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Research Paper

Impact of Social Networking on Perceived Social Support for Urban Indian Married Females

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at the interactions between conventional urban married females residing in an upmarket residential society in Greater Noida, India and their level of social support upon incorporation into the popular social networking site Facebook. The study looks at a technology that married women in today's urban communities use more and more frequently to communicate with people both inside and outside of their residential communities. A paper-based survey was distributed to more than 80 housewives in Greater Noida's upper middle class residential society as part of the research plan. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and the Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS), in addition to age-related variables, were the tools employed in the study. Multiple linear regression was utilized to analyze the variables, and the age variable served as the control. Correlations between the variables and the measured constructs were discovered by the investigation. Connections were validated in terms of Facebook's impact on social support. The study helps gain a better understanding of the significance of social networking technologies on personal experiences by investigating the connections between these women's views of social support and their use of these tools, despite its exploratory nature and very small sample size.

Keywords: *Social Networking, Perceived Social Support, Urban Indian Married Females*

In contemporary India, social interactions take place across a diverse landscape. While face-to-face communication remains important, the widespread adoption of social media platforms has significantly transformed how people connect. The internet, with its vast reach, has facilitated communication with geographically dispersed individuals, often exceeding the limitations of traditional social circles (Hampton et al., 2016). Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have fostered the development of entirely online social environments, replicating and sometimes even extending existing "offline" social networks (Boyd, 2017). These online interactions can significantly impact traditional social dynamics and their associated outcomes (Valenzuela et al., 2017). A deeper understanding of how these technologies influence the experiences and relationships of various demographics, particularly "modern urban married women" – a group whose social interactions may be uniquely affected by these platforms (Banerjee & Chandrasekhar, 2020) – can be invaluable for researchers, social workers, and anyone seeking to comprehend the evolving nature of social interaction in the digital age.

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Internet Technologies

The internet's explosive growth has fundamentally reshaped how people communicate, work, and socialize (Van Dijck, 2018). This ever-expanding online landscape offers a multitude of tools, from email and instant messaging to social media platforms. In India, particularly, the internet has become central to daily life, impacting everything from news consumption (Mehta et al., 2019) to commerce (Kumar & Misra, 2017).

Understanding the social implications of these technologies, however, remains a complex challenge (Lenhart et al., 2018). While numerous studies explore the general effects of the internet on social life, comprehending its influence on urban married women presents a unique challenge (Friemel et al., 2017).

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become the dominant online space, particularly in the last two decades (Marwick & boyd, 2014). Platforms like Facebook, boasting millions of daily users, enable geographically dispersed individuals to connect and maintain relationships (Van den Berghe et al., 2017).

Social Support

Social support networks demonstrably influence various aspects of life, including family dynamics, success rates, and overall well-being (Cohen, 2018). Individuals with limited or inactive friend and peer support systems are more susceptible to depression compared to those with extensive networks (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). While close friendships and social support have traditionally been viewed as cornerstones of healthy social integration, fostering feelings of belonging and fulfillment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), the rise of internet-based social interaction in urban populations necessitates a closer look at its impact (Lenhart et al., 2010).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to investigate the connections between the use of social networking site (Facebook) and social support perceptions. A quantitative method was taken for this investigation.

Aim

This research focuses on how integration with social networking sites, primarily Facebook, relate to the perceptions of social support from family & friends among educated females living in an upper middle-class society. The goal is to investigate social networking and its impact on perceived social support of Indian urban married females.

Objective

- To study the extent middle-class women from upper middle-class backgrounds in India are included into social media platforms like Facebook?
- To study the impact of social networking, especially Facebook, on perceived social support in urban Indian upper middle-class females.

Tools & Scales

The following 2 scales were used for measuring the dependent and independent variables –

1. **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)**
   The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), developed by Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, and Cribbie (2007), is a 12-item self-inventory that asks

participants to rate their views of support from friends and family on a conventional 7-point Likert scale.

2. **Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS)**
   Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) developed the Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS). The Facebook Integration Scale (FIS) has eight questions, the majority of which are Likert items that ask respondents how frequently they use Facebook and how much of it they integrate into their daily lives. The scale has reliability of 0.83, as measured with a Cronbach alpha.

Hypothesis

- H02: There will be no significant difference in Social Networking usage between urban Indian upper middle-class females below or above 35 years of age.
- H03: There will be no significant impact of social Networking on perceived social support in married and un-married urban Indian upper middle-class females.

Sampling

Married women between the ages of 30 and 45 who lived in an upper middle class residential society made up the sample. One Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India residential society hosted the surveys. Data was gathered during March and April of 2017.

Sample Size

Eighty females in all completed the survey. All respondents who started the survey finished it. Some females were unable to respond to questions about Facebook because they did not have Facebook accounts. These weren't included in the final analysis. After removals, there were 65 samples in all.

Procedure

A single survey comprised all of the many tests that were administered for this specific study. All of the distinct measuring tools were compiled into a single internet page for this survey. The item categories were arranged as follows: FIS questions and MSPSS questions. These inquiries were entered into a paper-based survey. It was anticipated that the instrument would finish in no more than 20 minutes.

Analysis

Data were checked for completeness and to make sure there were no major problems with data collection, like a high number of unanswered questions, survey instruments with incorrect answers, or problems that needed data cleaning (like incorrect inputs, like text when numbers are needed, etc.), before any analyses were conducted. Data was compiled into a MS Excel file and analysis done using statistical formulae available in MS Excel. Both the original data and excel data was retained.

Instrument Reliability

As standard instruments are being used for measuring the target variables no internal reliability testing was done. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was collected from standard sources and found to be more than 0.7.

Initial Analyses

A single married female group from a residential upper middle-class culture was taken into consideration. T-tests, or testing of between-group relationships was done. Regression was analysis done between FIS and MSPSS scales.

Question 1: How integrated are married women from upper middle-class residential society on Facebook and other social networking sites?

Descriptive Analysis: Report were created on the overall number of participants, the means, ranges, and standard deviations of the FIS construct. This is done to check the level of social networking usage by age groups.

Question 2: How Do Perceptions of Social Support Connect with Integration into Facebook?

Regression Analysis. For finding association between Facebook use and perceptions of social support, regression analysis was done between FIS variables for Facebook use & MSPSS variable for perceived social support.

Analyses

Following analysis were done on the collected data -

- Inter-group comparisons when considering the instruments' scales and subscales.
- Regression analyses to find out which items yield the most significant relationships with scales using age control to determine whether those items relate significantly.

Initial Analyses

Age differences: The first step in examining results of the survey was to determine whether differences exist between females by age. To that end, respondents' scores in the FIS scales were compared between 2 age groups.

A T-Test used to compare means based on age revealed scale differences. Significant differences were found in the FIS scales.

Statistic	***T-Test of FIS Scales with a) Age Above-35 years vs. b) Age Below-35 years***		***T-Test of MSPSS-Family Subscale with a) Age Above-35 years vs. b) Age Below-35 years***		***T-Test of MSPSS-Friends Subscale with a) Age Above-35 years vs. b) Age Below-35 years***		***T-Test of MSPSS-Significant Other Subscale with a) Age Groups Above-35 years vs. b) Age Below-35 years***	
	Below 35 Yrs	***Above 35 Yrs***	***Below 35 Yrs***	***Above 35 Yrs***	***Below 35 Yrs***	***Above 35 Yrs***	***Below 35 Yrs***	***Above 35 Yrs***
Mean	5.377	2.316	5.736	5.71	5.5486	5.66	5.75	5.5108
Variance	1.201	0.406	0.817	1.274	0.6422	1.202	0.7285	1.3720
Observations	35	24	36	25	36	25	36	23
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		0		0		0	
Df	56		44		41		37	
t Stat	13.514		0.096		-0.4337		0.846	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1.421E-19		0.462		0.3333		0.201	
t Critical one-tail	1.672		1.680		1.6828		1.687	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.843E-19		0.924		0.6667		0.402	
t Critical two-tail	2.003		2.015		2.0195		2.026	
Observation Summary	The averages of the 2 age groups were very different and a high 't Stat' with a low 'P two-tail' value indicates that the 1st group –		The averages / means of the 2 groups are not different and a low 't Stat' with a high 'P two-tail' value indicates that Family support for		The averages / means of the 2 groups are not different and a low 't Stat' with a high 'P two-tail' value indicates that Friend support for the		The averages / means of the 2 groups are not different and a low 't Stat' with a high 'P two-tail' value indicates that Significant Other	

	'Below 35 years' females' involvement in using Facebook is lot higher than the other group.	the two age groups are similar and also high.	2 age groups are similar and also high.	support for the 2 age groups are similar and high.

Regression of MSPSS - Family Support SubScale with Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS) Overall for Below 35 yrs Married Females:

Below are the statistics generated from Micosoft Excel when doing Regression Analysis between the MSPSS Subscale for Family Support and FIS Overall for the 'Below 35 yrs' age group females.

Regression Statistics- Below 35 yrs	
Multiple R	0.241
R Square	0.058
Adjusted R Square	0.029
Standard Error	0.894
Observations	35

ANOVA -Below 35 years

	Df	***SS***	***MS***	***F***	***Significance F***
Regression	1	1.634	1.634	2.043	0.162
Residual	33	26.383	0.799		
Total	34	28.017			

The 'Multiple R' represents the Pearson's coefficient of correlation. Here the values of the 'Multiple R' is less than 0.5. This implies that although the 'Below 35 yrs' females are well connected (as shown by mean values in the t-test results) and are using Facebook extensively their perceived social support is not significantly dependent of the Facebook usage.

Regression of MSPSS - Family Support SubScale with Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS) Overall for Above 35 yrs Married Females:

Below are the statistics generated from Micosoft Excel when doing Regression Analysis between the MSPSS Subscale for Family Support and FIS Overall for the 'Above 35 yrs' age group females.

Regression Statistics- Above 35 yrs	
Multiple R	0.155
R Square	0.024
Adjusted R Square	-0.020
Standard Error	1.152
Observations	24

ANOVA -Above 35 years

	Df	***SS***	***MS***	***F***	***Significance F***
Regression	1	0.720	0.720	0.542	0.469
Residual	22	29.214	1.328		
Total	23	29.934			

The 'Multiple R' represents the Pearson's coefficient of correlation. Here the values of the 'Multiple R' is less than 0.5. This implies that although the 'Above 35 yrs' females are well connected (as shown by mean values in the t-test results) and are using Facebook extensively their perceived social support is not significantly dependent of the Facebook usage.

Regression of MSPSS - Friend Support SubScale with Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS) Overall for Below 35 yrs Married Females:

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Regression of MSPSS - Friend Support SubScale with Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS) Overall for Above 35 yrs Married Females:

Below are the statistics generated from Micosoft Excel when doing Regression Analysis between the MSPSS Subscale for Friend Support and FIS Overall for the 'Above 35 yrs' age group females.

Regression Statistics- Above 35 yrs	
Multiple R	0.155
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ANOVA -Above 35 years

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Regression of MSPSS - Significant Other SubScale with Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS) Overall for Below 35 yrs Married Females:

Below are the statistics generated from Micosoft Excel when doing Regression Analysis between the MSPSS Subscale for Significant Other and FIS Overall for the 'Below 35 yrs' age group females.

Regression Statistics- Below 35 yrs	
Multiple R	0.242
R Square	0.058
Adjusted R Square	0.029
Standard Error	0.894
Observations	35

ANOVA -Below 35 years

	Df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	1	1.634	1.634	2.043	0.162
Residual	33	26.383	0.799		
Total	34	28.017			

The 'Multiple R' represents the Pearson's coefficient of correlation. Here the values of the 'Multiple R' is less than 0.5. This implies that although the 'Below 35 yrs' females are well connected (as shown by mean values in the t-test results) and are using Facebook extensively their perceived social support is not significantly dependent of the Facebook usage.

Regression of MSPSS - Significant Other SubScale with Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS) Overall for Above 35 yrs Married Females:

Below are the statistics generated from Micosoft Excel when doing Regression Analysis between the MSPSS Subscale for Significant Other and FIS Overall for the 'Above 35 yrs' age group females.

Regression Statistics- Above 35 yrs	
Multiple R	0.145
R Square	0.021
Adjusted R Square	-0.026
Standard Error	0.657
Observations	23

ANOVA -Above 35 years

	Df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	1	0.194	0.194	0.451	0.509
Residual	21	9.075	0.432		
Total	22	9.269			

The 'Multiple R' represents the Pearson's coefficient of correlation. Here the values of the 'Multiple R' is less than 0.5. This implies that although the 'Below 35 yrs' females are well connected (as shown by mean values in the t-test results) and are using Facebook extensively their perceived social support is not significantly dependent of the Facebook usage.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the use of Facebook is much higher in females below the age of 35 years vis-à-vis females above the age of 35 years. In both groups the perception of social support is not dependent on the use of Facebook.

For a study that compares variables across measurement instruments and uses multiple surveys, the sample size could have been larger. A larger sample size would be more effective in improving the analysis. Additionally, the variance decreased with the inclusion of control variables such as age.

As a result, the final analysis & its sample size was appropriate for maintaining the exploratory character of the study and allowing just the most important associations to be highlighted. A bigger sample size covering a wider population can be used to repeat the study.

An additional constraint of this research is that its primary focus was Facebook, which may not be the only well-known social networking site. Its unique characteristics might not be instantly transferable to other social networking platforms.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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