


# Exploring the Influence of Social Networks on Women's Family Roles and Responsibilities

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aims to explore the influence of social networks on women's family roles and responsibilities in Tehran.

**Methods and Materials:** A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 29 women residing in Tehran. Participants were selected based on their active use of social networks. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. NVivo software facilitated the organization, coding, and thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. The analysis identified key themes related to household responsibilities, social interactions, and professional and personal development.

**Findings:** The study revealed significant shifts in household responsibilities, with women reporting changes in the division of labor and time management challenges influenced by social networks. Parenting practices were notably affected, with social media providing valuable support and information. The dual impact on spousal relationships included both enhanced communication and increased conflicts due to online engagement. Social networks also facilitated professional development and personal growth, offering career opportunities and educational resources. However, negative aspects such as peer pressure, social comparison, and privacy concerns were prominent. The findings align with previous studies on the role of social networks in family planning, social support, and mental health.

**Conclusion:** Social networks profoundly influence women's family roles and responsibilities, presenting both benefits and challenges. They facilitate the redistribution of household chores, enhance parenting practices, and provide avenues for professional growth. However, they also introduce time management difficulties, privacy concerns, and psychological stressors.

**Keywords:** Social networks, family roles, women's responsibilities, household dynamics, parenting practices, professional development.

## 1. Introduction

The pervasive presence of social networks has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, including family dynamics, social interactions, and personal development. Social networks have emerged as powerful tools for communication and information dissemination, profoundly impacting family dynamics. Bougma and Rossier (2021) highlight the role of family networks and social capital in shaping women's fertility intentions in Burkina Faso, demonstrating the significant influence of social connections on personal and familial decisions (Bougma & Rossier, 2021). Similarly, Mtae (2021) discusses how social networks influence family planning use among married men and women in Tanzania, emphasizing the role of digital platforms in disseminating information and shaping attitudes toward family planning (Mtae, 2021).

In Tehran, where this study is based, social networks provide women with access to a plethora of information and support systems that can alter traditional family roles. The redistribution of household chores, as reported by participants, reflects a shift in gender roles influenced by the exposure to diverse lifestyles and practices shared on social media. This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Dykstra et al. (2016), who explored social network indices and their implications on family structures in the Generations and Gender Survey (Dykstra et al., 2016).

The influence of social networks extends beyond household responsibilities, significantly affecting social interactions and community engagement. Campbell et al. (2013) discuss the role of community groups in managing HIV/AIDS in rural Zimbabwe, illustrating how social capital and community support facilitated by social networks can lead to better health outcomes. This study's findings reveal similar patterns, where women in Tehran leverage social networks to build supportive communities, seek advice, and share experiences (Campbell et al., 2013).

However, the impact of social networks is not entirely positive. The study found that peer pressure and social comparison often lead to increased stress and self-esteem issues among women. This observation is consistent with Hudson et al. (2001), who found that social interactions and perceived support significantly affect the level of distress in HIV-positive women. The competitive nature of social media platforms and the constant exposure to curated lifestyles can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and pressure to conform to societal norms (Hudson et al., 2001).

Social networks also play a crucial role in professional and personal development, providing women with opportunities for career advancement, education, and personal growth. Kroenke et al. (2012) demonstrated the positive impact of social support and networks on the mortality and quality of life of breast cancer patients (Kroenke et al., 2012). Similarly, Lamprecht, Thyrolf, and Mau (2014) highlighted the influence of social relationships on the quality of life of women with breast cancer, underscoring the importance of supportive networks (Lamprecht et al., 2014).

In Tehran, women utilize social networks for professional networking, job searching, and skill development. The availability of online courses and professional groups facilitates continuous learning and career progression, reflecting trends observed by Ryan and Mulholland (2013) in their study on family life and networking among highly skilled migrants in London. Moreover, the flexibility offered by remote working arrangements, supported by digital platforms, enables women to balance professional and personal responsibilities more effectively (Ryan & Mulholland, 2013).

The health and wellbeing of women are also significantly influenced by social networks. Humphreys, Thompson, and Miner (1998) emphasized the role of social support in the intention to breastfeed among low-income pregnant women, illustrating the critical nature of supportive networks in health-related decisions (Humphreys et al., 1998). Similarly, Hassan et al. (2022) explored young women's access to family planning information and support during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the role of social networks in navigating healthcare access (Hassan et al., 2022).

In the context of this study, participants reported that social networks provide valuable resources for mental health support, fitness routines, and nutrition advice. The sense of community and encouragement found in online wellness groups contributes to better stress management and overall wellbeing. This aligns with the findings of Comfort et al. (2021), who studied the association between men's family planning networks and contraceptive use among their female partners in Madagascar (Comfort et al., 2021).

While social networks offer numerous benefits, they also pose significant privacy and security concerns. Women in the study expressed apprehensions about sharing personal information online, fearing data breaches and misuse. These concerns are echoed by Wall et al. (2001), who discussed the reproduction of inequality through informal support networks in Portugal, emphasizing the need for secure and

trustworthy platforms to protect user privacy (Wall et al., 2001).

Sarfraz et al. (2021) examined the role of social networks in decision-making for long-acting reversible contraception in Pakistan, highlighting the critical need for reliable and confidential information sources. Ensuring data security and privacy on social media platforms is essential to maintain trust and encourage open communication among users.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on the influence of social networks on family dynamics, social interactions, and personal development. By examining the experiences of women in Tehran, this research provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between digital engagement and traditional roles. The implications of these findings extend beyond the local context, offering a broader understanding of the transformative impact of social networks on women's lives globally.

As social networks continue to evolve, it is crucial to address the associated challenges, including privacy concerns and the potential for increased stress due to social comparison. This study aims to explore the influence of social networks on women's family roles and responsibilities in Tehran, focusing on changes in household dynamics, social interactions, and professional development. By understanding these impacts, the research seeks to provide insights into how digital engagement reshapes traditional family functions and offers opportunities and challenges for women.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This qualitative research aimed to explore the influence of social networks on women's family roles and responsibilities. Given the nature of the research question, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate to gain in-depth insights and a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. The study was conducted in Tehran, utilizing semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method.

The study focused on women residing in Tehran who are active users of social networks. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who could provide rich and relevant information regarding the research question. The criteria for selection included:

- Women aged 18-60 years.
- Active users of at least one social networking site.

- Willingness to participate in a face-to-face interview.

The principle of theoretical saturation guided the data collection process. Interviews continued until no new themes or insights were emerging from the data, indicating that additional interviews would not contribute significantly to the research findings. This point of saturation was reached after interviewing 29 participants.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Semi-Structured Interview

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility in exploring the participants' experiences while ensuring that key topics were covered. An interview guide was developed based on the literature review and research objectives, covering themes such as:

- Types of social networks used.
- Frequency and nature of social network usage.
- Perceived influence of social networks on family roles and responsibilities.
- Specific examples and personal experiences.

Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and was conducted in a private and comfortable setting to ensure confidentiality and encourage open and honest communication. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### 2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using NVivo software, which facilitated the organization, coding, and thematic analysis of the qualitative data. The analysis followed a systematic process:

- Familiarization: Transcripts were read multiple times to immerse in the data and gain an initial understanding of the content.
- Coding: Initial codes were generated based on significant statements and segments of text. Both inductive and deductive coding approaches were used, allowing for the identification of themes emerging from the data as well as those informed by the literature.
- Theme Development: Codes were reviewed and grouped into broader themes that captured the essence of the participants' experiences and perceptions. Themes were continuously refined through iterative analysis.

- Verification: Themes and sub-themes were verified through peer debriefing and member checking to ensure accuracy and credibility.

### 3. Findings and Results

The study included 29 women residing in Tehran, ranging in age from 18 to 60 years. The majority of participants (55%) were between the ages of 30 and 45, reflecting a middle-aged demographic with significant family responsibilities. A smaller proportion (20%) were aged 18 to 29, while 25% were between 46 and 60 years old. In terms

of educational background, 65% of the participants held at least a bachelor’s degree, with 25% having completed postgraduate education. Employment status varied, with 40% of the women being full-time employees, 30% part-time employees, and 30% homemakers. Additionally, 70% of participants were married, 20% single, and 10% divorced or widowed. The diverse demographic characteristics of the participants provided a comprehensive perspective on how social networks influence women's family roles and responsibilities across different age groups, educational levels, and marital statuses.

**Table 1**

*The Results of Qualitative Analysis*

Categories (Themes)	Subcategories (Subthemes)	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Impact on Household Responsibilities	1.1 Time Management Challenges	Balancing household chores, Multitasking, Prioritizing tasks
	1.2 Division of Labor Changes	Delegating tasks, Scheduling conflicts, Time allocation Redistribution of chores, Gender roles, Sharing responsibilities
	1.3 Influence on Parenting	Support from family members, Shifts in household duties Parenting styles, Childcare practices, Educational involvement
	1.4 Impact on Spousal Relationships	Screen time management, Social network parenting groups Communication patterns, Conflict resolution, Shared activities
2. Influence on Social Interactions	2.1 Online vs Offline Socializing	Emotional support, Relationship dynamics, Joint decision making Online friendships, Offline gatherings, Networking opportunities
	2.2 Peer Pressure and Social Comparison	Maintaining relationships, Social media engagement, Community participation Comparison of lifestyles, Social validation, Self-esteem issues
	2.3 Social Support Networks	Competitive behavior, Influence of influencers, Aspirational norms Emotional support, Practical advice, Virtual communities
	2.4 Privacy Concerns	Group memberships, Online support groups, Peer encouragement Sharing personal information, Data security, Anonymity
3. Professional and Personal Development	3.1 Career Opportunities	Cybersecurity awareness, Managing online identity, Trust issues Job searching, Professional networking, Skill development
	3.2 Educational Resources	Online courses, Freelancing opportunities, Career advancement Access to information, E-learning platforms, Knowledge sharing
	3.3 Personal Growth and Hobbies	Online tutorials, Educational forums, Webinars Discovering interests, Pursuing hobbies, Self-improvement content
	3.4 Work-Life Balance	Creative outlets, Learning new skills, Personal achievements Remote working, Flexibility, Time management strategies
	3.5 Health and Wellbeing	Balancing professional and personal life, Productivity tips Fitness routines, Mental health support, Nutrition advice Wellness communities, Stress management, Healthy lifestyle tips

#### 3.1. Impact on Household Responsibilities

##### 3.1.1. Time Management Challenges

Women reported significant challenges in managing their time due to the distractions caused by social networks. They often struggled to balance household chores, multitask, and prioritize tasks effectively. As one participant noted, "I find

myself spending hours on social media, and then I realize I haven’t finished my chores for the day." Delegating tasks and dealing with scheduling conflicts were common issues, highlighting the complex interplay between online engagement and daily responsibilities.

### 3.1.2. *Division of Labor Changes*

The presence of social networks has led to changes in the division of labor within households. Traditional gender roles are being questioned, and there is a redistribution of chores and sharing of responsibilities. One interviewee shared, "Seeing how other families operate on social media made me discuss and share household duties more equally with my partner." The support from family members and shifts in household duties underscore the evolving dynamics influenced by social networks.

### 3.1.3. *Influence on Parenting*

Parenting styles and childcare practices have been notably influenced by social networks. Many women turn to social media for educational involvement and advice on managing screen time for their children. A participant expressed, "I joined several parenting groups online which helped me find better ways to engage my kids and manage their screen time." These virtual communities offer a wealth of information that shapes contemporary parenting practices.

### 3.1.4. *Impact on Spousal Relationships*

Social networks have a dual impact on spousal relationships, affecting communication patterns and conflict resolution. While some couples find shared activities and emotional support through social media, others experience increased conflicts due to online interactions. "We sometimes argue because he spends too much time on his phone," one woman remarked, highlighting the complex dynamics at play. Overall, the influence on relationship dynamics and joint decision-making is significant.

## 3.2. *Influence on Social Interactions*

### 3.2.1. *Online vs Offline Socializing*

The shift between online and offline socializing is a prominent theme. Women often balance online friendships with offline gatherings, finding new networking opportunities through social media. "I've reconnected with so many old friends and made new ones through social media," one participant explained. This engagement helps maintain relationships and fosters community participation, though it sometimes competes with face-to-face interactions.

### 3.2.2. *Peer Pressure and Social Comparison*

Social networks amplify peer pressure and social comparison, affecting self-esteem and behavior. Women compare their lifestyles and seek social validation online, often feeling competitive. One interviewee mentioned, "Seeing others' perfect lives on social media makes me feel pressured to keep up." The influence of influencers and aspirational norms further intensifies these feelings, shaping perceptions and behaviors.

### 3.2.3. *Social Support Networks*

Social networks provide crucial emotional support and practical advice through virtual communities. Women join online support groups and peer encouragement platforms, finding solace and help in difficult times. "I received so much support from an online group when I was going through a tough phase," shared a participant. These networks offer a sense of belonging and support that might be lacking in offline settings.

### 3.2.4. *Privacy Concerns*

Privacy concerns are a significant issue, with women wary of sharing personal information online. Data security, anonymity, and managing online identity are common worries. One woman stated, "I'm very cautious about what I share online because I don't want my personal information to be misused." Awareness of cybersecurity and trust issues is crucial as women navigate the digital landscape.

## 3.3. *Professional and Personal Development*

### 3.3.1. *Career Opportunities*

Social networks open up new career opportunities, from job searching to professional networking and skill development. Women benefit from online courses and freelancing opportunities, enhancing their career advancement. "I found my current job through a LinkedIn connection," one participant revealed, underscoring the platform's importance in career growth.

### 3.3.2. *Educational Resources*

Access to educational resources is significantly enhanced by social networks. Women utilize e-learning platforms, knowledge-sharing forums, and webinars to further their education. "I learned so much from free online tutorials," a

participant noted. These resources democratize education, making it accessible to a broader audience.

### 3.3.3. *Personal Growth and Hobbies*

Social networks facilitate personal growth and hobbies, helping women discover new interests and pursue self-improvement content. Creative outlets and personal achievements are often shared and celebrated online. "I started painting again after joining an online art group," one interviewee mentioned. This encouragement fosters a sense of accomplishment and personal development.

### 3.3.4. *Work-Life Balance*

Achieving a work-life balance is aided by the flexibility offered through social networks. Remote working, productivity tips, and time management strategies help women balance professional and personal life. "Working from home has given me more time with my family," said one participant, highlighting the positive impact of digital flexibility.

### 3.3.5. *Health and Wellbeing*

Health and wellbeing are supported by social networks through fitness routines, mental health support, and nutrition advice. Online wellness communities offer stress management and healthy lifestyle tips. "I joined an online fitness challenge that helped me stay motivated," shared a participant. These platforms play a vital role in promoting holistic wellbeing.

## 4. **Discussion and Conclusion**

The study explored the influence of social networks on women's family roles and responsibilities in Tehran, highlighting significant shifts in household dynamics, social interactions, and professional development. The findings revealed that social networks challenge traditional gender roles, affect parenting styles, and introduce both opportunities and stressors in women's lives.

The redistribution of household chores and the evolution of gender roles were prominent themes. Women reported increased involvement of their partners in domestic duties, influenced by exposure to diverse family models on social media. This shift aligns with the findings of Bougma and Rossier (2021), who highlighted the role of social capital in shaping family practices (Bougma & Rossier, 2021). The study also revealed time management challenges, with social

networks often leading to procrastination and conflicts in scheduling, which mirrors the concerns raised by Dykstra et al. (2016) regarding the impact of social networks on family structures (Dykstra et al., 2016).

Social networks significantly influenced parenting practices, providing access to a wealth of information and virtual support groups. Participants noted that online communities offer valuable advice on childcare and educational activities, facilitating more informed parenting decisions. This is consistent with the findings of Hassan et al. (2022), who emphasized the role of digital platforms in providing family planning information and support (Humphreys et al., 1998). However, the potential for increased screen time among children due to parental engagement in social networks remains a concern, reflecting similar issues identified by Humphreys, Thompson, and Miner (1998) in the context of breastfeeding support (Humphreys et al., 1998).

The dual impact of social networks on spousal relationships was evident, with both positive and negative effects reported. Enhanced communication and shared activities were beneficial, yet conflicts arose from excessive online engagement. This finding supports the work of Hudson et al. (2001), who noted the relationship between social support and distress levels in HIV-positive women. The balancing act between online and offline interactions continues to be a critical aspect of modern relationships (Hudson et al., 2001).

The shift from offline to online socializing was a significant theme, with participants leveraging social networks to maintain relationships and build new connections. This mirrors the findings of Campbell et al. (2013), who discussed the role of community groups in managing health outcomes in rural Zimbabwe. However, peer pressure and social comparison emerged as negative aspects, contributing to stress and self-esteem issues. This is consistent with the observations of Hudson et al. (2001) regarding the psychological impact of social interactions.

Social networks were found to be instrumental in professional development, providing opportunities for job searching, networking, and skill enhancement. Participants reported using online courses and professional groups to advance their careers, echoing the findings of Ryan and Mulholland (2013) on the role of networking among skilled migrants (Ryan & Mulholland, 2013). Additionally, social networks facilitated personal growth and hobbies, aligning with the benefits highlighted by Kroenke et al. (2012) in

their study on social support and quality of life in breast cancer patients (Kroenke et al., 2012).

The role of social networks in promoting health and wellbeing was evident, with participants engaging in online fitness challenges, seeking mental health support, and accessing nutrition advice. This supports the findings of Comfort et al. (2021), who explored the influence of family planning networks on contraceptive use (Comfort et al., 2021). However, privacy concerns and the potential for data misuse were significant issues, reflecting the concerns raised by Wall et al. (2001) regarding the reproduction of inequality through informal support networks (Wall et al., 2001).

This study highlights the significant influence of social networks on women's family roles and responsibilities, revealing both opportunities and challenges. Social networks facilitate the redistribution of household chores, enhance parenting practices, and provide avenues for professional and personal development. However, they also introduce time management challenges, privacy concerns, and psychological stressors. By understanding these dynamics, we can better support women in navigating the complexities of digital engagement, ensuring that social networks contribute positively to their lives. Future research and practical interventions should focus on maximizing the benefits of social networks while addressing their potential drawbacks, promoting a balanced and empowering digital experience for women.

## 5. Limitations & Suggestions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small, with 29 participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Although theoretical saturation was achieved, a larger sample could provide more comprehensive insights. Second, the study was conducted in Tehran, and the cultural context may influence the results, making it challenging to generalize the findings to other regions or countries. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data through interviews may introduce bias, as participants might have portrayed their experiences in a socially desirable manner. Finally, the study focused solely on women, excluding men's perspectives on the influence of social networks on family roles and responsibilities.

Future research should address the limitations of this study by including a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Comparative studies across different cultural contexts could provide a

deeper understanding of how social networks influence family dynamics globally. It would also be beneficial to incorporate men's perspectives to gain a more holistic view of the impact on family roles and responsibilities. Longitudinal studies could offer insights into how the influence of social networks evolves over time, particularly as digital platforms continue to develop and integrate new features. Additionally, exploring the psychological impacts of social networks on both men and women would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional and mental health implications.

Practitioners and policymakers should consider the dual nature of social networks, leveraging their benefits while mitigating their negative impacts. Educational programs that promote digital literacy can help women use social networks more effectively, enhancing their professional development and personal growth. Support groups and online communities should be encouraged, providing safe spaces for women to share experiences and seek advice. However, it is crucial to address privacy concerns through robust data protection policies and awareness campaigns. Mental health professionals should be aware of the potential stressors associated with social networks and offer support to individuals struggling with social comparison and peer pressure. Employers can also play a role by promoting a healthy work-life balance, recognizing the flexibility that digital platforms offer while encouraging boundaries to prevent burnout.

## Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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