

A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the effects of using social media communication on family relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A quantitative methodology with a descriptive design was used to determine the relationship between the independent variable (family relationships) and the dependent variable (social media communication). There were 499 participants involved in this research survey, and their ages ranged from 20-50 years up for both males and females. The research shows that there is no significant social media communication effect on relationships between family members, including husband and wife and parent-children, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The finding shows that participants do not agree that social media influences relationships with married partners and family members. Even though the usage of social media has become a phenomenon in recent days, Saudi Arabian families are still keeping their strong and traditional relationships.

Keywords: social media effects, family relationship, usage of social media communications, effects of social media communications on family relationship, marriage and social media

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Are social media networks attacking our relationships? The new social media communication known as social media networks has become a phenomena in recent days. Danah and Nicole (2007) defined social media or social networks as web-based services that facilitates people's interaction and build their profile in specific system. Also, it allows people to communicate and share different things via this system. In addition, Messaoudene and Alaeed (2012) defined social media communication as a group of global social networks that connected a huge number of devices around the world that creates a vast connection. These networks have a high speed of information exchange by developmental technology.

Since social media communication technologies have appeared, they have been affected by human behavior, thought, relationship, and life styles. These social networks attracted people around the world because it gives them a chance to communicate with other people. Also, it is the best source to follow news, give an opinion, share moments, and meet new friends, provide entertainment and more. These factors have shifted the societal dynamics in terms of social interaction. According to Albayan Magazine (2010), "social media makes the world as a small village in terms of easiness of communication and exchange of information

and experiences.” Consequently, social media has been an important tool. As stated above, people can benefit from social media to communicate with others, listen to news or events, and participate in social activities.

Statement of the Study Issue

For the past 10 years, it has become apparent that there has been a more rapid increase in the use of social media communication in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A). Saudi’s society has become more interested in the usage of social media networks, which have been become a real phenomenon. According to the website Semoicast (2012), Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, ranks 10th worldwide for the amount of tweets posted in Twitter. Moreover, people in the K.S.A. use social media networks to discuss social issues, share pictures, post daily events, meet new friends, share knowledge, communicate with other people, and have fun. As a result, people in the K.S.A. have spent most of their time sitting and using their devices, especially since smart phones and tablet devices were invented.

In the K. S. A., smart phones and tablet devices help increase the number of social media websites. Also, these websites developed more applications that allow people to communicate by voice or chatting. They connect people from different nations. On the other side of the issue, the increased usage of communication using social media networks has contributed to increasing gaps between family members, specifically inter- relationships, and between other relationships as well, generally intra-relationships. There are many factors that influence individuals spending significant time using social media communication, which in turn influence their social life. Social networks dominate people’s time because they spent most of their time behind their phone or computer. This is because of the absent of family connection and social interaction (Messaudene & Alaeed, 2012). In fact, since many people spend their time using social media, weakness will be the communication between spouses or between parents with their children.

Additionally, the absence of family interactions affect couples in Saudi Arabia. Social media communication is playing a role in causes of divorce in Saudi’s family today. It is one factor that has been an issue in recently divorced Saudi’s couple. As a consequence, all family members would be affected by this issue. This study focuses on the impact of using social media networks on family’s relationships in Saudi Arabia.

Purpose of the Study

This study intends to investigate the effects of using social media communication between family members in the K.S.A. For example, it examines the degree to which social networks impact family relationships in Saudi Arabia. In addition, this study addresses factors that contribute to reasons why Saudi

families communicate using social media networks and how to alleviate this problem for the future in the Saudi society.

Also, it discovers possible reasons for, factors of, and solutions to social media's impact on relationships in the Saudi family. This study detects whether social media communication has an impact on the family interactions between husband and wife and parents with their children.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study were as follows:

R1: Is there a statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and the relationship between married couples in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

R2: Is there a statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and family relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

Hypotheses

H1: There is no statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and the relationship among married couples in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

H2: There is no statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and family relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Significance of the Study

This study attempts to recognize the impact of social communication on family relationships. Also, the present study helps understand how familial relationships have changed after the emergence of social networking. In addition, this study demonstrates how social media networks affect the relationships among families in Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, this study helps families be knowledgeable and aware about the impact of using social media networks between familial relationships.

Summary

In this chapter, the present study introduced how the social media networks in Saudi Arabia become a phenomena. The study's main idea is the impact of social media communication between family relationships in the K.S.A.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The proliferation of social media technologies and the accessibility and portability of the internet through mobile phones and tablets has brought about worldwide connectivity. One country in the Middle East, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.) has, in recent years, continued to increase its internet activities. According to a report by We Are Social, the data for average number of hours per day spent on the internet in K.S.A. is five hours from a laptop or desktop device and three hours if it is accessed through a mobile device. As for time spent on social media, data from We Are Social (2014) tells us that K.S.A.'s average number of hours spent on social media is 2.8 hours (Kemp, 2014). The paper attempts to investigate whether the prevalence of social media sites affect the most important social group in the K.S.A. which is the family (North & Tripp, 2009).

Family relationships are at the heart of human lives (Salmon & Shackelford, 2007). Since families in the K.S.A. are more self-contained, and there are several generations living under one roof, questions arise about the influence that social media brings to these families, and its effects on the fabric of life in that country. We shall take a look at various theoretical perspectives and build upon a framework to further understand the perspective of social media communication and familial relationships in Saudi Arabia.

Historical Perspective

Communication is the main way that we engage our family members.

Researchers on family and communication generally see a pattern of change over the past two decades on the values and behaviors that affect family structures. According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2000), communication plays a central role in the family.

According to anthropologist Edward T. Hall, cultural norms impact communication (Adler, Rosenfeld & Proctor, 2012). Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2000), attempted to define the family communication environment. In their explanation of family communication patterns, they mentioned research on two beliefs that families have on communication: centrality of conversation and conformity orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2000). The first belief of family communication is conversation orientation, which is the degree to which families create an atmosphere where everyone is encouraged to participate in unrestrained interaction on a wide spectrum of topics.

Families on the high end of conversation orientation spend a lot of time interacting with each other; they share their individual activities, thoughts, and feelings with other family members. Family decisions, plans, and activities are discussed with everyone. However, families on the low end of the conversation orientation spectrum interact less frequently with each other and only a few topics are discussed openly to

each other and not everyone's input is sought for family decisions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2000). The underlying implication of a high conversation orientation is the belief that frequent and open communication is essential to an enjoyable and rewarding family life. Those families that fall on the low end of the spectrum believe otherwise. The second belief about family communication is conformity orientation. This refers to the extent to which families stress an atmosphere of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs. Families on the high end of this dimension exemplify a unified stance on attitudes, values, and beliefs. Their family interactions typically focus on harmony, conflict avoidance, and the interdependence of family members. Families on the low end of this spectrum are characterized by family members having independent beliefs, and they may have differing attitudes or beliefs towards certain things. High conformity orientations are typically those families with a traditional family structure wherein the structure is cohesive and hierarchical. This means that family members will always choose their family over external relationships. Also, resources are shared by family members. They should also subordinate their personal interests and prioritize family decisions. Parents generally make the decision in this type of family. Families with low conformity orientation respect individual schedules, and they do not conform to the traditional family structure. They believe in a less cohesive unit, independence of the family, and value personal space (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2000).

The advent of social media has changed these communication paradigms of centrality of conversation and conformity orientation within families. In 2012, Porter et al. mentioned in their paper another study that looked at how social media affects relationships, and the conclusion was Internet use did not affect interpersonal relationships and closeness at all (Pollet et al., 2011 cited in Porter, et al., 2012).

However, the frequency of children nowadays being online may change that conclusion. According to Cloninger and Strembecki (2013), a study on media influence done by the Kaiser Family Foundation showed that parents often feel that technology is taking over their lives.

According to O'Keefe and Clarke-Pearson (2011), many parents today use technology well and feel comfortable and capable with the programs and online venues their children and adolescents are using. However, there are also some parents who are finding it difficult to relate to their digitally-savvy children because some of parents these lack a basic understanding of these novel forms of socialization, integral part of their children's lives. Parents often do not have either the technical abilities or time to keep pace with their children in the ever-evolving online landscape. Additionally, parents need to understand that their children's online lives are an extension of their offline activities. These conceptual and technical gaps may create relational gaps between parents and their children (O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). In a her study on social media's effects on family relationships, Glomb (2013) concluded that the greatest number of responses regarding positive effects on family relationships cited the ability to communicate with family at a distance.

A study conducted by Alsharkh (2012) surveyed 617 students from the University of Dammam. These students, aged 18 to 24 years old, were asked about the effect of social media on their families. The results showed that social media networks have made the children more independent when it comes to decision-making processes, unlike before when they have to consult for everything. Furthermore, it enhanced their ability to accept opposing opinions. Alsharkh discusses the positive as well as the negative effects of social media on Saudi families. Some of the positive effects are many Saudis realize that other people's points of view must be respected. Being closed-off and brought up in a cloistered environment, it is only with their exposure to social media that Saudis are being exposed to differing views and opinions of people from the outside world and discovering that they are many different kinds of people in the world today.

Because of social media, females have become more open minded and more aware of the wider characteristics of men within their society (Al Saggaf, 2004 cited in Alsharkh, 2012). Furthermore, hierarchy is so significant in Saudi culture, and younger people are always expected not to publicly express themselves and their ideas. Children in families are always reminded not to talk in the presence of elders. However, social media has given Saudi families the confidence to express themselves online and stand respect others' opinions. Some negative effects on social media for Saudi families are that there are cases when it causes infidelity in marriages since it is easy to maintain casual relationships in social media. Some respondents admitted to neglecting their family commitments because they are too busy on social media. The amount of family bonding, recreation, and physical conversations significantly decreased because of social media. "Taking into account that family ties and relationships with relatives, according to religion, are very important, participation in online forums could be a danger to the fabric of the family structure" (Al Saggaf, 2004 cited in Alsharkh, 2012). The findings led Alsharkh (2012) to conclude that social media has the potential to change Saudi Arabian family values, but the family structure is not changing significantly and the youth are still holding on to traditional family values despite the proliferation of social media.

Social Media Communication Technologies

Since we have established that communication is important among families, we shall seek to investigate what is fast becoming the mode of communication people today, especially children who were born into this world without knowing anything else. We are talking about social media communication. It is indeed a fact that globalization has turned the world into one global village. "Members of every nation are connected by communication technology" (Adler, Rosenfeld & Proctor, 2012). Social media communication has radically changed the way we interact with each other. We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2)

articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Social media's effect on our ability to interact and communicate is evident through all areas of society and has great impact on interpersonal communication (Keller, 2013). Keller (2013) further states that according to Professor Paul Booth, of DePaul University Chicago, "There has been a shift in the way we communicate; rather than face to face interaction, we're tending to prefer mediated communication...we'd rather e-mail than meet; we'd rather text than talk on the phone" (p.10). Certainly, social media has affected how we communicate and engage with one another across all venues and ages.

Booth further mentions that studies have evidenced that people are becoming more and more social and more interactive with each other, just on a different platform (Keller, 2013).

The style of communication has changed so that we are not meeting face-to-face as often as we used to. Since modalities are changing, the things that are happening online now with children will more than likely happen offline also. Keller (2013) says that there are three key issues that are now surfacing when it comes to people's communication styles as a result of the prevalence of social media: first, in communicating by social media, we tend to trust people on the other end of the communication just as we do when we are face-to-face, so we tend to be more open.

Second, our social connections are not strengthened as much through social media – they still remain within the status quo despite the constant communication. Third, we tend to only follow and interact with people who share our own points of view, so we are not getting various angles, as we tend to have during face-to-face communication.

Especially among preadolescents and adolescents, much of their interaction occurs via smartphones or on social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. There are several benefits to social networking outlined by Bauchner (2011) such as enhanced communication with family and friends, opportunities for community engagement, and the collaboration and exchange of ideas. However, the risks far outweigh the benefits in this case. The risks, are, cyberbullying, online harassment, sexting, Facebook depression and Internet addiction, exposure to inappropriate content, privacy concerns, and a compromised reputation via digital footprint. Dr. Bauchner (2011) advises parents to talk to their children about their use of social media, encourage regular family meetings to discuss online issues, and supervise online activities.

The prevalence of social media in Saudi Arabia is evidenced by the following statistics from The Social Clinic (2013). In 2013, 7.8 million Saudis were on Facebook, and 5 million of these users accessed it via mobile device. Facebook's mobile users were increased more than 150% in Saudi Arabia in 2013. Seventy-four percent of these were men, while 26% were women. The largest age group who accessed Facebook are

between the ages of 26 to 34 year olds, while the second largest age group was between 18 to 25 years old. As for Twitter users in Saudi Arabia, there are also more than 5 million users who are active on Twitter. Seventy-three percent of Twitter users in the country access it via mobile, and there are 150 million tweets per month on the average. In fact, Twitter penetration of internet users in K.S.A. is the highest in the world at 40%.

Incidentally, Saudi Arabia also has the world's highest YouTube use per capita with 90 million views per day (Black, 2013). It may seem surprising that an absolute monarchy with no political parties, enforced gender segregation, and very strict morality codes should have such a phenomenally huge and popular social media world. Saudis are not allowed to tweet highly controversial or anti-Islamic messages – at the risk of imprisonment or even death. Saudis tweet in their millions to exchange clean jokes, talk about their jobs, and air out political views (Black, 2013). Furthermore, according to Black (2013), social media usage is monitored strictly by authorities and can be silenced anytime when deemed too subversive. There have been arrests because of Twitter messages sent promoted what was regarded as undermining the government.

The explanation of social media's phenomenal growth in Saudi Arabia, according to Black (2013) is that their mainstream media only shows dreary state-run television programs and safe international TV programs, since it is government-controlled; the sheer boredom of a country where 70% is under 30, where majority can afford smartphones, religious police patrol public spaces and there are virtually nonexistent cinemas, bars or clubs. Educationalist Fawziah al-Bakr says, Twitter and YouTube replace the real world for many Saudis. Here there are no restrictions. They need these things to escape. With the increasing usage of social media in Saudi Arabia, the Saudis are empowered to communicate and express their sentiments in online communities. This is something that has not happened before – online communities have no physical and gender segregation based on the norms of religion. Despite the limitations of gender segregation and political silence – Saudis have become the most active users of social media in the Middle East.

Social media will continue to become increasingly integrated into the normal human experience, even in such a restricted Islamic nation as Saudi Arabia. Other communications technologies that preceded social media have been integrated, so in the near future it will be totally integrated as part and parcel of everyday life. The changes that result from social media communication is doing and the impact that it has for the future certainly has a huge impact on our relationships, particularly family relationships.

Family Relationships in Saudi Arabia

The most important social group in Saudi Arabia is the family. Extended families with three to four generations live under one roof, usually in sprawling houses with high walls. Because of the oil boom, families of the Arab and Islamic nation of Saudi Arabia are generally well-off and the children are well-provided for and tend to be indulged (North & Tripp, 2009). Since 1932, the House of Saud has maintained tight control as

monarchs over this oil-rich desert land of the Arabian Peninsula, but their power is shared in an unwritten agreement with the powerful Islamic clerics who are the guardians of Wahhābism, a branch of Sunni Islam. Since this is a strict and prohibitive Islamic State with laws based upon the tenets of Islam, the Shaira law, families, especially women, just stay at home and their lives revolve around the extended family and close friends. The oldest male, of course, is the head of the family. Family identity was tied to the father, since the children are considered to belong to him and not the mother. Saudi Arabia defines its families through patrilineal descent.

According to North and Tripp (2009), the ideal home for a Saudi is a self-contained villa where neighbors cannot peer into what is happening within. They prefer houses with high walls, and within those walls houses extended families are connected to each other in what can be described as a walled estate. There is much social activity happening among the houses of relatives, but Saudis, especially women, rarely go beyond their circles. Traditionally, Saudi families have a tendency to be intimately involved with each other's affairs, and children stay in the home until adulthood.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is characterized by a collectivistic culture, in which loyalties and obligations are to the in-group and the extended family. Families all share corporate identity and the esteem and honor of the family are held in high regard, and family members should constantly live up to that honor. Islamic values such as generosity, selflessness, and hospitality, and a willingness to support other family and assume responsibility for their errors are valued more highly than the rest (Adler, Rosenfeld & Proctor, 2012).

Saudi children, growing up indulged within the loving care of the women in the family, also grew up with religious instruction as the core curriculum. Therefore, young people in Saudi are generally respectful, faithful in their religious duties and maintain strong family ties. Children tend to find their amusements inside the home instead of going out or hanging out, as they say in the West. Since girls are not allowed to go out, only Saudi boys gather with their friends at malls, where behavior codes are fairly relaxed (North & Tripp, 2009).

Most families in Saudi Arabia only have one single breadwinner that is the father, since women are not permitted to work. Within the home, people familiar with the workings of Saudi families may claim that women may wield more influence than appears apparent from a Westerner's viewpoint. But mostly, the role of women is subsidiary (North & Tripp, 2009).

Furthermore, Alsharkh (2012) says that Saudi Arabia's rich cultural customs and traditions limit interaction and communication within its society, especially when it

comes to young people's say on certain issues. Decisions are most often than not relegated to the male elders in the community.

Afrocentric Perspective

The family value system and culture of Saudi Arabia may be compared to some relevant concepts of the Afrocentric perspective, as I see parallels of what was discussed in this particular perspective with that of the Saudi family experience. Even if Afrocentricity in itself is typically ascribed to people of African descent, the theoretical underpinnings of Afrocentrism should not be relegated to just one culture. According to Ince (2009), to subscribe to Afrocentricity does not exclude other theoretical frameworks, or suggest that other groups do not have the right to define their world. Schiele (2000, cited in Ince, 2009) defined the Afrocentric worldview as a set of philosophical assumptions that are believed to have emanated from common cultural themes of traditional Africa and have survived the effects of European and Arab colonization and imperialism. The set of philosophical assumptions in Afrocentrism that I deem to be connected to Saudi Arabia's family and cultural dynamics, especially connected to communication are discussed here.

To quote President Obama (2007, cited in Ince, 2009), it is essential not to become trapped in cynicism or despair or be robbed of our agency. Retaining agency means that the Afrocentric perspective also involved liberation from colonialism and cultural oppression (Nobles, 1986 & Swignoski, 1996 cited in Ince, 2009). Though Saudis were not physically chained and shackled and were not physical slaves, many Saudis feel culturally oppressed just the same, especially the women. For many, the chains that bound Saudis are mental, emotional, and social chains that permeated their thought processes and culture for years and years.

According to Molefi Kete Asante, the communal cognitive will is "the overwhelming power of a group of people thinking in the same direction." It is not unity in the traditional sense of a group of people coming together to achieve a single purpose; it is a full spiritual and intellectual commitment to a vision which constitutes the communal cognitive imperative (Modupe, n.d.). Many Saudis, for the longest time, have adhered to a communal cognitive will brought about by centuries of Islamic adherence to rules and regulations. What some traditionalists are aiming to do is to preserve that overwhelming power of a group of people thinking in the same direction. However with social media, more and more Saudis, especially the youth and women, are getting ideas that are not part of the communal cognitive will.

The Afrocentric perspective places emphasis on ancient African customs and traditions embedded in the consciousness of people and directly connected to rituals. The Saudi culture also gives a lot of importance to customs and traditions, and they are embedded within the moral fabric of society. Similarly, these customs and traditions that are highly regarded by the Saudi culture manifest themselves in religious rituals to which every citizen of Saudi Arabia must adhere. Religious police are employed to specifically monitor any misdemeanors with regards to noncompliance to tradition.

Some Afrocentric theorists on the other hand, such as Covin (1991, cited in Socha & Diggs, 2009) featured as one of his constructs in his Afrocentric framework, “resistance to the assault upon traditional values by Europeans” (p.13-14). For Saudis, we can say that there is an assault on their traditional values with the proliferation of social media that opened up their world considerably and allowed them to see the greater world beyond their cloistered families, religion, and culture. As for resistance to that assault, we can view this as Saudis trying to preserve their values and traditions while embracing social media. Following an Afrocentric perspective, it is important to understand that family communication is complex and should be understood from the point of view of their ethnic cultural heritage. For instance, within a given cultural group, a family may hold different orientations to different dimensions of their ethnic culture which results in variations in the content and patterns of their communication with each other (Socha & Diggs, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

The family, being an important and significant parcel of Saudi society, is the focus first and foremost for the influences that social media might have. Since the family is the most basic unit, and a significant unit at that, when it starts to break down it is likely that like dominoes all other societal forces will break down as well. Looking at a family systems theory that emphasizes the complexity as well as the inevitable connectedness of a family will help us better understand family dynamics and relationships.

The family systems theory views the family as an emotional unit and utilizes systems thinking to describe the complex interactions within the family emotional unit. A system, is a set of objects, that have attributes and are linked together in a network, through which there are flows (Hazell, 2006). It is inherent for every family and all its members to be inter-connected, most especially on an emotional level. Whether we admit or not, family members significantly affect each other’s thought processes, emotional make-up, and actions. This connectedness that is inherently felt therefore require family functioning to be interdependent (Hazell, 2006).

According to Fife and Schrage (2012), like the inside of a well-oiled machine, when one family member does not function, the whole interdependence dynamic is put into the test. Everyone in the family is bounded by a set of interlaced elements. The elements of the system are each member of the family. Each individual member of the family unit should not be viewed in isolation but rather as part of the interactions, transitions, and relationships within the family. A main key tenet of the family systems theory is the major belief that what affects an individual affects everyone else in the family.

According to Morgaine (2001), families also interact in patterns that can easily be detected. These patterns emerge in a family system, and are cycles that keep on repeating. Families also have boundaries, and they are either open or closed boundary systems. The closed boundary system, that isolates members from the

environment and are self-contained, seem to characterize Saudi families very well. But with the advent of social media and its phenomenal rise in K.S.A., this might gradually evolve into an open boundary system which allows elements and situations outside the family to influence it. In a way Saudi families are already allowing elements outside the family, like social media sites, to influence them.

Fife and Schragar (2012) also reminds us that it is essential to take note that the family system is merely a sub-system, a part of a bigger system, which is the community, and this community is a place that they interact with and also influence them. The family system, in turn, is also capable of influencing the community and contribute to the maintenance of certain behavioral patterns which is part of the norm and belief system of the community.

According to Hazell (2006), it is also important to remember that family systems, have certain properties. These properties are boundaries, sub-systems contained with the family system, causality distribution, openness or closeness, which was discussed earlier, and mirroring or simultaneity.

In sum, with the recognition that familial relationships and communication is important, we have come to know that there are several dimensions of communication for each family. These dimensions may be defined within centrality of conversation and conformity orientation within families. Family communication dynamics are rapidly changing with the advent of social media. There is an identified technology gap that affects both parents' and children's relationship due to differences in perspective on how to deal, use, and react to social media.

Social media's effect on ability to interact and communicate is evident through all areas of society and has great impact on interpersonal communication between and among family members. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, there is a phenomenal growth of social media users, one of the highest in the entire world. They heavily subscribe to, use, and share via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and other social media sites.

The staggering numbers of their tweets in 2013 account for the fact that despite the restrictive Islamic country, Saudis tweet and use social media because that is a way of expressing themselves, something that they were not allowed to do, as a collective culture for the longest time.

Saudi Arabia's familial framework is very patriarchal, traditional, and values- based. Their family relationships are close, and several generations and extended family may live in one compound or close to each other. For Saudis, family togetherness and observances of religious customs hold much importance.

Those Saudis who have been exposed to social media admit that the positive effects of social media are that they have learned to express themselves and to respect each other's points of view and accept the differences in others. On the other hand, there are also some negative effects from too much social media networking among Saudis such as cyberbullying, sexting, and online harassment.

One of the main theories of Afrocentric perspective that could be applied to the relationship of social media on Saudi family relationships is their view on the communal collective will. Similarly, all families, according to the Family Systems Theory, are all interconnected and operate as one single unit, though with different functioning members. It is essential to be able to be familiar with all the elements discussed to lay the groundwork and answer the underlying question of this study.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Chapter III objectives are to provide the methodology and research design strategies. These strategies are a research design, description of the site, sample and population, instrumentation and measure, treatment of data, and limitation of the study. This section rationalizes the means by which the research was sustained and provides support to strengthen its purpose to be analytical and truthful. All these support the interpretation of the data and the conclusions.

Research Design

The chosen research design was a quantitative research. Explanatory methods featured the variables where the facts, data, and situations gathered were discussed, explored, and correlated with other data. This approach is particularly functional when performing a research wherein the data are intangible like, thoughts, feelings, and belief. Moreover, the study focused on the set conditions and the nature of surrounding data and does not concentrate on the collected facts' correlations which made the study descriptive.

The purpose of the study is to discover the influence of using social media communication between family relationships in Saudi Arabia. In this case we need to describe what extended that social media influence family relationship. Moreover, we need to investigate if there is an impact of social media among couple in Saudi Arabia.

Social media communication and family relationships are two variables that are measured. A descriptive research design is an appropriate method to describe the correlation among the variables. Descriptive research designs identify the link between variables. With descriptive design we can determine whether there is relationship between the independent variable (family relationships) and the dependent variable (social media communication). Furthermore, it provides more explanation about the variable features and function in analyzes and detect relationships between the variables.

Description of the Site

The research was conducted in the Middle Eastern country of Saudi Arabia.

According to the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia is one of the biggest countries in the Arabian countries, and it is located in the west of Asia. Saudi Arabia is known as a home of Islam because it has two holy cities called Mecca and Medina. The capital of Saudi Arabia is named Riyadh City and Arabic language is used by citizens of Saudi Arabia as a main language. Saudi's population is estimated as 27 million and 90% are Muslims.

Sample and Population

The study was conducted in Saudi Arabia. Participants were from both genders, male and female, ages 20 to 50 and up. The sample was purposive nonprobability and 499 participants completed the surveys. The researcher employed purposive sampling to select respondents. The participants were carefully selected with the goal of having subjects who each has demographics and characteristics that when integrated together, represented the entire population. Apparently, it is not only the participants, but the entire community and population. Therefore, selection of the participants was based on their characteristics and demographics. The researcher chose specific ways such as Facebook, Twitter, and email to reach the sample, and that is why the researcher used purposive sampling.

Instrumentation

Electronic surveys have been used because of the distance of the sample since all the sample was from Saudi Arabia. Survey Monkey software was sent to the sample by email, Facebook, and Twitter to reach 499 subjects. Surveys were distributed in two languages: Arabic and English. The Arabic language was dominantly used because most of the sample spoke Arabic as a native language. Questions were multiple choice and questions closed ended. In addition, questions divided into two sections. The first section indicated demographic information such as gender, marital status, group age, education, information about family members, and annual income. The second section addressed the frequency of agreement with specific statements and was designed for the purpose of answering the research questions.

The questionnaires were administered by making three online pages. The questionnaires were electronically distributed to the subjects. The researcher believes this was much better and cheaper than other approaches of data gathering. Also, the benefit of utilizing surveys is that the participants have enough time to think about their answers which could lessen the rate of errors. At the same time, they could carefully answer critical parts of the survey and feel more comfortable completing the surveys since they were not required to discuss their answers to other people in order to provide data. The researcher received approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Clark Atlanta University before the surveys were distributed.

Participants were recruited by sending a survey's links via email and use of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook.

Treatment of Data

To ensure the correct interpretation of the data, the researcher employed the accurate and correct approach for data analysis. The research method of data interpretation were chosen for this descriptive study by categorically grouping the answers by social-stratification, then the researcher was able to collate, tabulate, and examine percentages. Tables were employed to clearly present the results so that the tabulated raw data and the classifications of each participant and their answers to the others were available. Therefore, basic statistics were applied and employed, which made it easier to identify how the participants reacted to the research topic. When the completed survey questionnaires had been gathered, the statistical software package called SPSS was employed for statistical analysis of the collected data.

The tool for data gathering was structured survey questionnaires that were based on the Likert Scale. A Likert Scale was used in order to rate the scales that needed to be answered by the respondents which indicated their level of disagreement or agreement with a statement. Through rating scales, the researcher gauged opinions on the said research topic (e.g., the level to which a subject has a specific view on a range to measure dislike or like and the importance of some attributes integrated to other attributes). This is equal to the answers and weights below:

<u>Range</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
4.00	Strongly Agree
3.00	Agree
2.00	Disagree
1.00	Strongly Disagree

Limitation of the Study

There were different issues that limited the study. First of all, there were limited literatures about the impact of social media technologies on Saudi families. On other hand, as stated in the methodology, the research is a quantitative research design which probability sampling was not used for gathering the data. As a result, the findings are not generalizable but the information is still useful in establishing trends among the population.

CHAPTER IV PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the finding of the study. An electronic questionnaire was randomly distribute to male and female from Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the study is to identify the influence of using social media communication between family relationships in Saudi Arabia. The researched divided the finding in to sections: demographic data, research questions, and hypotheses.

Demographic Data

The demographic data section provides a profile of the study participants and includes gender, marital status, age group, education level, family members, and annual income. Four hundred ninety-nine participants contributed to the study and they were 169 female and 330 male from Saudi Arabia. Two hundred fifty-seven of participants were married, 208 single, 20 engaged, 9 divorced, 3 separated, and 2 widowed. Three hundred forty-five participants were between the ages of 20-29, 136 were 30-39 years of age, 13 were 40-49 years of age and 5 were 50 or older. Educational levels among participants ware 24 diplomas, 50 have high school degree, 216 participants have bachelor's degree, and 209 were higher education. The participants family members are 29 (none), 155 (1- 3), 144 (4-6), 105 (7-9), and 66 (10 and up). The participant annual income are 160 (under \$20,000), 107 (\$20,000 – 29,999), 93 (\$30,000 – 39,999), 54 (\$40,000 – 49,999), 39 (\$50,000 – 59, 999), and 46 (\$60, 000 & up).

Table (1) Demographic Profile of Study Respondents (N = 499)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	169	33.87
Male	330	66.13
Marital Status		
Married	257	51.50
Never Married	208	41.68
Engaged	20	4.01
Divorced	9	1.80
Separated	3	0.60
Widowed	2	0.40
Age Group		
29-20	345	69.14
39-30	136	27.25

Variable	Frequency	Percent
49-40	13	2.61
and older 50	5	1.00
Education		
Diploma	24	4.81
High School Degree	50	10.02
Bachelor's Degree	216	43.29
Higher Education	209	41.88
Family Members		
None	29	5.81
3-1	155	31.06
6-4	144	28.86
9-7	105	21.04
oreor m 10	66	13.23
Annual Income		
Under \$20,000	160	32.06
29,999 – 20,000\$	107	21.44
39,999 – 30,000\$	93	18.64
49,999 – 40,000\$	54	10.82
59,999 – 50,000\$	39	7.82
up & 60,000\$	46	9.22

Table 1 presents the demographic information for the participant. Typical responses in this table is married male between ages of 20-29 years who has a bachelor degree, 1-3 family members, and annual income under \$20,000.

Table (2) I use social media communication to express my feelings to my wife/husband

Value	Frequency	centPer
Disagree	202	40.5
Agree	297	59.5
Total	499	100.0

Table 2 is frequency distribution of 499 participants. The table indicates that 59.5% of the participants agreed that they are using social media communication to express feeling to their partners.

Table (3) My feelings towards my partner changed negatively after I started using social media

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	202	40.5
Agree	297	59.5
Total	499	100.0

Table 3 shows that 59.0% of 499 participants agree that their feeling changed negatively after the use of social media technology towered partner.

Table (4) My feel that social media communication makes my partner not to care about me

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	350	50.1
Agree	249	49.9
Total	499	100.0

Table 4 is frequency distribution of 499 participants. The table indicates that the social media communication makes the partner not care about the other partner. The table shows that 50% of participants disagree that their partner does not care about them.

Table (5) I lose special moments with my partner because of social media communication

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	205	40.5
Agree	294	59.5
Total	499	100.0

Table 5 indicates the majority of participants of 59.5% agree that they lost special moments with their partner because of social media communication.

Table (6) Social media technologies have broken life privacy between me and my partner

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	297	59.5
Agree	202	40.5
Total	499	100.0

The higher present in Table 6 indicates that 59.5% of participants disagree that social media communications broke the life privacy between married couple in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, 40.5% of participants agree that life privacy between them and their partner was broken because of social media communications.

Table(7) I feel (suspect) my partners have other relationships because of the social media

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	366	73.3
Agree	133	26.7
Total	499	100.0

Table 7 shows that the majority of participants 73.3% disagree that they suspect their partner have other relationship because of the social media.

Table (8) I use social media communication more when sitting with my family

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	321	64.3
Agree	178	35.7
Total	499	100.0

Table 8 represents 64.3% of participants disagree that they use social media communications more when they are sitting with their family.

Table (9) I get entertained more when using social media than by sitting with my family

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	345	69.1
Agree	154	30.9
alTot	499	100.0

Table 9 shows the majority of participants 69.1% disagree that they were entertained more when using social media communications than by sitting with their family.

However, 30.9% of participants agree that they were entertained using social media communications than by sitting with their family.

Table (10) When I eat food with my family I check my social media network account

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	315	63.1
Agree	184	36.9
Total	499	100.0

Table 10 represents 63.1% of participants disagree that they check their social media network account while eating their food with family, in contrast 36.9% of participants who agree.

Table (11) When I go back home my priority will be to use social media communication

Value	Frequency	Percent
greeDisa	299	59.9
Agree	200	40.1
Total	499	100.0

Table 11 indicates that 59.9% of participants disagree that their priority when they go back home will be to use social media communications. Following by 40.1% of participants agree that social media communications is their priority when they go back home.

Table (12) I have problems with my family because of the time I spend using social media

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	320	64.1
Agree	179	35.9
Total	499	100.0

Table 12 shows 64.1% of participants disagree that they have problems with their family because of time spent using social media technologies.

Table (13) I have missed family gathering because of my usage of the social media network

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	434	87.0
Agree	65	13.0
talTo	499	100.0

Table 13 present 87.0% of participants disagree that they have missed family gathering because of the usage of social media technologies.

Table (14) Social media increases face to face communication between my family members

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	333	66.7
Agree	166	33.3
Total	499	100.0

According to Table 14, 66.7% of the participants disagree that social media increases face to face communication between their family members.

Table (15) Social media communication decreases the attention on children

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	133	26.7

Value	Frequency	Percent
Agree	366	73.3
Total	499	100.0

Table 15 indicates that 73.3% of participants agree that social media communication decreases the attention on children.

Table (16) Social media communication decreases my interaction with my family

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	175	35.1
Agree	324	64.9
Total	499	100.0

Table 16 shows that 64.9% of participants, which is the majority, agree that social media communication decreases their interaction with family.

Table (17) Computed Variable: Influence of social media on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	405	81.2
Agree	94	18.8
Total	499	100.0

Table 17 shows that 81.2% participants disagree that there is an influence of social media communication on family relationships in Saudi Arabia.

Table (18) Computed Variable: The influence of social media on married partner relationships

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	413	82.8
Agree	86	17.2
Total	499	100.0

Table 18 indicated that 82.8% of participants disagree that social media communication influences their relationship with their married partner.

Table (19) Computed Variable: The influence of social media on family relationships

Value	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	449	90.0
Agree	50	10.0
Total	499	100.0

Table 19 indicated that 90.0% of participants disagree that social media communication influences their relationship with family members.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Is there a statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and the relationship between married couples in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and the relationship among married couples in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Research Question 2: Is there a statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and family relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and family relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Table (20) Cross-Tabulation: Social Media by Married Partner Relationships

	<u>Social Media</u>				Total	
	Disagree		Agree			
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Married Partner Relationship						
Disagree	363	72.7	50	10.0	413	82.8
Agree	42	8.4	44	8.8	86	17.2
Total	405	81.2	94	18.8	499	100.0
000. = Square-Chi 1 df						

As indicated in Table 20, the chi-square statistical test for significance was applied and was not accepted (.000), indicating that there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables of social media communication and married couple relationship at the .05 level of probability. Of the 499 participants, 363 (72.7%) of them reported that they disagree that social media communication influences their relationship with their married partner.

Table (21) Cross Tabulation: Social Media by Family Relationships

	Disagree		Agree		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Family Relationship						
Disagree	380	76.2	69	13.8	449	90.0
Agree	25	5.0	25	5.0	50	10.0
Total	405	81.2	94	18.8	499	100.0
Square = .000-Chi	df 1					

As indicated in Table 21, the chi-square statistical test for significance was applied and was not accepted (.000), indicating that there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables of social media communication and family relationship at the .05 level of probability. Of the 499 participants, 380 (76.2%) of them reported that they disagree that social media communication influence their relationship with their family members.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter is a recap the main purpose of the paper, which is to investigate the effects of the prolific usage of social media communication among family members in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It recalls the research questions presented in the paper, as well as highlights the literature reviewed in relation to the research questions and the result of the data analysis. It also discusses how the results answer the main question that the paper proposed, about the effects of using social media on families in Saudi Arabia. Recommendations on topics for further investigation, and courses of actions that could be taken based on the results of the study are also presented.

Summary of the Study

The overarching question that this paper investigated was what are the various effects of using social media communication among family members in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This included identifying degree to which social network has an impact on family relationships, factors that contribute to Saudi's prolific use of social media networks, and way to solve the negative effects, if there is any, of social media in Saudi society. It also looks at the future impact on Saudi society.

The two questions that were placed under empirical scrutiny, in the light of the overarching investigations, are (1) is there a statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and relationship between married couples in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia? and (2) is there a statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and family relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

The review of literature tells us that this study is significant because out of all the countries in the Middle East, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.) has, in recent years, continued to increase its internet activities. A report by We are Social (2014) tells us that the average number of hours per day spent on the internet in K.S.A. is 5 hours from a laptop or desktop device and 3 hours if it is accessed through a mobile device, and time spent on social media is at an average of 2.8 hours. In fact, Twitter usage in K.S.A. is the highest in the world at 40%. This phenomenon has spawned several studies, including one from the University of Dammam, in which students are interviewed about the effects of social media on their families (Alsharkh, 2012). The results showed that children have become more independent when it comes to decision making and that they have become more open in respecting different opinions of people. This is significant in Saudi culture because younger people are always expected not to publicly express themselves and their ideas. Children in families are always reminded not to talk in the presence of elders.

However, social media has given Saudi families the confidence to express themselves online and stand respect others' opinions. Some respondents admitted to neglecting their family commitments because they are too busy on social media. The amount of family bonding, recreation, and physical conversations significantly decreased because of social media. "Taking into account that family ties and relationships with relatives, according to religion, are very important, participation in online forums could be a danger to the fabric of the family structure" (Al Saggaf, 2004 cited in Alsharkh, 2012 , p. 28). The findings led Alsharkh (2012) to conclude that social media has the potential to change Saudi Arabian family values. However, the family structure is not changing significantly, and the youth are still holding on to traditional family values despite the proliferation of social media.

For this paper, the results for the first question, determining a statistical relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and the relationship between married couples in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, shows that 72.7% do not agree that social media communication influences their relationship with their married partner. There is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables of social media communication and married couple relationship at the .05 level of probability. The results for the second question, determining whether there is a statistically relationship between the influence of social media communication technologies and family relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is that 76.2% of respondents reported that they do not agree that social media communication influence their relationship with their family members. There is no statistical significant relationship between the two variables of social media communication and family relationship at the .05 level of probability.

Based on the results, the answer to the main question that was presented in this paper is that there is no significant effect on the relationship among family members, including husband and wife and parent-children relationships, and social media communication in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A significant percentage, more than 70% of the respondents, said that they do not agree that social media influences relationships with married partners and family members. Other factors that respondents all agree that influence family relationships with regards to the use of social media are the following: the first one is the decrease of Saudi parents' attention to their children; the second one is the decrease of face-to-face communication among Saudi family members. Also, another factor is that people also missed out on the all-important family gathering because of social media usage. However, the following family activities have not been affected by social media usage: priorities of familial duty at home, eating with their families, usage of social media when sitting with family members, and suspicion of extramarital relationships. With this in mind, the close-knit family relationships are affected in Saudi's face-to-face interaction with their spouses and children. However, respondents were still aware of what they should prioritize and their cultural and religious values are still strong because they still agree that spending time with family and not having extra-marital relationships are most important. For Saudis, close-knit family relationships are still at the top of their priority list more than spending time with social media. Being able to protect these values by constantly reminding families of their importance will preserve the cultural future of Saudi society.

The findings in this paper agree with the previous researches cited in the review of literature. Case in point, the findings of Alsharkh (2012) concluded that social media has the potential to change Saudi Arabian family values, but the family structure is not changing significantly and the youth are still holding on to traditional family values despite the proliferation of social media. The conclusion of Alsharkh corroborates the conclusions of this research. Saudis, particularly the youth, still hold on to traditional family values despite the

prolific use of social media in the country. The review of literature also mentioned that the points of view of younger Saudi citizens, and even some adults, especially women, are changing because of exposure to social media. Yes, they are indeed being exposed to cultures and beliefs other than what their religious upbringing espouses, and there might be slight shifts in thinking which affect what they have been taught. In accordance to the review and the results of this study, these non- traditional ideas have the potential to germinate and probably cause changes in ways of thinking of Saudi families. It is inevitable that these ideas that are not traditionally espoused in the country might influence families' ways of thinking in the long run. An example is of anonymous tweets on Twitter from young Saudis expressing their frustrations about the country's repressive nature.

Implications for Social Work

Social workers in Saudi Arabia who work with children and families must be able to fully understand the cultural and social implications of the phenomena of the proliferation of social media in the country. While it is recommended to have a regulated policy on the access of social media for young people, to ensure age-appropriate decisions for the younger population, much in the same way that one does it in democratic countries such as the United States, the role of the social worker should serve as a guide for impressionable young minds with the goal of preserving Saudi Arabia's cultural identity. Social workers must also be able to monitor whether parents are able to regulate what their children can access online. Social workers' role, aside from guiding and assisting young people and consequently, families, to preserve the country's cultural identity, is also to make sure that the personal development of children is doing well, and that family relationships are healthy and thriving.

Family time should also be preserved by having government-led programs that would maximize family togetherness while being involved in social media. Social workers could spearhead facilitation of suggested activities such as competitions that would require families to join or forums that would encourage open but anonymous communication between children and parents. They can just harmlessly open up topics concerning family issues, not just limited to social media but covering different topics as well. The topics could be started or suggested by social workers who act as moderators. The moderators will facilitate the discussion, and synthesize, and give recommendations for courses of action to be taken with the goal of further understanding of family members.

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دراسة أثر استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على العلاقات بين أفراد الأسرة في المملكة العربية السعودية

الملخص: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على أثر استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على العلاقات بين أفراد الأسرة في المملكة العربية السعودية. الدراسة كانت دراسة وصفية وذلك لتحديد العلاقة بين المتغير المستقل (العلاقات الأسرية) والمتغير التابع (وسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي) وتم اتباع المنهج الكمي حيث تم استخدام الاستبيان لجمع المعلومات. عينة البحث كانت 499 تتراوح أعمارهم ما بين 20 إلى 50 عاما من كلا الجنسين ذكر وأنثى. وأشارت نتائج البحث بأنه لا يوجد تأثير لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على العلاقات بين أفراد الأسرة، بما في ذلك الزوج والزوجة والوالدين مع أبنائهم في المملكة العربية السعودية. حيث أظهرت النتائج بأن معظم المشاركين في البحث لا يتفقون على أن هناك تأثيراً من استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على علاقاتهم الزوجية ولا على علاقة أفراد الأسرة فيما بينهم. أيضا أظهرت الدراسة بأنه على الرغم من أن استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في المملكة العربية السعودية أصبح ظاهرة في وقتنا الحالي، إلا أن الأسرة السعودية لاتزال تحتفظ بعلاقاتها القوية والتقليدية بين أفرادها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أئرووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، العلاقات بين أفراد الأسرة، استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على العلاقات بين أفراد الأسرة