

# Social Relationships admist rise of Social Media

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## ABSTRACT

Social media is about sociology and psychology more than technology - Brian Solis

In an increasingly digital world, social media have become deeply embedded in many day to day relationships. Social media affects relationships and the way people work, learn and live. Public sphere is mass media dominated (Habermas, J. 1962). Social networking sites, photo sharing platforms, and group communications technologies all allow family members to remain connected with one another across distance, time, and national boundaries. Social Media may have positive and negative impacts on relationships. Internet meeting is displacing the roles that family and friends once played in bringing couples together. Through the use of social media people can interact to new people from different organizations and countries, can learn new skills and get to know about new opportunities. According to a recent Tinder survey, online dating can be especially helpful for the LGBTQ+ community. Of 1,000 LGBTQ+ adults who took the survey, 80% say online dating and dating apps have helped their community, 52% feel more comfortable being themselves, and 45% say it's easier to explore their identity. Social media also has negative impacts. It affects teenager's valuable communication and social skills because they interact through features of social media such as texts, tweets etc. Though internet addiction and Facebook addiction are not considered mental health disorders by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-V), researchers recognize both as dependence issues, which can interfere with quality of life. Individuals in groups are present but ignoring each other because they are focused on their mobile device which supports the idea that social media enabled online relationships can displace and damage offline interaction and relationships. **Goffman's dramaturgical approach** (1959) opined that individual presents an 'idealized' rather than authentic version of herself/himself which helps to understand people present their ideal images on social media. Goffman's *Impression Management* (1959) helps to understand that on social media

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profiles, people tend to create false perfect images. There is great deal of need to analyze how social media impacts interpersonal relationships.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In an increasingly digital world, social media have become deeply embedded in many day to day relationships. Social media affects relationships and the way people work, learn and live. Social media has become almost a necessity for all of us in today's world. Social media allows society to maintain these relationships on a global scale, with instant access to close friends and family as well as people around the world. Through interactive technology, users can make connections more easily and interact in many different and creative ways. Now that so many use social media, it is intriguing to see how this influences their behavior. Social media has become so important and evolved so much, that we carry our social media with us throughout the day, on our phones. Social media platforms provide a cheap, easy way to quickly communicate our point to others across the world. Social media is impacting our society more than ever before through connecting people who live millions of miles away. Social networking sites are very important need in our day to day life for students, parents, people in common, avail themselves for information, chatting or talk, study various maps. It has become a part of our life. These sites are available, in computers, laptops, smart phones, mobile phones. In earlier days students were reading novels, story books, encyclopedia, general knowledge books to collect information and now, in this generation students are diverting themselves to social networking. Even our parents, grandparents, siblings, relatives are messaging each other by Facebook, E-mails, etc rather than giving/posting letters by couriers. It was the most beautiful and enjoyable movements in our life when we were waiting for letters. More disadvantages are lack of emotional connection, people's instigation, humiliation, personal meet-ups, and communication skills, make you disconnected. It facilitates laziness, creates a skewed self-image, reduces family closeness and causes distractions in life.

Amid growing debates about the impact of smart phones and social media on romantic relationships, a Pew Research Center (American think tank based in Washington, U.S) survey conducted in October 2019 finds that many Americans encounter some tech-related struggles with

their significant others. For instance, among partnered adults in the U.S. – that is, those who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship, roughly half (51%) say their partner is often or sometimes distracted by their cell phone while they are trying to have a conversation with them, and four-in-ten say they are at least sometimes bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on their mobile device. Posting about relationships, comments and likes, these things impacts how one feels about their love bond and relationship. Social media can also be a source of annoyance and conflict for some couples. Among those whose partner uses social media, 23% say they have felt jealous or unsure of their relationship because of the way their current partner interacts with others on these sites, and this share rises to 34% among those ages 18 to 29.

### **IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

In our now largely virtual world there are many different ways that we can choose to communicate with one another. Texts, Face Time, and social media sites have become some of the most popular ways for people to communicate with each other. Romantic partners express their relationship in many different ways. A couple can choose how they want their relationship to be expressed to the public. Now, with the increasing growth of technology, romantic partners can express their relationship online for essentially everyone they know to see. Social networking sites are used to try to recreate face-to-face communication and to maintain interpersonal relationships by allowing individuals to share and post things with each other (Farrugia, 2013). Couples can use social networking sites to communicate with and about their significant other (Utz, Beukeboom, 2011). Social networking sites, such as Facebook, allow couples to post pictures and statuses about their relationship but it can also be a breeding ground for jealousy and can cause uncertainty in a relationship.

Social networking sites can help facilitate and maintain relationships between romantic partners. Facebook connects partners together online by allowing them to view their profile, post pictures with/of each other, and also can physically link profiles of partners together when the relationship status is changed. The promotion of one's relationship of Facebook can also be seen as a form of self-presentation and can be used to help boost the person's popularity (Lukacs, 2012).

### **POSITIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON RELATIONSHIPS**

- Reducing physical distances: Long distance relationships are never easy. But couples or families who have to spend time apart for long periods can still feel close to each other. They can communicate and interact via social media. Even if they're separated by thousands of miles.
- Better understanding: Social media profiles often act as a snapshot of a person's personality. They display a person's likes, dislikes, social circle, opinions, views, and habits. This can be convenient. It can help new friends decide if they would like to enter into a relationship with the other person. It helps you assess if you are compatible with the other person.
- Staying in touch: College means your children will ultimately move out of your house. They will have to start their own lives. But your interaction with them does not have to be limited to postcards. You don't have to wait for long-distance phone calls anymore. You can follow what's happening in their lives over social media. Just reach out to them, and offer support and guidance.
- Memories: The memory feature on social media allows families to relive amazing family moments. Pictures, videos, tags, check-ins, etc. show up every year on the anniversary of the event. This can help keep the nostalgia and familial love going strong.
- Bonding: Social media allows family members to see what each other is posting. It lets them bond over things they like. This will also spill over into real life. It helps keep family members close over shared interests, hobbies, and more.
- Single Parent Families: Divorce is fairly common, but children still need some form of stability. They crave the presence of both parents in their lives. While parents may not get along on their own, they can still communicate with their kids. Obviously, doing this over social media is almost natural. This helps make sure there is no estrangement.

## **NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON RELATIONSHIPS**

- Addictive: Social media addiction is a very real phenomenon, especially among children. It can have serious impacts on your ability to communicate and form relationships in real life. Children are losing out to learn the ways to communicate with each other in physical gatherings.

- **Highlight Effect:** Social media is essentially a highlight reel of everyone's lives. However, many people easily mistake the highlight reel for a behind-the-scenes image. This can cause dissatisfaction, discontent, jealousy, and other negative emotions.
- **Infidelity:** Social media often offers a "safe" channel for people in a relationship to cheat on their partner. Most of the time, the other person can't figure out because there isn't anything seemingly out of the ordinary. We are always on our phones, so there's usually no visible change in behavior.
- **Mental Health:** It is very easy to forget the blurred line between social media and the real world. Young people, often adolescents, find themselves struggling to prioritize the right one. This can lead to mental conditions like anxiety or depression.
- **Self-esteem:** Social media has a very strong impact on self-esteem. People tend to portray their lives to be "flawless" or "picture perfect" when, in reality; it's completely different when behind the scenes. When we only get the highlights of other people's lives, we end up comparing them to ourselves.

## **GOFFMAN'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS ADMIST RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Erving Goffman** in his concept of *Impression Management* (1959) opines that we desire to manipulate others' impressions of us on the front stage. Similarly, people on social media tend to create impression on their significant others by posting images, writing bio in social media applications which contradicts with their real life image like Goffman talked about *back stage* which contradicts with *front stage*.

**Goffman's dramaturgical approach** (1959) opined that individual presents an 'idealized' rather than authentic version of herself/himself which helps to understand people present their ideal images on social media. The most common impression management strategies include ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, self-promotion and exemplification (offered by Jones and Pittman). When two individuals or parties meet, both form a judgment about each other. **Impression Management** theorists believe that it is a primary human motive; both inside and outside the organization (Provis, 2010) to avoid being evaluated negatively (Jain, 2012). Goffman

(1959) initially started with the study of impression management by introducing a framework describing the way one presents them and how others might perceive that presentation (Cole, Rozelle, 2011). The first party consciously chooses a behavior to present to the second party in anticipation of a desired effect. Assuming the second party responds in the way that the first party intended, the first party will continue to use the particular strategy.

## **RELATIONAL DIALECTICS THEORY**

The Relational dialectics theory (RDT) can be used when discussing social networking sites and romantic relationships because it analyzes the creation of meaning from competing discourses that cause conflicts and resolutions in relationships. Relational dialectics theory states that romantic partners have to try to balance the effects of forces trying to bring them together and pull them apart simultaneously. The forces acting on the relationship are called dialectics and they occur both between the couple (internally) and between the couple and their social networks (externally) (Fox, Osborn, & Warber, 2014). I will be focusing on the three primary dialectics: expression-privacy, integration-separation, and stability-change (Fox, Osborn, & Warber, 2014).

### ***1. Integration-separation***

This dialect refers to the struggles that romantic partners face between inclusion and exclusion. The couple must find a balance between being a “we” and an “I” on social networking sites. I have discussed previously that social networking sites allow couples to connect with each other in a multitude of ways but it is ultimately up to both partners if they choose to use Facebook as another channel of communication in the relationship. For example, a partner may choose to not participate online for many reasons such as wanting keep their relationship private.

### ***2. Expression-privacy***

When using social networking sites, the issue of privacy is a relevant concern. This dialect discusses how much is shared on social media and how much is left as a mystery from social media users. Sharing too much on social media can take away from the intimacy of the relationship between two people. Adversely, sharing too little on social media can cause outsiders (friends/peers) to question the authenticity of a relationship. Social networking sites make it

possible to share almost every aspect of a relationship but finding a balance between sharing too much and not sharing enough is necessary for effective relationships.

### ***3. Stability-change***

The last dialectic discusses the balance between things staying constant in a relationship and things changing. Subtle changes to a relationship are healthy and normal, everyone changes so it only makes sense that relationships evolve as well. The extent of change in the relationship can sometimes create uncertainty. When both partners are not in agreement with the balance of stability and change in the relationship then it may cause uncertainty in the relationships.

### **Social Networking Sites and Conflict in Romantic Relationships**

When couples are active on Facebook it can sometimes create conflict in the relationship. Conflict in relationships can sometimes stem from insecurity or uncertainty in a relationship. If a person's significant other posts a picture with a member of the opposite sex or posts on their wall then the other partner may start to feel uncertain about the relationship. Social networking sites make it easy for a partner to be aware of inconsistencies in the relationship. A survey conducted by Fox (2014) revealed that students feel that without Facebook the inconsistencies would still happen but were more likely to be downplayed because it wouldn't be as public as doing it on Facebook. When we feel insecure or uncertain in a relationship social networking sites make it easy to check up on our significant others. Many people seek out social media sites to use for surveillance on their partner.

### **Using Technology to End a Relationship**

Although it is typically not acceptable, sometimes partners will end a relationship over a telephone call, text message, or with social networking sites. Breaking up over the phone can be looked at as term avoidance via distant communication (Weisskirch & Delevi, 2013). This means that the partner chooses not to deal with the intensity of breaking up with face-to-face communication so they choose to do it with mediated communication. This method of relationship dissolution is usually frowned upon and is not widely accepted as a socially acceptable way to terminate a relationship. The duration of the romantic relationship can have an effect on the manner in which

one terminates the relationship. If the couple has been together less than 3 months it is sometimes seen as more acceptable to end the relationship via text, call, or with social networking sites.

### **After the Break Up**

When partners break up social networking sites can be a cause for concern because the relationship is still imprinted into Facebook in a number of ways. After the couple has broken up and changed their relationship status there can still be artifacts from the relationship left on social media such as pictures together, messages, etc. Some people choose to do a type of cleanse of the relationship on social media and delete all of the evidence of the relationship. Even if the person chooses to defriend the previous partner on social networking sites it is still possible for that person to appear on the other's profile because of mutual friends (Fox, Osborn & Warber, 2014). Some people choose to keep the remaining evidence on their social networking sites some may choose to defriend any mutual friend they have with their past partner to ensure the person does not show up on their Facebook page anymore.

Facebook can also be a place for the partner's friends and peers to show support towards them after the relationship has ended. Comments or a message to someone's profile expressing sympathy is a common way for a person to show support on Facebook after a breakup occurs.

### **CONCLUSION**

Social media addiction as well as increased use of social media can lead to negative impact on the relationship especially it is damaging the marital relationships. Lack of trust, loneliness and inappropriate posts by the spouse are some of the factors causing negative vibes on the relationship between spouses.

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