The Implications of Modern Technologies for the Health of Family Relationships

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Abstract
This research examines the implications of modern technologies for the health of family relationships and how they have transformed patterns of family life, including communication patterns within the family. While these technologies have facilitated many tasks, such as monitoring children, supporting education, and maintaining communication, they have, conversely, weakened other functions, such as direct dialogue, emotional interaction, and affective communication, while contributing to the emergence of isolation. The study therefore aims to identify the most significant transformations affecting family relationships and to examine the effects of excessive use of modern technologies. To this end, the descriptive method was adopted. The study concludes that maintaining healthy family relationships in the digital age requires the moderate and conscious use of modern technologies in a manner that makes them a means of strengthening family communication rather than a cause of weakening it.

Keywords: Implications, Modern Technologies, Family Relationships.

Introduction

Over the past decades, the world has witnessed rapid technological transformations that have changed patterns of human life. Modern technologies have become an integral part of the daily lives of individuals and groups. The family has consequently moved from a traditional pattern of direct communication to a new pattern in which smartphones, the Internet, social media platforms, digital applications, electronic games, and artificial intelligence technologies have become intertwined with various aspects of family life. These technologies are no longer merely means of entertainment or obtaining information; rather, they have become tools for communication, education, work, family management, monitoring children, and maintaining relationships with members of the extended family who are separated by geographical distances. Studies on digital families indicate that the Internet and mobile phones can help family members remain connected, particularly when they are geographically distant. Recent studies have also shown that some couples view technology as a means of support and communication, whereas other studies have pointed to tensions resulting from excessive use or from one spouse being preoccupied with their phone while they are together. Furthermore, the widespread presence of digital devices within the home has created new challenges for the family. Recent studies have concluded that technology use affects patterns of family communication and connectedness, and that excessive use may be associated with a decline in certain forms of family communication and cohesion.

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Hence, there is an urgent need to study this issue from a descriptive and impact-oriented perspective, particularly with regard to the implications of modern technologies for psychological, social, and behavioral well-being within family relationships. The importance of this issue has increased with the integration of artificial intelligence and smart applications into everyday life, making it necessary for families to develop their educational and emotional practices and relationships in order to achieve a conscious balance between benefiting from modern technologies and avoiding their negative consequences.

The significance of this research therefore stems from the pressing need to examine the relationship between digital transformation and the family structure, particularly in terms of the extent to which this technological and digital transformation affects family relationships, as well as to understand how digital devices and platforms can be used consciously without excessive reliance on them.

Accordingly, this research seeks to achieve a number of objectives by examining the nature of the implications of modern technologies for the health of family relationships between parents and children and among parents themselves; identifying their positive and negative dimensions; defining the concept of modern technologies and presenting their major forms; clarifying the concept of healthy family relationships and their essential components; and highlighting the importance of dialogue and direct communication in maintaining family cohesion. The descriptive method was adopted by describing manifestations of the use of modern technologies within the family and analyzing their implications.

In order to understand the various dimensions of the issue, the research seeks to answer the following main research question:

What are the implications of modern technologies for the health of family relationships?

This main question gives rise to the following sub-questions:

- What is meant by modern technologies?
- What are the main forms of modern technologies used within the family?
- What is meant by the health of family relationships?
- How do modern technologies affect communication among family members?
- What are the implications of using smartphones and social networking sites for family relationships?
- What are the main psychological, social, and ethical risks associated with excessive use of modern technologies?
- How can the family develop a rational policy for the use of modern technologies?

Chapter One: Defining the Research Concepts

Section One: The Concept of Implications

Implications refer to the overall effects and changes produced by modern technologies in the nature of relationships and interactions among family members, whether these implications are positive or negative, particularly with regard to communication, dialogue, affection, cohesion, trust, shared time, relationships between parents and children, relationships between parents themselves, and the ability to manage conflicts.

Section Two: The Concept of Modern Technologies

Means and tools have varied according to each historical period and its circumstances. In light of digital transformations and technological progress, new and advanced means have emerged

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that have become necessary to understand and use. These include information technologies, most notably artificial intelligence technology.

Before examining the implications of these technologies for family relationships, it is useful to provide an overview of the research concepts, beginning with the concept of modern technologies.

Subsection One: The Concept of Technology

First: Linguistically

The term *technology* is derived from the concept of perfecting or mastering something. The Qur'anic verse states: "The work of Allah, Who perfected all things" [Al-Naml: 88]. The expression *atqana al-shay'a aw al-amr* means to perfect or master something, while *itqan* denotes the mastery and perfection of things. A person described as *tiqn* or *taqin* is one who masters things and possesses skill and expertise. *Tiqn* was also used as the name of a man known for his skill in archery, to the extent that he was proverbial for never missing his target. The term was subsequently used to refer to anyone highly skilled in a particular matter. Thus, it is said that a person *atqana* his work when he mastered and perfected it. [1][2]

Second: Terminologically

Technology, or technologies, is a term referring to all the methods used by human beings in their inventions and discoveries to meet their needs and satisfy their desires. The term *technology* is also used to describe a particular application, such as medical technology, industrial technology, military technology, and information technology. Each of these specialized technologies serves specific objectives and has particular applications, as well as tools and means for achieving those objectives. [3]

According to another definition, technology refers to "the scientific applications of science and knowledge in all fields of life within modern Western society." In other words, technology denotes the methods people use in their inventions and discoveries to meet their needs and satisfy their desires. [4]

Technology is an important tool used in all areas of life, particularly practical life. When we reflect on our daily routines and attempt to enumerate technological tools, we recognize the importance of technology in everyday life, including the use of automobiles, computers, the Internet, television, and so forth. Technology encompasses all the changes or modifications introduced by human beings to objects existing in nature, in addition to the various tools they have manufactured to facilitate the tasks they perform. It is used in all areas of life, including communication, where it facilitates human interaction and communication through means such as video communication, mobile phones, and paging devices. Information technology encompasses all computer-based applications, such as the Internet, electronic mail, digital scanning machines, and imaging devices. Entertainment and media technology appears in digital forms such as satellite television, online publications, video games, and other technologies. [5]

Subsection Two: Modern Technologies

Modern technologies refer to a set of digital tools, means, and systems based on communication and information technologies for processing, transmitting, storing, and exchanging data. The most prominent examples include smartphones, the Internet, social networking sites, instant messaging applications, computers and tablets, electronic games, distance-learning platforms,

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digital streaming services, smart applications, and artificial intelligence technologies. These means have become present in various fields, including the family sphere, where they can be used for communication, education, work, entertainment, and monitoring children. [6]

Section Three: The Concept of Family Relationships

[1] Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, Chapter of the Letter Nun, Section of the Letter Ta, Beirut: Dar Sadir, Vol. 13, n.d., p. 73.

[2] Ibid., p. 73.

[3] A Group of Researchers, *The World Arabic Encyclopedia*, Riyadh: Encyclopedia Works Foundation, 2nd ed., 1419 AH, Vol. 7, p. 69.

[4] Khidr I. Haidar, "The Concept of Technology: The Significance of the Term, Its Meanings, and Methods of Use," *Al-Istighrab Journal*, No. 15, 2019, p. 284.

[5] Ibid., p. 288.

[6] Reference information not provided in the original text.

Subsection One: The Concept of the Family

First: Linguistically

The family in the Arabic language is: "the strong shield, the man's household and clan. It also refers to a group bound by a common matter, and the plural of family is usrah." [1]

Second: Terminologically

The family is one of the institutions of socialization because it is the environment in which the individual's personality is formed. One of its most important functions is to contribute to the formation of sound and well-adjusted individuals, which is reflected through their proper behavior and positive roles in life. [2]

Ogburn defined the family as: "a social bond consisting of a husband and wife with children or without children, or a husband alone with children, or a wife alone with children." [3]

Bogardus defines the family as: "a small social group usually consisting of a father and mother and one or more children, who exchange love and share responsibility, and which raises children until they are able to guide and discipline them so that they become individuals who behave in a socially acceptable manner." [4] The family has a system with functions that are necessary and vital to societies in general, and despite its importance, it has been exposed to problems and challenges, although it is surrounded by emotions.

Subsection Two: The Concept of Family Relationships

Family relationships are:

The relationships that bring together a group of individuals who are connected by blood and kinship. They begin with the spouses and expand to include the children and the relatives of the husband and wife. [5]

In another definition, they are: "the relationship established among the roles of the husband, wife, and children as determined by the family. It also refers to the nature of the communications and interactions that take place among family members, including the relationship between the husband and wife, between children and parents, and among the children themselves." [6]

Family relationships are also: "the network of bonds and interactions that arise among family members. They include the relationship between spouses, the relationship between parents and children, and relationships among siblings and members of the extended family. A healthy

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family relationship is based on a number of elements, the most important of which are: love, respect, trust, dialogue, cooperation, a sense of security, responsibility, and effective management of conflicts... Therefore, the health of the family relationship does not mean the complete absence of conflicts; rather, it means that the family possesses the ability to manage differences in a manner that preserves respect, affection, and stability."

It is a relationship that includes the marital relationship, in which spouses communicate to satisfy psychological, social, and biological needs. The stronger the communication between them, the stronger, more stable, and more enduring the relationship becomes. Family relationships are also based on communication between parents and children. Communication enables the family to achieve the cohesion it needs through speaking, communicating, listening, asking questions, following up on children, and involving them in family decisions that affect their present and future lives. [7]

Therefore, it can be said that the family relationship concerned by the study is the set of relationships and reciprocal interactions within the family, represented by the three-way relationship among its members: the relationship of the husband with his wife and the relationship of parents with their children.

As for the term **health of the family relationship**, it can be defined as follows:

It is related to the ability of individuals to achieve compatibility among themselves and with the society in which they live, which leads to enjoying a life free from tension and disturbances and filled with enthusiasm. [8]

It is also defined as: "a state of psychological well-being in which family members perform their functions with adaptation and comfort." [9]

In another definition, it is: "a reciprocal relationship, but the reciprocity within it is not governed by material benefit or by obtaining a benefit in exchange for a service. Family relationships are relationships based on giving and receiving, grounded in feelings and emotions nourished by affection and mercy. Individuals in family relationships are not bound by interests; rather, their bonds are strong and cannot be escaped from; it is the bond of blood." [10]

This is also confirmed by Dr. Samiha Tawfiq, who states: "The family relationship is the relationship that brings together a group of individuals who are connected by blood and kinship. It begins with the spouses and expands and extends to include the children and the relatives of the husband and wife." [11]

In another definition, it is: "a cooperative relationship based on synergy, support, and complete mutual dependence." [12]

Chapter Two: The Implications of Modern Technologies for the Health of Family Relationships

Despite the advantages provided by modern technologies in human life, and specifically in family life, by facilitating family communication and shortening the distances between family members, excessive use of these technologies produces a number of implications for the nature of family relationships. The most important of these implications are as follows:

Section One: Negative Implications

This part examines the nature of these implications and their most prominent manifestations:

Subsection One: Decline in Direct Family Dialogue

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Family dialogue is: “a form of interaction among members of the same family through discussion and conversation about everything related to family affairs, including objectives, obstacles, and difficulties, for which solutions are developed through the exchange of collective ideas and opinions concerning various issues, thereby strengthening familiarity and communication among family members.” [13]

The decline in direct communication is one of the most serious potential consequences of excessive technology use. Family members may gather in the same place while each individual is occupied with his or her own device. Thus, the family changes from a space for dialogue and interaction into a space where individuals are physically together while each one lives in a different digital world.

The decline in family dialogue has resulted in serious implications for the psychological and relational health of the family, the most important of which are:

- Excessive addiction to technology and its applications has led to the loss of personal communication among family members, which has weakened social abilities, diminished linguistic and communicative abilities, and reduced their capacity for social interaction and effective human expression of their feelings, thereby affecting emotional and social relationships. [14]
- The long hours spent by fathers and mothers using modern technologies have reduced the time available for positive interaction within the family, leaving a communication gap among its members and reducing emotional support and attention to the details of their children’s lives. Recent studies entitled “The Implications of Technological Progress on the Family” have shown that excessive use of modern technologies affects the health of family relationships. They indicated that frequent daily use of social networking platforms weakens and undermines family and social relationships, resulting in problems, most notably marital conflicts. [15]
- The emergence of a gap among individuals creates difficulty in understanding one another, as well as feelings of isolation and separation within the family. The fact that children and parents spend considerable amounts of time on social networking applications has greatly reduced opportunities for direct dialogue between them. It has also contributed to children adopting cultures and values different from those that parents seek to instill in them, leading to conflicts in ideas and values and creating greater challenges in the educational process. [16]

The lack of dialogue also weakens the emotional bonds between parents and children and diminishes the sense of belonging and security within the family. This may also lead children to turn to alternatives outside the family environment to receive support.

This requires fathers and mothers to organize their time by allocating sufficient time every day for dialogue and interaction with their children, attempting to understand their viewpoints and appreciating their cultural and educational differences. Parents should also establish limits on the use of social networking platforms and electronic games and encourage joint family activities that enhance communication. Fathers and mothers should likewise educate themselves about how to deal with contemporary family challenges through specialized training courses, workshops, consultation with specialists, or reading books and articles that focus on modern education and the challenges facing families today.

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Subsection Two: Decline in Family Gatherings

Excessive use of modern technologies leads to a decline in family gatherings as one of the manifestations of the changes that have affected contemporary family life. A family gathering is an actual gathering that includes dialogue, participation, exchange of feelings, eating together, and a sense of closeness, attention, and care. Modern technologies have displaced family activities such as eating together, sitting and talking, and visiting, and have reduced the time devoted to family recreation. They have also affected the relationship between parents and children. When a father or mother is occupied with a telephone while the child is speaking or playing, this may lead to the interruption of natural interaction.

Among the manifestations that have spread in the present era, and through which the value of maintaining kinship ties and family gatherings on special occasions, particularly religious and social occasions, has declined, is the fact that families now receive congratulatory messages or send congratulatory messages in various forms and formats taken from Internet websites or modern technologies. This has, in turn, affected children's communication with their relatives, and they have begun to refrain from visiting them

[1] Mustafa Ubaidat et al., *Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasit*, Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, p. 18.

[2] Azzi Al-Hussein, *The Family and Its Role in Developing Social Values among Children in Late Childhood: A Field Study of a Sample of Fifth-Year Primary School Pupils in the City of Bou Saada*, Master's Thesis, 2013–2014, p. 16.

[3] Nasser Ibrahim, *Educational Sociology*, 2nd ed., Dar Lil-Jil Publishing, Beirut, 1996, p. 62.

[4] Al-Kandari Ahmed Mohamed Mubarak, *Family Psychology*, 2nd ed., Al-Falah Library for Publishing and Distribution, Kuwait, 1992, p. 23.

[5] Si Moussa Abdullah et al., "The Implications of Using Facebook on Family Relationships among Young People," *Al-Riwaq Journal for Social and Human Sciences*, Vol. 7, No. 1, University of Relizane, Algeria, 2021, p. 33.

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[7] Miliani Afrah, "Communication and Family and Social Relationships during the Coronavirus Era," *Journal of Research and Studies in New Media*, Vol. 1, No. 4, University of M'Sila, Algeria, 2021, p. 11.

[8] Rahmaoui Souad, "Family Relationships and the Psychological Health of Children," *Society, Education and Work Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2022, p. 227.

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[10] Samira Bouchala, "A Conceptual Foundation for Family Relationships," *Family Relationships and Quality of Life*, PDF format, n.d., p. 308.

[11] Ibid., p. 308.

[12] Ibid., p. 308.

[13] Mohamed Aouak, *Family Dialogue Meeting*, Beirut, Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, n.d., 2004, p. 21.

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[15] See: Dina Ibrahim Amin Abdel Majeed, "The Implications of Technological Progress on the Family," *Legal Journal Specialized in Legal Studies and Research*, n.d., p. 1734.
[16] See: Dina Ibrahim Amin Abdel Majeed, "The Implications of Technological Progress on the Family," *Legal Journal Specialized in Legal Studies and Research*, op. cit., p. 1734.
A recent study on the impact of computers on personal communication in Algerian society in general and the family in particular demonstrated that:

- Modern technologies, including computer technologies, contribute to distancing family members from one another, thereby reducing opportunities for family members to meet, particularly those who do not spend much time at home because of work or study.
- A large proportion of family members prefer to use computers and other modern technologies individually, which affects family gatherings.
- Computers and their technologies distance children from their parents and relatives, according to 82% of the individuals included in the study. Thus, they become an obstacle to direct family communication and gatherings, which may affect individuals' personalities and instill negative behaviors that affect their future lives, such as introversion and isolation. [1]

Subsection Three: Emotional Emptiness

One of the most prominent implications of the unconscious and excessive use of modern technologies, particularly smartphones, social networking sites, TikTok, and electronic games, is emotional emptiness and emotional coldness. Emotional emptiness is a state of deficiency in emotional fulfillment and emotional communication among family members. It is the gap that an individual feels when he or she does not find someone who provides affection, feelings, and attention that make the individual feel important and recognize his or her self-worth. Conversely, when the individual looks around and finds no one with whom to share the love and affection within, whether maternal affection, paternal affection, sibling affection, friendship, or otherwise [2], family members may live in the same place but fail to find sufficient time for dialogue, expression of feelings, mutual attention, and listening to one another's problems and psychological needs.
The most prominent manifestations of emotional emptiness are as follows:

- Weak face-to-face communication within the family.
- Replacing emotional dialogue with digital communication. Family relationships require listening, empathy, looks, and emotional participation. When communication among family members becomes limited to short messages or emojis, opportunities for deep expression of feelings decrease.
- Parents becoming preoccupied with devices and neglecting the emotional needs of their children. A father may be physically present with his child while being occupied with his phone or social networking sites. In such a situation, the child feels that the device receives greater attention than he or she does, thereby creating a gap between the child and the father.
- A decline in emotional participation within the family environment.

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- The emergence of isolation and loneliness within the family, whereby family members become connected to the outside world while being disconnected from one another inside the home.
- Emotional coldness and dryness.

A field study addressing family relationships in light of the growing use of social networking sites, conducted on a sample of families in the city of Sétif, found that the repeated and intensive use of social networking sites is associated with deterioration in family relationships. It concluded that there is emotional coldness and dryness and a lack of dialogue among family members. [3]

Subsection Four: Increase in Family Conflicts

Modern technologies have brought additional challenges within the family, the most prominent of which is the problem of addiction to and dependence on social networking sites, YouTube, TikTok, and others. This has had negative repercussions on the health, interactive, ethical, and security dimensions of family life, while exacerbating marital disagreements and conflicts and emotional neglect as a result of some family members abandoning their responsibilities within the family. [4]

Section Two: Positive Implications

Technology has brought benefits to numerous fields. With regard to the family, it has benefited from modern technological technologies in the following ways:

Subsection One: Communication and Contact

Through modern technologies, the family can enhance human and family communication by using text messages, instant messaging, email, and so forth. These means contribute to improving communication among family members, particularly those who are separated by long distances, and provide a space for conversation and interaction when they are unable to meet in person.

Subsection Two: Sharing Interests

Social networking sites, as a modern technology, have opened a new avenue of communication among family members by making it possible to share happy moments and different emotions. They have also opened the way for sharing news, photographs, audio recordings, and videos, as well as exchanging opinions and viewpoints about various matters.

Subsection Three: Supporting Education

Modern technologies such as the Web, YouTube, and artificial intelligence help families learn and provide distance education, such as online lessons and educational materials available on the Web. These educational options enhance children's education, personal development, and family interaction. They also strengthen family bonds by providing easy access to educational, cultural, and religious resources and encouraging the family to share materials and ideas. [5]

Based on the foregoing, some mechanisms that can help the family resist the improper use of modern technologies can be summarized as follows:

- Promoting a culture of purposeful and beneficial use of modern technologies, including communication and research technologies, such as using them for education or for researching matters of concern to the family and its members.
- Restoring the traditional pattern of family gatherings and dialogue without being preoccupied with modern technologies, such as preventing children from using these

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technologies during family gatherings and immediately putting aside modern technological devices when family members meet.

- Providing a family environment through participation in discussions, interests, and responsibilities in their traditional manner instead of through social networking sites.
- Strengthening family communication because of its benefits for the health of family relationships.
- Raising children's awareness of the dangers of repeated use of modern technological and technical means and their harmful effects on psychological, mental, and family health.
- Practicing social control within the family and deterring anything that constitutes a departure from family educational standards.
- Seeking recreational alternatives with the participation of family members and encouraging them to participate in establishing social relationships and activities that develop their talents and abilities.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of this study, it became clear that:

- Modern technologies have become an essential part of contemporary family life because of the services they provide in terms of contact and communication, bringing family members who are separated by distances closer together, allowing them to exchange feelings and share happy occasions, and providing access to information and services, which has greatly facilitated various aspects of family life.
- Excessive use of modern technologies has produced negative implications for the health of family relationships, the most prominent of which are the decline of family dialogue, feelings of isolation, continuous preoccupation with smartphones, declining emotional support, and the deterioration of proper upbringing within the family, which has deprived fathers and mothers of their roles within the family.
- Maintaining healthy family relationships in the digital age requires a transition in the way technology is dealt with so that virtual relationships do not replace direct relationships and these technologies do not become a barrier separating family members from one another. It is therefore necessary to achieve a balance between benefiting from modern technologies and limiting their negative effects.
- Despite the numerous negative implications of modern technologies for family relationships, their positive impact on family relationships cannot be denied, particularly through facilitating communication and reducing distances among family members. Accordingly, the implications of modern technologies for family relationships are more negative than positive, and this depends on the nature of their use and the extent to which family members are aware of the need to achieve a balance between benefiting from their advantages and maintaining direct communication.

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