

Article

Digital technology and its impact on the social change of the Saudi family

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Abstract: This study investigates the effects of digital technologies on family relationships and social norms and customs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A quantitative methodology with a descriptive design was used to determine the relationship between the independent variable (family relationships) and the dependent variables (family relationships and social norms and customs). There were 159 participants involved in this research survey, and their ages ranged from less than 25 years up to 45 years for both males and females. The research findings showed that digital technologies have no effect on family relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and digital technologies have a significant effect on social norms and customs.

Keywords: family relationships; digital technologies; Saudi Arabia;

JEL Classification: O14

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INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technologies has altered our way of life (ICT). These days, technology has dramatically improved quality of life by efficiently and effectively reaching millions of people (Ohiagu, 2010). Worldwide social change has been greatly impacted by the unprecedentedly fast development of digital technology, especially the worldwide communications technologies made possible by the growing cutting-edge, internationally based electronic messaging and networking technologies (Idogo, 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that the traditional barriers of time and distance that have up until now prevented the transfer of knowledge, skill, and expertise from one place to another are quickly being eliminated by the emerging technological advances such as radio, television, cellular phones, computers, Internet, and modems (Yusuf and Yusuf 2009). While "digital technology" is broadly described as a set of activities that make it easier to capture, store, analyze, transmit, and display information via electronic methods (Yusuf and Yusuf 2009). On the other hand, "social change" describes any substantial change over time in behavioral patterns and cultural values and conventions (Nwoke and Chukwuorji, 2011). A society's shift or transformation of its social structure is invariably brought on by changes in social interactions. And in this regard, the family serves as the cornerstone of society's social order. Social change is described as a considerable shift of social structures (i.e., patterns of action and interaction), including the results and expressions of such structures in the form of norms, values, cultural artifacts, and symbols. It happens in all social structures, including families, communities, and countries (CliffsNotes.com, 2012). Social change is described as a considerable shift of social structures (i.e., patterns of action and interaction), including the results and expressions of such structures in the form of norms, values, cultural artifacts, and symbols. It happens in all social structures, including families, communities, and countries (CliffsNotes.com, 2012). Now the question is to what extent these changes in family structure, duties, and conventionally assigned functions have been impacted by digital technology. Although there has been a significant advancement in the measurement of the impact of digital technology and use on human capital development, education, and the exploration of their relationships in the context of their place in the social, economic, and environmental realms, there has been little progress in the measurement of

the impacts of digital technology on the family structure and functions (Levi et al. 2008).

Advances in digital technology have sparked varying degrees of social transformation, which has inevitably changed the family. Therefore, it is important to take into account not just how technology is used, but also how much it contributes to new societal ideas about parenting and family dynamics, as well as how globalization has the potential to alter established social structures. This means it is impossible to study the perceived effects of digital technology in isolation from any other social developments. Instead, it is possible to investigate whether people in Saudi Arabia believe that Saudi society, particularly the family, is changing and, if so, what role they attribute to the internet in these changes (Alolyan, 2015). According to Alamri (2001), a normal Saudi family consists of the parents and their children, who are typically around seven years old, as well as any male lineal extensions (patrilineal). When it comes to declared beliefs, judicial systems, and social mores, Saudi society has a strong Islamic foundation. In particular, Islamic law, which derives from the prophet's sayings or "sunnah" and the holy book "The Quran," governs most elements of social and economic relations as well as legislation within Saudi culture (Alsaif, 1997; Long, 2005). Therefore, a family might be said to consist of a man, his children, and their children by patrilineal ancestry (Metz, 1992). This results in a complicated family structure that incorporates specific traditions, practices, and social standards.

For the past 10 years, it has become apparent that there has been a more rapid increase in the use of digital technology such as social media communication in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A). Saudi society has become more interested in the usage of social media networks, which have become a real phenomenon. According to Paris (2012), Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, ranks 10th worldwide for the number of tweets posted on Twitter. Moreover, people in the K.S.A. use social media networks to discuss social issues, share pictures, post daily events, meet new friends, share knowledge, communicate with other people, and have fun. As a result, people in the K.S.A. have spent most of their time sitting and using their devices, especially since smartphones and tablet devices were invented. Smart phones and tablet computers contribute to the growth of social media websites in the K. S. A. Additionally, these websites created more chat and phone communication applications. They foster cross-national connections. On the flip side of the coin, the increased use of social media networks for communication has widened gaps

inside families, notably inter-partnerships, as well as within other relationships, typically intra-relationships. Numerous variables affect people's decision to spend a lot of time communicating on social media, which in turn affects their social life. People spend the majority of their time on social networks because they spend so much time on their phones or computers. This occurs as a result of the lack of social engagement and family ties (Messaoudene & Alaeed, 2012).

This study makes an effort to understand how digital technology has affected social transformation among Saudi households in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The current study also sheds light on how social networking and the Internet have affected family connections. This study also reveals how social media and the internet influence family ties and norms and customs in Saudi Arabia.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The following primary goals related to Saudi society will be investigated and identified in order to accomplish this:

To explore the perceived influence of digital technology on Saudi families and society in terms of family relationships.

To explore the perceived influence of digital technology on Saudi families and society in terms of social norms, traditions, and customs.

Research Questions

The following are the study's research questions:

1. Is there a statistical relationship between the digital technology and the family relationships of Saudi families in Riyadh city in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
2. Is there a statistical relationship between the digital technology and the social norms, traditions, and customs of Saudi families in Riyadh city in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since its formation in 1932, Saudi Arabia has grown to be the largest nation in the Gulf region. It is home to numerous cities and numerous tribal groups. Together, these factors have produced a social structure that includes a feeling of national identity, variances in culture and social norms between tribes, and social divisions across geographic regions from the South to the North and from the East to the West (Alsaif, 1997). It is noteworthy that Saudi Arabia and its predecessor territories have never been

colonized by western powers, in contrast to many other nations. Additionally, Saudi civilization was built from several tribes that have had their own layer of culture and customs, similar to other Arabian nations (Messaoudene & Alaeed, 2012). Digital technology has had a profound impact on social change in Saudi Arabia. The country has been undergoing significant changes, including the implementation of reforms aimed at modernizing its economy and society, and the increasing influence of digital technology has played a key role in this transformation (Alanazi, 2018).

Digital Technology in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Digital technology has different tools and faces, Internet, social media platforms, and e-communication. Regular and extensive internet connectivity is a relatively new development, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Prior to the mid-1990s, most of it required some level of technical know-how, and, until around the year 2000, access speeds and, consequently, what could be viewed and downloaded, were constrained by the speed of traditional telephone lines. Equally, access typically required the ability to physically connect a computer to a phone line (Firth & Mellor, 2005; Internet Statistics Compendium, 2009). These limitations started to loosen starting around the year 2000. First, the fundamental technology improved, making it easier for users to use it without needing to have a certain level of specialized knowledge (Carter, 2008). Second, faster and more dependable connections were made possible by the expansion of broadband in the industrialized nations that make up the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. The concept that a computer required to be physically attached to a phone line was disproved by the development of wireless technology. Finally, a generation that had grown up with information technology (IT) and experienced its use as a natural part of their lives began to enter their teens and early adolescence (Kraut et al., 2006). The internet is fundamentally a tool for communication. It enables people to communicate with one another, exchange information, look for information, and take part in a number of social activities. As a result, Tidwell & Walther (2002) define computer-mediated communication (CMC) as a technique in which people use computers to communicate with one another using asynchronous and synchronous systems in order to exchange text, images, and have interactive dialogues (Carter, 2008).

Social media networks are another aspect of digital technology. It is true that globalization has made the world into a global village. "Communication

technology connects citizens of every nation" (Adler et al., 2012). The way we communicate with one another through social media has undergone a significant transformation. Web-based services that enable users to (1) create 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 and traverse both their list of connections and those made by others within the system are what we refer to as social network sites (Boyd & Ellison, 2013). Social media has a significant impact on interpersonal communication and is clearly having an impact on how we connect and communicate in society as a whole (Keller, 2013). Keller (2013) adds that Professor Paul Booth of DePaul University Chicago asserts that "there has been a change in the way we communicate; instead of face-to-face engagement, we're preferring to choose mediated communication... We prefer texting over phone calls and meeting in person (p.10). Social media has undoubtedly changed how we interact and communicate with one another across all contexts and age groups. With 90 million daily views, Saudi Arabia also boasts the greatest YouTube usage per capita in the world (Black, 2013). It would seem strange that a totalitarian state with no political parties, and extremely strict moral laws would have such a phenomenally large and well-liked social media universe. Millions of Saudis use Twitter to share clean jokes, discuss their work, and express their political opinions (Black, 2013). Furthermore, according to Alanazi (2018), use of social media is closely regulated by the government and is subject to censorship at any time if it is thought to be too subversive.

Even in Saudi Arabia, a highly conservative Islamic country, social media will continue to become more and more ingrained in everyday life. Social media has been incorporated into other communications technologies that came before it, thus it will soon be fully interwoven into daily life. Our relationships, particularly family ties, are significantly impacted by the changes brought about by social media communication today and in the future (Alanazi, 2018).

We can say the growth of social media networks in Saudi Arabia has been significant in recent years. Some contributing factors include increased access to high-speed internet and mobile devices, a young and tech-savvy population, rising disposable income and purchasing power, and government support and investment in technology and innovation. As a result, social media usage in the country has become widespread, with a significant portion of the population using social media platforms for both

personal and business purposes. The growth trend is expected to continue in the coming years.

Social Change of Saudi's Families

The family is the most significant socioeconomic class in Saudi Arabia. Three to four generations of extended families typically reside in large homes with high walls and are housed together. Families in Saudi Arabia, an Arab and Islamic country, are often well off thanks to the oil boom, and the children are well taken care of and frequently indulged in (North & Tripp, 2009). The morals and standards are developed from a blend of regional tradition and religious interpretation, with a focus on social ties in particular, both inside the family and in terms of wider societal relationships.

Saudi society is strongly influenced by religion in terms of its professed beliefs, judicial system, and social mores. In particular, Islamic law, which derives from the prophet's sayings or "sunnah" and the holy book "The Quran," governs most elements of social and economic relations as well as legislation within Saudi culture (Alsaif, 1997; Long, 2005). Every Muslim's sense of self in Saudi Arabia is strongly influenced by the religious values and norms of Islam. However, some authors contend that exposure to outside influences, such as those from the internet and social media, may have an impact on these standards and give women in particular a way to get over religiously based rules like gender segregation.

Saudi society is quite traditional in terms of both religion and culture (Long, 2005; Hamdan, 2005). The following are the primary components of the culture:

- Customs: The norms that people adhere to in their community are established by the religious and customary values that make them up. In a culture constructed along the lines that apply in Saudi Arabia with the importance of kinship and religion, failure to adhere to any of these conventions might be seen as a rebellion against society (Alsaif, 1997).
- Traditions: are actions that are associated with a particular social group or the home; they are less binding than conventions (Alsaif, 1997). Traditions are therefore not as powerful as conventions and the consequences for breaking them are not as severe.
- Norms: characterized as the unwritten social structure made up of values and principles inherited from a group's philosophy, history, and religious convictions. Additionally, this reflects a set of accepted social standards that establish appropriate and inappropriate behavior as well as appropriate and inappropriate interactions within

social cultures. However, they play a crucial role in upholding a specific type of social interactions since they serve as a representation of expected behavior (Alsaif, 1997).

- Values: Alsaif (1997) contends that values capture the circumstances, principles, and subjects that have been given significance through the history of a certain civilization. Values are defined as human moral value.

METHODOLOGY

The goals of this part are to present the methodology and research design approaches. These tactics include the research design, site description, sample and population estimation, instrumentation and measurement, data processing, and study restriction. This part justifies the methods used to sustain the research and offers evidence to strengthen its goal of being analytical and accurate. All of them provide credibility to the conclusions and the way the data were interpreted. Two variables are measured: social change and digital technology. The correlation between the variables can be described using a descriptive study design. The relationship between variables is determined via descriptive research designs. We can determine whether there is a relationship between the independent variable (digital technology) and the dependent variable using the descriptive design (social change). Additionally, it gives greater details regarding how the variables' characteristics and roles in analyses and the discovery of correlations between the variables are explained.

Saudi Arabia, a country in the Middle East, served as the site of the research. Saudi Arabia is one of the largest countries in the Arabian Peninsula and is situated in west Asia, according to the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia. Mecca and Alma Dinah are two sacred cities in Saudi Arabia, which is why it is known as the country where Islam was born. Saudi citizens speak Arabic as their primary language, and Riyadh City is the capital of Saudi Arabia. 90% of Saudi Arabia's estimated 27 million residents are Muslims.

In Saudi Arabia, the study was carried out. Participants included both male and female family members in Riyadh City, the kingdom's capital. Snowball nonprobability approach was used for the sample. To choose respondents, the researcher used a snowball sampling technique. With the aim of having individuals whose individual demographics and traits, when combined, represented the total population, the participants were carefully chosen. Evidently, the entire community and population

were represented in addition to the participants. As a result, the individuals were chosen based on their traits and demographics.

Making web sites allowed for the administration of the questionnaires. The subjects received the surveys electronically. The researcher thinks that this method of data collection was both cheaper and superior than others. Another advantage of using surveys is that participants have time to consider their responses, which may reduce the rate of inaccuracies. Since individuals were not compelled to share their responses with others in order to submit data, they could also thoroughly complete important survey questions and feel more at ease doing so.

DATA ANALYSIS

Reliability

The Cronbach Alfa test was used to measure the reliability. Jnr et al. (2007) indicated that Cronbach alpha values between 0.70 and 0.80 indicate high reliability, if the Cronbach value is between 0.60 and 0.70, the reliability is adequate, and if the value is less than 0.60, it indicates poor yet acceptable reliability.

Table 1 shows the reliability values of the variables, the values ranging from 0.636 for digital technology to 0.908 for family relationships that means the questionnaire has high reliability.

Characteristic of Data

This section describes the demographic data of the respondents, it includes gender, age, qualifications, experience, and annual salary.

In table 2, it is clear that the male ratio is higher than the female percentage, while respondents aged less than 25 years have the highest participation 90.6%. 73.6% of the respondents has average annual salary less than 30000 RS, whilst, 9.4% has average annual salary 30000 - 60000 RS and 60000 - 90000 RS. As for qualification, it is obvious that most of the respondents have a bachelor degree and less. Besides, most of respondents has experience level less than 5 years.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the study variables, the first column represents the variables of study which are digital technologies (independent variable), and family relationships and social norms and customs (dependent variables). The second column indicates to the mean value, and the third column deals with the values of standard deviation, and n value is the number of respondents.

The correlation analysis assisted in determining the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (table 4). Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized to demonstrate the relationship's direction, strength, and significance. Based on the results, the Pearson's correlation of the variables is positive, digital technologies has a positive correlation with family relationships ($r=0.543$, $P<0.01$) and with social norms and customs ($r=0.352$, $P<0.01$). Moreover, family relationships has a positive correlation with social norms and customs ($r=0.490$, $P<0.01$).

To analyze the study's hypotheses, the researchers used IBM SPSS version 25 to conduct simple linear regression in order to measure the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variables. The results in Table 5 indicate that digital technologies have no effect on family relationships, the P-value is 0.474, this value is higher than 0.05 which means digital technologies don't predict the family relationships. This allows to reject the first hypothesis.

The results presented in Table 6 show that digital technologies have a significant effect on social norms and customs, the P-value <0.05 , which can be considered as a predictor of social norms and customs. This leads to accept the second hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the current study was to determine the level of changes in family relationships and social norms and customs in recent years as substantial digital technologies have commenced in Saudi Arabia. In particular, whether or not this has had a direct or indirect impact on the traditions, norms, and customs of the social systems inside Saudi Arabia. The review of the literature tells us that this study is significant because out of all the countries in the Middle East, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.) has, in recent years, continued to increase its digital technologies. The results showed that families have high awareness regarding the negative effect of technology, they stated that the relationships among them are not affected by the technological progress in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which indicates that the family's relationships are strongly tied. Also, the results showed that the Saudi families showed a significant vision to that their social norms, customs, and traditions will not be affected by the progress of technology. The most important point in the results is that most of the respondents were adults in the first of their life, they are 25 years and less, most of them are male, and their work experience is less than five

years. This segment of Saudi people may be the most flexible one that may be affected by modern technology, but the results showed high resistance to that effect.

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1
Reliability test results

Constructs	Cronbach Alfa	Number of items
Digital technology	0.636	6
Family relationships	0.908	15
Social norms and customs	0.784	6

Table 2
Characteristics of data

Demographic profile	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	138	86.8
Female	21	13.2
Total	159	100.0
<u>Age</u>		
Less than 25 years	144	90.6
25 - 35 year	12	7.5
36 - 45 year	3	1.9
Total	159	100.0
<u>Average annual salary</u>		
Less than 30000 RS	117	73.6
30000 - 60000 RS	15	9.4
60000 - 90000 RS	15	9.4
More than 90000 RS	12	7.5
Total	159	100.0
<u>Qualification</u>		
Bachelor and less	150	94.3
Master	3	1.9
PhD	6	3.8
Total	159	100.0
<u>Experience</u>		
Less than 5 years	132	83.0
5 - 10 years	12	7.5
More than 5 years	15	9.4
Total	159	100.0

Table 3
Mean and Standard deviation of the variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Digital technologies	4.7013	.33019	159
Family relationships	2.9094	.80558	159
Social norms and customs	2.2547	.77922	159

Table 4
Correlation Coefficient

Variables		Digital technologies	Family relationships	Social norms and customs
Digital technologies	Pearson Correlation	1	.543**	.352**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	227	227	227
Family relationships	Pearson Correlation	.543**	1	.490**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	227	227	227
Social norms and customs	Pearson Correlation	.352**	.490**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	227	227	227

Table 5
The regression results (Digital technologies and Family relationships)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.565	.916		3.891	.000
Digital technologies	-.139	.194	-.057	-.717	.474

a. Dependent Variable: Family relationships

Table 6
The regression results (Digital technologies and social norms and customs)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.229	.873		4.842	.000
Digital technologies	-.420	.185	-.178	-2.266	.025

a. Dependent Variable: Social norms and customs