

Socio-cultural challenges faced by families due to excessive use of social media sites

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Abstract:

This study addresses the most prominent socio-cultural challenges facing families in light of modern media technologies resulting from their widespread and irrational use of social media. It aims to uncover the most significant social and cultural challenges facing families resulting from their excessive use of various websites using the descriptive analytical approach to diagnose the phenomenon based on a set of previous studies and scientific references.

It concluded that the most important of these challenges are addiction, isolation, weak relationships within the family, media penetration, cultural and value penetration, in addition to the loss of real identity and its replacement with a digital identity in a complex virtual world. To confront these challenges, efforts must be combined between various societal institutions in order to establish preventive awareness programs about the dangers of excessive use of these websites

Keywords: challenges, social networking sites, family. New media.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Globalization has brought about new changes in various fields, foremost among them the arsenal of modern technologies that aim to transform the individual into a global person open to others. Since technology is a product of its environment and imbued with ideology and cultural and social specificity, it has generated a number of sociocultural challenges, particularly with regard to our identity and belonging.

We cannot deny the fact that these modern media technologies have many advantages, that it is essential to rely on them in various aspects of life, these technologies have brought many benefits to improve the quality of life in societies, such as improving the educational process through online learning, providing thousands of important sources and information, in addition to reducing the concepts of place and time, which have lost their meaning, as communication with others has become easy to access anytime and anywhere. However, despite the many positive aspects of social networking sites, many studies have shown that the frequent and continuous use of these sites for long hours, as well as their misuse, have had a negative impact on the behavior and character of their users, to the point that an inability to control excessive and unbalanced use of them has emerged.

This study thus presents a comprehensive reading of the reality that the family has become in light of the digital society and the development of information and communication technologies. The negative repercussions have transformed into social, moral, cultural and psychological challenges, which required raising the following question:



What are the most significant sociocultural challenges that families face when it comes to inappropriate use of social media sites?

The study employed a **descriptive and analytical method** that helps understand and diagnose the phenomenon to provide a comprehensive picture of it by collecting theoretical information, analyzing it, and linking it to the sociological framework.

The phenomenon of excessive use of social media by the family was described based on scientific references and previous studies, with the aim of highlighting the most important sociocultural challenges embodied in the decline in the upbringing process, alienation, the emergence of digital identity, cultural invasion, and other aspects that will be presented and discussed through the following axes:

2. The concept of social networking sites:

Social networking sites have several definitions, the most important of which is: "It is a term given to a group of networks and websites on the Internet that appeared with the second generation of Web 2 (Web 2.0), which allows communication between individuals in a virtual environment where they exchange messages, consult other people's files and become aware of their information available through these sites" (Bourni, Bakhouch, n:03,2020,p295).

Heba Mohamed Khalifa defines it as: "Very effective sites in facilitating social life within a group of acquaintances and friends, as they allow them to communicate visually and audio-visually, exchange photos and other means that strengthen the social relationship between them" (El-Dihi,2015, pp 346-347).

The above definitions clearly show that social networking sites are primarily social in nature, allowing friends and acquaintances to meet and interact with each other through a virtual reality that mimics

the real world. These friends are brought together by common interests and activities despite their different environments and cultures. The most prominent of these networks are: Facebook, Twitter, My Space Instagram YouTube and others.

These sites are characterized by several features, the most important of which is interactivity, as the user of these sites is simultaneously a receiver, transmitter, and reader. Because they rely heavily on sharing or mutual informational communication practices, they are flexible and easy to use because they use symbols and images to express feelings and ideas, and share the daily routine of the users of this vast space. These sites are also accessible to everyone due to their comprehensiveness, in addition to the fact that there is an aspect of openness, by providing open services through the pages, without forgetting to emphasize their distinction in terms of connectivity, as they are interconnected with each other (Bouaoune, Ben Zaf,n:04,2021,p126).

3. The importance of using social networking sites and their purposes:

Social networking sites have become very popular recently and have acquired great importance in society, forming the concept of "third place" as a sociological concept that expresses a place to which a person resorts after the first place, which is home, and the second place, which is school, university or work(Al-Jaber, n:179,2017,p89).

This place is a virtual place, considered as a breathing space to relieve the individual from the pressures and burdens of life. These sites have several objectives, the most important of which are ethical objectives, expressed by the exchange of advice, adherence to the ethics of honesty and non-violation of privacy followed by educational objectives, materialized by the acquisition of knowledge and the exchange of news and experiences. They also have economic objectives based on marketing and e-commerce, as well as

entertainment and other political objectives.

The psychosocial objectives are to avoid introversion and isolation and to build positive relationships. Observing these objectives will lead to the conclusion that they are linked to the conscious and balanced use of these sites, and that they clearly conflict with their irrational use. It is therefore necessary to clearly understand these objectives and defend the values that support them in order to confront any violations resulting from the misuse of modern technologies, including various forms of social media.

4. New Media and Globalization:

Globalization is a global phenomenon that takes on a global character, because it is the process of creating a single world society with a new single culture, "which is a system of political and economic principles, social and cultural concepts, media and information systems, patterns of behavior and ways of life, designed to induce the world to integrate into it, adopt it, work with it and live within its framework" (Gatouche,2021, p 38).

This globalization has greatly affected media activities in our contemporary world, as today there are no phenomena of political, economic and social life; However, the media have played a role that was almost the most important, even in light of the meanings that these phenomena contain in different societies.

The association of the term globalization with the new technological and information revolution sweeping the world has led to the emergence of what is known as media globalization. The scientific and technological revolution, as a fundamental force, is responsible for making the world more integrated. It has also facilitated the movement of people, capital, goods, and information, and shortened distances and timeframes.

In light of globalization and the role of the media, which has swept away all its manifestations, several positions have emerged

regarding it, including accepting it as inevitable or completely rejecting all its implications. The most recent is the intermediate position, which calls for adhering to identity while developing and changing according to cultural specificity, heritage, and religious values, without absolute integration or submission to dominant states; this means viewing them objectively and taking advantage of their positive aspects.

In the midst of this new media reality, the individual has found himself surrounded by a huge amount of media messages, most of which are incompatible with values and ethics, making them values that distort reality and are incompatible with the specificities, principles and values of society; In addition to this tremendous scientific development, globalization has emerged with all its manifestations of change and civilization in all fields.

This has given rise to a series of challenges, the most important of which is the emergence of cultural penetration and media penetration. The decline of the role of the family in socialization, the emergence of virtual identities instead of real identities and other challenges affecting various aspects of life.

5. New Media and the Family:

Current changes in communication resources and technologies have imposed a series of transformations that have affected the family structure and some of its functions, especially with regard to the socialization process of a new generation that must adapt to the mechanisms of the time.

The change in the structure and functions of the family is a response to the demands of urbanization, the pace of the technological era and the tremendous development of communication methods. This has also affected the value system and relationships prevailing within the family. Modern technologies and rapid technological changes have

played a significant role on the components of the social structure, including the family structure, such as the invasion of the media, given the difficulty of controlling imported technology imbued with Western values alien to our Islamic society. The excessive use of the Internet, including social media, has become an alternative to healthy social interaction with family members, in addition to transmitting the values of the virtual digital society, which creates a conflict between two generations with different norms and values (Al-Shaker,n:03,2022,p129).

Many families are suffering from the incessant use of various forms of social media by their members, which has led to a series of unacceptable behaviors incompatible with the cultural and Islamic privacy of our societies. We cannot deny the reality of the addiction and depravity our children have reached. This is indicated by the study by Lopez and Cuarteros (2020) on the impact of social media sites due to their prolonged use, not to mention their impact on social interaction, lifestyle, and mental health (Al-Jamil,n:09,2023,p78).

6. The socio-cultural challenges facing the family:

6.1. Social media addiction:

Scientists define addiction as a person's inability to do without something, regardless of its nature, as long as it meets the conditions for addiction, that is, the need to consume more of that thing constantly until the point of satisfaction. That is why we see that a large number of Internet users, in its various forms, such as youth discussion forums (chat rooms), social networking sites, and various games, make excessive use of it, which negatively affects their personal lives. Internet addicts, especially those addicted to social networking sites, establish an emotional connection with the virtual world through social relationships and the exchange of opinions in an imaginary world as a way to escape the problems of reality on the one

hand, and to seek an outlet and satisfy psychological and emotional needs that are not met in reality on the other.

A person addicted to excessive use of social media sites feels anxious and tense when the electricity or internet goes out, and regains a sense of psychological comfort when they resume using these sites and enter the virtual world, where the addict loses track of time or those around them. Their addiction also causes social, health, and work problems due to long periods of consumption for gratification.

Addiction causes sleep disturbances, fatigue, and certain illnesses due to long hours of inactivity. Excessive immersion in Internet use, including social networking sites, reduces the time allocated for interaction within the family and neglects homework. It also leads to a decline in academic performance due to fatigue and academic neglect. Social media addiction also leads to problems at work, as workers waste their time and, due to their addiction to staying up late, their performance decreases (Abdallah,2013,p169).

6.2. Media Penetration:

Media penetration is one of the biggest challenges resulting from the inappropriate use of social media sites. This penetration is linked to both media invasion and intellectual and cultural invasion.

The equation is based on the fact that the spread of media invasion inevitably leads to media penetration.

Media penetration is defined as: “The dependence of dominant countries on international communication and media as tools for penetration and influence in the cultural, social, psychological and political structures of societies of target countries in the form of well-thought-out plans” (Al-Mashaqbah,2012,p18).

Consequently, media penetration is the result of the latent functions of the media through the information, commentaries, and analyses they publish, which aim to undermine cultural integration, including its diverse ideas, values, customs, and behavioral patterns.

UNESCO has highlighted the danger of imported media penetration because it presents Western lifestyles, which affects cultural self-esteem.

The objectives and effects of media penetration extend to psychological and social aspects, whether directly or indirectly, through well-thought-out plans that disrupt values and social and cultural balance. With the aim of confining the individual and society to the mold of monolithism and consumerist stereotypes in the informational aspect, the discourse of media penetration works to consolidate exceptional values, producing a type of human being that plays a static role in society; which leads to the elimination of cultural diversity through means of communication carrying similar values of stereotypes and normativity (Al-Mashaqbah,2012,pp113-115).

6.3. Cultural and values penetration:

Culture plays an important role in shaping society and the behavior of its members. Every society possesses a cultural heritage that reflects its historical and cultural specificity. This cultural heritage has recently been influenced by the rapid development of modern communication technologies, particularly social media. This requires confronting the phenomenon of cultural invasion in order to preserve our Arab-Islamic identity from the content of Western media, which is saturated with foreign cultural contexts that glorify consumer culture and obliterate our Arab-Islamic identities and specificities.

Given the connection between culture and the value system, we see that these values have undergone significant transformations due to the messages and values disseminated by social media, the content of which generally conflicts with our Arab-Islamic values. Due to the increasing and continuous use of websites and the internet, the value system has shrunk and declined due to the lack of family supervision. Individualistic values have spread instead of interconnected values, and moral values have declined with the spread of lies and deception, the prevalence of pornography and betrayal, the violation of privacy,

and the deviation from the customs and traditions of society. Thus, social networks have been able to penetrate the cultural boundaries of the family, due to the foreign and Western values they promote, which have no connection with our identity and our historical and cultural specificity (Bouaoune, Ben Zaf,2021,p130).

The constant and harmful use of social media exposes social cohesion to collapse and destroys our traditional value system, which greatly contributes to the socialization process is the transmission of values to strengthen and instill them, as it is a means of cultural communication. Speaking about children and the influence of the media on them, psychologist Hofman pointed out that "when children are in front of the media, they are like a sponge that absorbs everything they are exposed to" (Al-Hashemi,2020,p71).

6.4. The appearance of a virtual identity instead of a real identity:

The emergence of new media with their various means, especially the Internet, has made us live in two different societies. The first is the real society, which does not use the Internet and is based on personal communication between individuals and represents what is called "the place". The second is called **the virtual community or** Internet community, which is the community based on communication between individuals via the Internet and represents (the space), where individuals through social networking sites change their identities and assume many roles and personalities, which leads to a gap between the image that individuals present of their personality and themselves, and the real identity in reality. They use identities that change from one situation to another, and from one person to another, completely freely and without any control.

This relative freedom of Internet users in their relationship to place, body and social status allows them a new type of practice, essentially allowing them to form new virtual identities and to conceal their original identities in order to satisfy what is called the desire for

multiple identities. Knowing that, in most cases, the identities assumed in cyberspace are incompatible with the social roles that actually exist in reality (Boubaker, Boulkouk, n:01,2021,p494).

Entering and immersing oneself in the virtual world leads to the creation of false identities and alienation from one's true identity, as this virtual world creates a state of separation between the true and false self, and an inability to communicate in the real world. This includes closure to the virtual and imaginary personality, which leads to the erosion and disintegration of one's personal identity, and subsequently affects one's real identity. We therefore conclude that the content of virtual identity is defined by real stereotyping processes, the material of which is the self of the actors, who have become subject to a modeling process in the shadow of the network society, and consequently the users of this virtual space, find themselves surrounded by diverse cultural models that place them in a position of responsibility between an authentic culture that they seek to preserve, and another imported culture that can dominate them, directly reflecting the content of their identity, whose representations are evident in their virtual interactions (Bibimon,n:33-34,2016,p34).

6.5. Change Arabic to a default language (internet language):

Due to the rapid growth of information and communication technologies, the use of social networking sites has become more common as a means of exchanging written, audio, and visual conversations between large segments of society, which has had a negative impact on one of the symbols of identity and personality: the Arabic language.

The growing use of these websites by young people has led to the emergence of a new electronic language that mixes and intertwines languages through a combination of foreign languages and Arabic in a colloquial dialect consisting of abbreviations, icons, and smileys to comment on and express various feelings and ideas. These are symbols that only users of these sites understand, which poses a threat

to the Arabic language as one of the components of national identity in light of the dangers of linguistic globalization (Haddadi,n:01,2021,p1341).

Despite the unique characteristics of the Arabic language, which are considered a science in themselves, social media has played a negative role in spreading a language foreign to our Arabic language. With the proliferation of social media platforms, a crisis has emerged in which many social media users are reluctant to use the correct language to create a closed linguistic circle for social communication among themselves. This includes the introduction of symbols and numbers as an alternative to Arabic letters, and the search for abbreviations for them, in addition to the spread of the Chat language, which relies on writing the Arabic language in English letters, thus making it Arabic in terms of pronunciation and English in terms of writing. This phenomenon is considered one of the most dangerous cultural challenges that threaten the language and lead to its deterioration (Hawamdeh,2023).

Young people called this language "internet language," meaning the incorrect use of Arabic and its mixing with Latin letters (French and English), so that it became a virtual language for young people, whose habit led over time to a decline in the level of Arabic among young people (Haddadi,n:01,2021,p1345).

In this regard, Egyptian journalist Housseem Ibrahim, founder of the "Write Correctly" initiative on Facebook in 2013, pointed out in a press interview with the BBC that young people wrote in colloquial language all the time, even before the advent of social media, due to their low level of Arabic. Social media made us see the linguistic errors of these young people after they were brought to light (Al-Khatib,2019).

6.6. Weakness of family relationships:

Family relationships are described as a network in which each individual affects and influences the other; the more cooperation, understanding, and harmony there is among the members of this network, the more positive the interaction, which has a positive impact on society. However, if a defect presents itself in various forms, such as neglect, alienation, and selfishness at the relational level, it leads to a disruption of the family network, resulting in a fractured family structure versus a cohesive family structure.

In light of the many changes currently affecting family structure and quality of life, social media, particularly Facebook, has weakened family relationships, making them fragile and fostering isolation among family members. They have also undermined real-life relationships in favor of virtual ones. The integration of parents and children into the virtual world has reduced family dialogue and reinforced individualism, as family members prefer to be alone with their virtual communities rather than live in the warmth of family. This coldness in family ties has affected relationships between spouses, between parents and their children, and between siblings.

6.7. Decline of the socialization process and change of roles of family members:

The family was and still is the most important social institution responsible for the process of socialization and the transmission of heritage from one generation to the next. Its role is not limited to the sole function of reproduction, but extends to the social education and training of individuals, instilling values and norms in them, building their personality and reinforcing their positive values in them, based on the fact that socialization is the process by which an individual acquires the culture of his society, its language, as well as the norms and symbols that allow him to adapt to his group in a positive way.

"Socialization is considered one of the most dangerous processes because it plays a fundamental role in the formation of the

social personality of the individual, and thanks to it, the individual becomes aware and receptive to social influences with all the pressures they contain and the duties imposed on him" (Guenawi,2013,p13).

Due to the considerable progress of the communications revolution, family pressures and burdens have intensified. The role of the family as an influential factor in socialization has diminished, and new media have become a guide and facilitator of youth behavior and a magnet for various segments of society. It has also played a pioneering role in reshaping and influencing identity in line with the demands of globalization. Social media has also become an essential partner in raising children alongside their parents, due to the multiplicity of sources of guidance and education available to each individual, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other sites.

At the functional level of the family, social media has had a negative impact on the status and roles of its members, as this issue has posed a major challenge to it, especially in light of the loss of rights and neglect of duties resulting from parents' concern for their children and their inability to raise them by not devoting enough time to caring for them, guiding them, listening to their concerns and sharing their interests, which has made them easy prey for the virtual world (Bourni, Bakhouché,n:03,2020,p305).

6.8. Isolation:

The excessive use of social networks in their various forms has produced a new attractive and tempting form of communication, namely digital communication, which in turn has produced the phenomenon of "computer introversion" that has weakened family relationships and eliminated many family occasions, interactions and communications that have always been characterized by intimacy and emotional warmth. Dr. Moumtaz Abdelouahab explains: "Staying alone for long periods in front of the computer accustoms the child to

introversion and distancing. Thus, the arrival of the computer in homes has created a form of lack of communication and personal contact between its members” (Gatouche,2021, p 150).

The dialectic of isolation and connection remains present in many discussions about the impact of social media on family relationships, and it continues to highlight the clear shift in our communication behaviors, which are now dominated by digital rather than personal communication. Many situations and occasions have reduced social interaction to symbols and means in a form that summarizes stories, emotions, and reality, far from the confrontation required by personal interaction (Gatouche,2021, p 151).

7. the negative use of social networking sites in light of contemporary sociological theories:

The issue of challenges facing families as a result of excessive and suboptimal use of social media is one of the most important current topics, as it addresses a topic related to the general family system and its associated elements, such as family building, the socialization process, family ties, job roles, and others .

Therefore, several contemporary sociological theories have attempted to explain the causes of this phenomenon, drawing on the sociological heritage and the intellectual and theoretical efforts it entails to understand the impact of the digital revolution on society. The most important of these theories are:

7.1.The constructivist functional theory:

It is based on organizing society and ensuring its stability by distributing functions within the organization in a balanced manner that achieves stability and integration. This theory focuses on addressing the issue of family use of social media in a negative light, highlighting the existence of imbalances in the family's various functions (Robert Merton), such as guidance, parental control, and other functions. This can create a tense and weak atmosphere in

dialogue between family members, not to mention isolation and a decline in the socialization process .

7.2.Symbolic interactionism:

This theory is based on the study of the interaction of individuals within the family through symbols, language, and meanings, as individuals express their ideas using symbols in their interactions. In the midst of the family's virtual interaction and the erosion of real identity and its replacement with a virtual digital identity, the family moved away from its real reality, and dialogue shifted from within the family to the blue digital space, which negatively affected family cohesion, as individualism prevailed instead of social ties.

7.3.Uses and Gratifications Theory:

This theory emphasizes the various functions of media, such as monitoring the environment to detect anything that violates values, interacting and socialization by linking parts of society, in addition to transmitting social heritage through science and knowledge transfer (Al-Ayadhi, 2020,p:04). Individuals try through social networking sites to achieve psychological, social, cognitive and entertainment gratifications as an outlet away from the pressures of life, but excessive use of these digital media leads to digital addiction and wasting time.

7.4.Technological determinism theory:

This theory asserts that technology is not just a tool, but rather the dominant force that shapes the structure of social interaction and changes the values of society, leading to a type of technological stress (Techno stress represented by a state of psychological and physical pressure resulting from the excessive or ineffective use of modern technology, such as smart phones and computers, and the individual's inability to keep up with or disconnect from its accelerating requirements.

In this context, Marshall McLuhan points out in communication theory that the media today has changed the interests of society and moved it from a traditional society to a digital virtual society that adapts to technological developments. He also concluded in his thesis that technology in the postmodern period becomes an inevitable necessity imposed on society with its pros and cons. (Kessay, 2021).

7.5. Cultural invasion theory:

This theory indicates that digital media transmit foreign cultures and instill values alien to the local community, showing weak adherence to customs and traditions and a change in language (the language of the Internet) and social values as a result of imitating Western lifestyles.

7.6..Digital Alienation Theory:

The concept of alienation appeared in Karl Marx's early writings and then evolved into digital alienation to suit the age of technology, where the user feels disconnected from himself and his real community due to immersion in the virtual world, which leads to a feeling of isolation.

7.7.Liquid Modernity Theory:

Zygmunt Bauman introduced the concept of liquid modernity to describe radical transformations in contemporary societies where individual identities have become rapidly changing (liquid) and relationships in the digital age have become characterized by extreme speed, superficiality, and discontinuity, reflecting the liquid nature of modernity (Mubarak, Bakiri, No. 01, 2025, p. 256). This leads to individualism and the replacement of real identities with virtual identities.

After presenting the previous theories, we conclude that these theories explained the reality of the family's use of the Internet and digital media in an imperfect manner that led to digital alienation, a decline in upbringing, the invasion and penetration of media professionals, isolation and individualism, and other manifestations

that need to be confronted by spreading awareness and effective media education.

8. The expected role of the family in the face of the dangers of social networks:

The inappropriate and excessive use of social media sites is a crisis that is worsening day by day thanks to the astonishing development of information and communication technologies, which have begun to use various means of excitement and attraction. Therefore, there must be a clear and rational position on the part of society's institutions, especially the family, to make informed social and cultural decisions that develop thinking and protect family members from cultural and media infiltration. Therefore, families should adopt a resilience approach that helps children adapt to new changes by imposing social control and supervision on their behavior.

On the other hand, the aforementioned challenges can be addressed through effective media education based on strengthening national identity and confronting all challenges related to changing values or cultural communication.

Media education aims to achieve the awareness process to prevent all intellectual deviations resulting from the inappropriate use of modern media, especially social networking sites. Media education aims to raise awareness about security and provide balanced security materials that include modern and advanced thinking. It provides the recipient with skills to deal with the media, making them aware so that they can influence and not be negatively affected by the inappropriate use of the media. Media education is therefore mainly based on the ethics that an individual can adhere to when using the media. This is an ethic derived from the teachings and values of our religion and based on honesty and good manners and avoiding deception. It is the family that guarantees this to its members, as it is responsible for the socialization process.

9. CONCLUSION

Based on what has been presented previously, we conclude that social networking sites have created a number of challenges that have affected many aspects within the family. On the social level, the misuse of social networks has led to the disintegration of family ties, a lack of communication within the family, and the creation of isolation and individualism. This has had a negative impact on their responsibilities and roles as parents, sons, or siblings, as the socialization process has declined and the sense of responsibility has diminished. Social media has also largely succeeded in usurping local culture through media, intellectual, and cultural penetration of youth, which has had a negative impact on Arab identity. We must, therefore, face these challenges wisely and rationally to reduce their harmful effects and tip the scales in favor of our societies.

This is done by trying to benefit from these sites in a positive way as much as possible, and reducing their harmful effects, rationalizing their use, making family members aware of their dangers, educating them to exploit them in the positive aspects of life, activating media literacy by treating media messages with caution, analyzing and criticizing their content, thus achieving effective reception that ensures the reduction of the severity of the negative effects resulting from the excessive use of these sites.

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