

Article

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

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**Abstract:** Aggression can manifest in different ways for boys and girls, reflecting unique social and developmental patterns. Boys may exhibit physical or verbal aggression, while girls often display relational aggression, such as excluding others or spreading rumours. Understanding these differences is crucial for addressing the underlying causes and implementing effective interventions. The research underscores the urgent need for collective efforts by families, schools, and society to guide children in using social networks positively. Families play a vital role in fostering open communication, setting boundaries, and modelling appropriate online behaviour. Schools, as key influencers in children's lives, can incorporate programs that teach digital literacy, empathy, and conflict resolution to help students navigate social networks responsibly. On a broader level, society must prioritize the implementation of necessary regulations to ensure safer online environments. Social media platforms should be held accountable for providing tools to mitigate harmful content, while policymakers can establish guidelines to protect young users from exposure to cyberbullying, misinformation, and inappropriate material. Raising awareness about the potential negative effects of social media is equally essential. Through public campaigns and community initiatives, we can educate children and parents about the impact of excessive social media use on mental health and relationships. By working together, we can empower the younger generation to harness the positive aspects of social networks while minimizing their risks.

**Keywords:** *Aggressive behaviour, Social Media, children, education, school*

## **Introduction**

In recent years, the world has witnessed a remarkable technological boom, fundamentally altering the way humans communicate and interact. This technological revolution extends beyond the development of digital devices to include the facilitation of information transfer and the provision of new opportunities for work, education, and entertainment online. Technology has become a critical aspect of daily life, transforming traditional methods into more efficient and faster processes through modern tools that enable unprecedented levels of communication and task completion (Al-Barji, 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. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have brought significant changes to how people interact globally, offering opportunities for expressing opinions, connecting with friends, and influencing economic, political, and social spheres. These networks have become an essential component of daily life for many individuals worldwide (Al-Hammad, 2019).

Social media plays a pivotal role in modern life, serving as a primary means of communication for individuals and organisations 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 views and participate in societal and political issues. Additionally, social media has become a powerful marketing tool, enabling companies to reach a broad audience directly and cost-effectively (Abdel-Ghaffar, 2021).

Despite their numerous advantages, social media platforms have significant drawbacks that cannot be overlooked. Among these is their negative impact on individuals' mental health, leading to feelings of isolation and depression, particularly when users compare their lives to idealised portrayals on others' accounts. They also contribute to the spread of misinformation and rumours, undermining societal awareness and potentially causing chaos. Furthermore, these platforms influence individual behaviours, particularly among children, increasing levels of aggression (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.

### **Problem**

Social media platforms are catalysts for negative behaviours, such as cyberbullying, which has become a growing issue in the digital world. Many users, particularly children and adolescents, are subjected to psychological attacks online, adversely affecting their psychological and social development. Excessive use of social media also hampers individuals' ability to focus and engage in real-life interactions, exacerbating social isolation. Consequently, these platforms' influence on children's behaviour is evident, correlating with increased aggression due to exposure to violent or inappropriate content (Abdel-Jawad, 2015).

Children's behaviour is significantly impacted by social media, especially in terms of aggressive tendencies. In recent years, children's use of these platforms has become widespread, exposing them to diverse content, some of which may be unsuitable for their age. Violent or aggressive content shapes children's perceptions, increasing the likelihood of adopting such behaviours in their daily lives (Fahd, 2016). Additionally, children often experience cyberbullying, which may prompt aggressive responses or foster aggressive tendencies due to the psychological and social pressures they face through these platforms (Al-Barji, 2018).

The United Nations reports that 70% of children aged 7–18 years have experienced bullying or aggressive behaviour while browsing 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?

### **Objectives**

1. To explore the impact of social media usage on children's aggressive behaviour.
2. To propose measures to reduce the impact of social media usage on children's aggressive behaviour.
3. 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).

### **Questions**

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).

**H0:** 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).

### **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: A Perspective of Graduate Students. 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. The study recommended organising workshops and conferences to educate university students about the positive use of social media and to encourage adherence to Islamic principles and societal norms. Al-Louzi (2017): *The Impact of Facebook Use on Islamic Family Values: An Analytical Study*. This study employed a descriptive-analytical approach with a sample of 241 students. It found that excessive use of Facebook led to social distancing and reduced interaction with the surrounding environment. The study suggested raising awareness among parents and students through educational methods and awareness campaigns to optimise social media usage and its religious and social implications.

Ben About (2017) investigate the *Impact of Social Media on Family Separation: A Field Study of Families in Ain El-Beyda*. Using a descriptive-analytical methodology with a sample of 100 participants, the study revealed negative impacts of social media on family communication. It showed that most family members spent more time online than with each other, leading to social distancing. Recommendations included organising seminars and conferences to educate families about the adverse effects of social media on family ties and promoting awareness to mitigate its negative impacts. 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 affected 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.

## **Methodology**

### **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 analysing relevant data and information to understand their nature, causes, and trends.

### 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.

**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 sections:

Section one: The Impact of Social Media on Aggressive Behaviour in Children, This section contain 5 items: Section two: Suggestions to Mitigate the Impact of Social Media on Aggressive Behaviour in Children. This axis includes 5 items:

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.

**Results**

**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)."

**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

Rank	No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
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."

**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**

**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.

The researcher attributes this result to the fact that, despite the benefits offered by social media, it can have potential negative effects on children's Behaviour, including encouraging aggression if not used correctly. There are ongoing efforts to mitigate these effects through awareness campaigns and legislation. However, the role of the family and school is crucial in guiding children to use these platforms positively and constructively. Children are exposed to a variety of content on social media, some of which may include violent scenes, bullying, or dangerous challenges. This content can influence children's Behaviour in several ways, such as:

**Normalization of violence:** Repeated exposure to violent scenes may lead children to normalize these Behaviours, seeing them as ordinary or acceptable.

**Negative role models:** Children may be influenced by celebrities or social media influencers who display aggressive or provocative Behaviours.

This result aligns with the findings of previous studies, such as those by Teema (2019), Al-Shammari & Al-Balhan (2019), Al-Mutalqa & Al-Omari (2018), and Al-Lozi (2017), which demonstrated that social media is filled with various types of content, some of which carry positive messages, while others reinforce aggressive Behaviours. Users, especially children and adolescents, are affected by the content they regularly view. Among the primary causes of increased aggression are:

**Exposure to violent scenes:** Watching videos or posts containing verbal or physical violence can lead to the normalization of these Behaviours.

**Cyberbullying:** Cyberbullying is one of the most common forms of aggressive Behaviour, where

individuals may become bullies or victims, thus reinforcing aggression in the real world.

**Discussion of the second Question result:** 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.

This result can be attributed to the negative effects of social media, including aggressive Behaviours such as cyberbullying, which is a concerning phenomenon in the world of social media. It has become easier for individuals to post negative comments or attack others without facing them directly. The main effects of cyberbullying on aggression include:

Increased feelings of anger: Those who are bullied may show aggression toward others as a reaction to what they have experienced.

Revenge Behaviours: Children and adolescents who are bullied may become bullies themselves, thus creating a recurring cycle of aggression.

Psychological impact: Bullying can lead to feelings of isolation and frustration, which can further promote aggression as a way of expressing emotional pain.

This result is consistent with the findings of studies by Ben Aboud (2017), Noor Al-Huda (2017), Hilalat (2017), and Al-Turki (2017), which identified several suggestions to reduce the impact of social media on aggressive Behaviour in children. Among these suggestions were parental monitoring, awareness programs, teaching digital values, and awareness campaigns.

**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 suggests that some of the effects of social media on aggressive Behaviour are similar for both males and females. These include:

Exposure to cyberbullying: Both males and females are equally exposed to cyberbullying, including negative comments or online defamation.

Indirect aggressive Behaviours: Aggressive Behaviour may appear in the form of spreading rumors or tarnishing others' reputations, a Behaviour practiced by both genders.

Social pressure: Both males and females experience pressure to conform to societal norms or attract attention, which sometimes leads to aggressive Behaviour.

This finding is consistent with the results of studies by Al-Lozi (2017), Noor Al-Huda (2017), Al-Turki (2017), and Badr (2017), which demonstrated that the digital environment is gender-neutral. The nature of social media platforms ensures that interactions and exposure to content are nearly equal, reducing the likelihood of significant gender-based differences in impact.

### **Conclusion**

In addressing the first research question regarding the impact of social media use on children's aggressive Behaviour, the results revealed an average rating of 3.55, indicating a moderate impact. This can be attributed to the fact that social media has become an integral part of children's and adolescents' lives, both for educational and recreational purposes. However, despite the benefits these platforms offer, excessive or unsupervised use can foster aggressive Behaviours in children, particularly when they are exposed to violent or bullying content. These findings align with previous research, which has shown that exposure to violent scenes or engagement in cyberbullying can contribute to the normalization of aggression in young users.

Regarding the second question about suggestions for mitigating the impact of social media on aggressive Behaviour, the results showed a higher average rating of 3.72, indicating strong support for these proposals. Key recommendations included enhancing parental control and implementing educational awareness programs that focus on digital ethics and appropriate legislation. 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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