

Unraveling Virtual Threads: The Impact of Social Media Engagement on Family Dynamics and Real-Life Relationships

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Virtual communication through social networking sites: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Gaming Sites, and YouTube is the key characteristic of contemporary lifestyles, relationships, and interactions of young adults with friends and family (Bhowmick & Madhu, 2020). Its spread has raised concerns in Pakistan, a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic Muslim country, with conventional, family-orientated social frameworks based mostly on joint and extended systems. Online over-engagement though is increasing awareness, it is reducing real communication between parents and their (young) adults in urban Pakistan that the society considers essential for propagation of family norms, traditions, and values (Woodward, 2020). It has compromised real family time and inter-family social networking by involving individuals in the virtual world. They are physically present with their families but they are mentally engaged with their mobile phones (Kanwal, Pitafi, Akhtar, and Irfan, 2019). This research explores the multifaceted impact of virtual engagement with social networking sites on patterns of open communication within families. The study aims to investigate the influence of virtual engagement on real-life priorities and connections, proposing hypotheses that posit significant correlations between online identity maintenance and decreases in family social interaction and bonding. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the research employs a survey method with standardized questions to collect data from 800 participants. The data is analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, revealing key demographic information and social media usage patterns. Linear regression analyses support the hypotheses, demonstrating a significant relationship between time spent on social media and reduced family interaction and bonding, as well as its impact on family relations and priorities. The findings suggest that excessive engagement in sustaining online identities negatively influences real-life relationships, emphasizing the need to address the growing trend of social media dependency in familial contexts. The findings serve as a guide for the strategists who may plan to sustain social values and good relations between parents and their (young) adults in what they are perceiving as digital Pakistan of the future.

1. Introduction

The 21st century has observed a momentous progression in media technologies, followed by a surprising proliferation of social media platforms that have performed a crucial role in influencing the contours of contemporary informational societies (Moinuddin, 2021). These podiums have acted as outlets for the emergence of a distinguishing nexus between young adults living in Pakistani society and their peers across the globe. One of the distinguishing factors that has played a vital role in progression of these platforms is to create and maintain their online persona through self-presentation and adept impression management. It has enabled the construction of multifaceted online identities (Pearson, 2023). Uğur Gündüz, a notable scholar, contends that the advent of digital media has irrevocably transformed the fabric and essence of social interactions. Each individual's social performance has undergone a paradigm shift, effectively solidifying their virtual bonds with counterparts from diverse communities. Yet, this seismic transformation also raises concerns about the potential erosion of authentic social capital within societies (Gündüz, 2017).

The empirical data, as presented by Simon Kemp, underscores the extent of this transformation. A substantial fraction of the world's populace now wields cell phones (5.220 billion users), possesses distinct internet identities (4.660 billion users), and engages with social media platforms (4.200 billion users) (Kemp, 2022). The quantitative analysis by Kemp (2022) paints a vivid picture of the explosive growth in global social media users, surging from 1.482 billion in January 2012 to an astounding 4.623 billion in January 2022. Additionally, the preponderance of users below the age of 20, with 77 million users aged 13 and above, affirming the youthful demographic dominance (Kemp, 2022).

This exponential proliferation corroborates earlier concerns regarding the burgeoning reliance of young adults across the globe on technology-mediated communication. This shift, while enhancing virtual relationships, has been perceived as diminishing the value of face-to-face and interpersonal communication within immediate physical surroundings (Makarius et al. 2020). This transformative trajectory has been buttressed by the proliferation of 4G internet services and the democratization of smartphone access. These technological enablers have proven instrumental in galvanizing the rapid proliferation and pervasive usage of social media platforms (GSMA, 2019; Kemp, 2022). This transformational shift has, however, prompted a decline in traditional face-to-face interactions, concomitant with an augmentation of online engagements. Miller's perspective resonates, suggesting that these online activities have not only supplanted real-world interactions but have also attenuated the bonds shared with physical surroundings, a digital immersion sometimes clashing with local norms and values (Miller, 2017).

This study intends to explore the impact of virtual engagement with online persona on social networking sites on the patterns of open communication and the rise of social networking sites, especially among young adults in Pakistan, has led to debates over its impact on virtual and real-

life interactions. The partiality for virtual interactions, sometimes outshine face-to-face conversations, particularly within families, has been observed (Farrukh, 2022). However, scholars like Valkenburg, Piotrowski, and Jessica (2017) caution against excessive virtual engagement due to potential detachment from real-world experiences. On the other hand, proponents highlight the benefits of virtual interactions for sharing daily experiences and connecting with a wide network of friends, including family members. This divergence raises questions about ease of expression and relationship formation in digital and physical realms (Fuller et al., 2020). As these platforms gain traction, the broader implications of online identities and digital communication on relationships, social structures, and families are being explored (Fayed, 2022; Bernatzky et al., 2021).

The process of self-disclosure and the creation of online identities are fundamental to social media engagement. Users establish and maintain their virtual personas based on motivations, goals, intended audience, shared personal information, and the perceived value of interactions on specific platforms. Goffman's concept of self-presentation, derived from the notion that life is akin to a stage where individuals adopt roles based on context, applies to both real and virtual identities. Goffman originally applied this concept to face-to-face interactions, where individuals manage their impressions, selectively revealing different aspects of their personalities. (Shajahan & Kamble, 2020). Following are the research objectives of the current study.

1. To examine the multifaceted impact of virtual engagement with social networking sites on patterns of open communication with Parents and Siblings.
2. To investigate the influence of virtual engagement on their priorities and connections in real-life contexts.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Moya Escudero (2022) elucidates that real-life identity is a blend of philosophies individuals adopt as personally acceptable. Rooted in past experiences and perceptions, identity encompasses tangible and intangible elements. "Shaping identity involves the ego's identification with external objects and ideas" (Moya Escudero, 2022). The ego's role is pivotal in this process, whether through identification or introjection, integrating external elements into the self (Brooks, et al. 2020). Moreover, during early life stages, parents serve as both sources of inspiration and models for identity formation, impacting their progeny's identities through their positive or negative traits (Holmbeck, 2018). As time progresses, peers and friends become influential in shaping self-identity (Erinç, 2019). Individuals define themselves in relation to their social circles and the identities projected by their friends, seen in the context of amicable exchanges (Erinç, 2019). Martinez & Cumsille (2019) posit that identity's core function is to provide self-awareness, understanding of one's societal environment, and a sense of coherence and consistency (Martinez & Cumsille, 2019).

The process of constructing and sustaining online personas is complex, influenced by various factors (Mihailidis, 2020; Salminen et al., 2020). Virtual communities, unlike real-life environments, lack concrete controls, making them appealing spaces for individuals to express conventional and unconventional behaviors, manifesting imagined identities, and cultivating stronger virtual relationships (Chapman et al., 2021). The construct of online identity echoes Goffman's concept of self-presentation, inspired by the idea that life is comparable to a stage where individuals enact roles based on context. This concept applies to both real and virtual identities, where individuals choose to reveal or conceal dimensions of their personality to manage impressions. These dynamic highlights the relationship between the realities and personae individuals present in both realms (Leary, 2019).

Additionally, the influence of Robert Putnam's theory of time displacement becomes apparent, suggesting that increased engagement in virtual platforms for identity cultivation can lead to a reduction in face-to-face interactions and everyday activities (Huckle & Silve, 2020; Kobeissi, 2023). This displacement is akin to Putnam's assessment of TV viewing, which is linked to declines in social capital and well-being due to reduced interpersonal interactions (Dubrov, 2023; Nie & Erbring, 2000; Turkle, 2015).

The creation and maintenance of online identities offer users a sense of control over their presentation, allowing them to navigate complex factors that shape their online personas (Mihailidis, (2020); Wright et al., 2022). Similarly, just as real societies encompass individuals with diverse ideologies, beliefs, and values, virtual platforms provide a space for various online groups and communities (Kc & Upreti, 2017). The virtual community selection process, akin to choosing real-life affiliations, influences the perception of self within these groups. Both individualism and collectivism play pivotal roles in shaping an individual's sense of belonging, while social media platforms facilitate the development of virtual associations and communities based on shared interests, ideas, and hobbies (Huang & Waddel, 2020).

These virtual platforms have wielded considerable influence in shaping the trajectory of contemporary information societies. Their imprint is particularly conspicuous among young adults, who exhibit a predilection for manifesting self-constructed online personas across social media channels (Pakhtusova & Uvarina, 2019). With the proliferation of access to virtual platforms and online communities, dichotomous viewpoints have surfaced, debating their potential to impact real-life relationships, societal norms, and the cherished values enshrined within familial realms (Farrukh, 2021). This epochal shift has catalyzed transformations in behavioral patterns, interaction dynamics, and self-presentation strategies, generating an array of constructive and potentially deleterious repercussions across the spheres of both.

The increasing prominence of virtual platforms is evident, particularly among the younger generation. These platforms serve as spaces for the creation and maintenance of online identities, a process influenced by multifaceted factors (Mihailidis, 2020; Wright et al., 2022). The allure of

virtual communities lies in the freedom to express various aspects of one's personality, both conventional and unconventional, shaping imagined online identities that resonate with certain aspects of the user's real identity. This interplay influences the strength of their association with virtual communities, further shaping their online behavior and relationships (Farrukh, 2022).

These digital identities, often referred to as avatars (Poole, 2017), serve as conduits for users to engage in diverse activities within virtual realms. These personas enable participants to exchange messages, interact directly, and establish versatile connections with others. They provide users with the freedom to partake in a range of actions, from running and dancing to expressing emotions in various forms. The evolution of virtual worlds is marked by increasing complexity, hinging on the growth of internet usage and continuous technological advancements (Petrović, 2018).

The impact of spending time online is a topic of contention, contributing to a decrease in the quality time parents and young adults share (Faltýnková et al., 2020). Parents express concerns that internet usage does not enhance their relationships with the younger generation, particularly when parents possess limited knowledge about online activities (Faltýnková et al., 2020). The proliferation of internet usage has significantly amplified screen time among individuals aged 13 and above, resulting in limited family interactions (Faltýnková et al., 2020). However, while Elisa Sarafinelli (2020) challenges the notion that the internet necessarily disrupts social bonds, she acknowledges that both internet users and non-users share apprehensions about diminishing communication quality between parents and their offspring. It is concluded that the fast-paced nature of modern life often leaves family members with limited time to engage in meaningful discussions (Sarafinelli, 2020). Medically, excessive smartphone, computer, and screen device usage has been linked to adverse health effects, including weight gain, myopia, and social and emotional challenges such as isolation and decreased self-esteem (Kondo et al., 2020; Sarafinelli, 2020).

These concerns about the erosion of parent-child quality time have become more pressing as 4.20 billion users spend a staggering 12.5 trillion hours on social media, with 4.66 billion unique internet identities and 5.22 billion cell phones in a world population of 7.91 billion (Simon Kemp, January 26, 2022). Although the gap of 0.46 billion users between the internet and social media users appears minor, addressing the issue of declining quality time necessitates thorough consideration and potential solutions.

In Pakistan, the growing phenomenon of "pubbing" has become a concern for parents who perceive their younger generation as neglecting them in favor of mobile devices. Bai and Dan (2019) emphasize that family bonds are diminishing in significance due to the lure of mobile phone notifications and illuminated screens, overshadowing meaningful interactions with parents or discussions of vital family matters. In Pakistani society, valuing parental attention is a fundamental norm and a critical social value, and the influence of social media is undeniably reshaping these

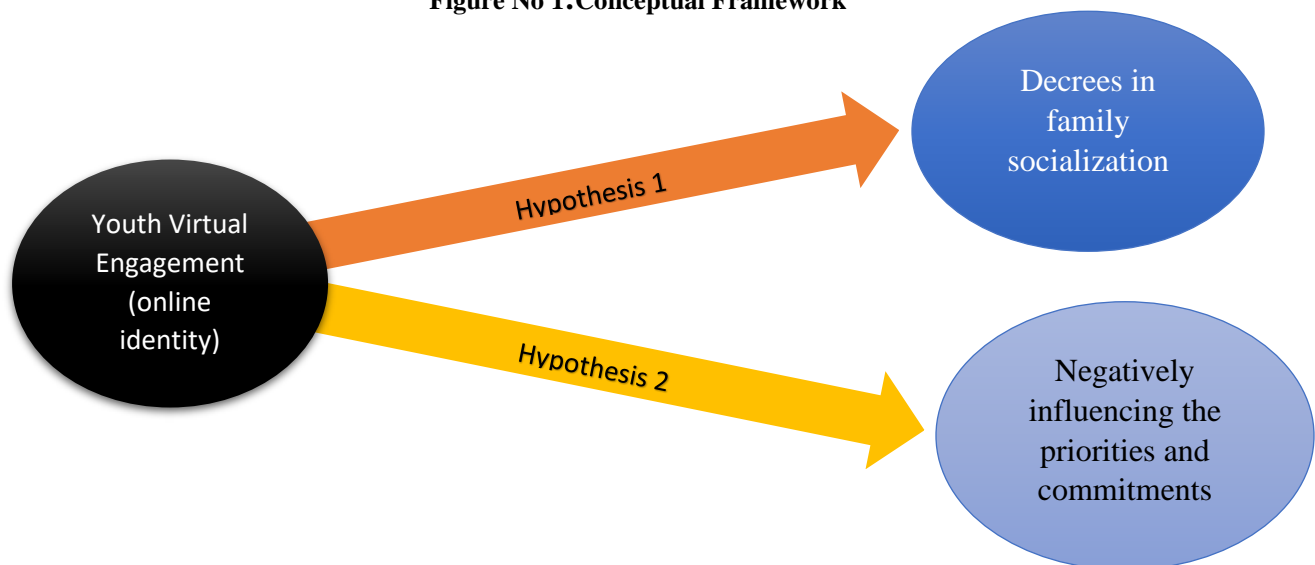
real-life norms. The intermediation and lack of awareness regarding the use of smart mobile devices and social media platforms are undermining the foundational principles of society.

Robert Putnam's theory of time displacement provides support for the hypotheses under examination. This theory posits that an increase in time spent on virtual platforms for the purpose of cultivating and sustaining online identities corresponds to a decrease in time dedicated to real-world socialization with family, friends, and community activities (Huckle & Silve, 2020; Kobeissi, 2023). Although Putnam's theory of time-displacement, originally applied to TV viewing, proclaims that this displacement of time leads to a decline in social capital and interpersonal interactions, potentially resulting in diminished well-being and communication (Dubrov, 2023; Nie & Erbring, 2000; Turkle, 1996; Stoll, 1995; Lavin, Marvin, McLarney, Nola, & Scott, 1999). Putnam's perspective suggests that excessive engagement with virtual platforms disrupts routine activities, reducing face-to-face interactions with family members (Siraj, 2018). While platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or Tic-Tok can foster relationships in ordinary circumstances, imbalanced usage may harm daily life and family connections (Siraj, 2018). On the basis of above facts current study proposes the following hypotheses.

H1: It is more likely that significant correlations exist between the extent of online identity maintenance and decrees in social interaction & family bonding with in the family.

H2: Excessive engagement in sustaining online identities has a noteworthy impact on real-life relationships negatively influencing the priorities and commitments.

Figure No 1: Conceptual Framework



3. Methodology

The research adopts a quantitative approach utilizing a survey method. According to Kaya Yilmaz, the quantitative method involves the analysis of numerical data to understand the correlation between dependent and independent variables within a given sample of the population.

This method can be either descriptive, confirming associations between variables, or experimental, establishing causality. Standard structured instruments are employed to gather data from large representative samples, ensuring reliability and enabling replication (Cengage, 2010). With standardized questions, surveys also mitigate potential biases during questionnaire completion. The research employed various scales to measure different constructs. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with 60 university students aged 18 to 30 from the University of Lahore. Based on the pilot test feedback, revisions were made to enhance the compatibility between the Likert scale and the phrasing of questions. Notably, sections 2 and 4 (scales 1 & 3) were significantly modified.

After the General scale (46 items) was developed by the researcher. The Virtual Identity scale (33 items) was partially developed by the researcher and originally by Romain, Sohair and Joel Bree (2016). The scales to assess priorities and association with virtual networking sites (24 items), Social Interaction and family bonding (21 items) were developed and utilized by Asma Alolyan (2017). The survey received responses from 800 participants who took part in the study. The collected responses were then subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. This software facilitated the extraction of findings and outcomes through a combination of inferential and descriptive statistical techniques. The presentation of results is organized in tabulated format, providing a clear overview of the obtained insights.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Demographics

The demographics table shows that majority of the participants 45.3% fall between 18 to 22 years of bracket, 57.2 % are males and majority of the participants are Single 60.8%. Educational statuses of the respondents included in the sample of the study. Dominating majority about 60% of the respondents had completed two to four years of education at the undergraduate level (14-16 years of education). The data indicates that most of the individuals 65% were associated with the nuclear family structure while only 35% belonged to the joint family system. The employment statuses of the survey participants; 58% respondents were employed part-time/full time while 42% respondents were jobless (being students).

Table No 1: Demographics

Age of the participants		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-22 Years	363	45.3	45.3	45.3
	23-26 Years	148	18.5	18.5	63.7
	27-30 Years	291	36.3	36.3	100.0
Total		802	100.0	100.0	

Gender of the participants		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	459	57.2	57.2	57.2
	Female	343	42.8	42.8	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Marital Status		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	488	60.8	60.8	60.8
	Married	200	24.9	24.9	85.8
	Widow	1	.1	.1	85.9
	in relationship	92	11.5	11.5	97.4
	In a platonic relationship	8	1.0	1.0	98.4
	Engaged	13	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Education Level		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	BA/BSc (2 years) Undergraduate	163	20.3	20.3	20.3
	BA/BS (Honors 4 year program)	317	39.5	39.5	59.9
	MA (16 years of education)	173	21.6	21.6	81.4
	MS/MPhil (18 years)	149	18.6	18.6	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Family structure of the respondents		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Joint Family System	282	35.2	35.2	35.2
	Nuclear Family System	520	64.8	64.8	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Employment status of the participants		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	467	58.2	58.2	58.2
	No	335	41.8	41.8	100.0

Total	802	100.0	100.0
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Table 2: Social Media Usage

Frequency of logging-in into SNS		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	24/7 checked in and check updates now and then	265	33.0	33.0	33.0
	Every half an hour	135	16.8	16.8	49.9
	Every hour	87	10.8	10.8	60.7
	1-5 times a day	94	11.7	11.7	72.4
	5-10 times a day	73	9.1	9.1	81.5
	10-20 times a day	51	6	6.4	87.9
	Once every day	30	3.7	3.7	91.6
	Twice a day	44	5.5	5.5	97.1
	Every two days	2	.2	.2	97.4
	Once a week	7	.9	.9	98.3
	Once a month	14	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Time spent with parents		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Half an hour daily	122	15.2	15.2	15.2
	An hour daily	461	57.5	57.5	72.7
	2-3 times a week	104	13.0	13.0	85.7
	Over the weekend	7	.9	.9	86.5
	6-7 times a month	3	.4	.4	86.9
	Occasionally	17	2.1	2.1	89.0
	Only if necessary	88	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Socializing with siblings		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Half an hour daily	266	33.2	33.2	33.2

An hour daily	362	45.1	45.1	78.3
Twice or thrice a week	96	12.0	12.0	90.3
Over the weekend	57	7.1	7.1	97.4
Twice or thrice monthly	4	.5	.5	97.9
Often	17	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Spending more time online than with the family					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	501	62.5	62.5	62.5
	No	301	37.5	37.5	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Average time spent on SNS daily					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Up to 30 minutes	7	.9	.9	.9
	One hour	54	6.7	6.7	7.6
	One to two hours	88	11.0	11.0	18.6
	Three to four hour	194	24.2	24.2	42.8
	More than 4 hours	459	57.2	57.2	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Social media usage while accompanying loved ones					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	426	53.1	53.1	53.1
	No	376	46.9	46.9	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Addicted to SNS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	479	59.7	59.7	59.7
	No	323	40.3	40.3	100.0
	Total	802	100.0	100.0	

Similarly, Table 2 Social media usage and Association shows that the data reveals that 33% respondents remained logged into their social media accounts 24/7 to check the updates. 17% were checking into their accounts every half an hour, 11% every hour, 12% 1-5 times daily, 9% 5-10 times daily, 6% 10-20 times daily, 4% once daily, 6% twice daily and 2% once in a month. Only a few respondents were logging into their accounts after every two days or once a week. Similarly, Majority of the respondents 57.5% expressed that they spend an hour daily with their parents whereas same is the ratio of time they spend with siblings at home. 62.5 % of the users admit that they spend more time online that with the family and they use social media even in the presence of their loved ones. When they were asked do they feel addicted towards social Networking sites dominating majority 59.7 almost 60 percent said yes they feel addicted or more associated with activities online that real life.

Descriptive Statistics for Each Scale

In this section, the statistical data of Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Skewness, and Kurtosis factor for all scales are presented. This table presents the statistical data that establishes the relationship between Virtual Identity with Association with SNS, Social Interaction & Family Bonding, Association with SNS and Priorities of young adults.

Table No 3: Descriptive Statistics for Each Scale

	Mean		Std.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Deviation	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
	Virtual Identity & Association with SNS	87.4464	.65209	18.46697	-.345	.086	.551
Social Interaction & Family Bonding	61.3803	.46874	13.27445	-.469	.086	.054	.172
SNS and Priorities of Youth	63.8204	.40376	11.43435	.021	.086	.091	.172

The table above presents the consolidated responses of the participants concerning the research variables. The computations for all the listed variables were based on their respective statements, focusing on measuring the average response (mean). The data reveals that among all the variables, virtual identity (mean = 87.44, standard deviation = 18.40) exhibited the highest score, indicating a notable level of dependency on social media among the respondents. Additionally, the mean (63.82) and standard deviation (11.43) values for SNS and Priorities of Youth were also comparatively higher. This outcome strongly suggests that the extensive engagement with virtual identity through social media usage has a substantial impact on family interaction, bonding, Priorities of youth and a subsequent reduction in overall communication and interactions.

Results of Hypothesis 1:

H1: It is more likely that significant correlations exist between the extent of online identity maintenance and decrees in social interaction & family bonding with in the family.

H0: It is more likely that significant correlations exist between the extent of online identity maintenance and decrees in social interaction & family bonding with in the family.

Linear Regression Analysis of Time Spent on social media to maintain online identity & Family Interaction & Bonding in real life.

Table No 4.1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.271 ^a	.074	.072	12.78461

a. Predictors: (Constant), Time Spent on SM

Table No 4.2: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10388.083	1	10388.083	63.557	.000 ^b
	Residual	130756.926	800	163.446		
	Total	141145.009	801			

a. Dependent Variable: Social Interaction & Family Bonding

b. Predictors: (Constant), Time Spent on SM

Table No 4.3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	48.779	1.644		29.674	.000
	Time Spent on SM	.791	.099	.271	7.972	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Social Interaction & Family Bonding

Table No 4.4: Summary Table

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis Supported
H ₁	TSM → FI&FB	.791	.074	63.557	7.972	0.00	Yes

Note: *p>0.05, TSM: Time spent on SM (while being online), FI & FB: Family Interaction & Bonding



In this analysis, the dependent variables of family interaction and family bonding were subjected to linear regression analysis with the independent variable being time spent on social media. The results of the statistical analysis revealed that time spent on social media significantly predicted family interaction and family bonding ($F=63.557$, $p<0.05$). This indicates that the amount of time individuals devote to social media has a noteworthy impact on shaping their family interactions and the strength of family bonds ($b=0.791$, $p<0.05$). According to the linear regression analysis, the results suggest that time spent on social media has a substantial effect on family interaction. Additionally, the R-squared value of 0.074 indicates that approximately 7.4% of the variance in family interaction and family bonding can be explained by time spent on social media, as demonstrated in the summary table above.

Results of Hypothesis2

H2: Excessive engagement in sustaining online identities has a noteworthy impact on real-life relationships negatively influencing the priorities and commitments.

H0: Excessive engagement in sustaining online identities has not any noteworthy impact on real-life relationships negatively influencing the priorities and commitments

Linear Regression Analysis of Time consumed on social media sites and family relations while being associated with SNS.

Table No 5: Summary

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis Supported
H ₂	TSM → FR	.295	0.25	20.934	4.575	.000	Yes

Note: * $p>0.05$, TSM: Time spent on SM (while being online), FR: Family Relations and Priorities and commitments

The hypotheses aimed to examine the influence of time spent on social media on Priorities and commitments of users in family setup. The results revealed that time spent on social media significantly predicted Priorities and commitments of users in family setup, as indicated by the values $F=20.934$ and $p<0.05$. This suggests that the amount of time individuals invest in social media plays a significant role in shaping their priorities ($b=0.295$, $p<0.05$). The linear regression results highlight the impact of time spent on social media on family relations. Additionally, the R-squared value of 0.25 indicates that approximately 2.5% of the variance in family relations can be attributed to social media dependency, as presented in the summary table above.

5. Conclusion

The escalating use of online media for social interaction is indicative of a significant shift in user behavior and interests away from family and friends. Prior to this surge in social media addiction, people were more invested in relationships, familial matters, and friendships, dedicating more time to their families. However, the advent of social media has led to the erosion of the emotional bonds that once united families (Kim & Fingerma, 2022). Banerji (2023) contends that excessive social media consumption consumes valuable time, detaches users from reality, confines

them to a virtual realm, fosters social isolation, and diverts attention from family gatherings in the Pakistani context. The intertwined issues of surveillance and trust further exacerbate the situation, with platforms like Facebook being blamed for fracturing family ties (Farrukh, 2021). Within families, individuals possess knowledge of each other's capabilities and circumstances, yet digital connections and the façades presented on social media promote a disregard for factual realities.

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