In the present method, in order to meet the requirement of maximum differences in sampling, the students interviewed were from different educational backgrounds. In the field of research, given the academic center's property damage by the chair-writing and the avoidance of fear and conservatism and the negative positions in the interview with the chair writers, the questions were raised indirectly.

According to the findings of Table (1), the majority of chair-writing students were men with 55.2%, two age groups of 18-22 years with 32.8% and age group of 22-27 years with 22.5%, single people with 67.2%, unemployed with 72.4%, educational group in humanities constituted 67.2% and most of the chair-writing actors were in the medium socioeconomic base (55.2%).

Table 1  
 Frequency Distribution of Chair-Writing Students

Variable	Class	Frequency	%
Sex	Woman	26	44.8
	Men	32	55.2
Age	18-22	19	32.8
	23-27	13	22.5
	28-32	11	18.9
	33-37	6	10.3
	38-42	6	10.3
	43 and higher	3	5.2
Marriage status	Single	39	67.2
	Married	16	27.6
	Divorced	3	5.2
Socio-economic status	High	11	18.9
	Medium	32	55.2
	Lower	15	25.9
Employment status	Employed	16	27.6
	Unemployed	42	72.4
Educational Course	Humanities	39	67.2
	Basic sciences	13	22.4
	Technical-engineering	4	6.9
	Agriculture	2	3.5



### Chair-Writing Areas

According to the theory of filed, where the process and structure are inextricably linked, "the underlying structures are the context in which the interaction takes place" (Strauss & Carbin, 2016).

In the present study, in order to answer questions about the context, conditions, or reasons for chair writing from the perspective of chair-writing students, and identifying structures in post-extraction actors' experience, classifying categories and coding data related to expressions uttered by students, and the concepts are grouped into five general axes as in Table (2).

Table 2  
 Chair-Writing Areas

Categories	Axial categories	Type of categories
Lack of legal prohibition in the academic environment	Lack of legal prohibition in the academic environment	Underlying
Livelihoods problems, unemployment, inflation, poverty	Economic pressure	Causal
Chair-writing under the influence of friends	Influence of friends	Intervening conditions
Unhealthy relationships, hypocrisy, pretense, deceit, dishonesty	Dysfunctional social relations	Causal
Education, finance, welfare	Academic problems	Causal

#### Lack of legal prohibition in the academic environment

Some who were themselves part-time or permanent chair-writers had a dual sense of chair-writing, and tended to encounter unwritten and written chairs in the classroom. They were complaining about the lack of law and custom to prohibit chair-writing, finding it to be effective in chair writing. According to chair-writers: The lack of law in the academic space for writing on the chair and the indifference of the community and even of students in college has made everyone indifferent; in the present study, the absence of legal prohibitions was identified as facilitating conditions.

#### Economical pressure

Chair-writers interpreted economic pressure as one of the most important factors in releasing the pressures of poverty, unemployment, inadequate parental rights, unemployment, university tuition, lack of tuition fees, and so on, as effective on chair-writing.

Chair writers are unanimous that the heavy pressures and stresses of the living constraints on the mind lead them to discharge the feelings through the act of chair-writing.

#### Influence of friends

Actors interpret the influence of friends. Many chair-writers consider stimulation and stirs by friends to be effective in promoting effective writing. Apart from friend-influenced chair-writers, writing memoirs and the like was identified as interfering conditions as they were not motivated by friends.

#### Dysfunction of social relations



Chair-writers have recognized the lack of deep and healthy social relationships in its various forms (family, public space, youth relations, nation-state relations, etc.) and have suffered from inappropriate social relationships. Interacting with others for lack of honesty and intimacy, hypocrisy, pretense, etc. have deprived them of healthy communication and communication networks which is quite effective enough for the actors to express them selves satisfactorily. For this relational disorder, people symbolically depict the traumas of their social relationships on the chairs, the fantasy of their relationships being fantastically mapped out, and the chairs are transformed into messaging tools to heal wounds from healthy social relationships.

#### University problems

Given the governance of the university's distance education system, actors are facing problems such as: education (textbooks, exams, professors, classroom programs, libraries, specific subject areas, online classroom facilities, libraries, etc.), finance (unemployment, tuition, employment loans, and scientific work) and welfare issues (clinic, health insurance, catering service, cultural and sports club, student traffic services, leisure/ pool/ green space, recreational camps, etc.) as effective problems leading them to writing on chairs.

#### Experience and understanding of chair-writing

In order to find out what interpreters have done with this style of writing, the categories were coded in six axes, the results of which are presented in Table 3:

Table 3  
Experience and understanding of chair writing

Categories	Axial categories
Disseminating data, changing the nature of the chair, enlightenment, organized chair writing	New communication channel
Need to connect with others and get attention, rebuilding social capital	Communication and Expression
Fun and entertainment	The fun tool
Non-confrontational talks, anonymous and trustworthy	Covert action
Conversation	No cost tools
Writing notes and past memories	Critical Tools

#### New communication channel

Chair-writers are very pleased with the cost of building a new communication channel, which means that the chairs and the media are expensive.

#### A means for communication and expression

The dissatisfaction of the actors with their social relationships has reinforced their sense of need for warm, sincere, deep, sincere, open-minded relationships. By writing and transferring words or sentences to the audience, they will be able to reveal their inner thoughts and social capital.

#### A fun tool

Recreation and entertainment are the needs of everyone. Transferring messages is one of the features of entertainment in popular culture (Deflower, 2014). Students find the easiest and least costly type of daily entertainment to write meanings on a chair.

#### Covert action

When action in society is arranged so that actors are satisfied with the institutionalized patterns of action, agency becomes regularized and satisfied. But in the absence of such mechanisms, "non-institutionalized" mechanisms



occur (Giddens,2018). When the costs of action are tolerable, actors tend to act overtly, and if they incur heavy financial costs, they see the chair-writing as an appropriate tool for anonymous actions.

#### No cost tools

The most common type of writing on the chair is taking notes, cheating on a chair especially during class, and students used a chair to remind them of past memories and to convey a message and cheat as they did not want to use paper and textbooks.

#### Tool of criticism

This strategy is in response to the limitations of the academic space. Student active in chair-writing consider this style of writing to be a safe and anonymous way to reflect on students' problems at the university.

#### **The effects and consequences of chair-writing**

After discovering and describing the conditions and interactions of chair-writing by students, the terms and effects of chair-writing activity are analyzed (Table 4).

Table 4:  
Chair Writing Effects and Outcomes

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Major categories</b>
Damage to the economy of the scientific community	Economic Injury
Inappropriate effect on the scientific structure of the country	Inappropriate effect on academic space
Influence, Enlightenment	Hidden Resistance
Raising awareness and understanding of university problems	Awareness raising
Chair-writing as a medium, connecting students and executives	Chair-writing as a medium

#### Economic loss

Almost all of the interviewees considered damage to the science-related economy as a result of destroying chairs to be an outcome of chair-writing, but their assessment was different, with chair-writers describing the damage as positive and leveraging pressure on academics.

#### Inappropriate effect on academic space

Chair-writing in addition to the destruction of public property indicates the inattention or disapproval of actors to customary academic or community rules and regulations; chair-writing actors were concerned about the inadequacy of chair-writing in the eyes of viewers and readers due to the importance of maintaining the sanctity of the scientific structure.

#### Hidden resistance

Chair-writers believe that the reasons behind the writing process have been to build a limited safe and secure opportunity to criticize the problems of the university and to express the university discomforts in pursuit of their goals.

#### Awareness-raising

Chair writers regard one of the results of their actions as raising public awareness, and acknowledge that writing on the chair will make readers think and that they will be aware of the adversity of the academic space as they read it.



### Chair-writing as a medium

Chair-writing students believe that by writing on a chair, its nature changes, making it separated from the mainstream media and evolving into an informing media.

### **Conclusion**

Chair-writing students have come up with new interpretations of the social world, the role and nature of the chair, and the implications for new interactions. The official culture of our society views the chair-writing as a pathological and disease-prone issue. Analysis of the data obtained from the research (Figure 2) shows that bottom-up acculturation results from the interpretation of economic, political, social, and cultural conditions as areas of deprivation and restriction. The core concept of "building a new communications network as an alternative to constraints" has emerged which indicates this issue, and actors have adopted meaningful strategies and have specific interpretations of the consequences. If there are effective and efficient channels for the rational transfer of data in the academic space, and the channels can connect student actors to the data-rich network, actors will not resort to the creation of alternative media to convey messages, desires, and disadvantages of academic space. Thus, they will benefit from appropriate, rational, and conventional conduits. Actors have created the written chair (cultural background) into a communication and cultural tool by creating low-cost, accessible media.

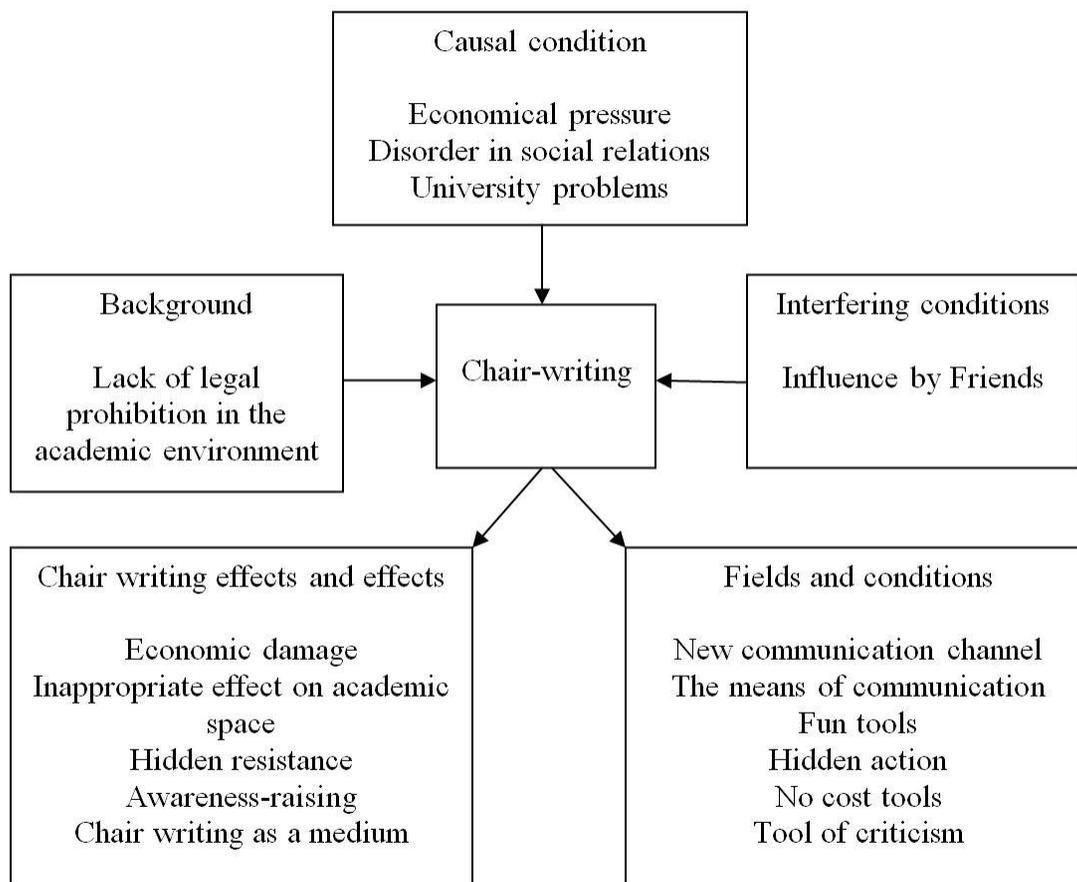


Fig. 2: Chair-writing students' understanding of chair-writing conditions, interactions, and consequences

Student chair-writers interpret, experience, and define the phenomenon of writing on the chair as a response to the problems of their social, political, cultural, and economic interaction networks, and in the face of inappropriately interpreted circumstances they make every attempt to rebuild or find alternatives to their role as friends.

If we view chair-writing according to Scott's Protest Variety<sup>1</sup> (1990) as a protest or criticism, converting chairs into anonymous, safe and conducive medium for expressing opposition and evolving psychological pressures can be considered anonymous resistance. The pessimistic attitude of actors to the economic experience they experience and their perception of economic pressure suggest economic deprivation as a reason for chair writing. In the meantime, Kosari (2010), Tajeri-Kia and Rezaei (2013) and Bagheri-Banjar and Heshmati (2011) suggest that graffiti is an indication of opposition with economic and social restrictions.

The presence of formal social capital, economic constraints and pressures have probably pushed actors towards the use of cheap medium, i.e., chair in the process of rebuilding relationships or building alternative relationships.



According to research findings, chair-writing actors find social relationships unhealthy and have a strong desire for self-expression and affirmation. Unhealthy social relations and a strong desire to assert themselves as the two aggravating categories lead to the reproduction of inappropriate structures, and the actors are struggling to recover from this state of social capital.

According to the research findings, the existence of formal social capital, economic constraints and pressures, disruption of social relations, and university problems have led actors to choose simple and cost-effective medium to rebuild alternative construction in relationships.

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