

شبكة التواصل الاجتماعي: أداة إزاحة التفاعل والعزلة لمستخدمي وسائط التواصل الاجتماعي

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ملخص: واحدة من المعضلات التي تواجه العديد من الأسر اليوم هي استخدام شبكة التواصل الاجتماعي بين أعضائها. بغض النظر عن المزايا الإيجابية، شبكة التواصل الاجتماعي أثرت على العديد من الأنشطة الاجتماعية بما في ذلك التواصل والتفاعل بين أفراد العائلة؛ مما أدى إلى العزلة الاجتماعية والعائلية وخاصة بين فئة الشباب. هذا البحث يسلط الضوء على هذه الظاهرة في المجتمع الكويتي، لتحديد مدى تأثير برامج التواصل الاجتماعي على العزلة الاجتماعية والاتصالات الشخصية. تستخدم هذه الدراسة نظرية الإزاحة كإطار نظري لفهم هذا التأثير. وتم توزيع استبانات بين الطلاب في خمس جامعات حكومية وخاصة. القياسات المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة هي قياسات العزلة الاجتماعية والدعم العائلي. وتظهر النتائج أن الطلاب يقضون المزيد من الوقت على برامج التواصل الاجتماعي؛ مما سبب عزلة اجتماعية، وهذا هو إزاحة للوقت الذي يقضونه مع أسرهم وأيضاً طبيعة برامج التواصل الاجتماعي تؤثر على العزلة الاجتماعية أكثر من الوقت الذي يتم إنفاقه على التواصل الاجتماعي، ولكن أظهرت النتائج أن هذه العزلة تقل مع وجود الدعم العائلي.

المصطلحات الأساسية: شبكة التواصل الاجتماعي - نظرية الإزاحة، العزلة الاجتماعية، الدعم العائلي، الكويت.

Social Network: A Tool of Interaction Displacement and Isolation for Social Media Users^{*}

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Abstract: One of the dilemmas many families face today is the use of social networks (SNs) between family members. Despite their positive advantages, SNs have affected many social activities, including communication and interaction in the family. This research investigates this phenomenon in Kuwait to determine how much SN programs have affected social communication and isolation. The study uses displacement theory as a theoretical framework to understand this effect. Questionnaires were disseminated among students at five public and private universities. The two measurements used in this study were social isolation and social support. The results show that students spend more time on SNs, and this displaces the time they spend with their family. The nature of the SN programs affect social isolation more than the time spent on social interaction.

Key words: Social Network, Social Displacement Effect, Social Support, Social Isolation, Kuwait.

Introduction

With the first launch of Social Networks (SN) in 1997 to the launch of Twitter in 2006, and more recently the Snapchat, more and more people are joining and using these SNs (Infographic, 2013). Usually new technologies may displace older ones if they were capable of providing a better method of delivering media content (Lin, 2004). The feature of

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writing texts on SNs made it possible for people to interact without being physically together (Zhao, 2006). Similarly, the invention of easy to use, free or inexpensive, multitasking functions for SN programs that worked with different smartphone brands increased the use of SN interaction programs.

SNs have become a daily practice for millions of users around the world (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). SNs include social programs, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and lately Snapchat. Smartphones have made it easier to use online social programs anywhere and anytime. The world is at the doorstep, where SNs have become useful tools for communicating, exchanging messages, sharing knowledge, discussing various subjects, and interacting with people from different cultures (Sawyer, 2011). Moreover, SNs have also become useful tools for teaching, learning, searching, and discussion. What used to be considered counter-culture has become acceptable in SN (Miladi, 2010). For example, in many Arab countries, a male-female friendship on SNs has become more acceptable if it remains confined to the virtual environment; however, it becomes unacceptable when it leaves the boundaries of the SN. Ellison et al. (2007) found that Facebook is used as an SN device to sustain and solidify offline relationships. Sponcil and Gitimus (2012) study of college students use of social media found that all students use some form of SNs and visit their SN sites several times a day to communicate with family and friends.

The most avid users of SNs are young people (Ahn, 2011, Madden et al., 2013) aged 18 to 29 (83%), with women more active than men (Popescu, 2013). The activities of male and female users of SN sites are not alike; women use SNs to support relationship maintenance (interpersonal and relationship oriented) while men use SNs to form new relationships (adventurous) (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012). There is a debate among researchers about the effects of Internet use on social ties, and whether the effects are positive (increasing social ties), negative (decreasing social ties), or neutral or contingent (Zhao, 2006). Using longitudinal data to examine the effects of the Internet on social involvement and psychological well-being, Kraut et al. (1998) found that an increase in Internet use results in a decline in communication with family members, causing depression and loneliness. However, in their more recent research work, Kraut et al. (2002) found the opposite effect,

that Internet use may increase social interaction. Uslaner (2000, p. 64) commented: “The Net is neither vicious nor virtuous, neither a dark and threatening place nor a grand intellectual and social commune”. The Internet can be positive or negative, but does not constitute a threat to society or morals. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) suggested that those who avoid face-to-face interaction can use the Internet to fulfill interpersonal needs, while those who see the Internet as social and active, use it for passing time, entertainment, convenience, and interpersonal utility. They concluded:

Internet users who were less satisfied with their lives and who used the Internet for interpersonal utility reasons had greater affinity with the Internet. This affinity may be due to the nature of the medium, which limits nonverbal cues, bypasses physical appearance, and allows the user to create a new identity, if so desired. The lack of visual contact and the existence of different cyberspace social norms allow the user more freedom in personal expression, and make interaction less stressful (pp. 192-3).

The Problem

Nonetheless, for every new technology there are disadvantages and negative outcomes. SNs have caused distraction when driving, impaired learning performance, led to the creation of virtual or fake relationships, disrupted friendships, sexual exposure, family problems and vanishing face-to-face interactions. These effects have raised fears that SNs may diminish human relationships and contact leading to isolation (Hampton et al., 2011). It has become usual to see people sitting at one table in a restaurant, but not interacting face-to-face with each other while communicating with their friends through SNs using smartphones. It became very common to see families gathering in one place but each member is interacting technologically with friends through smartphones rather than interacting interpersonally; also common to see students using smartphones in classrooms, distracting their attention from learning. Many car accidents have been caused by the use of SNs while driving. Notwithstanding their disadvantages, SNs started to create virtual friendships with distant people at the expense of our relationships with close family members. SNs make it hard to distinguish between meaningful relationships in the real world and casual relationships

formed online (Jung, 2013). There are other negative effects of SN sites, like reducing students research capabilities, reducing their attention span and their motivation for learning, as more time is spent on social media and less time is spent on socializing with others (Steve, 2012). Nie and Hillygus (2002) study of internet communication found a negative impact on individuals, creating loneliness and reducing face-to-face interaction with friends and family, as well as time spent on social activities. Instead of creating social interaction in real life, SNs started to produce social isolation. Thus, SNs replace face-to-face social interaction with virtual online communication. In this study, the authors will look at the use of social networks and their relationship to social isolation taking into consideration the social support factor of the user as an intervening variable which might have an effect on the social isolation.

Theoretical Framework and Related Studies

Zhao (2006) provided two main online activities 1) solitary activities, such as web surfing or reading the news, (non-social use) with no direct involvement of other people, and 2) social activities, such as email, SNs, and chat rooms, (social use) that involves direct contact with friends or strangers. These two activities should be considered when studying the effect of online activities on family ties. Zhao (2006) concluded that those who use the Internet for social activities have more social connections than those who use it for solitary activities. The type of Internet usage determines the relationship between time spent online and interpersonal connectivity.

Thus, effective SNs with social support for relationships have a “therapeutic value in mental and physical health” (Pearson, 1986, p 391). Both qualitative (process of perception and feeling) and quantitative (social network morphology) dimensions are incorporated with social support (Pearson, 1986). Kaplan et al. (1977, pp 54-55) defined four elements of morphology (accessibility criteria) which include anchorage (length and complexity of relationship), reachability (steps to contact people), density (lines of communication between members) and range (few to many direct contacts) and four social support interactions that include content (support and meanings of network relationships), directedness (amount of reciprocity of relationship), intensity (strength of commitment), and frequency (number of interactions). There is a close

association between individual morbidity and early mortality and poor social support, social isolation and limited interaction with others (Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Health and Behavior: Research, 2001). Social support is an important factor for better health and better life.

Several scholars used different definitions of social networks. Casber (2011) defined the social network as “a type of communication media in human communication process which adopt Web 2.0 as the communication tool and various Web 2.0 evolving information transmission technologies enables people to communicate, read/write and share contents in a worldwide many to many communication mode with social means” (pp. 27-8). Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined SNs as online services that allow individuals to (1) build a public or private profile, (2) form a list of users they would like to share a connection with, and (3) view their connections within the network structure, where connections differ from one SN to another. Turban et al. (2011, p. 22) on the other hand defined a SN as a "category of Internet applications to help connect friends, business partners, or other individuals together using a variety of tools". Cooke et al. (1988, p 212) defined a SN “as a unit of social structure that includes persons or groups and ties of emotional support which connect the individuals or groups”. There are four essential principles for positive involvement in SNs: 1) membership: users feel a sense of belonging, to have voice, to give back, to foster collective action and to support constant action, 2) demand-driven: where users are motivated to make a change, 3) reciprocity: which is forming a mutual interdependence on one another, and 4) learning: through acquiring knowledge in an environment that provides transformation, innovation, constant expansion, and adaptation (Piton Foundation, 2007).

Cobb (1976, p 300) defined social support as “information leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations”, creating three classes — those who believe they are cared for and loved (mutual trust), those who believe they are esteemed and valued (esteem support), and those who believe they belong to a network of communication and mutual obligation (common and shared). Furthermore, Abo-Saif (2010, p 402) defined family support as the “extent in which the family (parents, brothers, husbands, and other family members) offer and provide

support and help to the individual in everyday life matters, and during stressful and difficult life circumstances”. Al-Kandari (2011) believed that social support is an important psychological factor for those who live in a harsh environment like the Gulf region and need social solidarity. Al-Kandari (2011) further explained that the economic boom that occurred in the Gulf region, including Kuwait, created a new family and kin structure which affected relationships between family members and society. This rapid sociocultural change moved Kuwaiti families from extended families toward nuclear families (Al-Thakeb, 1985), and shifted the role of females from a traditional segregated position to a modern engagement in education and the workforce, working side by side with men (Al-Kandari, 2011).

The social displacement theory states that a person cannot perform two activities at the same time. Spending time on one activity will take time away from other activities. Spending time on a new medium displaces the time for social activities (Neuman, 1995, Kayany & Yelsma, 2000). You cannot watch TV, listen to music, play online games, and socialize with people simultaneously. Because we are limited to 24 hours a day and our attention ability is limited to one action at a time, some activities have to be lost (Mutz et al., 1993; Lee, 2009). Thus, spending more time online means spending less time to interact with family, friends or other community members (Shapiro, 2000), and weak ties online displace strong ties offline (Lee, 2009). When face-to-face interaction is displaced by time spent online, there is a significant negative effect, detracting from meaningful ties that affect community involvement (Chew et al., 2011). Lee (2009, p. 525) stated that adolescents online activities negatively affect parent-child relationships and “might have negative implications for childrens overall development in the long term”.

SN Use in the Middle East and Kuwait

According to Pew Research Center in the USA, 83% of people aged 18 to 29 (for all internet users 67%) use SNs (Duggan & Brenner, 2013), and in the Middle East 88% (male 65% and female 35%) of online users use SN sites daily (68% for those aged 18 to 34). Kuwait comes fifth in the Middle East with 87% of SN penetration, and out of the Arab population, Kuwait reached 37.4% penetration for Facebooks daily

active users (Salem, 2017). In terms of global Internet penetration, Kuwait is ranked 29th (75.5%), and has the most affordable fixed-broadband prices in the Gulf region (International Telecommunication Union, 2014). By March 2017, Kuwait had 3,202,110 Internet users from a population of 4,099,932, and 6.5 million mobile telephone subscriptions, 212% of the population, the highest mobile penetration in the Middle East region (Mideast Times, 2014). Kuwait comes third after Saudi Arabia (76%) and UAE (72%) for smartphone penetration with (69%) (IORMA, 2014). In the Arab region, Bahrain and Kuwait have the highest penetration rates of active Twitter users, and Kuwait has the most active Twitter users with 4.2 tweets per day (Salem, 2017). Kuwait became the most active country in the Arab region on Instagram. The use of the SNs in Kuwait ranked as follows: WhatsApp 84%, Facebook 75%, and Twitter 41% (ArabSMIS, 2015).

A study of Kuwaiti students by Al-Kandari et al. (2015) found that male students usage of SNs (Twitter: male 55.4% female 37%; Facebook: male 8.9% female 3.4%; YouTube: male 11% female 7%) was higher than female students usage, except for WhatsApp where female students (58.4%) outnumbered male students (46%). The study also found that Twitter was more effective for both female and male students (53%), followed by WhatsApp (25%), where 86% use mobile devices for SNs instead of computers (42.4%), and lastly by iPad (33.3%). Al-Kandari et al. (2015) concluded that SNs, especially the WhatsApp, were widely used by young people because they were easy to use and free, creating personal benefits for the user. In the Middle East, smartphones replaced laptops to be the most desired phone device among 18 to 30 year olds (Al Bawaba Business, 2013), and in Kuwait smartphones constitute about 80 percent of the mobile phone market (Arab Times, 2013), which is the highest smartphone penetration in the Middle East. WhatsApp was launched in 2009 as an online messaging application of SNs that was fast growing and became one of the top applications on smartphones with 1.2 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2017), while Instagram had 700 million monthly active users (The Social Media Hat, 2017). In 2016, Snapchat started to move to the top with more than 10 billion videos viewed every day, and 166 million daily active users (Constine, 2017; Johnson, 2016).

This study examines how much SNs (such as Facebook, Twitter,

WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat) affect social relationships among online student users in Kuwait. Some researchers argued that the SNs have a positive effect on the social ties of a person, while others believed that SNs have a negative effect on social ties. The objective of this study is to find out what kind of relationship exists between users of SNs and their social ties, the relationship between demographic factors (sex, marital status, school GPA, public vs. private universities and colleges) and the social ties, and the relationship between social support and social interaction by smartphone. The purpose of this research is 1) to identify the relationship between using SNs and the social isolation of the user; 2) to identify the relationship between using SNs and the social support of the user, and 3) to identify the relationship between the demographic variables of the SN user (sex, age, level of education, GPA, marital status, income), social support, and social isolation.

RQ1: What factors (use of various social media, perceptions about the influence of social media and demographics) best predict social isolation?

RQ2: What is the relationship between a social network (SN) user (with/ or without social support) and his or her social isolation?

Methodology:

This study assesses the use of SNs and its relation to social isolation and social support of the user. A convenience sample of students enrolled at public and private universities was selected for this study. Questionnaires were distributed to students at five universities (one public and four private). The students were randomly selected from their schools roster for different courses, days and times. The questionnaire included 43 questions. Part One of the questionnaire comprised general information about the user (gender, age, nationality, marital status, GPA, university, and college) and usage of SNs. In Part Two, the authors used the social isolation scale, and in Part Three, they used the social support scale.

Measurements

The first measurement was the social isolation scale which was developed by Daen and was used by Al-Knadari and Al-Qashan (2001) in Kuwait focusing on the role of using modern technology among university students and social isolation which was considered a dimension of social alienation. The scale consisted of 9 statements which

measured the social isolation using a five points Likert Scale. The second measurement was the social support scale which was developed by Zimet et al. (1988) and was used by a Kuwaiti scholar Al-Mutairis study (2000) on the behavioral disorders among children of low income Kuwaiti families. In addition, the measurement was also used by Al-Kandari (2002) on the lifestyle of Kuwaiti families and its forms in relation to social and psychological pressures with regard to social support and its correlation with blood pressure. The scale consisted of 12 statements on social support and rated on a six points Likert Scale. Both scales were translated and used in Kuwait.

Several pilot studies were conducted to ensure the questionnaire addressed the aims of the study. Some questions were modified and re-written. After conducting the survey in all the selected schools, the reliability was tested for social isolation and social support. The reliability for social support was high ($\alpha = 0.889$), while that for social isolation was below 0.5 ($\alpha = 0.466$) which forced the researchers to abandon the survey. Looking back at the original scale (in English) for social isolation, the translation for the word friendly was not accurately translated to Arabic. The social isolation scale was re-translated to make sure the statements accurately depicted the correct meaning in Arabic, as issues were raised by the pilot study. The questionnaire was revised eight times to make sure it was clearly understood by the respondents. The new alpha reliability coefficient - in this study - for the nine items on social isolation was $\alpha = 0.720$, and for social support alpha reliability was $\alpha = 0.904$ which consisted of 12 items.

The Findings

Six hundred and nineteen students participated in the survey, of whom 529 (85.5%) were Kuwaitis and 81 (13%) were non-Kuwaitis (nine missing 1.5%). The majority of the respondents were female ($n = 454$), because of the high percentage of female students at all universities (Central Statistical Bureau, 2014). The majority of respondents had GPA scores between 2.0 to 2.49 ($n = 192$) followed by those with 2.5 to 2.99 ($n = 166$; 28%), those with 3.0 and more ($n = 154$; 26%), and finally those with less than 2.0 ($n = 75$; 12%). Three hundred and ninety one of the respondents had only one smartphone (64%), while 178 (29%) had two, and 32 (5%) had three (Table 1).

Table 1: Respondents GPAs

GPA	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 2.0	75	12.7
2.0 to 2.49	192	32.5
2.50 to 2.99	166	28.1
More than 3.0	154	26.1

More than half (51%) of the respondents (n = 309) used SNs on a smartphone during the day, while those who accessed SNs 4 to 6 times were fewer (20%), 7 to 9 times were even (16%), and 1 to 3 times was the smallest group of all (12%). Most of the respondents (n = 232; 38%) spent more than four hours using SNs on smartphones, followed by three hours (n = 111; 18%), two hours (n = 104; 17%), and four hours (n = 93; 15%).

In the four statements related to the effect of social media on the users, the majority of the respondents believe that SNs have affected their social life either positively or negatively. Most of the respondents (79%; n = 486) believe that they gather face-to-face with their friends less often because of the SNs, and 83% (n = 508) agree that they spend more time on SNs. The respondents also believe that SNs have affected their relationships with friends and family. However, 37% (n = 227) believe SNs did not improve their relationships with their family, while 79% (n = 480) believe SNs did improve their relationships with their friends (Tables 2 & 3).

Table 2: Ranking of Social Media among Respondents

Ranking	Social Media	Have	Do not have
1	WhatsApp	590	15
2	Instagram	561	44
3	Snapchat	516	88
4	Twitter	463	143
5	Facebook	215	390

Table 3: Social Network Effect

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
If there were no social networks, I would spend more time face to face with my friends	614	4.4756	1.35840
I think social networks improved my relationship with my family	613	3.8662	1.44226
I think social networks improved my relationship with my friends	610	4.3967	1.32179
I spend a long time on social networks	615	4.6943	1.31425

The results show there is a significant negative correlation ($r = -.422$, $p < .001$) between social isolation and social support. Two hierarchical regression tests were conducted to confirm the hypotheses of this study. The hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, placing social media usage variables in the first block, perceptions about the influence of social media on respondents in the second, and demographics (gender, social status and GPA) in the last block.

The independent t-test analysis indicated a significant difference between males and females in the number of hours they spend daily on using SNs ($t = 4.101$, $p = .001$), with females ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.46$) more likely to use SNs than males ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.46$). Another t-test analysis revealed a significant difference between the two genders in having a Facebook account ($t = 3.00$, $p = .003$). Again, females ($M = 1.68$, $SD = .47$) are more likely to have Facebook accounts than males ($M = 1.54$, $SD = .50$). Finally, a last independent t-test analysis showed a significant difference between males and females in their adoption of Twitter ($t = 2.28$, $p = .023$). In this case also, females ($M = 1.26$, $SD = .44$) were more likely to have Twitter accounts than males ($M = 1.17$, $SD = .38$) (Table 4).

Table 4: Regression Analyses of the Predictors of Social Isolation

Predictors	First Block	Second Block	Third Block
How many smartphones do you own?	-.065	-.045	-.029
Do you have Facebook?	-.078	-.072	-.085*

Cont/ Table 4: Regression Analyses of the Predictors of Social Isolation

Predictors	First Block	Second Block	Third Block
Do you have Twitter?	.142**	.146**	.116*
Do you have Instagram?	.002	-.005	-.008
Do you have WhatsApp?	-.010	-.004	-.015
Do you have Snapchat?	.068	.054	.076
I spend a long time on social networks	.014	.100*	.074
If there were no social networks, I would spend more time with my friends		-.200**	-.202**
I think social networks improved my relationships with my family		-.042	-.042
I think social networks improved my relationships with my friends		-.114*	-.113*
Sex			.216**
Marital Status			.059
GPA			-.014
University			.060
R	.189	.318	.390
R2	.036	.101	.152
Adjusted R2	.023	.084	.129
R2 change	.036	.066	.051
Sig. F change	.007	.000	.000

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

The first regression procedure sought to answer the first research question: Which factors (use of various social media, perceptions about the influence of social media, and demographics) best predict social isolation? The regression analysis of the predictors for social isolation indicates that the statistical differences were significant at the third level (R^2 change = .051, F change (524, 4) = 7.810, $p = .001$). The analysis indicates that those who use Facebook ($\beta = -.085$, $p = .047$) are less likely to feel socially isolated, and those who use Twitter ($\beta = .116$, p

=.011) are more likely to feel socially isolated. The regression also showed that those who said that if there were no social networks, they would spend more times with their friends ($\beta = -.202, p = .001$), and those who said that they thought that social networks improved their relationships with their friends ($\beta = -.113, p = .033$) were both less likely to feel socially isolated. Gender was a predictor of social isolation ($\beta = .216, p = .001$). A t-test was conducted and revealed that females ($M = 2.87, SD = .58$) are more likely to feel socially isolated than males ($M = 2.64, SD = .67$) (Table 5).

Table 5: Regression Analysis of the Predictors of Social Support

Predictors	First Block	Second Block	Third Block
How many smartphones do you own?	-.002	-.034	-.038
Do you have Facebook?	.128**	.114**	.122**
Do you have Twitter?	.072	.074	.091*
Do you have Instagram?	-.104	-.102*	-.093*
Do you have WhatsApp?	.010	.007	.009
Do you have Snapchat?	-.097	-.086	-.096*
I spend a long time on social networks	.168**	.061	.075
If there were no social networks, I would spend more time with my friends		.132**	.130**
I think social networks improved my relationships with my family		.109*	.113*
I think social networks improved my relationships with my friends		.180**	.180**
Sex			-.077
Marital Status			-.064
GPA			.110**
University			-.019
R	.274	.404	.428
R ²	.075	.163	.183
Adjusted R ²	.063	.147	.161

Cont/ Table 5: Regression Analysis of the Predictors of Social Support

Predictors	First Block	Second Block	Third Block
R2 change	.075	.088	.020
Sig. F change	.000	.000	.012

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

The second regression procedure sought to answer the second research question: *What is the relationship between a social network (SN) user (with/ or without social support) and his or hersocial isolation?* The regression analysis of the predictors of social support revealed that the statistical differences were significant at the third level (R2 change = .020, F change (525, 4) = 3.233, $p = .012$). The analysis showed that those who use Facebook ($\beta = .122$, $p = .004$) and Twitter ($\beta = .091$, $p = .042$) are more likely to feel social support, while those who use Instagram ($\beta = -.093$, $p = .038$) and Snapchat ($\beta = -.096$, $p = .049$) are less likely to feel social support. The regression also indicates that those who said that if there were no social networks they would spend more time with their friends ($\beta = .130$, $p = .002$), if there were no social networks they would spend more time with their family ($\beta = .113$, $p = .023$), and those who said that they thought that social networks improved their relationships with their friends ($\beta = .180$, $p = .001$) were all more likely to feel social support. GPA was a predictor of social support ($\beta = .110$, $p = .007$). The ANOVA process showed that even though there was no significant difference between the groups, those with higher GPAs are more likely to have social support. Those who had a GPA less than 2.0 ($M = 4.74$) were different from those who had a GPA between 2.0-2.49 ($M = 4.93$), between 2.50-2.99 ($M = 4.88$) or 3.0 and more ($M = 5.03$).

The ANOVA test for the two concepts of social isolation and social support showed that there were no significant differences between those who spent more time on SNs and those who spent less time, but other statistics indicated that the type of social media (for example Twitter and Instagram) had more effect on users than the time spent on SNs. It seems that the media cultivation perspective, which addresses the time spent on the medium, cannot explain the effect in this case, while the theory that

the message is the medium, in which the medium influences how the message is perceived, can explain the effect (Table 6).

Table 6: ANOVA Analysis of the Predictors of Social Isolation, Social Support, and Time Factor

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Isolation	Between Groups	2.329	5	.466	1.272	.274
	Within Groups	219.313	599	.366		
	Total	221.642	604			
Social Support	Between Groups	4.593	5	.919	1.464	.200
	Within Groups	376.537	600	.628		
	Total	381.130	605			

Discussion

The result shows that 79 percent ($n = 486$) of the respondents replaced social face-to-face communication with time displacement on smartphones initiating social displacement and instigating personal isolation. The social displacement theory supports such a finding that a person cannot perform two activities at the same time (Neuman, 1995, Kayany and Yelsma, 2000, Mutz et al., 1993, Lee, 2009, Shapiro, 2000). The best way to reduce the negative effect of this new communication device is to increase social support among members of the family. The significant negative correlations of this study between social isolation and social support, like previous studies (Abo-Saif, 2010, Al-Kandari, 2011, Cobb, 1976), showed that social support helped in decreasing social isolation reconfirming the main concept of social support which stated that family (parents, brothers, husbands, and other family members) offer and provide support and help to the individuals in everyday life matters, and during stressful and difficult life circumstances. This negative correlation between social support and social isolation illustrated the importance of social support in eliminating social isolation among SN users. Since all members of the family were part of this new virtual communication, the negative outcomes are not yet seriously addressed.

Due to cultural, traditional, and religious barriers, female students tend to be more affected by the use of SNs than males, which make them

feel more socially isolated. This finding supports previous studies that females tend to be more active users of SNs than males (Popescu, 2013, Ahn, 2011, Madden et al., 2013). Respondents perceived that the usage of SNs was helping them in improving their relationships with friends. On the other hand, it made them more socially isolated from their families. The results showed that students were socially displacing the time they spend with their family with time spent on SNs. This finding supports social displacement theory, which claims that a person cannot perform two activities at the same time. Face-to-face communication was replaced by SNs, leading to social isolation.

Interestingly, the findings also showed that the nature of the SN programs affected the social isolation more than the time spent on SNs. Those who used Facebook were less likely to feel isolated than those who used Twitter.

Conclusion

This research provides essential information regarding the usage of smartphones and its relationship with social isolation and social support among students. It emphasized the fact that face-to-face communication was replaced by virtual SN relationships between students and their peers. Interpersonal communication is hardly practiced with the existence of smartphones. The Kuwaiti culture is well known for its connected family and strong face-to-face communication which formed skills for interactions, but this no longer exists. The usage of smartphones by most members of the families became a reality that cannot be ignored, and it affected face-to-face communication with family members and society as a whole. However, the study results show that in order to decrease this social isolation while using SNs, it is important to increase the social support. Thus, social support is the key to prevent the youth from being isolated online.

Further studies are required to learn more about how to intervene and protect SN users in general, and SN student users in particular, from social isolation.

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