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Evaluating the impact of young students' use of social media on conflicts with their mothers: A case study of students at Iran University of Science and Technology

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ABSTRACT

In the era of the Internet and modern technology, the lack of agreement in attitudes, values, and norms has led to conflicts and significant disagreements between mothers and children and their distance from each other. Therefore, this research aimed to evaluate the effects of young people's use of social media on their conflict with their mothers. This research was conducted using a survey approach. The statistical sample of the research included 367 undergraduate students from all fields of study at Iran University of Science and Technology. The face validity of the questionnaire was established based on the opinions of experts and university professors, and its reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The overall results indicated that the conflict level between young people and their mothers has been determined to be 38.14 on a scale from 0-100. In this study, PLS models were used to test the conceptual model of the research. Based on path analysis, the findings indicated that students' use of domestic networks (0.281), the number of youth memberships in social networks (0.206), students' use of foreign networks (0.168) and the interaction between mothers and children (-0.132), directly and significantly affected their conflict with mothers. Three variables, access to social networks (0.279), the number of youth memberships in social networks (0.130) and mothers' use of social networks, were indirectly significant in the conflict model with mothers. Three variables, purposes of use, time spent by youth on social, and youth access to social networks were not directly significant. Finally, the total effect of the variables in this model explained 28% of the variations in the rate of conflict with the mother.

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1. Introduction and statement of the problem

As the smallest social unit, the family can be influenced by global changes, notably the development of technology and communications. Like other societies worldwide, Iranian society has experienced globalization, the advent of new technologies, particularly the internet, and the networking of society and family for years, which has led to significant challenges and conflicts in values, norms, behavior, ethics, and speech among the new generation. The coexistence of the latest generation with modern information technologies has placed the processes of socialization and cultural transmission into a state of transformation. The internet and social networks provide extensive communication and information facilities beyond space and time constraints, or as McLuhan termed it, the "global village," especially for young people. In contemporary conditions, the vast expansion of facilities in education, culture, demands, and individual freedoms has created social and cultural gaps between the two generations. In such a situation, adults attempt to dominate the young, while adolescents and young people seek independence. Consequently, the youth aspire to create a new world aligned with their internal perceptions and closer to their ideals and dreams, often leading to rebellion against their parents. Youth culture embodies values that often conflict with those of the adult world. Young people perceive themselves as separate from the older generation in this period. The younger generation is accumulating knowledge rapidly that the older generation cannot perform a significant portion of its traditional roles (Patil, 2014: 311).

The extensive use of the internet and social networks, as well as educational applications and software, despite their advantages, has led to concerns such as the rise of individualism and isolation, changes in reference groups and lifestyles, and the emergence of new identities. As Bottomore suggests, socialization is never complete; new generations do not entirely replicate the behaviors of the previous generation. Instead, this replication is accompanied by criticism, rejection of some traditional aspects, or innovation (Bottomore, 1992: 342).

In the present era, considering the widespread embrace of social media by internet users, particularly the youth and adolescents, and their increasing use of virtual communication methods, the foundations of face-to-face interaction among young people in society and with their parents are under serious threat, which has led to a shift in the value system, manifesting as social anomalies and creating tension within families. Youth internet use has diminished family values, occupying a significant portion of their virtual leisure time. As Ronald Inglehart highlights in "Cultural Transformation," the adult generation tends to be more resistant to change. At the same time, the youth are more adaptable, leading to the breakdown of traditional communication frameworks between parents and children in families. Undoubtedly, the internet broadens horizons and provides unprecedented opportunities for connecting with others. However, the unrestrained pace of internet growth and expansion also poses threats and challenges to traditional forms of human interaction (Giddens, 2010: 684).

The most significant difference between the generations of children and parents likely pertains to their needs and desires. A subtle point regarding the needs and wants of technology is that most parents only seek to acquire the technologies they need. In contrast, the new generation needs technological manifestations simply because they are interested in them. Zuor and Zuor (2010) highlight an intriguing point about the digital divide within families. They suggest that family conflicts often arise because parents are immigrants to today's digital world, while their children are considered natives of this digital world. The digital divide usually leads to ongoing conflicts within the family and damages the communication between children and parents (Hariri et al., 2012: 5).

Therefore, a fixed factor (the generational gap between parents and children) and a variable factor (social changes) contribute to the generation gap (Davis, 1940: 525). The educational advancement of children, increased use of modern media including the internet and satellite, access to extensive information, women's employment, relative freedoms, choice rights, changes in individuals' lifestyles, and changes in reference groups are among the factors leading to generational differences within families. The most significant challenge facing today's families is the rapid and substantial transformation of family norms and values between children and parents, which can be discussed based on competing norms alongside traditional norms as the source of many family conflicts. Competing norms can be considered in areas such as spouse selection, ways of making friends, leisure activities, relationships with the opposite sex, religious attitudes and behaviors, and choices in cultural consumption (Sabouri Khosroshahi, 2014: 79). Thus, Iranian society has concerns about the changes affecting the previous order and unity that governed families and seeks to find out the role of new technologies and modern social networks platforms in the conflicts between mothers and children. If so, what types of conflicts have arisen among them? To what extent have the conflicts between mothers and children been significant?

The necessity of research

Today, parents and children in families often sit together for extended periods without having anything to say to each other. There are fewer signs of families where parents and children sit together to discuss various topics and seek each other's opinions on different subjects (Danaei, 2005: 8). In this regard, according to statements by the Deputy Head of

the Welfare Organization of the country, the amount of conversation among family members is only about 30 minutes, which can be detrimental (Rahimi, 2011).

Forghani and Mohajeri (2017), researchers at Allameh Tabataba'i University, examined the relationship between the extent of social network use and lifestyle changes among young people aged 15 to 29 in Tehran. In this study, 98.4% of the youth owned a smartphone, 97.4% were members of social networks, and the majority (48.4%) used these networks for at least 1 to 5 hours daily.

Additionally, MohseniTabrizi and Hoveyda (2014) indicated that internet addiction was more prevalent among 24-year-old students at the University of Isfahan compared to other age groups. Internet addiction negatively impacted participation and the formation of relationships and interpersonal interactions with family members and close friends. According to statistics from Alexa on September 11, 2018 (www.alexa.com/topsites), the search engine Google, YouTube, and Facebook, which are types of social networks, were the most visited sites globally. The attractiveness and visit statistics of Iranian and non-Iranian sites and social networks in Iran are notable. The search engine Google held the first place in visits by Iranian users, followed by social networks and websites such as Aparat, Digikala, Varzesh3, Instagram, Wikipedia, Shaparak, and the search engine Yahoo, which internet users widely use.

Another issue that underscores the importance of this research is the excessive membership and use of social media by young people, which has made natural intergenerational interaction within families a focal point of generational differences and conflicts (Azad Armaki, 2004a: 570). In such a scenario, intergenerational relationships, which are fundamental to cultural assimilation, value transmission, and identity formation within a society, are disrupted. This generational conflict and contention lead to value pluralism, cultural erosion, identity crises, and societal moral decline (Danesh et al., 2014: 2), which can be detrimental. Therefore, assessing the impact of young people's use of virtual social networks on potential generational conflicts and providing solutions and preventive measures is essential.

Research Questions

These main research questions guide the present study:

What are the key conflict domains between mothers and young adults?

whether use of platforms of social media have played a role in the conflict between mothers and young students'

Research Objectives

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

Assess the overall rate of conflict and its components between children and mothers.

Measure the relationship between the rate of youth access to social media and the rate of conflicts between mothers and children.

Determine the relationship between the number of youths' memberships in social media and the rate of their conflicts with their mothers.

Examine the relationship between children's daily use of social media and their conflicts with their mothers.

Evaluate the relationship between children's use of domestic and international social media and the rate of conflicts with their mothers.

Investigate the relationship between the purposes for which children use social media and the rate of their conflicts with their mothers.

Explore the relationship between mothers' use of the internet and various social media and the rate of their conflicts with their children.

Study the relationship between the interactions between children and mothers and the rate of their conflicts.

Research literature

According to the main categories explaining the generational conflict, some of the related researches are mentioned: Omadi Krishnan MS (2004), in his doctoral dissertation, "Parent-Adolescent Conflict and Adolescent Performance in an Ethnically Incongruent Communal Culture: Malaysia", examines, Parent-Adolescent Conflict Seven subcategories of conflict with fathers were extracted. which included (1) collective behavior, (2) time management, (3) family relations, (4) academics, (5) financial affairs, (6) appearance, and (7) daily discussions were extracted.

Sarah Rasmi and Timothy M. Dali (2015) in an article, using a mixed method, investigated intergenerational conflicts in Arab families. The cases of intergenerational conflict were divided into six factors: education, risky behavior, personal choice, culture and religion, family expectations, dating and marriage.

Ali Asghar Abbasi Esfajir (2008) in his master's thesis studied the parent-child conflict from the parents' perspective (a comparative study of families in Tehran city and rural areas of Quchan County). The variables of conflict between parents and children include the way leisure time is spent, choice of friends, choice of clothing, inviting friends to the

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home, and selection of types of entertainment and recreation. The sample size for village and city was 140 people each (70 fathers and 70 mothers). The contrast is more in urban families compared to rural families.

Zahra Barzegar et al. (2013) studied "Students' experiences of conflict with their parents among students of Dahaghan Islamic Azad University". Their study was a qualitative study. 16 students were selected and interviewed in-depth in a purpose-based way. Finally, 4 main concepts (marriage age, need for independence, modernity and growth of individualism, intellectual distance) were extracted, which include the basic needs of educating students and parents in communicating with each other and preventing conflict between them.

Asadi Younesi and her colleagues (2013) in a study titled "Development and Validation of Parent-Adolescent Conflict Measurement Questionnaire: Adolescent Form" to investigate the sources and issues of conflict between parents and adolescents from the perspective of adolescents. The results of the factor analysis of the questionnaire, using the method of principal components analysis and Wimax rotation, showed that this scale consists of 14 factors, health and self-discipline issues, adolescent relationships with friends, financial issues and family facilities, family member communication issues, leisure time and entertainment, and recreation, independence and freedom of action of teenagers, educational and academic issues, communication with family members and relatives, food and sleep of teenagers, use of communication media, religious and value issues, order and discipline at home, sexual and political issues. The total score in both aspects of the conflict has a very high internal consistency (alpha coefficient, 0.98)

Moidfar and Sabouri Khosroshahi (2011) evaluated the conflict between children and parents in lifestyle in districts 3 and 17 of Tehran. The findings indicated a conflict between parents and children. The highest amount of conflict between parents and children was in girl-boy friendship, smoking, and alcohol consumption, respectively.

Zanjanizadeh and Mohammad Javadi (2005) studied the impact of the Internet on family values among high school students in the 3rd district of Mashhad (2003-2004). The amount of chat use negatively affected family values; girls used it more than boys. Two variables, the feeling of anonymity and the amount of internet use, also negatively affected family values.

Kafashi (2009) explored the effect of the Internet on family values among the students of the Islamic Azad University in Roudhen, Iran. There was a significant and inverse relationship between students' access to the Internet, more students' use of the Internet, their level of dependence on the Internet, and the level of family knowledge about their children's use of Internet environments and family values.

Rasulzadeh Aghdam et al. (2015) sociologically analyzed the consequences of social media on the values of Iranian youth among young people who use social media in five cities. Based on this study, the level of adherence of young people to family, religious, social, and cultural values decreases by increasing the duration of membership in social media.

Bahripour (2018) investigated the effect of virtual social networks on the generational gap in citizens 18 years and above in Kashan, Iran. The amount of use of social media, the motivation and purpose of users, the duration of membership in virtual social networks, and the use of the type of facilities of social media of citizens were effective on the generation gap.

Soultan (2017) used a quantitative method to collect data on social networking sites and family relationships among the youth of Dhaka, Bangladesh. The results showed that using social networking sites decreased the family relationships of young people with their parents.

Kulandairaj (2014) investigated social media's influence on youth lifestyle to identify the impact of social networks on the lifestyle of 250 young people in Chennai from Tamil Nadu, India. In this study, social networking strongly influences the lifestyles of young people who spend 30 minutes to 1 hour on social networking sites.

Kim (2011) assessed the impact of internet use on academic achievement and behavioral adjustment of adolescents in South Korea, mediating and moderating by parental role. Parent-child relationships (closeness and conflict) were critical for modulating youth behavior, and the type of relationship played an essential role in adolescent Internet use and academic and behavioral outcomes.

Mesch (2006) explored family relations and the internet: examining family boundaries. Adolescents' use of the Internet for social purposes, i.e., playing online games, communicating with friends, and participating in discussion groups, was positively associated with family conflict. On the other hand, using the Internet for learning or school-related purposes reduced family conflicts.

A brief mention of the conflict process from Stephen Robbins' perspective is provided before reviewing the theoretical foundations of the topic.

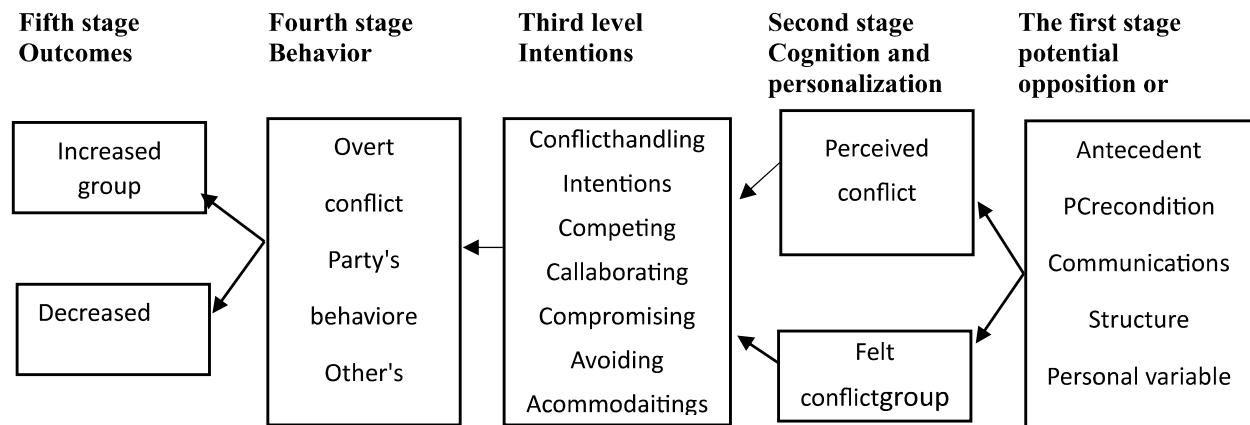


Figure 1. The conflict process from Stephen Robbins' point of view (Sarafizadeh Qazvini and Sadat, 2016: 5).

As shown in Figure 1, the stages from first to fifth refer to the conflict areas, perceived or recognized conflict, the strategies of the conflicting parties to resolve the conflict, completely revealed conflict, the behavior of the parties involved, and prediction of possible results (Jaafranjad, 2013: 9).

The primary source of maintaining the conflict of mind and brain is the people who experience it, and the conflict does not arise independently and outside of people's existence. The basic conflict factors include inconsistency, confrontation, disharmony, and opposition (Pirayesh and Shakeri, 2014: 3)..

Theoretical foundations of research

In this section, we have reviewed various theories from which the hypotheses of the article are derived. These theories facilitate a deeper understanding of the impacts of social media on the conflicts between mothers and children.

Perspectives and Theories Related to Conflict

Margaret Mead studied the new relationships between generations in the 1970s (Mead, 1978). According to Mead, people born before World War II experienced a completely different world compared to the post-war era (Mead, 1987: 12, as cited in Panahi, 2014: 3). Generally, faster, broader, and more profound social changes in a society lead to a more significant gap between the generations of parents and children, and more intergenerational conflicts and issues. Mead described three types of societies in terms of profound social changes:

1. **Postfigurative Culture:** In this type of society, the previous culture determines the nature of the subsequent culture, and the older generation serves as a complete model for life. For this cultural style, Mead used the term "repetitive," meaning that the future is a repetition of the past (Mead, 1987: 12, as cited in Panahi, 2014: 3).
2. **Cofigurative Culture:** In this type, social conditions change so that the previous generation can no longer serve as an appropriate model for the next generation. In these conditions, the older generation cannot be a suitable model for the future, as they live in two different worlds. Part of the culture is transferred to the next generation (Mead, 1987: 12, as cited in Panahi, 2014: 4).
3. **Prefigurative Culture:** In the third type of society, changes occur so rapidly that the previous generation not only cannot serve as a model for the next generation but must learn many things from their children to continue living. Therefore, the new generation seeks to create its new world. Margaret Mead called this situation "prefigurative culture" (Tajik, 2009: 50-51).

Inglehart believed that the expansion of mass media has led to changes in values, with the uniform clothing of young people and new music styles being manifestations of the media's influence on changing behaviors and values of the current generation and their lack of adherence to cultural traditions (Yousofi, 2004: 42). Inglehart attributes the fundamental generational changes to the socio-economic changes in Europe after World War II and according to the "prosperity hypothesis," since the 1960s, Western society reached a satisfactory level of fulfilling basic living and security needs, leading the new generation to develop a stronger inclination towards post-materialistic values (Azad Armaki, 2004: 45). Inglehart's two main hypotheses, "scarcity hypothesis" and "socialization hypothesis," examine the transformation of values due to the generational gap in advanced industrial countries. After rapidly increasing physical and economic security, noticeable differences in value priorities between adult and young groups could be expected (Sarookhani and Sedaghati Fard, 2009: 18).

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Karl Mannheim, the founder of the historical generation theory, believed that a generation is a social entity rather than a biological one, defined by its historical-social consciousness. In this view, the emergence of an actual generation and the crystallization of a distinct generational consciousness are the results of shared events that they experience collectively (Tavakol and Ghazi Nejad, 2006: 98). He distinguished between individuals within generations who have a common perspective based on shared experiences and those who do not, referring to the former as "generational units" (Azad Armaki and Ghaffari, 2004: 28). Mannheim argued that generational gaps primarily arise during periods of rapid cultural change. In such times, relatively large groups of individuals, as agents of rapid social change, challenge traditional interpretations and propose alternative interpretations (as cited in Moeidfar, 2004: 59, Sabouri Khosroshahi, 2014: 82). According to Mannheim, the generational gap results from the formation of specific experiences of individuals within a given generation, which accompany the establishment of values. This process leads to a lack of agreement and mutual understanding between the new generation (adolescents and young people) and the previous generation (adults), which sets the stage for intergenerational conflict (Roche, as cited in Azad and Ghaffari, 2004: 22). In such a process, there were changes in cultural values and norms. Thus, there are conflicting lifestyles between the two generations; traditional Iranian family values influence the older generation, while the new generation is influenced by modern values (Sabouri Khosroshahi, 2014: 82).

In his theory of structural conflict and generational theory, Bourdieu analyzed generational relations and conflict of values between two generations in social fields, such as university, politics, literature, and family. Bourdieu did not consider intergenerational challenges like other social conflicts, independent of class and social stratification systems, and analyzed the relations and value conflicts of generations in socio-economic and intellectual-cultural dimensions in the framework of inequality and social conflict.

Bourdieu believed that generations confront each other and conflict with their values in different social arenas and fields, which indicates a conflict between people with varying positions of power and wealth. Bourdieu considered young and old not as objective and real but as a social structure arising from the struggle between the old and the young in different social fields (Tawakkal and Ghazinejad, 2006, 107-108).

Theories and Perspectives on the Pathological Impact of Media and social media on youth

Three essential elements are considered in Giddens work and related to generations. First, he paid particular attention to the element of time. Second, he viewed society as highly transient and forbade adopting traditions. Third, he constantly emphasized the need to move away from the past to choose more active and modern approaches (Azad Armaki, 2004: 32). Using Giddens' structuration theory, the internet is both a product and a creation of meaningful human action, and users have created such an environment. However, forming this environment imposes constraints on the agents. The more young people engage and participate in the internet and virtual networks, the more likely they are to be influenced by this space, leading to more significant conflict within families.

The biological and evolutionary Steinberg (1989) and Montemayor (1983)" perspective suggests that the emergence of conflict between parents and young individuals is due to the youth's environmental needs, who seek more significant interaction with peers outside the family. As adolescents reach adulthood, tension decreases, and their parents acknowledge their sense of independence (Chen, 2010: 3).

Marshall McLuhan, in the process of socialization, argued that when a new technology is introduced into a society, that society changes forever. Young people are more affected by these changes than older individuals, whose thoughts and beliefs are more established due to their openness to innovation and readiness to embrace new things. The rapid pace of these transformations impacts young people's lives, growth, and maturity, completely altering the socialization process. Consequently, this generation's value system has become different from the previous generation's with the changing foundations of value entry (Danesh et al., 2014: 13).

Time Displacement Theory, which arises from the displacement hypothesis, assumes that adolescents have limited time (Motts, Roberts, and Van Vooren, 1993). When adolescents spend on online social activities increases, time must be diverted from other areas such as studying, reading, and doing homework (Neuman, 1991). This time displacement may occur because the internet engages adolescents with stimulating images and more attractive and enjoyable audiovisual content than school-related activities (Kim, 2011: 48-49).

The Uses and Gratifications Theory was first described in an article by Elihu Katz, in which the audience, as active, emphasizes their needs and motivations in using media. According to this theory, people choose what they want to see and hear based on these factors. The primary assumption of this theory is that media audiences, to some extent, actively seek content that provides them with the most excellent satisfaction. This satisfaction level depends on the individual's needs and interests (Windahl et al., 2008: 274). Based on this theory, young people are considered active audiences who seek out content that generates the most gratification (Ranai, 2016: 40-41).

Castells Network Society Theory discussed the impact of virtual social networks on all aspects of life. According to the theories of Valldhal and Klapper, the duration of use, length of access, and persistence in using virtual social networks can be considered independent variables for examining the influence of these networks on the emergence of

new social harms within the family. Each of these factors contributes to the reduction of intra-family relationships and ultimately to the decline of family values (Windahl, 2006, as cited in Rahimi et al., 2016: 151).

Cultivation Theory, proposed by Gerbner, emphasizes the interaction between media and the audiences who use that media and how media influences audiences (Adlipour, 2012: 105). According to Cultivation Theory, the extent of use and the duration of membership in social networks, along with perceiving the content of these networks as accurate, affect the cultural identity of users (Adlipour et al., 2013: 13).

Vaidhyanathan's Theory: Googlization of life and cultural lifestyle is the most critical theorist of culture and technology, and the "Googlization of Everything" concept represents that Google has now become the central axis of cultural lifestyle and therefore acts far beyond a search engine and its primary goals. Vaidhyanathan posits that the Googlization of everything has led us to overly trust Google, become excessively dependent on it, and develop blind faith in its ability to solve significant issues with its invisible technologies (Vaidhyanathan, 2011, as cited in Hasani, 2016: 103-105).

Wald Hall's Theory discusses the fleeting nature of communicative content, a factor that reduces the likelihood of achieving significant effects. He believes "long-term effects are given more attention than short-term effects" (Windahl et al., 1997: 330, as cited in Zanjani Zadeh et al., 2004: 126). From this theory, the duration of internet usage, the length of internet access, and the frequency of internet use (daily, weekly, monthly) can be used as independent variables to study the effect of the internet on parent-child conflicts (Zanjani Zadeh et al., 2004: 127).

Table 1: Matrix of Reviewed Theories

Theory Name	Theorist	Concepts Utilized
New Values and Lifestyles	Eisenstadt	Generational Gap
Origin of Conflicts between New and Old Generations]	Will Durant	Naturalness of Generational Quarrels
Growth of Individualism in the New World	Simmel	Difference between
Rapid and Deeper Social Changes	Margaret Mead	More Intense Conflict
Technology's Impact on Relativity of Identity	Anthony Giddens	Increased Internet use Leading to More Conflict
Communicative Action Habermas	Habermas	Comfort in Networks
Media's Impact on Changing Values and Attitudes of the New Generation	Marshall McLuhan	Generational Differences
Biological and Evolutionary Perspective	Steinberg and Montemayor	Conflict between Parents and Children
Time Displacement Theory	Moats Roberts, Van Woren	Increase in Online Activities of the Youth
Uses and Gratifications Theory	Elihu Katz	Impact of Mass Media on Family Values
Googlization of Life	Vaidhyanathan's Theory	Duration and Frequency of Internet Usage Contributing to Conflict
Cultivation Theory and Network Society	Castells	Impact of the Amount and Duration of Youth's Use of Websites and Social Networks on Parent-Youth Conflict

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Theoretical Model

Based on a review of theories and previous studies, the variables under examination are summarized as follows and schematically presented in the theoretical model below to assess the effects of using virtual social networks on the conflict between mothers and children:

a) Independent Variables:

Children's use of domestic and international virtual social networks, continuity, the number of children's membership and access to virtual networks, mothers' use rate, and parents' interaction with children were used as independent, external, or intermediate variables to show their effect on the conflict between mothers and children (Relationships between variables are given in model number 1).

b) Dependent Variable:

Rate of conflict between children and mothers: This variable indicates the emotional state or intensity of the feelings of conflict between parents and children across nine categories of issues. These categories include appearance and facial makeup, family financial resources, leisure activities, spouse selection and marriage norms, religious beliefs, youth independence-seeking, student interactions with friends, assignment completion and academic progress, and social-political activities. The dependent variable is measured using 56 indicators.

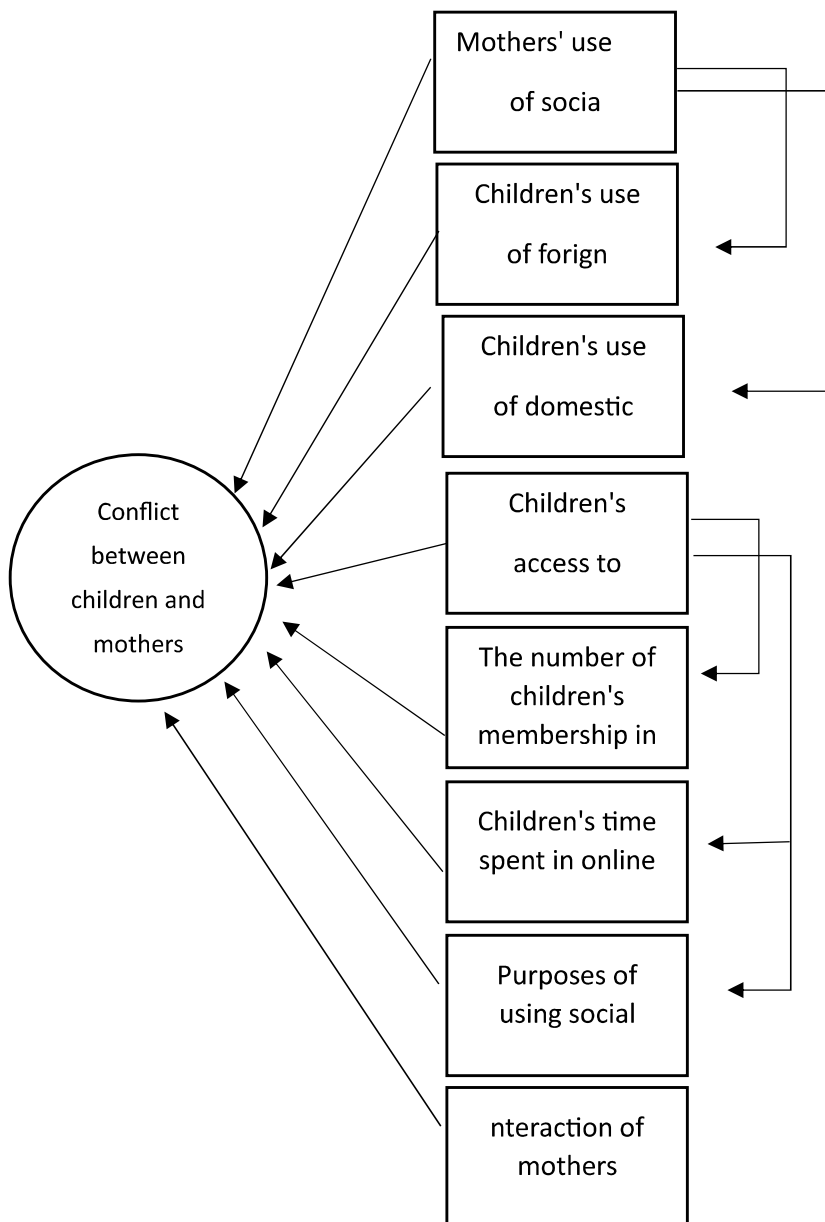


Figure 2. Conceptual and theoretical model of conflict between children and mothers

Research hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between children's access to social media and the rate of their conflict with their mothers.
2. There is a relationship between the number of children's membership in social media and the rate of their conflict with their mothers.
3. There is a relationship between children's time on social media and the rate of their conflicts with their mothers.
4. There is a relationship between children's use of social media abroad and the rate of their conflict with their mothers.
5. There is a relationship between the number of children using social media inside the country and the rate of their conflicts with their mothers.
6. There is a relationship between children's social media goals and the rate of their conflicts with their mothers.
7. The rate of conflict children are exposed to in social media with their mothers varies depending on the rate of interaction they have with them.

Conceptual definitions of the dependent variable (conflict between mothers and children)

The term conflict refers to differing, opposing, and having disputes with one another (Moein, 1992: 1096). The structure of the word "conflict" refers to a bilateral disagreement and a disagreement between two parties over a subject for conflict to occur (Zamanzadeh and Zolfaghari, 2020: 9). This difference and conflict in views and goals leads to the emergence of confrontation, aggression, opposition, and even preventing the other party from achieving their desired goal. From a sociological perspective, parent-child conflict is an intellectual conflict between the younger and older generations. Conflict is a reciprocal human relationship involving both parties (Zamanzadeh and Zolfaghari, 2020: 11-12). According to Gordon, conflict is a communicative process and occurs when individuals engage in communicative actions that result in feedback and make the factor significant. Gordon believes that conflict cannot be discussed without interaction among individuals. For example, there might be a potential conflict between two people wanting the same thing, but it only becomes apparent when they interact. Based on the above discussions, the conflict has features such as requiring the presence of involved parties and a sense of frustration among individuals. In other words, two or more parties or factions should always oppose each other for conflict to occur. The involved party can be individuals, groups, organizations, or, at lower levels, personal aspects of individuals (as cited in Sabouri Khosroshahi, 2010: 31).

Moayadfar and Sabouri Khosroshahi (2011) described conflict at the family level and parent-child interaction as the presence of opposition, disagreement, and argumentation in various aspects of life, which manifests as a lack of empathy, negative reactions and opposition, verbal disputes, and even violent confrontations. Parent-adolescent conflict often appears as prolonged discussions about specific issues, characterized by hostile exchanges and failure to resolve problems calmly and successfully (Robin and Foster, 1984).

Operational definition: the dependent variable of the research (conflict between mothers and children):

The researcher-made questionnaire, based on the theoretical and research background (Yau & Smetana (2003), Krishnan MS (2004), Abbasi Esfajir (۲۰۰۸), Min Chen (2010), Moidfar and Sabouri Khosroshahi (2011), Sherman and DemLao (2011), Shaleel Dobbs et al. (2013), Barzegar et al. (2013), Asadi Younesi (2013), Panahi (2014), Behrooz & Pashakhanlu (2014), Ruholahi and Amiri Majd (2015), Sarah Rasmi and Timothy M. Dali (2015, 2014)). After studying, reviewing, and integrating the findings, ultimately nine conflict topics between mothers and children were identified.

Table 2. Items of conflict between mothers and children

No.	Conflict issues between children and mothers	Items
1	Appearances and facial makeup	5
2	Financial means of the family	10

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3	How to spend free time	3
4	Choosing a spouse and marriage norms	10
5	Religious beliefs and convictions	7
6	Youth independence-seeking	6
7	Communication of young people with friends	5
8	Doing homework and academic progress	5
9	Social and political activities	5

Definitions of Independent Variables

Conceptual Definition: The time children spend on various social media daily.

Operational Definition: How much time do you spend daily accessing social media?

- Less than 30 minutes per day, Between 30 minutes to 1 hour per day, Between 1 to 2 hours per day, Between 2 to 3 hours per day, and More than 3 hours per day

Conceptual Definition: The number of students with social network memberships in social media.

Operational Definition: Approximately how many social media are you a member of?

- Less than two networks, 3-4 networks, 5-6 networks, 7-8 networks, and More than nine networks

Conceptual Definition: The persistence of users or the level of access to websites and social media.

Operational Definition: How frequently do you access social media?

- About once a day, Several times a week, Several times a month, Once a month

Conceptual Definition: The level of activity of students in domestic social media (e.g., Bale, Soroush, Rubika, Digikala, Aparat).

Operational Definition: The level of activity of students in foreign social media (e.g., Telegram, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube) assessed with five options: "None, Low, Moderate, High, Very High."

Conceptual Definition: Users' subjects and objectives in using social media refer to the interests, needs, and conditions that drive them to use these networks. If the content of virtual networks matches the individual's needs, the person will be satisfied and content; otherwise, they will turn away from virtual networks.

Operational Definition: What is your usual purpose for using social media?

Getting to know new people, downloading articles and books, shopping online, learning about news and events, having fun and spending time in interested fields, establishing relationships with friends, doing homework and educational and learning programs, finding non-same-sex friends, and participating in virtual university classes were raised as five options from none to little, somewhat, much, and very much.

Conceptual definition: relationships and interaction with mother: Coleman refers to the relationship between adolescents and their parents as indicators of family social capital, including the interest teenagers have in their parents and are close with them. In other words, the quality of communication between family members and the level of relationships between parents and children are indicators of family social capital (Alivardi Nia et al., 1387: 109).

Children's relationships and interactions with mothers were examined with the following three questions:

Operational definition: the amount of communication and sincere conversation with the mother, warm and intimate relations with the mother, and heartache with the mother were measured with none, little, somewhat, much, very much.

The mother's use of social media was investigated with one question.

Operational definition: How much do your parents use social media?

None, little, somewhat, much, very much

Method

The quantitative research approach was implemented using a survey method and a researcher-developed questionnaire. Before the final implementation of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted with 30 students to identify and correct any deficiencies. The questionnaire was deemed ready for execution after addressing the deficiencies and measuring the validity and reliability. Undergraduate students from the Iran University of Science and Technology were selected as the study population, and the sampling was conducted on a probabilistic methods. Sampling was conducted using a stratified method proportional to the sample size. The first stratum was the faculties, and then, the samples were randomly selected based on the number of male and female students. The sample size was

determined to be 355 using Cochran's formula, but 367 questionnaires were used to increase accuracy. SPSS version 25 software was utilized for the initial analysis of the data. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed using Smart PLS Graph software to determine the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable (conflict with the mother).

Validity and reliability of measurement tools

Validity addresses whether the questions included in the questionnaire measure what they are intended to measure as the main objective of the assessment (Azkia, 2010: 501).

The face validity of the research has been determined through a specialized panel consisting of experts and technical professors.

Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the reliability of the observed values of the dependent (conflict with the mother) and independent variables, whose coefficients in each variable and index were above 0.7.

Findings

Description of research data

1- Individual and demographic characteristics of the respondents

Sex: The sample comprised 257 male participants (70%) and 110 female participants (30%).

Age: The mean participant age was 20.34 years ($SD = 1,83$), with a modal age range of 20- 24+ years.

Description of the leading research variables

Students' access to social media: 62.4% of students access social media several times, and 16.1% once a day.

Young people spent 26.4% of their time entering social media between one and two hours, 21.3% between two and three hours, and 14.7% less than thirty minutes.

The number of students using domestic and foreign social media: The average usage of domestic social media was, respectively, Digikala (1.05) and Aparat (1.03), which had the highest average. The average usage of domestic social networks is 27.65, which is relatively low.

WhatsApp and Telegram had the highest average (1.80 and 1.79), while Instagram (1.70) had the lowest average. The total average use of foreign virtual social networks was 47.05, which shows that the use of foreign social media is almost average.

Youth conflict with mother:

Table 3. Mean Conflict Scores Across Nine Domains of Mother-adult student Conflict topics

Conflict in topics	Mean conflict with mothers	SD of conflict with mothers
Appearances and facial makeup	34.8	32.56
Financial means of the family	35.86	31.80
How to spend free time	38.8	30.51
Choosing a spouse and marriage norms	39.82	29.16
Religious beliefs and convictions	35.06	31.03
Youth independence-seeking	43.64	30.44
Communication of young people with friends	43.21	30.23
Doing homework and academic progress	42.67	30.47
Social and political activities	30.27	27.79
Appearances and facial makeup	38.14	26.48

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Conflict with mothers is more prevalent than in other cases in three dimensions of conflict issues (youth independence-seeking, student youth's relationship with friends, homework, and academic progress).

The average conflict between the youth and the mother was ۳۸.۱۴, which shows an average level of conflict.

Analyzing and explaining the data

Structural model fit

Variance-based structural modeling was used to test the model's hypotheses and predict the explanatory value of the dependent variable (conflict between mothers and children) by the independent variables. In addition, Smart-PLS software was used for path analysis based on partial least squares to identify the direct and indirect effects of each path in the model on the dependent variable.

The goodness of fit index of the conflict model with mothers

SRMR is one of the model fit indices in PLS software, which should be less than 0.08, equal to 0.073, and lower than 0.08. Therefore, the structural model of the research is appropriate regarding fit indices and all the mentioned factors, which can be collected in the structural model. Figure 3 demonstrates that the numbers written on the lines are the beta coefficients resulting from the regression equation between the variables, which are the path coefficients. The numbers inside each circle indicate the R^2 value of the model whose predictor variables have been entered into that circle through arrows (Niyazi et al., 2020: 27). The research variables have a factor load above 0.4, and there is no need to delete the item. It is necessary to check the value of t in Figure 4 of each route to check the significance of the coefficient of the route or to test the research hypotheses.

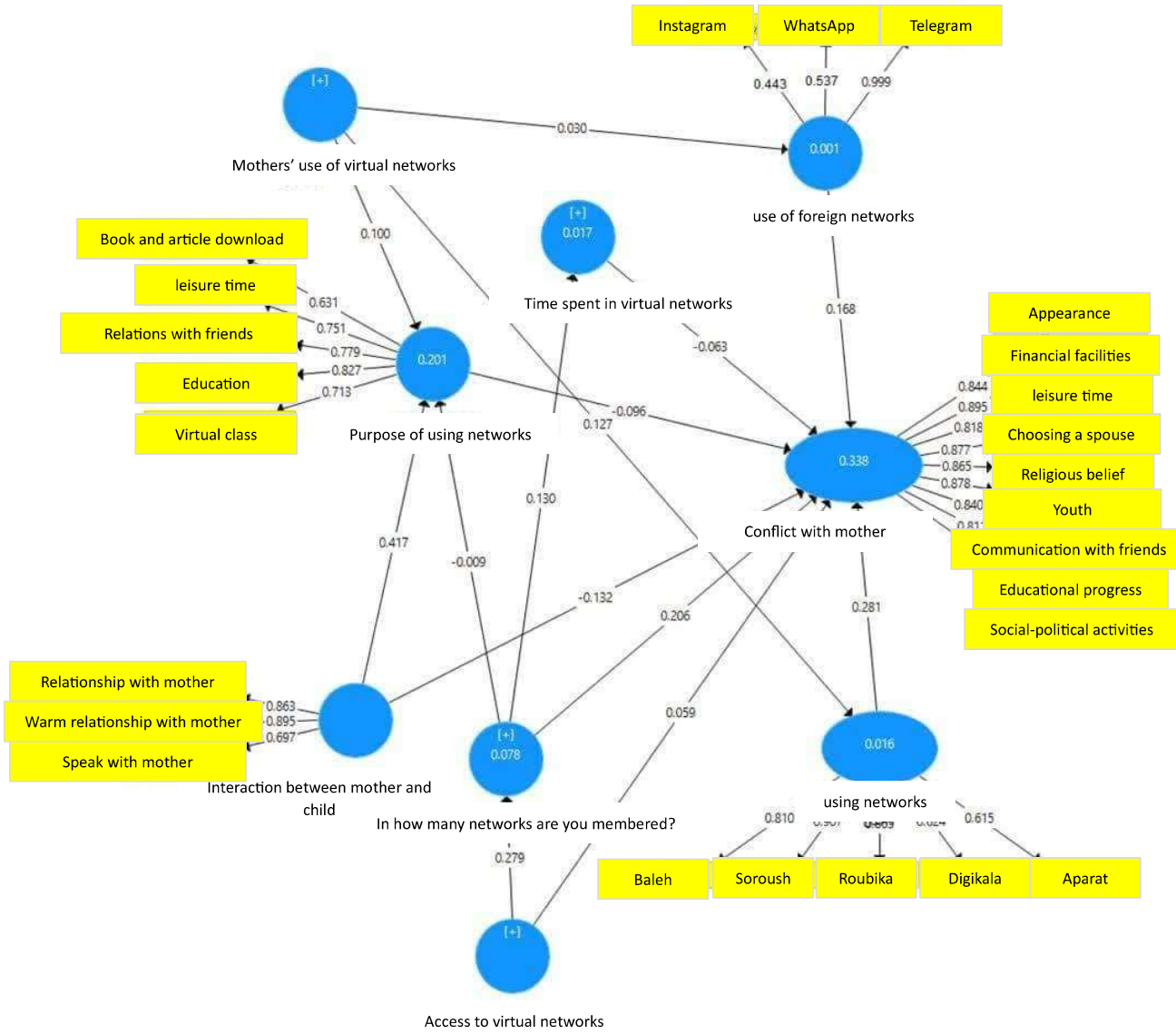


Figure 3. Evaluation of the internal model of the research along with path coefficients and factor loadings between underlying variables (conflict with mothers)

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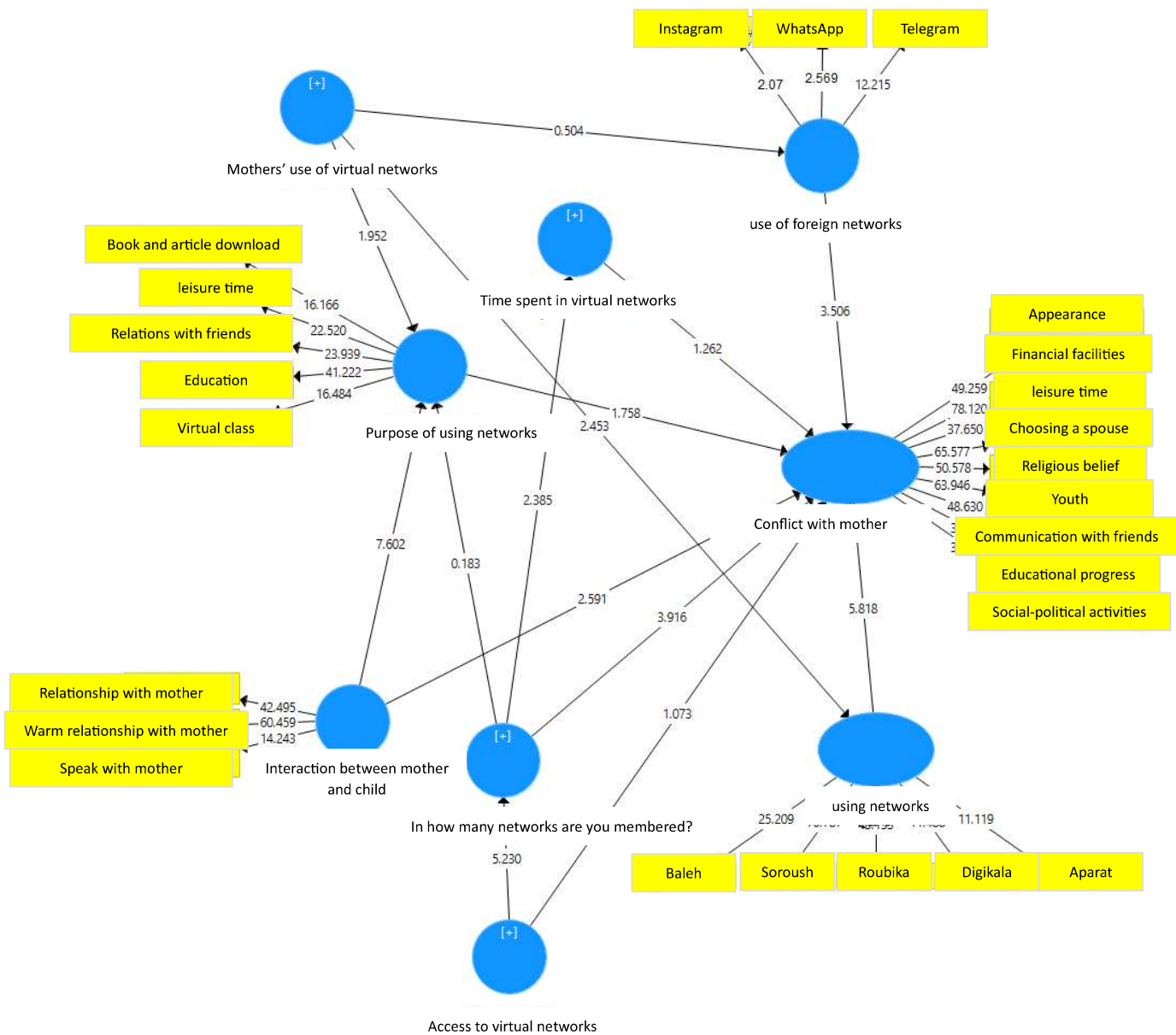


Figure 4. Research conceptual model with t-value (conflict with mother)

It is enough that the t-value is above 1.96 to prove a hypothesis. Then, it can be claimed that the hypothesis is proven at the 5% error level or 95% confidence level. On the other hand, a hypothesis can be proved in this way through p-value statistics. If this value is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is confirmed and proven; if it is above 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected.

Examining the direct path coefficients shows the following significant impacts: The use of domestic social media by youths -> conflict with mother (0.281), How many social media are you a member of? -> conflict with mother (0.206), The use of foreign social media by youths -> conflict with mother (0.168), and Interaction between mother and child -> conflict with mother (-0.132)

These have the most significant impacts. The three variables of the purposes of using the social media -> conflict with mother (-0.096), time spent on social media -> conflict with mother (0.063), and access to social media -> conflict with mother (0.059) have shown non-significant effects.

The examination of the coefficients between the intermediary variables indicates the following significant impacts in order: Interaction between mother and child -> purposes of using the social media (0.417), Access to social media -> number of youth memberships in social media (0.279), Number of youth memberships in virtual networks -> time spent on social media (0.130), and Mother's use of virtual networks -> youth use of domestic networks (0.127). These relationships have significant coefficients. The following relationships have shown non-significant effects: Mother's use of social media -> purposes of youth use of the social media (0.100), Mother's use of social media -> youth use of foreign social media (0.030), and number of youth memberships in social media -> purposes of using the social media (-0.096).

Table 3. Investigating research hypotheses using the PLS partial least squares approach

Hypotheses	Standard path coefficient	t -value	sig	Results
1. There is a relationship between children's access to social media and the rate of their conflict with their mothers.	0.059	1.073	0.284	Rejected
2. There is a relationship between the number of children's membership in social media and the rate of their conflict with their mothers.	.206	3.916	0.000	Confirmed
3. There is a relationship between the time children spend on social media and the rate of their conflict with their mothers.	0.063	1.262	0.207	Rejected
4. There is a relationship between children's use of social media abroad and the rate of their conflict with their mothers.	0.168	3.506	0.000	Confirmed
5. There is a relationship between the number of children using social media inside the country and the rate of their conflicts with their mothers.	0.281	5.818	0.000	Confirmed
6. There is a relationship between children's social media goals and the rate of their conflicts with their mothers.	-0.096	1.758	0.079	Rejected
7. The amount of conflict children experience when exposed to social media with their mothers varies depending on the rate of interaction they have with them.	-0.132	2.591	0.010	Confirmed

Table 4. Path analysis of the direct and indirect effects of influencing variables on the rate of conflict with the mother

Path	Direct path coefficients	Indirect path coefficients	Total effect	P Values	Results
Young people's use of foreign networks -> conflict with mother	0.168	---	-0.168	0.000	Confirmed
Young people's use of domestic social media -> conflict with mother	0.281	---	0.281	0.000	Confirmed
Time spent by young people in social media-> conflict with mother	0.063	---	0.063	0.207	Rejected

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Path	Direct path coefficients	Indirect path coefficients	Total effect	P Values	Results
Mother's use of social media -> conflict with mother	---	0.021	0.021	0.354	Rejected
Interaction between mother and child -> conflict with mother	-0.132	-0.040	-0.172	0.086	Rejected
Purposes used by young people from social media -> conflict with mother	-0.096	---	-0.096	0.079	Rejected
Number of young people's membership in social media -> conflict with mother	0.206	-0.007	0.199	0.468	Rejected
Access of young people to social media -> conflict with mother	0.059	0.056	0.115	0.001	Confirmed

The table above shows the "total effect" of the constructs in the following order: Students' use of domestic social media with a coefficient of (0.281), Number of youth memberships in social media (0.199), Access to social media (0.115), Students' use of foreign social media (0.168), Purposes of students' use of social media (-0.096), Level of interaction between mother and children (-0.172), Time spent on social media (0.063), and Mother's use of social media (0.021).

The hypothesis that students' use of domestic social media directly increases the rate of conflict between mother and child is confirmed.

The number of youth memberships in social media is significant in the direct path, leading to an increase in conflict, but it is not significant in the indirect path through time spent and purposes of using social media.

Youth access to social media directly increases the rate of conflict between mother and child. Indirectly, the variables of membership, time spent, and purposes of using social media also significantly increase the rate of conflict between mother and child, confirming the hypothesis.

The hypothesis that students' use of foreign social media directly increases the conflict between mother and child is confirmed.

The effect of students' use of social media for educational purposes (attending online classes, downloading articles and books, relationships with friends, and leisure activities) on the conflict between mother and child is insignificant, and the hypothesis is not confirmed.

The interaction between mother and child has a significant direct effect on the level of conflict between them, but it does not have a significant indirect effect through the variables of purposes of using social on the level of conflict with the mother, leading to the rejection of the indirect hypothesis.

The time students spend on social media does not directly affect the level of conflict between mother and child.

The mother's use of social media does not significantly indirectly affect the level of conflict between mother and child, except for the pathway where the mother's use of social media affects the children's domestic networks. This indirect hypothesis is not confirmed.

The indirect impact of variables within the model on the rate of conflict with the mother shows that the interaction between mother and child (0.417), through the variable of purposes of using social media, has the primary role based on the indirect impact coefficient on the rate of conflict with the mother. Youth access to social media (0.279), through the variable of the number of youth memberships in social media, and the number of youth memberships in social media (0.130), through the variable of time spent by youth on social media, and the mother's use of social media (0.036), through the variable of students' use of domestic social media, have the most significant effects on the rate of

conflict with the mother and are significant. the total effect of the variables in this model explained 28% of the variations in the level of conflict with the mother.

Discussion and conclusion

According to Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, individuals join different groups on social media where they establish interactive relationships, discuss their opinions, issues, and problems, and spend their time and emotional energy. Thus, young people's thinking and behavior patterns change, resulting in family conflicts. Using Giddens' structuration theory, it can be inferred that the more users engage in reflective and participatory activities on social networks, the more they contribute to the production of meaning, and thus, the likelihood of their being influenced increases. Conversely, the more passive and non-participatory users are on social networks, the less likely they are influenced (Faramerzian et al., 2016: 116). Moreover, McLuhan believes that young people are more affected by these changes than older individuals, whose thoughts and beliefs are more established due to their inclination towards modernity and readiness to embrace new things. Thus, they are drawn to changes in communication methods, fashion, politics, and non-cultural role models. Such role modeling, which contradicts their societal values, norms, and culture, leads to identity crises and ultimately results in generational gaps and conflicts. Based on the Exchange Theory, if the exchange among family members is mutual, it will satisfy them. Exchange Theory, specifically Rational Choice Theory, views society as a collection of rational individuals all striving to maximize their benefits. However, this theory can be used to explain the logical and instrumental dimensions of intra-family relationships, though it may be less successful in explaining the emotional and affective dimensions of family relationships (Turner, Jonathan H., 1998; Hans O. Melberg, 1993; Coleman, James, 1998; Chalabi, Masoud, 1999).

According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, young users of social networks pursue their activities based on their motivations, interests, and goals. If these networks do not align with their interests and motivations, they will turn away from them, leading to dissatisfaction and a lower likelihood of being influenced. Therefore, virtual social networks can significantly impact young people's identity formation and identity shaping, affecting their family values and potentially causing conflicts between parents and children (Taheri Ldari, 2017: 203).

The Equity and Exchange Theory also supports the hypotheses of the present study.

The bidirectional relationship between parents and children, based on Exchange Theory, suggests that when exchanges among family members are reciprocal, it will lead to their satisfaction. Exchange Theory, specifically Rational Choice Theory, views society as a collection of rational individuals striving to maximize their benefits. This theory can be particularly useful in explaining the rational and instrumental dimensions of intra-family relationships, although it may be less successful in explaining the emotional and affective dimensions of family relationships (Turner, Jonathan H., 1998; Hans O. Melberg, 1993; Coleman, James, 1998; Chalabi, Masoud, 1999).

According to Equity Theory, a relationship can be highly satisfying if it is a balanced and reciprocal exchange. Such balanced exchanges lead to mutual satisfaction and reduce conflicts.

Turner et al.'s research findings showed that parents often think they are too old to learn new technologies, which causes a digital divide between the two generations (quoted by Hariri and Zamani Rad, 2011: 17).

The above theories confirm the assumptions of the current research.

According to the results, the following suggestions are made:

Suggestions based on research results:

- When parent-child relationships are damaged and conflicted, they should be organized with knowledge of communication skills.
- By managing time, adhering to traditional values, and preserving culture, the impact of social media on parent-child relationships can be controlled and managed.
- Relevant organizations must make policies and plans to recognize and respect the values and perspectives of the young generation and parents, facilitating the optimal transmission of Indigenous values and cultures to future generations.
- Policy-making and planning should aim to balance social media's educational and social benefits with the negative impacts of some content or interactions.

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- Emphasis should be placed on the importance of preserving family and societal values and cultures along side the use of modern technology.

- Policy-making and planning to address the potential changes and risks arising from social media.

Suggestions for Other Researchers:

- Conduct this research at other universities across Iran.

- The statistical population of this research is limited to undergraduate students of technical and engineering universities, so caution should be taken when generalizing the results to other groups.

- Examine parent-child conflicts from the parents' perspective as well.

- Investigate factors that influence family cohesion and the resolution of family conflicts.

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