The Impact Of Digital Communication Via The Internet On Social Relations Between Family Members In Algerian Society (A Field Study On A Sample Of University Youth In The City Of Khenchela - Algeria)

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Abstract:
This study falls within the framework of sociological research on social communication and family relationships, and aims to reveal the impact that digital communication through new communication media can have on family dynamics and relationships between its members. This research seeks to highlight the characteristics of this new form of communication, represented by digital communication, which has repositioned elements of traditional communication processes through the use of multimedia. The aim is to identify the psychological and social effects that this type of communication has on the family. The importance of this study lies in the emergence of modern electronic means of social communication, which have brought about changes in the family relationships between family members, their forms of interaction and their methods of communication. Since the current study is about the effects of digital communication on family relationships, it is classified as descriptive research, which aims to describe the nature and characteristics of the population studied.

Keywords: Digital communication - Internet - Social relations - Family relations.

Introduction:

Interest in social communication media has grown steadily in recent years, especially with the dawn of the 21st century, as these media have brought about fundamental changes in the nature of communication, ways of thinking and methods of influence. They have also posed significant challenges to all countries around the world, including Arab countries, in terms of the extent to which they can control these media, regulate their content, and use them within the framework of sustainable development.

Studies on the social dimensions of this type of communication in people's social relations, as well as their modes of interaction and communication, remain very limited. In fact, even in Western societies where there has been considerable research interest in this form of communication, such studies are still quite scarce. Moreover, these studies have not produced conclusive results on the nature, intensity or depth of these effects. If the different perspectives of researchers on the dimensions of online communication and its effects on social relations remain unresolved in Western societies, the social dimensions of this type of communication have not been adequately captured or resolved in Arab societies (Halim Khidr Sari, 2008, pp. 297-298).

Despite the many benefits of the Internet and its positive impact on children and young people and the active role it plays in their psychological, social, intellectual and cultural lives, it is not without its risks. These risks manifest themselves in symptoms of Internet addiction, emotional distress, sexual exploitation, psychological and social alienation, among others. This situation calls for a concerted effort by various social institutions, including families, educational institutions at all levels, places of worship, the media (both audio and print), and security and justice agencies, to protect individuals from the many dangers of the Internet and to raise awareness of the nature of these risks and their potential consequences.

First: Conceptual Theoretical Introduction

1. The concept of digital communication:

The study aims to explore the concept of digital communication, which is part of human communication through digital means, and to understand the reality of the information and network environment and its potential for effective interaction.

1.1. Definition of digital communication:

Digital communication is defined as "the social process in which communication takes place at a distance between parties who exchange roles in sending and receiving various communication messages through digital systems and their means to achieve specific goals" (Mohammed Abdel Hamid, 2007, p. 26).

Kristi Aho (2005) defines digital communication as "the essential skill for most tasks that individuals must acquire within the framework of conceptualising, producing and receiving communication means in their functions and lives, where digital communication is the ability to create effective communication through digital means" (Khawla Rkrouk, Tayeb Issawi, 2021, p. 188).

Digital human communication can be defined as communication carried out by an individual or a group using digital communication tools to produce, distribute or exchange digital content (text, image, video, audio, etc.) at an individual or collective level. This enables the opportunity to participate in expressing opinions and positions on various issues, as well as the potential to achieve creativity and knowledge production in its various forms (Nadim Mansouri, 2019, p. 148).

1.2 Determinants of the definition of digital communication:

Digital communication is a process that takes place not only between the parties involved in the communication, but also within a specific social and communicative context. It is also characterised as a process between the elements of digital systems, indicating the continuity and evolution of communication.

Although the concept of isolation in digital communication is often discussed, the social dimension is evident in this process, as there is both bilateral and collective communication. Whatever the level of digital communication (whether bilateral or collective), it is a form of remote communication. All the technologies used in communication are used in close proximity between the parties involved, but this does not bring it closer to face-to-face communication.

Despite being a form of remote communication, digital innovations have provided the elements necessary for face-to-face communication, such as the circularity of communication and the exchange of communicative roles. The need for digital systems to complete the digital communication process is essential.

The presence of coding devices in the processes of sending and receiving enhances the elements of digital communication compared to face-to-face or mass communication. The digital communication process is purposeful and the parties involved are aware of the requirements and characteristics of digital communication. Therefore, these users have specific goals and functions they wish to achieve through its use, and although these goals are generally the same as those of human communication, they differ in their prioritisation.

2. Definition of the Internet:

There is an abundance of definitions provided by experts and practitioners in the fields of communications, computing and information, making it almost impossible to list them all. This abundance arises from the diversity of specialisations, interests and uses of the Internet by each group. Nevertheless, there is a consensus on the concept and nature of the Internet.

Halim Khidr Sari states that the Internet is "the electronic network consisting of a collection of networks that connect people and information through computers and digital devices, enabling communication between individuals and the retrieval of this information" (Halim Khidr Sari, 2005, pp. 19-20). The Internet is also defined as "a collection of global networks connected to millions of devices around the world that transmit vast amounts of information at high speeds" (Sub-Committee for Administrative Development, 2007, p. 169). In addition, it is described as "a network of computers linked by a variety of connection means" (Qassem Al-Nawashi, 2010, p. 195).

3. Social relations:

Social relations are the processes and interactions that result from the interactions and engagements of individuals within the natural and social environments. They define the behaviour of individuals and the various aspects of their behaviour and activities.

Social relations can also be defined as "the relationships that arise between two or more people when there is a form of agreement between their interests, or as a result of the convergence of these interests or the minimisation of conflicts that may arise due to different interests" (Adnan Abu Musleh, 2015, p. 347).

From the above, it is clear that social relations constitute the interaction that takes place between two or more individuals located within a common framework, environment, organisation or structure, as a result of the influence that each has on the other.

4. Family social relations:

Family social relations refer to the relationships that exist between the roles of husband and wife and between parents and children. They also encompass the nature of communication and interaction among family members living in the same household, including relationships between spouses and among children themselves.

Abdul Hakim states that family social relations are "the bonds that unite members of the same family under one roof to meet the family's needs and aspirations. The father and mother are the basic building blocks in the formation of these relationships, and they exert their utmost efforts to care for their children" (Abdul Hakim Bin Baṭūsh, 2012, p. 36).

Second, research methodology:

1. Problem of the study:

The tremendous advances in digital communication technology, especially the Internet and social networks, have led to radical changes in the patterns of social relations among individuals. The emergence of online social networks and the introduction of communication media have led to a qualitative leap in human relations, giving rise to a new society and new patterns of behaviour and relationships among users. This has created forms of virtual communities that have become part of their daily lives, leading to changes in their behaviour and relationships with their social environment, resulting in individuals becoming more isolated and less involved with their family members.

Given that the study is concerned with whether there is a risk that the use of social media may threaten the safety of the family and undermine the bonds of family relationships among its members, this study aims to answer the following central question:

Has digital social communication technology affected the social relations between family members in Algerian society?

The central question has led to the emergence of several sub-questions:

- What are the habits and motivations of university students in using digital communication tools via the Internet?

- What are the psychological and social effects of the Internet on family members who use it?

- Do these effects differ according to the gender of the user (male or female)?

- Do these effects vary according to the number of hours of daily use?

2. Importance of the study:

The importance of this study lies in its contribution to enriching the sociological literature on the phenomenon of the use of digital communication tools, which have recently seen a significant increase in users and an expansion of their impact on individual culture and attitudes. The study aims to shed light on this phenomenon and to examine the relationship between electronic communication networks and the social changes brought about by digital technology in family relationships, which have been affected by technological advances in various fields and the constant interaction between modern technologies and the society in which they exist.

The importance of the study is evident in the following aspects:

- Contributing to the literature on the growing phenomenon of social media use and observing its various effects on family relationships, as well as assessing its impact on social communication.

- To draw the attention of officials, parents and children to the negative influence of social media, while providing them with the necessary information and recommendations to improve family relationships and to use social media in a positive way.

- To highlight the issue of social media and its impact on families, with the aim of planning awareness and remedial programmes by relevant authorities to mitigate its effects, which could improve family relations and strengthen ties between all members of society.

3. Aims of the study:

The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of the use of digital communication tools on family relationships among Algerian family members. This includes the relationship between parents, the relationship between parents and children, the relationship between siblings and the relationship between family members and their relatives. The study has the following sub-objectives

- To identify some social characteristics of the respondents.

- To understand the nature of digital communication use within Algerian families and its relationship with variables such as age, gender and daily usage rates, as well as the applications used online by family members, the most visited websites and the reasons for their use.

- To discover the impact of the use of virtual digital communication on the social relationships between family members.

- To explore the nature of relationships formed through social media platforms.

4. Study population:

The study population consists of students from the Department of Communication and Media Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Abbes Laghrour Khenchela University. The total number of students is 194, including both undergraduate and masters students, distributed in the following academic levels:

- Second year Communication and Media: 71 students

- Third year media: 31 students

- First year Master's in Audiovisual: 47 students

- Second year Master's in Audiovisual: 45 students

This data is based on statistics from the Department of Humanities, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.

5. Study sample:

A sample of 146 students was selected from a total of 194 students, representing 75.26% of the study population. These students are enrolled in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, specifically in the Department of Humanities, majoring in Communication and Media at the Bachelor's level and Audiovisual at the Master's level. The sample members were selected randomly.

6. Research method and data collection tool:

The study used a survey methodology, which is the most effective approach to achieve the objectives of the study and answer the questions. Regarding the data collection tool, a special questionnaire was prepared for this purpose, consisting of eighteen questions designed to measure the following dimensions:

- Dimension related to the demographic characteristics of the sample members:

  This dimension included two questions/items: (1 - 2).

- Dimension related to habits and motivations for using digital communication tools and the Internet:

  This dimension consisted of eight questions/items: (3 - 8).

- Dimension related to the impact of digital communication technology on social relations among family members:

This dimension included ten questions/items: (9 - 18).

Third: The digital communication system and its layers:

The digital communication era is the fifth and final stage in the evolution of communication tools. Digital communication refers to all means that use technology to handle data, with the Internet being the most important, along with related social media, blogs, applications, smartphones, video games, digital cameras, and more.

1. Characteristics of digital communication:

It is essential to identify the features of digital communication that have helped to define its characteristics and give it its distinctive qualities, as follows:

1.1 Interactivity: This is a characteristic of face-to-face communication and indicates the end of the linear concept of

communication flowing in one direction from sender to receiver. Instead, communication becomes bidirectional, allowing the parties involved to change roles. Each party has the ability, freedom and control over the communication process in terms of time and space that suits them (Mahir Awda Al-Shamayleh, 2015, p. 69).

1.2 Synchronous communication: this refers to the ability to send and receive messages at a time convenient to the individual, without the need for all participants to use the system at the same time. For example, in e-mail, a message can be sent from the sender to the receiver without the need for both to be present at the same time (Laith Badr Youssef, 2023, p. 239).

1.3 Diversity: The development of digital innovations has increased the capacity for storage, accessibility and better use of the communication process according to individual needs and motivations. This diversity in digital communication manifests itself in various forms, including

- Diversity of communication formats: These include (voice communication, e-mail, discussion groups, video conferencing and communication via websites).

B. Content diversity: This includes the diversity of functions of the content or its fields (Mahir Awda Al-Shamayleh, 2015, pp. 73-74).

1.4 Fragmentation: Modern communication, in the light of communication technology, has moved towards the fragmentation of communication, which means the provision of multiple messages that suit individuals or specialised small groups. This fragmentation of messages has two aspects: the first is controlled by the sender and the second is controlled by the receiver. The sender regulates the fragmentation of communication by directing messages that cater to individual preferences and needs, while the receiver in turn controls the fragmentation of communication by managing the amount of material received (Yamen Boudhan, 2013, pp. 23-24).

1.5 Immersion in the communication process (reduced cost).The reduction in the cost of digital communication has encouraged engagement in digital communication and immersion in available educational programmes for extended periods of time in an individual context. The proliferation of advanced media and diverse content has facilitated exploration and navigation, leading to deeper immersion in information and knowledge. This has resulted in longer usage times compared to other media. It has been observed that immersion can increase the social isolation of individuals and may have health implications due to prolonged sitting in front

of devices, such as back pain and visual impairment (Mahir Awda Al-Shamayleh, 2015, p. 72).

2. Stages of digital communication:

The stages of human digital communication can be divided into three phases:

1.2 Electronic bulletin board phase:

This phase appeared in the late 1970s and lasted until the mid-1990s. It is characterised by programs that allow communication between computers via telephone lines, allowing the exchange of data, information and opinions. However, this phase is characterised by slow and non-instantaneous dialogue.

2.2 Phase of semi-instantaneous communication tools:

This phase appeared in the mid-1980s and included a range of communication tools such as newsgroups, electronic mailing lists and blogs. These tools provided a broad avenue for human communication, allowing information and opinions to be shared with thousands of people with remarkable ease. Blogs, in particular, opened the door to the first production of digital communication tools in cultural contexts.

2.3 Social media phase:

This phase emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, beginning with the introduction of forums in 1996, which allowed human communication in real time and the exchange of digital content such as text, images, videos or audio files. It progressed through chat rooms and individual communication methods, allowing face-to-face interaction between individuals or groups at their preferred times. This culminated in the rise of social media platforms, which opened wide avenues for all types of communication and social networking (Nadim Mansouri, 2019, p. 147).

3. Characteristics of the digital user:

The digital user is distinguished from the traditional receiver by the effectiveness provided by artificial intelligence in accessing and dealing with knowledge, accompanied by the following characteristics (Ahmed Abdel Kafi Abdel Fattah, 2023, pp. 197-199):

- Ability to utilise vast communication opportunities: The user can benefit from the extensive communication opportunities offered by the Internet, including email correspondence, browsing websites, participating in social networks, and communicating through social media and voice/video call platforms. In addition, users can conduct extensive knowledge

searches using search engines on the web or stored media on devices.

-Availability of user-friendly software: There is an abundance of easy-to-use software that enables digital users to edit, design, produce and publish communication media across multiple digital platforms and environments.

-High level of interactivity: The Web offers content producers the opportunity to enable users to express their opinions on the content they receive. Thanks to search engines that have made significant advances in the use of artificial intelligence, users can easily find appropriate content to express their interactions by copying, pasting, scrolling or referencing.

- Content verification and source credibility checks: Users can verify content and assess the credibility of sources to detect misinformation.

- Flexibility in content reception: Digital users are no longer forced to passively receive available content, as the overwhelming amount of digital information exceeds traditional reception capabilities. Digital content is characterised by its adaptable reception according to the user's circumstances, and the artificial intelligence used in search engines ensures that content relevant to the user's interests is readily accessible.

- Detailed options among multiple choices: Users can navigate through detailed options among multiple choices.

- Creation of varied texts: Users can create texts that differ in form and content for different readings of the same text.

- Customise visual elements: Users can change colours, choose backgrounds and select graphics.

4. Levels of digital communication:

Digital system technology has facilitated the development of existing levels and forms of communication, leading to the creation of modern forms that ultimately maximise the benefits of using technology in the field of communication and information. These levels are represented as follows (Mahir Awda, 2015, pp. 73-74):

**4.1 Computer and programme communication:**

In this case, the computer itself and the software that serves as a database are parties to the communication process. The interaction with these programs takes place according to their design and intended purpose (whether educational, entertaining or recreational).

4.2 Database communication:

Here the computer acts as a conduit for databases stored on a main server connected to several computers that exchange information and data. This exchange can be either wired, as in local area networks, or over the Internet. This type of communication has limited interactivity, the limits of interactivity being defined by the ability to access, retrieve and navigate the data as designed by the database administrators.

4.3 Direct communication over networks:

This type of communication takes place over communication and information networks, using a modem and telephone line for connectivity. Communication can be written (via messages), vocal or visual (as in videoconferencing). This communication can be with an individual or with groups, such as newsgroups. This form of communication should ideally be synchronous, whereas written communication is often asynchronous. In this case, the elements of digital communication are:
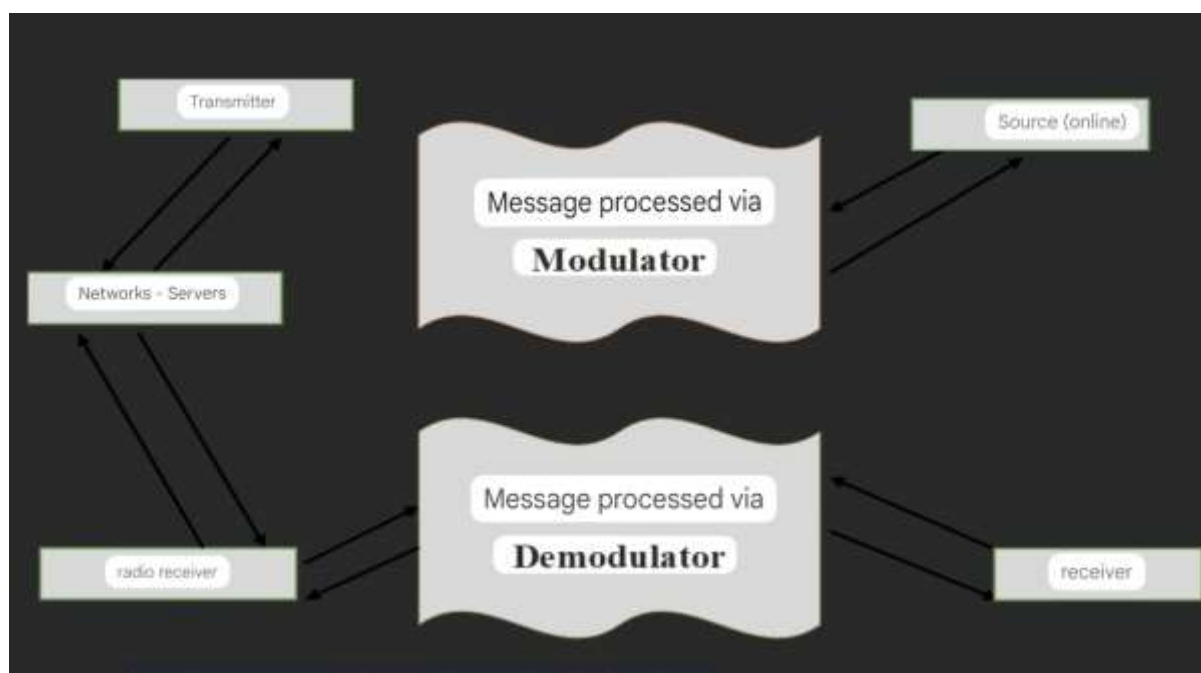
Source: (Mahir Awda, 2015, p. 74)

4.4 Communication with media outlets:

Due to the reluctance of some individuals to follow traditional media and the increasing use of the Internet, these media outlets have resorted to establishing permanent websites on the Internet to attract such users. As the Internet has been recognised as a suitable medium for achieving global communication, media organisations have rushed to reach as many local, regional and global audiences as possible through these sites. This adds another role to the network, either as a communication medium or as a communication tool.

Fourthly, the social and family implications of digital communication via the Internet.

Some sociologists argue that these sites have had a negative impact on family relationships and have contributed to widening the gap between family members and fragmentation. Social media platforms, especially Facebook, have become addictive, posing a threat to Arab families and undermining the closeness and warmth characteristic of Arab societies, as they tend to "fragment the audience" and diminish real relationships in favour of virtual ones. As a result, a new branch of sociology has emerged, called "mechanical sociology", which studies the social relationships that form and exist based on this type of online interaction.

4.1 Advantages and disadvantages of electronic relationships:

The relationships formed online and through social media are diverse, and the nature of each relationship influences the motivations behind it and the psychological outcomes that result. Psychologists view online relationships as mere virtual lives that some individuals establish because of a particular psychological state that governs their desires and inclinations. In this context, individuals may engage in anonymous relationships that they desire regardless of the consequences, while rejecting advice from others about the dangers and negative impact of such relationships on their mental health. These relationships are often illusory, hidden behind names, images and intangible qualities, based primarily on fantasy and virtual existence.

Sociologists, on the other hand, argue that the virtual relationships created in the online world have many positive aspects. Such relationships, at all levels, are based on feelings of love or admiration that dominate the emotions of both parties. This implies that both individuals perceive the essence of the other before any other attributes, recognising each other's personalities beyond physical appearances. This is one of the strongest reasons for the success of these relationships, as neither wealth nor beauty interferes; both parties are attracted to each other without consideration, with intellect alone determining the sustainability of the relationship.

The most common reason for seeking virtual relationships is emotional deprivation, which is one of the motivations that can lead individuals into the realm of illusory online relationships. Individuals may seek these connections after emotional trauma or the loss of a loved one, turning to these relationships for their abundance and accessibility, as well as to fill the emotional void they are experiencing.

The negative impact of illusory online relationships on individuals is manifested in a lack of trust and lingering

suspicion between the parties, especially if the relationship is romantic and leads to marriage, leading to doubts about each other's fidelity. In addition, young people of both sexes may experience psychological trauma as a result of the deception surrounding these relationships and the false information provided by many individuals on social media, which is often misleading (Hani Mahmoud Al-Sayed, 2019, pp. 190-191).

4.2 The impact of digital social communication on society, both positive and negative:

Social media has proliferated significantly in recent times and has become the dominant medium exerting considerable and dangerous influence on Arab societies and families. This is largely due to its use of myriad engagement strategies that attract followers from all demographic groups. A double-edged sword, social media can increase individual knowledge and promote many positive values, but it has also contributed to the spread of negative behaviours that many societies, particularly Arab communities, are currently suffering from. These include the spread of violence and crime and the disintegration of many Arab families.

First: Positive impacts:

Despite the severe criticism that social networks, especially Facebook, often face for their alleged negative and direct impact on family dynamics - contributing to their disintegration and collapse - some see these platforms as important tools for growth and cohesion among communities. They facilitate the bridging of concepts and perspectives with others and enable the exploration and appreciation of different cultures, in addition to their effective role as successful communication tools (Yas Khader Al-Bayani, 2014, p. 378).

Social media has transformed user engagement from mere passive consumption of content to active participation in content creation and the exchange of topics and ideas with both friends and strangers. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have attracted a wide range of community members due to the entertainment and leisure opportunities they provide, as well as the ease of communication with others (Zainab Abdel Azim Abdel Wahid Ali, 2023, p. 79).

Here are some of the positive impacts:

- Bridging distances between continents: Digital communication technology has made it possible to see relatives and family members, hold work meetings and complete many tasks that were previously difficult to achieve.

- Gaining experiences and making friends: Social media platforms provide all the necessary tools and opportunities for

individuals to gain experiences from around the world and make friends on a global scale.

- Rekindle old friendships: At a time when people thought they had lost touch with their old friends, social media has successfully revived these long-lost friendships.

Second: Negative effects:

2.1 Weakening of family ties and relative isolation:

The Arab family is experiencing a weakening and disintegration of its structure, with individualism becoming the dominant characteristic among its members. There has been a decline in interaction between family members and a deterioration in relationships between spouses and between parents and children. This is largely due to the long hours spent in front of the television, computer games and social media, not to mention the harmful ideas propagated by these media, which negatively affect individual behaviour within the family, whether as spouses, parents or children. This situation has indeed become a reality for many Arab families who are deeply immersed in the use of these platforms.

2.2 The distance between spouses in discussing family matters:

A common characteristic of couples within the Arab family is that each individual is preoccupied with his or her own device, whether it is a mobile phone, a computer, or watching his or her own films. This has led to a significant divide between spouses as each is absorbed in their own world, with little time to discuss family and children's issues. As a result, the family is disintegrating, with neither spouse aware of the threats facing the family due to the lack of time for discussion and resolution.

2.3 The prevalence of consumer culture in families, especially among young people:

One of the negative effects of the widespread use of modern means of communication is the spread of consumer culture and the desire to acquire things that are beyond the family's financial means. Individuals want to upgrade their mobile phones just to have a more advanced device with better features and constant access to social media. Major mobile phone companies are eager to flood the market with new high-tech devices on a regular basis, prompting consumers to attempt upgrades that strain the budgets of Arab families. This ultimately leads to economic problems that can affect the entire family (Hani Mahmoud Al-Sayed, 2019, pp. 206-208).

Results of the field study:

Axis One: Characteristics of the study sample:

Table 01: Distribution of sample members by gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Females	132	90.41%
Males	14	09.59%
Total	146	100%

The table detailing the number of sample members by gender shows that the number of females reached 132 users, representing 90.41%. In contrast, the number of males was 14 users, or 9.59%. Thus, the proportion of women appears to be significantly higher than that of men. This discrepancy is explained by the fact that women are among the most active users of the Internet and show a greater interest in using modern communication technologies.
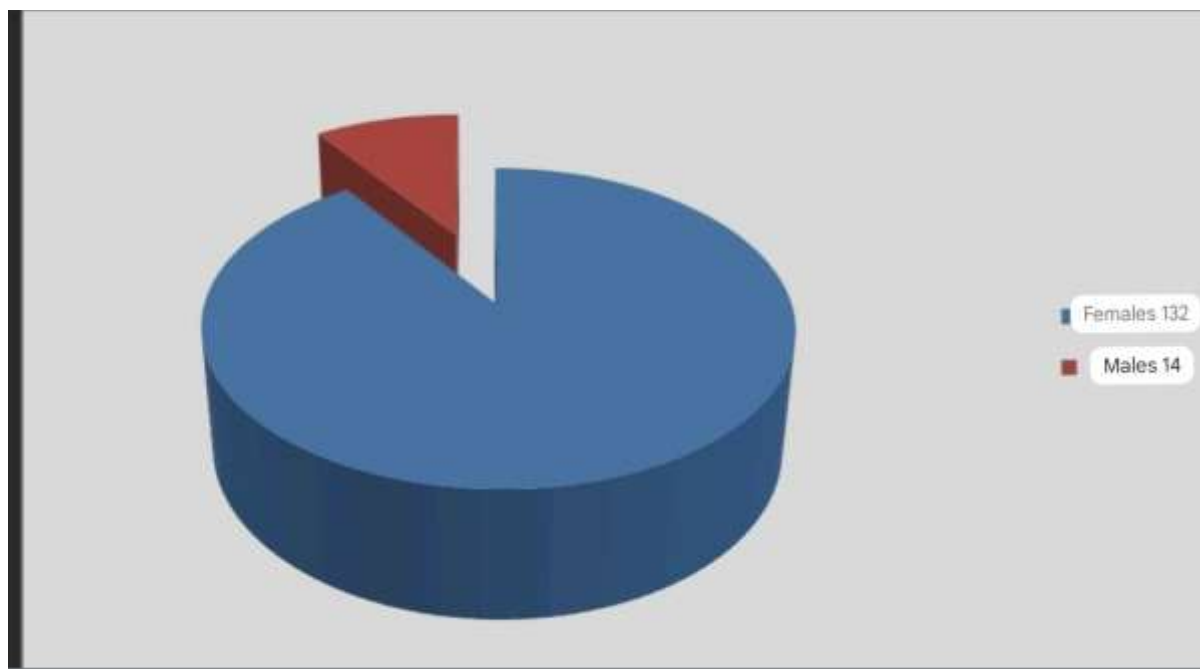
Table 02: Distribution of sample members by age

	Females		Males		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
18-24	113	85.60	13	92.85	126	86.30
25-30	13	09.85	01	07.14	14	09.59
More than 31	06	04.54	-	-	06	04.11

Total	132	100	14	100	146	100

Regarding the distribution of these individuals by age group, Table 02 shows that the highest percentage belongs to the age group 18-24 years, with 86.30%. This was followed by the percentage of users in the 25 to 30 age group, which was 9.59%. The lowest representation in the sample was among users aged 31 years and over, with a percentage of 4.11%.
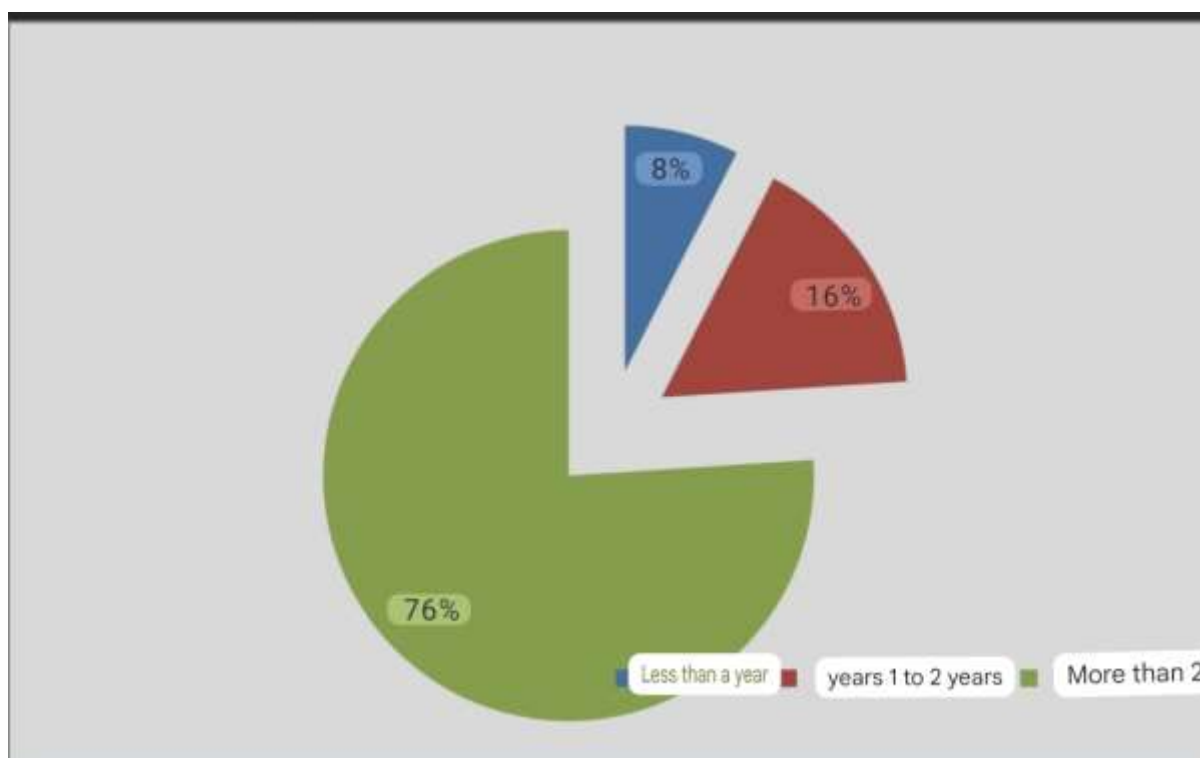
Axis Two: University students' habits and motivations for using digital communication tools

Table 03: Internet use by university students

Do you use internet ？		
Alternative	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Always	**74**	**50.68%**
Sometimes	**69**	**47.26%**
Rarely	**03**	**02.05%**
Never	**/**	**/**
Total	**146**	**100%**

The table above illustrates the level of Internet use among university students. The results show that the majority of the sample uses the Internet constantly, with a rate of 50.68%, which confirms the intensive and widespread use of the Internet. On the other hand, others use it intermittently, at a rate of 47.26%, due to their academic or family commitments. This is followed by the category of infrequent users, with 2.05%. Although this percentage is minimal, it confirms the idea that the Internet is very popular and increasingly used by university students, given the numerous services and advantages it offers.

Table 04: Number of years of experience in using the Internet

How long have you been using the Internet?		
Years of experience	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Less than a year	**11**	**07.53%**
From one to two years	**24**	**16.44%**
More than two years	**111**	**76.03%**
Total	**146**	**100%**

Regarding years of experience in using the Internet, it was found that the highest percentage of users belonged to those with more than two years of experience, with 76.03%. The second highest percentage, 16.44%, was among those with one to two years of experience. It was also found that those with less than one year's experience of using the Internet did not exceed 7.53%.

Table 05: Distribution of hours spent daily using the Internet

How many hours do you use the Internet a day?		
Number of hours	Frequency	Percentage
Less than an hour	09	06.16%
1 to 2 hours	30	20.55%
2 to 3 hours	35	23.97%
3 to 4 hours	30	20.55%
More than four hours	42	28.77%
Total	146	100%

In terms of the magnitude of the phenomenon in terms of Internet use, it became clear that users within the sample were excessive in their use. The highest percentage of users, 28.77%, reported using the Internet for more than four hours a day. This was followed by the category of users who use it for 2 to 3 hours a day, which accounted for 23.97%. The next largest group, with 20.55%, was those who used the Internet for 3 to 4 hours, followed by those who used it for 1 to 2 hours. Meanwhile, those who use it for less than an hour a day accounted for 6.16%.

Table 06: Distribution of sample members by most frequently used Internet services

What are the most frequently used Internet services?		
Internet services	Frequency	Percentage
e-mail	14	05.76%
social media sites	116	47.74%
Intellectual forums	06	02.47%
Entertainment and entertainment	29	11.93%
Watch movies	41	16.87%
Cultural programs	33	13.58%
Other programs	4	01.65%
Total	243	100%

In terms of the type of services most frequently used by the sample members, the table above shows that social media and chatting with virtual friends received the highest percentage of the sample with 47.74%. This was followed by watching films with 16.87% and then cultural programmes with 13.58%. Entertainment and leisure activities followed with 11.93%. E-mail seems to be less popular among this group (students), with a percentage of 5.76%. Finally, intellectual forums came last, with the lowest percentage of 2.47%.

Table 07: Distribution of sample members by preferred social media platforms

What are the most used social networking sites?		
social media sites	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	124	54.38%

Twitter	10	04.38%
YouTube	82	35.96%
Skype	04	01.75%
WhatsApp	08	03.51%
Total	228	100%

Table 07 shows that Facebook is the most popular site, with a percentage of 54.38%. This is due to its many features, such as connecting with individuals, chatting, exchanging opinions and ideas, as well as its ease of use compared to other platforms. Facebook is followed by YouTube with 35.96%, Twitter with 4.38% and WhatsApp with 3.51%. Finally, Skype was the least used by the sample, with a percentage of only 1.75%.

Table 08: Distribution of sample members by importance of preferred leisure activities, listed in descending order

In your spare time, what do you most like to do		
Alternative	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Communicate online	71	35.86%
Sitting and talking with family members	48	24.24%
Watching TV and satellite channels	35	17.67%
Visiting relatives	21	10.61%
Reading (books, newspapers, magazines)	19	09.59%
Other (please specify)	04	02.02%
Total	198	100%

Table 08 shows the activities that the sample members prefer to do in their free time, listed as follows: online communication, spending time with and talking to family members, watching television, visiting relatives, followed by reading and studying. This suggests that the study sample, representing university students - who would be expected to be the demographic most inclined towards reading and literature - consider reading to be less important than the other activities listed in the question.

The study results show that online communication received the highest percentage at 35.86%, followed by spending time with family at 24.24%. This reflects the significant impact of the Internet on the behaviour of the study sample, as it has reduced their interaction with family members, suggesting that the Internet plays a major role in influencing family communication patterns by reducing social relationships.

Excessive use of the Internet leads to mental distancing between family members; although they may be in the same place, each individual may not be aware of the presence of the others when they are engaged in the Internet. This is related to the degree to which an individual focuses on the medium. For example, television is a medium that facilitates high levels of social interaction and communication, as individuals typically watch it with others. In contrast, the Internet is a communication medium that requires a high level of concentration and is largely experienced individually.

Axis Three: The impact of digital communication via the Internet on family social relationships

Table 09: Participation of sample members in discussions and conversations within their families

Do you take part in the discussions and conversations that take place in your family		
Alternative	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Always	58	39.72%
Sometimes	65	44.52%
Rarely	18	12.33%
Never	05	03.42%
Total	146	100%

Approximately 84.24% of the sample members indicated that they take part in family discussions and conversations, either regularly (39.72%) or occasionally (44.52%). In contrast, 15.75% said they rarely or never took part in such discussions, 12.33% said they rarely took part and 3.42% refused to take part. Although the latter percentage is relatively low, it should not be overlooked as it may increase over time, given that experience of communication via the Internet is still in its infancy.

Table 10: Frequency with which participants visit their relatives

How often do you visit your relatives

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage
Always	16	10.96%
Occasionally	100	68.49%
I do not visit them	30	20.55%
Total	146	100%

Regarding the frequency with which the participants visit their relatives, it was found that the highest percentage affected by the Internet, leading to sporadic visits, is 68.49%. This is followed by the group of students who answered 'I do not visit them' with 20.55%. This group is more preoccupied with their online interactions than with fulfilling their social obligations, such as visiting relatives. On the other hand, among the students whose use of the Internet does not affect their social interactions with family and relatives, 10.56% of the sample said that they visit their relatives consistently and regularly.

Table 11: Impact of the Internet on sample members' communication and interaction with family members

Do you feel that your interaction and communication with family members has decreased compared to before after using the Internet		
Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	44	30.13%
Sometimes	49	33.56%
No	53	36.30%
Total	146	100%

The responses of the sample members indicate a disruption caused by the Internet in their daily interactions, which they had maintained for a long time before relying on the Internet as a primary means of communication. It was found that more than half of the sample, 63.69%, with 30.13% answering 'yes' and 33.56% answering 'sometimes', felt that their usual interaction and communication with their families was not the same as before. Conversely, 36.30% of the total sample do not believe that Internet use has hindered their social interaction and communication with family members.

Table 12: Impact of the Internet on sample members' visits to their relatives

Do you feel that you visit your relatives less than you used to because you are so busy with the Internet?		
Alternatives	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	**32**	**21.92%**
Sometimes	**53**	**36.30%**
No	**61**	**41.78%**
Total	**146**	**100%**

Table 12, which examines the impact of the Internet on sample members' visits to their relatives, shows a decline in the number of such visits. Daily use of the Internet has distracted them from such visits, which were customary in the community prior to their involvement with this medium. It was found that 58.22% of the sample, divided between the answers "yes" (21.92%) and "sometimes" (36.30%), no longer have enough time to practise this social habit. This is a remarkable percentage, as it serves as an indicator of the Internet's ability to change social interaction and individuals' relationships with their relatives through family visits.

Contrary to this group, there is a significant percentage of people who have not allowed their engagement with the Internet to interfere with their social obligations towards their relatives, which is 41.78%.

Table 13: Time spent by sample members on the Internet compared to time spent with family members

Do you spend more time online than with your family?		
Alternatives	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Always	**22**	**15.07%**
Sometimes	**86**	**58.90%**
Never	**38**	**26.03%**
Total	**146**	**100%**

Just as the Internet has affected sample members' visits to their relatives, it has also affected the amount of time children spend sitting with their family members, as shown in Table 13.The percentage of sample members who spend a lot of time on the Internet and no longer participate in family gatherings as they did before they learned to use the Internet is 58.90%

for the answer 'sometimes' and 15.07% for 'always'. In contrast, the percentage of those who still prefer to sit down with their family to discuss family matters as they used to is 26.03%. This may be partly due to the strict social control that families and society have over children.

Table 14: Time spent by participants talking online with friends and acquaintances compared to time spent talking with family members

Do you spend more time chatting online with friends and acquaintances than with your family members?		
Alternatives	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	**30**	**20.55%**
Sometimes	**53**	**36.30%**
No	**63**	**43.15%**
Total	**146**	**100%**

It is true that the percentage of participants who sit down with their families and communicate with them directly (43.15%) is relatively high, indicating that children still strive to maintain family cohesion and ties through their efforts to ensure communication between family members. However, the percentage of the latter type of communication (communication via the Internet) remains noteworthy, with 56.85% of respondents stating that they spend more time communicating with friends and acquaintances online than with family members. This includes 36.30% who answered 'sometimes' and 20.55% who answered 'yes'. This relative increase is merely an indicator of the emerging pattern of communication in society, which is electronic communication via the Internet.

Table 15: Percentage of families complaining about their children's preoccupation with the Internet

Does your family complain about your preoccupation with the Internet?		
Alternatives	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Always	31	21.23%
Sometimes	78	53.42%
Rarely	37	25.34%
Never	146	100%

Family dissatisfaction with their children's use of the Internet is one of the manifestations that reflect the impact of online communication on family interaction and communication processes within the household. In this regard, the responses of the sample members indicate that some families express dissatisfaction with their children, with 53.42% reporting occasional complaints about prolonged Internet use and 21.23% expressing constant complaints. Meanwhile, 25.34% said they did not experience any family dissatisfaction related to continuous Internet use.

Most researchers agree that intensive Internet use inevitably affects the nature of family relationships between its members, creating a form of physical, spatial and mental separation for individuals. This leads to anxiety among parents when their children are preoccupied with the Internet.

Table 16: Nature of participants' interaction with family members after using the Internet

After using the Internet, how is your relationship with your family members in terms of interaction, understanding and communication?		
Type of interaction	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Good	69	47.26%
Weak	62	42.46%
Poor	07	04.79%
Finished	08	05.48%
Total	146	100%

Table 16 shows that the nature of the sample members' interaction with their families remains good after using the Internet, as indicated by the percentage of 47.26%. This confirms that they maintain their social interactions with family members more than they engage with online networks. In light of this confirmation, the results of the study showed a percentage close to the previous one, at 42.46%, indicating that their interactions have weakened after this use. In addition, 5.54% described their interactions as 'finished', while 4.79% described them as 'poor'.

Table 17: Participants' feelings of discomfort and distress when visiting relatives

Do you feel uncomfortable and annoyed when visiting relatives because they prevent you from using the Internet?		
Alternatives	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Always	10	06.85%
Sometimes	42	28.76%
Rarely	21	14.38%
Never	73	50%
Total	146	100%

The results of the study show that 50% of the participants said that they do not feel uncomfortable or distressed by visiting relatives because they are unable to use the Internet while they are there. Of those who do feel uncomfortable, their responses vary: 28.76% feel it 'sometimes', 14.38% feel it 'rarely' and 6.85% feel it 'always', which is the lowest percentage.

Table 18: Distribution of sample members by use of the Internet

In your opinion, the Internet is a tool that contributes to		
Type of contribution	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Individual isolation and introversion	69	30.80%
Deterioration of family relationships	41	18.30%
Deterioration of marital relationships	25	11.16%
Solving social problems	18	08.04%
Solving emotional problems	10	04.46%
Acquisition of new skills	55	24.55%
Other (please specify)	06	02.68%
Total	146	100%

Table 18 illustrates the effects of the Internet on the sample members as perceived by the respondents. It shows that the Internet contributes to the withdrawal of individuals from

society, driving them towards isolation and introversion, with a percentage of 30.80%. It also contributes to the deterioration of family relationships with 18.30% and marital relationships with 11.16%. This suggests that the Internet has a significant negative impact on their lives. Conversely, there are positive effects of the Internet on the sample members, reflected in its contribution to the acquisition of new skills, which receives the second highest percentage of 24.55%. The Internet also plays a role in solving some social problems (8.04%) and emotional problems (4.46%). This means that the Internet generally has an impact on the sample members, some positive and some negative.

Final results of the study:

Despite the positive role that digital communication has played in the cultural life of individuals and the psychological needs that it has satisfied in various areas, it has also created numerous problems with different psychological, social and cultural dimensions in terms of intensity and severity.

One of the most obvious problems is the decline in communication and interaction with family members resulting from the use of this type of electronic communication in their daily lives. The study found that 63.69% of the sample acknowledged that their usual interaction and communication with their families was no longer what it used to be.

Another issue arising from the students' use of electronic communication is the impact of the Internet on the sample members' visits to their relatives. Although a significant percentage, 41.78%, stated that their involvement with the Internet did not prevent them from fulfilling their social obligations towards their relatives, 58.22% stated that they no longer had sufficient time to practise this social habit. This percentage should not be underestimated, as it serves as an indicator of the Internet's ability to bring about changes in the social interaction and relationships of individuals with their relatives through family visits

Just as the Internet has affected the number of visits that sample members make to their relatives, it has also affected the amount of time that children spend with their family members. The percentage of sample members who spend more time on the Internet than with their families is 58.90%.

The study also showed that 56.85% do not sit with their families or communicate directly with them. This relative increase is merely an indicator of the emergence of a new pattern of communication in society, namely communication via the Internet (electronic communication).

The dissatisfaction of families with their children due to their excessive use of the Internet is one of the manifestations that reflect the impact of electronic communication on family interaction. In this regard, the study revealed complaints from the respondents' families about their children's preoccupation with the Internet, with 74.65% of these families expressing concern about their children's lack of interaction and long hours spent communicating online. This was supported by the findings of the current study, which indicated that the nature of the sample members' interaction with their families had diminished after using the internet, with 42.46% acknowledging this decline.

In addition, the study found that the participants' use of and attachment to the Internet led them to feel annoyed by visits from their relatives, perceiving these visits as a burden that interrupted their engagement with the Internet. About 50% of the sample expressed dissatisfaction with visiting relatives while using the Internet.

A particularly noteworthy issue highlighted in this study, and perhaps the most serious problem resulting from the use of the Internet for communication, is the psychological and social isolation caused by some people's dependence on these forms of electronic communication in their daily lives. The study revealed that 30.80% of the participants admitted that Internet use contributes significantly to their withdrawal from society, driving them towards isolation and introversion.

Conclusion:

Digital communication has significantly changed the facets of social interaction in a remarkably short period of time. The widespread adoption of digital technologies has led to a substantial increase in unique levels of human communication that cannot be compared to any previous patterns or experiences of communication. As a result, the future of digital communication remains uncertain as communication and information technologies continue to evolve and reach astonishing levels of quality and usability.

In the face of these changes, Arab families are experiencing a weakening and disintegration of their structure, with individualism becoming the predominant characteristic among family members. There has been a decline in interaction between family members, and relationships between spouses, parents and children have deteriorated. This is particularly true of Arab families, which have become heavily immersed in the excessive use of the Internet and digital communication tools.

Moreover, the prevailing characteristic of couples within Arab families is their preoccupation with their personal devices - mobile phones and computers - resulting in a significant gap

between spouses and between parents and children. Each individual is immersed in his or her own world, leaving little time to discuss family issues and concerns. This has led to the disintegration of the family unit and the prevalence of isolation among its members, as individuals remain unaware of the long-term threats facing the family.

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