

The Manifestations of the Cultural Values Crisis Caused by Social Media at the Family Context

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to study the most prominent problems and incursions produced by individuals' interaction on social media platforms, and how family roles have been affected by them. It is based on the fact that social media is a user-generated content platform that takes part in a bigger techno-economic and cultural globalization network, which in turn contributes in diversifying the options and sources of knowledge acquisition and builds new intellectual and value perceptions at the extent of the traditional ones.

Beside this broad question, a number of secondary problematic are to be drawn:

- The definition and history of social media.
- How can social media be the responsible for the creation of social problems at the family level?
- How can these family problems be avoided?

Keywords: Cultural Crisis; Family Context; Social Media; Social Problem; Values.

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Introduction:

Recently, human being communication tools have been developing at a rapid pace, notably after the remarkable expansion of Internet second generation services known as, "web 2.0", which in turn paved the way to many other technological innovations that have shaped the nature of human being communication because of their interactive nature, and their ability to eliminate all kinds of geographical and temporal boundaries between individuals. The dramatic changes of social interaction brought up a new way of living in an open world where everyone can be easily reachable. In other words, this new way of social communication has had profound effects on the methods and forms of direct and indirect communication, and with the increasing number of users, it eventually turned out to be the most common means of communication and exchange; especially with the emergence of more sophisticated social media platforms aiming at providing better services and satisfying the needs of larger numbers of users. Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Twitter – among others- are considered to be the leading social media networks that have refuted Marshall McLuhan's eternal quote, "The world has become a small global village," and replaced it by «the world has become a small screen."

Despite the fact that social media affects all kind of social interaction patters, it is agreed that it affects family relations in a very remarkable manner, as it has the power to shape family members behaviors 'and their social relationships' (Taraban, 2004). This may happen when the following three components are present: 'the situation'-which is called the construction or the structure, the subject or the content of the situation, and finally the interaction between the components of the social position. This dichotomy led us to investigate the duality of "direct - indirect influence" as well as "instant-cumulative" influence on these components and individuals belonging to different social contexts.

All these changes have created heated controversy around the importance of individuals' adherence to the local cultural values and social morals or the necessity to assimilate into the dominating intellectual and ideological values, especially among youth who is more likely to use social media networks as the main communication and interaction tools in the social as well as the family context.

1. Methodological framework:

In order to conduct a study of the manifestations of the impact of social networking sites on values in the family context from a critical perspective, we followed the following methodology:

- A review of the available literature and previous studies that discuss the impact of social networking sites on values in the family milieu. We also searched for academic research, scientific articles, and reports that discuss this topic. This literature review provided us with the theoretical basis and helped us formulate research questions.
- We formulated specific hypotheses focusing on the impact of social networking sites on values in the family milieu. Most of the assumptions shared that social networking sites lead to:

- Changes in traditional family values.
 - Deviation of interest from important family values.
 - Increase virtual communication and reduce real personal communication.
 - Distorting the self-image and heading towards the perfect virtual appearance.
 - Contradictions between default social values and traditional family values.
- Employing the critical social perspective that focuses on understanding social phenomena and critical analysis thereof. This perspective considers that social issues stem from social and structural interactions and political forces. In the context of the influence of social networking sites on values in the family milieu, the critical sociological perspective can look at multiple social and structural factors that influence the formation of values within the family and how social media influences those factors. Thus, we used the ideas and critical points that were analyzed from the previous literature and applied them to our current study. To assess the impact of social networking sites on values in the family milieu and highlight the negative and positive aspects and challenges faced by individuals and families.

2. Theoretical framework:

One of the appropriate theories to address the impact of social networking sites on values in the family milieu is the theory of social influence and modern communication. This theory focuses on the influence of social and communicative factors in shaping individual and group values and behaviors (Ji Kim, 2015). This theory provides a framework for understanding how social networking sites influence values in the family milieu through social interactions and modern communication.

In the context of studying the impact of social networking sites on values in the family milieu, this theory can be applied by asking some questions and analyzes about how modern communication through social networking sites affects values in the family milieu. And about the possibility that virtual communication brings about changes in the methods of communication and the values associated with it within the family, and does interaction with different societies and various opinions and ideas through social platforms lead to an impact on family values and orientations.

Through the use of social influence theory and modern communication, we can understand the impact of social networking sites on values in the family milieu and analyze socio-cultural factors. Social influence theory is based on a number of basic assumptions. Here are some common assumptions of this theory:

- 1- **Social Influence:** The theory posits that individuals are affected by the actions and opinions of others and may adjust their behavior and beliefs in accordance with considered social norms (Huffaker, 2010).
- 2- **Social Commitment:** The theory assumes that individuals tend to adhere to social norms and join groups and societies that practice those norms, as commitment is part of an individual's need for affiliation and social acceptance.

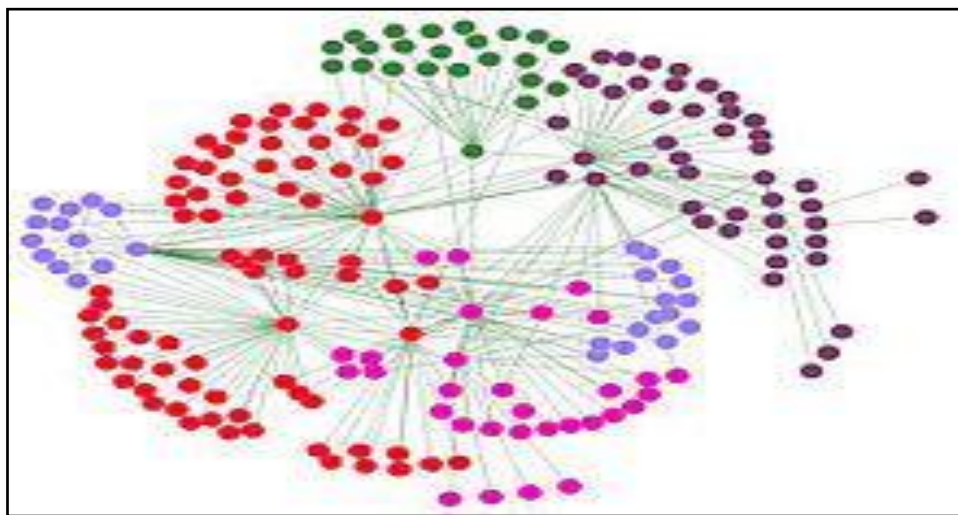
- 3- **Modern Communication:** The theory assumes that modern communication between individuals contributes to the formation and influence of values, beliefs, and behaviors, as information, ideas, and influences are exchanged (Papacharissi, 2010).

3. Definition and History of Social Media:

The first use of the concept of social network can be traced back to the sociologist John Barnes in (1954 AD). In their traditional form, social networks refer to international correspondence clubs that help people create friendships from all around the world using the common written messages. Yet, internet, contributed in the spread of the phenomenon of social media communication, along with all its innovative options and services.

The definitions of the social network vary from one researcher to another. Balas 2006 defines this concept as “a program used to build communities on the Internet where individuals can communicate with each other for many different reasons.” Likewise, Preece and Maloney-Krichmar 2005 define social network as “a place where people meet for specific goals and are directed by specific regulations that include a number of policies proposed by the program” (Danah M. Boyd, 2010). In the same context, Zahir Rady argues that social media is: “a system of electronic networks that allow the user to create his own account, and then connect it through an electronic social system with other members who share his interests and hobbies” (Rady, 2003).

Figure (1): social network diagram model



The source: a group of authors, Center for Strategic Studies, 2012.

Figure (1) is a graphic representation of a social network where the dots represent all the individuals involved in the network, connected by lines to create a virtual relationship between them within the same network.

Other researchers described social networks as websites that allow individuals to introduce themselves and participate in building social networks and create social relationships (Rebecca, A. Hayes, 2009). These networks consist of a group of actors who communicate with each other based on specific relationships, such as friendships, joint missions or information exchange. The maintenance of these networks is guaranteed by the enduring interaction of the network members with each other (Amy Y. Chou, David C. Chou, 2009). Users can also create their own accounts that reflect their personality in front of a wide or specific audience based on a specific system that reveals a list of a group of users with whom they share a mutual connection; with the ability to see their own accounts as well as the available information, knowing that the nature and naming of these links vary from one site to another ” (Mazen Al-Darab, 2015).

According to Boyd and Ellison, social networking sites are services over the Internet that allow individuals to build a public or semi-public personality through a specific system, and a list of users who belong to their personal networks, with the possibility to add more connections through the same system (Jamel alrshad., 2010). Moreover, Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social networks as “a set of Internet applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2, and allow the creation and exchange of content (Kaplan, Andreas M.; Michael Haenlein, 2010).

Even though the definitions of social networks differ from one researcher to another, they all agree on the virtual nature of users ‘relationships and interaction within lists of virtual friends. In addition to that, most of the above-mentioned definitions focused on the use of the advanced communication technologies of web 2.0 to create interactive and participatory connections within these social networks and accounts. Yet, other researchers focused -in their definitions - on the services that social networks provide and the reasons that drive individuals to log in to the network either through direct communication services such as instant messaging or through personal files exchange.

Generally speaking, it can be said that social networks are a group of websites that allow users to communicate within a virtual community in which they introduce themselves by presenting a glimpse of their public life and in which they exchange interests and express their opinions, by sharing ideas, pictures, videos and other elements on which they receive comments from other users who belong to their networks and share common links with them . Nevertheless, the intensive use of these new communication tools affects the cultural values of their users as they are exposed to different types of contents. Hence, these users will eventually affect other individuals through friction and interaction within the same social network, and so on.

From a socio-communicative perspective, social media platforms are regarded as one of the most common social networks that create a kind of social dynamism and an organizational and work pattern. Accordingly, Castelle argues that social networks are communication channels that help creating an open, interactive social structure for innovation, without changing the nature of these networks. Yet, it is difficult to determine the ultimate target of these social cells developed in the age of technological and information innovation (Castelle, 1998). In the midst of the countless amount of news and pictures shared in these networks, the standard use of social networks contributed to the creation of a new communication behavior that brings together individuals within this structure, commonly known as ‘a virtual

community' despite their remarkable effects on users' lifestyle and way of thinking. Even though these social media websites merely provide a specific web service, they have actually managed to compete with all the other media and communication tools, as they have been able to attract the attention of an increasing number of internet users, and entice them to spend more time on them; until getting dependent to them. In this regard, Philip Proto thinks that this dependency can reach "the level of addiction due to extensive contact with the device screen (Breton, 2000). Social networks are also seen as social gatherings loaded with enough human emotions and common interests to achieve the communicative goal, as if they are real life communities (Leila Jarrar, 2012). This what has produced a new and transforming communicative environment that restricted the classic communication patterns and allowed the emergence of new expressive forms that helped moving the wheel of social mobility (Al-Sadiq Al-Hamami, 2004).

4. Social Media and Family issues : What Relation?

The emergence of the second-generation Internet technology has provided new communication options through social networking websites. However, these rapid changes have undeniably affected people's way of living and values by penetrating in to their social structures and challenging their values, rituals and social norms, until they become entirely dependent to them and subject to all of their rules and policies. (Muhammad Al-Fateh Hamdi, 2012) under the pretext of open mindedness. Besides, these platforms have created a more informational and techno-communication environment that doesn't take into account people's personal identity and cultural values. Consequently, ideological movements have been created to either support the idea of openness, or to defend the principle of cultural adherence and belonging. The extensive use of social networking has also affected family life. This latter is defined by Ernst Burgess: as a group of persons linked by ties of marriage, blood or adoption, forming a social life with each other. Every family member has its own social role (Hanafi, Nermin Syed, 2003) as well common and distinct cultural values from other members.

This logic moves individuals from the social position they occupy in their community into new groupings that are based on a value system and linguistic specifications, to form a new network space (1), called "CYBER COMMUNAUTE". This concept is manly embodied in chat rooms where confidentiality of the consuming user is fully guaranteed. The change brought by these social network websites encouraged more people to raise many questions about their real impact on communication behaviors, as well as on human beings 'rights and freedoms, especially those related to the sanctity of personal life. Moreover, the concepts of individualism and independence have been increasingly widespread, especially among youth, due to the different cultural values and ideologies portrayed in social media (Malika Haroun, 2005), which led us to investigate the impact of these websites on users' personal and social life.

Cherri Turkle, a professor of sociology of science at the University of Massachusetts - USA, is primarily interested in studying the impact of social media on people's well-being. In her book entitled "Life on Screen", she addresses the issue of identity across these websites based on two elements (Maan Al-Naqry, 1999).

- The difference between the real and the virtual space: she argues that millions of people who spend part of their daily life in the virtual or cyber space find it more difficult to interact with others when moving between the two spaces
- How to draw the boundaries between the real and the unreal world: the researcher focused on the impact of these two opposite worlds on the user's mind, body, soul, as well as the effects of the post-modernist thinking on his mentality, that is, reconfiguring new trends and rebuilding previous perceptions. In other words, when the user of these social networks returns to his realistic social position, he is often loaded with a group of ideas and feelings that he has already acquired in the virtual space.

Besides, a recent study conducted by a group of researchers from the University of Michigan that was published in the Los Angeles Times newspaper (Al-Dossary, 2012) revealed that the social media website "Facebook" puts users in bad moods after spending a long time using it. In addition, one of the study researchers indicated that the research sample was based on observing the behavior of 82 people while browsing on Facebook. The research study carefully selected this sample to represent about 700 million users of this social networking website. The results of this research study revealed that the addictive use of Facebook could affect users' mood by making them feel more lonely and isolated. Another research study on social media indicated that one of the main drawbacks of social networks is that they may make users more isolated and detached from reality as they start avoiding family meetings and disobeying family regulations and rituals. The effects of social media can get worse on spoiled children who were brought up by less severe parents who don't impose clear regulations on their kids and who are not used to share a mutual discussion with them. Consequently, we can sum up the impact of social media on family life on the following elements:

1- Weak family relations and isolation

Contrary to the past, Arab family relations have become weaker, as most family members started to adopt the principle of individualism and tend to get isolated from each other, especially among children who prefer spending more time watching television or playing video games than with their parents. Besides, the destructive ideas that are posted on these platforms contribute in worsening family members' behavior toward each other, and widen the gap between them because of the long hours spent behind their screens. Social media can also amplify the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) by exposing users to the activities and events of others (Sumeet Singh Lamba, 2021). This can contribute to feelings of exclusion and isolation, especially if individuals perceive that they are not partaking in similar experiences. Excessive use of social media may replace in-person interactions, reducing the richness of real-world connections. Selective socialization and the impact of negative online experiences can also lead to social media fatigue and withdrawal. Mitigating these effects involves encouraging mindful social media use, promoting a balanced lifestyle, providing education on responsible usage, and fostering positive online communities to enhance overall well-being.

2-Couples avoidance of discussing family matters

Today's Arab couples tend to spend more time on their phones or computers watching their favorite movies than interacting with each other in real life and discussing family issues or kids problems (Thoraya Gabriel et al., 2002). These negative attitudes may widen

the gap between couples and consequently tear down their relationship because of the accumulated problems that had not been solved properly. Moreover, as social media represents environments wherein different social norms and rules can be established and followed by adolescents out of their parents' control, this can make further risks arise if their use and its consequences is not adequately discussed among family members, as, therefore, adolescents' decision-making processes can be affected by those norms (Collodi S,2018).

5. The prevalence of the culture of irrational consumption within families:

One of the negative effects of social media usage is the spread of the culture of uncontrolled consumption that exceeds the financial capabilities of the family, especially in obtaining the most advanced devices available in the market to enjoy all the benefits of social media websites. In return, major mobile companies launch new high-tech devices every now and then to entice more users to buy their products, at the expense of the Arab family budget, leading to the creation of more financial problems.

6. Digital Betrayal:

Social media platforms led to the emergence of new attitudes that weren't known before in our Arab and Islamic societies, and made it easy for men and women to talk to each other without any constraints. These irresponsible actions often lead to the exacerbation of couples' problems, and may end up with divorce.

The concept of "Digital Betrayal" has gained significant prominence, highlighting the various ways in which individuals and their information can be exploited or violated through digital means. The term encompasses a range of unethical behaviors and privacy breaches facilitated by the use of digital technologies.

7. Emerging psychosocial diseases:

The first psychosocial disease to emerge was the cyber phobia (COMPUTER ANXIETY), or fear of the computer, which generally affects adolescents who suffer from dizziness, nausea and cold sweats, when getting anxious of damaging the computer or when getting afraid of personal failure. These negative feelings oblige users to be isolated and detached from reality. Many reports have studied the phenomenon of "Internet Addiction" for users who spend 12 hours straight on these social networks without taking a break (Sherif Darwish Laban, 2000); few of them don't even eat or go to the bathroom in order not to lose the virtual discussion flow. Users who suffer from this kind of health problems are often in their thirties. However, multiple studies have found a strong link between heavy social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts. An expert in information technology and programming, Omar Sami, declared Sky News Arabia magazine: "The social media industry is designed to keep the user around for as long as possible, and the goal of the platforms is not to make people's lives happier, and this is unfortunately the truth, and they have succeeded in doing so."(Omar Sami, 2023).

8. The duality of social interaction and the child:

There are some Arab research studies that have tackled the topic of social media from different perspectives; namely, the effect of the Internet on family interaction, such as the study of Qasim Muhammad Rania (2000), about the impact of computer use on the child's social interaction skills in the preschool period. The study aimed to identify the relationship between the computer use and the degree of social interaction for preschool children, and to show the differences in social interaction between computer and non-computer users, as well as to compare the impact of computer and Kindergarten activities on pre-school children's social interaction skills. The researcher relied on surveys to collect his primary data and conducted his practical study on a sample of (60) children enrolled in language schools whose ages ranged from five and a half years to six years and three months. Besides, the study also used several other tools to collect data (the man's drawing test, the economic and social level scale, the application form for children who use the computer and children who do not use it, and the list of social interaction behavioral observation when children start using the computer in kindergarten). The results obtained from the list of behavioral observation revealed that the frequent use of the computer decreases children's social interaction (Qasim, Rania Muhammad Ali, 2000). There are statistically significant differences between children who use the computer and children who do not use it in terms of the degree of social interaction, in favor for the non-computer users.

9. Personality fakeness and exaggerated flattery:

The wrong use of social media platforms leads some people to create a virtual personality other than their own, either to appear in a perfect state to others, or with the aim of manipulating and carrying out illegal practices via the Internet without being exposed. (Al-Oweidi, 2012), which may generate a state of social hypocrisy, where the user can be happy, sad or in pain at the same time. Yet, the degree of personality fakeness may differ from one user to another, based on the motifs of his attitudes and the nature of his interests, which may create a toxic environment governed by lies, exaggerated flattery and fraud that distance the person from his religious beliefs and values.

Social media networks are accused to be the primary cause of family relations deterioration, as they have contributed in eliminating social conviviality. Other than that, social media platforms make users feel isolated and detached from reality as they become more disconnected from the outer world. McLuhan described the virtual world of social media as a small village of great harmony and cohesion that is governed by strong social bonds. Every member of this village shares positive attitudes and emotions with others, and tries to help those who are in need of support. There are no destructive ideologies or political plans that may divide the larger community. Instead, the world is regarded as a big hotel that gathers everyone under the same roof, despite all the cultural, social and religious differences. Nevertheless, this feeling of harmony can also be the primary reason of isolation and deterioration from the real world.

After all, we found out that we all agree that social networking websites have created many new communicative behaviors that have strengthened communication between individuals within a broad-dimensional virtual world, as well as expanded communication

gaps between individuals in real life. Therefore, users of these platforms are getting closer within the (virtual) space and farther in the real world, notably within family relations and friendships. This new way of social communication has imposed its patterns on multiple aspects of our daily life in a way that negatively affect family interaction. Hence, family members who use social media websites for long hours are less likely to gather around the dining which. Besides, family visits are limited to official holidays, as brothers and family relatives prefer to interact with each other on the internet than moving from one city to another to do so.

10. The Study Recommendations:

- Enhancing the family role in maintaining noble values among its members by focusing on purposeful religious and informational discourses taken from a real social context.
- Attempting to introduce various activities to the educational curricula to enhance the school's role in guiding youth way of thinking towards the positive use of social media, and protecting them from its negative effects.
- Encouraging individuals, especially youth, to invest their time in developing their talents, practicing sports, discovering themselves and their desires and improving them.
- Encouraging centers and academic institutes to conduct more rigorous research studies on the negative impact of social media on family members and society.
- Creating what is known as training courses in the domain of social communication and family bonding by designing effective programs that help eliminating all kind of negativity, inaction and violence.

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