



The Impact of Social Media Use Culture on Sexual Satisfaction and Emotional Divorce among Married Women with the Mediating Role of Body Image and Gender Role Expectations

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of social media use culture on sexual satisfaction and emotional divorce, with the mediating role of body image and gender role expectations among married women in Tehran. The statistical population comprised all married women living in various districts of Tehran, from whom 384 participants were selected through convenient sampling procedure. This research was a descriptive-correlational design based on structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Data were collected using standardized questionnaires including Social Media Use Integration Scale (Jenkins-(Guarnieri, Wright, & Johnson, 2013), Body Appreciation Scale-2 (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015), Gender Role Expectations Questionnaire (Bem, 1974), Index of Sexual Satisfaction (Hudson, 1992), and Emotional Divorce Scale (Gottman, 1994). Path analysis and Sobel test results indicated that the cultural use of social media had significant direct and indirect impacts on sexual satisfaction and emotional divorce. Furthermore, higher engagement with social media was associated with a more negative body image and reinforced stereotypical gender expectations, which in turn were significantly related to lower sexual satisfaction and higher emotional divorce. These findings suggested that media culture could weaken marital relationship quality through the internalization of unrealistic ideals. The final model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit indices.



Extended abstract

Introduction: In contemporary society, the rapid growth of social media has transformed communication patterns, lifestyle choices, and interpersonal relationships. In the Iranian cultural context, where family and marital bonds are considered fundamental social values, the influence of media content on marital dynamics is particularly significant. Social media platforms often propagate idealized beauty standards and stereotypical gender roles, which may shape individuals' perceptions of themselves and their relationships. This internalization could affect marital satisfaction and stability, potentially contributing to emotional divorce. Body image dissatisfaction and rigid gender role expectations have been identified as key psychosocial mechanisms linking media utilizing with marital outcomes. Accordingly, the present study aimed to investigate the impact of the social media use cultural on sexual satisfaction and emotional divorce, with the mediating roles of body image and gender role expectations, among married women in Tehran.

Method: The statistical population consisted of all married women living in various districts of Tehran. Implementing a convenient sampling procedure, 384 participants were selected as the sample of the research. The research design was descriptive-correlational, applying the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. Data were collected through standardized questionnaires, including the Social Media Use Integration Scale (Jenkins-(Guarnieri, Wright, & Johnson, 2013), Body Appreciation Scale-2 (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015), Gender Role Expectations Questionnaire (Bem, 1974), Index of Sexual Satisfaction (Hudson, 1992), and Emotional Divorce Scale (Gottman, 1994). Statistical analyses included path analysis and Sobel's mediation test were performed using SmartPLS and SPSS software.

Results: The findings revealed that the cultural use of social media had significant direct and indirect impacts on sexual satisfaction and emotional divorce. Specifically, greater cultural engagement with social media was associated with a more negative body image and reinforced stereotypical gender role expectations. In turn, negative body image was significantly related to reduced sexual satisfaction, while rigid gender role expectations were related both to lower sexual satisfaction and higher emotional divorce. The mediating roles of body image and gender role expectations were statistically confirmed by Sobel's test. The final structural model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit indices.

Conclusions: The results indicated that social media culture influences marital relationships not only directly but also indirectly through psychological and socio-cultural mediators. By perpetuating unrealistic ideals of physical appearance and reinforcing traditional gender role stereotypes, social media use could undermine sexual satisfaction and increase the risk of emotional divorce. These findings aligned with theoretical frameworks such as Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954) and Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), highlighting how repeated exposure to idealized media portrayals could reshape personal and relational expectations. Practically, the results underscored the need for marital counseling and educational interventions focused on media literacy, enabling couples to critically evaluate media content and resist internalizing harmful norms. Furthermore, policymakers should address cultural representations in media to promote healthier gender roles and relationship ideals.



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