

Social Media's Impact on Youth Social Relationships at Birzeit University: A Field Study

Bassam Ewaida
Birzeit University (Palestine)
bewaida@birzeit.edu

Nasser Khasib *
Birzeit University (Palestine)
nkhasib@birzeit.edu

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Abstract:

The study aims to assess how social media affects the social connections of young Palestinians attending Birzeit University. Using a descriptive and analytical approach, the researchers randomly selected 142 male and female students from Birzeit University's media department in the West Bank, Palestine. Out of these, thirty students formed the experimental sample. The students came from various residential backgrounds and ranged in age from 18 to 26 years. The study was conducted in 2025 during the second semester. The results showed that the sample's average estimate of social media's influence on young people's social connections at Birzeit University was 2.56 (51.2%), indicating a moderate level of influence. The statement "Social media platforms assist in spreading lies and rumors about others" ranked highest (4.05, 81.0%), while "Social media platforms have enabled me to have unlawful relationships (such as electronic sex)" ranked lowest (1.80, 36.0%) among responses, which ranged from 1.80 to 4.05.

Keywords: Birzeit University, Social Media, Social Relationships, Youth, Media, Palestine.

1- Introduction

One of the most notable features of the new digital media brought about by the widespread use of One of the most notable features of the new digital media enabled by widespread use of tablets and smartphones is social media, which has structural problems and affects individuals, families, and society as a whole. It has greatly enhanced communication and interpersonal interactions among community members. families, and society as a whole. It has significantly improved community members' communication and interpersonal interactions. Digital communication platforms have completely altered life patterns and elements, redefining relationships and taking center stage in people's lives while diminishing the significance of traditional media. The triumph of the image, synchronicity, cross-border communication, high-speed communication, multidirectional information provision, and interactivity are some of the key tools, features, and applications that distinguish social media from traditional media.

In terms of size, effect, and content, the impact of this profound transformation in people's lives brought about by mass media has surpassed all predictions. Changes in behavior, social interactions, and information exchange have all been influenced by this profound transformation of interaction and information exchange.

* Corresponding author

New digital media have significantly impacted public opinion, particularly among young people, who are considered a crucial demographic. They are now a means of bringing about social order changes. There have been effects on their political, social, psychological, behavioral, cultural, and economic domains.

The Arab world is one of the regions with the highest rates of social media usage. "The Middle East recorded the highest use of social networks, with 35% of Arabs aged 18-24 using networks daily to share content reflecting the news and issues of their Arab countries" (Badarkhan, Taha, and Haemour, 2022, pp. Facebook was the most popular social media platform in Palestine, with 92.2% of users, followed by WhatsApp (72.3%), Twitter (25.6%), TikTok (17.5%), and LinkedIn (22.3%)—a crucial platform for job seekers and businesses (Quds News Agency, 2020). These statistics were provided by the social media company "Epok".

On the positive side, social media has increased people's participation, reducing time, effort, and money, and fostering openness among civilizations. Electronic acquaintance has led to marriages outside traditional family structures and facilitated networking among researchers, scholars, teachers, and students.

On the negative side, it has led to fragmented families, feelings of alienation, loneliness, depression, introversion, a generation unable to communicate effectively with others, reduced family visits, linguistic pollution in conversations, youth rebelling against elders, fake relationships built on a false reality created through Photoshop and filters, and the ease of recruiting youth by terrorist organizations.

In summary, digital media has significantly changed and impacted social relationships, presenting unprecedented challenges in human history. The researchers drew inspiration for this study from their direct experience as university professors in the Media Department at Birzeit University, prompting an investigation into this phenomenon under study.

Study Problem:

Social media, as a prominent aspect of digital media, has brought about unprecedented changes in social relationships among young people, who are considered one of the most important segments of society. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of researchers and specialists. The texts and images transmitted through social media, especially among youth, express personal thoughts and interact with their influences, reflecting psychological perspectives, political and social dimensions, and the educational level of the writer and publisher. On social media platforms, these messages and images find greater opportunities to establish their dominance and create more social impacts and risks than ever before. We witness the exposure of household secrets, individual privacies, and shocking images, which is unusual in our conservative societies.

Posts and images are widely shared on social media for various purposes, such as complementing news and reports, providing entertainment, marketing, advertising, expressing opinions, highlighting corruption issues, or facilitating social interaction.

The study's focus revolves around the impact of social media platforms on social relationships among young people. Some individuals exploit social media to post images, comments, and posts that have significantly altered relationships among young people. These

posts often disregard religious, moral, and legal boundaries for purposes such as blackmail, harassment, a lack of religious restraint, deviant behavior, a misunderstanding of freedom of expression, the arousal of instincts, or the pursuit of likes and approvals.

Given these multiple issues, this study aims to shed light on the extent to which social media affects social relationships among youth and the consequences thereof. Therefore, the study seeks to answer the following question:

What is the degree of social media's impact on social relationships among Palestinian youth?

Based on the clarification of the study's problem, and in an attempt to achieve the study's objectives, the following sub-questions emerge from the main question:

- Have social media platforms helped youth isolate themselves from others and avoid conversations with them?
- Have social media platforms contributed to the spread of lies and rumors about others?
- Have social media platforms enabled the establishment of unlawful relationships (such as electronic sex) between genders?
- Are there statistically significant differences in the role of social media in influencing social relationships among youth at Birzeit University attributable to the gender variable?
- Are there statistically significant differences in the role of social media in influencing social relationships among youth at Birzeit University attributable to the father's educational level variable?
- Are there statistically significant differences in the role of social media in influencing social relationships among youth at Birzeit University attributable to the residential variable?

1.2 Study Importance:

The importance of this study lies in two key dimensions:

1.2.1 Theoretical Importance: Theoretically, this study makes a new and distinctive contribution to the Arab library and digital Arab databases, which currently lack studies on the impact of social media on youth. The study reveals and clarifies the role of social media in influencing the social relationships of Palestinian youth, paving the way for similar studies addressing the same topic or building upon it due to its critical importance.

1.2.2 Practical Importance: The practical importance stems from the nature of the topic and the study population, which focuses on youth, a key societal group. The study aims to understand the role of social media in influencing the social relationships of Palestinian youth. It also helps university officials and decision-makers to raise students' awareness about the proper use of social media, highlighting the risks, particularly concerning their social relationships. This will aid in developing strategies and improving the educational environment in Palestinian universities. Additionally, the study calls on researchers and academics to conduct scientific studies on the uses of mass media and their societal impact to mitigate the influence of new digital media. The study also contributes to encouraging specialists to enrich digital Arab content and to implement guidance programs and virtual campaigns to discourage students from spending excessive time on tablets and mobile phones. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need to enforce cybercrime laws to reduce the spread of rumors, bullying, and insults on social media, which will help decrease online disputes, cyberbullying, and youth

violence. The study will be available to media students at universities for academic research development.

1.3 Study Objectives:

The study attempts to uncover the role of social media and its effects on social relationships among youth, such as a lack of participation with others, family disintegration, electronic sex, fostering violence, spreading rumors, and lying. Additionally, it offers recommendations to mitigate the negative impact of these media.

1.4 Study Hypotheses:

In light of defining the study's problem and objectives, the researcher formulated the following null hypotheses to verify their validity:

1. There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the role of social media in influencing the social relationships of Palestinian youth attributable to the gender variable.
2. There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the role of social media in influencing the social relationships of Palestinian youth attributable to the father's educational level variable.
3. There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the role of social media in influencing the social relationships of Palestinian youth attributable to the residential variable.

2. Previous Studies

Most of the scientific studies reviewed by the researchers have revealed the problem statement and hypothesis, as well as contributed to defining the theoretical background of the study, enhancing its quality, and utilizing the results of these studies in formulating the subject of the current research to avoid repetition. These previous studies also enabled the researchers to identify scientific tools for the research and compile relevant Arabic references on the topic.

The researchers found a lack of studies on Palestinians that specifically addressed this topic in Arabic digital databases, which highlights the significance of this study in earnestly exploring the role of social media in shaping social relationships among Palestinian youth.

The researchers reviewed the study by Fatima Saud Al-Salem (2022), which is directly related to the topic. This study aimed to identify the social and psychological effects of using social media and following influencers among the youth in Kuwait, as well as their impact on mental health. The study employed a survey methodology using an electronic questionnaire on a non-probability sample of 4,275 individuals (2,404 males and 1,871 females) from various regions of Kuwait. The study tested five main hypotheses and found that the frequency of social media use affects the psychological state of youth, and that their psychological state, in turn, influences the "Fear of Missing Out" (FoMO). It also found that the more youth follow social media influencers, the higher their rate of social comparison (Al-Salem, 2022, p.12).

Adnan Al-Zoubi's study (2021) examined the development of media and communication technology, highlighting its captivating characteristics, particularly for the youth, due to its multiple platforms and ability to fulfill cognitive desires across diverse cultures. The study, conducted in Jordan, focused on exposure to digital media and its effects on individuals, the correlation between increased exposure and psychological, health, and social issues such as

isolation, depression, and exclusion, and the benefits related to global cognitive and cultural enhancement, alongside its relationship with media literacy (Al-Zoubi, 2021, p.209).

Abdul Kareem Tafriqni's study (2020) showed that new media have led to significant changes in communication and social interaction among individuals and groups, altering many behaviors and traditions, and affecting the system of values within Arab societies. It highlighted the challenge of aligning such media content with Arab and Islamic cultures, which struggle to counteract these global trends or provide alternative social media platforms (Tafriqni, 2020, p.238).

Manal Mohammed Al-Nasser's study (2019) aimed to explore the role of social media on social and familial relationships among students of the Saudi Electronic University in Riyadh. The study employed a descriptive survey methodology and included a sample of 315 students (153 males and 162 females), selected through stratified random sampling. The results showed that social media usage was prevalent among the students, with WhatsApp being the most used platform, followed by Instagram and Twitter. The study also found that social media has a significant impact on social life, but a lower impact on familial relationships (Al-Nasser, 2019, p. 6).

Aya Mohammed Saleem Al-Sharayia's study (2018) aimed to investigate the impact of social media usage on the social relationships of Jordanian youth, examining both the positive and negative effects. The study employed a social survey methodology and included a sample of 360 students from the University of Jordan, selected proportionally from various faculties. The findings highlighted that ease of expression was a primary reason for social media use, which facilitated significant social interactions among young people (Al-Sharayia, 2018, p. 3).

Naim Faisal Al-Masri's study (2018) examined the extent to which Palestinian journalists utilize mobile phones to access the internet and their corresponding usage patterns. The study, which involved 450 journalists, found that the majority used smartphones, with a high frequency of accessing social networks for professional purposes, particularly via applications such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger (Al-Masri, 2018, p. 2017).

Najwa Latrash's study (2017) examined the impact of social media on family values among university students at the University of Annaba. This descriptive study employed a random sample of 100 participants and found that students frequently used Facebook for extended periods, primarily for socializing and engaging in discussion groups (Latrash, 2017, p. 247).

Marwan Mazraq's study (2016) examined the impact of social networks on social relationships among Facebook users in Algeria. The study employed a questionnaire to gather data and found that the majority of users spent over three hours on Facebook, primarily using it for commenting and chatting, which significantly impacted their social lives. It also noted gender differences in Facebook use (Mazraq, 2016, p. 4).

Abdulrahman Mohammed Said Al-Shami's study (2014) explored the challenges posed by new media to traditional media, including the inadequacy of conventional media theories in studying new media forms, which necessitates the development of new or modified theories to examine this medium (Al-Shami, 2014, p. 105).

Hamoud Mohammed Al-Alimat and Ziad Khamees Al-Tah's study (2012) aimed to understand the relationship between the use of social interaction media and the formation of

social, economic, and political attitudes among Al al-Bayt University students. The random sample consisted of 371 students, and the study found significant statistical differences in the impact of these media on attitude formation, depending on the type of sites used (Al-Alimat and Al-Tah, 2012, p.94).

Barman and Dakua (2024) emphasized that social media has permeated youth culture globally, shaping attitudes, behaviors, identity formation, and social support systems, while also posing risks such as addiction, cyberbullying, and privacy concerns (Barman & Dakua, 2024). Jha, Singh, Kundu, and Banerjee (2024) demonstrated the dual role of social media, showing its positive potential for creativity and connection, but also its negative consequences, including anxiety, depression, and social isolation (Jha et al., 2024). Similarly, Marzuki and Baharta (2023) found that teenagers' self-perception and social relations are significantly influenced by social media use, with moderating variables such as personality, family background, and social environment (Fathurohman et al., 2023). In addition, Angelini, Gini, Marino, and Van Den Eijnden (2024) confirmed that platform features like availability and quantifiability are directly and indirectly associated with perceived friendship quality among adolescents, highlighting the importance of active social media use and peer norms (Angelini et al., 2024).

2.1 Commentary on Previous Studies:

The researchers found several scholarly studies on this topic at the Arab level, but none on the Palestinian level. Seven Arabic-language studies were reviewed, all of which touched upon the subject or its aspects. The researchers focused on scientific studies rather than books due to the former's rigorous peer-review process and empirical results.

The studies were selected from various Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Jordan, to provide diverse perspectives. Most previous studies employed descriptive survey methodologies, utilizing questionnaires, and focused on the originality and recency of research published between 2017 and 2022.

The current study will examine similarities and differences with previous studies in terms of problem statements, methodologies, populations, samples, and tools. It shares similarities with previous studies, such as the use of surveys and questionnaires, but differs in sample size and some thematic aspects.

The current study aligns partially with previous studies in its subject and goals, utilizing the same theoretical framework and methodologies. The researchers benefited from these studies in formulating the problem statement, theoretical framework, and objectives, as well as developing the study's tool and dividing the study's importance into theoretical and practical aspects.

The current study aligns with most previous studies in using a descriptive survey methodology and questionnaires as the primary tool. It shares similarities with Al-Nasser's (2019) study in sample selection, tool, and results. Previous studies often explored the effects of social media platforms and employed the uses and gratifications theory. The researchers found that the overlap between the current study and prior studies exceeds 70%.

The addition of recent international studies (Barman & Dakua, 2024; Jha et al., 2024; Fathurohman et al., 2023; Angelini et al., 2024) underscores that the impact of social media is

not only a local or regional concern but also a global issue. These studies confirm that social media has profound effects on youth identity, psychological well-being, and social interactions, echoing the findings of this field study at Birzeit University, which found moderate but significant influences, particularly concerning rumor spreading and reduced family interaction.

The current study, however, diverges from some previous studies in the overall topic focus. While the current study examines the impact of social media on social relationships, Latrash's (2017) study focused on its effect on youth values, and Al-Shami's (2014) study examined challenges posed by new media to traditional media, among other differences.

In summary, the current study is the first peer-reviewed study on this topic in Palestine, exploring the impact of social relationships among youth, particularly concerning online sexual interactions. This makes the study a significant addition to the existing literature, driven by the need to address these issues specifically within the Palestinian context.

2.3 Study Advantages

2.3.1 Youth Demographic: This study focuses on the youth, who constitute a significant segment of the Palestinian society. "Youth in Palestine make up more than one-fifth of the Palestinian population, accounting for 22% of the total population as of mid-2021." (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021)

2.3.2 Location: The target demographic is located at a university that is considered one of the oldest and most prestigious in Palestine, among the 37 universities and colleges in the Palestinian territories.

2.4 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The study relies on the "Uses and Gratifications" theory. According to Katz and his colleagues, this theory is based on five assumptions to achieve three main objectives. The assumptions are that individuals are active participants, and their use of communication media reflects their needs; they choose the messages and content, define their needs and motivations, and cultural norms can be inferred through usage rather than just message content. The theory aims to discover how individuals use communication media, explain the motivations for exposure to one medium over another, and emphasize the outcomes of media use to understand the overall process. (Makawi and El-Sayed, 2014, p. 241)

2.5 Operational Definitions of the Study

2.5.1 New Media: New media, also known as digital media, refers to all digital information and communication technologies that have enabled the production, consumption, distribution, and exchange of information managed by individuals. (Al-Hamdi, 2021, 163)

2.5.2 Social Media: A group of people who communicate and interact using new media technologies for professional, cultural, social, or educational purposes. In this community, relationships do not necessarily require synchronous communication or the presence of individuals in the same place for effective interaction. The virtual community can be more powerful and effective than the real community because it forms quickly, spreads across locations, and achieves its goals with minimal constraints and limitations. (Al-Mubarak, 2020, p. 43)

2.5.3 Social Relationships: A model of mutual interaction that persists over a certain period, leading to the emergence of a set of social expectations. Examples include the reciprocal role

relationship between husband and wife and the relationship between a psychoanalyst and a patient. Social relationships are defined as the connections formed between two or more people to meet social, economic, or emotional needs, facilitated through social media. (Al-Nasser, 2019, 248)

2.5.4 Youth: Although there is no internationally agreed-upon definition of the age range for youth, the United Nations, for statistical purposes and without prejudice to other definitions set by member states, defines youth as persons aged 15 to 24 years. All UN statistics on youth are based on this definition. Many countries also establish criteria for defining youth, typically based on the age at which a person is considered an adult under the law, often referred to as the "age of majority," which is usually 18 years. A person is not considered an adult until reaching this age. (United Nations, 2022)

2.5.5 Birzeit University: An academic institution founded in 1924, located in Ramallah, in the central West Bank of Palestine. It has ten faculties and is a private university established by a Palestinian family. An independent Board of Trustees oversees it, and it has approximately 15,000 students. (Birzeit University, 2023)

3. Methods and Procedures

The researchers will outline the procedures followed, including the type and methodology of the study, its boundaries and variables, and the steps taken to analyze the study population, sample characteristics, and type, as well as the study tools and attributes of each tool. A detailed explanation of the questionnaire, including its axes and the number of items, will be provided. The researchers will also discuss the statistical methods used to analyze the data, utilizing a statistical package program, as well as the procedures and steps taken to ensure the study's validity and reliability.

3.1 Type of Study:

This study falls under the category of quantitative exploratory studies, which attempt to examine phenomena, identify relationships between trends, variables, movements, characteristics, problems, relationships, indicators, influencing factors, and future outcomes.

3.2 Study Methodology:

Based on the nature of the study and the information to be obtained, the current study employed a descriptive-analytical method using a sample survey technique. The descriptive method involves accurately describing the phenomenon, collecting information, classifying, arranging, understanding its origin and formation, observing its units, and analyzing and interpreting its results, and the studied facts related to the behavior of a sample of people, their situation, a series of events, or an intellectual system. The descriptive-analytical method is defined as "a particular form of gathering information about individuals' conditions, behavior, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes." (Abdel Jalil, 2021, p. 73)

3.3 Study Boundaries and Limitations:

The current study's boundaries are as follows:

- **Subject Boundaries:** The degree of influence of social media on the social relationships of youth at Birzeit University.
- **Temporal Boundaries:** The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2025 academic year.

- **Spatial Boundaries:** The Department of Media at Birzeit University, Palestine.

3.4 Study Population:

The original study population consists of all students of the Faculty of Media at Birzeit University, totaling 242 students out of 15,000 students at Birzeit University, according to an official statistic from the department for the academic year 2025. The researchers chose the study population because the youth segment is considered one of the most important and capable of understanding, categorizing, and dealing with digital communication platforms. The Department of Media at Birzeit University, established in 1996, is one of the most prestigious media departments in the Palestinian territories.

3.5 Study Sample:

The study sample was selected as follows:

3.5.1 Pilot Sample: A pilot sample of 30 youth students from Birzeit University was selected to ensure the validity of the study tools and to calculate reliability and validity.

3.5.2 Main Study Sample: The main study sample was randomly selected from the original study population of 242 students. The sample size was 142 students from the Department of Media at Birzeit University. Their ages ranged from 18 to 26 years, representing various academic years and different residential areas. The sample was selected from the Department of Media at Birzeit University, established in 1924, because it is one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Palestine. It is located in Ramallah, in the central West Bank. It is one of the most open universities in Palestine, characterized by religious diversity and a socially open atmosphere, different from other Palestinian universities. The university has a total of 15,000 students.

Table (1): Distribution of the Study Sample According to Independent (Categorical) Variables

Variable	Categories	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	35	24.6
	Female	107	75.4
	Total	142	100.0
Place of Residence	City	65	45.8
	Town	14	9.9
	Village	63	44.4
	Total	142	100.0
Father's Educational Level	High School or Less	56	39.4
	Bachelor's Degree	78	54.9
	Master's Degree or More	8	5.6
	Total	142	100.0

3.6 Study Tools:

To achieve the study's desired objectives, the researchers developed a scale to measure the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University. This was done after reviewing previous studies in this field, including: the study by Al-Nasser (2019), which explored the role of social media in affecting social and family relationships among students at the Saudi Electronic University in Riyadh, and the study by Al-Shar'aia (2018),

which examined the impact of social media use on the social relationships of Jordanian youth and the nature of social relationships through social media.

To achieve the study's objectives, the researchers relied on two tools:

3.6.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a primary tool in the study. It consists of a set of related questions and inquiries designed to achieve the study's goals. The researchers initially developed the study tool, which was then refined based on previous studies reviewed by the researchers. The form included (25) items divided into two sections: the first section covered demographic variables (general initial information about the individual), and the second section included (22) items to measure the impact of social media on social relationships among Palestinian youth.

The electronic questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms to the study sample. Data were collected and analyzed using the most widely used statistical software, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

3.6.2 Observation

Observation is defined as "the process of monitoring the behavior of a phenomenon and its components, tracking its course, directions, and relationships to interpret it and determine the relationship between variables and predicting the behavior of the phenomenon. This means that observation is a deliberate, organized, and controlled attention to the phenomenon to discover its causes and laws." (Saadi, 2016, p. 191)

Psychometric Properties of the Scale Measuring the Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships Among Youth at Birzeit University:

3.6.3 Validity of the Study Tool:

3.6.3.1 Face Validity:

To verify the face validity of the scale measuring the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University, the researchers followed these procedures: a) The researchers employed the face validity method, also known as judgmental validity. To verify the indicators of the tool, the preliminary version of the scale was presented to five experts from the Media Department at Birzeit University and a specialist from the Illinois Institute of Technology (Department of Media) in Chicago, USA. The preliminary version of the scale contained (30) items, with an agreement criterion of (80%) as the minimum for item acceptance. The scale was reviewed to ensure the clarity of the items, the procedural formulation, the relevance of the statements to the sections, its suitability for measuring the intended constructs, its alignment with the study objectives, and the accuracy of language, semantics, spelling, and grammatical formulation. Suggestions and comments led to modifications. The approval rate of the questionnaire was 95%, indicating that the scale is valid for application.

3.6.3.2 Construct Validity:

To verify construct validity, the researchers also employed a pilot study with a sample of 30 students from Birzeit University, who were not part of the target study sample. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the correlation values of the items with the total score of the scale measuring the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University, as shown in Table 2.

Table (2): Correlation Coefficients of Items in the Scale Measuring the Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships Among Youth at Birzeit University with the Total Score of the Scale (N=30):

Item	Correlation with Total Score	Item	Correlation with Total Score
1	.72**	12	.71**
2	.67**	13	.73**
3	.73**	14	.72**
4	.48**	15	.71**
5	.71**	16	.62**
6	.75**	17	.80**
7	.75**	18	.77**
8	.65**	19	.52**
9	.30*	20	.71**
10	.59**	21	.52**
11	.66**	22	.52**

*Significant at the level of significance (*p < .05) **Significant at the level of significance (**p < .01)

According to the information and data in Table 2, the researchers observed that the correlation coefficients of the items ranged from 0.30 to 0.80, with all correlations being statistically significant and acceptable. Scientifically, a correlation coefficient value less than .30 is considered weak, values within the range of (.30 to ≤ .70) are considered moderate, and values above .70 are considered strong. Based on this, the researchers did not exclude any item from the scale.

3.6.4 Reliability of the Scale:

To ensure the reliability of the scale measuring the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University, the scale was distributed to a pilot sample of 30 students at Birzeit University, who were not part of the target study sample. To accurately assess the internal consistency reliability of the scale, the researchers used Cronbach's Alpha on the pilot data after validating (22) items. The Cronbach's Alpha value was (.93), which is considered high, indicating that the tool applies to the original sample.

3.6.5 Correction of the Study Scale:

The scale measuring the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University was finalized with (22) items after assessing validity. All items represented the positive direction of the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University.

The researchers asked participants to rate their responses using a five-point Likert scale, with weights assigned to the items as follows: Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Neutral (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point).

To clarify and present the mean scores and determine the level of impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University, the scores were converted according to a range of (1-5) points, and categorized into three levels: High, Medium, and Low, using the following formula: (Maximum Score - Minimum Score) / Number of Levels = (5 - 1) / 3 = 1.33. Accordingly, response levels on the scales are as follows: (2.33 or less) Low level, (2.34 - 3.67) Medium level, and (3.68 - 5) High level.

3.7 Study Variables:

The study included several independent and dependent variables as follows:

3.7.1 Independent Variables (Categorical):

1. Gender: Two levels: (1 - Male, 2 - Female).
2. Place of Residence: Four levels: (1 - City, 2 - Town, 3 - Village).
3. Father's Educational Level: Categorized by the researchers into: (1 - Uneducated, 2 - Bachelor's Degree, 3 - Master's Degree or higher).

3.7.2 Dependent Variable:

1. The total score measures the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University.

3.8 Steps for Implementing the Study:

1. Collected all data and information from scientific sources, such as studies.
2. Defined the study population and sample.
3. Developed the tools by reviewing literature and previous scientific studies.
4. Validated the study tools.
5. Applied the tools to a pilot sample of 30 students at Birzeit University, who were not part of the main study sample, to ensure the validity and reliability of the study tools.
6. Administered the tools to the original sample, asking participants to respond honestly and objectively, with assurance that their responses would only be used for scientific purposes.
7. Entered the data into a computer and used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 26) for data analysis.
8. Discussed the results of the analysis scientifically, identified reasons, and formulated recommendations and suggestions.

3.9 Statistical Treatments:

After collecting, organizing, and arranging the information and data, the researchers used SPSS (version 26) to process the data with the following statistical treatments:

1. Means, percentages, and standard deviations.
2. Cronbach's Alpha to test reliability.
3. An Independent Samples t-test to examine the hypothesis related to gender.
4. One-Way ANOVA to examine the hypotheses pertaining to place of residence and father's educational level.
5. LSD (Least Significant Difference) test for post-hoc comparisons.
6. Pearson Correlation to test the validity of the study tool.

4. Results Related to the Study Questions:

What is the degree of impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University?

To answer this question, means, standard deviations, and percentages were calculated for the scale measuring the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University. Table 3 shows these results:

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations, Percentages, and Ratings of Items Measuring the Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships Among Youth at Birzeit University, Sorted in Descending Order

Rank	Item Number	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage	Rating
1	9	Social media helps spread lies and rumors about others	4.05	1.132	81.0%	High
2	21	I feel that relationships formed through social media are superficial	3.07	1.241	61.4%	Medium
3	11	Social media fulfills my desire for isolation and lack of interest in talking to others	2.94	1.276	58.8%	Medium
4	2	Social media has reduced direct interaction with my family members	2.89	1.195	57.8%	Medium
5	13	Using social media negatively affects my daily activities	2.86	1.302	57.2%	Medium
6	6	Social media has contributed to reducing my visits to family and relatives	2.72	1.380	54.4%	Medium
7	5	Social media has contributed to my isolation from people	2.65	1.249	53.0%	Medium
8	20	I feel that visits to my relatives have decreased due to the use of social media	2.65	1.255	53.0%	Medium
9	16	I spend more time chatting with friends on social media than with my family	2.65	1.277	53.0%	Medium
10	1	Social media has reduced my social engagements	2.59	1.143	51.8%	Medium
11	18	I feel that my daily interactions with family members have decreased since I started using social media	2.55	1.228	51.0%	Medium
12	3	Social media has caused me to neglect relationships with my acquaintances	2.52	1.146	50.4%	Medium
13	15	My family complains about the long time I spend on social media instead of with them	2.50	1.303	50.0%	Medium
14	17	I feel that my family and social activities during events have declined since I started using social media	2.49	1.224	49.8%	Medium
15	10	Social media has reduced my direct communication with my university peers	2.36	1.156	47.2%	Medium
16	14	My use of social media has led to my inability to express myself in front of others	2.36	1.175	47.2%	Medium
17	7	Social media has caused me to feel alienated from the community I live in	2.34	1.202	46.8%	Medium

18	12	My parents argue with me because I am occupied with social media	2.20	1.267	44.0%	Low
19	19	Social media has contributed to others bullying me	2.19	1.212	43.8%	Low
20	8	Social media has helped me to free myself from obeying my parents and elders	2.00	1.179	40.0%	Low
21	22	Social media has caused me to have enmity with some of my professors	1.84	1.096	36.8%	Low
22	4	Social media has provided me with inappropriate relationships (e.g., cybersex)	1.80	1.245	36.0%	Low

Overall Degree of Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships Among Youth at Birzeit University: 2.56 (Mean), 0.796 (Standard Deviation), 51.2% (Percentage) - Medium

Table 3 shows that the mean score of the sample's responses on the scale measuring the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University was (2.56) with a percentage of (51.2%), indicating a medium level of impact. The means of responses to the items ranged from (4.05 to 1.80). The item "Social media helps spread lies and rumors about others" ranked highest with a mean of (4.05) and a percentage of (81.0%), rated as high. In contrast, the item "Social media has provided me with inappropriate relationships (e.g., cybersex)" ranked lowest with a mean of (1.80) and a percentage of (36.0%), rated as low.

4.1 Reasons for These Results:

The researchers believe that the results may be attributed to the following factors:

4.1.1 Mandatory Course on Media Laws and Ethics: All media students at Birzeit University xstake a mandatory course titled "Media Laws and Ethics" in their second year. This course covers legal and ethical guidelines for posting comments, taking and sharing photos, electronic crime laws, national and international charters guaranteeing freedom of expression, the relationship between media and society, new roles introduced by new media and social networks, media ethics, the difference between criticism and defamation, and the distinction between accurate information and falsehoods. This course enhances students' awareness of how to handle social media platforms, helping them distinguish between accurate and misleading information.

4.1.2 Elective Course "Hashtag Palestine": The media department offers an elective course called "Hashtag Palestine," which includes fact-checking fake news and understanding social media policies. This course enables media students at Birzeit University to handle social media platforms professionally and accurately, helping them differentiate between correct and misleading information.

4.1.3 Compulsory New Media Courses: Students study three compulsory courses related to new media: "Social Networks," "Writing for the Web," and "Introduction to New Media." These courses cover the concept of social communication processes online, its various tools, characteristics, interactivity importance, and the impact of different media on social relationships among the audience. They also discuss digital media, its tools, and social network operations, which aid students in distinguishing between true and false information on social media.

4.1.4 Elective Photography Courses: Students take two elective photography courses: "Photojournalism" and "Advanced Photojournalism." These courses cover the theoretical and practical aspects of taking and publishing photos, and help students identify genuine images from those manipulated using Photoshop.

4.1.5 Awareness of Online Exploitation: Media students are fully aware that inappropriate sexual content shared on social media is often a "trap" set by criminals seeking financial gain. This awareness comes from the courses and awareness campaigns conducted by the department. Consequently, the item "Social media has provided me with inappropriate relationships (e.g., cybersex)" ranked lowest, with a mean of 1.80 and a percentage of 36.0%, indicating a low degree of impact.

5. Conclusion:

These courses and awareness campaigns distinguish media students at Birzeit University from other university students or community members who lack sufficient knowledge about the laws and ethics of posting on social media platforms. This increased awareness enables media students to better distinguish between true and false posts. As a result, the item "Social media helps spread lies and rumors about others" ranked highest, with a mean of 4.05 and a percentage of 81.0%, indicating a significant impact.

5.1 Results Related to the Hypotheses:

5.1.1 Results Related to the First Hypothesis:

There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha < .05$) in the mean scores of the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University, attributed to the variable of gender.

5.1.2 Testing the First Hypothesis:

To examine the first hypothesis and determine the differences based on gender, an Independent Samples t-test was used. The results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Results of the t-test for the significance of differences in the mean scores of the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University based on gender.

Variable	Gender	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-Value	Significance Level
Overall Score	Male	35	2.74	0.830	1.551	.123
	Female	107	2.50	0.780		

It is evident from Table 4 that the computed significance level on the scale of the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University was greater than the significance level set for the study ($\alpha \geq .05$). Consequently, the researchers found that there were no differences in the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University attributable to the gender variable.

The likely reason for the absence of differences in the attitudes of media students related to gender is that all students in the department, whether male or female, are exposed to the same courses and teaching content that raise their awareness and interest in verifying the content of posts, texts, comments, images, and their contexts. Mastery of verification skills and tools is one of the essential skills that media students need to acquire, regardless of gender.

5.1.3 Results Related to the Second Hypothesis:

There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha < .05$) between the mean scores of the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University attributable to the variable of place of residence.

To test the second hypothesis, the researchers calculated the mean scores and standard deviations for each variable, specifically the place of residence. Then they used One-Way ANOVA to determine the significance of differences related to the place of residence variable. Tables (5) and (6) clearly illustrate this:

Table 5: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships Based on Place of Residence

Variable	Residence	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall Score	City	65	2.45	0.782
	Town	14	2.70	0.705
	Village	63	2.63	0.827

The researchers found, after analyzing the information and data through Table 5, that there were apparent differences between the mean scores. To determine whether these differences reached the level of statistical significance, the researchers used One-Way ANOVA, and Table 6 illustrates this:

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA Results for the Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships Based on Place of Residence

Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Value	Significance Level
Overall Score	Between Groups	1.334	2	0.667	1.052	.352
	Within Groups	88.092	139	0.634		
	Total	89.426	141			

From Table 6, it is evident that the calculated significance level for the measure of the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University was greater than the predetermined significance level of the study ($.05 \geq \alpha$). This indicates that there are no significant differences in the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University attributed to the variable of place of residence.

The lack of differences in the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University, attributed to place of residence, is likely due to the absence of differences between students from cities and towns compared to students from villages and refugee camps. This is because communication technologies have developed in various forms across most of the Palestinian territories, and the proliferation of mobile phones means they are now in the hands of both young and old, in both urban and rural areas of Palestine. This has led to similar patterns of interaction and social relationships on social media, with no notable differences between cities, characterized by individualism, privacy, and self-centeredness, and villages and refugee camps, which often feature extended family structures and tribal cultures.

Evidence of this is the increasing use of digital devices and smartphones among users of virtual platforms in the Palestinian territories. For example, the social media monitoring company Epok released its annual report on the state of social media in Palestine for 2021.

According to the report, "Facebook" usage in Palestine reached 92.2%, followed by "WhatsApp" at 72.3%, and "Instagram" as the third most used application (Quds, 2022).

5.1.4 Results Related to Hypothesis Three:

There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha < .05$) between the means of the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University, attributed to the variable of the father's educational level.

To test Hypothesis Three, the researchers calculated the mean scores and standard deviations for each father's educational level. Then they used One-Way ANOVA to determine the significance of the differences attributed to the father's educational level. Tables 7 and 8 illustrate this clearly:

Table 7: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships Based on Father's Educational Level

Variable	Educational Level	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall Score	High School or Less	56	2.39	0.725
	Bachelor's	78	2.71	0.799
	Master's or Higher	8	2.26	1.021

It is apparent from Table 7 that there are noticeable differences between the mean scores.

To determine whether these differences and results reached statistical significance, the researchers used One-Way ANOVA, and Table 8 illustrates this:

Table 8: One-Way ANOVA Results for the Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships Based on Father's Educational Level

Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Value	Significance Level
Overall Score	Between Groups	4.039	2	2.019	3.287	.040*
	Within Groups	85.388	139	0.614		
	Total	89.426	141			

(*Statistically significant at the level $p < .05$)

It is evident from Table 8 that the calculated significance level for the measure of the impact of social media on the social relationships of youth at Birzeit University was lower than the predetermined significance level of the study ($.05 \geq \alpha$). Consequently, the data and results show that there are differences in the impact of social media attributed to the variable of the father's educational level.

To identify the location of the differences between the mean scores of the measure of the impact of social media on the social relationships of youth at Birzeit University attributed to the father's educational level, an LSD test was conducted, and Table 9 illustrates this:

Table 9: LSD Post-Hoc Test Results for Mean Comparisons Based on Father's Educational Level

Variable	Educational Level	Mean	High School or Less	Bachelor's	Master's or Higher
Overall Score	High School or Less	2.39		-0.317*	-0.130
	Bachelor's	2.71			-0.187
	Master's or Higher	2.26			

(*Statistically significant at the level $p < .05$)

From Table 9, the following is evident:

- There are statistically significant differences at the significance level ($.05 \geq \alpha$) in the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University, attributed to the variable of the father's educational level between (high school or less) and (bachelor's degree), with the differences favoring the (bachelor's degree) group.

The researchers attribute the differences in the impact of social media on social relationships among youth at Birzeit University to the father's educational level, between (high school or less) and (bachelor's degree). The more educated and cultured the father is, the more aware, perceptive, attentive, and cautious the children are regarding the impact of social media platforms and how to handle them, thus avoiding critical mistakes.

Despite the decline in traditional family roles due to the dominance of technology and social media platforms, the majority of children spend most of their time outside the home with friends or on social media platforms at home, often without direct interaction with their father, especially if he is not highly educated or culturally well-off. Usually, children spend more time at university, on public transportation, and on social media platforms than they do with their family. It is no secret that the family has undergone profound transformations, resulting in a lack of dialogue, increased isolation, individualism, fragmentation, and estrangement.

Family members now live a life of isolation, even though they are together, with each person engrossed in their phone, which has become closer to them than other family members. This is due to the clear absence of paternal authority and the decline of the father's traditional role, which once dominated every detail in the home, especially if he is not well-educated or culturally aware.

6.Recommendations:

In light of the study results and discussion, several recommendations emerged, including:

1. We recommend conducting virtual media campaigns to activate programs, events, and guidance seminars, and to make significant efforts to work with youth by organizing conferences and workshops on the importance of face-to-face and participatory relationships during social events. This is necessary to avoid relying solely on virtual relationships, as these can have a lasting impact on a young person's personality and development.
2. It is crucial to launch intensive media campaigns, both in traditional and new media, to mitigate the negative impact of social media platforms on social relationships among young people.
3. We urge researchers and academics to conduct ongoing scientific studies on the use of new media and their impact on social relationships among young people. Additionally, intensive media campaigns should be conducted in virtual communities to provide guidelines, legal regulations, and monitoring of internet users, warning them against legal and ethical violations that could lead to severe consequences.
4. We urge Arab universities to include media literacy courses as an elective requirement for students, aiming to mitigate the negative effects of social media platforms and educate them about media ethics and laws.

5. We recommend that universities raise awareness among students about the benefits of digital platforms for university students and educate youth on how to use these platforms beneficially without adversely affecting their lives.
6. Conduct digital campaigns in both traditional and virtual media to encourage students to avoid spending excessive hours on social media.

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