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SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY FAMILY VALUES

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become an influential part of contemporary society, transforming family communication, interpersonal relationships, cultural traditions, and the values that guide everyday family life. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp enable family members to communicate, share experiences, maintain relationships across geographical distances, and participate in wider social networks. However, increased social media engagement may also introduce challenges related to privacy, family authority, generational differences, personal independence, and the preservation of traditional values. Valkenburg et al. (2022) explain that social media use can have different consequences for individuals depending on their personal circumstances and patterns of engagement. Similarly, research on digital family life highlights the importance of understanding how online interactions influence relationships, expectations, and family practices. This article examines the influence of social media on contemporary family values, focusing on communication, respect, parental guidance, cultural traditions, and intergenerational relationships. It adopts a qualitative, literature-based approach to synthesize existing academic research and identify the opportunities and challenges associated with social media use in family settings. The discussion suggests that social media does not necessarily weaken traditional family values; rather, its influence depends on how individuals use digital platforms and how families respond to changing social expectations. Responsible social media use, open communication, mutual respect, and balanced digital habits can help families preserve meaningful relationships while adapting to contemporary technological developments.

KEYWORDS

Social Media, Family Values, Family Relationships, Digital Communication, Cultural Traditions, Intergenerational Relationships, Contemporary Society

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a significant feature of contemporary family life, influencing how individuals communicate, express their opinions, maintain relationships, and understand family responsibilities. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp provide opportunities for family members to exchange messages, share photographs, celebrate important occasions, and remain connected despite geographical distance. These platforms have also changed how family members present their personal lives and interpret the behaviour of others. Valkenburg et al. (2022) explain that the effects of social media on psychological and social well-being vary considerably across individuals, indicating that its influence cannot be understood through a single general assumption. In family settings, this variation is important because social media may strengthen emotional connections in some households while contributing to misunderstandings and disagreements in others. Therefore, examining its

influence on contemporary family values requires attention to communication practices, cultural expectations, and the quality of relationships between family members.

Family values include respect, trust, cooperation, responsibility, honesty, care for older relatives, parental guidance, and the preservation of cultural traditions. These values influence how family members interact, resolve conflicts, share responsibilities, and support one another during difficult circumstances. Social media creates new opportunities to express these values by allowing relatives to exchange emotional support, participate in family discussions, and remain involved in one another's lives. However, online communication can also change expectations concerning privacy, independence, availability, and social approval. Erstad et al. (2024) explain that digital platforms have become embedded in family life across generations, creating opportunities for connection while also introducing questions concerning power, control, and interpersonal relationships. This suggests that contemporary family values are not simply disappearing because of technological change; instead, they may be reinterpreted and negotiated through new forms of digital interaction.One major area of influence is communication between parents and children. Social media enables parents to remain informed about children's activities and allows younger family members to exchange ideas, seek information, and maintain relationships with their peers. Nevertheless, differences in online behaviour can create disagreements regarding screen time, appropriate content, privacy, and parental supervision. Parents may emphasize discipline, protection, and respect for established family rules, while adolescents may place greater importance on independence, personal expression, and peer acceptance. These contrasting expectations can influence trust and communication within the household. Research by Odgers and Jensen (2020) emphasizes the importance of examining adolescent digital experiences carefully rather than assuming that all technology use produces harmful outcomes. Their review supports a balanced approach in which family circumstances, individual differences, and the quality of interpersonal relationships are considered when assessing the influence of social media on younger generations.

Social media also influences the preservation and transformation of cultural traditions and intergenerational relationships. Families increasingly use digital platforms to share traditional celebrations, religious or cultural occasions, family histories, photographs, and community experiences. Such practices can help younger generations remain connected to their cultural backgrounds and maintain relationships with grandparents and extended relatives. At the same time, exposure to diverse lifestyles, social attitudes, and global cultural trends may influence young people's preferences concerning marriage, gender roles, family responsibilities, clothing, and personal independence. Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020) discuss the complexities of raising children in a digital age, including parental concerns about children's online participation and the relationship between digital opportunities and family life. These developments suggest that social media can simultaneously support cultural continuity and encourage changes in traditional expectations, depending on how families interpret and respond to online influences.

Another important concern is the effect of social media on emotional closeness and the quality of everyday family interaction. Although digital platforms can make communication easier, excessive engagement may divert attention from face-to-face conversations, shared meals, family gatherings, and other activities that contribute to emotional connection. Family members may also compare their lives with idealized online representations of other households, creating unrealistic expectations concerning financial success, relationships, parenting, and personal achievement. Such comparisons may contribute to dissatisfaction or disagreements when online portrayals conflict with family circumstances. The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on social media and youth mental health (2023) highlights important concerns about young people's digital environments and the need for a thoughtful, evidence-based approach to social media use. Although these concerns do not establish that social media necessarily damages family values, they demonstrate why responsible use and open discussions about online experiences are important within contemporary households.

In contemporary society, understanding the relationship between social media and family values is increasingly important because digital platforms influence both private relationships and wider cultural expectations. Social media can encourage cooperation, emotional support, cultural participation, and communication across generations, but it may also create tension around privacy, authority, independence, and appropriate behaviour. Qian and Hu (2024) provide a conceptual framework for understanding how digitalization becomes integrated into family practices and wider social environments. Building on this perspective, the present study examines how social media influences contemporary family values, particularly respect, trust, communication, parental guidance, cultural continuity, and intergenerational relationships. It considers both the potential benefits and challenges of digital participation and explores how families can maintain meaningful relationships while adapting to technological and social change.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the influence of social media on communication, respect, and relationships within contemporary families.
2. To identify the positive and negative effects of social media on traditional family values and intergenerational relationships.
3. To explore strategies for promoting responsible social media use while preserving important family values.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does social media influence communication, respect, and relationships within contemporary families?

2. What are the positive and negative effects of social media on traditional family values and intergenerational relationships?
3. What strategies can families adopt to encourage responsible social media use while preserving important family values?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between social media and contemporary family values has attracted increasing attention in research on digital communication, family sociology, and intergenerational relationships. Qian and Hu (2024) developed a multilevel conceptual framework for understanding the digitalization of family life, explaining how online practices interact with wider economic, cultural, and social environments. Their framework suggests that digital platforms influence how families communicate, organize responsibilities, exchange support, and develop shared expectations. Social media can help preserve family connections by enabling relatives to communicate regularly and participate in important occasions, even when they live far apart. However, online communities can also introduce new expectations concerning family privacy, personal independence, and the public presentation of family life. This research provides a useful foundation for examining how contemporary family values are maintained, negotiated, and transformed through digital participation.

Erstad et al. (2024) examined how digital technologies become embedded in family life across generations through a scoping review of multidisciplinary research. Their review identified two major themes: stronger connectedness through intimacy, belonging, and care, and conflicts arising from power differences and interdependence. These findings suggest that social platforms can strengthen family bonds by allowing relatives to exchange emotional support, share experiences, and maintain regular contact. At the same time, technology may create disagreements concerning parental authority, privacy, acceptable online behaviour, and the responsibilities of different generations. These tensions are particularly important in families where older members emphasize established traditions while younger members seek greater freedom of expression. The study indicates that digitalization transforms family relationships rather than automatically replacing traditional values, making it important to consider how families negotiate their expectations in changing social environments. Research on social media and adolescent development provides another important perspective on changing family values. Odgers and Jensen (2020) reviewed evidence concerning adolescent mental health in the digital age and highlighted the need for careful, evidence-based interpretations of young people's technology use. Their review cautions against assuming that digital engagement has identical consequences for every adolescent. Within families, social media may provide young people with opportunities for self-expression, peer connection, and access to information, while also raising concerns about online risks, social comparison, and disagreements over household rules. These experiences can influence how parents and children understand respect, independence,

responsibility, and trust. A balanced interpretation therefore requires families to distinguish between beneficial online activities and patterns of use that interfere with everyday responsibilities or healthy communication. The literature supports constructive parental guidance rather than relying exclusively on restrictive or punitive approaches.

Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020) explored the challenges of raising children in a digital age, focusing on parents' experiences, concerns, and responsibilities in children's digital lives. Their work demonstrates that digital parenting involves negotiating questions of safety, opportunity, privacy, independence, and family expectations. These issues are closely related to contemporary family values because parents must determine how to protect children while allowing them to develop autonomy and participate in digital society. Social media can expose children to different cultural perspectives and lifestyles, encouraging discussion about traditional expectations and contemporary social norms. However, disagreements may arise when parents and children interpret online content differently or hold contrasting views about acceptable behaviour. This literature suggests that family values can be supported through open communication, shared expectations, and age-appropriate guidance that combines protection with respect for children's developing independence.The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on social media and youth mental health (2023) reviewed potential benefits, risks, and evidence gaps relating to young people's social media use. The advisory identifies concerns about harmful content, excessive use, and possible consequences for well-being, while recognizing that social media can also provide opportunities for connection and support.

These issues have implications for family relationships because online experiences may influence children's emotions, everyday behaviour, and willingness to discuss personal concerns with parents. When families respond to digital challenges through supportive conversations, they may reinforce values such as care, responsibility, honesty, and mutual respect. Conversely, conflict or excessive monitoring may make discussions about online experiences more difficult. The advisory emphasizes the importance of shared responsibility among parents, caregivers, technology companies, and researchers, supporting the need for family practices that encourage safer and more thoughtful social media participation. Valkenburg et al. (2022) examined the relationship between social media use and well-being through a comprehensive review of the literature, highlighting the importance of individual differences and the need to move beyond generalized assumptions about digital media. Their findings are relevant to family values because online experiences may influence individuals differently according to their personal circumstances, social relationships, and patterns of engagement. For some family members, social media can provide companionship, emotional support, and opportunities to maintain relationships; for others, it may contribute to stress, comparison, or interpersonal tension. These differences suggest that the effect of social media on family respect, cooperation, and emotional closeness cannot be understood solely by measuring the amount of time spent online. Instead, the

nature of online activities, the quality of family communication, and the values guiding digital behaviour must also be considered.

Nobakht et al. (2026) investigated social media use and family relationship quality through a six-wave longitudinal study following young people from ages 10 to 20. Their research contributes to the discussion by examining changes in social media use and family relationships over time, rather than relying only on comparisons between different families. This distinction is important because an association between social media use and family relationship quality does not automatically demonstrate that one causes changes in the other. Considered alongside the work of Qian and Hu (2024), Erstad et al. (2024), and the U.S. Surgeon General (2023), the literature suggests that social media can influence how family values are expressed, discussed, and negotiated, but its effects depend on broader family and social circumstances. A remaining research need is to understand these processes across different cultural contexts, including societies where respect for elders, collective responsibility, and family traditions hold particular importance. The present study addresses this concern by examining the positive and negative influences of social media on contemporary family values and identifying approaches that may help preserve meaningful family relationships.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, literature-based methodology to examine the influence of social media on contemporary family values. It draws on published academic research concerning digital family life, social media use, adolescent development, parental guidance, and intergenerational relationships. The selected literature includes conceptual frameworks, scoping reviews, research reviews, and longitudinal studies published between 2020 and 2026, with particular emphasis on recent research from 2023 to 2026. These publications provide evidence and theoretical perspectives concerning the ways digital platforms influence family communication, respect, trust, cultural traditions, and everyday responsibilities. The study uses secondary sources to develop a broader understanding of the topic without claiming to have collected original data from families.

The selected literature was examined thematically to identify recurring ideas, areas of agreement, and differences in the reported findings. Particular attention was given to the positive contributions of social media, including maintaining family connections, sharing cultural experiences, and providing emotional support, as well as potential challenges involving privacy, excessive use, intergenerational disagreements, and changing expectations. Findings from different publications were compared while taking account of their research designs, populations, and limitations. This approach allows the study to develop an integrated interpretation of existing scholarship while distinguishing between established findings, conceptual arguments, and issues that require further empirical investigation.

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RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employs a descriptive and analytical research design to investigate the relationship between social media and contemporary family values. The descriptive component explains how social media is incorporated into family communication, cultural participation, parenting, and intergenerational interaction. The analytical component examines how these practices may support or challenge values such as respect, trust, responsibility, cooperation, privacy, and cultural continuity. The research is organized around the three stated objectives and questions, enabling a structured examination of the opportunities and challenges identified in the existing literature.The research design relies exclusively on secondary data obtained from relevant scholarly publications and an authoritative public health advisory. The selected sources are interpreted in relation to the research questions, with attention to differences in context and research methodology. No original surveys, interviews, experiments, or observations are conducted. Consequently, the study is suitable for synthesizing existing knowledge and identifying research gaps, but it cannot establish new causal relationships or claim that the reviewed findings apply equally to every family or cultural setting.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed through qualitative thematic analysis to identify major patterns in the relationship between social media and contemporary family values. The first theme focused on communication and family relationships, including the ways social media supports contact, emotional expression, and the exchange of family information. Qian and Hu (2024) and Erstad et al. (2024) provide a foundation for understanding how digital platforms have become integrated into family practices and intergenerational relationships. The second theme examined challenges associated with social media, including privacy concerns, online social comparison, differences in generational expectations, and potential interruptions to family interaction. The reviewed literature was compared to determine how these issues may influence respect, trust, responsibility, and cooperation within households.The third theme focused on cultural traditions and the preservation of family values in changing digital environments. The analysis considered how families use social media to share cultural experiences, maintain relationships with extended relatives, and discuss changing social expectations. Research by Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020) and the U.S. Surgeon General (2023) informed the discussion of parental guidance, responsible digital participation, and concerns about young people's online experiences. Findings were interpreted in relation to the study's research questions, while recognizing that differences in culture, family structure, and patterns of technology use can influence outcomes. As the study relies on secondary literature, the analysis represents a synthesis of existing research rather than a statistical analysis of newly collected data.

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FINDINGS

The analysis indicates that social media can support contemporary family values by improving communication, maintaining emotional connections, and enabling relatives to participate in one another's lives despite geographical separation. Family members can use digital platforms to share important experiences, provide emotional support, celebrate cultural occasions, and coordinate household responsibilities. Qian and Hu (2024) and Erstad et al. (2024) demonstrate that digital technologies have become integrated into family practices and relationships across generations. These findings suggest that social media does not necessarily eliminate traditional family values; instead, it can provide new ways of expressing care, cooperation, belonging, and responsibility. Its positive contribution depends on whether online interaction strengthens meaningful relationships and supports the needs of different family members.The analysis also identifies challenges involving generational differences, privacy, parental guidance, and changing social expectations. Younger family members may use social media to explore personal identity, express opinions, and engage with different cultural influences, while older relatives may place greater emphasis on established traditions, family authority, and collective responsibilities. Such differences can create disagreements concerning acceptable behaviour, independence, screen time, and the sharing of personal information. Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020) and the U.S. Surgeon General (2023) highlight important considerations relating to children's digital experiences and parental responsibilities. However, these challenges should not be interpreted as evidence that social media inevitably weakens family relationships, because its effects vary according to individual circumstances and patterns of use.

The findings further suggest that responsible social media use and constructive family communication can help preserve important family values. Open discussions about online behaviour, mutually agreed boundaries, respect for privacy, and opportunities for face-to-face interaction may help families manage digital challenges. The literature also indicates a need for further research into how social media influences family values across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts. In societies where respect for elders, collective responsibility, and cultural traditions are particularly important, the interaction between digital influences and established family expectations deserves additional attention. Overall, the findings suggest that social media can contribute positively to contemporary family life when digital participation is balanced with mutual respect, emotional understanding, and shared responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Social media has become an important influence on contemporary family values, changing the ways individuals communicate, express emotions, maintain traditions, and negotiate family responsibilities. The literature reviewed in this study suggests that social media can strengthen relationships by facilitating communication, providing emotional support, and connecting

relatives across geographical distances. At the same time, it may introduce challenges involving privacy, excessive use, generational differences, and changing expectations concerning family authority and personal independence. Qian and Hu (2024) and Erstad et al. (2024) demonstrate that digitalization transforms family practices and relationships in complex ways. Therefore, social media should not be regarded as inherently beneficial or harmful to family values; its influence depends on how digital platforms are used and how family members respond to the opportunities and challenges they create.The study concludes that maintaining important family values in the digital age requires responsible social media use, open communication, and mutual understanding between generations. Families can benefit from discussing online experiences, establishing reasonable boundaries, respecting personal privacy, and protecting time for shared activities and direct interaction. Parents and older family members can provide guidance while recognizing younger generations' need for independence and self-expression. Similarly, younger family members can respect family traditions while engaging thoughtfully with contemporary cultural influences. Further empirical research is needed to examine these relationships across diverse cultural settings and family structures. Ultimately, social media can coexist with traditional and contemporary family values when technology supports rather than replaces respect, trust, care, cooperation, and meaningful human relationships.

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