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# Exploring Mobile Social Media Use and Deviance in Islamic Spousal Obligations among Married Women in Tehran and Istanbul

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**ABSTRACT**

Employing a descriptive survey design, this study aimed to investigate the extent to which married women, with dominant Islamic backgrounds, frequented mobile social media, perceived reasons for it and in what ways their activities/relationships deviated from the established Islamic spousal obligations. To this effect, a sample size of 384 married women from Tehran and Istanbul, filled a researcher-made questionnaire distributed through various mobile social media networks. The questionnaire posed questions about the type of and the extent to which mobile social media was used, the personal and social activities/ relationships they engaged in and prevalent within the mobile social media frequented. The results revealed some similarities and differences between the two groups' responses to the questionnaire. The percentage and the extent to which the respondents perceived mobile social media use promoted non-traditional friendships with the opposite sex, discussions on devaluing the importance of the 'Hijab', the imitation of diverse fashion, and opportunities to gain more attention from the opposite sex, were the highest and similar in both cities. Furthermore, a vast majority, in both groups, felt that the exchanges and posts in the media demonstrated a decline in both the observance of moral principles and limitations to relationships between men and women but an increase in unconventional (sexual) messages/ exchanges related to very private topics/experiences and diverse/adverse types of thoughts among users and the wide acceptance of infidelity as a common/acceptable behavior. However, married women in Tehran perceived that their activities and relationships online not only made their spouses seem less desirable but also more sensitive towards their behavior than their Istanbul counterparts. Thus, this study's contribution to existing literature is that it identifies social relationship patterns and activities of married women in Tehran and Istanbul that violated Islamic spousal obligations enshrined in the Quran and described by the learned of Islam as 'haram' (prohibited).

***Keywords:*** Mobile Social Media, Islamic Spousal Obligations

## Introduction

The Social Media is defined as "websites and applications used for social networking" (Oxford dictionary, 2011) and involves some form of communication between individuals over the internet. It was created for the purposes of sharing information, exchanging personal messages, viewing videos and images, sharing ideas, and posting. Examples of Social media includes: WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Tik tok, Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Quora, Telegram, Wechat, Pinterest, amongst others. Social media is classified into six different categories including; Collaborative project (Wikipedia), Blogs and micro blogs (Twitter), Content communities (YouTube), Social networking sites (SNSs) such as (FB, 2go, BB chat), Virtual game World (World of Warcraft) and Virtual second world (second life) [1]. It serves as a, "communication channel which is very popular, extremely fast and broad, has proven to be highly effective, as well as trusted by billions of people , to share and discover content concerning individuals, brands, information, entertainment and knowhow" (Dearborn, 2014). It is predicted that globally, the total number of social media users is estimated to grow to around 4.4 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2022). The driving

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factors for the adoption of social media are said to be the progressively ubiquitous access, convenience, functionality, and flexibility of social technologies ([2]; [3]). Thus, it is no wonder that social networking sites have become a popular place to meet, connect and exchange information with other people. Even as early as the 1960s, social scientists predicted that the increase in media forms would break down geographical barriers and create media globalization (The worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas). However, owing to the relative novelty of this field of research, there are still many outstanding questions on which online contexts users prefer and how they engage with others online (Hamburger & Hayat, 2013; [4]; [5]) especially in countries where the role of women and their social relationship are bound by the domestic practice of religious values. Furthermore, social media is known to affect users' thoughts and behavior ([6]; [7]); in such a way so as to influence offline behavior has been reiterated by many researchers (e.g. [8]).

The ease of which the social media initiates new relationships and friendships [9], allows access to pornography, engagement in gambling, intimate exchanges and experiences are regarded as its hidden negative effects which can pose a threat to religious, moral and spiritual values (Dill, 2012; Warschauer, 2003; Wang et al., 2012). Relevant studies conducted in the Middle Eastern region have suggested that changes in social networking users' behavioral and social patterns tend to demonstrate their sense of individualism as a form of rebellion against local traditional religious [10] and cultural [11] values. Studies have also shown that social networking sites were capable of changing users' outlook on traditional cultural and religious values that limited free social relationships [12]. Information on the effects of these sites on local culture, religious attitudes and behavior have been freely circulating in popular blogs ([13]; [14]) in countries that prohibit such endeavors, yet there seems to be a lack of relevant published articles in academic journals.

With the introduction of the mobile internet, web-based social networks were extended for mobile access through mobile browsers, smartphone apps and over-the-top (OTT) messaging apps. This created the mobile social networking (MSN) introduced to facilitate a faster, easier, more reliable and most of all, cheaper way of communication that was more accessible to a wider range of users. These sites can facilitate the posting of messages, comments, videos and images especially related to the user's personal life, thoughts and perspectives. Social media users receive validation when their online friends give them feedback on their posts which is said not to fulfil their information needs but to meet their social-emotional needs [15]. Besides these advantages, MSN was found to have dramatically improved the efficiency of searching for and finding new people outside of one's preexisting social network, foster communication, creativity, social cohesion, and advanced freedom of expression in such a way so as to be able to transform contemporary society (Tripathi & Madakam, 2012). Thus, it was concluded that the widespread integration of MSN into people's daily lives has not only affected the ways in which people engage with others but has dramatically shifted the mode of human social engagement ([16]; [17]; [18]).

The undeniable exponential growth in the use of the social media within mobile social networking (MSN) has been the driving force behind many societal changes in the Middle East, such as gender reform [19] and the political uprising in 2011 called the "Arab Spring" [20]. Laws and regulations based on the government's interpretation of the Islamic tradition, hadith, and Quran, related to women in the Middle Eastern countries, such Iran (Kazimir & Bell, 2019) and Turkey [21], still govern the country. Yet, just as in other regions, these countries with a Muslim majority have witnessed a rapid diffusion and adoption of social media platforms as demonstrated in Table 1. Moreover, there exist more than 30,000 active female bloggers in Iran and around 35,000 active female bloggers in Turkey (data.worldbank.org/ indicator / IT.NET.SECR). This large percentage of social media presence, is claimed to affect people's religiosity and practices of piety (Nurdin, 2017). Thus, the lack of related studies in these contexts necessitated this study.

**Table 1**

Population, Internet, Social Media, Mobile Use- Comparing Iran and Turkey (January 2021) Source # Digital2021

| Country | Population | Internet users | Social Media Users | Mobile Connections |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Iran | 84.51 million<br>Female:49.5%<br>Male: 50.5% | 59.16 million<br>Internet penetration-70.0% in | 36.00 million (= 42.6% of the total population) | 131.0 million ( = 155.0%* of the total population) |
| Turkey | 84.69 million<br>Female-50.6%<br>Male-49.4% | 65.80 million<br>Internet penetration-77.7% | 60.00 million<br>(= 70.8% of the total population | 76.89 million<br>(= 90.8%* of the total population) |

*Many people have more than one mobile connections, so figures for mobile connections may exceed 100% of the total population.



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The study is based on Sutherland and Sumner's theory of 'deviance'. According to Sociologist Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory (1947), people learn the values, attitudes, methods and motives for delinquent behavior from intimate social relationships with others, such as friendships, through the transference of attitudes and definitions. The Merriam-Webster dictionary explains delinquent behavior as conduct that is out of accord with accepted behavior or law. This phenomenon is called 'deviance' by sociologist William Graham Sumner. He explains that 'deviance' is a violation of established contextual, cultural, or social norms, whether folkways, mores, or codified law (1906). Since the intrusive power of the mobile phone technology into people's lives (Katz & Aakhus, 2002) is undeniable, researchers are now able to observe aspects of the human communication process like never before. Thus, the main aim of the study was to investigate the extent to which mobile social media use and type of social media activities/relationship married women in Tehran and Istanbul engaged in. The primarily intend was to see if the adoption of the mobile social media has caused married women to deviate from the established spousal duties that Islam has dictated to them.

**Method**

The sample chosen as the subset of the population involved in this study consisted of married women who volunteered to participate online. The questionnaire required only married women to participate. These participants were from the capitals of two important Islamic countries in the Middle East, namely Tehran. In order to devise the study's questionnaire, topics and issues on the spousal obligations that Islam has dictated to married women were identified through a literature review and personal interviews with professors in the field of sociology and Islamic religious experts in Tehran and Istanbul. Then, subsequent to personal interviews with 15 mobile social media users from both cities on these topics and issues, around 50 common mobile social media activities and relationships that violated these obligations, were recorded. These were framed into statements to be used in the questionnaire and sent to the professors in the field of sociology and religious experts, first interviewed, to be reviewed. Their comments led to a revised questionnaire with 48 statements. These were tested for reliability through a pilot study. The resultant questionnaire consisted of 44 statements to be responded from a 5 five-point Likert scale. These were divided into three parts. The first statement was framed to gain information on the type of Mobile Social media application married women in both cities frequented (Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, Twitter and to name others not mentioned) and to what extent they did so. The second set of 6 statements enquired about the type of activities respondents engaged in (e.g. to get information and news, communicate with family members and friends, find new friends, converse on political and social issues, for entertainment (such as to upload videos, photos, etc.), scientific use and to to what extent they did so. The third set had 37 statements seeking details related to their overall social media activities and perception of Mobile Social Media effects on their online relationships with the opposite sex, their spouses and the types of 'haram' activities/feelings prevalent in the mobile social media they frequented. The questionnaire was posted via different social media sites accessible by mobile for a period of 6 months. Ultimately, 950 married women in both cities respond to the questionnaires displayed in the researcher's personal page. However, only around 600 had completed the questionnaire, out of which 384 (ages 30 and above) was found to be an ideal sample size using Cochran formula. Thus, 192 filled questionnaires from each city were analyzed to gain information related to the study's questions.

**Results**

The first research question sought any differences in the type of Mobile Social Media (MSM) application use between married women in Tehran and Istanbul.

**Table 2**

Type of Mobile Social Media Application Used by Married Women in Tehran and Istanbul

| Degree of Use | Instagram | | WhatsApp | | Telegram | | Facebook | | Twitter | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I |
| Very Low | - | - | - | - | 2.1% | - | 34.4% | 7.3% | 43.8% | 7.3% |
| Low | - | - | - | - | - | 1.6% | 12.5% | 1.6% | 12.5% | 9.4% |
| Moderate | 1.6% | 5.7% | 3.1% | 12.5% | 15.1% | 16.7% | 25.0% | 34.4% | 23.4% | 33.3% |
| High | 16.1% | 26.0% | 26.6% | 27.6% | 38.5% | 37.5% | 17.7% | 35.9% | 18.2% | 27.1% |
| Very High | 82.3% | 68.3% | 70.3% | 59.9% | 44.3% | 44.3% | 10.4% | 20.8% | 2.1% | 22.9% |
| Total Percentage | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |



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As can be seen from Table 2, the highest percentage and extent to Mobile Social Media Applications Use by Married Women in both Tehran (T) and Istanbul (I) were the Instagram (82 %, 68%, respectively) and WhatsApp (70%, 68%, respectively). Also, about 44% of both groups frequented the Telegram to a high extent.

The second research question sought any differences in the type of common Mobile Social media activities married women in Tehran and Istanbul engaged in and the extent to which they did so.

**Table 3**

Type of Mobile Social Media Activities Engaged in by Married Women in Tehran and Istanbul

| Degree | Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Information and News | | Communicating with family members and friends | | Seeking new friends | | Discussing political and social issues | | Entertainment (such as to upload videos, photos, etc.) | | Scientific use | |
| | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I |
| Very Low | 21.3% | 2.1% | - | - | 2.1% | 4.7% | 35.4% | 5.7% | - | 1.6% | 40.6% | 5.7% |
| Low | 5.7% | 4.2% | - | 2.1% | 2.1% | 2.1% | 12.0% | 10.4% | - | 2.1% | 13.5% | 14.1% |
| Moderate | 33.3% | 14.1% | 5.2% | 3.6% | 9.9% | 12.5% | 27.6% | 43.2% | 7.8% | 8.9% | 18.2% | 25.0% |
| High | 18.2% | 14.6% | 41.1% | 22.9% | 19.3% | 21.4% | 12.0% | 22.9% | 23.4% | 16.7% | 18.2% | 13.5% |
| Very High | 21.5% | 65.1% | 53.6% | 71.4% | 66.7% | 9.4% | 13.0% | 17.7% | 68.8% | 70.8% | 9.4% | 41.7% |
| Total Percentage | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

As can be seen from Table 3, the highest percentage of respondents in Tehran used mobile social media for entertainment (69%) followed by seeking new friends (67 %) and communicating with family members and friends (54 %) to a very high extent. However, the highest percentage of about 71% of the respondents in Istanbul used mobile social media for communicating with family members and friends and entertainment while more than 65 % used it to gain information and news to a very high extent. Also, a comparatively high percentage of moderate media use was seen in discussing political, and social issues (43%) and for scientific purposes (25%). The third question sought any differences in the extent to which married women in Tehran and Istanbul perceived Mobile Social Media promotes various types of novel relationships and experiences with the opposite sex.

**Table 4**

Perception of Married Women in Tehran and Istanbul on promotion of various types of relationships/experiences with the opposite sex in Mobile Social Media

| Degree | Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Experiencing opposite- sex friendship | | Seeking friends from opposite sex | | Having non-traditional friendships with opposite sex | | Ease of communicating with opposite-sex | | Increase Intimacy with opposite-sex | | Provides fast / unlimited communication with opposite-sex | | Increase poss. of relationship with attractive opposite sex | |
| | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I |
| Very Low | 9.9% | 10.4% | 3.0% | 19.2% | 2.1% | 4.7% | 24.0% | 29.2% | 21.9% | 36.5% | 9.4% | 8.8% | 42.7% | 70.8% |
| Low | 11.5% | 14.6% | 3.5% | 24.0% | 2.1% | 2.1% | - | 7.8% | 12.5% | 34.9% | 12.5% | 32.7% | 7.3% | 16.7% |
| Moderate | 5.7% | - | 8.4% | - | 9.9% | 12.5% | 24.0% | 33.9% | 24.0% | 14.1% | 40.6% | 43.9% | 18.8% | 8.3% |
| High | 17.5% | 22.2% | 32.4% | 7.8% | 19.3% | 21.4% | 47.9% | 29.2% | 39.6% | 14.6% | 37.5% | 14.6% | 27.1% | 4.2% |
| Very High | 55.4% | 52.8% | 52.7% | 49.0% | 66.7% | 59.4% | 4.2% | - | 2.1% | .0% | - | - | 4.2% | - |
| Total Percentage | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |



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As can be seen from Table 4, the highest percentage of respondents in Tehran (67%) and Istanbul (59%) perceived mobile social media use promoted non-traditional friendships with the opposite sex to a very high extent. There is also a comparatively large percentage of respondents from Tehran (55%) and Istanbul (53%) who perceived that social media use promoted experiencing opposite sex friendship and the seeking of opposite- sex friends to a very high extent, Tehran (53%) and Istanbul (49%).However, a comparatively large percentage of married women in Tehran (43%) and Istanbul (71%) did not feel that the media increases the possibility of relationships with attractive opposite sex.

The fourth question sought any differences in the extent to which married women in Tehran and Istanbul enjoy participating in activities promoted by Mobile Social Media

**Table 5**

Types of Mobile Social Media activities that Married Women in Tehran and Istanbul enjoy and are interested in

| Degree | Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Imitating diverse fashion | | Gaining more attention from people | | Creating specific posts for specific audiences | | Seeing photos and videos of friends/ strangers' parties | | Seeing pornographic photos and videos | | Discussions on disvaluing the importance of 'Hijab' | |
| | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I |
| Very Low | 2.1% | - | - | - | 24.0% | 46.9% | 26.6% | 20.3% | 53.9% | 53.7% | 6.3% | 2.1% |
| Low | 8.3% | 4.2% | 9.2% | 12.4% | 20.8% | 24.5% | 15.6% | 43.2% | 31.1% | 21.0% | 2.1% | 4.2% |
| Moderate | 4.2% | 8.9% | 16.1% | 11.8% | 32.3% | 14.1% | 41.1% | 24.0% | 10.0% | 22.1% | 2.1% | 6.3% |
| High | 29.7% | 23.4% | 20.5% | 22.8% | 16.7% | 12.5% | 10.4% | 6.3% | 5.0% | 3.2% | 5.2% | 6.3% |
| Very High | 55.7% | 63.5% | 54.2% | 53.0% | 6.3% | 2.1% | 6.3% | 6.3% | - | - | 84.4% | 81.3% |
| Total Percentage | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

As can be seen from Table 5, the mobile social media activity that the majority of respondents in Tehran (84%) and Istanbul (81%) were most interested in is discussing the unimportance of 'Hijab'. Most respondents in Tehran (56%) and Istanbul (63%) were interested in imitating diverse fashion, and gaining more attention from the opposite sex, Tehran (54%) and Istanbul (53%), to a very high extent too. However, a comparatively large percentage of married women in both cities (54%) had very low interest in seeing pornographic photos and videos during their social media presence.

The fifth question sought any differences in the extent to which married women in Tehran and Istanbul perceived the impact of Mobile Social Media on their relationships with their spouses. As can be seen from Table 6, the highest percentage of negative feelings married women had towards their spouses in Tehran were seen in all six categories with a high extent as compared to their counterparts in Istanbul. The highest percentage and extent to the types of negative feelings that married women had towards their

spouses was perceived to be their awareness of spouses' shortcomings (50%) and their spouses' lack of understanding and appreciation (49%) followed by being more satisfied with opposite-sex relationships (47%) and feeling able to share their grievances with online opposite-sex more than their spouses (46%)



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**Table 6**

Perception of Married Women in Tehran and Istanbul on the impact of Mobile Social Media on relationship with spouse (Negative Feelings**)**

| Degree | Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Being satisfied associating with online opposite-sex relationship more than spouse | | Feeling able to share grievances with online opposite-sex more than spouse | | Getting irritated when spouse touches wife's phone | | Becoming more aware of spouse's shortcomings | | Feeling spouse, unlike online friends, does not understand nor appreciate wife | | Feeling unhappy of early marriage and regret for the wrong choice (spouse) made | |
| | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I |
| Very Low | 19.8% | 15.6% | 19.8% | 15.6% | 16.1% | 9.4% | 13.8% | - | 10% | - | 17.7% | 30.7% |
| Low | 10.8% | 19.3% | 1.6% | 19.3% | 4.2% | 8.3% | 19.8% | 26.0% | 16.1% | 24.5% | 5.2% | 32.3% |
| Moderate | - | 22% | - | - | 9.4% | 23.4% | 4.2% | 20.3% | 19.8% | 20.3% | 15.1% | 24.5% |
| High | 22.5% | 22.3% | 32.3% | 32.3% | 25.0% | 30.2% | 12.5% | 28.3% | 15.0% | 20.4% | 16.0% | 12.5% |
| Very High | 46.9% | 22.8% | 46.4% | 32.8% | 45.3% | 28.6% | 49.8% | 25.3% | 49.1% | 24.8% | 46.0% | - |
| Total Percentage | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

**Table 7**

Perception of Married Women in Tehran and Istanbul on the impact of Mobile Social Media on relationship with spouse (Negative behavior)

| Degree | Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Trusting online opposite-sex friends other than spouse | | Obsessed with checking posts from opposite-sex other than spouse | | Posting romantic emoticons to opposite-sex friends other than spouse | | Comparing an ideal opposite-sex personality online to spouse | | Becoming dishonest to spouse due to engagements with online friends | | Hiding relationships and engagements with online friends from spouse | |
| | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I |
| Very Low | 10.7% | 14.0% | 10.8% | 20.6% | 10.7% | 21.4% | 22.5% | 37.0% | 17.7% | 34.9% | 14.0% | 59.0% |
| Low | 14.2% | 10.0% | 11.1% | 20.0% | 11.2% | 10.0% | 2.1% | 10.0% | 4.2% | 20.0% | 10.0% | 2.0% |
| Moderate | 12.0% | 31.7% | 14.6% | 30.7% | 14.1% | 22.2% | 13.4% | 22.8% | 13.0% | 16.1% | 8.3% | 14.5% |
| High | 21.4% | 24.5% | 18.1% | 14.1% | 28.1% | 26.4% | 16.4% | 28.1% | 27.5% | 10.2% | 26.7% | 14.1% |
| Very High | 41.7% | 19.8% | 45.4% | 14.6% | 35.9% | 20.0% | 45.6% | 2.1% | 37.6% | 18.8% | 41.0% | 10.4% |
| Total Percentage | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

As can be seen from Table 7, the highest percentage of negative behavior of married women had towards their spouses in Tehran were seen in all six categories with a high extent. Approximately 46 % of the respondents compared their spouses to an ideal opposite-sex personality online, 42% trusted online opposite-sex friends other than their spouses, 41% hid their relationships and engagements with online friends from their spouses, 37% became dishonest to their spouse due to engagements with online friends while 28% were obsessed with checking posts from opposite-sex other than their spouses and 36% of married women posted romantic emoticons to opposite-sex friends other than spouses. However, not higher than 20% of their counterparts in Istanbul perceived all six categories to a high extent. Most women (59%) also preferred not to hide their relationships and engagements with online friends from their spouses as much as their counterparts did in Tehran



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**Table 8**

Perception of Married Women in Tehran and Istanbul on types of behavior that spouse have become sensitive about due to their Mobile Social Media activities/relationships

| Degree | Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | On not discussing with family about friends on social media | | On associations with 'non-mahram' on social media | | On makeup and fashion sense | | On posting photos without 'hijab' | | On expressing satisfaction with online associations | | On trusting the opposite sex online other than spouse | |
| | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I |
| Very Low | - | - | 4.2 | - | 5.7 | 43.2% | 5.7 | 53.2% | - | - | 0.2% | - |
| Low | 1.6% | 42.8% | 14.5% | 43.2% | 12.5% | 37.5% | 10.5% | 17.5% | 7.8% | 19.3% | 0.4% | 30.0% |
| Moderate | 19.7% | 15.6% | 7.3% | 8.9% | 9.4% | 8.9% | 15.6% | 8.9% | 19.8% | 42.8% | 7.3% | 24.0% |
| High | 32.3% | 22.3% | 25.0% | 20.4% | 25.0% | 5.4% | 15.5% | 10.4% | 25.5% | 22.3% | 41.4% | 23.0% |
| Very High | 46.4% | 19.3% | 49.0% | 27.5% | 47.4% | 5.0% | 52.7% | 10.0% | 46.9% | 15.6% | 50.7% | 23.0% |
| Total Percentage | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

As can be seen from Table 8, the highest percentage of and extent to which the behavior of married women which their spouses have become sensitive about is seen in all six categories in Tehran (more than 46%). Among them, the percentage of married women's behavior of posting photos without 'hijab' and trusting the opposite sex online other than spouses were comparatively higher (53%) than the other issues. However, these categories seem not so important to married women's spouses in Istanbul.

**Table 9**

Perception of Married Women in Tehran and Istanbul on Haram Activities/Feelings prevalent in the mobile social media frequented

| Degree | Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Decline in the observance of moral principles | | Decrease in limitations to relationships between men and women | | Prevalence of posts related to unconventional (sexual) messages | | Prevalence of exchanges related to very private topics/experiences among users | | Infidelity is widely being accepted as common/acceptable behavior | | Prevalence of diverse/adverse type of thoughts | |
| | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I |
| Very Low | 6.3% | 2.1% | 2.1% | . | - | - | 2.1% | . | 12.5% | - | - | 5.2% |
| Low | 6.3% | 2.1% | 14.6% | 4.2% | 6.3% | - | 6.3% | . | 2.1% | 4.2% | 4.2% | . |
| Moderate | 12.0% | 20.3% | 9.9% | 22.4% | 12.0% | 22.4% | 5.7% | 22.4% | 118% | 24.5% | 10.4% | 2.1% |
| High | 20.3% | 19.8% | 12.0% | 19.8% | 28.6% | 17.7% | 22.4% | 21.9% | 14.6% | 11.4% | 30.2% | 33.3% |
| Very High | 55.1% | 55.7% | 61.4% | 53.6% | 53.1% | 59.9% | 63.5% | 55.7% | 59.0% | 59.9% | 55.2% | 59.4% |
| Total Percentage | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

As can be seen from Table 9, married women in both cities feel the same way about the prevalence of 'haram' activities/feelings in the mobile social media frequented by them. The majority (more than 55%) of the respondents felt that the mobile social media demonstrated a decline in both the observance of moral principles and limitations to relationships between men and women but an increase in posts related to unconventional (sexual), exchanges related to very private topics/experiences among users, the wide acceptance of infidelity as a common/acceptable behavior and diverse/adverse type of thoughts, to a high extent.

## Conclusion

With the evolution of the social networks in mobile environments, modifications in the ways people perceive social relations and interact with each other have been reported in various studies (Thilakarathna, Viana, Seneviratne, & Petander, 2013). Studies have also shown that social networking sites were capable of changing users' outlook on traditional, cultural and religious values that limited free social relationships (e.g. Omoush, Saleh, Yaseen et al., 2012).



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Furthermore, some even stressed that Islam is threatened by the hidden negative effects of modern technology that might affect both the moral and spiritual upbringing of children and youth (Dill, 2012; Warschauer, 2003; Wang et al., 2012). However, there is a lack of studies on whether their effects could transcend the boundaries set by Islam on married women's spousal obligations. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the use and reasons for married women's adoption of Mobile Social Media applications in Tehran and Istanbul by seeking the percentage and extent to which it is a 'deviance' from established Islamic Spousal Obligations. Deviance here is operationalized by the questions related to 'haram' relationships/activities between men and women and the duties of a married women in Islam enshrined in the Quran and described by the learned of Islam.

The Quran is still a reliable source of guidance to a pious life, even today as it has already envisaged and contains all such that may come with changing times. However, where there exist no vivid provisions, the learned of Islam (ʿulamāʾ) are there to issue 'fatwa' i.e. legislate on such issues in Islam such as things that are permitted ('Halal') or prohibited (haram) (Ar buna Nabawi: Hadith No. 6). It is believed that Allah said about Prophet Muhammad (SAS): 'Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written (i.e., mentioned) in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him - it is those who will be the successful' (Surah Al-A'raf, 7:157). Consequently, based on Islamic scriptures and interpretations found on online sites posted by religious leaders, discussions with professors in sociology and Islamic studies in Tehran and Istanbul, the conclusion made subsequent to analyzing the results of the questions of study based on the meaning of haram relationships/activities between men and women and the duties of a married women in Islam as stated in the Quran and described by the learned of Islam, will be explained next.The first research question sought the perception of married women on the manner/ promotion of various types of relationships/experiences with the opposite sex. The study results showed that most married women in both cities extensively used the media for entertainment purposes and seeking new friends from the opposite sex. This activity/relationship is 'haram'. Firstly because, any relationship that is non-professional with a 'non-mahram' (one who is not her husband or a close relative) is 'haram'. This is because the Prophet (SAW) warned, "Behold! A man is not alone with a (non-mahram) woman but the third amongst them is Satan." (Jami Al-Tirmidhi, 265). In other words, the devil will definitely turn an innocent meeting or conversation into something which is wrong and lustful. So, chatting or texting between friends has the potential to develop into a haram romantic relationship even if they started off as something strictly platonic. In order to prevent such a sin from happening, Islam prevents the means that may lead to haram activities/thoughts and ensures protecting the Muslim from temptation and its causes. Allah is perceived to have said, 'O you who have believed, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan - indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing...' (Surau Al-Nur - 24:21).Even the leader of the Islamic world warns that friendship between boys and girls is impermissible, because there is a fear of sin taking place (Khamenei, Istifta, questions 651 and 779). Studies have also reiterated that the social media can even change the way romantic relationships are established and maintained (Farrugia, 2013).

The second research question sought the types of activities that married women are interested in. The result showed that the highest level of enjoyment felt by mobile social media users in both cities was discussing the disvaluing of the importance of 'Hijab' followed by imitating diverse fashion. This is another example of the means that may lead to haram activities/thoughts. As Imam Khomeini in his Istifta'at, (Vol. 3) states that, speaking of things that lead to corruption and pave the way to corruption are problematic. Observing 'Hijab' is an Islamic duty. In this context, the Qur'an says, 'Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their modesty' (Surau-Al-Nur, 24:30). The same was also said for women in the following verse, 'And tell the believing women to lower their gaze, and guard their modesty. That they should not display their beauty and ornament beyond what is decently and spontaneously apparent in daily lives. Hence, let them cover their bosoms with their veil (Hijab). And let them not display their beauty in the presence of anyone other than their husbands' (Surau-Al-Nur, 24:31). A married woman's non- maintenance of her Hijab at all times in front of non-mahram can disprove both their faith and love for their husbands and cause ill-feelings and family rows.

The third research question sought the perception of married women in Tehran and Istanbul on the impact of Mobile Social Media on arousing negative feelings towards their relationship with their spouses. The results showed that married women in Tehran perceived that their activities and relationships online not only made their spouses seem comparatively less desirable to them but also more sensitive towards their related behavior compared to their Istanbul counterparts. For example, a comparatively high



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percentage of the respondents in Tehran felt they got very irritated when spouse touches their phones. Also, some reported negative feelings of becoming more aware of spouses' shortcomings and their lack of understanding and appreciation for them. In this context, "The Prophet of Allah (S) stated: 'There is nothing worse for human beings than to seek the faults of others, while ignoring their own flaws'." (Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 73, p 385 – 45). ). In Islam, a wife who looks at other men and compares her husband with them is unacceptable as it might lead to her finding a man who does not have her husband's faults and might then think that the other man is perfect. As, it is believed that Imam Ali Reza (a s.) said, 'The greatest gain for a man is a faithful woman who, when she sees him, becomes happy and protects his property and her own honor in his absence' (Wasa il al-Shia, Vol. 14, p 23 ), to do/be otherwise is prohibited.

The fourth research question sought the perception of married women in Tehran and Istanbul on the impact of Mobile Social Media on arousing negative behavior towards their relationship with their spouses. The results also showed that the highest percentage of negative behavior of married women towards their spouses in Tehran were that they trusted online opposite-sex friends other than their spouses, hid their relationships and engagements with online friends from their spouses, became dishonest to their spouse due to engagements with online friends. Here the quote. 'O you who believe! Be afraid of Allah, and be with those who are true (in word and deeds) (Surau Al-Tawbah 9:119), is appropriate. It is believed that the Prophet (PUH) said, " …Falsehood leads to Al-Fajur (i.e. wickedness, evil-doing), and Al-Fajur (wickedness) leads to the (Hell) Fire, and a man may keep on telling lies till he is written before Allah, a liar."(Sahih al-Bukhari 6094: Book 78, Hadith 121). Also, a Shia scholar narrated, 'Any woman who bothers her husband and distresses him is distant from the blessings of God.'(Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 103, p 253). On the issue of trust, the Quran says, 'Those who are faithfully true to their Amanat (all the duties which Allah has ordained, honesty, moral responsibility and trusts ) and to their covenants' has Faith, and the one, who keeps promises and pledges has Islam (Surau Al-Mu'minun, 23:8). In Islam, a married woman's disobedience to any of the abovementioned is 'haram' as the Quran states, '…And righteous women are devoutly obedient and, when alone, protective of what Allah has entrusted them with their husband's honor and wealth." (Surau Al-Nisa: 34)

The fifth research question sought the perception of married women in Tehran and Istanbul on Haram Activities/Feelings prevalent in the mobile social media frequented. The results showed that married women in both cities felt the same way about the prevalence of 'haram' activities/feelings in the mobile social media frequented by them. For example, the respondents from both cities felt that the media demonstrates a decline in the observance of moral principles. In this respect, the Quran states, 'And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, "Indeed, I am of the Muslims'. Thus, the best person is a person who upholds moral foundations and invites others to practice these values [22]. Also, the respondents from both cities felt that the media has affected limitations to the relationships between men and women but increases posts related to unconventional (sexual) exchanges related to very private topics/experiences among users and the wide acceptance of infidelity as a common/acceptable behavior. According to a study, married couples' display of personal details, flirting, sexting, and falling in love with others are part of online infidelity behaviors [23]. Here, the Quran states, "And do not come near to adultery" (Surau, Al-Isra, 17:32). This commandment warns each individual not only to guard against adultery or fornication itself but against all those things that lead to or stimulate it. Also, the existence of diverse/adverse type of thoughts in the media as perceived by the majority of the respondents in both cities can be said to lead to breakups, divorces, and cheating [24].

Thus, this study's contribution to existing research on the subject is that it identifies important social relationship patterns of married women in Tehran and Istanbul that are considered 'haram' in Islam. More importantly, the results also points to the prevalence of 'haram' activities/feelings in these platforms that might facilitate their breaking away from the boundaries set by Islam on married women's spousal obligations. Also, it suggests that mobile social media could be one of the contributing factors in the changing social communication trends of married women in Islamic countries.

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