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# The Impact of Social Media Usage on Children's Aggressive Behaviour

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**Abstract:** Modern social media occupies a significant part of our daily lives and has become indispensable for social communication and quickly obtaining information. This study aimed to identify the extent to which social media influences the emergence of aggressive behaviour among children. Using a descriptive approach and a random sample of 70 families from Abu Dhabi, the findings revealed that the average ratings of the study sample regarding the impact of social media use on children's aggressive behaviour were generally 3.55, corresponding to a moderate level. Excessive or unmanaged use of these platforms can have negative effects on children's behaviour, including promoting aggressive behaviours such as cyberbullying. The results also indicated no differences between males and females in their susceptibility to aggressive behaviour influenced by social media use. The study also recommended the importance of enhancing the role of digital education for children through various schools and institutions with a focus on increasing educational and religious awareness among children.

**Keywords:** aggressive behaviour, social media, children, education, school.

## 1. Introduction

The world has witnessed a tremendous acceleration in technological progress, which has changed the way of life of people in all societies. Information technology has contributed to accelerating the transfer of information between individuals, institutions and countries very quickly.

It provided a lot of new job opportunities that were previously unknown, so enterprises became dependent on remote work with traditional work at the same time. Therefore, it cannot be said that we can do without technology from our lives, as it has contributed to accelerating the process of information transfer and socialization in all sectors (Al-Borji, 2018).

As part of this technological revolution, social media has emerged as a cornerstone of digital life. Social media platforms are defined as electronic spaces that allow

users to communicate, interact, and share content in various forms, including text, images, and videos. Social media like Facebook Instagram and Twitter have contributed to changing people's lives and the way they interact with each other, so the majority of the world's population rely on them to communicate with each other, they hear the news and check on their relatives and friends from distant places in a short time and keep in touch with them continuously (Al-Hamad, 2019).

Social media plays a pivotal role in modern life, serving as a primary means of communication between individuals and organizations on a global scale. These platforms facilitate the rapid exchange of ideas, information, and news, enhancing accessibility and connectivity. They also provide individuals with opportunities to express their opinions and engage in societal and political issues. In addition, social media has become a powerful marketing tool, allowing businesses to reach a wide audience directly and cost-effectively. (Abdel-Ghaffar, 2021).

Despite their numerous advantages, social media platforms have significant drawbacks that cannot be overlooked, Therefore, due to the wrong practices of using these platforms, some mental health diseases such as isolation and depression have emerged, and studies have indicated that they contribute to spreading aggressive behaviour among children (Fathi, 2020).

Aggressive behaviour refers to actions involving violence or threats to harm, whether physically or psychologically, with the aim of asserting control or causing harm to others. Such behaviour may arise from various causes, including frustration, anger, or attempts to assert dominance (Al-Jamaai, 2017). It manifests in multiple forms, such as physical assault, verbal abuse, or property destruction, and socially, it negatively affects the surrounding environment, deteriorating relationships and increasing victims' fear and anxiety. If left unaddressed, such behaviour may evolve into a persistent pattern of interaction (Al-Zaabi, 2019).

Social media significantly contributes to the spread of undesirable behaviours, including aggressive behaviour, especially among children. The country has taken measures to protect children from social media risks through various laws and initiatives, such as the Child Digital Safety Initiative (Abdel-Ghaffar, 2021).

This study highlights novel variables, namely social media and aggressive behaviour. It provides proposals for decision-makers in government and private institutions to mitigate social media's negative influence on children's aggressive behaviour. Furthermore, the study offers a resource that researchers can use in similar investigations.

### **1.2. Problem**

Social media platforms are catalysts for negative behaviours, such as cyberbullying, which has become a growing issue in the digital world. Studies have shown that many children are exposed to psychological effects related to their psychological and social development through the internet, which reduces their interaction with their peers and increases their social isolation, and they are also

likely to be exposed to viewing inappropriate content for their age (Abdul-Jawad, 2015).

In the last two decades, the use of these platforms has become exaggerated by parents and children, which greatly exposes them to watching content that negatively affects them and provokes aggressive behaviour. Studies have also shown that viewing aggressive content increases the adoption of deviant and abnormal ideas in children (Fahad, 2016) and that children are likely to be subjected to cyberbullying via these platforms, the reason for putting pressure on them and promoting the emergence of aggressive tendencies about them in the future (Al-Borji, 2018). Global reports have indicated that 70% of children between the ages of 7 and 18 have previously been bullied via social media platforms (Kamel, 2023).

Hence, the current study seeks to answer the primary question: What is the impact of social media usage on children's aggressive behaviour?

### **1.3. Objectives**

To explore the impact of social media usage on children's aggressive behaviour.

To propose measures to reduce the impact of social media usage on children's aggressive behaviour.

To examine whether there are statistically significant differences in the impact of social media usage on children's aggressive behaviour based on gender (male or female).

### **1.4. Questions and Hypotheses**

- 1- What is the impact of social media usage on children's aggressive behaviour?
2. What are the proposed measures to mitigate the impact of social media usage on children's aggressive behaviour?
3. Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at the ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) level in the impact of social media usage on children's aggressive behaviour attributable to gender (male or female).

### **1.5. Literature review**

This section reviews prior studies, presented in reverse chronological order as follows:

Al-Tayma (2019) studied the role of social media in family disintegration among Jordanian families. The study employed a descriptive-analytical methodology with a sample of 150 students. The findings highlighted that social media significantly contributed to family disintegration by disrupting communication among family members. It revealed that divorce was one of the most prevalent effects in Jordanian society due to social media usage. The study recommended strengthening the role of social media, educational, and religious organisations in raising societal awareness about the importance of family cohesion and the negative aspects of excessive social media use. Al-Shammari and Al-Balhan (2019) The Psychological Risks of Social Media Use Among Children in Kuwait: A Perspective of Parents. Using a descriptive survey approach with a sample of

1,097 parents, the study found that social media posed significant psychological risks to children, such as exhaustion, lack of sleep, and persistent fatigue. It noted no statistically significant differences in the respondents' awareness of these risks. The study emphasised the importance of raising parental awareness in Kuwait about the detrimental psychological impacts of social media on children and encouraged parents to monitor their children's online activities. Al-Mutlaqah and Al-Omari (2018) investigated *The Impact of Social Media on Family Relationships: A Study of Yarmouk University Students*. The study used a descriptive survey methodology with a sample of 565 students. It identified significant impacts of social media on family ties, including moral, religious, social, and health-related effects.

Al-Louzi (2017) investigated the impact of Facebook use on Islamic family values. Through a random sample of 241 male and female students, the study showed that heavy use of Facebook leads to weak social relations between individuals. The study called for the importance of spreading awareness of the dangers of heavy use of this platform and its negative effects on children. In his study Ben Aboud (2017) investigate *The Impact of Social Media on Family Separation: A Field Study of Families in Ain El-Beyda*. Through a consensus survey of a sample of 100 individuals, the study concluded that the majority of individuals spend longer periods of time using the Internet than sitting together. The study also recommended the importance of spreading awareness of the dangers of prolonged use of these platforms.

Noor Al-Huda (2017): *Social Media and Social Relationships: Opportunities and Challenges*. Using a descriptive-analytical methodology with a sample of 200 students from Kasdi Merbah University, the study found that social media negatively impacted both individual and family relationships. It emphasised that social media contributed to increased domestic violence and marital conflicts in Algeria. Recommendations included reducing social media's negative effects and raising family awareness about its harms. Hilalat (2017): *The Role of Technology in Value Conflicts Among Jordanian Families: Mobile Phones and Facebook as Models*.

This descriptive survey study involved 1,215 participants aged 12-30 years. It found a significant increase in value conflicts within families due to the use of mobile phones and Facebook. The study recommended reducing the use of social media applications among Jordanian families and focusing on their positive aspects.

Turki (2017) studied *The Role of Educational Media in Developing Role Models Among Children: A Field Study*. This social survey-based study involved 594 secondary school students. It found that the family remained a central pillar in shaping children's upbringing. The study recommended that parents embody positive qualities to serve as role models and emphasised proper social and

religious foundations in child-rearing. In the same field Badour (2017) researched *The Negative Effects of Modern Communication Technologies on Muslim Families and the Role of Women in Ensuring Safe Use*. Using a descriptive-analytical approach with a sample of 50 families, the study revealed that, despite the benefits of modern communication technologies, they had negative impacts on family unity and religious practices. Recommendations included strengthening marital and family relationships and promoting activities to enhance family cohesion. Finally Al-Abd Al-Jaleel (2017) studied *Marital Problems and Their Impact on Kuwaiti Society: A Field Study*.

A descriptive exploratory study involving 750 participants, the research highlighted trust issues and health-related consequences as prominent effects of marital challenges. Recommendations included enhancing family relationships and promoting practices to strengthen marital bonds for positive impacts on children.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Approach & Research Design

The current study adopted a descriptive approach due to its suitability for the nature of the research. The descriptive approach is one of the scientific research methods used to study phenomena as they are in reality, without intervening in their factors. This approach aims to describe phenomena accurately by collecting and analyzing relevant data and information to understand their nature, causes, and trends.

### 2.2. Sample

The study population consists of all students at the University of Al Ain, which has two campuses: Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. According to the records available for 2024, the total number of students is 865, distributed across six colleges: Engineering, Pharmacy, Law, Education and Humanities, Business, and Communication and Media. The study sample was randomly selected and consists of 70 students, including 45 male students and 25 female students.

**Table 1**

Distribution of Study Sample According to Personal Variables

Variable	Level	Sample Size	Percentage
Gender	Male	45	64.3%
	Female	25	35.7%
	Total	70	100%
Age	20–30 years	18	25.7%
	31–40 years	30	42.8%
	41–50 years	12	17.2%
	51 years and above	10	14.3%
	Total	70	100%
Marital Status	Single	10	14.3%
	Married	40	57.1%
	Divorced	11	15.7%
	Widowed	9	12.9%
	Total	70	100%

Employment	Government Employee	35	50%
	Private Sector Employee	25	35.7%
	Self-employed	10	14.3%
	Total	70	100%
Income Level	Less than 6,000/month	9	12.8%
	7,000–13,000/month	41	58.6%
	More than 14,000/month	20	28.6%
	Total	70	100%

From Table 1, it is clear that the number of male students in the sample is 45 (64.3%), while the number of female students is 25 (35.7%). The highest percentage based on age is 42.8%, for the 31-40 age group, while the lowest percentage (14.3%) is for the 51 and above age group. The highest percentage based on marital status is 57.1% for married individuals, and the lowest is 12.9% for widowed individuals. The highest percentage for employment status is 50% for government sector employees, and the lowest is 10% for self-employed individuals. Finally, the highest percentage for income level is 58.6%, for those earning between 7,000-13,000 AED per month, and the lowest is 12.8%, for those earning less than 6,000 AED per month.

### 2.3. Tool

The current study relied on a questionnaire consisting of two sections:

Section 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample, such as gender, age, educational status, employment status, monthly income, and family size.

Section 2: The questionnaire aimed to answer the study's questions and achieve its objectives. It consisted of 10 items, divided into two main axes:

Axis 1: The Impact of Social Media on Aggressive Behaviour in Children

This axis includes 5 items:

Social media teaches children aggressive behaviour and violence.

Social media makes children inclined to introversion.

Social media teaches children harmful ideas (such as bullying).

Social media leads to a decline in children's activities and interactions with their families, increasing aggressive behaviour.

Social media helps children identify bad friends.

Axis 2: Suggestions to Mitigate the Impact of Social Media on Aggressive Behaviour in Children. This axis includes 5 items:

Increase educational and religious awareness among children.

Strengthen digital media literacy for children through schools and various institutions.

Parents should supervise and monitor their children's use of social media.

Implement stricter privacy settings on social media platforms.

Implement preventive programs against aggressive behaviours.

To verify the content validity of the tool, the initial version of the questionnaire was presented to a group of experts to obtain feedback on the clarity of the items, language formulation, and appropriateness for the subject matter. They also

provided any necessary suggestions or modifications.

For answering the questionnaire items, a five-point Likert scale was used, as follows:

Very large (5 points)

Large (4 points)

Moderate (3 points)

Small (2 points)

Very small (1 point)

Reliability of the Questionnaire

To verify the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficients of the Questionnaire

Tool	Internal Consistency Reliability
Questionnaire	0.94

From Table 2, it can be observed that the internal consistency reliability value of the questionnaire is 0.94. This value indicates the high quality of the scale's construction and its suitability for the purposes of this study. To assess the mean scores of the study tool and its items, the response levels were based on the five-point Likert scale. The categories were calculated as follows:

Low (1-2.33)

Moderate (2.34-3.67)

High (3.68-5)

### 3. Results

**3.1. Results of first Question:** What is the impact of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children?

To answer the first question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated to assess the impact of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children. Table (3) illustrates the results.

**Table 3**

Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of Study Sample Responses to Statements Regarding the Impact of Social Media Usage on Aggressive Behaviour in Children.

Rank	No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	4	Social networks lead to a decline in a child's activities and interactions with their family, increasing aggressive behaviour.	3.88	0.73	High
2	1	Social networks teach children aggressive behaviour and violence.	3.70	0.98	High
3	2	Social networks make children tend toward introversion.	3.47	1.51	Moderate

4	5	Social networks facilitate meeting bad friends.	3.40	1.71	Moderate
5	3	Social networks teach children harmful ideas (such as bullying).	3.33	1.51	Moderate
Overall Score			3.55	0.968	Moderate

From Table 3, the arithmetic means for the study sample’s responses to statements regarding the impact of social media on aggressive behaviour in children show an overall mean of 3.55, which indicates a moderate degree of impact. The individual items ranged from 3.33 to 3.88. Two items received a high rating: Item 4: "Social media leads to a decline in children's activities and interactions with their families, increasing their aggressive behaviour," with a mean of 3.88. Item 1: "Social media teaches children aggressive behaviour and violence," with a mean of 3.70. The remaining items received a moderate rating, with means ranging from 3.33 to 3.47. The highest mean of 3.47 was for Item 2: "Social media makes children inclined to introversion," while the lowest mean of 3.33 was for Item 3: "Social media teaches children harmful ideas (such as bullying)."

**3.2. Results of the second Question:** What are the suggestions to reduce the impact of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children?

To answer the second question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated for the suggestions to reduce the impact of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children. Table (4) illustrates the results.

**Table 4**

Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of Study Sample Responses to Statements Regarding Suggestions to Reduce the Impact of Social Media Usage on Aggressive Behaviour in Children.

Rank	No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	2	Enhancing the role of digital media education for children through schools and various institutions.	4.06	0.92	High
2	1	Increasing children’s educational and religious awareness.	4.00	0.98	High
3	4	Imposing stricter privacy restrictions on social media platforms.	3.53	1.53	Moderate
4	5	Implementing preventive programs against aggressive behaviours.	3.31	1.90	Moderate
5	3	Monitoring and supervising children by parents during their use of social media platforms.	3.30	1.40	Moderate
Overall Score			3.72	0.941	High

From Table 4, the arithmetic means for the study sample’s responses to the suggestions for reducing the impact of social media on aggressive behaviour in children show an overall mean of 3.72, indicating a high degree of effectiveness. The individual items ranged from 3.30 to 4.06. Two items received a high rating: Item 2: "Enhance the role of digital media education for children through schools and various institutions," with a mean of 4.06. Item 1: "Increase educational and religious awareness among children," with a mean of 4.00. The remaining items



received a moderate rating, with means ranging from 3.30 to 3.53. The highest mean of 3.53 was for Item 4: "Implement stricter privacy restrictions on social media sites," while the lowest mean of 3.30 was for Item 3: "Monitor and supervise parents' involvement in their children's social media usage."

### 3.3. Results of the Hypothesis:

There is no statistically significant effect at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children due to the gender variable (Male, Female).

The study used the "t-test" to examine the differences between the two groups.

Table 5: Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-value for the Differences in Responses of the Study Sample Regarding the Impact of Social Media Usage on Aggressive Behaviour in Children, According to Gender (Male, Female)

Variable	Type	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation	"t" Value	Significance Level
Human Resource Empowerment Strategy	Male	45	3.51	0.52	0.103	0.770
	Female	25	3.43	0.62		

From the table, the significance level (sig) is 0.770, which is greater than the alpha level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ). This indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no statistically significant effect at the 0.05 significance level of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children, due to the gender variable (Male, Female).

## Discussion

**4.1. Discussion of the first Question results:** What is the effect of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children?

The results show that the mean ratings of the study sample on the statements related to the effect of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children were generally 3.55, which corresponds to a moderate level.

This outcome can be attributed to the fact that, in recent years, social media has become an integral part of daily life for children and adolescents, where the use of technology is an important component of education and entertainment strategies. However, excessive or unmanaged use of these networks can have negative effects on children's behaviour, including fostering aggressive behaviour.

This result may be due to the lack of good awareness among families and their children of the danger of using these platforms without supervision and to a large extent, so it is necessary to spread awareness of the importance of the supervisory role to mitigate their negative impact. Watching the Internet and platforms for long periods of time may make the child an easy prey to unacceptable sites and videos that violate social values and traditions. This result was agreed upon by the studies of Taima (2019), Al-Shammari and Al-Baladhan (2019), Al-Mutlaqah and Al-Omari (2018), and Al-Lawzi (2017), all of which indicated that social media

platforms are likely to cause the spread of aggressive behaviour.

**4.2. Discussion of the second Question results:** What are the suggestions to reduce the impact of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children?

The results showed that the mean ratings of the study sample on the suggestions to reduce the impact of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children were 3.72, indicating a high level. Such as the importance of enhancing the role of digital education for children through various schools and institutions with a focus on increasing educational and religious awareness among children

It is clear to us that bullying is a result of aggressive behaviours acquired from excessive use of social media platforms. This result was agreed upon by the studies of Bin Aboud (2017), Nour Al-Huda (2017), Hilalat (2017), and Al-Turki (2017), which showed that it is necessary to confront the negative effects of using social media platforms on children, the most important of which is aggressive behaviour.

**4.3. Discussion of Hypothesis results:** There is no statistically significant effect at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children due to the gender variable (Male, Female).

The results of the study showed that there is no statistically significant effect of social media usage on aggressive behaviour in children when attributed to the gender variable (Male, Female).

This outcome can be attributed to the fact that social media affects all individuals in general, regardless of gender. However, studies indicate that the differences between males and females in terms of the impact of social media might be minimal or non-existent in some cases, although the way aggressive behaviour manifests may differ between genders.

This result also indicates that there is no difference between males and females in their acquisition and exposure to aggressive behaviour, as both parties may be exposed to cyberbullying and spreading rumours. Both parties may be exposed to social pressures in the form of compliance with societal norms that cause aggressive behaviour. These results are consistent with Al-Lawzi (2017), Nour Al-Huda (2017), Al-Turki (2017), and Badr (2017), who indicated that social media platforms do not differentiate between males and females in the expected negative effects.

### **Conclusion**

The previous section showed that social media has an impact on spreading aggressive behaviour among children. The reason may be attributed to the lack of awareness of parents and their inability to apply fixed standards related to controlling their children's use of social media platforms. Despite the cognitive and educational benefits that social media platforms may provide, it cannot be asserted that videos or phrases that use unacceptable behaviours and spread hostility and hatred towards others will not appear. The family must have a mechanism to deal with this matter in an organized and convincing manner for children, so that they

are aware of the things that are happening on these platforms that may cause problems for them and their personality. The results also showed a set of proposals that came from parents, which focused on reducing the impact of social media on aggressive behaviour. The most prominent of these proposals are: strengthening supervision, raising awareness, and spreading good values.

These suggestions underscore the urgent need to address the negative effects of cyberbullying and encourage positive behaviours among children. This is consistent with prior studies that emphasized the importance of community awareness and stringent monitoring of internet use.

As for the study's hypothesis concerning the existence of a statistically significant effect of social media use on aggressive behaviour based on gender (male vs. female), the results showed no significant differences between the two groups. This suggests that the effects of social media on aggressive behaviour are similar for both genders. While the manifestation of aggressive behaviour may differ between males and females, the core influence remains the same, encompassing exposure to cyberbullying and social pressures that may drive aggressive behaviours.

In conclusion, the negative impact of social media on children's behaviour calls for active intervention from both families and schools, alongside increased public awareness and the enforcement of necessary regulations. Implementing practical solutions, such as parental oversight and comprehensive awareness campaigns, can help mitigate these adverse effects and promote a healthier, more constructive use of social media.

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