



*Internet use and marital communicative relationship, a field study in
Mostaganem Algeria*

Naimi Amina^{*1}. Hamlili Ismail². Fidjah Abdelkader³

¹ PhD Sociology of communication.
University of Mostaganem. Algeria.

amina.naimi@etu.univ-mosta.dz
aminasmi5@outlook.fr

² PhD Student Translation didactics
Oran University. Algeria.

hamlili.ismail@edu.univ-oran1.dz

³ Mechanical and materials development laboratory
Djelfa university

fidjah.abdelkader@univ-djelfa.dz

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Abstract:

This article focuses on the relationship between internet use and marital communication by a field study on a sample of married spouses in Mostaganem, Algeria. Since the spouses relationships occupy a central position in family dynamics, and beside to the widespread use of the Internet by all family members. This article examines how the interaction between these two spaces gives certain change. The study aims to find out the patterns of the spouses relationship when using Internet that can serve as a reference guide for reforming communication in the family.

It concluded that the impact of the internet use whether as content or general interaction with the device on the marital relationship appears through three levels: either it is neutral that reflex the relationship level, or it negatively affects the marital relationship by increasing its intensity, or it positively strengthens the marital relationship.

Keywords: Family Interaction; Internet Use; Marital Communication; Relationship, Spouses.

^{*} Corresponding Author

I. INTRODUCTION

The family is considered to be the fundamental structure within society (Lasker et al., 2023). It encompasses the prevailing relationships between spouses and between parents and children. It evolves and changes as a result of various factors and is subject to various internal and external influences, the impact of which varies according to their penetration within the family, their strength and other factors. (Ruiu et al., 2023). One of the spaces that constitutes a new factor that takes its place in the interactions within the family is the realm of media and communication. In particular, the Internet, with its various devices and diverse content, has become present in all households, collectively or individually, and is increasingly abundant and sought after. (Jurgens & Helsloot, 2018)

The use of these devices is not just a material possession, but rather a use that consumes a significant amount of time and preferences and interests in an individual's daily life. This communicative medium is situated within family structure and achieves interaction with it, in addition to the pre-existing social interaction that existed before the existence of this medium. (Dzardanova et al., 2022) Since the beginning of the use of this technology, there has been a growing body of research showing its effects on individuals. These effects are manifold and include physical, psychological and behavioural effects on children, adolescents (Chao & Yu, 2023), young adults, women and even the elderly (Khalaila & Vitman-Schorr, 2018). However, it's crucial to understand whether these effects extend to the relationship between spouses, altering the pattern and intensity of their union. The problematic question can therefore be posed as follows: How does Internet use affect the communicative relationship between spouses?

The choice of this topic stems from the infiltration of this medium into our lives and its widespread presence across all social classes (Helal et al., 2018), which makes us curious about whether this infiltration affects the core of our relationships or whether it's just individual use that doesn't penetrate the core of family cohesion. Concerns about the dangers of the Internet, be it in terms of content or representations of its use as an individual or collective tool, coupled with the lack of Arab and Algerian studies, especially those dealing with family relationships in relation to communication tools. This gap exists because most of these studies focus on the impact of communication tools on the individual rather than on the individual's relationship with others.

The importance of our research topic is illustrated by the study of the relationship between spouses, which is part of family relationships. These relationships have an impact on different levels of society. The spread of internet devices and networks have given rise to a number of phenomena that did not previously exist within families and their relationships (Wellman, 2018)

Among the outlined objectives of this research is to understand how the Internet is used in the home and family environment, and the resulting mental, psychological and behavioural patterns. The research aims to determine the nature of the contribution and presence of the Internet as a factor in family changes. We adopted the descriptive and interpretive approach to describe the phenomenon, interpret its meaning, identify its causes and analyse its outcomes using social survey methods. (Stratton, 2021). by collection of field data using semi-directed interview tool which engages interviewees responses to initiate qualitative research involving interpretation and analysis in parallel with existing scientific and theoretical perspectives. By selecting an intentional and representative sample of the research community that meets the criteria of the study and conducting research with them . the study allows for the expression of thoughts that may not have occurred to the researcher (Herrero et al., 2019), This is because the research area is concerned with the interaction between individuals, not just the quantity or frequency of the phenomenon (the impact of the Internet on relationships). Instead, the focus is on the nature of the phenomenon and the patterns of behaviour that emerge from it.

We aimed to select intentional sample individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds (Stratton, 2021), selecting those who met the research criteria. These criteria include: the spouse living with the family (without death or separation) and their occasional use of this medium.

The fieldwork was conducted from 07/01/2022 to 11/02/2022, with a maximum of two

interviews per day. we defined the geographical area as the inhabitants of the central part of the city of Mostaganem, Algeria, on a sample size of 25 married men and women, to carry out the field research, as the instrument was a semi-directed interview. This number was determined after conducting interviews that provided a diverse and representative sample (Guest et al., 2020) through varied responses, without prolonging time with similar or repetitive responses.

2. Conceptual definitions:

2.1. Communication:

The transmission of information, opinions, attitudes and emotions from one person or group to another through symbols. (Goffman, 2022). It is the basis of all social interaction, enabling the transfer of knowledge and facilitating understanding between individuals. It becomes effective when it actually reaches the recipient, embracing the idea of interaction where the sender becomes the recipient and vice versa. (Guo et al., 2020). It always involves behavioural outcomes for both parties

Operational definition:

In our research, by communication we mean the intentional act of an individual interacting with another family member to convey a specific content. By intercommunication we mean the positive response of both parties to the purpose of the communication and the exchange of communicative content.

2.2. Internet usage:

Social usage is patterns of use that are sufficiently emphasised by repetition in the form of habits that are integrated into everyday life (Cai et al., 2021). These habits assert themselves in pre-existing cultural practices that are reproduced.

With regard to practice, "Josiane Jouet" notes that it doesn't only include the use of technology, but also behaviours, situations and representations of individuals that are directly or indirectly related to the medium. (Rashidi et al., 2020). It is the technical, cognitive and innovative integration of elements of digital culture into users' everyday lives (Haider & Sundin, 2022).

Operational definition:

Internet usage in our research means the repeated and regular or irregular use of the Internet. Owning an Internet-enabled device is not a prerequisite for this use. Temporary borrowing may be sufficient. This leads to specific behavioural patterns or daily habits.

II. Effects of Internet usage on marital relationships:

1. Representations of the couple's relationship with the Internet device:

The dynamics of marital relationships have been transformed by social changes such as industrialisation and the information revolution.. (Cheng & Yang, 2021) With women entering the workforce and taking part in professions previously dominated by men, competition and conflict between couples have increased. Conversely, women's involvement in the family budget has changed men's perceptions of their role, leading to a more equal power dynamic

Both the telephone and the Internet, seen as communication tools, create a barrier between spouses. The time spent on these media reduces the time they spend together (Dworkin et al., 2018). These technologies provide an escape into another world, introducing competition and threats. They also increase the individual freedom of each spouse within the marital space, often without resistance.

Couples use communication tools for different reasons ,they may turn to the Internet for information on education or health. They also use mobile phones all the time to inquire about daily tasks and to recommend. (Soler-Costa et al., 2021).

When couples use the Internet or ICT in general, whether together or independently with their individual devices, it has specific implications for each case. (Chopik & Francis, 2022)

Placing the computer in the bedroom has implications of acceptance and compromise between spouses, allowing them to engage in shared activities such as chatting, reading articles together, planning holidays and spending leisure time together. (Drouin & McDaniel, 2021). On the other hand, it can also create problems related to sleep disturbance for one of the spouses and their annoyance with the other spouse's internet use (Cimino et al., 2022). (the emitted light and the spouse's preoccupation with the device to the detriment of their conversation and relationship)

From this perspective, the term 'internet widows' has emerged, as those addicted to social media often leave their spouses feeling neglected and uninvolved in family life due to their addiction to technology (Bonsaksen et al., 2023). This absence, quantified by social media addiction, affects the quality of the marital relationship, regardless of the level of interaction outside of the times when these technologies are used, which can lead to marital dissatisfaction.

Aspects of the interaction of Internet use within the marital relationship can be seen at different levels, and among the levels derived from the field study of the participants, the following are noteworthy:

2. Shared viewing:

We didn't record cases of spouses sharing Internet browsing or viewing experiences unless there was a specific need that required it. Due to the different interests and preferences of the partners, the opportunities for joint engagement are limited. In addition, the independence of each partner using their own device has further reduced such common activities.

The interviewee number 20 was an exception, as his wife has the same level of education and works in the same field (IT engineering). When asked about their shared use of the Internet, he confirmed that the field of information technology and the Internet was their common area of work. Even if their interests don't match in other areas, the IT field is a common bond that keeps their relationship fresh. This professional aspect of their relationship makes it sustainable over time, even if it is more focused on specialisation and work.

Differences in preferences are not necessarily a cause of tension in the relationship, but they can lead to conflict in certain situations or make one feel uninterested in the other's interests. (Tasew & Getahun, 2021). The interviewee number 04, a mother of three and a technical IT employee, explains: "My husband looks at things related to maintenance, which I don't find attractive. He calls me to watch with him and I watch for a moment before I leave because it's not important to me" (interview number 04). In such cases, we record how one spouse presents their interests to the other, and the response may be indifferent or dismissive. This dynamic can strain the relationship through repeated instances or lead to avoidance of shared interests due to a lack of positive response.

Interviewee number 03, a mother of three and an employee, emphasises that this issue goes beyond mere annoyance and can sometimes escalate into arguments. The husband presents the children with content, whether on TV or the Internet, which the wife objects to because it's not appropriate for their age and she's afraid that they'll be exposed to inappropriate content that might influence their thinking or behaviour. She says: "I always tell him not to look at things that are above their level in front of the children. He lets me talk and keeps watching. Even when he gives them the phone, he lets them watch what they want, not what's appropriate for them" (interview number 03). In this situation we see a difference in the way the spouses interact with their children in terms of what is allowed to be watched. The mother wants her children to watch content that is appropriate for them, while the father doesn't prioritise this concern when it comes to what he watches. This dynamic may inadvertently minimise the potential impact of the internet and viewing on children because the father doesn't perceive it as a significant risk.

The interviewee number 15, 39-year-old a doctor and father of two, is against the use of Facebook and suggests that his wife should delete her Facebook account and use an alternative network. However, his suggestion didn't work and he doesn't feel bothered by it. He said: "I don't have a Facebook account and I don't need it. It's more negative... She uses it for friends, family and shopping. I suggested she leave it and use Viber instead. She didn't leave it and I didn't force her to. I expressed my observation and she's free to choose" (interview number 15). This

participant's rejection of Facebook led him to express his concern to his wife to stop using it, but she didn't respond to his suggestion. He is unperturbed by her refusal because he understands that she has valid reasons for continuing to use it (communication and shopping). This shows flexibility in dealing with differences and respect for the other person's wishes. The husband's decisions about technology and the Internet are not binding on the wife and don't symbolise his authority over the family members. (Hänninen et al., 2021). This indicates the diversity of male behaviour and power dynamics, including the democratic man who makes decisions that benefit a larger group, with his wife and children as the primary beneficiaries. He may even make decisions that contradict his personal preferences based on the majority opinion within his family members.

The interviewee number 04, managed to change her husband's attitude towards digital social media platforms. Initially, he commented on her constant and uninterrupted use of the internet on her mobile phone. However, she confronted him with the reality of the situation by giving him a smartphone with internet access and various applications that she uses. She realised that he did not understand the purpose of her constant use and took steps to avoid such comments by putting him in the same position as she was. As a result, he became preoccupied with his own use and refrained from criticising hers. She describes this process: "I bought him a phone, put different applications on it and added him to different groups. He became more understanding and stopped making repetitive comments. In fact, he uses it more than I do" (interview number 04)

This concept also reflects the wife's influence on her husband's behaviour and beliefs. Her support for technology and the Internet, along with her desire to share the same practices with her husband, maintains a balanced level of communication and interaction between them. (Hunsaker et al., 2020). This shared participation fosters a sense of closeness, harmony and shared interests, contributing to increased compatibility and cohesion.

Relationships often struggle at the beginning because of a lack of understanding of each other's expectations or the background to their actions. Over time, the picture becomes clearer. In this case, waiver and reversing opinion emerge as a deliberate mechanism for adaptation and harmony, aimed at preserving the family and maintaining the unity of the family structure with all its components. (von Schlippe et al., 2021). This is in line with functional structuralism, which emphasises the need for activities to adapt to the expectations of another group, which govern the performance of other necessary activities within the same structure. (Ormerod, 2020).

The interviewee number 01, a mother of three and an employee, embodies differences of interest in the form of conflicts in practice. The wife's online activities become a source of annoyance for the husband, forcing him to express his frustration and engage in activities to distract himself: "He deliberately comes and distracts me from using my phone, asking me to stay on it and leave my duties." (interview number 01) This behaviour reflects the wife's mismanagement of her time with the internet or screen time in general. She may be neglecting her household duties, and this neglect becomes more evident when she engages in electronic chatting in front of him. While he may not oppose her internet use in general, his presence at home and his perception that she is preoccupied with something else increases his annoyance and strains the relationship. This preoccupation is her private world, but it bothers the husband because it implies that she isn't focused on him and his world. It's as if her preoccupation with the internet is competing with his attention and focus. (Peng, 2022). He expresses his annoyance, which causes her to shift her attention away from the screen. She is fully aware that this is deliberate, but she insists on repeating the behaviour every time. She doesn't feel obliged to comply, reflecting a shift in the power dynamic for men, where the relationship becomes one of resentment, irritability and stubbornness rather than obedience and compliance with orders and requests. (Smoliak & Strong, 2019).

On the other hand, "Azzi Abderrahmene " explains that media time, including time spent watching television and using the internet, is symbolic rather than real. "The media generally work to reduce social time. Time spent with these media ultimately comes at the expense of direct social interaction, and over time individuals become accustomed to this way of communicating. It can lead to isolation and absolve the individual from social responsibility towards others".

(Azzi, 2021).

All the participants in the sample agree that some of the topics they follow online become the subject of dialogue between spouses, either during consumption (inviting the other to take an interest and comment) or later (returning home and initiating discussions on topics previously consumed online).

3. Sharing the use of the same device:

The use of the partner's device symbolises a specific implication. The use of a partner's means of communication indicates the degree of sharing and harmony in the relationship. (Sirgy, 2021). Conversely, each partner having their own computer indicates a lack of integration between them, keeping personal tools in times of conflict.

The majority of interviewees agreed that they could rely on their partner's device for a variety of purposes, such as research, making phone calls or connecting through digital social networks, in cases of low airtime or network connectivity. Most of them fell into the categories of either asking permission to use their partner's device, not needing permission, or briefly informing them. For example, interviewee number 03, a mother of two, explained: "I just ask him where it is. In Fact my calls are on his phone, I use his phone and he use mine" (interview number 03). This sentiment was echoed by participants 9, 10, 11, 16 and 20 during their interviews.

Interviewee 11, a father of three and department head, mentioned that although he occasionally uses his wife's device, he does not have the curiosity or authority to inquire about her smartphone use. He emphasised the principle of trust, noting that her device is private and outside his sphere of control over her. There are boundaries to what they share, and the use of the device with internet access is one such boundary that maintains their individual worlds.

While some spouses understand and respect this as the wife's personal space, others do not want to separate this privacy from their sphere of authority.

Interviewee 13, a banker and mother of three, mentioned that she doesn't try to know what her husband follows online. This is because he already follows content with the sound of the device turned up so that everyone knows what he's watching. This situation reassures the wife, even if she isn't curious. It shows that the device isn't private and the Internet isn't just his exclusive domain. The relationship between the two individuals is therefore manifested through these technological practices, indicating the strength or fragility of their bond. It's a neutral means that can be directed towards privacy or sharing, depending on the social communication it supports or diminishes through its use. (Barbosa Neves et al., 2019).

4. Asking for permission to use a partner's device:

Permission to use a partner's device may involve knowing the device's password or lock code, which implies personal freedom and ownership. (McKay & Miller, 2021). It becomes a sensitive issue between spouses when it comes to using each other's devices. This issue of lock codes and their effects was only raised in interviews 01 and 24, both of which were conducted with female participants who are employees and mothers. The husband of the first participant treats technology use and practices in the same way as she does. She doesn't ask permission to use his device because he doesn't ask permission to use hers. She has access to his lock code and pretends not to know it, using it as a mechanism to spy on him. She says: "Surveillance is necessary. Yes, I spy on him. I know the lock code and pretend not to. I check all incoming and outgoing messages, even those from the children. If I find something suspicious, I confront him and hold him accountable. Sometimes this leads to conflict, and sometimes things go smoothly. I don't ask permission. Just as he touches my phone, I touch his" (interview number 01).

This dynamic indicates a lack of trust between spouses and a failure to recognise each other's freedom and privacy. Jealousy drives the desire to spy and the fear of deviating from expected behaviour, (Tandon et al., 2021) whether of the husband or the children. Even if she discovers something suspicious, she will not only speak of it but also investigate the details. This reflects the principle of "tit for tat" behaviour - if he doesn't ask for permission, she won't either. This reflects the dialectic of the relationship between these spouses, indicating a lack of

agreement, harmony, cohesion and trust. The device becomes a reflection of this relationship, involving monitoring, permission and sharing.

As for the participant in interview number 24, she didn't initially care about her husband's device lock or monitoring his phone until she encountered something suspicious in a situation. This made her cautious and gave her a choice between nagging him or being transparent with her. This transparency only comes after he shares his personal codes with her as a sign of loyalty, honesty and maintaining a good relationship. She says: "He had a brief Facebook interaction, but he denied it and became evasive. I threatened to end our relationship and was very angry with him for a month. When we reconciled, he gave me his passcode as proof of his transparency and loyalty" (interview number 24).

This underlines the value of security for wives, which is essential for the continuation of married life - security from marital betrayal, even in its simplest forms or in relation to digital communication. This security is achieved by knowing the passcode for the partner's device. It guarantees and reassures the wife that she is informed and vigilant about her husband's activities, even when he isn't physically present at home. Being together no longer implies fidelity and honesty. Virtuality has shattered the boundaries of time and space, changing the meanings of place and distance. (Steffen et al., 2019). It's now possible for a spouse to be unfaithful even when they're in the same room, communicating with an outsider without the partner's knowledge. This could have an impact on the weakening of the marital relationship and possibly lead to its dissolution. (Steffen et al., 2019).

5. Virtual infidelity:

The Internet establishes fragile relationships "friending" while complicating pre-existing communications with existing social groups, (Yang, C. C., Holden, S. M., & Ariati, J. (2021). introducing new and contrasting dynamics. It enables both weak and strong ties, especially when linked to close individuals such as parents and social groups. The Internet has given rise to new kinds of relationships that were previously unknown by the sociologist. It has created a revolution in relationships, allowing even shy individuals to engage in interactions they might not be able to in the physical world, unencumbered by the gaze of society and the people around them in real life. (Hine, C. (2015).

the participant in interview number 25, a 43-year-old secretary and mother of four, suffers from virtual infidelity. This means that the internet has become a disease in her home, affecting her relationship with her husband. He has become addicted to the internet, neglecting his duties as a father, husband and family member. Not only does he use the internet excessively at the expense of his responsibilities, but he also engages in conversations with strangers. This behaviour has shattered their harmonious relationship and left the wife worried and desperate. She fears that her children will end up with divorced parents, which is in fact the case, even if it is not officially announced. Many women, especially in Arab society, prefer an emotional and spiritual divorce from their husbands to a legal divorce because of the negative perception of divorce in the Arab community. (Rasheed, A., Amr, A., & Fahad, N. (2021).

Interviewee number 10, a university professor and father of three, highlights the changing dynamics in Saudi Arabian society due to the Internet. The prevalence of GPS tracking of spouses for marital infidelity has become common in a conservative society. He uses this example to underline the danger of the internet to societies, claiming that it is primarily responsible for the breakdown of family structures. Studies shows the impact of online chatting on marital relationships, diminishing marital commitment, causing mental and behavioral problems and contributing to significant social breakdown. (Abbasi, I. S., & Dibble, J. L. (2021). It provides an ideal alternative (in the eyes of the user) to the real spouse by chatting or viewing pictures and videos that the spouse wouldn't approve of. (Pichon, M., Treves-Kagan, S., Stern, E., Kyegombe, N., Stöckl, H., & Buller, A. M. (2020).

Spouses who engage in virtual relationships with the opposite sex invest time and take advantage of the ease and flexibility of virtual interaction. (Koike, M., & Loughnan, S. (2021). Despite the weakness of these relationships, they can accumulate and impose new dynamics within the marital structure. Some individuals have multiple online relationships, having a virtual

partner (or partners if they are women) on different platforms, which facilitates communication compared to the real world where such interactions are more difficult. (Robinson, L., Schulz, J., Blank, G., Ragnedda, M., Ono, H., Hogan, B., ... & Khilnani, A. (2020).

This communication technology has replaced personal, face-to-face interaction and replaced physical presence with the network and interactivity. This has led to rapid, reflexive relationships that are less enduring and engaging, (Collins, H., Evans, R., Innes, M., Kennedy, E. B., Mason-Wilkes, W., & McLevey, J. (2022).

We did not register cases of absorption in front of the internet to the extent of no or delayed response when one spouse appealed the other while they were using the internet. However, the majority tended to choose to appeal the partner who was physically present and in front of them when they were using the internet. This is because appealing from a distance may not elicit a response or even be heard by the other spouse due to their engagement with the internet.

6. Asking help from spouse to inquire to internet use:

Most respondents say that one spouse can ask the other for help with technical or network-related problems when using the Internet if they are unsure of how to use it. It appears that the husband is often the one with greater technical control and the wife turns to him for clarification or questions. However, this is not a global rule. The participant in interview number 4, an ICT specialist and mother of three, clarifies her husband's questions due to her greater experience in using the Internet, as she has been using it longer than him. This technological weakness on the part of the husband compared to her higher technological competence disrupts the power dynamic between the spouses, (Summers, K. H., Baird, T. D., Woodhouse, E., Christie, M. E., McCabe, J. T., Terta, F., & Peter, N. (2020). leaving the husband in a position of weakness. Although he may be technologically competent, he faces a social and psychological representation of weakness in the context of the relationship that undermines his ability to assert his opinion or authority. This puts him in a position of vulnerability, not just a lack of knowledge or inappropriate use of technology. The situation implies that the wife, technologically adept, has a social and psychological presence within the dynamics of the marital relationship. The participant in interview number 20, a center professor, notes that he turns to his wife for help when he needs assistance with information technology issues because she is an expert in the field (both are IT engineers). He enjoys her involvement and the unity of their interests.

Participant number 10, a university professor, describes how his wife, also a mathematics professor, relies entirely on him to use the Internet. She uses the internet to prepare for classes and exams, and he handles this aspect for her by downloading files and identifying relevant websites. He affirms that her avoidance of the Internet is not due to a lack of knowledge or misuse of technology, but rather a conscious choice: "She uses it with my help. She tells me to get this test or that exercise... It's not that she doesn't know, but she doesn't want to" (interview number 10). The husband knows that she is capable of doing these tasks, but he responds to her requests by using the Internet on her behalf for her specific needs. This suggests that the wife wants to remain in a position of perceived vulnerability when she is capable of strength. She deliberately avoids using her technological competence to maintain a balance of power within the relationship, achieving a harmony between the husband's strength and the wife's vulnerability, in line with established norms and roles. However, this is influenced by a prior intention (the wife's deliberate avoidance of using the Internet) and produces outcomes such as the husband's sense of control, gender power dynamics, conformity to social expectations, and the balance of the pull and push of the relationship. Families can be classified according to their level of power:

- **Patriarchal family:** The father has extensive authority over the wife and children.
- **Matriarchal family:** Authority within the household is held by the mother.
- **Filial family:** Authority is vested in one of the children.
- **Egalitarian family:** Decision-making is shared by all members, with no one person dominating. (Cárcel, J. A. R. (2021).

In the results of these interviews, the manifestations of power oscillate between the spouses

in their use of the Internet and social communication platforms. Sometimes the balance tilts towards the husband, sometimes towards the wife, without causing relational conflict.

7. Online communication between spouses:

The majority of the sample does not engage in much online communication. Their communication relies primarily on telephone calls due to the nature of the communication, which often occurs in fast-paced daily life situations. Nevertheless, there are instances of some individuals in the sample being connected through digital social networks. For example, interviewee number 03 mentioned that she occasionally uses Facebook. When her husband posts something, she responds with another message related to a religious ruling, saying, supplication or similar content.

Interviewee number 01 uses digital social networks to renew the romantic relationship with her husband when one of them is away from home. She emphasises the use of instant written communication through messaging apps and uses video and audio on platforms such as Viber to communicate with her children. Writing makes it possible to express hidden feelings more clearly, even before these technological tools existed. It creates an intimate atmosphere and opens up space for the exaggerated expression of feelings. (Delić, A. (2022). In this context, the theory of media efficiency and its richness comes into play, showing the diversity of methods suitable for different situations and relationships. It allows individuals to move between methods as needed, according to the characteristics of each network and the nature of the relationship. (DAR, S. A., & NAGRATH, D. (2023). Similarly, interviewee 01 uses instant messaging via Messenger to deal with tensions with her husband. She uses it as a platform to justify and clarify misunderstandings. She notes that what she might not be able to say to her husband in person can be communicated through Messenger, such as accusing him of neglect or listing personal and emotional demands.

Social digital networks have multiple functions, including social presence. It's as if the people communicating were face to face. Then there's the function of self-disclosure and self-presentation. This means revealing identity and preferences through their use. People can share things online that they might not be comfortable discussing face-to-face, such as a teenager discussing personal matters with her mother online. (Chu, T. H., Sun, M., & Crystal Jiang, L. (2023). These situations are reminiscent of the pre-internet era, when writing was an easy way to discuss sensitive issues with parents or close relatives.

In addition, interviewee 14, a bank security officer and father of two, explains that his wife watches television series and only needs the internet when his travelling outside Algeria. He sets up Viber on her phone so they can stay in touch while he's away. This network is exclusively reserved for him. This demonstrates the reinforcement of gendered control, where the wife relinquishes her technological agency to her husband in order to avoid any attempt to assert her dominance over him. Her interaction with this medium occurs only out of necessity and at his request

The interviewee 23 illustrates a transition from a virtual relationship to a real one. Her husband started as a mixed reality friend (the relationship originated through electronic social media) and this relationship eventually developed into marriage (augmented reality). Similarly, participant 14 in interview 14 expresses that she has relationships with people she doesn't know personally, and she has no problem if these relationships develop into real-life interactions. However, most participants refuse to engage with strangers on the internet and wouldn't accept them as friends unless there was a good reason. The interviewee 03 confirms this by rejecting her husband's request to be added to her friends list, citing her desire to avoid intrusion and invasion of her personal space by others. She mentions that her husband's presence in the house and their face-to-face communication is enough and that there's no need to add a virtual relationship on top of it.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

The interaction between Internet use and marital relationships is manifested through the following phenomena and practices: the independence of each spouse using their own device or sharing the same Internet-connected device, their level of cooperation in managing their Internet

uses, the imbalance of gender power position that were prevailed before, the level of annoyance caused by a partner's Internet use, responsiveness to calls during Internet sessions, immersion in online activities, and control over such activities, spouses' communication via the internet, spouses' control over each other's internet use, the implications and methods of asking for permission or not to use the other person's device within the family, the destabilising effect of the Internet on trust between spouses, and changing beliefs about spouse intervention in Internet use.

Digital communication does not replace traditional communication, but introduces new methods that often overlap with it. Marital relationships persist even with intensive digital communication, but traditional communication with others in the user's environment is negatively affected when digital communication is excessive, especially when the origin of the real relationship is of a weak nature.

The results suggest that the topics that spouses share and cross are limited to a few cases. The lack of trust between spouses exacerbates these problems and leads to conflicts in internet use, whether in terms of the content followed or the identity of the online caller. The internet becomes an open field for marital infidelity, further straining marital life. However, from an alternative perspective, it embodies the power dynamics and the prevailing relationship between spouses. Its use reflects their level of interaction and can serve as a platform for renewed interaction each time one spouse seeks the other's help in controlling Internet use. It offers expressive opportunities (through text, audio and images) to rekindle romance, express hidden feelings, reproach and open the door to reconciliation between partners.

There are three scenarios for the interaction between Internet use and marital relationships:

Firstly: The internet acts as a mirror of marital relationships. The way in which spouses use the Internet and how they present themselves online reflects the type and nature of the communication and interaction between them. If the link is strong, it will manifest itself in their internet use. Similarly, if the communication is weak and fragile, this is also reflected in their Internet use. The communication style between spouses is reflected in their online practices, whether it's flexible and permissive or strict and reserved.

Secondly, in other cases, the internet may exacerbate existing negativity in a relationship or make a good relationship worse. Couples with a weak and fragile relationship may increased problems when using the Internet, especially as it allows them to spend time together without being noticed. A mere weak communication between them could escalate into irresponsibility and even marital infidelity, which can manifest itself in varying degrees. This infidelity may not be linked to pre-existing relationship problems; rather, the Internet could ignite suspicious relationships even if the marital relationship was once stable and calm.

Thirdly, in some cases the internet can have a positive effect, improving relationships from good to better or from bad to good. Couples can reconcile through online communication, exchanging accusations, clarifying misunderstandings and even sharing expressions of love, gratitude and tolerance. Romantic gestures can be rekindled and hidden feelings revealed. The internet allows one party to reach out to the other or to use online content on behalf of the other, and online communications can develop into lasting real-life relationships.

IV. CONCLUSION

Studies have shown that the use of the Internet is effective and has a certain interaction with family members. The article in our hands deals with knowing its impact and interaction with the relationship of the spouses between them. How do they deal with it and how does this affect their communication relationship.

After conducting a field study on a sample of couples using the semi-directed interview tool, it was found that the interaction between the use of the Internet with its various carriers and its multiple contents with the relationship of the spouses appears on several levels of communication, such as the fluctuation of the balance of power and trust between them, control, sharing, using each other to deal with it, communication between them with it. The results were summarized in three focal points: the internet is neutral and reflects what is being, the Internet is negative and raises matters that disturb one of the partners, or it is positive and improves what

was bad. The internet remains a neutral electronic tool with dual potential, and we are the ones who control its direction. Being aware of the risks of its content, using it within appropriate time limits, using it for informational purposes, and treating it as an additional means of communication without replacing face-to-face interaction can make it an extraordinarily positive tool in marital and family relationships.

The use of communication technology does not necessarily have to be at the expense of the marital relationship. When the aim is to maintain a stable and happy marital relationship, any reason for this can be harnessed, and the strength of the impact of influences can be confine and not let it be unleashed. The well marital communication is the pillar of the family and deserves care and striving from all parties.

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Appendices:**Appendix A: Table of socio-demographic characteristics of the research sample.**

Research number	Gender	Age	Educational Level	Number of Children	Occupation	Spouse's Occupation	Interview Date	Interview Duration
1	Female	40	University Level	3 males, females	Administrative agent	Computer Technician	07/01/22	45m
2	Female	31	University Level	none	Administrative agent	Clothes dealer	08/01/22	40m
3	Female	35	University Level	2 males, females	Civil engineer	Port employee,	09/01/22	1h55m
4	Female	38	University Level	3 males	Computer technician	Port employee,	10/01/22	1h45m
5	Female	35	University Level	none	Architect	Pharmaceutical	13/01/22	35m
6	Male	41	University Level	2 males	Ingeneer	Seamstress	14/01/22	42m
7	Male	39	Secondary Education	1 male	Vendor on Sidewalk	Housewife	14/01/22	38m
8	Female	40	University Level	1male 2females	Housewife	Smith	15/01/22	35m
9	Male	49	Higher Education	4 males, females	University teacher in sport	Housewife	15/01/22	50m
10	Male	47	Higher Education	2 males, females	University teacher in literature	Mathematics Teacher	22/01/22	1h57m
11	Male	50	University Level	2 males, females	Head of Department	Education Employee	23/01/22	1h45m
12	Male	43	University Level	none	distributor	Housewife	23/01/22	39m
13	Female	34	University Level	2 males, females	Accountant at the Bank	Administrative Employee	27/01/22	35m
14	Male	38	Secondary Education	2 males, females	Security agent at the Bank	Housewife	27/01/22	40m
15	Male	39	Medicine	2 males, females	Medical doctor	Housewife	28/01/22	45m
16	Female	25	Student	none	Student	Military	28/01/22	38m
17	Female	59	Illiteracy level	4 males, females	Housewife	Retired	01/02/22	55m
18	Male	73	Mosque Education	2 males, females	Retired	Housewife	01/02/22	25m
19	Male	40	Secondary Education	none	Technician in construction	Housewife	02/02/22	35m
20	Male	40	Computer Engineer	2 males, females	Vocational training teacher	Computer ingeneer	03/02/22	38m
21	Male	44	Secondary Education	1female	Mobile devices dealer	Housewife	03/02/22	30m
22	Male	29	University Level	none	Teacher	Office worker	05/02/22	37m
23	Female	33	University Level	none	Architect	Mobile devices dealer	07/02/22	25m
24	Female	35	Higher Education	3 males, females	Administrative employee	Administrative employee	07/02/22	1h50m
25	Female	43	Vocational formation	4 males females	Secretary	Not specified	11/02/22	50m

Appendix B: Interview Guide

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Educational level
4. Occupation/spouse's occupation

Marital communication and relationship axis

5. Family Size
6. Describe your relationship with each member of your family
7. Are there any problems in your family? What kind?
8. Have you noticed any changes in your relationship with your spouse? How? Why?

Impact of Internet use by both partners:

9. How do you use the Internet?
10. Why do you use the Internet? What does it offer you?
11. Is the Internet a topic of conversation between you?
12. Do you ask your partner for help when you search online?
13. How do you react when your partner asks you to check something online?
14. Do you use communication tools to interact with your spouse?
15. Tell us about monitoring the use of these communication tools.
16. What do you do if you disagree with or are prevented from seeing something your spouse is looking at?