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Married Couples' Perception of the Excessive Use of SocialMedia and its Impact on Marital Problems in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract:

This study explores married couples' perception of the effects of using social media on marital relationships in Saudi Arabian society. The study discusses the growing use of social media, the common applications used, the reasons why married couples use social media, and the potential marital problems caused by the excessive use of social media. These issues are explored through the viewpoints of married couples living in Saudi Arabia.

An online-based questionnaire was used to collect data, and the data sample comprised 1,226 married Saudi citizens; 55.7% male and 44.3% female. The data was analyzed using SPSS. The results show that the use of social media is common among married couples in Saudi Arabia, and that the majority use social media excessively. WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat are the most common applications used. The study also finds that married couples use social media for a number of different purposes, including communicating with family and friends, keeping up to date with celebrity and social media influencers' news, as well as sharing photos and videos with others. Finally, spouses think that their partner's excessive use of social media can cause marital problems, including the feelings of jealousy, the neglect of family responsibilities, the weakening of interpersonal communication, and the feelings of mistrust.

Keywords: Social Media, Excessive Use of Social Media, and Marital Problems.

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1. Introduction

Social media has become a significant part of people's daily lives. It provides an easy way for individuals to communicate, participate, collaborate, and interact, and to avoid the traditional restrictions associated with meeting others (Askool, 2012). For example, social media applications such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat etc. facilitate instant and direct communication with others anywhere in the world. These applications allow people to broadcast content across multiple platforms and they encourage a variety of communication activities (Ham et al., 2018). Indeed, social media can help people to feel connected to and part of their communities, even when they are sitting alone at home (Waigumo, 2013).

There are multiple benefits of the use of social media, including sharing interests and achievements, making online friends, sharing expertise, and learning new things etc. Social media is one of the most important technological developments of the 21st century, and the number of users of social media has increased exponentially in recent years. As well as offering a means of communication, different social media sites have different additional functions, including providing a way of sharing photos, videos, news, and daily status updates (Scarpino & Alshif, 2013). Because of social media, physical distance no longer poses a significant barrier for spouses who wish to communicate, and they can preserve their romantic relationship and feel closer together because of social media (Gull et al., 2019; Yoon, 2006).

However, despite the benefits of social media, excessive or negative use can pose a serious risk to family stability, including for married couples, whose relationships might be negatively affected by using social media (El Khouli, 2013). A study by Valenzuela et al. (2014) discusses two main scenarios when social media can negatively affect marriage quality. Firstly, the excessive use of social media is associated with dependency and/or compulsive use, and this can create psychological, social, and work difficulties in a person's life. Secondly, social media can contribute towards creating an environment that may evoke feelings of jealousy between partners which can harm the quality of their relationship.

The excessive use of social media has become a problem for a large proportion of users (Cao & Yu, 2019), including for married couples in Saudi Arabian society, and this can result in negative consequences for family relationships (Alrashed, 2015). Research finds that the excessive use of social media contributes to increasing social gaps between family members, and this can be the cause of relationship conflict and marital problems (Gull et al., 2019; Alanazi, 2015).

To sum up, it is impossible to deny some of the more positive influences of social media on life. Nevertheless, using certain social media applications excessively can lead to problems in the family environment, particularly between spouses. In this context, this study looks to explore and understand the effects of the excessive use of social media on marital relationships in Saudi society.

2. Problem Statement

Social media has become an integrated part of individual life in Saudi Arabia (Saudi Gazette, 2019). Essentially, it is now part of the routine of daily life, and Saudi citizens are spending a significant amount of time using social media to communicate with family members, friends, and colleagues they already know in real life, as well as meeting new people online (Alhodaib & Alrwais, 2017).

Saudi Arabia is one of the biggest national markets for social media applications in the world. The latest statistics released by the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) reveal that the use of social media in Saudi Arabia in 2018 rose swiftly, touching 91.7% of the total population, of which the majority are young people in the age group of 20-34 years (Saudi Gazette, 2019).

There are various social media applications available for people to use and some are used more prevalently by Saudis. WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, and YouTube are the most frequently used social media sites among Saudi social media users (Al Saud et al., 2019; Alamri, 2019; Alrashed, 2018). These applications are free of charge, easy to use, and have no restrictions on use (Askool, 2012). Furthermore, internet services in Saudi Arabia are affordable, and, therefore, the use of social media has become widespread in society (Alamri, 2019).

There are multiple reasons why someone might spend a long time on social media, including chatting with friends and family, passing the time, sharing opinions and information, and internet shopping (Paliszkiewicz et al., 2017). Other reasons include watching and listening to entertainment, obtaining knowledge and news, reading educational material, getting to know new people, and engaging in personal promotion (Albinahmed Ahmed, 2017), as well as sharing photos and videos, and getting updates on news (Scarpino & Alshif, 2013). Social media has become one of the most popular technologies used by Saudi people, including married people. Researches show that married people report using social networking more frequently than bachelors (Ngonidzashe, 2016; Hertlein & Ancheta, 2014; Coyne et al., 2011). Also, Kuppuswamy & Rekha (2015) explain that some people think life without social media is impossible.

Many married couples feel that social media helps them to gain access to their partners when there is an emergency situation, when one partner is reaching out for contact, or if one partner is experiencing stress and needs reassurance or emotional soothing (Hertlein & Ancheta, 2014). However, the use of social media can have a negative effect on a marital relationship if it is used in an inappropriate way (Aydin et al., 2018). Indeed, some married people who spend a great deal of time using social media report experiencing unhappy marital relationships, because using social media excessively reduces partner interaction (Alrashid, 2015). Some spouses feel ignored and often get upset by the amount of time their partner spends online, or they worry about what their partners are doing online (Gull et al., 2019). The amount of time spent connecting online can have a negative effect on family relationships (Yu et al., 2018; Al-Saggaf, 2004). Clayton (2014) cautions that although social media sites may be beneficial for helping users keep in touch with others, excessive use of social media sites can be harmful to marital relationships.

A study by Alrashid (2015) finds that couples' excessive use of social media can lead to a decrease in dialogue between a couple and the dominance of silence. Furthermore, a study by Kraut et al. (1998) finds that the excessive use of social media is associated with lower levels of family communication. Another study by Ramadan (2017) finds that family dialogue and social interaction levels decrease as a result of the excessive

use of social media by family members, and Joo & Teng (2017) show that the excessive use of social media correlates to less family interaction and a declining number of real friends. These findings indicate that the longer time a spouse spends communicating and interacting on social media, then the less time they have for their family. One of the most serious negative effects of using social media excessively is a neglect of family responsibilities (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011; Al-Saggaf, 2004).

The excessive use of social media has also been linked to feelings of jealousy between spouses. Previous studies indicate that the excessive use of social media shows a positive correlation with levels of jealousy in a marital relationship, in that as social media usage increases, then levels of jealousy between spouses also increases (Alrashid, 2015; Muise et al., 2014; Farrugia, 2013). Also, Gull et al. (2019) warns that monitoring a partner's behaviour online leads to an increase in feelings of jealousy, anxiety and mistrust.

Other studies find that marital problems such as suspicion, surveillance, flirting, cheating, feelings of mistrust, and low levels of loyalty were a repercussion of spouses' excessive use of social media (Gull et al., 2019; Aydin et al., 2018; Ngonidzashe, 2016; Altayar, 2014; Muise et al., 2014). Also, the excessive use of social media has been linked to an increase in depression and loneliness (Joo & Teng 2017; Kraut et al., 1998).

The effects of the excessive use of social media may get out of control, and, in some cases, lead to divorce. Studies show that the excessive use of social media by one marriage partner can play a role in divorce (Aydin et al., 2019; Alanazi, 2015; Saleh & Mukhtar, 2015). For example, a study by Aydin et al. (2018) suggests that posts and messages exchanged on social media with the opposite sex can be read as a violation of trust and loyalty, and that this can lead to some marriage partners filing for divorce, due to loss of trust and loyalty.

To sum up, it can be concluded that spouses' excessive use of social media can have a significant impact on a marital relationship, because social media replaces human interactions with conversations using technology (Ante-Contreras, 2016).

This current study seeks to understand how the excessive use of social media affects marital relationships in Saudi Arabia. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, studies in this particular area are limited. AlGhamdi et al. (2018) and Alrashed (2015) explain that, in spite of the widespread use of social media in Saudi society, research about the effects of social media on relationships is still scarce. This current study explores married couples' perceptions of how the excessive use of social media impacts on marital problems.

3. Research Questions

Four questions were compiled by the researcher in order to achieve the main objectives of this research, as follows:

1. How common is the use of social media among married couples in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the most popular social media applications used by married couples in Saudi Arabia?
3. What are the most common reasons why married couples use social media in Saudi Arabia?
4. What are the potential marital problems caused by spouses' excessive use of social media from the study participants' Perceptions?

4. Definition of Concepts

For the purpose of this study, the following definition of social media is adopted:

A collection of technologies and applications that allow individuals to communicate, exchange information, and share digital artifacts (e.g., photos and videos) with one another, often in the context of larger groups, communities, or networks (Butler & Matook, 2015).

The excessive use of social media is defined as using social media sites for more than six hours per day, and checking these sites more than fifteen times per day, to the extent that the social media usage could be classed as addiction.

The researcher has defined marital problems as undesirable behaviours

arising between couples as a consequence of one or both partner's excessive use of social media sites, including jealousy, mistrust, cheating, and neglecting family responsibilities, which, in turn, cause dissatisfaction in the marriage or might lead to divorce.

5. The Impact of Social Media on Family Relationships in Saudi Society

Over the past decade, Saudi Arabia has experienced a variety of cultural and social changes. These changes have come about as a result of wealth created from its oil reserves and the Saudi Government's commitment to a programme of modernisation and interaction with the outside world. Furthermore, many of these changes have impacted on Saudi society, particularly in respect of social life and family relationships (Askool, 2012).

One factor that has contributed to change in Saudi society over the last decade, and something which continues to have an impact on Saudi society, is the widespread use of social media. Websites like Twitter, YouTube and Facebook are extremely popular in Saudi Arabia, and are accessible via devices such as computers and smart phones (Cumminc, 2015). Also, Saudis are among the most prolific users of social media in the Middle East (Al Saud et al., 2019). Recent statistics released by the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) reveal that the use of social media in Saudi Arabia rose swiftly in 2018, and 91.7% of the total population now use it (Saudi Gazette, 2019). According to Alhodaib & Alrwais (2017) social media is routinely used by Saudi citizens. Many people spend a significant amount of time chatting and networking online with contacts and family members, including people they know in real life, and people known only online.

The rise in the use of social media in Saudi Arabia has come about because it offers people the opportunity to interact with others privately and easily, irrespective of physical distance, borders and time zones. Also, it is an affordable method of communication which can be accessed on various internet services and mobile devices. However, debate continues about the consequences and value of social media and its impact on social and family relationships. Nonetheless, social media is now taken for granted

as a means of communication by the members of most Saudi communities (Xanthidis & Alali, 2014).

Social media provides users with opportunity and efficient services to conduct remote communication with friends and family. It also contributes towards the mechanisms that work to integrate and involve communities that have different interests, and it promotes openness among different cultures worldwide (El Khouli, 2013). However, some people spend a significant amount of time using social media, and, in some cases, it provides an alternative to developing meaningful real life conversations and face-to-face interactions. This can cause family relationships to deteriorate (Scarpino & Alshif, 2013).

Sharaievska (2012) argues that the negative effects of social media are not limited to individual users, but are also likely to impact on other family members. The excessive use of social media can affect family relationships in two main ways. Firstly, excessive use diverts an individual from giving time and attention to conventional interactions, and secondly social media use can influence personal values due to the exposure to new ideas and concepts (Alolyan, 2015). In relation to married couples, it can have a variety of negative outcomes, including increasing surveillance behaviour (i.e. keeping an eye on a spouse's interactions and online activities), increasing feelings of jealousy, depression, and mistrust, and providing the opportunity for engaging in improper interactions with others (Gull, 2019).

Saudi society is part of the world, and what happens in other communities also happens in Saudi society, and this includes experiencing the negative effects of social media on family relationships. One study by Alolyan (2015) undertaken in Saudi Arabia finds evidence to suggest that social media is perceived as having had a significant impact on social and family relationships.

6. Theoretical Framework

It is possible to apply social exchange theory in order to explain the mechanisms of social and family relationships. Through its hypotheses, we can determine the factors of stability and the imbalances that may afflict family relations. This theory can help to explain marital relationships in terms of the balance between the rewards and costs that marital partners incur

in their relationships. Costs include the responsibilities and behaviours that are required in a marital relationship to promote commitment and stability, and the rewards include satisfaction in the relationship and the stability of the relationship (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008).

Based on the hypotheses of social exchange theory, marital relationships become ingrained, flourishing and constant, if there is a balance between rewards and costs, and between the rights and obligations of both partners. Conversely, relationships become tense and unhappy if the balance between rewards and costs are not shared equally between the partners (Alhassan, 2010). The theme of this study can be articulated as the effects of the excessive use of social media by one or both spouses, which makes either spouse less committed to marital life and family responsibilities. Previous studies show that the excessive use of social media can lead to negative marital and social consequences, including social isolation, mistrust, infidelity, and divorce (Gull et al., 2019; Aydin et al., 2018; Ngonidzashe, 2016; Altayar, 2014; Muise et al., 2014).

To sum up, the excessive use of social media by one or both spouses can lead to partners feeling ignored and distrustful or jealous, and, as a result, the balance of the marital relationship is disturbed. An imbalance between costs and rewards can lead to problems in the relationship and can raise the risk of the marriage ending in divorce.

7. Methodology

For the current study, the researcher used quantitative methods, namely, an online social survey, in order to collect data to gain an in-depth understanding of the relationship between the excessive use of social media and marital problems. The researcher also used descriptive research design, because this is the best way to solicit people's perceptions (Mutanana and Mpofu, 2015).

6.1 Sampling

Participants for the online survey were gathered using the techniques of purposive and snowball sampling. The researcher employed purposive sampling in order to select the respondents. There was an expectation that the participants should be married individuals who use social media. The

participants were also selected using demographics and characteristics that, when integrated together, would represent the entire population. The researcher used applications such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and email in order to reach the sample.

Sampling was also undertaken using the snowball technique. The researcher asked all participants to send an online based questionnaire link to their married friends and acquaintances, so that they could also complete the survey. Many participants were very interested in taking the survey, in order to learn more about how social media usage might affect their marital relationships. Some also shared a link to the survey on their social media pages, blogs, or websites. Additionally, the researcher made himself available via WhatsApp and email in order to answer any queries the participants might have about the survey.

The online survey targeted Saudi married individuals. Both partners were asked to fill in the survey individually. This was done in order to obtain the fullest possible picture of the impact of social media usage on both genders. The timeframe for responses was set for between 9th June 2019 and 8th July 2019. A total of 1,226 individuals participated in the survey, offering complete responses. The respondents were all married individuals. The sample selection was made to comply with the nature of the research information needed and the type of analysis to be carried out.

6.2 Instrument

For data collection purposes, an online based questionnaire, comprising closed ended questions, was distributed in order to gather information from respondents. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher, based on a literature review and consideration of the context and nature of the study. The survey was divided into five main parts as follows:

1. Demographical information (e.g. gender, age, education, and occupation etc.).
2. The frequency of use of social media by married couples in Saudi Arabia (e.g. use per week, number of times daily, the amount of usage daily etc.).
3. Married couples' perceptions of why they use social media.

Respondents were offered twelve different reasons for use and were asked to select all the reasons they felt were applicable.

4. Married couples' perceptions about the most popular social media applications used. Seven items were offered, and respondents were asked to choose every application they used.
5. Married couples' perceptions of the potential marital problems that might be caused by the excessive use of social media. Nine items were offered for choice and respondents were asked to choose all the reasons they felt were applicable.

The questionnaire was validated and tested by three experts from Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, in order to make sure that it could harvest reliable and profound data, and to check the validity of the questions. Also, it was pre-tested with a small group of respondents prior to the distribution phase.

6.2.1 Veracity and Internal Consistency of the Instrument

After ensuring the veracity of the study tools, the researcher applied the tools to the data collected. The researcher calculated a Person Correlation Coefficient in order to test the internal veracity of the questionnaire. The correlation coefficient was calculated for the degree of veracity of each questionnaire statement, and the total degree of the pivot to which the statement belonged, as illustrated in the following tables.

Table (1): Person Correlation Coefficient for First Pivot Statements and Total Degree of the Pivot

Statement No.	Correlation Coefficient for the Pivot	Statement No.	Correlation Coefficient for the Pivot
1	0.787**	5	0.908**
2	0.911**	6	0.948**
3	0.845**	7	0.837**
4	0.963**	-	-

** The significance at a level of 0.01 or less.

Table (2): Person Correlation Coefficient for Second Pivot Statements and Total Degree of the Pivot

Statement No.	Correlation Coefficient for the Pivot	Statement No.	Correlation Coefficient for the Pivot
1	0.837**	6	0.909**
2	0.864**	7	0.894**
3	0.627**	8	0.909**
4	0.893**	9	0.801**
5	0.738**	-	-

** The significance at a level of 0.01 or less.

Tables 1 and 2 show the correlation coefficient value of each statement with its pivot, which was positive and statistically significant at a level of 0.01 or less. This indicates the veracity of the survey and its consistency with the pivots.

6.2.2 Study Instrument Stability

In order to measure the stability of the questionnaire, the researcher used Cronbach's Alpha test. Table 3 shows the coefficients of the stability of the study tool.

Table (3): Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for Measuring the Stability of the Study Tool

Axis	Number of statements	Stability
Popular social media applications used by married couples.	7	0.8820
Potential marital problems caused by spouses' excessive use of social media.	9	0.8757
General stability.	16	0.8210

Table 3 shows that the coefficient of general stability for the first pivot is high, reaching 0.8820, and the second pivot scored 0.8757. This indicates that the questionnaire has a high degree of stability and would be dependable in the field implementation part of the study.

6. Study Sample

The study was conducted in Saudi Arabia. The sample comprised 1,226 Saudi married individuals. As shown in Table 4, 55.7% of the study participants were male, and 44.3% were female; 59.5% were in the twenty to forty age group but only 9.5% were less than twenty years of age. In terms of education, 41.2% of the study participants were educated to bachelor degree level, while 32.4% were educated up to undergraduate level. More than half of the study participants (60.1%) were employed, whereas 20.3% were unemployed.

Table (4): Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants

Item		N	%
Gender	Male	683	55.7
	Female	543	44.3
Age	Less than 20 years	116	9.5
	20 to less than 30 years	288	23.5
	30 to 40 years	442	36.0
	More than 40 years	380	31.0
Education	Undergraduate	397	32.4
	Bachelor Degree	505	41.2
	Post Graduate Degree	324	26.4

Item		N	%
Occupation	Employed	737	60.1
	Unemployed	252	20.6
	Retired	182	14.8
	Self-Employment	55	4.5
Total N (%)	1226 (100%)		

7. Results

The first research question set was: How common is the use of social media among married couples in Saudi Arabia? The results are shown in Table 5 below. The majority of the participants (98%) said they used social media on a daily basis. Furthermore, almost 91% of the participants said that their partners use social media in a daily basis. More than half of the participants (63.3%) said that they checked their social media applications more than fifteen times per day, and almost 20% checked their applications ten to fifteen times a day.

More than half of the participants (52.4%) said that they spend more than six hours per day connected to social media applications, and 17.2% said that they spend three to six hours connected to social media applications daily. In spite of these figures, 44.4% of participants felt they were not using social media excessively, and 39% said they were not sure if they use social media excessively.

Table (5): Frequency of married couples' use of social media in Saudi Arabia

Item		N	%
Do you use social media on a daily basis?	Yes	1,201	98.0
	No	25	2.0
Does your partner use social media on a daily basis?	Yes	1,113	90.8
	No	113	9.2
How many times do you check social media applications every day?	10 times or less a day	209	17.0
	10 to15 times a day	241	19.7
	More than 15 times a day	776	63.3
How many hours do you spend on social media in a day?	Less than one hour	119	9.7
	1 to less than 3 hours	254	20.7
	3 to 6 hours	211	17.2
	More than 6 hours	642	52.4
Do you think that you are using social media excessively?	Yes	204	16.6
	Not Sure	478	39.0
	No	544	44.4
Total N (%)	1226 **(0%)**		

The second question posed for this study was: What are the most popular social media applications used by married couples in Saudi Arabia? Table 6 shows that the most popular social media applications used among the study participants were WhatsApp (M= 2.89), followed by Twitter (M=2.30), then Instagram (M= 2.27), and Snapchat (M=1.91).

Table (6): Most popular social media applications used by married couples in Saudi Arabia

Rank	Item	F	Degree of Approval			M	S.D
		%	Every day	Every few days	Never use		
1	WhatsApp	F	1,093	127	6	2.89	0.33
		%	89.2	10.4	0.5		
2	Twitter	F	612	371	243	2.30	0.78
		%	49.9	30.3	19.8		
3	Instagram	F	448	661	117	2.27	0.62
		%	36.5	53.9	9.5		
4	Snapchat	F	332	450	444	1.91	0.79
		%	27.1	36.7	36.2		
5	Facebook	F	318	285	623	1.75	0.84
		%	25.9	23.2	50.8		
6	Skype	F	188	273	765	1.53	0.75
		%	15.3	22.3	62.4		
7	YouTube	F	29	142	1,055	1.16	0.43
		%	2.4	11.6	86.1		
Mean						1.97	0.41

The third study question posed was: What are the most common reasons why married couples use social media in Saudi Arabia? Table 7 shows that the study participants mainly use social media to communicate with family and friends (56.4%) followed by keeping up-to-date with celebrities and social media influencers (48.4%), sharing photos or videos with others (43.8%), and finding new products to buy (36.9%). Sharing opinions and information with others (10.7%), and staying up-to-date with social and political news (10.6%) came in bottom of the list.

Table (7): Main reasons why married couples use social media in Saudi Arabia

Rank	Item	N	%
1	To communicate with family and friends.	691	56.4
2	Keeping up-to-date with celebrities and social media influencers.	593	48.4
3	To share photos or videos with others.	537	43.8
4	To find new products to buy (electronic shopping).	452	36.9
5	For entertainment and playing electronic games.	264	21.5
6	For fashion and to get the latest news of fashion brands.	260	21.2
7	For finding new people and making friends.	219	17.9
8	To get health and medical information.	216	17.6
9	For job purposes.	171	13.9
10	For educational and knowledge development.	150	12.2
11	To share opinions and information with others.	131	10.7
12	To stay up-to-date with social and political news.	130	10.6

The fourth question posed for the study was: What are the potential marital problems caused by spouses' excessive use of social media from the study participants' point view? Table 8 reveals that the respondents agreed that excessive use of social media among married couples can cause marital problems, such as feelings of jealousy (M=2.42), followed by a neglect of family responsibilities (M=2.36), a weakening of personal communication (M=2.36), and feelings of mistrust (M=2.32). Problems such as breaching of privacy (M=2.21) and divorce occurrence (M=2.12) came in bottom on the list.

Table (8): Potential marital problems caused by spouses' excessive use of social media

Rank	Item	F	Degree of Approval			M	S.D
		%	Agree	Neutral	Disagree		
1	Feelings of Jealousy.	F	654	431	141	2.42	0.69
		%	53.3	35.2	11.5		
2	Neglecting family responsibilities.	F	619	429	178	2.36	0.72
		%	50.5	35.0	14.5		
3	The weakening of personal communication.	F	629	408	189	2.36	0.73
		%	51.3	33.3	15.4		
4	Mistrust between spouses.	F	601	417	208	2.32	0.75
		%	49.0	34.0	17.0		
5	Emotional coldness.	F	583	436	207	2.31	0.74
		%	47.6	35.6	16.9		
6	Conflict and verbal quarrels.	F	579	442	205	2.31	0.75
		%	47.2	36.1	16.7		
7	Cheating or infidelity.	F	570	434	222	2.28	0.75
		%	46.5	35.4	18.1		
8	A breach of privacy.	F	495	489	242	2.21	0.71
		%	40.4	39.9	19.7		
9	Divorce.	F	390	592	244	2.12	0.71
		%	31.8	48.3	19.9		
Mean						2.30	0.58

8. The Correlation between the Excessive use of Social Media and the Study Sample Variables of Gender, Age, Educational Attainment, and Occupation.

9.1 Gender

Table (9): Independent Samples Test

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
The prevalence of the use of social media applications among spouses in Saudi Arabia.	Male	1.9327	.3063	-3.640	0.000**
	Female	2.0234	.5128		
The influence of the excessive use of social media on family relationships.	Male	2.3247	.5488	1.797	0.073
	Female	2.2636	.6241		

Table (9) shows that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 between the trends of the study sample for the gender variable.

9.2 Age

Table (10): ANOVA Results for Age

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The prevalence of the use of social media applications among spouses in Saudi Arabia.	Between Groups	23.131	3	7.710	50.681	.000**
	Within Groups	185.905	1222	0.152		
	Total	209.035	1225	-		
The influence of the excessive use of social media on family relationships.	Between Groups	60.493	3	20.164	68.987	.000**
	Within Groups	357.178	1222	0.292		
	Total	417.671	1225	-		

**The mean difference significance at level .01.

Table (10) shows statistically significant differences at the level of 0.01 between the trends of the study sample for the age variable.

Table (11): Scheffe Results for Age

	Age	Mean	Less than 20 years	20 – less than 30 Years	30-40 Years	More Than 40 Years
The prevalence of the use of social media applications among spouses in Saudi Arabia.	Less than 20 years	1.6133	-	**	**	**
	20 – less than 30 Years	1.9757		-		
	30-40 Years	2.1025			-	
	More Than 40 Years	1.9297				-
The influence of the excessive use of social media on family relationships.	Less than 20 years	1.6312	-	**	**	**
	20 – less than 30 Years	2.4495		-		
	30-40 Years	2.3703			-	
	More Than 40 Years	2.3015				-

**The mean difference is significant at the level of .01.

Table (11) indicates statistically significant differences at the level of 0.01 among married couples under the age of 20 years, and married couples over the age of 20 years. The results favour married couples who are older than 20 years.

9.3 Education

Table (12): ANOVA Results for Education

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The prevalence of the use of social media applications among spouses in Saudi Arabia.	Between Groups	7.372	2	3.686	22.353	.000**
	Within Groups	201.664	1223	0.165		
	Total	209.035	1225	-		
The influence of the excessive use of social media on family relationships.	Between Groups	22.755	2	11.377	35.234	.000**
	Within Groups	394.916	1223	0.323		
	Total	417.671	1225	-		

**The mean difference is significant at the level of .01.

Table (12) indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.01 between the trends of the study sample for the educational level variable.

Table (13): Scheffe Results for Education

	Educational Level	Mean	Undergraduate	Bachelor	Postgraduate
The prevalence of the use of social media applications among spouses in Saudi Arabia.	Undergraduate	1.8658	-		
	Bachelor	2.0464	*	-	*
	Postgraduate	1.9894			-
The influence of the excessive use of social media on family relationships.	Undergraduate	2.2077	-		
	Bachelor	2.4587	*	-	*
	Postgraduate	2.1567			-

*The mean difference is significant at the level of .05.

Table (13) indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.05 among married couples who are educated to bachelor's degree level, and for those who have attained lower and higher education levels (e.g. undergraduates and postgraduates). The results favour of those who have reached bachelor's degree level.

9.4 Occupation

Table (14): ANOVA Results for Occupation

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The prevalence of the use of social media applications among spouses in Saudi Arabia.	Between Groups	83.968	3	27.989	273.476	.000**
	Within Groups	125.067	1222	0.102		
	Total	209.035	1225	-		
The influence of the excessive use of social media on family relationships.	Between Groups	69.423	3	23.141	81.201	.000**
	Within Groups	348.249	1222	0.285		
	Total	417.671	1225	-		

**The mean difference is significant at the level of .01.

Table (14) indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.01 between the trends of the study sample for the occupational status variable.

Table (15): Scheffe Results for Occupation

	Occupational Status	Mean	Employed	Unemployed	Retired	Self-Employment
The prevalence of the use of social media applications among spouses in Saudi Arabia.	Employed	1.9248	-			
	Unemployed	2.3005		-		
	Retired	1.5322			-	
	Self-Employment	2.5740	**	**	**	-
The influence of the excessive use of social media on family relationships.	Employed	2.3018	-			
	Unemployed	1.8505		-		
	Retired	1.9194			-	
	Self-Employment	2.6561	**	**	**	-

**The mean difference is significant at the level of .01.

Table (15) indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level of 0.01 among married couples who are self-employed, and among married couples with another occupational status (e.g. employed, unemployed, and retired). The results favour of those who are self-employed.

9. Discussion

The current study was undertaken in order to explore married couples' perceptions of the excessive use of social media and its effect on marital problems in Saudi Arabia. The findings show that the majority of the participants (98%) and almost 91% of their partners use social media on a daily basis. This reveals that social media use is common among married couples in Saudi Arabia. According to Albinahmed & Ahmed (2017), Saudi

people are among the most active users of social media in the Middle East, and this makes Saudi Arabia one of the largest markets for social media providers in the region. Also, Saudi Arabia experienced the largest annual increase in social media usage between January 2017 and January 2018, in terms of the global average (Fakih, 2018). This increase could be due to the increasing use of mobile devices, such as smart-phones, tablets and palmtops, in addition to the availability of affordable internet services for the home and at work. To sum up, social media usage has become very common among the majority of the population in Saudi Arabia (Alamri, 2019).

The current study finds that almost two-thirds of the participants (63.3%) checked their social media more than fifteen times a day, and almost 20% checked it ten to fifteen times a day. Also, more than half of the participants (52.4%) said they spend more than six hours a day connected to social media, and 17.2% said that they stayed connected for three to six hours. This indicates that majority of the participants use social media for a significant amount of time on a daily basis, at levels classed as excessive. Previous research finds that those who use social media excessively pay less attention to their family and to family interaction, and this is associated with the failure to fulfill family responsibilities and with marital conflict (Sultana, 2017).

Unexpectedly, more than half of the study participants (52.4%) said that they connected to social media applications for more than six hours a day, which is classed as excessive use. Furthermore, 44.4% of the participants did not feel convinced that they are using social media excessively, and 39% said they were not sure if they use social media excessively. It is possible that these participants might not be aware of the negative effects of the excessive use of social media, such as an increase in depression and loneliness, and the neglect of existing family relationships (Sultana, 2017).

The results show that the most popular social media applications used by the participant married couples are WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. This result supports the findings of previous studies conducted in Saudi Arabia (Al Saud et.al. 2019; Alamri, 2019; Alhodaib & Alrwais, 2017). Specifically, the results of the current study match with those found

in Alrashed (2015). A study by Gull et al. (2019) also finds that WhatsApp is the most popular application used by Middle Eastern married couples. WhatsApp and Twitter are the most preferred social media options for social interaction (Al-Qoot and Abu-Jado, 2016). This might be because these applications are free of charge, easy to use, fast, easily obtainable, and they offer multiple features for interactivity, such as chatting, posting comments, sharing interests, and capturing.

The current study finds that there are three main reasons why married couples in Saudi Arabia use social media. The main reason cited among participants is to communicate with family and friends. Previous studies also find that one of the most common reasons why people use social media is to stay connected to their families and friends (Christensen, 2018; Joo & Teng, 2017 Wang et al., 2012). However, an excessive use of social media to interact with family rather than via real life personal communication contributes towards reducing marital relationship quality (Joo & Teng, 2017; Salgur, 2016). Salgur (2016) also reports that people do not feel as strongly connected using social media as they do when engaging in face-to-face communication.

The second main reason cited for using social media is to follow news about celebrities and social media influencers. This result was expected, because of the growing phenomena of social media influencers in Saudi Arabia. Social media influencers attract the attention of other social media users by uploading podcasts to their own accounts that comprise tutorials, advice, and advertising products, among other things. These podcasts typically work to influence followers, but this can have a negative effect on some people's lives. For example, influencers often create a perception for the audience that they live a 'perfect' or desirable life, and this can lead their followers to make false comparisons between the influencer's life and their own, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction (Al Saud et al., 2019). Also, if one married partner begins to follow a celebrity influencer of the opposite sex, this can sometimes trigger feelings of jealousy in the other spouse (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011).

The third main reason given for why married people use social media is to share photos or videos with others. However, spouses may be affected by what other people post on social media platforms, and this can cause marital relationship problems. Following the lives of others on social media, which involves looking at pictures of purchases made, celebrations, travel and holidays, and social life can make people feel unsatisfied with their own life. Also, viewing photos of celebrities who promote images of an ideal body can cause people to feel bad about their own bodies, or to question their partner's motives for looking at these photos. Also, posting photos of oneself and family members on social media can result in a breach of privacy and leave posters open to others mistreating this material (Ngonidzashe, 2016; Siddiqui & Singh, 2016).

The current study finds that spouses' excessive use of social media can contribute to marital problems. The main problems that arise are: feelings of jealousy, a neglect of family responsibilities, a weakening of interpersonal communication, and feelings of mistrust. Indeed, previous studies find that feelings of jealousy, a neglect of family responsibilities, a weakening of interpersonal communication, and mistrust were significantly associated with marital problems (Gull et al., 2019).

This result of this current study are supported by the findings of several previous studies. For example, previous researches indicate a significant correlation between the time spent on social media by spouses and feelings of jealousy (Gull et al., 2019; Muise et al., 2014; Valenzuela et al., 2014; Farrugia, 2013). Other researches find that time spent on social media draws spouses away from real life and distracts them from family responsibilities (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; Al-Saggaf, 2004). Researches also find that the excessive use of social media reduces personal communication between couples (Gull et al. 2019; Aydin, 2018) as well as the level of trust between spouses (Farrugia, 2013).

10. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study has explored married couples' perceptions about the excessive use of social media and its contribution to marital problems in Saudi Arabia. The study finds that the use of social media is common

among married couples in Saudi Arabia, and that many use it excessively. However, most participants did not believe that they use social media excessively. WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat are the most common applications used. The study also finds that married couples use social media for a number of purposes, including communicating with family and friends, following celebrities and social media influencers news, and sharing photos and videos with others. The participants also believed that the excessive use of social media can cause marital problems, including feelings of jealousy, a neglect of family responsibilities, the weakening of interpersonal communication, and feelings of mistrust.

This research finds that the excessive use of social media by married couples can threaten the stability of married life, and more research needs to be undertaken in order to find ways to reduce the negative consequences of the excessive use of social media. One way that this can be done is to caution people who are using social media of the negative influences of excessive use. Further research is needed to discover the causes and negative effects of social media generally, and excessive use specifically, on marital relationships.

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إدراك الزوجين للاستخدام المفرط لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وأثره على المشكلات الزوجية في المملكة العربية السعودية

نشمي بن حسين العنزي[1]

ملخص البحث:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد مدى إدراك الزوجين لأثر الاستخدام المفرط لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على العلاقات الزوجية في المجتمع السعودي، وذلك من خلال التعرف على مدى انتشار استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بين المتزوجين، وأكثر التطبيقات التي يستخدمونها، وأسباب استخدامهم لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، والمشكلات الزوجية التي قد يسببها الاستخدام المفرط لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي من وجهة نظرهم. تم الوصول لعينة الدراسة باستخدام استبيان إلكتروني، وكان العدد الكلي (1226) زوج وزوجة من مواطني المملكة العربية السعودية، (55.7٪) ذكر و (44.3٪) أنثى، وتم استخدام برنامج SPSS لتحليل البيانات.

توصلت الدراسة إلى عدد من النتائج أهمها: أن استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي شائع بين المتزوجين في المملكة العربية السعودية، وأن غالبية المتزوجين يستخدمون وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بشكل مفرط، وأن أكثر التطبيقات استخداماً: واتس آب، تويتر، انستقرام، سناب شات على التوالي، وأن المتزوجين يستخدمون وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لعدد من الأغراض مثل: التواصل مع العائلة والأصدقاء، متابعة أخبار المشاهير، ومشاركة الصور ومقاطع الفيديو مع الآخرين، وأخيرًا، وافق غالية عينة الدراسة أن استخدام الزوجين لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بشكل مفرط يمكن أن يكون سبب في حدوث عدد من المشكلات الزوجية مثل: الغيرة، وإهمال المسؤوليات الأسرية، وضعف التواصل، والشعور بعدم الثقة.

الكلمات الدالة: وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، الاستخدام المفرط وسائل التوصل الاجتماعي، المشكلات الزوجية.

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