

## Investigating the Effect of Social Media on Female Users

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to investigate the effect of social media on female users. The study uses descriptive research method. Nine women between the ages of 30 and 40 living in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, participated in the study. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form containing four questions on the following topics (i) the impact of social media on daily life, (ii) the comparison between life on social media and their own life, (iii) the effect of social media on family life and (iv) the effect of social media on expectations. The results of the study reveal that social media makes life easier, that they do not make comparisons, that they know the fact that life on social media is not real, that it does not negatively affect family relationships, and that it broadens their perspective on life. In these times, when social media use is unavoidable, it is thought that married housewives who participated in the study can socialize via social media and try to make their life fun.

**Keywords:** Social media, women, family

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is a place where almost everyone who encounters the internet in some way participates. However, it is a place not only of people but also of various institutions, and groups that seek to change the building blocks of society and control perceptions. These institutions and groups that seek to change the building blocks of society and control perceptions view social media as a space where various ideologies, perceptual operations, and cultural transformation projects are served directly to users and they actively use social media for these purposes (Sayim 2018, Kural 2013, Yavuz 2018, Gültürler 2013).

Social media applications are the platforms where individuals can create their personal profiles, create and share contents and interact with others. According to K. Allen, T. Ryan, D. Gray, D. McInerney & L. Waters'e (2014), people visit social media platforms to pass time, connect with others, play games, and participate in various social and entertainment activities. While these platforms or websites capture people's attention for purposes such as news, communication, education, sharing information, following friends, they also offer a space where thoughts and experiences can be shared (Baz, 2018).

The rapid rise of social media platforms has led to a change in the way we present and perceive our social relationships. Social media is becoming a place where people who are unable to express their feelings in their daily lives or who want to draw attention to themselves can share their emotional state. While people have difficulty expressing themselves in their daily lives, thanks to social media platforms, they believe they can express themselves whenever and however they want (Ünlü, 2018). These issues raise the interest in investigating the relationship between personal characteristics and social media use. Moreover, with the rise of these platforms, people who attract attention with their posts and influence their followers have emerged and are called influencers and have started to influence other users on different platforms (Kıran, Yılmaz & Emre, 2019).

While social media plays the role of a protector in maintaining the existing social and cultural status, it also has the power which can be used for change and transformation. Social media is a tool that has a role in social learning. Unlike television, radio and print media, it can address more than one person, institution or group. Furthermore, in this process, the feedback path of those who receive the message is open (Büyüksener, 2009).

According to the uses and satisfaction approach, which assumes that people select mass media according to their individual and social needs and achieve certain satisfactions through this use, in order to satisfy their psychological and social needs and to achieve their goals, individuals use media for various purposes and differ in terms of the satisfactions they seek. This approach focuses on the motivations associated with media use, the elements influencing those motivations and the outcomes of the media-related behaviors (Sheldon, 2008). The uses and satisfaction theory asks the question "what do people do with the media?" rather

than the question “what do media do to the people?” (Severin and Tankard, 1994). Researchers of the uses and satisfactions theory assume that audiences are individuals who actively seek out media messages to satisfy their particular needs, as opposed to assuming that audiences are indifferent audiences who passively absorb media messages (Kaye and Johnson, 2002: 55). According to the active audience view, the activities of individuals or groups trying to understand a situation is the center of the communication process, and communication takes place only when information is selected from a source (Erdoğan and Alemdar, 2005).

The fact that social media has a large number of users and has become an extremely popular communication channel also raises the question of why individuals want to exist on social media. Individuals can use the media for a wide variety of reasons, and media use behaviors or preferences can be evoked by various motivations (Koçak, 2013).

Social media, which has begun to penetrate all areas of life, is beginning to attract the interest of researchers from various disciplines in academia and daily life, and this leads to a rapid increase in the number of studies examining social media platforms from individual, social, political, cultural and economic perspectives. According to the uses and gratifications approach, which assumes that people select mass media according to their individual and social needs and achieve certain satisfactions through this use, individuals may use media for different purposes in order to satisfy their psychological and social needs and achieve their goals, and they may differ in terms of the satisfactions they seek in media. In this context, examining the effects of social media on married women today constitutes the problem of this research.

### **Purpose**

This study aims to investigate the effect of social media on women users.

## **II. METHOD**

### **Research design**

This study uses a descriptive research model, one of the qualitative research methods. Qualitative research method allows researchers to systematically investigate the subjective views and experiences of the individuals being studied and to make comments with the obtained data (Ekiz, 2003; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). Descriptive methods provide information about the current state of the problem that is being studied. It requires the collection of the data to test hypotheses or answer questions about the current state of the issue under study (Büyüköztürk, Akgün, Karadeniz, Demirel, Kılıç, 2016).

### **STUDY GROUP**

The study group of this research consists of 9 women between the ages of 30-40, living in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, who voluntarily participated in the research.

#### **Data collection tools**

In the present study, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews. An interview is the expression of the feelings and thoughts of the individuals participating in the research on a particular topic. The main purpose of the interview is to penetrate the inner world of the individual and try to understand his or her point of view. With the interviews, one hopes to obtain unobservable information such as the person's experiences, attitudes, thoughts, intentions, comments, mental perceptions and reactions about the topic under study (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 120; Sönmez and Alacapınar, 2011: 108). Semi-structured interview, a widely used method of data collection in qualitative research, is an interview method in which researchers can ask predetermined questions or new questions that arise during the interview (Aziz, 1994; Ekiz, 2017; Güler, Halıcıoğlu and Taşgın, 2015). The questions in the semi-structured interview were prepared as open-ended. In order to prepare the interview form, literature review was conducted and other studies on this topic were reviewed. The questions were presented to the expert opinion and the questions were finalized according to the feedback from the experts.

1. What aspects of your life are affected by social media use? And how?
2. How do you compare the life shown on social media to your own life?
3. How does social media use affect your relationships with your husband and children?
4. What impact does social media use have on your expectation of life?

### **DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

In the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research, an analysis of domestic and foreign documents (literature review) was conducted. In the second part of data collection process, semi-structured interview was conducted. Ethical principles were strictly followed during data collection process. Before data collection began, the necessary approvals were obtained for the measurement tools to be used. During data collection, priority was given to the voluntary participation of the participants. A declaration form was prepared for the participants, explaining the purpose of the study and how it would be carried out in a way that the

participants could understand. They were assured that the identities of the participants in the study would remain confidential. In order to obtain the data appropriately, the voices of the participants giving permission were recorded. Interviews lasted between 30-40 minutes.

**ANALYSIS and INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

The data were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is conducted to determine the presence of certain words or concepts in a text or series of texts. The researcher determines the presence, meaning and relationships of these words and concepts and draws conclusions about the message of the text through analysis. In content analysis, related data are organized as concepts and themes and analyzed into categories and subcategories (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2008; Ekiz, 2017). In the data analysis, the following processes were followed. First of all, interviews were conducted with the participant women. These interviews were recorded using a voice recorder. After the interviews were completed, the raw transcripts of the voice recordings were transferred to the electronic environment. The participants’ voice recordings were listened to and transcribed in Microsoft Word software. During this process, the audio recordings were repeatedly listened to and checked for the accuracy with the data in the written Word document.

**III. FINDINGS and COMMENTS**

This section contains the findings and comments that emerged as a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the answers given to the questions asked during the interviews.

Table 1 presents the answers participants gave to the question of “What aspects of your life are affected by social media use? And how?”.

**Table 1.** The effects of social media use on life

Participants	Answers	N	%
P2,P3,P4,P7,P9	Makes her life easier	5	29,4
P2,P3,P5,P7	Communicates easily	4	23,52
P1,P7,P8	Fills her spare time	3	17,64
P2,P5,P7	Affects her life positively	3	17,64
P3,P4	Brings joy to her life	2	11,76
Total		17	100

As seen in Table 1, according to the participants the most significant effect of social media is that it makes their life easier (29,4%). “Social media makes my personal and business life much easier” (P3)

The second most common response to this is that it allows them to communicate easily with other people (23,52%). “Actually, it's good because I can access anything and anyone I want and it keeps me from boredom and allows me to get closer to my distant friends” K7

The third most frequent response was that they spend their spare time on social media (17,64%). “I spend my free time on social media” K1.

The other response that the participants gave at the same level is that social media positively affects their life (17,64%). “It has affected my life in a good way because I learn a lot through social media” K2

The least repeated response to this question is that it brings joy to their life (11,76%). “Social media keeps me active in every aspect of my life and brings me joy.” K1

Table 2 shows the answers participants gave to the second interview question: How do you compare the life shown on social media to your own life?

**Table 2.** The findings regarding the comparison between the life on social media and their own

Participants	Answers	N	%
P1,P3,P8,P9	Doesn't make comparisons. Knows the life on social media is not real	4	40
P4,P5,P6,P7	Instead of making comparisons she implements what she sees	4	40
P2,P5	There are huge differences between the life on social media and her own life	2	20
Total		10	100

As seen in Table 2, the most common response to the second question is that they do not make comparisons and know that life on social media is not real (40%). “I do not usually make comparisons at all. I know that life on social media is not real.” K9

Another answer that participants most often gave to this question is that they do not make comparisons, but they try to implement what they see (40%). “I don't make comparisons. I usually do the things I see such as going out, having breakfast and shopping” K4.

Another reply the participants gave to this question is that there is a huge difference between the life on social media and their own. “There are gaps between life on social media and my own life, but it's nice to observe the life there.” K2

Responses to the third question, “How does social media use affect your relationships with your husband and children?” are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The effect of social media use on family life

Participants	Answers	N	%
P1,P3,P5,P6,P7	Doesn't affect family relations negatively	5	45,45
P2,P8,P9	It causes an emotional distance among family members	3	27,27
P3,P7	When they use it for a long time, they cannot care for their children appropriately	2	18,18
P4	They have so much fun as a family	1	9,09
Total		11	100

As seen in Table 3, it can be concluded from the most frequently given answer to the third question that social media doesn't negatively affect their life (45,45%). “Social media does not pose a problem for us because when we close the page, we go on with our lives.” K1

The second most common response to this question is that it causes emotional distance among family members. “Social media keeps us emotionally distant from our family members.” K7

Another response the participants gave to this question is that they cannot take care of their children when they use it a lot. “Sometimes, when I use it a lot, I feel like I couldn't take care of my kids enough. There is no effect other than this. K7

The least repeated response participants gave to this question is that they have so much fun as a family (9,09%). “There is definitely no negative impact. We, with my husband and children, become more cheerful and fun.” K4

The answers to the fourth question “What impact does social media use have on your expectation of life?” are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The impact of social media on expectations

Participants	Answers	N	%
P1,P2,P4,P8,P9,	Expands the point of view towards life	5	33,3
P1, P3,P7,P5	Doesn't have much influence on expectations	4	26,64
P1,P2,P8	Increases the desire to go shopping	3	19,98
P2,P6	Implements the things she watches there and likes	2	13,32
P6	Targets what he watches and likes	1	6,66
Total		15	100

As seen in Table 4, from the most repeated answer given to the fourth question it is concluded that social media expands their point of view about life (33,3%). “Our eyes are opened more and we become more knowledgeable.” K4

The second most repeated response to fourth question is that social media doesn't have much influence on their life (26,64%). “I have never had any expectations from social media about life.” K5

Another response the participants gave to this question is that social media increases their desire to go shopping (19,98%). “It doesn't affect my expectations in general, but I like things from the stores and buy them, and that's enough for me.” K1

One of the responses that the participants gave to this question is that they try to implement what they watch and like on social media (13,32%). “Of course, it has an effect on my expectations from life because I watch videos there and try to apply them.” K2

The least repeated response to the fourth question is that they set the things they watch and like on social media as a target (6,66%). “I set what I see on social media as a target for myself” K6

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section contains the results reached through findings, the discussions of these results and suggestions made through the results.

In the research, based on the data on the impact of social media use on respondents', it was concluded that it makes life easier, enables easy communication, fills their spare time, positively contributes to their life, and brings joy to their life. In line with the results of this research, Çetin (2022) found that the women using social media stated that they use social media for communication. When the married women's reasons for using social media were examined it was found that most of them use social media to support their children's education and development and to follow pages which develop their cooking, knitting, and handcrafting skills. It was also found that some participants stated that they use social media because it has distracting, relaxing and enjoyable effects on them.

In the research, as for the comparisons they make between the life shown on social media and their own life, it was found that they know that the life on social media is not real, that they try to apply what they see instead of making comparisons, and that they are aware that there is a big difference between their own lives

and the life on social media. In their study examining the effects of posts in social media on users, Kıran, Küçükboşancı and Emre (2020) found that the factors such as comments on posts, likes, or the number of followers have a greater impact on female users. they concluded that the addiction to social media is more prevalent among women, supporting the finding that shares in social media have a greater impact on female users. In their study, Özkan and Öztürk (2015) revealed that most of the participants in the study could not use social media tools effectively for sharing information and academic studies, but they used social media to follow other people's lives and spend their spare time playing games. Most of the 16 to 25 year-old participants in the study conducted by Radmard, Soysal, Kutluca and Türk, it was found that most of the participants use social media to follow the daily lives of others, to meet people with common interests and to add articles expressing their feelings or opinions. However, it was found that participants between the ages of 22 and 24 use social media to share information, have fun and communicate socially.

The results on the effects of social media use on the relationship among family members revealed that social media use did not negatively affect their relationship in general, but that there was an emotional distance between her husband and the children, and that he could not show interest in his children when she used social media for a long time. It was also noted that they had great a lot of fun while using social media. It can be said that social media use can make an ineffective change in women's maternal identities and their children were also affected by this change (Ersoy, 2018). Özkan and Uzun Özer (2022) found that mothers use social media in order to satisfy their need for social support, to be a good mother, and to gain admiration. They also found that social media is an effective factor in motherhood role appropriation and adjustment. Moreover, these studies revealed that the social media use puts pressure on women to be better mothers, and that cases of neglect and abuse occur as a result of sharing photos and videos of the child. Aktaş & Çopur (2018) found that there is no negative attitude towards spouse's social media use, but as expected, perceived stress increases with the amount of time the spouse spends on social media. Rosen et al. (2013) also found in their study that those who spend their time on online social networks exhibit symptoms of depression. The results of the research conducted by the General Directorate of Family and Social Research (GDFSR) in 2008 show that as the frequency and duration of internet use of individuals increase, the time they spend with their family members decreases. In the results of the research conducted by Alan (2012), it was found that more than half of the participants thought that the internet did not have a negative effect on the relationship between partners. According to Şad et al. (2016, p.166), if the use of social media threatens the quality and duration of the time spent together as a family, it may cause problems such as the weakening of communication between spouses.

The data obtained in the research on the impact of social media use on life expectations, it was concluded that although the participants' perspective on life has broadened, it has not had a great effect on their expectations, that social media use has increased their desire to shop, and that they have tried to apply what they have seen on social media and set them as their goals.

## V. SUGGESTIONS

Considering these findings and the fact that communication is the foundation of healthy family life, training can be provided to families to guide them towards real communication instead of virtual communication and for the proper use of social media. Families should be made aware of the fact that couples should do a digital detox in the evening, when they are freed from the busy schedule of the day, to spend time together and communicate. Considering that parents could no longer limit their children's social media use nowadays, it is not possible to prevent children's social media use, but families should be made aware of the fact that children can use social media under parental control and that children should be guided to use social media to improve their creativity. Further studies that can contribute to the literature can be conducted.

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