



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Digital Humanities***Family relations in the age of social media: How Jordanians view the influence of Facebook and WhatsApp**Noor Darwish¹, Taha Darwish², Ahmad S Haider¹¹Department of English Language and Translation, Applied Science Private University, Amman, Jordan²Department of Journalism and Digital Media, University of Petra, Amman, JordanCorrespondence: ndarweesh@asu.edu.jo**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the influence of social media platforms, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, on family life and marital relationships in Jordan, with attention to their potential link to rising divorce rates. The research addresses a growing concern about how digital communication technologies affect trust, cohesion, and everyday family interactions. A quantitative survey was conducted with 100 married participants residing in Amman, Jordan. Data were collected using structured questionnaires designed to capture perceptions of spousal trust, relationship quality, and family dynamics in relation to social media use. The findings reveal that while most respondents acknowledged the negative impact of Facebook and WhatsApp on spousal communication and family cohesion, perceptions of trust were more complex. Specifically, 72% reported no strengthening of marital bonds through social media use, yet 82% did not believe mistrust had increased. Participants attributed this to shared cultural, religious, and ethical values that reinforced marital trust. Nonetheless, over half observed that excessive time on social media disrupted face-to-face communication, family mealtimes, and overall cohesion. In conclusion, social media use among Jordanian families presents a double-edged sword: while enabling global connectivity and access to diverse perspectives, it also risks weakening intimate communication and contributing to marital discord. These findings highlight the need for further research into cultural, generational, and psychological dimensions of social media use, particularly its impact on children and long-term family stability.

KEYWORDS: divorce, Facebook depression, isolation, new media, social networking, WhatsApp

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Introduction

Social media has attracted significant scholarly attention (Haider & Al-Abbas, 2022). They are rooted in our everyday lives, offering an effective platform for communication and connection. Moreover, Deuze (2012) states that social media is the cornerstone of our everyday life. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, have altered the way people spend their time and how they communicate with each other (Jordan et al, 2014, p. 105; Miller, 2016, p. 192). A huge number of people around the world, including those in the Middle East, are turning to social platforms for news, information, entertainment, shopping, and communication (Al-Ali & Shatnawi, 2023; Al-Oudah & Al-Sharah, 2023; Al-Harasees & Thawabieh, 2022).

Moreover, “people are dealing with the internet as a solution to the problem of loneliness, helplessness, and the resulting loss of self-esteem” (Bakardjieva, 2005, p. 123). Thus, the impact of those media on individuals and groups has become a significant subject of study with the aim of exploring potential impacts on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours, prompting Silverstone (2005) to question the effects of social media on family life. In addition, Martin and Creeber (2009, P. 5) suggest that digital culture is linked to the speeding up of societal change and is causing a number of social transformations in an astonishingly short amount of time.

Facebook is a social networking site launched in 2004, and its users around the world have significantly increased from 1.94 billion to 2 billion monthly active users in June 2017. Thus, Miller (2017) addressed an extreme reading of Facebook with a proposition that Facebook radically transforms the premise and direction of social science”. Empirical evidence suggests that increased Facebook use is positively correlated with marital problems and increasing divorce rates (Abbassi and Alghamdi, 2017).

WhatsApp was established in 2009 (and assimilated by Facebook in 2014), and this prompt messaging application has reached the landmark figure of one billion users per day who actively use the platform to communicate with their friends and families.

In recent years, social media has garnered substantial attention in Jordan, serving as a socialising platform for the country’s population, particularly its youth. It appears to have had a wide influence on family life and relations. The importance of social media and its huge influence on family life in Jordan are shaping most aspects of everyday life. This research examines the perceptions of social media’s impact on families in Jordan, aiming to investigate the correlation between the use of Facebook and WhatsApp and the country’s high divorce rates. Among the Arab states, Jordan has one of the highest numbers of people using social media, with 98.7% of Jordanians now owning mobile devices (Jordan Times, 2016). Jordan also ranked third in Internet usage in the Arab world with 84% using social networking sites, at the end of May 2017 (Internet World Stats, 2017).

This study examines the positive and negative impacts of social media on family life in Jordan, as reported by platform users, specifically spouses. There have been discussions and debates in Jordanian society about the negative impacts of social media on family life, particularly in relation to divorce. The researchers are interested in whether there is a correlation between digital communication transitions and depression in young people, as well as family cohesion. Divorce rates in Jordan have dramatically increased, and many questions have been raised in Jordan about the reasons behind the increasing divorce rates.

Psychiatrists in Jordan contend that rates of depression among children and teenagers have increased over the past few years. O’Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) coined a new phrase, “Facebook depression”, which they defined as “depression that develops when preteens and teens spend a great deal of time on social media sites, such as Facebook, and then begin to exhibit classic symptoms of depression” (O’Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011, p.802), and other studies in Western countries have explored this new phenomenon. Chow and Wan (2017) conducted research about Facebook depression in which they explored the moderating roles of neuroticism, Facebook social comparison, and envy. The researchers did not find a significant statistic to prove the correlation between Facebook use and depressive symptoms, but they found “positive association between time spent on Facebook and depressive symptoms among those high in neuroticism” (Chow and Wan, 2017, p. 281). Some of the questions in the survey are, therefore, intended to determine whether there is any relation between using Facebook and depression among some teenagers and children in Jordan.

To understand the impact of social media on families in Jordan, this research investigates the following research questions:

RQ 1. To what extent does the use of social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) influence the relationship between spouses?

RQ2. Is there any correlation between divorce rates and the use of social media platforms (Facebook and WhatsApp) in Jordan?

RQ3. What are the social implications of social media use in Jordan?

RQ4. What are the positive impacts of social media on families in Jordan?

Literature Review

Research undertaken within the last few years has recognized the impact of social media on society generally and, increasingly, on specific groups such as young people. In addition, a significant number of scholars in the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States of America, and a few in the Middle East have attempted to explore the social media phenomenon and discuss its positive and negative effects on family and society. Thus, “research about social media has grown tremendously over the past couple of years” (McCorkindale and DiStaso, 2014, p. 1).

Havey and Puccio (2016) conducted a study about the influence of social media on children and teenagers, in which they explored the negative effects of using Facebook and many other social networking sites on the relationships between teens. This study is rooted in the RAP project (Raising Awareness and Prevention), founded by Allison Havey and Deana Puccio in 2012, to raise awareness about the negative effects of using social media on the personal safety of children and teens. By July 2016, the RAP project had reached over 16,000 students in Scotland and England and covered more than 100 schools. Havey and Puccio (2016) claim that using social media has many negative and unwanted effects on children and teens, such as eating disorders, body image issues, and low self-esteem. Significantly, the researchers highlighted some of the signs parents should be concerned about if they notice them with their children and teens, such as: “If teen becomes socially withdrawn and his behavior changes, if they are adamant about the exact time they need to be online, and if they change the screen when their parents walk into their rooms” (Havey and Puccio, 2016, p. 75).

A qualitative analysis of data collected from parents in Melbourne, Australia, explored parental perceptions of their adolescents’ use of social media and access to Internet content (Lewis et al, 2015). The findings indicated a possible link between adolescent depression and/or their depressive disorder and the use of social media platforms such as Facebook. The researchers concluded that using social media by Australian adolescents puts Australian families at risk and threatens family cohesion and parental authority (Lewis et al, 2015, p. 1). This study bears similarities to the author’s own research, as it investigated parents’ perceptions of social media platforms used by their children.

Maseruka (2014) discussed the effects of smartphones on Teenagers’ social and cultural interactions in Switzerland. This qualitative study used in-depth interviews to focus on the benefits and unwanted effects of using a smartphone on teenagers’ social and cultural interactions. The researcher concluded that the teenagers were deeply concerned about the potential undesirable effects of extreme use of smartphones on their physical health, such as damage to their eyes due to staring at their smartphone screens for a long time, in addition to its negative impacts on their other activities, including cultural interactions and social communications with their community (Maseruka, 2014, p. 54).

Of all the social platforms, Facebook is considered to be the most threatening to family cohesion and was a key reason for an increase in divorce rates in the United Kingdom, where one in seven married people have taken the decision to divorce because of misuse by one or both of the spouses. Furthermore, research conducted by the law firm Slater and Gordon (UK) revealed that the way husbands and wives used social networking sites led to daily rows between spouses. Newbury, a family advisor in the law firm, noted that Facebook has become one of the most common reasons leading to divorce (Dailymail, 2015). Another group of researchers from the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri undertook a study on the negative impacts of using Facebook on human relationships (Hurst, 2013) and found that American spouses or partners who used Facebook extensively are more likely to experience Facebook-related conflict with their partners, which may cause harmful relationship consequences, including divorce.

Further evidence of the negative impact of Facebook on relationships is provided by Abbassi and Alghamdi (2017). Cravens and Whiting (2014) sought to explore how people interpreted Facebook infidelity

behaviors, the impact of these behaviors on offline behaviors, and how Facebook infidelity compared with offline infidelity through the use of a cue story (in which participants were given a scenario and then asked to write what happens next). The study found that 51% regarded online behavior as cheating. All four studies concur that emotional intimacy is the hallmark of online infidelity, whose impact is just as devastating as physical or sexual infidelity. Moreover, all these studies highlight Facebook as a contributory factor in divorce cases.

In the Arab world, different studies discussed similar topics. For example, Ayish and Mellor (2015) noted a significant impact of social media platforms on traditional media outlets in the Middle East. It was found that the ten media organizations covered by the study were using social media to reach out to millions of audiences around the world with remarkable engagement. Both BBC Arabic and Sky News Arabia were at the forefront of social media usage, as evident in the relatively higher engagement levels they garnered during the study period. It was also noted that journalists working in those organizations were active users of social media tools both as professionals and in private. The study also showed the important contributions of Arab audiences in social media communications related to the 10 media organizations covered by the study. Increasing audience access to the Web and opportunities for more free expression online were instrumental in motivating millions of Arabs to engage with social media platforms operated by conventional media channels.

Al-Shehri (2013) studied the effects of electronic social networking sites on social relationships. The researcher focused on Facebook and Twitter and surveyed a sample of 150 students at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, one of the largest cities in Saudi Arabia. The researcher explored the reasons behind subscribing to Facebook and Twitter and examined the nature of social relations on these social media platforms. The study also highlighted the positive and negative impacts of Saudi university students' use of social media. Similar to the author's research methodology, Al Shehri (2013) used the survey method and designed a questionnaire as the main instrument of data collection.

Facebook and WhatsApp are the social media of choice in Jordan, and, to date, limited research has been carried out to explore the impact of these platforms on everyday life in Jordan. Moreover, despite the absence of solid research on the impact of social media on families in Jordan, there are a number of studies on the effects of social networking sites. These studies were based on the hypothesis that social media has both negative and positive impacts on various aspects of life in Jordan.

Research Methodology

Research sample

The goal of this research was to gain insights into a specific phenomenon; therefore, the researchers purposefully selected individuals based on specific characteristics, i.e., homogeneous. Thus, the sampling frame was planned to cover 100 Jordanian spouses who have active accounts on Facebook and WhatsApp (50 males and 50 females) who represent the married population of Jordan with varying ages and educational status. The representative sample was deliberately chosen from spouses who are currently working in schools, universities, ministries, and many other institutions in Amman, the capital of Jordan.

The researchers distributed and collected 116 hard copies of questionnaires, examining them to ensure all participants had answered all the questions. The researchers excluded 16 questionnaires, which were either incomplete or had been filled in wrongly, and then adopted 100 questionnaires (50 males and 50 females) for analysis.

Questionnaire

Following a detailed literature review, the researchers followed the advice set out by Brennen (2013) on how to formulate a clear and understandable questionnaire. The questionnaire was then adapted and translated into the Arabic language to provide participants with clear and understandable questions in their mother tongue. This helped to avoid any misunderstanding or any semantic noise caused by using the English language.

The questionnaire utilises the Likert scale, a one-dimensional tool used to measure broad attitudes and values. Although the Likert scale is easy for participants to use, care must be taken in the formulation of the questions to minimise confusion, bias, and ambiguity (John, 2010).

Once the preliminary questionnaire was generated, it was scrutinised by three specialised academic staff, two from the Faculty of Human Science and one from the Faculty of Educational Science in Yarmouk University in Irbid and the University of Jordan in Amman. They were asked to judge the questionnaire items for clarity and comprehensiveness, and after receiving their comments, three questions were modified. Thus, the final version of the questionnaire incorporated a balanced range of positive and negative questions and consisted of four parts: 1. Demographic information, including gender, age, and educational status. 2. Question on why the spouses are using Facebook and/or WhatsApp. 3. Question on how many hours the spouses are spending on Facebook and/or WhatsApp, daily. 4. Likert scale statements (including 30 statements to examine the research questions).

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from the University of Leicester prior to data collection. Participants completed a written consent form to indicate willingness to participate in the study. Participants were also assured of strict confidentiality and informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any explanation.

Findings and Discussions

The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Analysis of demographic data

Table 1. Participants by sample gender

		Gender			
		Frequen- cy	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	50	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	50	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows that equal numbers of men and women made up the sample. The Table shows that fifty males and fifty females participated in the survey.

Table 2. Participants by sample Age

Age				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
20 - 25	4	4.0	4.0	4.0
26 - 30	9	9.0	9.0	13.0
31- 35	11	11.0	11.0	24.0
36 - 40	15	15.0	15.0	39.0
41 - 45	18	18.0	18.0	57.0
More than 45	43	43.0	43.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows the sample breakdown by age and demonstrates that participants of varying ages took part in the study. A total of 87% of participants were aged 31 and above; 43% were older than 45 years of age. The smallest number of participants, 4%, falls within the 20-25 age range.

Table 3. Participants by sample educational status

Educational status					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary school	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	High school	11	11.0	11.0	13.0
	College	18	18.0	18.0	31.0
	Bachelor's degree	46	46.0	46.0	77.0
	Master's degree	15	15.0	15.0	92.0
	PhD	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 shows the educational status of participants. Of the sample, 69% have a university-level education. The least educated, 2%, have a primary education.

46% have a Bachelor's degree, 8% have a PhD., and 33% have either a college or a Master's degree. These figures demonstrate that Jordanian people are well-educated, as "Jordan has made significant progress in the field of education during the past five decades, both qualitatively and quantitatively" (Shbaikat, 2006, p. 6).

The reasons behind the use of Facebook and/or WhatsApp

Table 4 demonstrates that the primary reason for using Facebook and/or WhatsApp is to communicate with family and friends. This is due to the fact that such social media platforms provide efficient, accessible, convenient, and cost-effective channels compared to non-digital channels, such as telephone calls and/or face-to-face interactions. 89% of the respondents believed that Facebook and/or WhatsApp allow them to communicate with their family and friends, hence emphasizing how important these platforms have become for bringing families and friends together.

Table 4. Featured by reason for using Facebook and/or WhatsApp

No.	Reasons for using Facebook and WhatsApp by spouses	Percentage
1	For communication with family and friends	89%
2	For finding information and news.	75%
3	For educational purposes	49%
4	For searching for old friends	46%
5	For exchanging experiences.	37%
6	For spending my spare time	30%
7	For commercial business (buy and sell).	16%
8	For making new friends.	14%
9	For entertainment	11%
10	Any other reason (Please specify)	1%

The second primary reason is for accessing information, such as news. This is because social platforms provide real-time access to news and information through mobile devices. This result is in line with the claim made by Couldry (2012) that the availability of smartphones with very fast internet access has dramatically improved media users' capacity to receive news and information through many different types of social media channels. Similarly, Nakamura (2010, cited in Curren, 2010) concluded that mobile devices enabled individuals to regularly receive information and news about an event on the spot and as it happened.

Other minor reasons that motivate individuals to use Facebook and/or WhatsApp are for edutainment and commercial benefit. While Facebook and/or WhatsApp provide discrete/non-structured educational materials, they also serve as a complete commercial service for some enterprises to help promote their products and services to their customers. Interestingly, given that Facebook is a 'friend-heavy' platform, only 14% of the sample used Facebook to make new friends. The last reason for using these platforms is for entertainment.

Only 16 % of participants used Facebook and WhatsApp for commercial business (buying and selling). This figure is low when compared to the United Kingdom, where 67% of Internet users buy and sell online (Ofcom, 2016).

As previously discussed, UGT is an influential sociological theory that explains why and how individuals actively select specific media outlets to satisfy specific needs (Blumler, Katz & Gurevitch, 1974). UGT assumes that individuals are aware of their needs and are goal-oriented in their use of media, that people are capable of assessing value judgments of media content, and have the initiative to link needs and gratifications to a specific choice of medium (Katz et al., 1974). This assertion is clearly demonstrated in Table 4, which shows the many ways in which participants choose to use social media platforms. They are aware of their motivations for choosing these specific domains and actively use Facebook and WhatsApp. The number of people using social media in Jordan and the rest of the world continues to grow, suggesting that these platforms are meeting people's needs and gratifications. The questionnaire did not ask participants to reveal which of the two social networking platforms they favoured and for what purpose, so it is impossible to know which of the two platforms was most used by participants.

The number of hours spent on Facebook and/or WhatsApp Daily

Table 5 shows that the majority of the sample (90%) spent less than 4 hours per day on these platforms, and of these, 29% spent less than an hour per day. Of the sample, 2% spent more than 6 hours per day.

Table 5. Featured by hours spent on Facebook and/or WhatsApp

Hours spent on Facebook and/or WhatsApp					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than 1 hour	29	29.0	29.0	29.0
	1 - 3 hours	61	61.0	61.0	90.0
	4 - 6 hours	8	8.0	8.0	98.0
	More than 6 hours	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

This slightly varied data highlights the large amount of time that the participants spend on Facebook and/or WhatsApp, which may justify a relationship between divorce rates and usage of Facebook and/or WhatsApp.

The extent to which the use of social media (Facebook and/or WhatsApp) influences the relationship between spouses

Table 6 indicates that 72% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that using Facebook and/or WhatsApp strengthens their relationship with their spouses; 19% agreed; and 9% were uncertain. This demonstrates the potential negative impact of using Facebook and/or WhatsApp on family relationships. Furthermore, this mandates spouses to reconsider the usage pattern and frequency of such social channels to mitigate the risk to relationships.

Table 6. The results of statement 4.

Using Facebook and/or WhatsApp strengthens my relationship with my spouse.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
	agree	14	14.0	14.0	19.0
	uncertain	9	9.0	9.0	28.0
	disagree	51	51.0	51.0	79.0
	strongly disagree	21	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 demonstrates that 23% agreed with the statement that by using Facebook and/or WhatsApp, they feel that they can interact effectively with their spouses.; 63% disagreed or strongly disagreed; 14% were uncertain. A majority of participants did not think that by using social media platforms, they could interact effectively with their spouse.

Table 7. The results of statement 5.

By using Facebook and/or WhatsApp, I feel that I can interact effectively with my spouse.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
	agree	18	18.0	18.0	23.0
	uncertain	14	14.0	14.0	37.0
	disagree	41	41.0	41.0	78.0
	strongly disagree	22	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 shows that 58% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that daily interaction with the spouse has negatively changed due to usage of Facebook and/or WhatsApp; 26% agreed, and 16% were uncertain.

Table 8. The results of statement 6.

Daily interaction with my spouse has changed negatively due to my usage of Facebook and/or WhatsApp.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	agree	23	23.0	23.0	26.0
	uncertain	16	16.0	16.0	42.0
	disagree	44	44.0	44.0	86.0
	strongly disagree	14	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 shows that a significant number of respondents, 72%, disagreed with the statement; 14% agreed; while 14% were uncertain. However, a minor part of the respondents, specifically 14%, have felt that love and trust with their spouses have become stronger due to using Facebook and/or WhatsApp. This may be because the spouses hold each other responsible for what they do with these social media platforms.

Table 9. The results of statement 11.

Love and trust with my spouse became stronger due to using Facebook and/or WhatsApp.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	agree	12	12.0	12.0	14.0
	uncertain	14	14.0	14.0	28.0
	disagree	50	50.0	50.0	78.0
	strongly disagree	22	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 10 shows that 82% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 8% agreed, and 10% were uncertain. Surprisingly, this result appears to contradict the previous statement (Table 9). This could be explained by Jordanian people's religious background, the nature of the conservative society in Jordan, and the negative view in which infidelity is held.

Table 10. The results of statement 12.

My spouse's usage of Facebook and/or WhatsApp has increased the level of mistrust and suspicion between us.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	agree	8	8.0	8.0	8.0
	uncertain	10	10.0	10.0	18.0
	disagree	47	47.0	47.0	65.0
	strongly disagree	35	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The correlation between divorce rates and the use of social media platforms (Facebook and WhatsApp) in Jordan

Table 11 shows that 58% agreed with the statement, 32% disagreed, and 10% were uncertain. This is most likely due to the navigation and large amounts of time spent by families on social media platforms, with virtual interaction destabilizing the social structure of the family.

Table 11. The results of statement 2.

My family members are less communicative with each other due to their time spent on Facebook and/or WhatsApp.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	23	23.0	23.0	23.0
	agree	35	35.0	35.0	58.0
	uncertain	10	10.0	10.0	68.0
	disagree	32	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 12 shows that 45% of the sample agreed with the statement that isolation levels in families have increased due to the usage of Facebook and/or WhatsApp; 38% disagreed with this statement, and this might be due to the balanced approach and responsible usage of such social media platforms, while 17% of the sample were uncertain.

Table 12. The results of statement 3

Facebook and/or WhatsApp place my family members in isolation.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	18	18.0	18.0	18.0
	agree	27	27.0	27.0	45.0
	uncertain	17	17.0	17.0	62.0
	disagree	34	34.0	34.0	96.0
	strongly disagree	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 13 demonstrates that 43% agree with the statement, 38% disagree, and 19% are uncertain. It could be argued that the arrival of such social media channels has minimized face-to-face interactions between people. This could be due to the lack of balance between physical and virtual social interactions. However, there is no doubt that technology and social media interactions have provided people with efficient, cost-effective, and accessible communication.

Table 13. The results of statement 7

There is a possible link between the lack of face-to-face communication among family members and Facebook and WhatsApp usage.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	11	11.0	11.0	11.0
	agree	32	32.0	32.0	43.0
	uncertain	19	19.0	19.0	62.0
	disagree	35	35.0	35.0	97.0
	strongly disagree	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 14 shows that 33% agreed that the amount of time their spouse spends on Facebook and/or WhatsApp has negatively affected their relations with their children.; 48% disagreed; 19% were uncertain. Children's growth and development may be compromised by inattentive parents and guardians who spend excessive time on social media.

Table 14. The results of statement 14

The amount of time my spouse spends on Facebook and/or WhatsApp has negatively affected our relations with our children.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	11	11.0	11.0	11.0
	agree	22	22.0	22.0	33.0
	uncertain	19	19.0	19.0	52.0
	disagree	36	36.0	36.0	88.0
	strongly disagree	12	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 15 shows that 24% of the sample strongly agreed that there is a possible link between divorce and social media usage, while 27% agreed. A total of 51% agreed on the possible impact of Facebook and WhatsApp on divorce rates, indicating that a significant portion of the sample believes this possibility is real. The most striking observation is that 45% of the sample were unsure if there was any link between social media and divorce. This result highlights the need to educate the Jordanian population about the potential effects of social media on families and society at large.

Table 15. The results of statement 15

There is a possible link between divorce rates in Jordan and the usage of Facebook and/or WhatsApp.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	24	24.0	24.0	24.0
	agree	27	27.0	27.0	51.0
	uncertain	45	45.0	45.0	96.0
	disagree	3	3.0	3.0	99.0
	strongly disagree	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 16 shows that 48% agreed with the statement, 45% disagreed, and 7% were uncertain. Traditionally, mealtime is an opportunity for family members to interact, share experiences, and reflect on their daily lives, which might lead to a more collaborative and caring family environment. In recent years, the spread of mobile devices and social applications has negatively impacted mealtime, as some family members bring their devices to the table and prefer to socialize virtually while eating, often isolating themselves from the rest of the family.

Table 16. The results of statement 16.

The usage of Facebook and/or WhatsApp has negatively affected our family's social interaction during mealtime.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	11	11.0	11.0	11.0
	agree	37	37.0	37.0	48.0
	uncertain	7	7.0	7.0	55.0
	disagree	42	42.0	42.0	97.0
	strongly disagree	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 17 indicates that 78% of respondents disagreed with the statement, 7% agreed, and 15% were uncertain. The respondents, to a great extent, disagreed with the statement that the usage of social applications created tension between spouses. This disagreement may be due to both spouses approving the use of social media.

Table 17. The results of statement 19

Using Facebook and/or WhatsApp is a reason for tensions with my spouse.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	agree	6	6.0	6.0	7.0
	uncertain	15	15.0	15.0	22.0
	disagree	47	47.0	47.0	69.0
	strongly disagree	31	31.0	31.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The implications of social media use in Jordan

Table 18 shows that 59% of the sample disagreed with the statement, 32% agreed, and 9% were uncertain. Interestingly, 59% of the respondents believe that their visits to close relatives remain the same and have not been impacted by social media platforms. This may be due to the close family cohesion that Jordanians strive for, making sure they visit their relatives frequently to maintain good relationships.

However, the statement did ask for a 'dramatic decline' in family visits, which might not be the case for 59% of the sample. They may have noticed a minor decline, but not a dramatic one. On the other hand, 32% agreed that there has been a dramatic decline in visits to close relatives due to using Facebook and/or WhatsApp. This is unsurprising, as the most popular reason for using these platforms was to communicate with family and friends. It might be that rather than visiting close relatives, as would have previously been the case, people are choosing to use social media platforms as their preferred way of keeping in touch.

Table 18. The results of statement 8

My visits to close relatives have dramatically declined due to using Facebook and/or WhatsApp.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	7	7.0	7.0	7.0
	agree	25	25.0	25.0	32.0
	uncertain	9	9.0	9.0	41.0
	disagree	51	51.0	51.0	92.0
	strongly disagree	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 19 demonstrates that 40% agreed with the statement, 36% disagreed, and 24% were uncertain. The practice of using social media platforms to communicate with relatives may not necessarily be conducive to good family relations. Face-to-face interaction is reduced and replaced by texting/chatting. Also, rather than discussing real-life events and experiences, relatives may begin gossiping about other social media users' posts,

creating new topics that contrast with real-life occurrences. Interestingly, 24% of respondents were uncertain whether these platforms negatively affect how the family interacts.

Table 19. The results of statement 9

Using Facebook and/or WhatsApp has negative effects on the way the family interacts with relatives.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
	agree	30	30.0	30.0	40.0
	uncertain	24	24.0	24.0	64.0
	disagree	34	34.0	34.0	98.0
	strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 20 shows that 56% disagreed with the statement, 23% agreed, and 21% were uncertain. Time spent on Facebook and/or WhatsApp decreases physical interaction and socialisation between family members, which in turn weakens family cohesion.

Table 20. The results of statement 10

By using Facebook and/or WhatsApp, family cohesion has become stronger.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	agree	21	21.0	21.0	23.0
	uncertain	21	21.0	21.0	44.0
	disagree	48	48.0	48.0	92.0
	strongly disagree	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 21 shows that 43% of the sample disagreed with the statement, 37% agreed, and 20% were uncertain. What is interesting about the results is that 20% of the sample were unsure about the statement. This is similar to the number of people who are uncertain about whether social media platforms strengthen or erode family cohesion (21%); and those who were unsure about interactions with relatives (24%).

Table 21. The results of statement 13

Using Facebook and/or WhatsApp has distanced my family members from their community.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	7	7.0	7.0	7.0
	agree	30	30.0	30.0	37.0
	uncertain	20	20.0	20.0	57.0
	disagree	31	31.0	31.0	88.0
	strongly disagree	12	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 22 shows that 68% of respondents agreed with the statement, 17 % disagreed, and 15% were uncertain. The culture in Jordan is built around mealtimes, where Jordanians dine less outside and more in their own homes, and for 68% of the sample, mealtimes remain a crucial aspect of daily life despite the penetration of social media applications among Jordanians.

Table 22. The results of statement 17

Despite using Facebook and/or WhatsApp, mealtime is still a crucial aspect of our family's daily life.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	16	16.0	16.0	16.0
	agree	52	52.0	52.0	68.0
	uncertain	15	15.0	15.0	83.0
	disagree	13	13.0	13.0	96.0
	strongly disagree	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 23 shows that 45% of the sample agreed with the statement, 41% disagreed, and 14% were uncertain. It could be argued that social involvement and collaboration require time to be invested by family members, and this does not seem to be viable for 45% of the respondents who believe that social media has occupied their time and impacted their ability to be socially involved.

Table 23. The results of statement 18

The usage of Facebook and/or WhatsApp has hindered social involvement and face-to-face interactions.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
	agree	35	35.0	35.0	45.0
	uncertain	14	14.0	14.0	59.0
	disagree	38	38.0	38.0	97.0
	strongly disagree	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 24 shows that 39% agreed with the statement, and this can be linked back to the excessive usage of social media applications; 39% did not agree, and 22% were uncertain. Surprisingly, there was no difference in the number of participants who agreed or disagreed with the statement. It could be argued that an equal percentage of parents disagree with such statements, likely because they are more involved in their children's physical and social lives, including enrolling them in activities like sports.

Table 24. The results of Statement 20

My children's usage of Facebook and/or WhatsApp has led them to feel lonely and lose their self-confidence.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	11	11.0	11.0	11.0
	agree	28	28.0	28.0	39.0
	uncertain	22	22.0	22.0	61.0
	disagree	32	32.0	32.0	93.0
	strongly disagree	7	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 25 shows that half the sample disagreed with the statement that their children's use of Facebook and/or WhatsApp is one of the key reasons for their depression.; 18% agreed; 32% were uncertain. An even higher level of uncertainty is reflected here (32%). This is remarkable because participants appear to agree that their children are depressed, but they are unsure about whether social media platforms may be implicated.

Table 25. The results of statement 22

My children's use of Facebook and/or WhatsApp is one of the key reasons for their depression.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	7	7.0	7.0	7.0
	agree	11	11.0	11.0	18.0
	uncertain	32	32.0	32.0	50.0
	disagree	43	43.0	43.0	93.0
	strongly disagree	7	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The positive impacts of social media on families in Jordan

Table 26 shows that 88% of the participants agreed with the statement, 8% disagreed, and 4% were uncertain. The findings acknowledge that the majority of respondents feel more socially connected when using Facebook and/or WhatsApp.

Table 26. The results of statement 1

When using Facebook and/or WhatsApp, I feel more socially connected.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	35	35.0	35.0	35.0
	agree	53	53.0	53.0	88.0
	uncertain	4	4.0	4.0	92.0
	disagree	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 27 shows that 37% disagreed with the statement that their children's use of Facebook and/or WhatsApp has positively developed their personalities; 33% agreed with the statement; 30% were uncertain. This result is interesting - opinion is almost equally divided between those who agree, disagree, and are uncertain about the statement. The findings highlight that 37% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This is most likely because children have been using Facebook and/or WhatsApp negatively, such as using social media channels to navigate further into other virtual and harmful domains. Furthermore, these children may excessively use these platforms. This improper usage of social media cannot develop a child's personality; in fact, it can probably harm it.

Table 27. The results of Statement 21

My children's use of Facebook and/or WhatsApp has positively developed their personalities.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	4	4.0	4.0	4.0
	agree	29	29.0	29.0	33.0
	uncertain	30	30.0	30.0	63.0
	disagree	26	26.0	26.0	89.0
	strongly disagree	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 28 shows that 54% of the sample agreed with the statement, 29% disagreed, and 17% were uncertain. More than half the sample were of the view that social media platforms help family members stay close and connected anytime, anywhere. However, as with the other questions relating to children and family generally, a large proportion of the sample, 17%, demonstrated uncertainty.

Table 28. The results of statement 23

Facebook and/or WhatsApp have helped family members stay close to each other and connected anytime anywhere.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	16	16.0	16.0	16.0
	agree	38	38.0	38.0	54.0
	uncertain	17	17.0	17.0	71.0
	disagree	22	22.0	22.0	93.0
	strongly disagree	7	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 29 shows that 70% of the sample agreed with the statement, 19% disagreed, and 11% were uncertain. The majority of the sample agreed that the flow of information on social media platforms has increased education on social responsibilities and other life topics. Such information may be provided by governments and their associated agencies, community interest groups, and private organizations that also have a Facebook presence. This benefit from social media will allow for exposure to significant information that may not be taught in schools and universities, such as how to react in certain situations, and how to deal with a person's depression symptoms.

Table 29. The results of statement 24

Information flow through Facebook and/or WhatsApp made family members more educated on social responsibilities and other life topics.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per-cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	12	12.0	12.0	12.0
	agree	58	58.0	58.0	70.0
	uncertain	11	11.0	11.0	81.0
	disagree	17	17.0	17.0	98.0
	strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 30 shows that 43% agreed with the statement, 29% disagreed, and 28% were uncertain. Whilst information flow has made individuals more aware, it has not necessarily made family members more productive, as shown by those who disagree and/or are uncertain.

Table 30. The results of statement 25

My family has become more productive and efficient in their daily activities due to access to information through Facebook and/or WhatsApp.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Per-cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	9	9.0	9.0	9.0
	agree	34	34.0	34.0	43.0
	uncertain	28	28.0	28.0	71.0
	disagree	25	25.0	25.0	96.0
	strongly disagree	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 31 shows that 50% agreed with the statement, 28% disagreed, and 22% were uncertain. Expectedly, this result is in line with information flow on social media platforms. It could be argued that connecting social media to fitness and health may potentially allow governments and private companies to use these platforms to spread messages about healthcare and the importance of physical fitness.

Table 31. The results of statement 26

My family has become healthier and more fitness-aware due to healthy social communication on Facebook and/or WhatsApp.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	4	4.0	4.0	4.0
	agree	46	46.0	46.0	50.0
	uncertain	22	22.0	22.0	72.0
	disagree	22	22.0	22.0	94.0
	strongly disagree	6	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 32 shows that 59% agreed with the statement that Facebook and/or WhatsApp provide growth and self-development for family members through expanding their horizons and exposure; 12% disagreed; 29% were uncertain. Almost a third (29%) of the sample were uncertain about the role played by these media in self-development.

Table 32. The results of statement 27

Facebook and/or WhatsApp provide growth and self-development for family members through expanding their horizons and exposure.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	6	6.0	6.0	6.0
	agree	53	53.0	53.0	59.0
	uncertain	29	29.0	29.0	88.0
	disagree	8	8.0	8.0	96.0
	strongly disagree	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 33 shows that more than two-thirds of respondents (70%) believe that Facebook and/or WhatsApp have enabled them to express their opinions freely. In recent years, with the world constantly changing because of politics and economies, the average citizen has used social media to express their opinions. Occasionally, social media may become a powerful tool that can help change people's perspectives and opinions.

Table 33. The results of statement 28

Facebook and/or WhatsApp enabled family members to express their opinions freely.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	12	12.0	12.0	12.0
	agree	58	58.0	58.0	70.0
	uncertain	18	18.0	18.0	88.0
	disagree	10	10.0	10.0	98.0
	strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 34 shows that 68% agreed with the statement, 19% disagreed, and 13% were uncertain. It is no surprise that social media platforms have allowed individuals to become more social through meeting new people and making new friends.

Table 34. The results of statement 29

Facebook and/or WhatsApp enabled family members to have new friends and relationships.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	12	12.0	12.0	12.0
	agree	56	56.0	56.0	68.0
	uncertain	13	13.0	13.0	81.0
	disagree	17	17.0	17.0	98.0
	strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 35 shows that 96% agreed with the statement, 1% disagreed, and 3% were uncertain. Significantly, almost all the samples agree with the statement; this is in line with the highest reason for using social media platforms. It could be argued that this finding is one of the most significant in terms of the positive impact of using social media. Thus, “Social media platforms transcend time and place and provide an easy and accessible way for family and friends to stay in touch” (Madianou and Miller, 2012; Ess, 2014).

Table 35. The results of statement 30

Facebook and/or WhatsApp are helping family members stay close to their relatives overseas and connected regardless of time and distance.					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	47	47.0	47.0	47.0
	agree	49	49.0	49.0	96.0
	uncertain	3	3.0	3.0	99.0
	disagree	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Conclusion

This study explored the potential impact of social media platforms, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, on marital relationships and family life in Jordan. The findings indicated that while these platforms provide significant benefits—such as enabling easy communication, strengthening ties with family and friends, and supporting personal development—they also pose risks when overused or misused. Specifically, the time spent on social media by spouses was found to negatively affect family cohesion, children's growth, and, in some cases, contribute to marital discord and divorce.

The participants' responses highlighted a tension between the opportunities offered by social media and the harm that may arise from diminished face-to-face interaction. Although the platforms facilitate information exchange and global connectivity, concerns have been raised about their potential impact on mental health, productivity, freedom of expression, and the overall development of young people. Such uncertainty reflects broader community apprehensions and signals a responsibility for action on the part of families, academic institutions, and government bodies.

Despite these limitations, the study makes a valuable contribution to understanding how social media affects couples and families in Jordan. It underscores the need for ongoing research to explore sensitive issues such as online infidelity, cultural and religious influences on digital interactions, and the mental health consequences of excessive use. Including younger participants and addressing addictive aspects of social media use may further illuminate the complex ways these platforms shape family and community life.

In conclusion, while social media has undoubtedly reshaped communication within families, its broader implications for cohesion, relationships, and well-being in Jordan remain largely unexplored. This study represents an initial step toward understanding and highlights the importance of continued scholarly inquiry, public awareness, and educational initiatives in fostering a healthier and more balanced use of digital platforms in everyday life.

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