

## Original Article

# The study of the relationship between addiction to social networks and marital satisfaction: A cross-sectional study in Kerman, Iran

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## Abstract

**Background:** Along with the increase in the use of social networks, the relationship between couples has undergone fundamental changes compared to the past. So that the bedroom or living room in a house is no longer considered a private place. This research aimed to study the relationship between addiction to social networks and marital satisfaction in Iran.

**Methods:** The current study was cross sectional. The study population included 185124 married women in Kerman, Iran. Using an available sampling method, 401 participants were selected. The study instruments included: The Enrich marital satisfaction scale and addiction to mobile-based social networks questionnaire. The collected information was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Results:** The results showed that 41.1% of the respondents entered the virtual space and connected to social networks while spending time with the family. Among the respondents, 62.8% use smartphones to connect to social networks in cyberspace. Findings showed that there is a significant and negative relationship between using social networks and marital satisfaction ( $r = -0.51$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Components such as time management, personal performance and self-control, and social relationships had a significant effect on marital satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ). Also, demographic variables (duration of marriage and age difference between couples) were effective on marital satisfaction.

**Conclusion:** The findings showed that there was a significant and negative relationship between the use of social networks and marital satisfaction. Components such as time management, personal performance and self-control, and social relations had a significant effect on marital satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Iran; Marital satisfaction; Marital status; Social networking; Women.

**Cite this article as:** Vafadoost Z, Maghsoodi S. The study of the relationship between addiction to Social Networks and Marital Satisfaction: A Cross-Sectional Study in Kerman, Iran. *Soc Determinants Health*. 2023;9(1):1-10. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22037/sdh.v9i1.38645>

## Introduction

The family is the basic part of the society and marital satisfaction is the most important and main characteristic of a healthy family. (1). The huge growth of social networks, the internet, digital cables, WiFi, WiMAX and application software, along with the

popularity of smartphones, tablets and laptops have coincided with the basic changes in marital relationships (2-6). While social media allows one to easily strengthen relationships, it may present challenges for people in a romantic relationship. Evidence suggests that social

media use may have a detrimental effect on relationship dynamics, mainly due to reduced time and attention for relationship partners (7). The main goal of many social network users is to expand and develop interpersonal relationships, but couples who have marital and communication problems with each other, use the internet to solve their problems and to establish relationships outside marital life (8). The entry of social networks into marital relationships has greatly affected the amount and nature of couples' satisfaction compared to the previous era. Today developments in communication technology in the living room, bed and family relationships are facing a serious challenge, a challenge in which marital relationships are turned into the fourth page of the show (9, 10).

A group of studies indicate that the most important risk of using social networks is the internet addiction, the breakdown of interpersonal interactions, and the negative impact on marital satisfaction (6, 11). Ganji et al. (2015) examined the impact of addiction to new communication technologies effect on family breakdown. it was found that the internet addiction has pushed intimate relationships outside the family system. At the same time, it has changed the value system of couples, increased feelings of alienation between couples and raised sexual avoidance between them (12). In fact, the freedom and anonymity of users on the Internet creates a kind of psychological dependence in people, which is sometimes very difficult and annoying to get rid of. In such an environment, the moral and normative values of the real society can be violated without paying any cost. In fact, the morals and human values desired by the couple are easily lost in the maze of this vast and complex space (13).

According to the statistical results of the Iranian Statistics Center in 2016, the Internet penetration rate in the country was 64%, which is an increase of 18.7%

compared to the penetration rate of 45.3% in 2014, and the total population of the country is 47 million people. have been Internet users, which shows that 59.7 percent of the population have used the Internet (14). According to the statistics of general use of the Internet and virtual social networks in families and the importance of investigating its impact on marital satisfaction, research has been conducted in this field. According to Satisi et al. study (2021), There was a significant correlation between relationship satisfaction and social media addiction. Therefore, reducing the use of social media may help couples improve their marital life satisfaction and thereby reduce their depression, anxiety, and stress (15). Clayton study (2014) found that heavy Twitter use led to higher levels of Twitter-related conflict among spouses, which in turn leads to infidelity, separation (16). Based on the available evidence, with increasing addiction to social networks, marital satisfaction and communication skills decrease (14). Internet addiction has had harmful effects on couples and their marital relationships. And the unusual use of the Internet has caused marital boredom and has reduced the satisfaction of men and women to a great extent (17).

In many researches, researchers have taken a general view of the relationship between internet use and marital satisfaction, in many of these researches, internet addiction is considered as a general concept; While the purpose of this research is to give detailed and detailed attention to the concept of social networks, which are designed with the aim of interpersonal communication in the form of new apps. Also, based on previous studies and considering that there has not been much research in this field in Kerman, Iran, this research studied the relationship between addiction to social networks and marital satisfaction in Iranian women.

## Methods

### Participants

This cross sectional study was performed in Kerman city, one of the cities of Iran. The study population included married women in Kerman, Iran, which according to the Statistical Centre of Iran; their number was about 185124 people. based on the calculation of sample size through Cochran's formula, a sample size of 383 people was proposed, and to ensure the completion of the questionnaires and considering the distorted questionnaires, 401 questionnaires were completed.

In this research, available sampling method was used. Due to the spread of the corona disease, face-to-face communication between people became weaker and people were not willing to cooperate with the implementation of the home quarantine plan. Therefore, a list of mobile phone subscribers was prepared from telecommunications and people were selected based on membership in the groups. Questionnaires were filled online and in virtual space (WhatsApp). The link of the designed questionnaire was sent to women through social networks with the help of the research team. The link of valid existing questionnaires was designed and the designed link was sent to women through social networks with the help of the research team. inclusion criteria were married women. the exclusion criteria were the unwillingness to continue study participation.

### Data-collection form

Data were collected using the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale and Addiction to mobile-based social networks Questionnaire (18, 19). The Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire contains 47

questions and 12 scales in the form of Likert scale. The scales included: contractual response, marital satisfaction, personality issues, marital relationship, conflict resolution, financial issues, leisure, sex, marriage and children, relatives and friends, Equality seeking roles and ideological orientation (20). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire have been measured by Solomonian (1994) and Mirkheshti (1996). The authors obtained 4 general scales with 12 scales. The scales included: Emotional satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, economic satisfaction and social satisfaction.

Standard questionnaire of mobile-based social networking with 22 items, consisting of four components of individual performance, time management, self-control and social relationships. These dimensions include all factors of social network addiction, so they were used to measure the use of social networks (19). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire have been measured by KhajehAhmadi et al (2017). This tool contains five options in the form of Likert scales, which are given one to five points each.

In this study, formal validity (using the opinions and experiences of experts) was used. Cronbach's alpha method was also used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. As can be seen in the table below, the Cronbach's value is acceptable. Thus, the variables seem to have good reliability (Table 1).

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, the collected information was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistical Package for the SPSS24 software was used for data analysis.

Table 1. Cronbach's value

scales	Cronbach's value	scales	Cronbach's value
Marital satisfaction	0.73	use of social networks	0.87
Emotional satisfaction	0.83	individual performance	0.82
sexual satisfaction	0.71	time management	0.79
Economic satisfaction	0.82	self-control	0.70
social satisfaction	0.80	social relationships	0.73

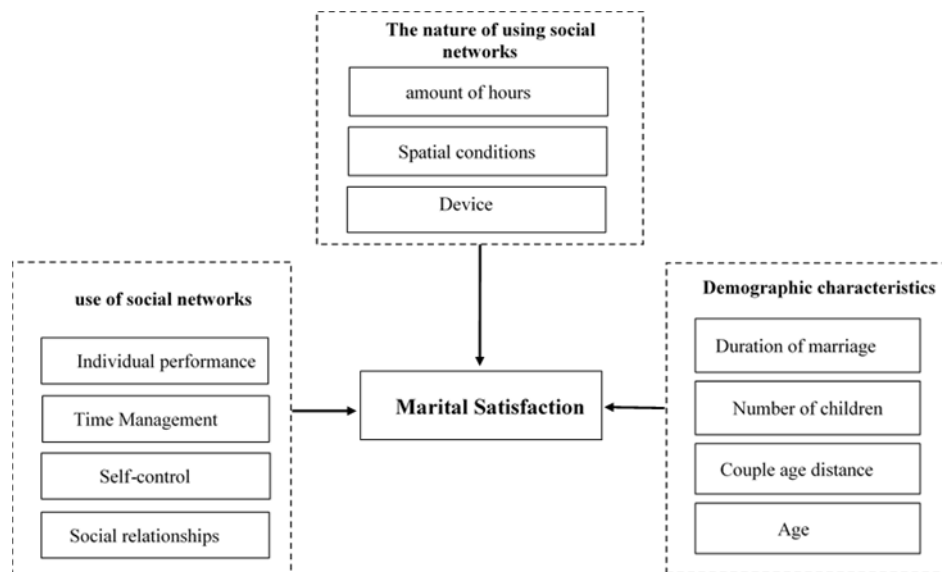


Figure 1: Diagram

## Results

The average age of the respondents was 35.3. The minimum age of respondents was 25 years and their maximum age was 64 years. The average marital life of the respondents was 16 years and the minimum marital years were 1 year and the maximum was 37 years. The average number of children stated by the respondents was 2. Among these, the maximum number of children of the respondents was 5 and some of the respondents had no children. The average age gap between couples was 5 years. Among these, the minimum age was less than one year and the maximum was 14 years (Table 2). The findings indicated that 50/1% of the respondents spent more than 6 hours a day in cyberspace and only 14/9% spent less than 3 hours in cyberspace. As could be seen, 41/1% of the respondents entered cyberspace and connected to social networks while spending time with the family. About 34/66% of the respondents stated that the used of social networks in

cyberspace was also done inside their bed. The most important tool used by respondents to connect to social networks in cyberspace was smartphones, which was selected by 62/8% of respondents (Table 3).

Pearson's coefficient was used to answer the main question of the current research, that there was an association between social networks and marital satisfaction. There was a significant and negative relationship between the average hours of using social networks and marital satisfaction. So, when women used social media a lot, their marital satisfaction decreased ( $r = -0.51$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). There were significant and positive relationship between the dimensions of using social networks and marital satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ). There was also a positive and significant relationship between marital satisfaction and marriage duration and age distance of couples ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 4).

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of demographic variables (n=401)

Name of variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
age	35.3	5.42	25	64
Duration of marriage	16.16	0.79	1	37
Number of children	2.5	0.77	0	5
Couple age distance	5.6	0.75	0	14

Table 3. Standard deviation and mean of using social networks

Name of variable	Hours use of social networks			
Option	Less than 3 hours	Between 3 and 6 hours	More than 6 hours	
Frequency	60	140	201	
Percentage	14/9	34/9	50/1	
Mean hours	103.37	20.59	61.34	
Standard Deviation	12.34	10.39	9.59	
Name of variable	Spatial conditions			
Option	Living room	Inside bedroom	Outdoor environment	
Frequency	168	139	94	
Percentage	41/8	34/66	23/3	
Mean Score	77.21	23.9	128.1	
Standard Deviation	88.8	9.54	9.52	
Name of variable	Device			
Option	Tablet	Smartphone	Laptop	computer
Frequency	34	252	66	49
Percentage	8/4	62/8	16/4	12/2
Mean Score	34.1	22.7	91.6	108.3
Standard Deviation	10.34	9.97	9.22	13.35

As can be seen in Table 5, there was an association between social network and marital satisfaction. Those who connected to social networks via smartphones have the least satisfaction with family life (Mean= 22.7), and the use of tablets was in the second place (M= 34.1). The group that

uses computers and laptops to connect to social networks has the highest level of marital satisfaction. Considering the significance level of eta, it was clear that the statistically between the means was statistically significant (Table 5).

Table 4. Correlation between independent variables and marital satisfaction

Name of variable	correlation coefficient	p
Mean use of social networks	-0.51	0.000
Individual performance	0.59	0.000
Time Management	0.32	0.004
Self-control	0.35	0.006
Social relationships	0.441	0.000
Age	0.121	0.060
Duration of marriage	0.27	0.000
Number of children	0.05	0.101
Couple age distance	0.38	0.020

Table 5. Analysis of variance between dependent variable and independent variables

Name of variable	Option	Mean	P	Eta	F
Spatial conditions	Living room	77.21	0.000	0.44	34/32
	Inside bedroom	23.9	0.000	0.39	
	Outdoor environment	128.1	0.001	0.68	
Device	Tablet	34.1	0.000	0.38	35/08
	Smartphone	22.7	0.000	0.50	
	Laptop	91.6	0.000	0.44	
	Computer	108.3	0.000	0/48	



As shown in Table 5, the stepwise method was used to explain the regression. Based on the obtained findings, it can be said that 54% of the changes in marital satisfaction that were considered as dependent variables in this equation are explained by the independent variables predicted in the research. The beta value results showed that the average hours of using social networks (0.73) was more related to marital satisfaction than other variables. Therefore, it can be said that by reducing the use of social networks, marital satisfaction increases. Time management (0.60) was the second influential factor. Individual performance (0.58), Social relationships (0.49), Devices (0.34), Spatial conditions (0.33) and Self-control (0.31) with very low beta difference are the next effective factors in explaining the observed changes in marital satisfaction (Table 6).

The diagram below shows the path of marital satisfaction based on the direct and indirect effects of the internal variables of the model. Based on the obtained results, the average hours of using social networks had the highest correlation with the dependent variable of 0.73. As shown in the diagram, this effect is done directly and indirectly through other variables. Time management is also of secondary importance with an effectiveness of 0.60.

This variable had an effect on marital satisfaction both directly and indirectly through social networks.

Table 6. The relative participation of the variables on the level of marital satisfaction

Variables	$\beta$	Sig Level
Hours of using social networks	0.73	0.000
Time management	0.60	0.000
Individual performance	0.58	0.000
Social relationships	0.49	0.001
Devices	0.34	0.000
Spatial conditions	0.33	0.000
Self-control	0.31	0.000

R value= 0.74  
R<sup>2</sup> value= 0.54  
R<sup>2</sup> value= 0.54  
F sig level= 0.000

On the other hand, as can be seen in the path analysis model, Individual performance with an intensity of 0.58 and social relations with an intensity of 0.49 have a straight and positive effect on marital satisfaction (Figure 2).

## Discussion

This study aimed to Investigating the relationship between addiction to social networks and marital satisfaction in Iran. The average number of children stated by the participants was 2. The average age distance between couples was 5 years.

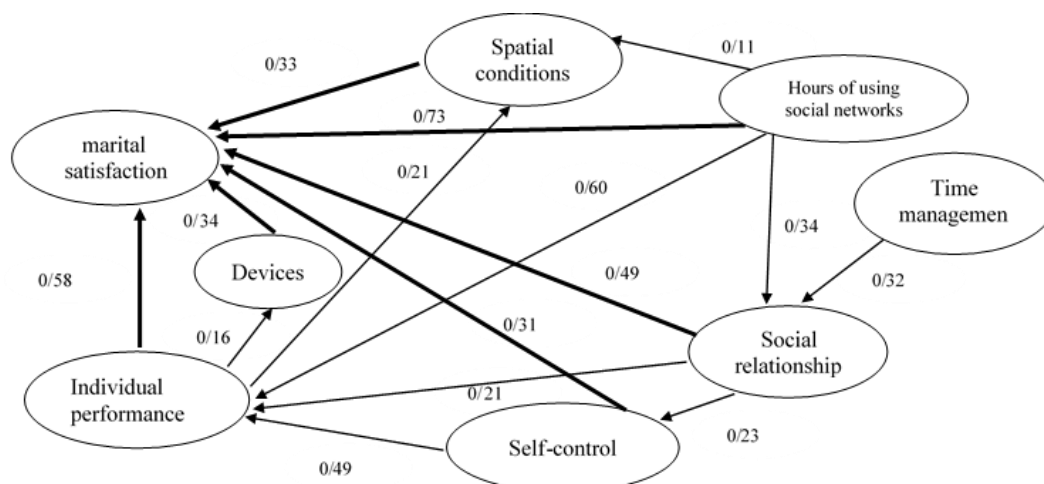


Figure 2. Path analysis model

Findings showed that 50.1% of the respondents spend more than 6 hours a day in cyberspace. From a spatial point of view, 41.1% of the respondents entered the virtual space and connected to social networks while spending time with the family. The most important tool that respondents used to connect to social networks in cyberspace was smartphones, which 62.8% of the respondents chose.

It is quite important to mention that the present study demonstrated when women used social media a lot, their marital satisfaction decreased. Several researches have shown similar outcomes Ebrahimipour and Nakhshipour (2018), The degree of marital satisfaction of the spouses had a negative and significant relationship with the presence and activity in the virtual space. (21). Barghi Irani and Rezaei (2018) in Iran concluded that there was a significant and inverse relationship between the use of social networks and marital relationships (22). Davies et al (2012) in Provo, concluded that Internet use among spouses was negatively related to marital satisfaction and obligation of both partners (23). The results of another study showed that there was an opposite and negative relationship between marital satisfaction and smartphone addiction (24).

This study stated that, there was a positive and significant relationship between individual performance, time management, self-control and social relationships with marital satisfaction. Therefore, if women's individual performance, time management, self-control and social relations improve in using social networks, women's marital satisfaction will increase. Rajaei and Heidari (2017) explained marital relationships in terms of users' connected devices and believe that the people who spend many hours in the internet through smart phones are the people who have the most marital boredom (17). Rainie and Wellman (2012) showed that most cyberspace users experienced reluctance and discouragement in marital relationships

due to their weakness in self-control and time management (25).

According to the findings of this study, there was also a positive and significant relationship between marital satisfaction with marriage duration and age distance of couples. But there was not also a positive and significant relationship between marital satisfaction with age and number of children. Kumcagiz et al (2017) showed that there was a positive relation between smartphone dependency and age (26). Nouri et al (2019) marital satisfaction was found to be related with age and number of children (27). These findings were not the same as the findings of the current study. According to the results obtained, the use of social networks in bed led to a significant decrease in the average level of marital satisfaction. However, using social networks in the living room resulted in significantly lower average marital satisfaction compared to using social networks outside the home. Therefore, the use of smartphones in the private space of couples decreased marital satisfaction.

The average marital satisfaction among the group that connected to the Internet via smartphone had the lowest level of satisfaction with family life. The next group included those who connected through tablets. The group that connects from computers and laptops to connect to social networks had the highest level of marital satisfaction. Gunuc & Dogan (2013) and Coyne et al (2014) pointed out the type of device and the amount of time users spend on the Internet as the most important factors affecting marital satisfaction. The connection to social networks through mobile more severely decreases marital dissatisfaction (28, 29). ShahriyariAhmadi et al (2019) in their study to found that the rate of infidelity, accusations of infidelity, and lack of commitment to marital relations were higher among couples who connected to virtual networks through smartphones (30).

The findings of regression analysis revealed that the duration of using social networks is able to explain the majority of changes in marital satisfaction. Components such as personal performance and self-control after time management were the most effective indicators in explaining changes in women's marital satisfaction. The outcomes of the path analysis in this research showed that the use of mobile phones led to an increase in couples' dissatisfaction due to the reduction of time management. These results were consistent with some previous studies. Malekian et al. (2017) showed couples who spent more than 4 hours per day on social networks had the lowest level of marital satisfaction. They had the least desire to spend time with their spouse (31).

In general, technology attracts people to use these networks due to its attractiveness, and the important point in this field is to increase the awareness of the audience for the correct use of social networks (media literacy). In fact, this is the most suitable way to prevent the negative functions of these spaces. Undoubtedly, using virtual space and connecting to social networks has become an unavoidable part of human relations. Therefore, it is suggested that users who want or need to spend part of their hours in virtual space, consciously minimize the amount of their connection through smartphones. Users should manage their time online. Due to the fact that this research was conducted during the corona epidemic, people were not willing to cooperate due to prevent corona disease. Therefore, the researchers sent the questionnaires to the research sample through virtual space, which was difficult and time-consuming.

### **Conclusion**

Findings indicated that there is a significant and negative relationship between the use of social networks and marital satisfaction. Components such as time management, personal performance and self-control, and social relationships had a significant effect on marital satisfaction. Also, demographic

variables (duration of marriage and age difference between couples) were effective on marital satisfaction. If the use of online social networks of the couple's private environment is significantly reduced, women's marital satisfaction will increase.

### **Acknowledgment**

Researchers need to thank all the respected women who worked closely with the researchers in completing the questionnaires.

### **Authors' contribution**

Study conception, design and data collection: Vafadoost Z.  
Analysis, interpretation of results and draft manuscript preparation: Maghsoodi s.

### **Ethical considerations**

The present study was approved by the Ethics Organization in Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman (code: IR.UK.REC.1399.003). All ethical principles were considered in this research. The respondents were informed about the objectives of the research and its steps. They were confident that their information would remain confidential.

### **Funding**

There was no financial support for conducting this paper.

### **Conflicts of interest**

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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