Palestinian Students' use of Social Media in Family Communication

Amin Abuseifein

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Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Acting Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Media Studies.

_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Agah Gümüş
Chair, Department of Communication and Media Studies

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Media Studies.

_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahire Özad
Supervisor

Examining Committee
_____

1. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Metin Ersoy   _____

2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahire Efe Özad   _____

3. Asst. Prof. Dr. Umut Ayman   _____

ABSTRACT

Many Palestinians immigrate for higher education due to the political conflicts faced by the nation. A large number has found Eastern Mediterranean University as a convenient place to pursue their education. As the geographical distance between these students and their families became greater, the easiest and fastest way to communicate became social media as it is today's trends. Thus, Facebook as the most preferred social network is valuable in the world of communication.

The method of study will be qualitative. The methodology will be based on focus groups of male Palestinian students. The field study is Eastern Mediterranean University, a state university in North Cyprus with Palestinian as one of the largest foreign population on the campus. The interviews/discussions will be held in 3 different groups of six participants each. Thus, data will be triangulated than similarities discussed in themes. The samples selection is based on the fact according to a survey conducted by Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) most of the emigrants were young, single men. It also found more males than females were emigrating for education. The population of the focus group was selected randomly. The research must be conducted with an objective to collect and store sources of data, in a systematic manner using literature review and a thematic analysis.

The goal is to analyze family communication and understand the vitality of family relation through the use of social media amongst student living abroad for educational reasons. The results show how the role of Facebook in the life of Palestinian students is complex as it may serve for good or for bad. Results also show

that the impact of Facebook on families is not to be ignored, especially among Palestinian students whose main mean of communication with families is social media for the most may lead to questioning the vitality of family relation in their lives. The study highlights the factors that can most likely affect international students due to the use of social media.

Keywords: Palestinian Students, Social Media, Family Relations, Facebook

ÖZ

Birçok Filistinliler, ulusun karşı karşıya kaldığı politik çatışmalar nedeniyle yüksek öğrenime göç ediyor. Birçok Filistinli öğrenciler eğitimlerini sürdürmek için Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesini çok uygun bir yer olarak görmektedirler. Bu öğrenciler ve aileleri arasındaki coğrafi mesafe daha da arttıkça, sosyal medya, bugünün eğilimleri olduğu gibi, iletişim kurmanın en kolay ve en hızlı yolu haline olmuştur. Böylece, Facebook en çok tercih edilen sosyal ağ olarak iletişim dünyasında çok önem kazanmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın metodu niteliksel olacaktır. Metodoloji, erkek Filistinli öğrencilerin odak gruplarına dayanıyor olacaktır. Alan araştırması olarak Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki bir devlet üniversitesi olup, kampusunda en büyük yabancı nüfustan biri olan Filistinli öğrenciler sahibtir. Görüşmeler, her biri altı katılımcının bulunduğu 3 farklı grupta gerçekleştirilecektir. Böylece, veriler temalarda tartışılan benzerliklere kıyasla üçgenleştirilecektir. Örneklem seçimi, Filistin Merkez İstatistik Bürosu (PCBS) tarafından yürütülen ve göç edenlerin çoğunun genç, bekar erkekler olduğu bir ankete göre yapılmaktadır. Ayrıca, eğitim için kadınlardan daha fazla erkek göç edilmektedir. Odak grubunun nüfusu rasgele seçilmiştir. Araştırma, literatür taraması ve tematik bir analiz kullanarak veri kaynaklarını sistematik bir şekilde toplamak ve depolamak için bir amaca uygun olarak yürütülmelidir.

Amaç, eğitim nedenleriyle yurtdışında yaşayan öğrenciler arasında sosyal medya kullanımı yoluyla aile iletişimini analiz etmek ve aile ilişkisinin canlılığını

anlamaktır. Sonuçlar, Filistinli öğrencilerin hayatında Facebook'un rolünün nasıl iyi veya kötü hizmet edebileceği açısından karmaşık olduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuçlar ayrıca Facebook'un aileler üzerindeki etkisinin görmezden gelinmediğini, özellikle ailelerle olan iletişimin en çok olduğu sosyal medyanın hayatlarında aile ilişkisinin canlılığını sorgulamasına neden olan Filistinli öğrenciler arasında görmezden gelinmediğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, sosyal medyanın kullanımı nedeniyle uluslararası öğrencileri etkileyebilecek faktörleri vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Filistinli Öğrenciler, Sosyal Medya, Aile İlişkileri, Facebook

DEDICATION

To My Dearest Family

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My most profound appreciation and thankfulness are stretched out to the general population who has helped me amid this examination in somehow.

Firstly, my gratitude is extended to my beloved family for standing with me during my journey. With them standing beside me during this journey, the process has been smother for the completion of this study. Secondly, thanks go to the Eastern Mediterranean University General Union of Palestinian Students for all the help that they have been providing to Palestinian students. Thirdly, my deepest appreciations are directed to my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahire Özad for her patience, contributions and suggestion that have been a fruitful seed for the successful complication of my research. In this same respect, I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Examining Committee. Fourthly, my special thanks go to the Eastern Mediterranean International Office for enhancing the welfare and success of all international students during their stay in North Cyprus.

Above all, I desire to acknowledge and express gratitude God for always being with me.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a tool that is used by many around the world for a host of different reasons. From general chats to sharing breaking news and from gentle humor to serious studies, social media has served in connecting people from different races, regions and cultures and sustaining or developing communication regardless of the geographic barrier. Therefore, understanding the level of family relation vitality through using social media to maintain communication is the aim to attain in this research. More specifically, the research seeks to define the role of social media in students' life, as well as to comprehend the influence that social media has on family communication between students and their family, question the vitality of family relation in student's life.

This section gives a general outline of this study. First, a background of the research topic is provided proceeded by a brief explanation of the motivation of the study. Next, the aims and objectives are defined as well as the significance of the study. Finally, limitations are stated and provided.

1.1 Background of the Study

The growth of technology in today's world of communication is rapidly growing and altering the ways human beings interact with each other. Individuals no longer meet on the bench of the sidewalk, or the house garden, talking less about other spaces for family gathering. As a matter of fact, social networking technologies are slowly

taking over the sense of gathering; becoming more like 'a tie between two or more people'.

Interaction through social media is the modern trend. Facebook, Skype, and Twitter are social networks that now provide the choice of staying home and virtually communicate and interact with others. It also provides the possibility to stay in touch with family and loved ones that are geographically far away without having to travel and meet them.

In our age, internationalization of universities is a global issue. Numerous Palestinian students go abroad to study higher education. Also, with the ongoing political conflicts between Palestinian and Israeli governments, young people seek education abroad to flee limitations and brighten their future. Thus, social media becomes an important tool to stay in touch with family and loved ones. This can be truer when the level of access to internet is high and that the families that are left behind also have the necessary technologies to stay in touch through various social media platforms.

1. 2 Motivation for the Study

Palestinians are one of the most literate populations and despite economic hardship; families continue to put education as a priority for their members to invest in. However, due to some policies, higher education may be at times very difficult to access, as graduates of Palestinian universities may be restricted in recognition of their diplomas. Therefore, education abroad may be the best, or the most convenient option for Palestinian high school graduates.

Being a student in a new environment may be at times difficult, especially when the geographical rupture from home is for the first time. It may demand to make new connections and built new social relations. Also, the level of interaction with the family is diminished and for some, it may be a challenging condition. Therefore, the researcher is curious about how Palestinian students manage to keep, sustain or develop their relationships with family through social media in another geographical area that does not allow face-to-face interaction.

1.3 Research Aims

Not only in cases of conflict and restrictions do individuals seek education abroad; but in a world of globalization, students tend more to pursue their higher education in international environments, which may also be the case for Palestinians. Consequently, they travel to far distances away from home in order to achieve this goal, leaving most of them distant from families and friends for short or long period of times.

Thus, this study seeks to understand the influence of social media on family relation, and to see effects that may generate through the use of Facebook.

1.4 Research Objectives

Social media has attempted to replace or recreate face-to-face interactions by giving certain people the ability to interact publicly or privately online. Social media is used by a great number of people to stay in touch, or keep built connections. A great benefit of social media is that it is tool of maintaining relationships between people that may be geographically far from each other. By a simple click, families, friends and lovers can stay connected through social media. Thus, the questions in this research are:

- To explain the role of social media in Palestinian students' family life;

- To understand the impact of social media on family relations;

- To question the vitality of family relation in Palestinian student's life;

- To detect what affects that may develop due to the use of social media.

1.5 Significance of the Study

In the present world of globalization, technological advancements in communication are of great importance. Computers and smart phones have become vital in the lives of many people, also in many areas of the human life. As a result of globalization, universities internationalize; international students travel aboad. Thus, the outcome of this study will bring addition to current literature in the related field.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The study will merely look into the lives of Palestinian students at Eastern Mediterranean University during summer 2017, as well as into Facebook for social media during the analysis of the findings. Immigration in Palestine is higher amongst male, so the researcher has also limited the study to male students.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present chapter is a preamble to the research as it provides information about the keywords and in particular Social media and its influence on relations. The first part emphasizes on internet and social media, and then it describes some of its effects on family communication. Later, related communication theories are highlighted. This section is based on earlier researches and provides literature that will later support the analysis of the results.

2.1 Internet and Social Media

In Sweden, the Netherlands, Australia and the U.S., around 7 in 10 use social networking sites, for example Facebook and Twitter, but around 30% of the population in those countries are non-users.in France, merely 48% use social networking sites. In other countries like Greece, Japan and Germany the numbers of users are respectively 46%, 43% and 37%. The differences in reported social media use are due to whether people use the internet. For instance, less than 5% Dutch, 7% Swedes and 7% Australians don't access the internet or own a smartphone. The figures are 40% in Greece, 33% in Hungary and 29% in Italy (www.pewglobal.org).

Social relationships, social welfare, school, activities and sleeping time are impacted by the use of Facebook. For instance, the Pew Internet and Social Life study, which surveys various types of digital communication technologies, said that these

technologies have a strong influence on peoples' daily life as they are for many the central force of their existence (Lenhart, Hitland and Madden, 2005).

2.1.1 Internet Usage

Internet use, via various apparatus, is an innovation that brought much development in the world of commutation, socialization and information sharing; it is a multifaceted culture which is growing and where many young adults participate. For instance, the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), stated that the access to computers and the internet use is quite elevated among all age groups except for those above 65years, but its maximum is for ages ranging from 15 to 24. History tells that being connected to the internet for merely dissemination and diffusion of information was enough. This denoted Web 1.0, which is the World Wide Web with flat data. Communication between sites and web users was restricted to a simple portal where information is passively received without the opportunity to post reviews, comments or feedbacks (URL1).

Today, new versions of social interactions, interchange, discussion and association have come to light. These are social networks such as Facebook and Instagram. Referred to as social media, these social networking sites permit users to share thoughts, exchange comments and news and take part in events or activities. Unlike the earlier version, this one allows users of the web to be connected to sites, and then users can more freely exchange and communicate with each other. Other models of the Web 2.0 exist, namely YouTube, Wiki, Flickr, blogs, etc. This second generation of advanced web tools encourages participation and information sharing (URL1).

In the US, the on-going and expending use of web 2.0 technologies is bringing much change to social life; many areas of social life are being changed by introducing

computers, internet, mobile phones and smart phones. Jobs are being restructured as computers along with the use of Web are gaining central importance in most offices. Also, internet helps people to have new ways of participating in politics through mails or social media posts or calls to events. Even family relations or intimate relations of social media users are being affected by these new technologies and innovations. Thus, the influence of social media technology is so great that in the two decades, computer capacities will predictably surpass the aptitudes of the human brain and social medial communication may surpass other communication tools like e-mails with more efficient interactions (Vascellaro 2009; Hanlon 2009; URL2).

2.1.2 Social Networking Sites

As stated by boyd & Ellison (2008), Social Networking Sites (SNS) refer to:

> Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view 8 and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p. 211)

SNSs like Friendster, CyWorld, MySpace and much more help individuals to get to meet each other, express their social networks, and set up or keep up associations with others. Members may utilize the SNS to interface with individuals they knew in person before or to meet new individuals.

A few decades ago, people communicated using media in two leading ways – public broadcast media (television, radio) and newspapers. Since then, the rise of social media has been exponential. However, when it comes to social media, there is a tendency of emphasizing on particular platform such as Facebook or Twitter, but history shows that there are many more. In 1997, SixDegree.com was launched but did not last long. It was the first distinguishable site that had

characteristics of social media sites: profiles, friend lists, browsing through friends. Later in 2002, Friendster was launched and quickly became a big hit in the social network world, as its initial purpose was for online dating. The SNS builder wished that people would share original information in order to build trust, upon which they would construct their relationships (boyd, 2008, p. 97). Also, users started to compete with one another in regards to the number of friend counts (boyd, 2008, p. 98). However, due to the attempts to reconfigure and limit the activities on the site because of the user's social construction of the site, MySpace took over from Friendster (Boyd, 2008, p. 100). Two years later, the famous Facebook was created and by 2007, over 21 million users were registered, generating 1.6 billion daily views of Facebook pages (Ellison et al, 2007). Gangadharbatla (2009), scholar in the field of communication suggested that because of the number of users, Facebook could have been equated to a country that would be the fourth largest on planet earth.

By joining Facebook and filling forms, a profile is allocated to the user. This profile is visible to other users of the SNS, but the users can choose to filter who can have access the profile. Also, the SNS provides the option to share feeds, make comments or make posts within the network. (Lenhart, 2009).

When it comes to defining what social media is, it is the *content* rather than the platform that matters more as it has the ability to influence or transform relationships and issues. In most social media, people share information between one another and in this way; they determine the information to be posted on the internet by making comments, views, presentations, pictures and videos, and by sharing these with friends, family and others (URL3).

The popularity of the social networking site Facebook is unprecedented: Facebook remains the most preferred among large series of other SNS. Since 2013, millions of users log in daily to their accounts average user count a minimum of 130 friends/contacts on they profiles (Koc, 2013).

Daily, according to data shared by Facebook, 4.75 billion shares were recorded in May 2013, an increment of 94% from 2012, and over 2.01 billion users are active every month since 2017 (Facebook, 2017).

2.1.3 Facebook

While he was still a student, Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook at the age of 23 years in February 2004 at Harvard University. As of September 2006, the social network was stretched out past educational organizations to anybody with a registered email address (Phillips, 2007). Today, Facebook as a leading SNS has become an integrative part of the daily media activities of its users as they spend daily about 20 minutes on it and more than half of the users log in daily (Cassidy, 2006). Facebook is a social networking site that is recent, and now one of the most popular (Facebook counts more than 400 million active users). Facebook overrides other SNS in popularity, but the race is rising. Though this site has multiple types of users from different backgrounds and professions, research has shown that it has served most users for social purposes like staying in touch and making plans with near and far away friends, or even total strangers.

Facebook constitutes a rich SNS for specialists intrigue because of its substantial use designs and innovative technologies that extend networks from disconnected to connect in that it initially mainly serves a geologically bound community. Previous studies acclaim that users of Facebook contribute in seeking for individuals that are

already connected to them outside more than they searching to encounter with outsiders (Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006).

In its original design, Facebook was only designated to college networking among Harvard University students. Later, Facebook supported ten other universities. The rule for users was to have a valid email address from the university. In 2005, the SNS expanded to include everyone (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Its unique feature of building applications (games, adverts, marketplaces, etc.) allows users to practice diverse tasks on one same site (Facebook, 2017).

SNS apparatuses like Facebook might be of specific utility for people who generally experience hardship framing and keeping up both solid and fragile ties. A number of analysis have proven, for instance, that internet may support people with low mental prosperity because of low connections to friends/family and neighbors (Bargh & McKenna, 2004).

Westling (2007) claims that Facebook has been successful in forming a public sphere more than any previous SNS, in regards to the fact that a large student population and many people around the world use Facebook as a space for communication. Facebook has proven to be the most effective in terms of interconnectivity between its users (p. 4).

2.1.4 Facebook in Palestine

The occupied Palestinian territories which comprises of the West Bank and the Gaza strips is historically rich region that is geographically located in the Middle East and presently recognized by 136 United Nation (UN) members. This region established an interim self-government body in 1994 which enables it to govern the territories

under the auspices of Palestinian National Authority which was formerly proclaimed as State of Palestine in the year 2013. The state of Palestine had an estimated population of 4,550,368 as of 2014.

According to the Interned World Stats, in 2017, the estimated population was 4.9M in 2017 with an estimation of 3M internet users. And in 2016, 1.7M Palestinians were using Facebook (URL4).

Hanafi (2005) also studied the issue of the Palestinian use of media and was interested in the issue of "geography" and Palestinian identity and how the rise of virtual communication is rising as a digital solution to the unsolved physical problem of the return of Palestinians to their homeland (Hanafi, 2005, p. 581).

According to Nassar (2002) the question is will Palestinians use new venues of media like SNSs, specifically Facebook, to continue their efforts in being heard, and how they feel they can express themselves better on topics that are taboo since Facebook is not monitored by their government.

2.2 Social Media and Its Influences on Family Communication

2.2.1 Family in Palestine

In Palestinian (Arab) culture by and large, the fundamental unit of social and socioeconomic organization is the family. Individual relatives are intertwined to the point that the achievement or disappointment of one member influences the destiny of the whole family.

In Arab culture, the notion of family is more comprehensive. An Arab's family is his kin, which may include a number of households and all male first cousins on the

father's side. The members usually live in proximity and meet regularly celebrate and enjoy other occasions together. They even coordinate their economic and political activities together (URL5).

The maintenance of family relationships appears to be prioritized in characterizations of Palestinian societies. Arab children are socialized into seeing themselves as reliant with the familial group rather than independent from it. This is possibly the main means through which family unity and consistency are maintained (Alsharekh, 2007; Taraki, 2006).

2.2.2 Family Communication in Palestine

Because of the costs required with a private move, frequently just nuclear families are immigrating (Alsharekh, 2007; Taraki, 2006). Thus, staying in touch with the loved ones is a social need of any individual.

In a study conducted in 2013, Ball, Wanzer and Servoss conduct a research on Family Communication Pattern (FCP). Among many, they highlighted two: conversation orientation and conformity.

In the first, there is very little restriction on the topics of conversation. Families view communication as the most important way to educate and socialize their children; therefore, for these families communication becomes "a means of gaining control, alleviating isolation, and seeking affection from others". Those who have a low level of conversation limit the amount of shared private information with the other members of the family (Ball et al., 2013, p. 618).

In the second, predominant features are obedience to parents and imitation of expressed attitudes, beliefs, and values in the family. A key feature of conformity is, "a clear hierarchical family structure and a belief that family member interests are

superior to individual interests". In these types of families, conflict is often avoided. Where there is low conformity, members of the family tend to develop a more autonomous communication practice (Ball et al., 2013, p. 618).

Thus, in the case of Palestine, a culture of kinship and patriarchy, conformity is the type of communication that is more applicable. Elders and male have authority and members confirm to the ones with more power.

When it comes to Facebook, users can view each other's profiles, unless a profile owner has decided to restrict permission to those in their network. Facebook takes a different approach—by default, users who are part of the same "network" can view each other's profiles, unless a profile owner has decided to deny permission to those in their network. The users find interest in the possibility to post about personal life and opinions. Reactions received from family became of form of communication and feedback on the way others view them. Also, the nature of what is shared among the family and the level of openness can indicate the nature of the family communication pattern.

2.2.3 Social Media Influences

Social Media influences on relations can be viewed in two perspectives. The first proposes that social media leads to isolation among the youngsters. The second suggests that new technologies form a 'hyper-connectivity' that expands and in the future modernize social interaction. Also, it is claimed by Brignall that the increasing use of cell phones, messaging tools, internet social media sites and blogs to conduct relationships reduces the level of face-to-face interaction amongst the youth, which

affects their ability to sustain and develop social abilities and relations (Brignall, 2005).

Another study that resulted from examining finding collected from 3 studies that showed that communities are not destroyed or diminished through the use of internet, but they are changed (Wellman, Boase & Chen, 2002).

On the other hand, some researchers contend that those with a wide network of social support gained from using the internet, whilst others with a smaller network did not profit considerably (Kiesler et al, 2002). However, Alan and John (2002) claim that when the use of internet intensifies, face-to-face communication are not sufficient. But, others view the need of equilibrium between virtual and personal interactions. And, that while the growth of social and personal networks may expand and improve collaborations, virtual interactions can gradually replace the face-to-face interaction, which fundamental in building trust (The National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO), 2007).

Another view is that internet use reduces loneliness regardless of its effect on individual's SNS. Nonetheless, among internet users, the quantity of time spent on online socialization is connected with the increment of the level of loneliness (Coget et al, 2002, p.193). Pea et al (2012) examined the associations between social wellness, media usage and face-to-face interaction through an online survey where the results indicated the use of media for interpersonal interaction positively affected the level of wellbeing among the population that was studied (p. 327).

Another effect on relationships is that social media provides an arena for behaviors such as social comparison or envy. Krasnova et al. (2013) showed that on Facebook, envy feelings occur often. In their research, 36% of the population of study testified that they had witnessed frustrations and fatigue by spending time on Facebook at least once or more. Thus, they concluded that passive Facebook use may lead to degradation of life satisfaction in the long term, trigger social comparison and offensive emotions. Users may tend to envy the happiness they observe in others, their way of socializing, spending their vacations, etc. These findings reveal that the intensity of passively following can decrease the users' life fulfillment in the long-term. It induces vertical social comparison and emotions of envy, with users who may envy the joy and well-being of others, or the way they spend their time and socialize (p.13).

2. 3 Related Communication Theories

In communication and media studies, numerous theories have been advanced for the sake of understanding the influences of communication on media, viewers or users. Facebook is a medium of communication and socializing. It is connected with many other social networks and serves as a method of expression and exchange and they are constituents of a wider cultural environment.

2.3.1 Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) is a mass communication theory that relates to why, how and at what frequency/speed innovative technologies, ideas and products proliferate and implement in the society. This theory was developed in 1962 by E.M. Rogers (1995) who expressed it as the route of communicating an innovation via particular streams in a period of time amongst adherents of a social system (p.5).

He defined 5 steps in which the members of a social system acquaint with the innovation (p.162):

1. Knowledge – an individual tackles an innovation and gets a few hints of how it functions;

2. Persuasion – the innovation faces a formation of a positive or negative attitude on behalf of the person;

3. Decision – by engaging into activities, the person has the ability to choose between adapting and rejecting the innovation;

4. Implementation – the innovation is used by the individual;

5. Confirmation – the outcomes of the implemented innovation are assessed.

It examines how the social individuals receive the new creative technologies and how they settle on the choice towards it. Both mass communications and interpersonal communication channels are associated with the dispersion procedure.

Later, Rogers (2003) proposed four key elements in the Diffusion of Innovation which consist of: innovation, communication channels, time and social system.

Innovations – This is a thought, practice, or event seen as new by a person. It can also be an initiative to explore a new territory or bring some social change. Rogers additionally expressed under innovation the features that lead to the advancement rate of innovation which incorporates relative preferred advantage, similarity, unpredictability, observability and discernibleness.

Communication Channel – Is the exchange of communications from one person to another. It is through the channel of communication that innovation is disseminated. It can be verbal, written or in any other structure.

Time – It refers to how quick individual in a given society adapt to the innovation.

Social system – It alludes to the interrelation between members of a social system that have common objectives and problem to tackle. It may be organizations, group of individuals, institutions or individuals.

Based on these four points, when it comes to Facebook, it is a presently preferred social media channel that is also seen as innovative with a very high rate of dispersion. With the incorporation of 'Messenger' or 'Instagram', Facebook is an easy tool for sharing and communicating through texts, voice messages, videos, or images between one or more individuals at a time. Facebook quickly speed after its creation and has millions of users. Different communities and groups on Facebook tackle matters of common objective.

2.3.2 Research into Diffusion of Innovation Theory

In 1903, Gabriel Tarde (Toews, 2003) examined the Diffusion of Innovation Theory by designing the first S-shaped dissemination curve, trailed by Ryan and Gross (1943) who presented categories that were further utilized as a part of the present theory advanced by Everett Rogers (1962).

The Diffusion of Innovation theory is regularly viewed as an important for managing technological innovation where advancement is altered and introduced in channels that address demands over all kind of adopters. It additionally focuses on the

significance of communication and peer networking among the procedure mechanism.

Ellison et al (2007) researched on the affiliation of the use of Facebook with the development and conservation of social capital. It was found that using Facebook interacts with psychological welfare; meaning that Facebook users would have more advantages if they suffer of low self-esteem and low life satisfaction.

Dwyer et al (2007) conducted an online survey to study, compare and analyze feelings of privacy and trust on Facebook and MySpace. They examined if users would share private information or develop fresh relationships. Results showed that Facebook users were trusting, though both sites were equally rated. They also proved to be more willing to share identifying information. The analysis proved that even with low privacy, online relationships can grow.

In their study, Folorunso et al. (2010) use DOI to examine the reasons inducing implementation of social networking sites innovation. Five major concepts: "Relative Advantage", "Complexity", "Compatibility", "Observability" and "Trialability" were used to examine the influence on the attitude and trust regarding SNS and to define how attitude would effect on the intention to use it.

2.3.3 Uses and Gratification Theory

Initially, the Usage and gratification theory was intended for television viewers until it was extended to integrate all other forms of social networking sites users. Bryant and Oliver (2008) described the theory by saying that they U&G:

> Include our psychological and social environment, our needs and motives to communicate, the media, our attitudes and expectations about the media,

functional alternatives to using the media, our communication behavior, and the outcomes or consequences of our behavior. (p. 527)

Bryant and Oliver (2008) state that the audience is dynamic when they choose the media they use, instead of being indifferent in that regard (p. 526). This gives clarification on why some SNSs are more popular, in our case like Facebook as compared to other less preferred networks. Katz et al (1974) expressed leading arguments of this theory, as how different individuals embrace different types of media to 'gratify' some particular needs leading to further demands, reasons and conducts (Bryant & Oliver, 2008, pp. 527-528). Since the 1920s, theorists have been concerned with the influences of innovated media on audiences. It is difficult for a media source alone to please an individual's media usage requirement. This gap induces the users to search for other sources of media that would fulfill them, particularly university students when it comes to entertainment or updates.

When it comes to entertainment, students may use the internet to fulfil several pleasures that can be found for instance in movies or music. Gratifications in news feeds can be a consequence of the desire to fulfill certain academic activities or to receive updates about events. An intriguing element is socialization; the use of electronic media reduces the dissimilarities between one another in a network (Westmyer et al., 1998, pp. 28-30).

The Uses and Gratifications Theory looks into comprehending the diverse purposes of mass media as well as what operators intend to fulfill through the use of media. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000), analyzed 5 reasons for internet that

influence users SNSs, namely "Interpersonal Utility", "Pass Time", "Information Seeking", "Convenience" and "Entertainment" (p. 186).

Suggested by boyd and Ellison (2007), Facebook and MySpace were leading SNSs, and until now, the first remains at the top compared to others with its number of users and according to data published on Facebook's website, its numbers surpasses a billions of active users (p. 210).

2.3.4 Research into Uses and Gratification Theory

As technology progresses, studies about existing theories related to mass media continue to be conducted. In 1980s, internet was introduced and its fast rate of adoption has triggered revisions in the traditional theories of mass media (Stafford, 2003). Many studies related to U&G in media innovation have been developed (Williams, Strover and Grant, 1994, Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996, Morris & Ogan, 1996).

Ruggiero (2000) contends: "in fact, uses and gratifications has always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each new mass communications medium: newspapers, radio and television, and now the Internet." (p. 1)

In recent days, the U&G approach were adopted to study other topics like online cooperate advertising (Roberts & Ko, 2001), internet amenities (Stafford, 2003), collection of news, blogging (Li, 2005) and social networking sites (Yale, 2007).

According to Raacke and Raacke (2008), U&G should be implement in order to understand the influences of the uses of SNSs in the lives of the users. For instance,

Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, & Hughes (2009) suggest that the use of Facebook has a great significance in the daily routine of students' life. The gratifications drawn from using it is the convenience and the connection to a large group of individuals (p. 96).

In a study conducted by Articolo, (2008) four gratification purposes of the use of Facebook where defined:

1. Gratification via interaction with individuals of the social network;

2. Gratification in staying in touch with friends and being able to inquire more about their activities;

3. Gratification in sharing ones identity through social experiences;

Gratification in disseminating news and updates with one another through social media.

In this study, Facebook is less looked into in the perspective of the diffusion of innovation and more into the usage and Gratification theory. The researcher seeks to understand what the needs of the Palestinian students are when it comes to their use of Facebook for family communication, whether their needs are gratified or not and how it influences their relations with family.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes the research methodology and the implemented data collection method. The methodology is qualitative and data is collected through focus groups run by the researcher. The goal is to understand the vitality of family relation through the use of social media amongst student living abroad for educational reasons, in the case of Eastern Mediterranean University Palestinian students.

3.1 Research Methodology

The methodology of study is qualitative. Data collection is based on three focus groups of male Palestinian students. The field of study is Eastern Mediterranean University, a state university in North Cyprus with Palestinian as one of the largest foreign population of the campus. The interviews/discussion will be held with 3 different groups of 6 students. Interviews allow the researcher to collect deeper information in a more economic manner than individual interviews.

Qualitative methodology helps the researcher seek a deeper truth and understand, make sense of, construe phenomena based on the way individuals interpreted them. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) proposed the following definition:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p.3)

For this study, focus groups were used as data collection method.

3.2 Research Design

The present study is a case study. According to Larry M. Dooley (2002) in a Case Study Research; the study follows the steps bellow:

- Generating the research questions;

- Selecting cases and defining data collection methods and techniques;

- Preparing to gather data;

- Collecting data;

- Analyzing and evaluating the collected data;

- Preparing the report.

According to Kardos and Smith (1979) features, the study aims to be:

- Based on real life, though identities may be kept confidential;

- Broken down into parts that lead to different points for discussion;

- Contain the necessary information for treating the problem and matter;

- Convince the reader.

3.3 Population and Sample

The present study is the case of Palestinian students studying in Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus in the 2016-2017 academic year's summer term. Many of these students emigrated from their country in order to pursue higher education. Presently, according to the Eastern Mediterranean University General Union of Palestinian Students the estimated number of Palestinian students is 783 in 2017. However, due to the fact that many carry non-Palestinian passports due to the political conflicts in their homeland, an exact number was not provides.

Theories that are related to such a phenomena of immigration to receive higher education abroad, affirm that this type of immigration is influenced by two factors; 'Push' and 'Pull'. The 'push' factor results from the country of origin, whilst the 'pull' factor I generated by the host country. The last can be influenced by the historic, cultural, financial or geographical ties. However, the immigrants meet some difficulties like coping with different languages and cultures, geographical distance, financial costs, etc. (Khalid & Kussai, 2013).

Eastern Mediterranean University is home to a significant number of Palestinian students. However, due to the fact that some may have different nationalities based on the passport they hold, they are easily identifiable as they organize many cultural events through the Eastern Mediterranean University General Union of Palestinian students. The multicultural and diversity of the university makes it attractive to 'pull' Palestinian students that seek higher education. The 'push' and 'pull' factors draw them away from their families and the geographical gap is filled up through the use of social media. The male Palestinian young population being more dynamic as reviewed in earlier sections, the sample was limited to only Palestinian males.

The sampling strategy used by the researcher purposive sampling. Each of the 3focus group contained individuals that were selected in such a way that they would characterize the overall population and give the researcher a better understanding of the research topic.

Each group contains 6 individuals, Participant 1 to 18. All participants were male Palestinians, currently studying at Eastern Mediterranean University. Though such questions were asked during the interview, the participants wished to stay

anonymous, and no personal information (name, age, place of origin) were provided in the analysis. The few personal questions, which answers are provided in the analysis section, help give a general idea of the participants.

For focus groups, a number of six to ten individuals is recommended (MacIntos, 1993), but researchers may opt to use 15 people (Goss & Leinbach,1996) or just 4 (Kitzinger, 1995).This is the optimal size in order to facilitate discussion and help the facilitator/moderator to work at ease.

3.4 Data Collection Method

This study employed focus group interviews from three focus group sessions. A focus group helps understand how people think and provides a deeper understanding of the event being studied. Focus groups are interviews conducted in groups that allow the researcher to collect deeper information in a more economic manner than individual interviews. The interaction and the non-verbal exchanges are key elements to the focus group. The responses during the focus group can be different and the gap between people's words and actions is better understood (Lankshear, 1993).

The aim of a case study is to build theories. Theory building requires an ongoing comparison of data collected by in-depth interview during focus groups (in the limitation of the population and sample) and theory (gathered from the literature review) and the continuous refinement between the two. The researcher uses thematic analysis as a tool to analyze the data. This is described in the following sections.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

The following is prepared prior the interview and used to facilitate the sessions.

- Consent Forms and sign-up sheet should be prepared.

- Venues and refreshments that will help participants feel comfortable.

- Questions (see Appendix 1).

The interviews were conducted at the residence of the researcher. The participants were invited one by one over phone calls and face to face discussion. The purpose of the gathering and its importance was explained to each in order to encourage there participants.

The meeting lasted around 60 to 80 minutes. First, participants were welcomed and offered some tea and snacks. Also, some breaks were included I to the sessions (see Appendix A). Each recording lasts around 30 minutes. Since the sessions were being recorded, the researcher had to get permission from each participant by asking each one of them. If anyone objected, the researcher would not record. Also each participant was informed that all information would be kept confidential. This is to allow the participant to feel free to discuss freely and be comfortable about participating by knowing that individuals will remain anonymous. The sessions were held during the second week of August 2017 in Famagusta, North Cyprus.

During the interview, personal opinions are not shared by the facilitator to avoid influencing participants to take any particular stand or opinion. He also ensures each participates participate and speaks during the interview.

The questions asked are open-ended in order to allow to promote discussion during the sessions, because short or specific and Yes/No question can limit the discussion and provide poor results.

3.6 Data Analysis

The analysis method is thematic. Qualitative descriptive approaches such as thematic analysis are appropriate for research that wishes to reduce the level of interpretation, unlike grounded theory, where interpretive complexity is required at a higher level.

Finding, evaluating and defining patterns (themes) within data are the features of thematic analysis. It develops minimum data in details. It can also go further into the interpretation of various characteristics of the topic that is being studied (Boyatzis, 1998).

"A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82).

Thematic analysis approach is fit for answering questions about what people think about an event or why people prefer to adopt or not use a facility or service (Ayres, 2007b).

Analyzing is instantly done after focus groups conclusion. Note taking and synopsis of the exchange with the members during the focus group session will encourage more productive analysis. For each inquiry, the researcher incorporates perceptions, for example, non-verbal communication, tone, and opinion alteration. This procedure encourages a more profound comprehension on the research topic.

Data analysis is a systematic quest for meaning. It is a procedure by which qualitative data is processed and communicated to others. Analysis is bring together

and questioning data with the aim to help the researchers to identify theories. It contains pattern finding, summaries, analysis, interpretation, classification, conjecturing and comparison. The researchers employ intellectual capabilities to decode qualitative data (Hatch, 2002, p.148).

Braun and Clarke's 6 'guides' of managing thematic analysis has been adopted in this research:

1. "Becoming familiar with the data".

2. "Generating initial codes".

3. "Searching for themes".

4. "Reviewing themes".

5. "Defining and naming themes".

6. "Producing the report".

In the next chapter, findings are analyzed. Focus group discussions recordings were interpreted and experienced a few realms of examination. A preparatory examination was directed with a specific end goal to get a general idea of the information and think about its significance. Next, a more itemized investigation was preformed and information was isolated into subjects or topics that reflected particular considerations, dispositions, and encounters of members. At the end of this process of investigation, a rundown of categories was produced, and the categories were grouped into themes that were named as key discoveries. Data from across each focus group was then triangulated so that it could be classified into these categories. Triangulation is the use of several methods or sources of data in qualitative research with the objective of building an ample understanding of events (Patton, 1999).

3.7 Triangulation

In order to maintain the fitness criteria of the present study, actor triangulation has been done. In other words, three focus group interviews were conducted by the researcher and translated. The interviews were conducted in Arabic and back to back translation was done with a friend (for transcript of one of the focus groups, please see (Appendix C).

Secondary sources of data collected from the literature review complemented data collected during interviews of focus groups. In this way, the researcher seeks to increase the trust in the validity of the study. Transcribed interviews were analyzed in a summary form, and later grouped in themes.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the findings are analyzed thematically. Focus groups were held during August, 2017. A total of three focus groups were held. Groups ranged in size of six participants each and lasted from 90 to 120 minutes. 18 students participated in focus groups. Each focus group was homogenous in that it represented a certain Palestinian student type. The representation in focus groups included only males.

Using an open-ended interview discussion, the focus groups were conducted by a friend of the researcher, who is also a student of Eastern Mediterranean University. Interview questions (see Appendix A) were developed and designed to cover a range of family relation and Social Media use issues and tackled specific questions and subjects raised reviewed literature. Informed-consent measures were described at the beginning of each focus group and while filling the consent forms (see Appendix B).

All focus groups discussions were recorded, but only after the consent of the members. The secrecy of the focus group participants is secured in the report; in a few occasions the utilization of pronouns like "they" or "their" as the primary individual has been encouraged ensure the character of members and to outline how their proclamations are illustrative of many aggregated answers from the members.

4.1 Analysis

Here, specific questions were summarized in order to give an idea of the 18 participants (here coded as P1 to P18):

- **How many years are you a student?**

  - Group 1: P1, P3, P5 & P6 – 3 years; P2 & P4 – 5 years

  - Group 2: P9 & P10 – 3 years; P7; P12 – 4 years; P8 & P11 – 5 years

  - Group 3: P13, P15 & P18 -3 years; P14, P16 & P17 – 4 years

- **Are you married or are you in a relationship?**

  - Group 1: P1 & P5 – married; P2, P3, P4 & P6 – single

  - Group 2: P7, P8, P9, P10 & P11 – in a relationship ; P12 – single

  - Group 3: P13, P14, P15 & P18 – in a relationship; P16 & P17 – single

- **When did you start using Social Media?**

  - Group 1: P1 & P3 – 7 years ago ; P2, P5, P4 & P6 – over 5 years ago

  - Group 2: P7, P9,P10 & P12 – around 6years ago ; P8 & P11 – maybe 4 years ago

  - Group 3: P15 & P18 – 7or 8 years ago ; P16 & P17 – 5 years ago; P1 & P14 – maybe 6 years ago

- **How many hours a day do you spend on social media (please estimate)?**

  - Group 1: P2 & P4 – around 5 hours ; P1, P5, P3 & P6 – I am logged in all day

  - Group 2: P8, P9,11 & P12 –10 hours ; P7 & P10 – half a day

  - Group 3: P15 & P17– 3 ; P16 & P18 – around 5 to 8 hours; P1 & P14 – maybe 10 hours

- **When did you start using Facebook?**

  - Group 1: P1 & P3 – 7 years ago ; P2, P5, P4 & P6 – over 5 years ago

- Group 2: P7, P9,P10 & P12 – around 6years ago ; P8 & P11 – maybe 4 years ago

- Group 3: P15 & P18 – 7or 8 years ago ; P16 & P17 – 5 years ago; P1 & P14 – maybe 6 years ago

- **What is your point of view on having your family as friends on Facebook?**

Group 1: P1 & P5 –Very good and useful; P2, P3, P4 & P6 – it's not really a must

Group 2: P7: I don't like it; P8, P9,P10 & P11 – its good, but sometimes, not good ; P12 – its ok for me

Group 3: P13, P14, P15 & P18 – Its good, they should be there;, P16 & P17 – its makes no difference, they can be my friends

- **What is your experience about using Facebook to communicate with your family?**

Group1, Group2 & Group 3:

The experience is good, especially that around the campus there is free Wi-Fi, it makes it even easier. When something comes up. It is easy to directly inform the family. And when there is an event, sharing picture and videos, or being live helps a lot.

- **How has your relationship with your family improved through using Facebook?**

Group 1: Nothing has really improved, but much has been sustained. It is easier to stay in touch. With the option of posting pictures and videos, it gives a feeling of being very close.

Group 2: Facebook is a social media that came in time and help a lot especially for us that find it hard to travel home often. With what we share it keeps us close to our

family. Maybe it doesn't really improve family relations, but it helps also build new relations

Group 3: Facebook is very useful. What improved is that communicate is much easier and frequent, but Facebook is not the reason for the nature of the relation: it just keeps us in touch with one another.

The participants did not testify of any improvement, but they are very pleased with the activities that are offered on Facebook and they find it as a very useful platform for communication.

- **If Facebook didn't exist, how do you think it would affect family relations?**

All groups generally believed that without it, they can find other ways to communicate with their families.

- **Some people feel lonely without the use of Facebook. What is your opinion about it?**

Group1: There is not much time to feel lonely on Facebook, it is rather a tool to spend time and entertain ourselves.

Group2: Loneliness on Facebook is hard to experience. You don't only use it to talk to your family, but you can also chat with hundreds of friends that you can meet online. It is also possible to just browse and follow what is happening in other people lives.

Group3: Facebook is not really an emotional platform. It is rather a place for entertainment and social experiences.

The participants of the three focus groups generally see Facebook as non-emotional platform. It is more a pass-temps and entertainment tool. Most believe that emotions should not be affected by loneliness.

- **What is your opinion about using Facebook as a source to learn how to build family relation?**

Group1, 2, 3: It is doubtful to think that Facebook is a place to learn. Many share all type of information and it must be first filtered. It is easy to follow the wrong, lies or built stories. But sometimes, it is possible to learn a few lessons through other people experiences.

- **How do you test information that you find on Facebook?**

Group1, 2, 3: Testing information is not very easy. Something that is shared can be turning around and finding the source can be difficult. But sometimes, there is a link to the original post, and then from there we can check.

The participants mainly believed that the origin of the information is the best place to9 find out how original a story is. However, some did admit that they do not always check the originality or trustworthiness of what is circulating on Facebook.

- **Can you share an experience of feeling envy because of a post related to family on Facebook?**

Group1: when you see others together, you may also want to experience the same. But it doesn't affect to the point that a person may suffer envy. Facebook is not really a place to affect our emotional beings.

Group2, 3: Sometimes, some post show the perfect family or ideal relation and yes, it is something any may desire or envy, but images cannot always be believed.

- **What are your best memories in using Facebook?**

Group1: nothing in particular to remember. It is more of a daily routine using Facebook so it is hard to highlight anything particular.

Group 2: there are probably a few but remembering is hard and we have been using it for years for general matters.

Group3:It is hard to remember but, Facebook is not really a place for these type of things

- **In what way do you find Facebook influential/stimulating for building family relations?**

Generally, the groups just underlined that the communication aspect in Facebook is the most useful and stimulating, but it is not really for building family relation.

- **If you were to invite your friend to use Facebook, what would you say?**

All groups commonly said that they will invite their friends to use Facebook because it is the best

- **If you were in charge of Facebook, what would you change?**

Group1, 2: The aspect of privacy is maybe the most important. Sometimes, it is not sure whether it is safe to really share everything on Facebook

Group3: Participants agreed with the answer of P17 that said that 'it really hard to pick out something to change when people can simply open up their own page, but this makes it faster to find other business pages as this will contain only business-related information'

- **What are the best features about Facebook?**

Generally, participants like the profile, sharing and pages. Also, they liked the ability to run a business and be viewed by thousands.

- **What are the disappointments in Facebook?**

Gropu1, 3: Some participants said that maybe Facebook is not responsible for this one, but it is a disappointment to see how social skills face to face have gone down in many people's lives and personality. People can express themselves more fluidly on

social media than in person. Facebook is like a mask sometimes, you never know who is who.

Group2: The free access to posting on Facebook makes people post unnecessary thing that can be at times annoying.

- **In your experience, how has Facebook achieved what you expected?**

Participants could not clearly define their expectations from Facebook, apart from the communication aspect. Thus, for most, the expectations were met.

- **As a summarizing question, I would like to ask each of you to share a story where Facebook was the main tool for building your relation with your family; how it influenced your relation.**

Participants did not prefer to share anything as they believed this was a quite personal matter.

- **Is there anything else we haven't discussed yet that you think is important to know**?

No additions were made

To keep the participants anonymous, nicknames were provided and used in the next section:

Participant 1: A student for 3 years that is married – Ami;

Participant 2: A student for 5 years that is single – Avi;

Participant 3: A student for 3 years that is single – Ari;

Participant 4: A student for 5 years that is single – Asa;

Participant 5: A student for 3 years that is married – Ben;

Participant 6: A student for 3 years that is single – Bob;

Participant 7: A student for 4 years that is in a relationship – Bill;

Participant 8: A student for 5 years that is in a relationship – Dan;

Participant 9: A student for 3 years that is in a relationship – Don;

Participant 10: A student for 3 years that is in a relationship – Eli;

Participant 11: A student for 5 years that is in a relationship – Eve;

Participant 12: A student for 4 years that is single – Gus;

Participant 13: A student for 3 years that is in a relationship – Ian;

Participant 14: A student for 4 years that is in a relationship – Jay;

Participant 15: A student for 3 years that is in a relationship – Lee;

Participant 16: A student for 4 years that is single – Pat;

Participant 17: A student for 4 years that is single – Sam;

Participant 18: A student for 3 years that is in a relationship – Ted.

In order to analyze thematically the interview transcripts, each question was summarized for the focus groups as follow:

The thematic analysis of the other questions asked during the focus group interview records exposed a number of key findings associated to Palestinian students' use of social media in family communication. These findings include: 1) How participants defined the use of Facebook and their own experience of using Facebook? 2) Newsfeed and information credibility on Facebook? 3) Perception of the Facebook culture and its influences on family relations? 4) Benefits in the use of Facebook or family relations?

4.2 Findings

Exchange of each key discovering starts with a bulleted rundown of the real topics that were reflected in focus groups talks. This is trailed by an extended depiction of students' stories about their understandings and encounters.

4.2.1 Key Finding 1: Perception and use of Facebook

- Communication tool;

- Generates envy;

- Occupation.

Communication tool

Internet at Eastern Mediterranean University is very accessible and makes it easier to connect to Facebook. Therefore, Facebook becomes a cheap and easy way to communicate.

'I use it to communicate through texting and calling. I use it when there is need to pass on or receive or request for needed information' (Ami).

'For many different reasons usually people say that they use it to communicate with their close circle, like families and friends' (Bill).

Also, with the messenger application that can be downloaded to a phone, the communication is quick and instant.

> With Facebook, I have the joy of receiving a quick response from a loved one, seeing them express themselves, (smileys) and creating new moments even whilst far apart. (Eli)

Generates Envy

Another aspect that may be underlined is the fiction of the family that is portrayed by social media. It was highlighted in the literature review that social media may cause envy and loss of happiness or well-being because of what is seen in other people's life. Due to economic, demographic, and mobility pressure, the lifestyle of family and its relationship between one another have changed from family life to disintegration or decline of the significance of the family in the lives of individuals,

and probably among international students as well. Thus, social media may create images of the "family dream", and not having the same may lead to frustration and isolation from the family.

However, participants also shared that generally, they do not use Facebook as an emotional platform:

'I use Facebook on a little serious scale, I don't like to share feelings I share experiences and thoughts. Surprisingly I have no such experience. I am content with what I have'(Ted).

Social media for many is a place to be fed with information, results also showed that the participants rely much on what is shared on Facebook and that, for the majority, some post may create envy and jealousy. If it is the case, it may affect the family relation as it may lead to comparison, disappointments, and lead to questioning the vitality of family relation in their lives.

Occupation

For most, Facebook is a tool to keeping informed and aware of the current state of affairs in both family and society. They spend more ten 2 hours a day on Facebook and it has become quite a part of their daily life.

> I am online most of the day, what I mean by online here that I let my phone connecting to the internet as any hours as possible to check every hour if there is any important messages or calls as it's my way to communicate with my family. (Dan)

'In my opinion, it's not a healthy feeling, yeah, we feel like addicts sometimes but we should always take a step back to reconnect to the reality'(Eve).

Especially psychological factors such as loneliness, isolation, degradation of wellbeing, loss of happiness affect international students due to the use of social media. Most agree that they cannot spend a day without Facebook and even, claim to feel lonely when they do not use Facebook, while one may expect them to feel lonely when they cannot reach family or when they lack interaction with others. Only for a few, Facebook shouldn't make a person feel lonely:

> That depends on the people. In my case, I don't feel so lonely because I am mostly working on my purpose in life. Knowing am developing myself by investing in my abilities and talents provides me quite a decent feeling of self-worth that I don't need to depend on my family's attention all the time. I do treasure the moments I have with them, I just haven't made that my foundation for life. (Bill)

4.2.2 Key Finding 2: Newsfeed and Information on Facebook

- Privacy;

- Credibility;

- Information Sharing.

Privacy

A family is normally seen as private territory. It is the place where many people can come together and share the problems they faced. International students do not have that luxury, however, Facebook can still help in keeping the links together. They may still seek for solutions while enjoying understanding and privacy. I think you can accomplish that by using more private applications like Viber, WhatsApp or even the messenger, but social media accounts can help you to connect to the world news to the changes which are happening worldwide or in the people we know lives as we r here isolated a bit from our social network. So it's a helpful tool to know what is going on. (Jay)

During the discussion, it was reflected that privacy on Facebook is not trusted and that it would be better to use other applications for private discussions.

However, we must not overrule the fact that because of the advancement and variety of technology, intimate space has shrunk. Anyone can capture a scene and post it on

social media, leading to the spread of information that another student would have wanted to keep confidential.

Credibility

Information shared on Facebook is not always genuine. Sometimes, some stories may be made up in order to reach a certain public or make a certain point. As an example, some students may have not been in touch with their families for years or may have bad relations with them, but in order to not be left out and to fall into the "ideal family" picture, they share and post good things in public, while they are living other things in private. Thus, a reason people chose to talk more behind the social media screen is because of the emotional invisibility that these platforms offer. Social media allows students both to hide what exactly is happening in their lives and also to show what is not happening in their lives in the ' electronic way'.

> Facebook encourage you to show a nice picture about yourself or to represent yourself the way you like, it builds a comfortable atmosphere so people will actually like you, but I feel a bit worried on this kind of relationships because, sometimes, people act to be the ones they want to be, but not the ones they really are. (Eli)

Information Sharing

Through networking site, the speaker is emotionally invisible and this encourages a more free expression. In other words, it makes it much easier to say things in the electronic way.

> Facebook is good to a certain extent, because you can control what you want them to see through your account, but there are things which you don't want them to know but they will know somehow out from a tag or mention or a pic posted by someone else ...so sometimes it's not really nice for your own privacy. (Bob)

> But social media accounts can help you to connect to the world news to the changes which are happening worldwide or in the people we know lives as we r here isolated a bit from our social network. So it's a helpful tool to know what is going on. (Avi)

Therefore, as mentioned in the literature, while social media may lead to disconnection and isolation; this results into the trust aspect of the family being affected. Not hearing or seeing about a child when far abroad in an international environment may lead to questioning from the side of the parents. Sometimes, the students may display information on Facebook that reveal things about themselves, which the parent had no idea about. For the students, they may in this way avoid the face-to-face contact and escape parental reactions by letting them "discover" about their personalities online. The same is applicable to the students loosing trust in their parents when they unceasingly follow the activities of their children through social media, or even drop "unwanted comments on their pages.

For instance, the media portrays the mother as the one who give concern for the children and fathers offer them approval. Or boys are shown as the ones able to help their mothers and to voice out for them whilst mothers are the ones who are usually victims of the children tricks. This is usually seen when student post texts, comments, pictures, videos of their families on special occasions like birthdays or international days.

'I shared a very shocking news everyone was commenting and sharing and it was wrong I felt so guilty that I rarely believe the information shared on Facebook I have to check the sources' (Ari).

4.2.3 Key Finding 3: Facebook and Family Relations

- Sharing;
- Meeting;
- Following.

Sharing

Facebook gives the opportunity to share images and other visual Medias with friends. The focus group discussions reveal that this was a positive aspect of Facebook since the geographical distance does not allow visual contact.

'It's an easier, affordable and enjoyable way to keep in contact with them. Seeing their pictures and posts give me a picture of how they have changed and grown while apart from them' (Gus).

'Seeing their progress and growth through pictures, videos and posts helps me accept them for who they are and it helps me embrace the changes that have taken place while I am away from home' (Don).

Meeting

Obviously, it was clear that many met friends, trough Facebook.

'The social network in now days is very important, if you use it in the right way FB is a great gate to make the world closer in ideas friendships and knowledge' (Pat).

'If you use it write it's an easy way to connect with the world and let everyone know who you really are, because sometimes you can't show it to everyone in real life'(Sam).

'The discussions I have sometimes on a certain topic on FB helped me to know some people that I thought I'll never know or that I thought that they are not thinking like that'(Lee).

'I built a very good friendships throughout Facebook, sometimes it started on Facebook and moved to reality, some other times people you barely knew we became very close'(Don).

More importantly, Facebook was for a few a way to reach or learn about family members that they were not aware of before:

'I never knew much about my father, he passed away 12 years ago. I found a relative via Facebook that explained to me my family tree and also helped me catch up on my father history' (Eve).

Follow

The social network in nowadays is very important, if you use it in the right way Facebook is a great gate to make the world smaller and stay updated:

> It is not bad because of the circumstances of living abroad it's impossible to communicate individually to all of the family members (here I mean even uncles and aunts...etc.) so it's great to be able to follow-up. (Ami)

> For a person like me who comes from a large family tree, it helps me catch up with relatives that are far away, as in abroad, and also those that I had little time to spend with during my earlier years. (Gus)

4.2.4 Key Finding 4: Facebook Benefits

The role of social media in the life of students is complex. It may serve for good or bad, depending on the aims or desires of the users.

'Social Media? Well, it's hard to say but I guess I achieved quite a list of things, but mainly, it helps me socialize and I guess that is why it exists'(Lee).

'I use it to communicate through texting and calling. I use it when there is need to pass on or receive or request for needed information. But we must be careful, because all type of things circulate on Facebook' (Bill).

'Just like most do, I like browsing through the homepage and reading posts. I also use it to communicate my thoughts and share them with others' (Eve).

' Facebook is multitask, I even use it for school sometimes, but when I see how it eats my time, I sometimes feel like it is bad to use Facebook' (Ari).

However, the discussion revealed that the nature of the family relation did not depend on the use of Facebook, as it is rather developed and maintained according to the zeal and desire of each member.

'The fact that I can still let my family know of how am doing and find out how they are doing through other channels really makes my life away from home easier'(Ben).

A response that was general is as follow when participants were asked about the must of using Facebook to keep a Family relation going on was as follow:

'If Facebook didn't exist, I would simply find a different alternative' (Ami).

Another quite general answer was that:

> I think it's deeper than letting Facebook or a way of communication affect a family relation, we can clearly see that the people who use to live abroad for studies without having all of these communication developments did not lose their relationship with family unless they don't wanted to, they can always find a way out (messages, rare phone calls) ...making communication easier doesn't mean that it is the reason that makes us communicate . (Ian)

I don't think Facebook is responsible for this one, but it is a disappointment to see how social skills face to face have gone down in many people's lives and personality. People can express themselves more fluidly on social media than in person. Facebook is like a mask sometimes, you never know who is who. (Jay)

4.3 Summary

The impact of social media on families is not to be ignored. The impact of social media on relations, in general, gives understanding on how the impact on family relations can be great. It may isolate or hyper-connect, it may decrease trust or destroy family intimacy, it may build greater relations or make things worse.

At this level, the use of social media amongst international students as the main mean of communication for the most cannot lead to questioning the vitality of family relation in their lives as they claim that it is a bond that goes beyond a simple communication tool.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

This section first gives a summary of the study. It recalls the aim, objectives and methodology of the research then gives a conclusion by going through each research objective, one by one, for an explanation. Last but not the least, the chapter ends with suggestions for further research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The motive of the study was based on the fact that education in Palestine is highly valued, but due to the political instabilities, education abroad is the best option for many. The number of immigrant for higher education among males is more dominant compared to female. Therefore, the research is curious about how Palestinian students sustain or develop relationship with family through the use of Facebook.

Thus, this studied aims to understand the influence of social media (precisely Facebook) on the level of family relation vitality through the use of social media as a means of communication. More specifically, the research seeks to define the role of social media in Palestinian students' life at Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus, to understand the impact of social media on family relations of these students and finally, question the vitality of family relation in student's life.

The methodology of the study is qualitative. The collection of data is based on focus groups. The discussions were held with 3 different groups of 6 participant each. The

collected data was analyzed based on thematic analysis and key findings were discussed in themes.

5.2 Conclusions Drawn from the Study

In this section, the research objectives are revisited and elaborated with the findings of the study. Suggestions were as well made for further research.

5.2.1 Research Objective 1

To explain the role of social media in Palestinian students' family life

The role of Facebook in the life of Palestinian students is complex. The data revealed that most spend more than 20minutes a day on Facebook. For some, it is also part of their daily routing and living without it would probably affect them. The main purpose of using the social network is for sharing news and staying updated. Making friends was not the main purpose, but keeping existent relations.

5.2.2 Research Objective 2

To understand the impact of social media on family

Though the participants acknowledged that Facebook played a great role in family communication, but for most, Facebook is not the creator or upgrader of relations, but rather the user himself. They stated that the relation between families is already established and that Facebook is just a facilitator. Without Facebook, other means would be sought in order to maintain the commutation. But meanwhile, Facebook remains the best option.

5.2.3 Research Objective 3

To question the vitality of family relation in Palestinian students' life

Obviously, during the discussion, the participants shared that their relationship with family is unquestionable. And in some cases, Facebook has allowed them to discover

more about their families by helping them be in touch with member of extended family and even discover relations that they were unaware of.

5.2.4 Research Objective 4

To detect what affects may develop due to the use of social media

Loneliness was not detected amongst the participants. Very few agreed on being affected by the use of Facebook. Though some expressed the occurrence of envy caused by other people's post, it was underlined that the interaction on Facebook is less an emotional platform, also due to the fact that the privacy aspect may be questioned.

In sum, it is important to understand the impact that social media has in today's world. It has grown to become one of the most preferred sources of daily information and also a platform for expressing one's mind in the 'electronic way'.

Therefore, social media has been able to shape, change or transform the lives of many in a positive or negative way. Subsequently, family relations are not left behind in this picture. When it comes to international students who are far from home and detached from any face-to-face contact with their families, the role of social media is at its fullest.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

In a further research, the impact of social media in Palestinian students' lives, family relations may be analyzed with a quantitative methodology in a large scale. In this way, the results will be more objectives and it would give a more scientific nature to the study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Focus Group Discussion Session

Background

Being a student in a new environment may be at times difficult, especially when the geographical rupture from home is for the first time. It may demand to make new connections and built new social relations. Also, the level of interaction with the family is diminished and for some, it may be a challenging condition. Therefore, the researcher is curious about how Palestinian students manage to keep, sustain or develop their relationships with family through social media in another geographical area that does not allow face-to-face interaction.

1- Introduction

The facilitator will introduce himself, and explain why the focus group has been gathered and how it will be run. The explanation will be as follow:

We are in a meeting to discuss about students use of Facebook in family relations. This questionnaire aims to measure the influence of social media on family relation among Eastern Mediterranean University International Students. The information given will be used for a study on the topic; however, each participant will remain anonymous in the study. We will start by a few introductory questions, which will be followed by different questions that will cover subjects related to the use of Facebook in family relations. The sessions will be recorded but everything you say will be coding in order to keep it anonym. This session will be part of a Master's thesis.

2- <u>Opening questions</u>

A- May you please introduce yourself by answering the following questions?

1) How many years are you a student?

2) Are you married or are you in a relationship?

B- May you please answer these general questions:

3) When did you start using Social Media?

4) How many hours a day do you spend on social media (please estimate)

5) What technology do you use to be online on social media

6) Do you communicate with your family (Family here means Siblings, Parents or spouse and children)?

7) When did you start using Facebook?

C- May you please sincerely answer these questions? Please remember that the report will keep your responses anonymous.

Give a short brake of 15-20 min with refreshment.

8) Who or what influences your decision to use Facebook?

9) What usually makes you tag members of your family when sharing stories that nay interest

10) What do you think about using Facebook for following what is happening in the lives of family members

11) What is your point of view on having your family as friends on Facebook?

12) What is your experience about using Facebook to communicate with your family?

13) How has your relationship with your family improved through using Facebook?

14) If Facebook didn't exist, how do you think it would affect family relations

15) Some people feel lonely without the use of Facebook. What is your opinion about it?

16) What is your opinion about using Facebook as a source to learn how to build family relation?

17) How do you test information that you find on Facebook?

18) Can you share an experience of feeling envy because of a post related to family on Facebook?

19) What are your best memories in using Facebook?

20) In what way do you find Facebook influential/stimulating for building family relations?

Based on this question:

21) If you were to invite your friend to use Facebook, what would you say?

22) If you were in charge of Facebook, what would you change?

23) What are the best features about Facebook?

24) What are the disappointments in Facebook?

25) As a summarizing question, I would like to ask each of you to share a story where Facebook was the main tool for building your relation with your family; how it influenced your relation.

3- <u>Closing</u>

- From Question 37, get more details where necessary

26) Is there anything else we haven't discussed yet that you think is important to know?

- Thank the participants for the contributions and their time.

- Close the session.

Appendix B: Focus Group Consent Form

Research project title: **Palestinian Students' Use of Social Media in Family Communication**

Research investigator: Amin Abuseifein

This discussion is *voluntary*—you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If any questions
make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. You may leave the group at any time for any reason.

☐ I agree to participate in the focus group carried out Amin Abuseifein of the Eastern Mediterranean University, to aid with the research of Palestinian Students' Use of Social Media in Family Communication

☐ I have read the information related to the Palestinian Students' Use of Social Media in Family Communication research and understand the aims of the project.

☐ I am aware of the topics to be discussed in the focus group.

☐ I am fully informed that I will remain anonymous throughout data reported

☐ I am fully aware that I am not obliged to answer any question

☐ I agree to have the focus group recorded, so it can be transcribed after the focus group is held.

_____
Participant's Name

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researchers Signature   Date

Contact Information

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:
Amin Abuseifein
E-mail: ameen199067@gmail.com

You can also contact Amin Abuseifein supervisor:
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahire Özad
E-mail: bahire.ozad@emu.edu.tr

Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion Session 2 - Transcript

Starting time: 19:00

I will give you a short background, it was prepared in English but I will translate it to Arabic: Being a student in a new environment may be at times difficult, especially when the geographical rupture from home is for the first time. It may demand to make new connections and built new social relations. Also, the level of interaction with the family is diminished and for some, it may be a challenging condition. Therefore, the researcher is curious about how Palestinian students manage to keep, sustain or develop their relationships with family through social media in another geographical area that does not allow face-to-face interaction.

I would like to introduce myself himself, and explain why the focus group has been gathered and how it will be run: My name is Amin Abuseifein. As you most know, I am a master's student and I am conducting a study for my master's thesis. We are in a meeting to discuss about students use of Facebook in family relations. This questionnaire aims to measure the influence of social media on family relation among Eastern Mediterranean University International Students. The information given will be used for a study on the topic; however, each participant will remain anonymous in the study. We will start by a few introductory questions, which will be followed by different questions that will cover subjects related to the use of Facebook in family relations. The sessions will be recorded but everything

you say will be coding in order to keep it anonym. This session will be part of a Master's thesis.

May you please introduce yourself by answering the following questions? Please note that the forms that are being passed on now are for you to accept to be part of this and to understand that we will keep you anonymous. We will not reveal what was said by whom.

1) **How many years are you a student?**

   P9 & P10 – 3 years; P7; P12 – 4 years; P7, P8 & P11 – 5 years.

2) **Are you married or in a relationship?**

   Now, I will ask you some other form of questions. May you please answer?

3) **When did you start using Social Media?**

   P7, P9, P10 & P12 – around 6years ago; P8 & P11 – maybe 4 years ago.

4) **How many hours a day do you spend on social media (please estimate)**

   P8, P9, 11 & P12 –10 hours; P7 & P10 – half a day.

5) What technology do you use to be online on social media?

Everyone: Lap top, desk top and phone.

6) How do you use Facebook?

P11: I use it to communicate through texting and calling. I use it when there is need to pass on or receive or request for needed information.

P8: just like most do, I like browsing through the homepage and reading posts. I also use it to communicate my thoughts and share them with others.

P9: Facebook is multitask, I even use it for school sometimes.

7) When did you start using Facebook?

P7, P9,P10 & P12 – around 6years ago ; P8 & P11 – maybe 4 years ago

 We can have a short brake of 15-20 min with refreshment. Please feel free to serve yourself.

8) Who or what influences your decision to use Facebook?

P7: The availability of most of my family and friends on Facebook and the affordability of communication via Facebook.

P1: In the beginning it was just cool to be there.

P9: Now it is more for my business.

P12:'Social Media? Well, it's hard to say but I guess I achieved quite a list of things, but mainly, it helps me socialize and I guess that is why it exists.

9) What usually makes you tag members of your family when sharing stories that may interest them?

P7: I don't usually tag them.

P8: It's a good way to let them know they are still part of my life. And the ability to express this in so many different, unique and creative ways makes Facebook a good platform for family bonding.

P9: When it's something funny, or make them laugh.

P10: The desire to let them know I still remember them and I am still connected to them. And also because I wish to stay connected to them.

P11: I don't usually tag them.

P12: It's an easier, affordable and enjoyable way to keep in contact with them. Seeing their pictures and posts give me a picture of how they have changed and grown while apart from them.

10) What is your point of view on having your family as friends on Facebook?

P7: It really helps in keeping in contact with them, and it also allows them to get to know more about who I am.

P8: It's not the best,

P9: same with me

P10: It is like they want to monitor everything.

P11: It's not the best way,

P12: It gives less freedom in doing what we want.

11) **What is your experience about using Facebook to communicate with your family?**

P7,8: Calling is quite expensive so it's better.

P10: The joy of receiving a quick response from a loved one, seeing them express themselves, (smileys) and creating new moments even whilst far apart.

P1: It makes it easy.

P12: yes, it makes it easy.

12) **How has your relationship with your family improved through using Facebook?**

P9: Seeing their progress and growth through pictures, videos and posts helps me accept them for who they are and it helps me embrace the changes that have taken place while I am away from home.

Others: yes, he is right, we agree with him, nothing to add….

13) **If Facebook didn't exist, how do you think it would affect family relations?**

P7: Definitely, it would be difficult to maintain a good family bond.

P8: Understanding amongst family members would be very poor, provided that Facebook is the only social media.

P9: If that were not the case, I would simply find a different alternative like Viber, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc.

P10: It would affect everything not just family relation.

Others: we agree with P9.

14) Some people feel lonely without the use of Facebook. What is your opinion about it?

P7: That depends on the people. In my case, I don't feel so lonely because I am mostly working on my purpose in life. Knowing am developing myself by investing in my abilities and talents gives me a good sense of self-worth that I don't need to depend on my family's attention all the time. I do treasure the moments I have with them, I just haven't made that my foundation for life.

P8: That is an addiction and it shouldn't happen.

P9 &10: Yes, that's an addiction.

P11: If you have something to do, then you shouldn't spend much time on Facebook.

P12: Actually, Facebook itself can get boring.

15) What is your opinion about using Facebook as a source to learn how to build family relation?

P7, P8 & 9: it's a bad idea.

P10 & 11: It doesn't play any major role in that.

P12: For a person like me who comes from a large family tree, it helps me catch up with relatives that are far away, as in abroad, and also those that I had little time to spend with during my earlier years.

16) How do you test information that you find on Facebook?

P7: I contact the origin of the information or the source to which that information is related too.

P7&8: I sometimes google.

P10: I usually use Facebook when relaxing so I don't bother trusting much of it.

P11 & 12: It depends on the source.

17) **Can you share an experience of feeling envy because of a post related to family on Facebook?**

P7: sometimes, yes

P8: I have no such experience. I am content with what I have.

P9: At some point yes.

P10: I am not sure, but I think, no.

P11: When we are not in good terms with some of the member.

P12: no never.

18) **What are your best memories in using Facebook?**

[laugh!] [noise!] … we can't share them here!

19) **In what way do you find Facebook influential/stimulating for building family relations?**

P8: The many variants of creativity that can be used to express a message.

P11: Not in any way.

Other: nothing really.

Based on this question:

20) **If you were to invite your friend to use Facebook, what would you say?**

P10: Facebook is good for creating, developing and maintaining relationships, just don't get too addicted.

P12: I would invite them for business purposes

Others: it's Facebook, we think all our friends know about it already!

21) If you were in charge of Facebook, what would you change?

P7: Nothing as far as the interface is concerned.

P8: I would make categories of Facebook just to make things faster, like Facebook-corporate; this is specifically for business, so an user that uses this category knows they will only find business related material.

P10: It's really hard to pick out something to change when people can simply open up their own page, but this makes it faster to find other business pages as this will contain only business-related information.

P11: The invitations for games are annoying sometimes.

P12: I don't know.

22) What are the disappointments in Facebook?

P11: I don't think Facebook is responsible for this one, but it is a disappointment to see how social skills face to face have gone down in many people's lives and personality.

P12: yes, his right; people can express themselves more fluidly on social media than in .person. Facebook is like a mask sometimes, you never know who is who.

Others: yes, they are right.

23) In your experience, how has Facebook achieved what you expected?

P8: The fact that I can still let my family know of how am doing and find out how they are doing is really makes my life away from home easier.

Others: Yes, it's easy to reach out people.

24) **As a summarizing question, I would like to ask each of you to share a story where Facebook was the main tool for building your relation with your family; how it influenced your relation.**

P11: I never knew much about my father, he passed away 12 years ago. I found a relative via Facebook that explained to me my family tree and also helped me catch up on my father history.

Others: we wouldn't like to share it here .

 We are coming to the end of our session.

25) **Is there anything else we haven't discussed yet that you think is important to know?**

Participants: No.

 Thank you all for your contributions and their time. It was very helpful for the study.

Close the session.

Finishing Time: 20:10