



## The perilous impact of addiction to e-communication on solidarity, interaction and traditions in the Lebanese society

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### Abstract

This study scrutinizes the hazardous addiction of the Lebanese people towards using SNS (Social Network Sites) and its perilous impacts on health and behavior. It also focuses on the societal dissociation which highlights its dangerous role on the solidarity in the society whether among friends on one hand or family on the other hand. This study is conducted and evaluated using a quantitative self-completed questionnaire. Its venture is a descriptive research undertaken using attitude and opinion questionnaires of organizational practices. This enables us to identify and describe the variability in different phenomena of the Lebanese people's use of mobile phones in their daily lives. The survey includes 39 questions related to the Lebanese people's interpersonal relationships, the SNS's impact on different levels and people's awareness regarding this influence which took around 10 to 15 minutes to fill-up. The findings of this study are shocking since some of them are compatible with our hypothesis while the others are eye-opening to unexpected findings. The contradictory answers of the participants reveal the silent precarious process which has a severe negative impact whereby people are unaware of. This publication reveals, from our point of view, that this process is deteriorating swiftly and the dilapidation in the near future is unacknowledged.

**Keywords:** SNS, e-communication, addiction, behavior, Lebanon

### 1. Introduction

Communication is defined as the occurrence of two associated information producing processes and the output from one process is the functional inverse of the other process's output. This social and crucial process involves people affecting one another through a procedure of transmitting information. Therefore, communication is a significant facet of a person's ability to express and convey their opinions, beliefs, thoughts, and ideas through diverse means <sup>[1]</sup>. It has efficient means exhibited through language: speaking, signing, writing or Braille. Some of its significant historical means can be displayed in people's need of a medium to deliver their messages other than stones to transcribe upon. This communicative medium ranged from using papyrus or parchment to deliver messages. Another remarkable mean of communication was the homing pigeon, which was a rapid one-way postal service during the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Baghdad. These pigeons flew straight home from wherever they might be <sup>[2]</sup>. These were the most popular ways of communication that lasted hundreds of years till the emergence of the Industrial Revolution at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century till the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, a major technological advancement in the realm of communication was commenced. Mass circulation including periodicals, magazines, journals, and publishing houses were prospering. These were followed by two other significant innovation that were the telegraph

and fax machine during 1833 and 1843 respectively <sup>[3, 4]</sup>. Moreover, a technological revolution (1870-1920) perceived the invention of the first telephone <sup>[5]</sup>. The invention of the telephone resulted in a web of communication and this is due to the initiation of the first telephone line from London to Paris in 1891, followed by the first transatlantic telephone line in 1927 <sup>[6]</sup>. Further to those two, the scientific-technical revolution (1940-1970), which arose with the emergence of World War 2 (1939-1945), introduced the television in the 1950s <sup>[7]</sup>. All this cycle of technological and scientific revolution paved the way for the invention of the world's most prominent communicative process: the telephone. It commonly started as telephone landlines and became familiar in Britain's households at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century and particularly in the 1970s <sup>[4]</sup>. By the invention of satellites in the year of 1957 <sup>[8]</sup>, a massive new technological revolution sheathed the previous communicative devices and issued a new significant change revealed through the cellphone in 1973 in USA and smartphones that were introduced in Britain in 1996 <sup>[9]</sup>.

Besides, we stand on the verge of a technological revolution that initiates intensifying transformational growths. In their scale, complexity and scope, these transformations were never witnessed and experienced before. This revolution is regarded as a norm that is being used on daily basis in our society. This will fundamentally bring technological and social

consequences that amend the way we live, work, and relate to one another. Being in a society powered by technology, this continuous engagement with our smartphones, tablets, laptops, and other internet-based technologies is rapidly becoming the norm<sup>[10]</sup>. For instance, billions of people socialize with each other using various types of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Viber, etc. instead of face-to-face interaction<sup>[11]</sup>. The prospects of people's interconnection by mobile devices, with exceptional processing power, storage capacity, and access to knowledge, are unconstrained.

Communication can be divided into two significant categories: direct communication and indirect communication. Direct communication, also called face-to-face or verbal communication, is a process that happens between two or more individuals. Within it, we can sense an interaction of the body, soul, and structure, which mirror an impressionistic atmosphere of solidarity. On the other hand, the indirect communication can be defined as a process of communication between two or more individuals via a virtual medium<sup>[11]</sup>. Unlike the direct one, we do not sense an interaction of the body, soul, and structure. It is merely an interaction behind the screens of our mobiles where emoticons and text messages are sent. These messages usually do not resemble the reality of the situation and intentions which may provoke an atmosphere of acting that leads to misunderstanding and therefore miscommunication. Acting can be demarcated as performing art in which movement, gesture, and intonation are used as a matter of mimicry and imitation<sup>[12]</sup>. This relentless connection may divest us of one of life's most critical assets: the time to pause, reflect, and participate in momentous discussions.

## 2. Problem statement

One cannot deny the importance of communication in our lives. Clear positive impacts are present but its negative invisible dangerous impacts are ruining our good Lebanese traditional habits, ethics of social communication, physical and mental health and many other facets which can be clear with the advancement of this e-communication whether economically, socially, or even politically. Simply, it can be defined as a double-edged weapon.

A majority of the Lebanese people who use their mobile phones prefer employing e-communication specifically social media on direct contact. Their unawareness of the subversive negative consequences of the social media deleteriously affects the quality of their interpersonal relationships and radically deteriorates their traditions in an accelerated time frame.

Social media has entrenched an upside-down shift on how we communicate with each other<sup>[13]</sup>. People in the past directly expressed their physical and emotional interaction through building strong bonds and interpersonal relationships with others. On the other hand, people nowadays have a systemic life. They prefer to display their interactions indirectly and verbally through social media in a consistent pattern, especially in family and friends' settings whereby they consume time mostly on mobile phones<sup>[14]</sup>. Hence, they might sometimes rely on feeble e-connections more than the solid connections they might have when meeting directly.

Internationally, we could currently see a revolution in the people's concepts of communication where the direct and

physical interaction is accompanied to those related to special events or obligations such as attending weddings, funerals, etc. This state of superficial communication resulted from a radical change of the present technology that controls our emotions and relationships in our society<sup>[15]</sup>. This control is conspicuous regarding our attachment to the social platforms to escape from the economic or social issues. This attachment results mainly from the implementation of marketing strategies by certain companies that seek only profit and doesn't regard the impact on social relationships.

Indeed, this uprising technology leads to dissociation in some countries of the western society as well as some countries of the Eastern society, especially Lebanon. Lebanon witnesses a process of rapid communication that transgresses the profound norms and traditions of its people. Governed by traditions that pay great significance to the reputation, respect, and good manners, we can still mark the dangers of this invasive communication in individuals. The danger resides in the inevitable integration of mobiles in their lives that might deteriorate some of their emblematic human capacities such as compassion and cooperation. This results in a devastation of various relationships portrayed as intimate among peeps to being only shallow. The interpersonal relationships negatively affected the Lebanese people who live a harsh life that demands a less time-consuming interactive process. We could barely see a Lebanese citizen who does not befriend hundreds or maybe thousands of people not only as an act of insecurity but also to leech them for personal use in the future. Needless to say, as social media is becoming the axis of our lives, people are neither aware nor able to identify its destructive disadvantages listed above.

Therefore, this virtual communication is merely a superficial one that will lead to cancelling of others, where some people are considered only numbers with little or no importance. All these factors and changes have developed new data in regard to the type of people whereby we established new classifications designated into the following seven main categories:

1. Formal people: those whom we usually interact with on special events
2. Informal people: those whom we usually interact with for no specific reasons or events
3. Friends
4. Special friends: those whom we usually give them time and interest more than our families
5. Family
  - Kinships
  - Members
6. Groups
7. Pages
  - Family
  - Business
  - International

All these categories affect the type of communication among people. This kind of communication ranges from superficial, business, and intimate to love, addiction, and attraction.

## 3. Research methodology

The venture of this study is a descriptive research undertaken

using attitude and opinion questionnaires of organizational practices that enables us to identify and describe the variability in different phenomena of the Lebanese people's use of mobile phones in their daily life. Its design is a mixed-method that includes multiple data collection: primary and secondary data. The primary data is initially collected through undisclosed examination on the Lebanese people use of mobile phones in order to mark their obsession with SNS (Social Network Sites). This data was provided by researchers who have performed interviews with the pedestrians and which have opened doors for the researchers to ask questions to discuss issues concerning the topic. They questioned many people all over Lebanon, and selected only those carrying smartphones to be examined. Hence, 500 Lebanese SNS consumers of both genders between 18 and 60 years old have completed the survey, which is translated to Arabic, for the researchers to assess the validation of the study. The secondary data is collected from various journal articles, publications, books and sites. The secondary data related to the field of communication, in general, was very abundant while that related to Lebanon, specifically e-communication, was so scarce that we could not find any that might develop our research in order to be compared with others. The time frame of this study is cross-sectional. The study is conducted and evaluated using a quantitative self-completed questionnaire. The type of questions is closed questions, also referred to as closed-ended questions. The study is settled in to investigate Lebanese people's acquaintance and awareness towards perceiving the impacts of SNS on them. It also scrutinizes their familiarity with the dangers of SNS as well as to defining their viewpoints. The survey includes 39 questions related to the Lebanese people's interpersonal relationships, the SNS's impact on different levels and people's awareness regarding this influence which took around 10 to 15 minutes to fill-up.

#### 4. Results

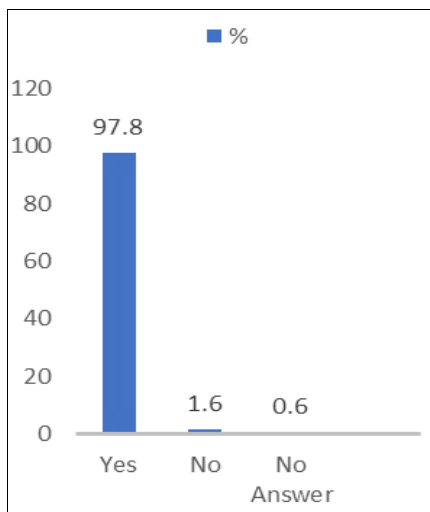
The findings of the study were collected by the integrative research team at AUL, who were highly knowledgeable with the statistical field which is guided by Dr. Jihad Takkoush. The data collection was based on the responses of the questionnaires given to the participants. The data was analyzed through Microsoft Excel, then the variables were evaluated through SPSS. Through this system, tables and charts are displayed, which were then converted to Microsoft Word in order to be further scrutinized and discussed. The results were as following:

1. 52.2% of the participants were females, whereas 47.1% were males and 0.7% didn't answer.
2. Among the participants, 54.5% were from Beirut, 3.8% from North, 8.3% from South, 4.5% from Bekaa, 20% from Mount Lebanon and 8.9% didn't answer.
3. Most of the participants were living in Beirut (52.5%), North (1.1%), South (5.6%), Bekaa (2.5%), Mount Lebanon (36.3%) and 2% didn't answer.
4. 36.5% of the participants were working in Beirut, 0.9% in North, 0.7% in South, 0.9% in Bekaa, 11.4% in Mount Lebanon and 41.8% were unemployed.
5. As well, 11.6% of the participants' age was in the range 14-18, 37.1% in the range 19-22, 27.7% in the range 23-30, 13.2% in the range 31-45, 5.6% in the range 46-55, 4.7% in the range 56-65 and 10.1% didn't answer.
6. 17.4% of the participants had some high school education, 20.4% had high school graduate education, 18.1% had associate degree education, 5.6% had some college education, 25.1% had college graduate education, 6.5% had higher than college graduate education, 6.3% were uneducated and 0.6% didn't answer.
7. Concerning the occupation, 13.6% of the participants were self-employed, 40.3% were employees, 23.5% were out of work, 6% were homemakers, 14.3% were students and 2.2% were retired.
8. 67.4 % of the participants were single and never married, 27.6 % were married, 0.9 % were separated, 0.9 % were divorced, 1.8 % were widowed and 1.4% didn't answer.
9. 9.6 % of the participants' income was under 500, 27.6 % had income in the range 500-1000, 9.9 % had income in the range 1000-1500, 3.8 % had income in the range 1500-2000, 2.2 % had income more 2000 and 46.4 % had no answer.
10. 1.6% of the participants do not have smart phones, whereas 97.8% are having smart phones and 0.6% didn't answer.
11. Most of the participants (70.2%) cannot live without smart phones while, (28.9 %) of them can live without it and 0.9% had no answer.
12. 39.4% of the participants can stay without smart phones from 1-3 hours, 24.4% can stay from 4-6 hours, 12.5% can stay from 7-9 hours, 10.7% can stay up to a day, 12.1% can stay for more than one day and 0.9% didn't answer.
13. 29.8% of the participants check their phone every 10 mins, 26.6% check it every 10-30 mins, 23.7% check it every 1-2 hours, 11.4% check it every 2-4 hours, 8.1% check it at the end of the day and 0.4% didn't answer.
14. 2.2% of the participants turn off their smartphones during the day, 29.5% turn it off at night, 2.2% turn it off on weekends, 1.8% turn it off on vacations, 62.4% do not turn it off at all and 1.9% had no answer.
15. 56.6% of the participants said that they do not wake up at night to respond to any notification while, 41.8% said they do and 1.6% didn't answer.
16. 45.6 % of the participants prefer to use Online Video, Voice and Voice Messages, 22.6% of them prefer to use Normal Phone Calls, 21.0% prefer to chat, 10.3 % prefer to use both Normal Calls and Online Video and Voice calls and 0.5% did not answer.
17. 32.4% of the participants reply immediately to chats, 19.0% postpone their replies, 2.0% do not reply at all, 46.1% reply sometimes depending on the person and 0.5% didn't answer.
18. 2.9% of the participants do not reply to siblings immediately, 74.5 % reply immediately, 20.8% sometimes reply immediately, 0.7% have no siblings on social media platforms and 1.1% had no answer.
19. 27.3% of the participants talk to 1-3 people on SNS, 30.6% talk to 4-6 people, 16.6% talk 7-9 people, 11.6% talk to 10-13 people, 3.6% talk to 14-16 people, 8.5% talk to more than 16 people and 1.8% did not answer.
20. 47.7% of the participants spend 1-3 hours on SNS, 28.4% spend 4-6 hours, 13% spend 7-9 hours, 5.1% spend 10-12

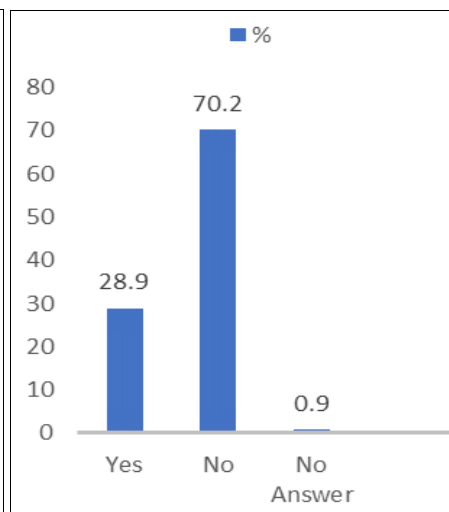
- hours, 4.7% spend more than 12 hours and 1.1% didn't answer.
21. 61.5% of the participants do not interact with people through SNS while, 37.6% of them do and 0.9% didn't answer.
  22. 9.6 % of the participants do not communicate directly with family members while, 89.7% of them do and 0.7% didn't answer.
  23. 74.0% of the participants talk to family members directly while, 25.1% send them a voice message and 0.9% didn't answer the question.
  24. 61.1% of the participants said that they do not use SNS to communicate with parents even same house while, 37.4 % said that they do and 1.5% didn't answer.
  25. 65.5% of the participants do not spend hours in the same room on their phones without speaking while, 34.2 % of them do and 0.3% didn't answer.
  26. 75.8 % of the participants do not spend most of the time with friends without contacting relatives while, 23.9 % of them do and 0.3% didn't answer.
  27. 22.7% of the participants do not know all extended family members while, 77.1 % of them do and 0.2% had no answer.
  28. 27.5% of the participants do not communicate directly with extended family members while, 71.4 % of them do and 1.1% didn't answer.
  29. 20.9% of the participants frequently see extended family members, 46.8% of them meet members several times per month, 19.6% occasionally meet them and 12.7% didn't answer.
  30. 89.2% of the participants not risk health while using SNS,

- 9.9% of them do and 0.9% didn't answer.
31. 34.2% of the participants said SNS does not deviate their attention, 22.8% said yes it does, while 42.1% said maybe SNS deviates your attention and 0.9% didn't answer.
32. 8.3% of the participants mentioned that SNS causes over eating, obesity and no appetite, whereas 75.0% mentioned that it causes fatigue, eye problems, backache and headache, 12.2% mentioned that SNS causes all the above-mentioned diseases and 4.5% didn't answer.
33. The majority of the participants (89.9%) think that SNS strengthen the relationship with extended family members, whereas (9.4%) of them think that it does not affect the relationship and (0.7%) had no answer.
34. Most of the participants (81%) said that the Lebanese traditions are affected by SNS, while (18.6%) of them said that traditions aren't affected by it and (0.4%) did not answer.
35. Mostly, (89.7%) participants used to visit family members more before, (9.8%) said that they weren't affected concerning visiting their relatives and 0.5% didn't answer.
36. 9.8 % of the participants see that relationships are stronger than before, while 89.7%.
37. See that SNS weakens relationships more than before and 0.5% had no answer.
38. 72.5% of the participants said that SNS does not affect private life negatively, whereas 26.6% said that it does affect it and 0.9% didn't mention their opinion.
39. 60.0% of the participants are not aware of the disadvantages of SNS, whereas 38.9% are aware of it and 1.1% had no answer

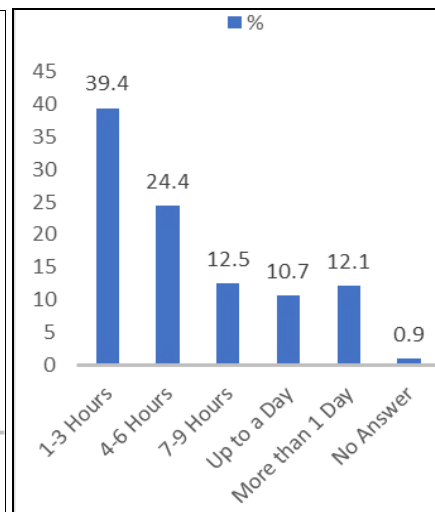
**5. Tables and figures**



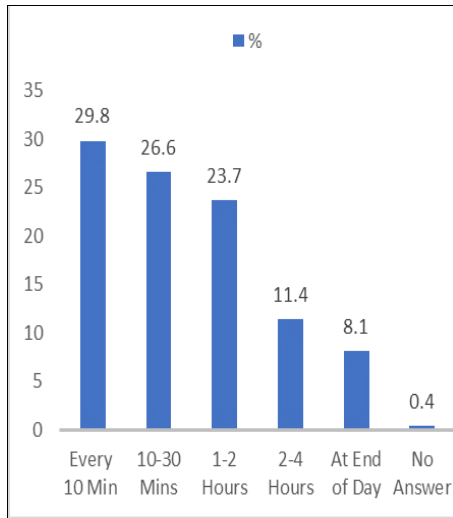
**Fig 1: Having Smartphone**



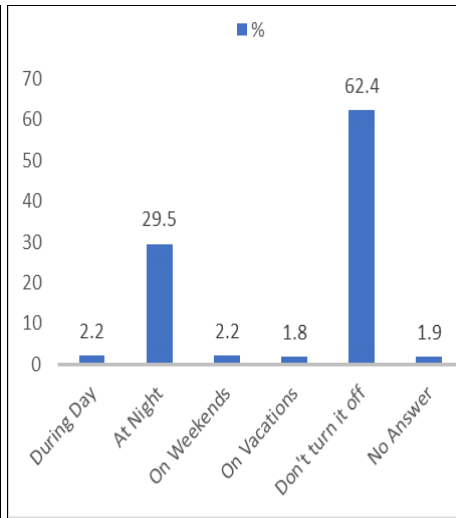
**Fig 2: Living without Smartphone**



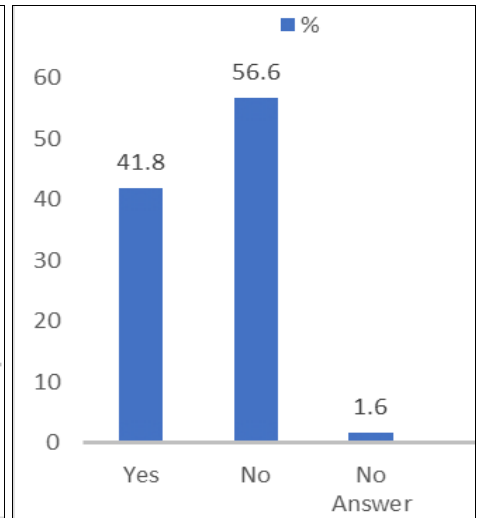
**Fig 3: Stay without Smartphone**



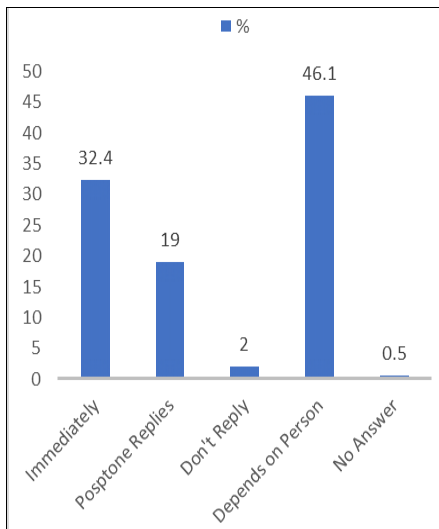
**Fig 4:** Checking Smartphone per Day



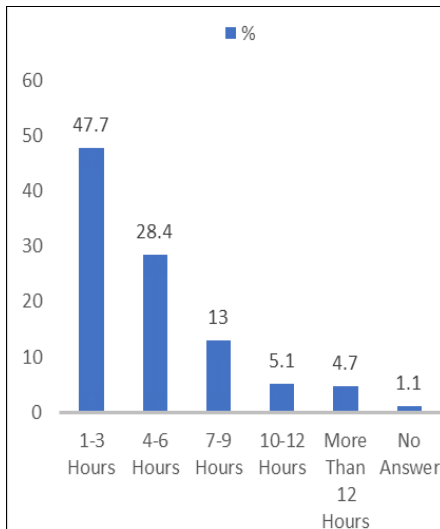
**Fig 5:** Turn off Smartphone



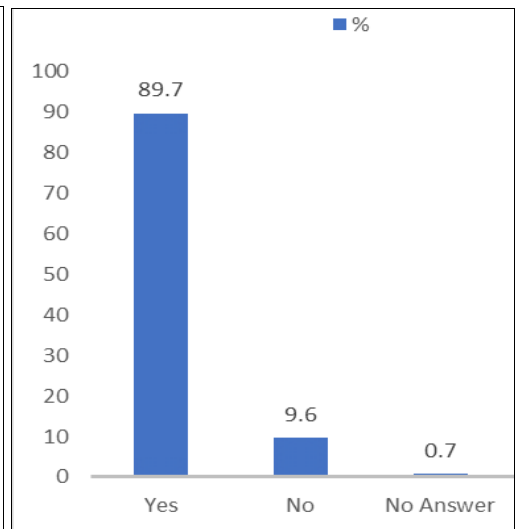
**Fig 6:** Respond to Notifications at Night



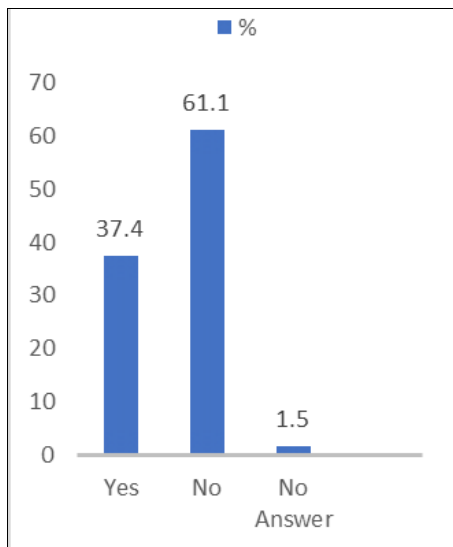
**Fig 7:** Reply to Chats



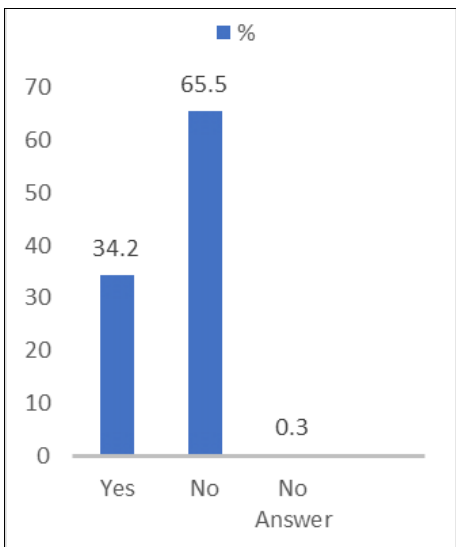
**Fig 8:** Spend Time on SNS



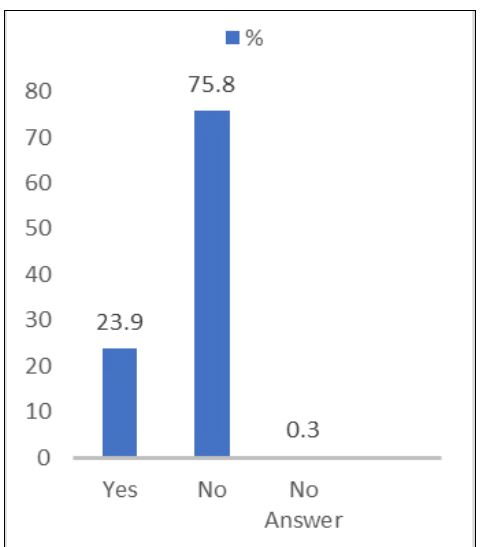
**Fig 9:** Communicate Directly with Family Members



**Fig 10:** Use SNS to Communicate

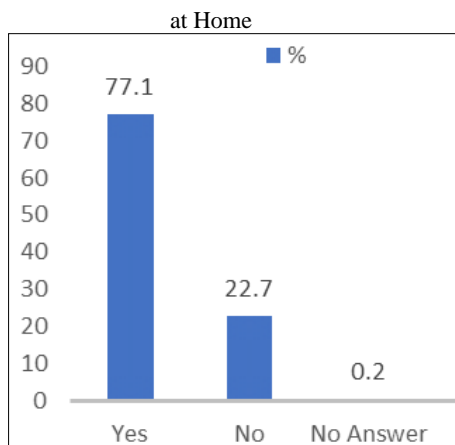


**Fig 11:** Spend Hours on Smartphone

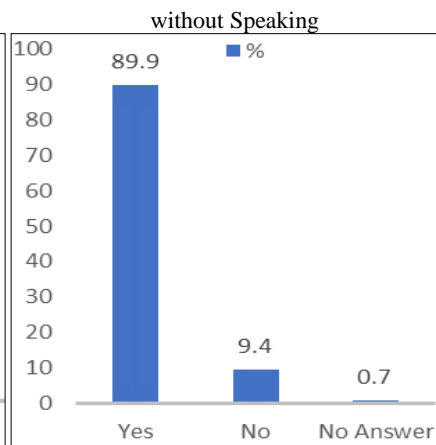


**Fig 12:** Contact Friends more

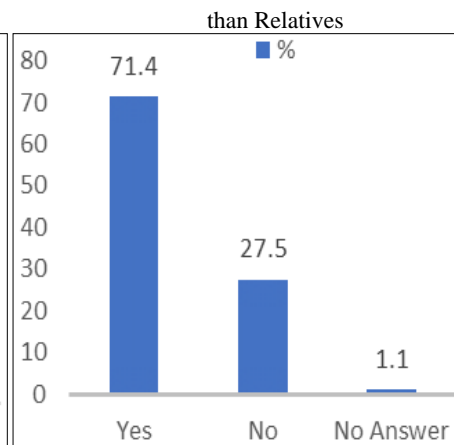




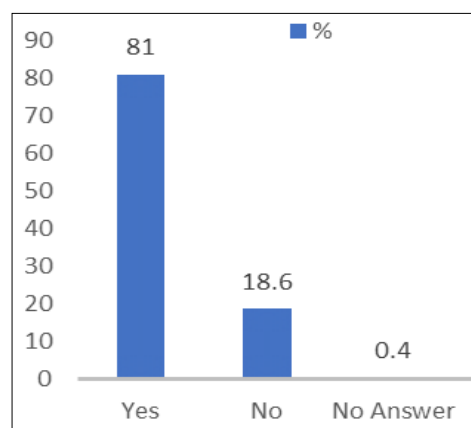
**Fig 13:** Know all Extended-Family Members



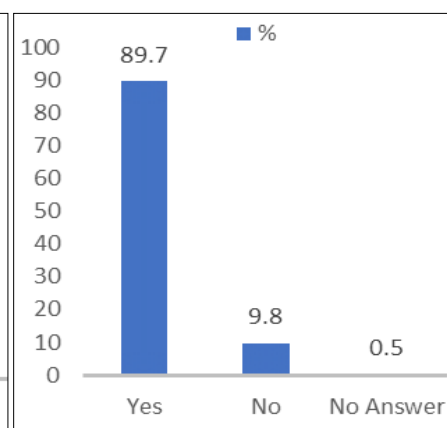
**Fig 14:** Strong Relationship with Extended-Family Members



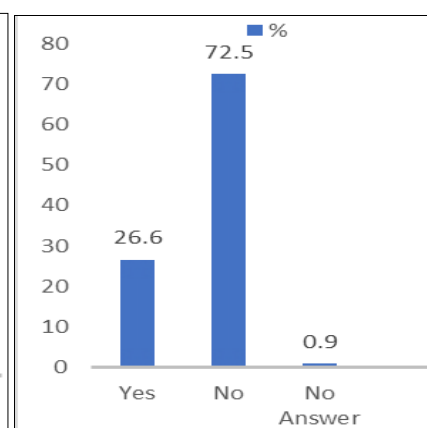
**Fig 15:** Communicate Directly with Extended-Family Members



**Fig 16:** Affect Lebanese Traditions



**Fig 17:** Used to Visit Family More



**Fig 18:** Negatively affects their Private Lives

**6. Discussion**

The results of this study were shocking since some of them were compatible with our hypothesis while the others were eye-opening on unexpected findings. However, the majority of the results support our hypothesis in one way or another.

The samples of the study are selected randomly but the results reveal that the bulk of the participants are the educated youth (64.8%). This indicates their awareness and supports the credibility of our research since most people who use technology particularly attain high academic degrees. These educated people utilize their smartphones more than others since they are familiar with their needs and goals compared with others. Most of them are employed (40.3%) and others have their own business (13.6%). There is a high communication among the participants which are mostly single (67.4%) compared to those married. Surprisingly, most of them did not provide us with their incomes (46.4%) and that might be because they:

- Are unemployed.
- Have high incomes and are afraid to declare because of the government’s taxes
- Are students who are financially supported by their parents
- Work in governmental jobs and other jobs whereby they are afraid of revealing information since the Lebanese laws prohibit a person from having a job other than his/her governmental job.

On the other hand, most of our study is based on other single participants whose incomes range mostly between 500-1000\$ (27.6%). This result reveals the low income of more than one quarter of Lebanese people. The most striking result was that the 9.6 % that earn less than 500\$ per month which is not enough for the single people’s sustainability, how might it be enough for the married couples, especially those who have children?

**The social media platforms**

A high dependency on smartphones is shown in accordance with an outstanding number of people who use them (97.8%) in comparison with others who don’t (0.6%), Fig.1. There exists an addiction on these smartphones with around 70% of the participants who do not consider living their lives without them while (28.9%), Fig.2, which was also a shocking and unexpected percentage, dare to live their life peacefully without them. This reveals that Lebanese people are exhausted and prefer not to use them despite their attachment to them. Undeniably, findings that reveal almost 75% of those who stay without their smartphones are obliged not to use them, Fig.3, and this can be explicated that some of them:

- Make calls rather than receiving them
- Working in offices whereby landlines are available and much cheaper than smartphones

- Might not have people to communicate with through applications but through calls only.

Surprisingly, each day, they check their smartphones every 10min (29.8%) which means 96 times per day thus showing an extremely high addiction, particularly for the youth. Half of them check them between 11min and 2 hours which means 50 times per day which also show their high addiction (Fig.4). These “check-ons” do not include the time that they spend on applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others or even on calls. This addiction might lead to nervousness and self-torture out of regular checking of these smartphones. This remarks that around 70% of Lebanese people are highly addicted to these smartphones, whether for work or any other scope, despite the fact that our observation was based on using them for means of entertainment. Moreover, some of them are always willing to communicate with others since a huge number of participants do not turn their smartphones at all (62.4%), in comparison with (29.5%), a percentage that supports our hypothesis, who turn them off at night which indicates that they would not like to communicate. The rest of them still have their private lives and turn them off during the day, weekends, and vacations (6.2%) and this is also notable whatever the importance of the call is (Fig. 5). In addition, addiction is also prevalent on great number of participants who wake up at night and respond to any notification (41.8%) while the rest do not respond at all and that may be out of exhaustion or sleep (Fig. 6).

Because they get bored of chatting, (45.6%) prefer using calls, video calls, and voice messages, but still, (21%) prefer chatting because they like to blur their real state in not expressing their feelings fully and don't like the interruptions in connection that happens through online calls. (22.6%) prefer regular calls due to the weak connection present in Lebanon and due to their confidentiality. Depending on the person, (46.1%) reply sometimes to the chats which shows that they are moody (Fig. 7). When it comes to communicating with siblings, (20.8%) reply sometimes to them and this is abnormal because this exposes acting especially when pretending that they are busy.

Almost 75% of participants spend around 1 to 6 hours on SNS which deteriorates their health (Fig. 8). 89.7% communicate directly with their family members and this answer is considered ambiguous since the observation shows that the majority does not communicate. Also, 9.6% do not communicate with their family members which signifies unusual and shallow relationships (Fig. 9). 34.1% of them prefer to use SNS to communicate with their family members especially in the same house rather than face to face 61.1% (Fig. 10). In the same house too, 34.2% do not speak to their family members when using their smartphones which displays dissociate and uncommunicative family relations (Fig. 11). This is very strange because it reveals that the Lebanese people are not willing to meet their family members which shakes the family principles, how come if they were immigrants?

23.9% spend most of their time with their friends without contacting their family while the rest do contact them (Fig. 12). This shows the beginning of the family dissociation since the participants do not share their daily life events with them. 22.7% do not know their extended family members (Fig. 13)

but 89.9% of them acknowledge that they have strong relationships with them (Fig. 14) though 27.5% of these participants do not communicate directly with them (Fig. 15), which shows contradiction in their answers as a result of their shyness if people acknowledge that they have poor relations with their family. Around 50% of them rarely see their extended family members which is exposed to a decrease by time.

89.2% do not will to risk their health for the sake of SNS, though they ironically acknowledge that it causes them a lot of health problems mainly fatigue, eye problems, backache, and headache (75%).

This is a medical problem that is spread among the adults as a result of exaggerated use of smartphones knowing that this is unhealthy for them. The use of these smartphones is also very perilous for the new generation that affects them physically and psychologically, though they are unaware of the risky health problems with the absence of the parents' guidance <sup>[16]</sup>. 81% of the participants agree that the Lebanese traditions are deteriorating rapidly due to e-communication and surprisingly they do not solve this problem (Fig. 16). 89.7% of them agree that the Lebanese people used to visit their family more than today and that they also used to have stronger interpersonal relationships than now (Fig. 17). Moreover, 72.5% claim that using social media around the clock negatively affects their private lives (Fig. 18), but astonishingly, 60% are aware of the destructive disadvantages of SNS. These results extremely show the contradiction among the participants' responses.

## 7. Conclusion

This study reveals the hazardous addiction of the Lebanese people towards using e-communication whether on health or behavior. It also shows the societal dissociation which highlights its perilous role on the solidarity in the society whether on friends on one hand or family on the other hand. This was very clear through the answers of the participants which were wavering between those who were superficially attached to the Lebanese traditions that comprise a support of unity, and the same participants' answers which were actually contradictory to this concept.

This silent dangerous process has a severe negative impact which people are unaware of though from our point of view, which this publication reveals, that this process is deteriorating swiftly and we are incapable of acknowledging its dilapidation in the future.

## 8. Recommendation

This publication stresses on the deleterious impacts of e-communication, thus precautions and solutions should be taken into consideration because this obstacle stretches to a large scope of the Lebanese people which in turn affects their health and fundamental manners.

Fast solutions should be also regarded because this problem is moving towards an escalating negativity. These solutions are divided into three categories:

- ✓ **Personal:** Each individual should start applying the manners of solidarity and communication on himself/herself.
- ✓ **Community:** NGOs have significant roles in restraining this problem through raising cultural awareness and in

practical implementation of solidarity among individuals as well as the Lebanese society as a whole.

- ✓ **Governmental:** The Lebanese government can be capable of raising cultural awareness through public schools and universities.
  - It can also implement laws so that private schools resort to them in their curriculum.
  - Employing media in this domain for expressing opinions, proposing the problem, and suggesting solutions to the public.

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