

The impact of social networks on relationship between spouses in Iran

Shahnaz Hashemi^a, Mohammad Soltanifra^b, Mahdi Soltanifar^c

^a Faculty of Communication science and Media Studies,

Islamic Azad University (Central Tehran Branch), Tehran ,Iran

^b Department of Communications, Faculty of Humanity Sciences ,

Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran ,Iran

^c PhD student of Social Communication Sciences, Qeshm, Iran.

Corresponding author: shahnaz_hashemi@yahoo.com

© Author(s)

OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, Ontario International Development Agency, Canada

ISSN 1923-6654 (print) ISSN 1923-6662 (online) www.oidaijds.com

Also available at <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>

Abstract: The concept of family and the value of this social institution is seen as essential for any community, And a society that puts the family in accordance with their values focus. Today the family living complex structures, has increased the importance of proper communication more. Its couples have been considered as the longest and deepest relationship in the family. Communication in the family transmission of information, ideas, thoughts and feelings. And communication provides conditions that respond to the multiple needs of spouses. For example, physiological needs especially the sexual needs, safety needs, the need to love and respect, cognitive needs, and the need for self-actualization.

Social networking has created an impact on couples.couples who Continued use of social networking may create problems for them or create new problems in the family. Iranian users is increasing from social networks. Which undoubtedly should be investigated to determine the usage of social media and network interactions because of interest in the continuation of the network. In Iran, the main reason people use social networks the information and news, dating and new relationships with friends, discuss political and social issues, entertainment and leisure time or seek answers to needs that were not met in the real world.

This study has done in Tehran (the capital of Iran). It was conducted in four stages using the Delphi method, The impact of social networking sites collected using structured interviews, Using descriptive statistics showed the first decline due to the constant use of social networks makes the second cut relations and trust each other and coldness in relations between the verbal and the third forecasts broken specialists in the field of legal boundaries. It is recommended to make couples aware of the effects of continuous use social networking to damage the relationship, Strengthening communication skills and be taught face-to-face in the family. on the other hand The use of social networks should be managed at home with his wife and her husband. Be used to a limited extent only when necessary or the motivation to work. Do not use the social networks to purpose entertainment in home and if used for leisure and entertainment done with the support and presence of a wife or husband. Spouses read messages of social networks for the parties out loud. See images together, listen to audio files together.

Keywords: *social network, relationship, spouses, family*

Introduction

Marriage is a social unity or a legal, religious or cultural contract between people which makes kinship taking shape. Marriage is a ritual bond which is established through special decrees or customs between men and women in different religions and countries, eventually it leads to a family; every society focuses on the family in accordance with its values (1381). The future, survive or collapse of a family has been the main concerns of sociologists (Azad Armaki, Zand and khazaeii, 1381: 3). Talebzade and et al. believe that family

communication uses family mechanisms to share preferences, needs, and feelings. Communication is considered as a facilitator and dynamic dimension in the family system which plays a vital role in helping families move towards to cohesion and flexibility. The positive relationship facilitates moving in different levels of family organization and lack of communication skills or negative relationships hinder the ability to change the family system in the levels of cohesion and flexibility. Therefore, proper communication can play a key role in the prevention of family disintegration in times of crisis (Talebzade et al., 1392: 16).

Virtual social networks are sites or site collections which allow users who like to share their favorites, ideas and activities with others and subsequently others share with them to briefly introduce themselves in the virtual world and provide elements of communication between himself and his allies in various fields of interest, so these networks are new generation of social relations space and although they do not have much life, have been able to take their place in the lives of the people well. Many people of different ages and from different social groups have come together in social networks through which they communicate from very far distances in the real world. A variety of communication methods on the Internet include email, SMS, Chat rooms, Web sites and Games, and networks such as: Line, Viber, WhatsApp, Tango, Facebook and etc; those have been maintained as ways to develop and maintain social relationships (Mahmoudi, 1393: 68).

One of the factors that could affect couples' relationships is using social media. Couple's continuous use of social networks may cause problem and develop new issues inside family and consideration of this matter has the utmost importance. Another reason for the importance of this research is that planners and all those involved use it to plan and make better decisions about providing information and services to families and prevent a lot of damage.

Families and couples relationship

Family has a unique communication system which is different from friendships and working relationships. Entry to such an organized communication system is done only through birth or marriage. Family power is so remarkable that despite the vast distances between members and even death of some of them, its effect remains stable. The main value of the family is the result of network of relationships which have been borne by its members (Goldenberg and Goldenberg).

Marriage is one of the most important events that happen in life while some marriages lead to the growth and prosperity of the couples, many couples are also able to become calamities against each other. Establishing and maintaining intimate relationships and emotional and psychological satisfaction during the marriage is an art and skill that in addition to mental health and healthy primary experiences needs to have and gain logical attitudes, communication skills, life skills and performing special duties (Etemadi, Navabinejad, Ahmadi and Farzad 1385). Communication within the family has been proposed as a contributing factor in its construction and operation (Bolton Translated by Sohrabi, 1386). Communication within the family is defined as the combination of information, ideas, thoughts and well-known feelings of family members (Olson and Barnes, 2004). Relationships are the foundation of responding to multiple needs. For example, physiological needs especially sexual needs, safety and security needs, the need to love and respect, cognitive needs, and the need for self-actualization are somehow satisfied during relationships (Siman, 1996; quoted Sadegh, 1389).

Following his studies, Settir (1987) concluded that the communication element is crucial in the family .Progressive families have learned how to communicate and send messages so they have healthy patterns.

Good communication of couples with each other enables them to talk about their needs, desires and interests with others. They can express their love and friendship to each other and properly solve the problems and inevitable consequence in the family; but the lack of necessary communication skills has taken the possibility of such a performance from families and couples and converts their intimacy into a parallel relationship without intimacy. When the intimate relationship is stopped, the energy of love turns to irritation and anger and as a result, many conflicts, frequent criticism, taking refuge in silence, lack of emotional association and unresolved problems will be created (Bolton, 1996).

Marital relationship has always been considered as the longest and deepest relationship, because a satisfactory marriage is good for physical and mental health of couples (Siavashi, Navabinejad, 1384).

During their study of more than a thousand couples, Gottman et al (1995) found that interaction and positive remarks of happy couples is on average five times more than interactions and negative comments. Investigations show that satisfied couples communicate with each other more (Gottman, 1994).

Marital relationship is a process which the couple exchange their feelings and thoughts either verbal speech or non-verbal in the form of listening, pause and facial expressions through it (Navabinejad, 1377).

Ronan, Dreer and Dollard (2004) showed that when couples use effective communication skills will experience less conflict, while if they do not use effective communication skills will have a higher level of conflict.

The marital relationship can be a cause of joy or great source of suffering and pain. Communication gives the opportunity to the couples to talk with each other, exchange ideas and solve their problems. Couples who cannot communicate with each other are in an uncertain position (Young and Young, 1998).

Social Networks

Social networks are a group of people who have broad and continuous relationships among themselves and form a coherent communication ring. Today, this term is used to describe websites which people join and get access to other member's information, understand their interests, share text, audio and video and form groups based on common interests with some other members of the web page (Sadiq banay, 1387).

"The emergence of social networks has severely affected on daily patterns of life, since many people are planning other activities on certain social networks" (Stivein, 1390, 375). Media, in the vicinity of other institutions that make up the mentality of our society, play a major role. Media spread thoughts, ideas and new attitudes among the people and by emphasizing on certain attitudes, show their positive or negative aspects. The mass media in society, by itself, without regard to the people who work in the mass media and in related organizations, are socially validated. So, if a media talks about a person or an issue in its discussions, it will transfer some of its own social reputation to that individual or subject. In this case, ordinary people think those subject, person or chosen groups are not an everyday phenomenon; but something important enough that has been chosen among the mass of available information. Through the provision of certain social norms, the media positively suggest that presented behavior is an appropriate social behavior. In this way, social media creates individual's conformity by providing appropriate social behavior (Azazi, 19: 1373).

Virtual social networks as one of the latest communication technologies provide the global space for multiple economic, social, cultural and political areas, which allows users to maintain the existing social relationships, find new friends, change and develop sites and partners and help share experiences; they provide a field of membership, active and meaningful participation for users (Massari, 2010).

Social networks cover many social and cultural needs of its members and at the same time provide the opportunity of other social activities for members via computer or mobile phone and along with other social activities via computer or mobile phone, members can pursue their activities in these virtual communities (Bashir, Afrasiabi, 1391).

In this regard, Iranian user's reception of sites, programs and applications has had a significant trend; there is no doubt that the popularity of social networks and virtual social applications and interest in continuity of network interactions need consideration and review (Shahabi, Bayat, 1391). Tohidinia et al (1391) suggest that many young people use the Internet for entertainment, recreation and leisure time or they seek answers to those needs that are not met in the real world. Class interference with gender and geography can create a free space for a group of young people and make gender and social boundaries pale in the youth culture.

Rasouli and Moradi (1390) found that the majority of university students are a member of online social networks such as Facebook and most respondents have access to this network via proxy. Most respondents are very interested to post news and publish photos on social networks. Most respondents have confirmed the effectiveness of social media in the development of the country. The majorities of respondents use the networks for information and news, new dating and connect with friends, discuss political and social issues, leisure and entertainment. The majority of respondents believe that creating an Iranian social network is essential for communication and believe that filtering of social networks cannot have an impact on students' lack of access.

By referring to the figures available about social media users in Iran, may come to realize that social networking has the largest share of spending leisure time (Piozzi, 1389: 5).

According to Kia and Moradabadi (1391) sharing news and information, freedom of association, free flow of information, the ability to control the audience on personal data and principled equality in the networks are the most important reasons for Iranian student's membership. Adly pour (1391) concluded that user's participation and activity in the virtual social networks and the amount of use each time they connect to these networks undermine the identity of user's family, duration of membership and duration of use undermine the religious and national identity of users; also the aim and motivation of the them for using the online social networks undermine the religious identity. Moreover, the presence in social networks strengthens the modern and consuming identity of young users.

Abdollahi et al (1392) concluded that social networks as one of the social institutions are involved in the transmission of cultural heritage and social values of the communities. During the current era, the role of social institutions such as family, school and peers in socialization of generations is weakened and in the contrary the importance and role of social networks increases day by day. According to observations in recent years, the use of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter among families is increased and somewhat unprecedented. Social networks have a positive or negative effect on the transformation of values, generation gap, changing patterns of consumption, lifestyle, marriage and spouse selection. Research findings of Taylor (2012) suggest that, through these virtual social networks remarkable people around the world interact with each other and have faced with foreign culture and beliefs and have been alarmed about the loss of their national and religious identities.

Khojir et al (1392) found that virtual social networks with the aim of entertaining take the users away from intimate space of the family, Iranian Islamic values and beliefs that make Iranian families strong will be destabilized; these networks are the proposed revision of Western countries for communities and show that family ties are not important to them, because of the dominance of individualism people stay alone; using those networks with the same function in our country will be a lethal strike for the family which leads to distrust, betrayal, cold relationships, addiction to networking, aggressive people, perversion and moral vulgarity, promotion of western lifestyle, valuation of false needs, breaking individual privacy and abuse of it.

Shahabi and Bayat (1391) think that most users have turned to networking due to facilitate current relations, revival of old communications and establish and maintain friendly relations and they do not consider social networking space political. This study concludes that the development of the quantity and quality of social relationships and interactions is an important factor of youth activism on the net in Tehran. From the qualitative dimension, people's discussions on the network affect the quality of their relationship and from the quantitative dimension; scope of the relationship depends on person, this socialization brings expression of opinion and freedom. McDonald (2012) has done a research entitled the relationship between social networks and marriage. His aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between social networks and life satisfaction among young Californians. In this research he came to the conclusion that there is a meaningful and negative relation between recognizing the value of life and the expectations of each other and marital satisfaction.

Although the use of social networking is rapidly becoming epidemic but the research on the impact of social networks on families, especially spouses must be done to gain a persuasive recognition on this issue. The main question is that what's the effect of continuous use of social networks on couples' relationships?

Continuous use means that each couple spend more than two hours in social networks in the absence of other, and more than half an hour in his/her presence.

Research method

The Delphi method is used in this study, Delphi's research goal is to obtain reliable picture of the future (Rafipour, 1391: 45-46). This study is conducted in four stages or periods; in the first stage and by a written questionnaire, participants are asked about a certain issue then their views will be listed. In the second stage, the prepared list is sent back for professionals and they are asked about the probability of events, eventually their consensus will be determined. In the third period, consensus on a number of events is sent to experts and again a number of chosen discrepancies sent back to them and the reason of their disagreements about those issues will be asked. In the fourth stage, the results of the third round and total cases of agreement and disagreements will be sent to experts; several important events that have been predicted by calculating the median data will be selected (Rafipour, 1391: 47-48).

The statistical population and sample

The statistical population is a group of experts in sociology and communication sciences in Tehran in 2015 and 17 specialists were selected as sample.

Research findings in four stages:

First stage

At this stage, we gave questionnaires to experts, they were asked about the consequences of continuous use of social networks on couple's relationship. In this way, 170 outcomes were collected from 17 responsive professionals. Then responses were coded and summarized as follows:

1. Reduction of relations between spouses
2. Promotion of couple's expectation levels
3. Reduce of trusting one another

4. Increase empathy between couples
5. Increase Family disputes
6. Coldness in verbal relations
7. Increase betrayal fields of couples to each other
8. Improve the understanding of spouses in respect of their rights
9. Increase isolation and individualism
10. Increase emotional divorce

Second stage

In the second stage, we sent the agreed issues of first stage which had been classified to the experts; they were asked to give weight to each of the items. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Prediction relations between spouses in case of Continuous use of social networks

Row	Items	Average weight (0 to 20)	Rank
1	Reduction of relations between spouses	15.3	4
2	Increase couple's expectation levels	11.4	8
3	Reduce of trusting one another	14.3	5
4	Increase empathy between couples	7	9
5	Increase Family disputes	15.3	4
6	Coldness in verbal relations	16.2	2
7	Increase betrayal fields of couples to each other	13.2	6
8	Improve the understanding of spouses in respect of their rights	12.4	7
9	Increase isolation and individualism	16.4	1
10	Increase emotional divorce	15.7	3

As Table 1 shows two cases such as increase empathy between couples and improve the understanding of spouses in respect of their rights are among positive consequences, other cases are among negative consequences of continuous use of social networks. Maximum weight is given to increase isolation and individualism, coldness in verbal relations and increase emotional divorce.

Third stage

During classifying 170 outcomes of first stage, cases were observed which did not put in our categories and were different from other fields. Consequently, these different cases have been collected and again sent to experts to review and re-weighting. The results of which are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Cases of disagreement in prediction relations between spouses in case of Continuous use of social networks

Row	Items	Average weight totally agreed	Rank
1	Increase the probability of couples being caught in the trap of charlatans and profiteers	3.4	4
2	Stay away from the realities of everyday life	3.7	3
3	Increased competition in the purchase of products such as mobile, tablet and etc	2	5
4	Distortion of the couples' relationships due to the publishing private photos and videos in virtual space	4.3	1
5	Breaching the religious privacy (Mahram and Non-mahram)	4	2
6	Worsening relations due to loss of opportunity to earn income and economic growth	2	5

According to table 2 and among the issues in dispute, distortion of the couples' relationships due to the publishing private photos and videos in virtual space has the highest weight.

Fourth stage

At this stage, 10 agreed cases of first stage and 3 disputes of third stage are adjusted in a questionnaire and presented to experts to give them weight again. Their comments are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The final results of Prediction relations between spouses in case of Continuous use of social networks in order of priority

Items	Total scores	Average	Rank
Reduction of relations between spouses	71	4.4	1
Reduce of trusting one another	64	4	2
Coldness in verbal relations	64	4	2
Breaching the religious privacy (Mahram and Non-mahram)	62	3.9	3
Increase isolation and individualism	61	3.8	4
Increase Family disputes	61	3.8	4
Stay away from the realities of everyday life	60	3.7	5
Improve the understanding of spouses in respect of their rights	58	3.6	6
Increase betrayal fields of couples to each other	57	3.5	6
Distortion of the couples' relationships due to the publishing private photos and videos in virtual space	57	3.5	7
Increase couple's expectation levels	56	3.5	8
Increase emotional divorce	46	2.9	9
Increase empathy between couples	30	1.9	10

Thus, it can be stated that the first effect of continuous use of social networks on couple's relationship was predicted as decline in their relationship. The second prediction of experts in this field is distrust and coldness in verbal relationship towards each other. Breaching the religious privacy (Mahram and Non-mahram) is the third effect of continuous use of social networks on couples. At this stage, increasing the emotional divorce became the ninth priority while in the second stage it was the third priority. It suggests that emotional divorce is placed in the final stages of marriage.

Based on this, research hypothesis is confirmed and it can be said "couple's continuous use of social networks could adversely affect their relationship."

Conclusion and Recommendations

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan stated his famous theory of "medium is the message". He believes that the media regardless of its content and due to its nature and essence can shape human relations style and specify the criteria and functions of relationships (McLuhan, 7:1377). Therefore, social networks are part of McLuhan's theory and, as this study shows continuous use of social networks do not have a favorable effect on couples' relationships; we suggest that:

- The use of social networks at home and next to your spouse should be managed and on limited scale, only when necessary or for work. Never use social networks in family for entertainment purpose; if your intention is entertainment, it should be used in the presence of your spouse or both together.
- 2. To remove any possible misunderstanding, join your spouse a in each group you already are a member and they tend to be a member too. If it is not possible, tell your reasons. Secrecy and investigating in this context is unfavorable for both sides.
- 3. Communication skills should be taught to couples; especially face to face communication that can be effective to express feelings, needs and wishes of the parties. Findings of Attari, Hosseinpour and Rahnavard (1388) showed that communication skills training reduce the feeling of tiredness in the marriage, especially between couples who have been referred to Family Court. Also the research findings of Gholamzadeh, Attari and Shafiabadi (1388: 41) showed that communication skills training increases communication and emotional association. Therefore,

Informing and educating young couples will be very effective to reduce damage of social networks.

References

- [1] Azad Armaki, Taghi, Zand, Mahnaz, khazaeii, Tahereh (1381), the family's socio-cultural changes in Tehran during three generations, *Journal of Human Sciences University of Al-Zahra*, No. 44 and 45, Pages 1-24.
- [2] Steven et al, wisdom, justice and modernity, translated by Mohammad Akbari Hariri, Tehran Province: Ghatreh publication.
- [3] Etemadi, Ozra, Navabinejad, Shokoh, Ahmadi, Seyed Ahmad, Farzaneh, Valiollah (1385), Investigating the effect of couples therapy with Imago therapy method on increasing intimacy in couples referred to counseling centers in Isfahan, *Journal of Consulting and Research News*, Volume 5. No. 19, 9-22.
- [4] Bolton, Rabt (1383), psychology of human relations, translated by Hamid Reza Sohrabi. Tehran: Roshd publication.
- [5] Piozzi, Michael (1389), Jorgen Habermas, translated by Ahmad Tadayon, Hermes publication.
- [6] Khojir, Yusuf, Faezeh, Hossein Nazar (1392), Iranian family pathology in the field of virtual social networks, social networking aspects Conference, Tehran Province, Jihad University, and Institute of Information Technology.
- [7] Rasouli, Mohammad Reza, Moradi, Maryam. Participation of communication students in social media content production, *Culture - Communication studies*, thirteenth year, No. 19, Fall 1391, Pages 113-140.
- [8] Rafipour, Faramarz (1391), special techniques of research in social sciences, the second volume exploring and assumptions, Publication Joint Stock Company.
- [9] Settir, Virginia (1987), Self-building in family psychology, translated by Behrouz Birashk (1384), Tehran: Roshd publication, Sixth Edition.
- [10] Siavashi, Hossein, Navabinejad, Shokoh (1384), The relationship between marital communication patterns and illogical beliefs of teachers and high schools of Malayer, *Journal of Consulting and Research News*, Volume 4. No. 15, Pages 9-34.

- [11] Shahabi, Mahmoud, Bayat, Ghodsi (1391), Virtual social networks and young users, From the continuity of real life experience to home life, *Journal of parliament and strategy*, nineteenth year, No. 69, pages 152- 180.
- [12] Shahabi, Mahmoud, Bayat, Ghodsi, Goals and objectives of membership in social networks (study of youth in Tehran), *Culture – Communication studies*, thirteenth year, No. 20, winter 1391, pages 61- 86.
- [13] Sadiq Banay, Helen (1387), Familiarity with social networking, *Hamshahri Newspaper*, Media Research Center, Tehran, Iran.
- [14] Abdollahi, Zahra, Heshmat, Ghobadi and Mohammad Zadeh, Omid (1392), Sociological approach to media influence on changing family values in Ilam province, *Pathology Conference on youth issues*, Felavarjan, Islamic Azad University Felavarjan Branch.
- [15] Adly pour, Samad (1391), Sociological analyze of consequences of virtual social networks on the social identity of young people in Isfahan, MA thesis, Sociology degree, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, University of Esfahan.
- [16] Attari, Yousefali, Hossein Pour, Mohammad and Rahnavard, Sima (1388), the effectiveness of communication skills through communication program to reduce the feeling of tiredness in married couples, *Journal of Thought and Behavior*, Volume IV, No. 14, Pages 25-34.
- [17] Gholamzadeh, Maryam, Attari, Yousefali and Shafiabadi, Abdullah (1388), The effectiveness of communication skills training on emotional accompany and couple's relationship, *Journal of Thought and Behavior*, Volume III, No. 11, Pages 11-35.
- [18] Talebzade Nobarian, Mohsen, Seidy, Mohammad Sajjad, Mousavi, Seyed Hossein, Mierlo, Mohammad Mahdi (1392), The relationship between spirituality of parenting and relationship quality in the family and psychological hardness of students: Determine the mediating role of relationship quality, *Journal of Family and Research*, tenth year, No. 3, Serial 20, Pages 7-22.
- [19] Kia, Ali Asghar, Nouri Moradabadi, Yunes (1391), Factors associated with student's tendency on social networking "Facebook": A comparative study of American and Iranian students. *Culture – Communication studies*, thirteenth year, No. 17, Pages 171-212.
- [20] Goldenberg, Irene, Goldenberg, Herbert (2000), *Family therapy*, translated by Hamid Reza, Hossein Shahi Baravati, Siamak , Naqshbandi and Elham Arjmand (1385), Tehran: Ravan Publication.
- [21] Mahmoudi, Alireza (1393), *social networking aspects and concepts*, Tehran: Sacco Publication.
- [22] McLuhan, Marshall (1377); *Understanding of Media*, Saeed Azari, Tehran IRIB Research Center, First Edition.
- [23] Navabinejad, Shokoh (1377), *Characteristics and requirements for marriage of girls and boys*, Youth and starting a family, Tehran: Parents and educators Forum Publication.
- [24] Gottman, G. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2000). The timing of divorce. Predicting When a Couple Will divorce over a Year Period. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62,737-745.
- [25] Gottman, J. (1995). *Why marriages succeed or fail*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- [26] McDonald, R. P. (2012). The relationship between social networks and marital. *Journal of Classification*.6, 97-103.
- [27] Ronnan, G. F., & Dreer, L. E. (2004). Violent couples coping and communication skills. *Journal of Family Violence*, 19, 131-142.
- [28] Tyler, T. (2012). "Social networking and Globalization", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, No. 6, July 2013
- [29] Young, L. L., & Young, M. E. (1998). *Counseling and Therapy for Couples*. Brook/ Cole Publishing Company.