

# The Role of Facebook in Changes in Interpersonal Communication Patterns and the Concept of Romantic Relationships

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## ABSTRACT

*Digital technology in mass media provides a new way of transmitting information, but often does not deliver the veracity and emotional depth of information as direct human interaction does. Apart from the convergence offered by the media, information discernment through one of the digital or mass communication channels remains inferior to direct human communication. The question arises as to how social internet platforms affect relationships between women and men and the value and emotional structure of these relationships. Despite numerous studies that have dealt with the influence of social networks on the quality of communication and life of children and young people, it is evident that the question of the influence of social networks on gender relations is often neglected or considered less important. The purpose of this research was to examine the public's perception of the alienating effects of Facebook in the area of primordial and primary social inte-*

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*reaction between women and men as a previous communication to all other forms and types of communication. The results showed that the majority of respondents do not support the use of social networks for sexual acquaintances or emotional relationships, considering virtual communication as an insufficient substitute for real emotional contacts, which include non-verbal signs of attraction, and do not perceive them as a suitable means for engaging in emotional or erotic experiences. Although most do not consider them a threat to stable emotional relationships, they are a threat to the spiritual component and dignity of the partner and are perceived as an foundation for sexual adventures, trips and fraud.*

**Keywords:** Social networks, gender identity, communication, emotional relationships, humane sexuality

## **Introduction to the field of research**

### **Communication and sexual communication**

The entire living world manifests its existence through communication. Symbolic interactions in all areas and levels of the constitution and operation of social organizational structures, as well as relationships between individuals, are usually denoted by the term communication. One of the fundamental determinants of the quality of communication is definitely the media. Namely, communication creates, maintains, acts and changes all relationships and all organizational structures and communities in all areas and levels of society. Therefore, we logically conclude that the quality of interpersonal relationships, as well as the quality of the managing of organizations and social communities, is determined by the quality of interactions between communicators. We cannot ignore the fact that sexual communication is the original, basic and previous form of human interaction, the meeting of two minds and two beings, which is a prerequisite for all other types and forms of communication. And not only in human communities. “When a man remembers the period in which he loved, it seems as if nothing has happened since then.” With these words, François Charles Mauriac<sup>1</sup> uses his literary language to emphasize the importance of emotional communication between the sexes, which is certainly hidden in the foundations of every other interaction between a woman and a man.

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<sup>1</sup> French novelist, playwright, critic, poet and journalist, member of the French Academy and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. In 1958 Biography, Literature And Literary Studies, Biography And Non-Fiction Prose, Diaries, Letters And Journals - Journal - Tome 1 [Paperback] François Mauriac (1939).

In an era marked by the rapid evolution and pervasive use of new communication mediums, particularly social networks, the impact of this technology on interpersonal relationships, notably emotional connections between men and women, becomes a pertinent inquiry. With the increasing dissolution of families, a staggering surge in divorces (Državni zavod za statistiku, 2023), the prominence of femicide, and a shift towards partnerships over traditional marriages, even information and communication technology (ICT) cannot evade implications in shaping this emerging normalcy. Hence, the inquiry into technology's influence, particularly considering the dominance of traditional values in the cultural fabric of the Western-Balkan region, is both valid and crucial. Within this cultural-ethnic sphere, differing perspectives on emotions, especially their gendered origins, persist even in contemporary times.

### **Emotions in the structure of interpersonal interaction between the sexes**

The concept of suspicious perception of emotions, prevalent in contemporary Western culture, including ours, traces back nearly four hundred years before Christ, following the Platonic approach to emotions as irrational responses originating from the lower psychosomatic levels of the soul (Knuuttila, 2023). This diminishment of emotional significance persisted through the centuries, including Aristotle's philosophy, until Darwin and his theory, which viewed the expression of emotions as an evolutionary vestige, a long-surpassed remnant of animal heritage or childhood (Oatley and Jenkins, 2003), a perspective still echoed today.

Despite the common viewpoint that often relegates emotions to the domain of primitive, infantile, and irrational human traits, many theorists and researchers consider emotions as inherent strengths of humanity and a source of societal value (Solomon, 1977: 14-15), or at least, as a purposeful adaptation to the irrationality of the external world (Milivojević, 2000: 11). It's fascinating to note that while emotions are universally experienced across all cultures, specific emotions exhibit universal recognition among different cultures, yet individual variations in intensity and response speed have been observed (Ekman, 2011).

The conventional understanding implying that the amygdala is the key brain structure responsible for the processing and experience of emotions (Stafford and Webb, 2005: 384; Mickley Steinmetz and Kensinger, 2010: 6) is complemented by findings supporting the activation of other structures within the cerebral cortex alongside the amygdala, such as the central striatum, nucleus caudatus, putamen, and ventral tegmental area (Šimić et al., 2021). This does not exclude the importance of the paradigm advocating for a perspective in which emotions are formed through continuous interaction between the human body and the environment, undergoing

constant changes (Barrett, 2016; Barrett and Satpute, 2019), as the entirety of these findings best describes the complexity of emotional experience and response in humans.

This paradigm aligns with the conceptual framework suggesting that humans inherently seek social contact, perceiving loneliness as a source of pain, with its evolutionary function indicating deficiencies or absence in social interactions (Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008: 25; Peplau and Perlman, 1982: 381). Hence, it's logical to observe people actively striving to alleviate this discomfort, including seeking friendships through virtual social networks (Tanta et al., 2014), supported by empirical evidence showing that individuals with more friends experience lower levels of loneliness (Spitzer, 2019: 86).

Loneliness in the digital age is gaining considerable attention from researchers (O'Day and Heimberg, 2021). It's not solely viewed as a consequence of social isolation but also as a contributing factor (Spitzer, 2019: 87), with a particular focus on the risks among younger generations (Chatterjee, 2018). Consequently, scientific research is increasingly aimed at comprehending the adverse somatic effects that loneliness may have on the human population (Spitzer, 2019: 89).

### **Information and communication technology and new communication media**

Given that the internet and digital social networks offer diverse opportunities, including avenues for information dissemination, meeting new individuals, socializing, and communication, among others (Kosanović et al., 2021), it is not surprising that an increasing number of people are inclined to seek some form of social support through these means (Song et al., 2014; O'Day and Heimberg, 2021). Despite robust scientific evidence indicating that exposure to screens and the use of social media lead to heightened feelings of loneliness (Chatterjee, 2018; Twenge et al., 2018; Song et al., 2014; Meier and Reinecke, 2021), as well as a plethora of difficulties indicative of compromised mental health (Cleland Woods and Scott, 2016; McNaughton-Cassill, 2001; Hoge, Bickham and Cantor, 2017; Lin et al., 2016; O'Day and Heimberg, 2021; Meier and Reinecke, 2021; Tettegah, 2016: 9). Nonetheless, social media platforms do not solely pose a threat to human society. They also facilitate faster communication and collaboration, greater opportunities for education and business (Siddiqui and Singh, 2016), as well as the opportunity for a long-observed, and increasingly prevalent in contemporary times, inevitable need for intercultural adaptation (Sawyer and Chen, 2012).

Prior to the rise of social media, it wasn't expected that the Internet would wield such a profound influence on emotional expression. However, the emergence and

establishment of social networks as platforms for mutual interaction and coordination have notably reshaped the social environment. Social tools that were previously used as a means of conveying emotions (telephone, paper and pen) enabled communication within the family, between friends, lovers, and various social groups. In this broader context, social media is not a new phenomenon. However, with the emergence of digitization, they have become more modern in their application and methods of information transmission. (Tettegah, 2016: xv; Serrano-Puche, 2015). Mobile applications, internet platforms, and social media have significantly simplified the expression of emotions through various posts, enabling a richer expression of emotions through different formats such as emoticons, text, images, voice messages, videos, and the like (Tettegah, 2016: 3). However, at the same time, they constantly shape behavior (Serrano-Puche, 2015).

Facebook, as the longest-standing among newer media tools, still maintains its position as the primary multimedia platform for expression because it creates and sustains the impression of connection. This is corroborated by data from the online portal Statista, which indicates that during the last quarter of 2023, approximately 308 million individuals, aged between 18 and 44 years, in Europe used the Meta-owned Facebook platform on a daily basis (Dixon, 2023; Dixon, 2024). Particularly on Facebook, it's evident how the rules of digital practices are carefully crafted to 'translate' users' emotional experiences (Scribano, 2023: 17). Various social interactions, such as getting to know one another, expressing love, or displaying intolerance, are increasingly occurring in a digital and virtual context. Social networks enable a range of activities, from creating and sharing content to conducting transactions and managing various aspects of life. Consequently, what used to take place in physical locations now predominantly occurs through digital platforms (Scribano, 2023: 135).

The communication of emotions through social media closely intertwines with the social aspects of online technologies, suggesting that current theories about emotions may not suffice to fully comprehend the context and specificity of the online community (Giaxoglou et al., 2017). However, examining the technical functioning of digital networks while remaining attentive to the human affective potential within the digital environment reveals a challenging space. Individuals find themselves directly impacted by the algorithmic corporate digital networks, often receiving content that doesn't align with their actual needs or desires (Mandić, 2023; Tettegah, 2016: 9).

Hence, there's an imperative for additional empirical approaches to adequately address the emotional needs of social digital platform users and the dynamics of emotional interactions within the digital social context. This pursuit constitutes the primary goal of this work.

## **Review of the literature on the state and concepts in the field of the research topic**

Through a review of published scientific papers on Google Scholar and Web of Science, it becomes evident that our research subject is both current and encompasses diverse dimensions of study. Notably, there's an increased representation of studies exploring the impact of social networks and other digital innovations within the realm of information and communication technology, particularly focusing on their effects on children, youth, and the elderly population. Moreover, a considerable number of studies delve into analyzing the impact of social networks on corporate (interorganizational) communication, while a notably smaller body of research addresses the emotional aspects of communication between women and men.

## **Overview of the role of networks in communication communities throughout history**

Yadav (2022) defines social media as computer technologies that enable users to generate and disseminate information. Lawlor (2018) expands this fundamental concept to encompass active participation in social networking and the facilitation of two-way communication, primarily occurring on online platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, and similar platforms. These platforms serve as avenues for people to access news, promote their identities, share information, ideas, interests, and emotions, as well as to socialize and communicate with friends, family, and the global community through various means such as messages, calls, and announcements. As a result, these online social platforms have become an indispensable and integral aspect of modern everyday life.

Ball-Rokeach and Defleur (1976) emphasize that mass media can directly influence users' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, cultural values, norms, and subsequently, their behavior. They also highlight a direct correlation between exposure to media content, social interactions, discussions with others, and the development of addictive behaviors.

A meta-analysis conducted by Cheng et al. (2019) shed light on both perceived and actual benefits of social internet networks. Findings indicated that extroverted individuals often utilize social networks to enhance their social interactions and build additional online social capital. Conversely, individuals with pronounced social anxiety tend to perceive the Internet as a preferred platform for social interaction, choosing online networks over face-to-face communication (Erwin et al., 2004). This preference might stem from their attempt to compensate for a lack of social su-

port in real-life situations (Weidman, 2012). Consequently, they use social media primarily as a means to fill their social deficits, albeit inadvertently accumulating online social resources (Cheng et al. 2019).

According to the OECD in 2016, the ratio of individuals suffering from compromised mental health was 1 in 6 individuals, totaling 970 million by 2019 (WHO, 2022: 39). However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this figure has risen to 1 in 2 individuals (European Council, 2023). The WHO (2022: 18-39) explains this phenomenon through the interaction of individual vulnerability and increasingly pronounced environmental stressors, including the recent pandemic, global climate crisis, and escalation of conflict zones worldwide. This trend logically corresponds with an increase in all disorders falling under the group termed Neurotic and somatoform disorders and disorders caused by stress, as classified in the MKB-10 (Svjetska zdravstvena organizacija, 2011), across all age categories, with a particular emphasis on anxiety. Statistical data indicate that as of June 2023, 25 million people, or 5.4% of the total population of the European Union, suffer from an anxiety disorder (European Council, 2023). Therefore, it is advisable to conduct specific research in the field of anxiety and the selection of online emotional relationships.

### **Negative aspects of using social internet platforms**

It has been observed that positive experiences during interactions on social media platforms can create a strong emotional connection with unfamiliar individuals on those platforms, which can foster the development of addictive behaviors, resulting in prolonged engagement on the networks (Brailovskaia and Margraf, 2017), particularly emphasized among youth (Kosanović et al., 2021; Puharić et al., 2014).

Another negative aspect of media influence is the reinforcement of dominant gender norms (Planinić and Ljubičić, 2020), manifested through gender representation and asymmetry across various media forms, including the film industry, television commercials, music videos, video games, and roles of television hosts and forecasters, perpetuating traditional gender stereotypes (Sanborn, 2023: 115-18). Women are often depicted in stereotypical ways, emphasizing youthfulness and slim figures (Percy and Lautman, 1994 as cited in Sanborn, 2023: 119), while research consistently indicates the presence of themes of premature sexuality, further emphasizing the problem of more frequent objectification of women compared to men (Goodin et al., 2011 as cited in Sanborn, 2023: 119; Bernard et al., 2012 as cited in Sanborn, 2023: 128; Heldman, 2012).

The fact that the culture of objectifying women is deeply ingrained in society is confirmed by numerous studies that observe how women are encouraged to view their

bodies through the lens of self-objectification (Vaes, Loughnan, and Puvia, 2014: 233), whereas in media discourse and portrayal, they often assume passive roles (Conley and Ramsey, 2011; Kilbourne, 2010 as cited in Sanborn, 2023: 119), and media depictions often limit them to roles as homemakers and mothers, while their professional and other social roles are systematically overlooked or diminished (Sanborn, 2023: 121; Lubina and Brkić Klmpak, 2014). The key role of such representation in shaping stereotypes about female inferiority lies in shaping firm perceptions in the minds of media consumers, through leading representation policies that align with prevailing cultural norms (Milivojević, 2004; Planinić and Ljubičić, 2020).

In line with this, the dominant representation of men in the media characterizes them as calm, cool, confident, decisive individuals, entirely devoid of emotionality. Parallel to the depiction of women, men are often portrayed as young and attractive, but the rules shaping them are different. While older men are often perceived less unfavorably compared to women of the same age (Sanborn, 2023: 125). Nonetheless, there is an indication that men are increasingly focusing on their bodies (Field et al., 2014; Pope et al., 2000 as cited in Sanborn, 2023: 125; Mulgrew and Volcevski-Kostas, 2012, as cited in Erceg Jugović and Kuterovac Jagodić, 2016; Hargreaves and Tiggemann, 2004), and they are often depicted as clumsy and uninformed about household chores and childcare in movies and television shows, indicating mutual stereotyping (Sanborn, 2023: 126).

Oppliger (2007 as cited in Sanborn, 2023: 127) concludes that greater exposure to gender stereotypes in the media leads to the strengthening of gender-typed behavior and stereotypical attitudes about gender roles in real life. These findings are supported by Döring et al. (2016 as cited in Sanborn, 2023: 127), who claim that people create their selfies on social media to reflect gender stereotypes rooted in their environment.

Social media allows users to conceal their imperfections through filters and selective displays of body parts in profile pictures, creating an atmosphere of deception and manipulation. Biased portrayals in the media seem to create expectations that both sexes are equally susceptible to, influencing their perception of their own identity and the truthfulness of information and image of themselves they wish to share with others through social media.

### **Why are affective relationships on social internet platforms at the center of interest?**

The relationships between women and men represent an original and authentic interpersonal interaction or communication, the quality of which determines the qu-



ality of life within the communication community, across all its areas and levels of existence. We are talking about communication between genders as the primordial beginning of social integration, from partnership, family, local to global levels of social associations. Unfortunately, to date, and based on our review of sources and literature, these relationships have not been the subject of serious scientific research from this perspective. There is an abundance of popular and professional literature, little or no scientific research on erotic communication as the original communication between genders. Communication between women and men is still being replaced by interventions from various state bodies, instead of exploring ways of quality communication between women and men. Therefore, communication between women and men is the basis of all other types and forms of communication, *quod optiome notandum*.

Over recent decades, researchers have diligently delved into understanding the multitude of factors shaping romantic relationships. However, the influence of various communication technologies on these relationships has remained insufficiently explored. Remarkably, there's been relatively little attention devoted to analyzing the impact of social networks on romantic dynamics, despite platforms like Facebook having played a significant role in this aspect for almost two decades amid a changing social climate.

The need for more in-depth research in this domain is highlighted by early 2000s authors exploring affectivity on social platforms and more recent studies. For instance, Fox et al. (2013) identified numerous similarities in men's and women's experiences on Facebook but suggested significant differences in their behaviors on the platform.

This trend was confirmed by Mansson and Myers (2011), who observed women's tendency to express love more frequently on Facebook compared to men. However, it's unclear whether these findings stem from inherent communication differences between genders in emotional relationships, distinctions between online and offline interactions, or variations in communication norms across different social environments, which can directly impact engagement on online social platforms (Fox and Warber, 2013).

Considering the widespread use of social networks across diverse demographics worldwide, Fox et al. (2014) emphasize the necessity of identifying both general and specific trends in emotional behavior on these platforms, particularly in the context of romantic relationships on Facebook (Seidman et al., 2019).

All of the above points to the serious implications of processed, artificial images that we receive from the outside world, through the media, on the image of our

own body, the attitude about sexual and gender roles, and the creation of dangerous stereotypes and prejudices, which consequently have an impact on self-presentation in the media and the potential to create opportunities for emotional relationships.

## **Research methodology**

In a theoretical approach, we have chosen current scientific and professional sources of literature as well as the results of applied research on this topic. As for the empirical part of the research, we used some of the techniques of qualitative (observation, description, discourse analysis) and quantitative research (survey). The survey questionnaire was made in Google Docs form and was available to the participants for six full days, from October 15 to October 21, 2023. Long-term observations conducted by Veljković (2017) were employed in formulating the questionnaire, incorporating insights summarized in the questions presented here. The comprehensive questionnaire is provided at the end of this paper, while the specific questions used to assess each hypothesis are detailed below the corresponding graphs.

In the following, we present the outline of the quantitative research.

## **Research problem**

The perception of Facebook's role in the process of alienation among individuals, specifically gender alienation between women and men.

## **Subject of research**

The public's perception of Facebook's influence on emotional relationships between women and men, as seen through human interaction and communication.

## **Elements of the research subject**

Dependent variables include: the technical and technological solutions provided by Facebook as a social network, people's attitudes toward these solutions, and the frequency and methods of utilizing this platform to cultivate meaningful emotional connections in intimate relationships. Independent variable: gender.

## **The main (*cardinal*) research question**

Can the social network Facebook, serving as a medium for two-way communication, adequately substitute for direct verbal and non-verbal communication between or within genders in real life?

### **Specific collateral research questions**

**RQ – 1:** Do women and men believe that Facebook applications can enable them to have a complete and perfect emotional relationship?

**RQ – 2:** Why do women and men opt for social network communication, particularly through platforms like Facebook?

**RQ – 3:** Can communicating through the social network Facebook harm the quality of the emotional relationship between women and men?

**RQ – 4:** What techniques do individuals utilize during emotional conversations on Facebook?

### **Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1:** Both women and men share the view that time spent (virtually) on Facebook cannot equally replace real-time interaction among communicators in the realm of emotional intimacy.

**Hypothesis 2:** Women, more than men, perceive Facebook and other social media as an opportunity for new forms of sexual communication that create conditions for sexual objectification of both genders, negatively impacting the cultivation of emotional relationships between communicators in the realm of sexuality. Facebook and other social networks introduce new modes of sexual communication, fostering an environment where both genders can be objectified. This detrimentally impacts the development of emotional relationships between communicators in matters of sexuality.

**Hypothesis 3:** Men, more than women, perceive social media as a tool that creates a sense of security for communicators (own room and fake name on profile), thereby encouraging more freely thinking and communication about sexuality.

**Hypothesis 4:** Both women and men perceive social media as a tool that facilitates easy, quick, and countless acquaintances, making it a highly enticing challenge for various forms of sexual and emotional deception.

## **Research results**

### **Description and structure of data, research results and valorization of hypotheses**

The study included a random sample of a total of 260 participants, comprising 157 women and 103 men. Although participants had the opportunity to express their sexual orientation, none chose that option.

In the sample, the dominant group was the age group of 30 to 49 years, comprising 55.8% of participants, followed by those aged 18 to 29 years at 23%, 50 to 59 years at 17%, and the fewest participants were aged 70 to 79 years and under 18 years. Less than half, 40% of the respondents, were married, slightly over 30% were in emotional or partnership relationships, while 1.5% of the participants identified themselves as someone's lover. The smallest percentage of participants in the research sample (1.2%) had elementary education, 38% had secondary education (equally distributed between men and women), 18% had higher education, 38% had tertiary education (predominantly women), and 6% of participants had doctoral education, with male participants being dominant. As expected, the majority of participants, 77%, identified themselves as Christians, with equal representation of those who identified as Jews or Muslims (0.8%), atheists at 12%, agnostics at 8%, and there were also Hindus (1.2%).

### **Results and valorization of hypotheses**

For the purpose of testing hypotheses and exploring the issue, measures of descriptive and inferential statistics were applied for the analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

In order to check the normality of the distribution of the variables used, the Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted, confirming statistically significant deviations of almost all variables from a normal distribution. Except for the results of the normality test, Table 1 also lists the indices of skewness and kurtosis of the distribution. By analyzing the indices of kurtosis and skewness along with their corresponding standard errors, in conjunction with the results of the S-W test, we conclude that in this case, it is more justified to use non-parametric methods of data analysis.

Q-Q Plots presented below illustrate the distribution of the results.

Table 1 Descriptive Data

Tablica 1. Deskriptivni podaci

	H-1		H-2		H-3		H-4	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Mean</b>	21.732	21.981	13.089	13.922	13.223	14.262	12.707	13.184
<b>Coefficient of variability</b>	0.148	0.156	0.21	0.269	0.257	0.286	0.292	0.33
<b>Index of asymmetry</b>	-0.879	0.126	0.093	0.908	0.69	0.855	0.655	1.327
<b>Standard error of skewness</b>	0.194	0.238	0.194	0.238	0.194	0.238	0.194	0.238
<b>Flatness index</b>	1.489	2.424	-0.013	1.323	1.2	1.118	-0.12	2.683
<b>Standard error of the flattening index</b>	0.385	0.472	0.385	0.472	0.385	0.472	0.385	0.472
<b>Shapiro-Wilk Test</b>	0.946	0.96	0.985	0.945	0.96	0.942	0.951	0.907
<b>P value of Shapiro-Wilk test</b>	< .001	0.004	0.089	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001

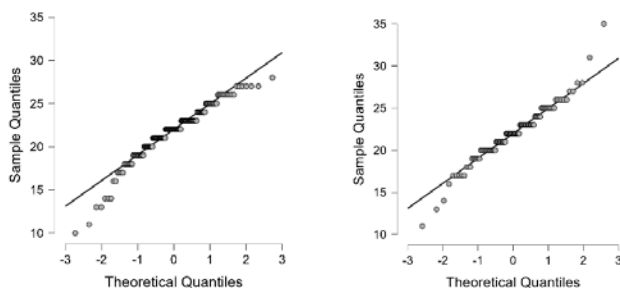


Chart 1 Q-Q plots for women and men according to H-1

Dijagram 1. Q-Q plotovi za žene i muškarce prema H-1

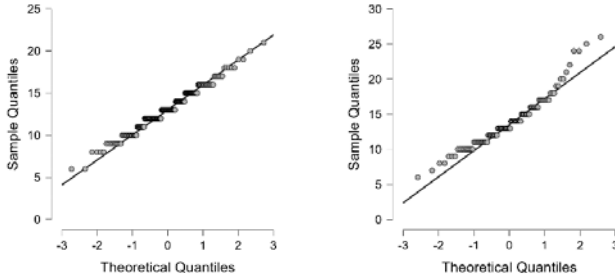


Chart 2 Q-Q plots for women and men according to H-2

*Dijagram 2. Q-Q plotovi za žene i muškarce prema H-2*

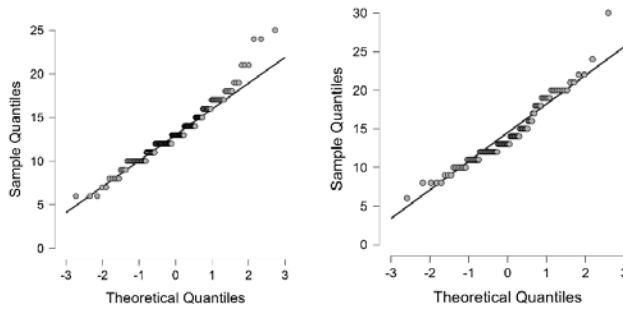


Chart 3 Q-Q plots for women and men according to H-3

*Dijagram 3. Q-Q plotovi za žene i muškarce prema H-3*

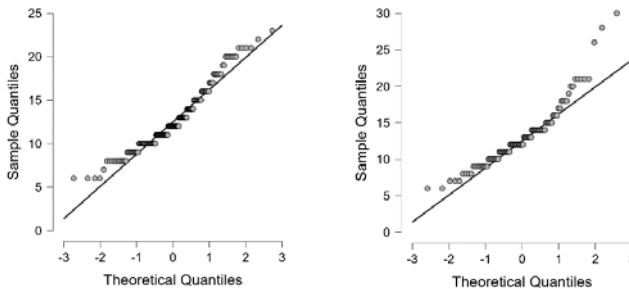


Chart 4 Q-Q plots for women and men according to H-4

*Dijagram 4. Q-Q plotovi za žene i muškarce prema H-4*

To test the hypotheses, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted, which shows that there is no significant difference between the groups of participants divided by gender.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test - Mann-Whitney U

*Tablica 2. T-test za nezavisne uzorke - Mann-Whitney U*

	<b>W</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>H-1</b>	8011.5		0.901
<b>H-2</b>	7281.5		0.173
<b>H-3</b>	7037.5		0.076
<b>H-4</b>	7644.5		0.456

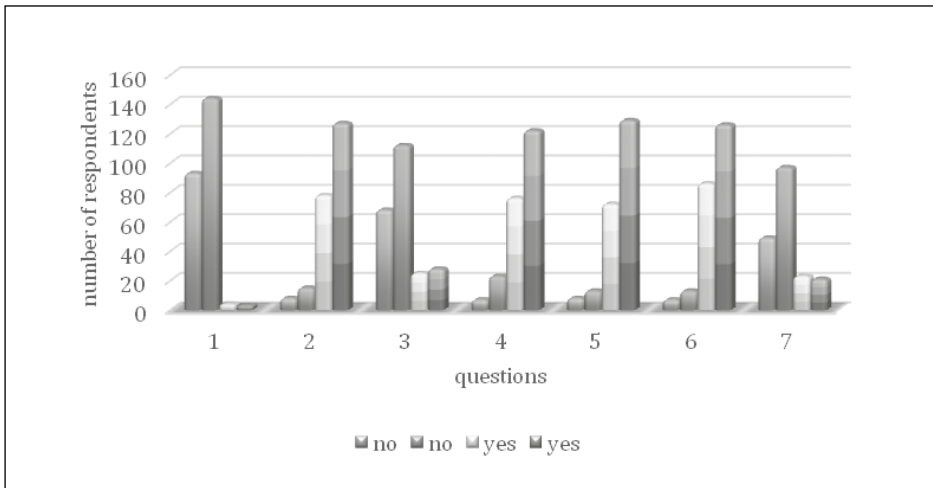
Table 3 Spearman's correlation coefficient

*Tablica 3. Spearmanov koeficijent korelacije*

<b>Variable</b>		<b>H-1</b>	<b>H-2</b>	<b>H-3</b>	<b>H-4</b>	<b>gender</b>
H-1	Spearman's rho	—				
	p-value	—				
H-2	Spearman's rho	0.322	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			
H-3	Spearman's rho	0.270	0.323	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
H-4	Spearman's rho	0.341	0.433	0.307	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
gender	Spearman's rho	0.008	0.085	0.110	0.046	—
	p-value	0.900	0.173	0.076	0.456	—

Table 3 indicates a high significance of the relationship between respondents' attitudes on all four variables studied, in a positive direction, suggesting a tendency for variable values to change in the same direction. However, no statistically significant relationship between gender and the attitudes investigated was found.

**Hypothesis 1 (H-1): Both women and men share the view that time spent (virtually) on Facebook cannot equally replace real-time interaction among communicators in the realm of emotional intimacy.**



Legend\*:

Authors of the paper

1. I find it more fulfilling to express affection with someone online rather than in person.
2. Social networks serve as a platform that often promotes false rather than genuine emotional and sexual information.
3. I feel more comfortable expressing my feelings, desires, and needs online than in face-to-face interactions.
4. Online messages lack warmth and fail to convey the complete emotional context, leading to potential misunderstandings or arguments.
5. On Facebook, verbal communication is increasingly being replaced by emoticons, abbreviations, or short videos, often losing the intended emotional depth.
6. Social platforms like Facebook offer plenty of enjoyable content, including virtual intimacy opportunities, but may also desensitize us.
7. Social networks can facilitate making sexual connections but may vary in fostering quality emotional bonds.

Graph 5 H-1: The perception of women and men regarding whether Facebook is an adequate substitute for real-time emotional interaction

*Grafikon 5. H-1: Stav žena i muškaraca o Facebook-u kao adekvatnoj zamjeni neposrednim emotivnim odnosima*



## The Role of Facebook in Changes in Interpersonal Communication Patterns

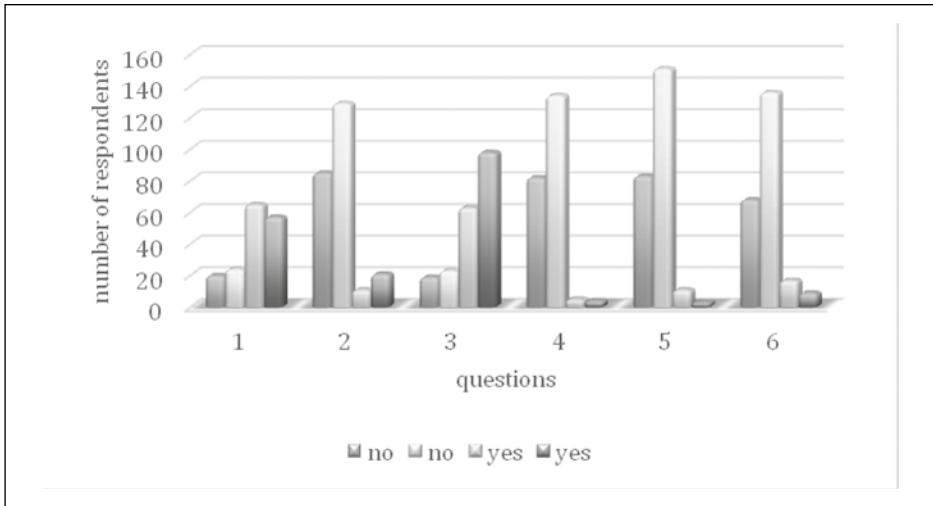
Table 4 H-1: The perception of women and men regarding whether Facebook can serve as a sufficient replacement for in-person interactions in emotional relationships, presented through percentages and actual figures

*Tablica 4 H-1: Stav žena i muškaraca o Facebook-u kao adekvatnoj zamjeni realnog vremena u emotivnim odnosima, prikazan u postocima i realnim brojevima*

	No M	No W	Yes M	Yes W	In total	Neither yes but no
<b>1.</b>	35.77%	55.38%	1.54%	1.15%	93.85%	6.15%
<b>2.</b>	3.08%	5.77%	30.00%	48.85%	87.69%	12.31%
<b>3.</b>	26.15%	43.08%	9.62%	10.77%	89.62%	10.38%
<b>4.</b>	2.69%	8.85%	29.23%	46.92%	87.69%	12.31%
<b>5.</b>	3.08%	5.00%	27.69%	49.62%	85.38%	14.62%
<b>6.</b>	2.69%	5.00%	33.08%	48.46%	89.23%	10.77%
<b>7.</b>	18.85%	37.31%	8.85%	8.08%	73.08%	26.92%

According to respondents, time spent on social networks does not facilitate genuine emotional communication between individuals. These platforms primarily enable the use of insincere messages and new symbols that fail to capture the emotional essence of communication between women and men. In essence, the majority of respondents do not view social networks as a suitable medium for forming sexual connections or meaningful emotional relationships. This lack of acceptance is equally prevalent among both men and women. These findings affirm first hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 2 (H-2): Women, more than men, perceive Facebook and other social media as an opportunity for new forms of sexual communication that create conditions for sexual objectification of both genders, negatively impacting the cultivation of emotional relationships between communicators in the realm of sexuality.**



Authors of the paper

Legend\*:

1. I miss genuine human contact and in-person social interactions.
2. Dining out, going to the cinema, etc., seem outdated to me.
3. Finding someone for a sexual encounter or a date on a social network is common and much easier today than meeting in person.
4. Seeking potential partners for sex/love online excites me more than doing so in person.
5. I frequently use Facebook to exchange sexual content (photos, words, gifs, etc.) with others.
6. I tend to respond on Facebook primarily to those individuals whose physical appearance, i.e., their profile picture, appeals to me, rather than the information they share or their profile content.

Graph 6 H-2: The perspectives of women and men regarding the role of Facebook and other social networks as platforms for introducing new forms of sexual communication

*Grafikon 6. H-2: Stav žena i muškaraca o Facebooku i drugim društvenim mrežama kao posrednicima novih oblika seksualnog komuniciranja*

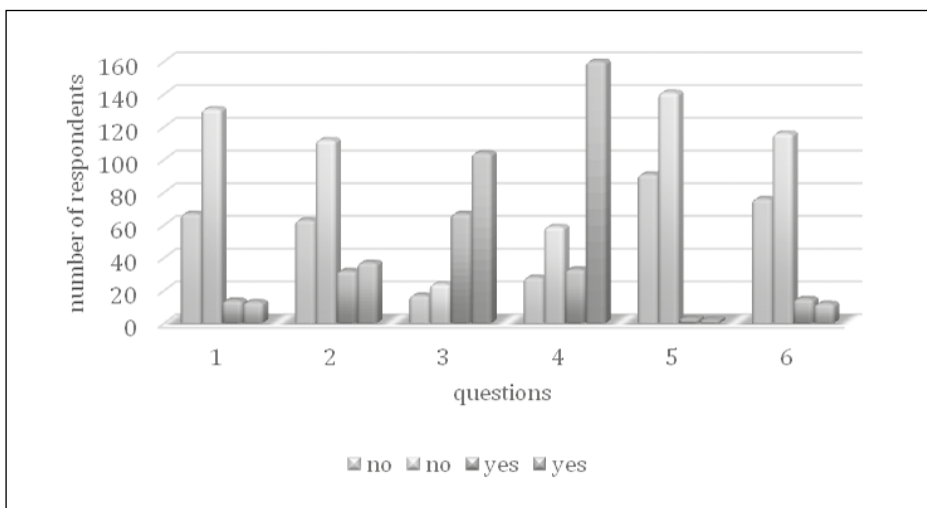
Table 5 H-2: The perception of women and men regarding the role of Facebook and other social networks as facilitators of emerging forms of sexual communication, presented through percentages and actual figures

*Tablica 5 H-2: Stav žena i muškaraca o Facebooku i drugim društvenim mrežama kao posrednicima novih oblika seksualnog komuniciranja, prikazan u postocima i realnim brojevima*

	No M	No W	Yes M	Yes W	In total	Neither yes but no
1.	7.69%	9.23%	25.00%	21.92%	63.85%	36.15%
2.	32.69%	49.62%	4.23%	8.08%	94.62%	5.38%
3.	7.31%	8.85%	24.23%	37.69%	78.08%	21.92%
4.	31.54%	51.54%	1.92%	1.54%	86.54%	13.46%
5.	31.92%	58.08%	4.23%	1.15%	95.38%	4.62%
6.	26.15%	52.31%	6.54%	3.46%	88.46%	11.54%

Nearly three-quarters of the respondents believe that the modern technological advancements in sexual communication lead to a virtualization of relationships between men and women. However, they perceive this as an inadequate replacement for a complete emotional connection. They emphasize the irreplaceable nature of non-verbal cues, such as physical touch, hugs, the sense of smell, or eye contact, in fostering genuine emotional bonds. Interestingly, women seem to be slightly more receptive to these new technological possibilities in sexual communication compared to the male respondents. However, the difference in the attitudes of women and men towards Facebook as a virtual space that provides an opportunity for new forms of sexual communication, which create conditions for the sexual objectification of both genders, did not prove to be significant. The second hypothesis was not confirmed.

**Hypothesis 3 (H-3): Men, more than women, perceive social media as a tool that creates a sense of security for communicators (own room and fake name on profile), thereby encouraging more freely thinking and communication about sexuality.**



Authors of the paper

Legend\*:

1. I express myself (sexually) more openly on Facebook and other social networks than in face-to-face relationships.
2. I have met some of my emotional/sexual partners on Facebook.
3. Maintaining a romantic relationship remotely (through a social network) is more challenging than in person.
4. I am naturally extroverted.
5. I tend to trust information on Facebook more than that from friends or relatives.
6. I find it easier to discuss topics like love or sex via chat than in person.

Graph 7 H-3: The attitudes of women and men regarding their sense of safety in communicating about sexuality on social networks

*Grafikon 7. H-3: Stav žena i muškaraca o osjećaju sigurnosti za komuniciranje o spolnosti na društvenim mrežama*

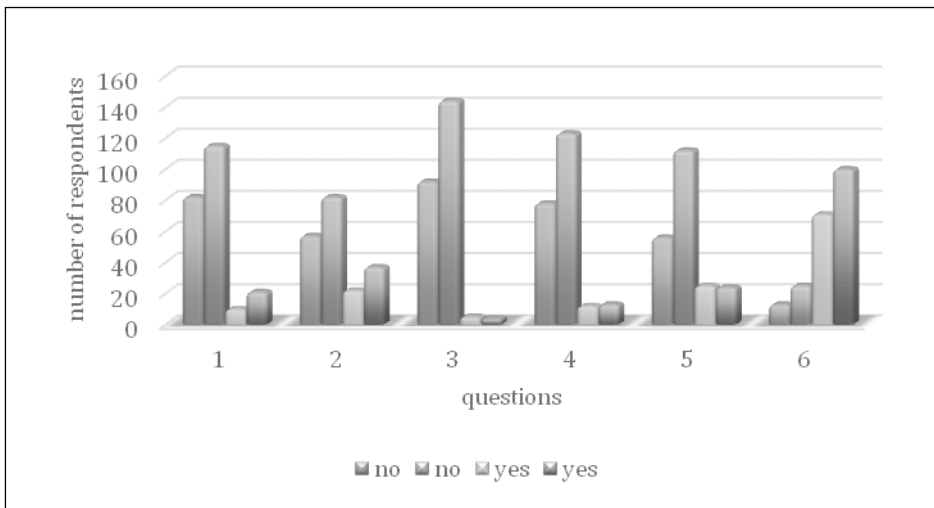
Table 6 H-3: The perspectives of women and men regarding their sense of safety in discussing sexuality on social networks, presented through percentages and actual figures

*Tablica 6. H-3: Stav žena i muškaraca o osjećaju sigurnosti za komuniciranje o spolnosti na društvenim mrežama, prikazan u postocima i realnim brojevima*

	No M	No W	Yes M	Yes W	In total	Neither yes but no
1.	25.77%	50.38%	5.38%	5.00%	86.54%	13.46%
2.	24.23%	43.08%	12.31%	14.23%	93.85%	6.15%
3.	6.54%	9.23%	25.77%	40.00%	81.54%	18.46%
4.	10.77%	22.69%	12.69%	23.08%	69.23%	30.77%
5.	35.00%	54.23%	1.15%	0.77%	91.15%	8.85%
6.	29.23%	44.62%	5.77%	4.62%	84.23%	15.77%

Respondents believe that despite the various protective and security measures on social networks, they do not necessarily encourage individuals to engage more deeply in getting to know each other or in eventually fulfilling their emotional or erotic aspirations in reality. Surprisingly, over 70% of respondents did not meet their emotional partners through social networks. The research indicates that distance and physical separation do not foster substantial emotional connections. Interestingly, women, outnumbering men by a notable 10%, still perceive social networks as providing a sense of security, thereby encouraging more open sexual communication. However, this hypothesis was not supported by the research findings.

**Hypothesis 4 (H-4): Both women and men perceive social media as a tool that facilitates easy, quick, and countless acquaintances, making it a highly enticing challenge for various forms of sexual and emotional deception.**



Authors of the paper

Legend\*:

1. I check my partner's Facebook profile because I don't trust him/her.
2. I consider myself a jealous person.
3. I spend most of my time in front of a phone or computer screen precisely for exchanging emotional and/or sexual content with someone.
4. If given the option, I would prohibit my partner from having an open Facebook profile because I've heard/know what people do online.
5. I don't consider flirting on Facebook to be cheating.
6. Facebook, as a technical system, significantly facilitates sexual escapades, fraud, and various adventures.

Graph 8 H-4: The perspectives of women and men regarding social networks as platforms that facilitate sexual escapades and diversions within male-female relationships

*Grafikon 8. H-4: Stav žena i muškaraca o društvenim mrežama kao facilitatorima spolnih avantura i diverzija u žensko-muškim odnosima*

Tabule 7 H-4: The perspectives of women and men regarding social networks as enablers of sexual escapades and diversions within male-female relationships, presented through percentages and actual figures

*Tablica 7. H-4: Stav žena i muškaraca o društvenim mrežama kao facilitatorima spolnih avantura i diverzija u žensko-muškim odnosima, prikazan u postocima i realnim brojevima*

	No M	No W	Yes M	Yes W	In total	Neither yes but no
1.	31.54%	44.23%	3.85%	8.08%	87.69%	12.31%
2.	21.92%	31.54%	8.46%	14.23%	76.15%	23.85%
3.	35.38%	55.38%	1.92%	1.54%	94.23%	5.77%
4.	30.00%	47.31%	4.62%	5.00%	86.92%	13.08%
5.	21.54%	43.08%	9.62%	9.23%	83.46%	16.54%
6.	5.00%	9.62%	27.31%	38.46%	80.38%	19.62%

According to the majority of respondents, social networks, as a means of potential infidelity, are not perceived as a threat to stable emotional relationships between men and women, although a significant portion of respondents view flirting on Facebook as deceitful. Therefore, there is a perceived risk on social networks to the emotional integrity and dignity of a partner, as well as human dignity in matters of sexuality. Social media are recognized by male participants in slightly larger percentage, but still statistically insignificant, as can be seen from Table 2, as a technical infrastructure for sexual escapades, affairs, and infidelities, with men being less trusting of their partners and more convinced that the network is an opportunity for deceit. This hypothesis was confirmed by the research.

## **Discussion**

### **Introduction to the Discussion**

The foundation of any social research undoubtedly lies in exploring interactive processes within communication communities and other social structures across all organizational levels. Communication is inherent to existence; where communication is absent, existence is lacking. Currently, extensive research is conducted across nearly all spheres and levels of social communication, aiming to uncover knowledge and models relevant to communication. Technological advancements, especially in information and communication technologies, not only innovate methods and research tools but also introduce new mediums or mediators in communication, profoundly influencing the quality of interpersonal relationships. The impact of modern technologies, notably contemporary media, on communication processes commonly results in a characteristic alienation most pronounced in emotional relationships between men and women. Interestingly, research on the role of emotional relationships, encompassing aspects such as erotica, love, and sex, was historically overlooked, relegated to the realms of literature and art. Consequently, the initiators of creativity shifted from daily interactions to the pages of novels and canvases, leaving real-life relationships emotionally vacuous.

It is crucial to highlight that our research was conducted within the cultural framework of traditional values, primarily focusing on male-female relationships, family dynamics, and certain religious presumptions and values. Thus, the research findings carry heightened significance in understanding the communication reality within emotional relationships between men and women, while also indicating a tendency to surpass traditional value systems.

### **Facebook cannot replace real time in emotional relationships**

Evaluating the research findings on online emotional exchanges between men and women, 82% of respondents refute the concept, aligning with Fox et al. (2013) discovery that most individuals meet potential partners outside social networks. Specifically, women exhibit a significantly higher rejection rate of substituting in-person interactions with online communication. Additionally, a considerable number of respondents (41.9%) doubt the authenticity of information transmitted through social networks, with a higher percentage of men believing that these platforms propagate more false information. This coincides with Walther (1996) assertion that users craft messages to present themselves favorably rather than realistically. Over half of the respondents (52.7%) believe expressing emotions and needs is easier “face to face”



than online, aligning with previous research (Parks and Floyd, 1996; Joison 2001) suggesting more pronounced uncertainty reduction and self-presentation in computer-mediated communication compared to in-person interaction. Regarding gender, a higher percentage of men lean towards ignoring online expression in favor of live emotions. Authors like Joinson (2001) and Ben-Ze'ev (2003) emphasize emotional presentation for intimacy in online relationships, contrasting beliefs that virtual connections offer greater intimacy. However, while some argue for the potential of developing emotional ties online (Walther et al., 2005 as cited in Pauley and Emmers-Sommer, 2007), a relative majority (42.3%) perceive online messages as cold and prone to misunderstandings and arguments (men: 39.1%, women: 60.9%).

On Facebook, visual elements often supplant verbal communication, a belief shared by a relative majority, roughly one-third of men and two-thirds of women, which aligns with findings indicating inadequate signaling in computer-mediated communication for relationship development (Tidwell and Walther, 2002). Critics highlight the absence of non-verbal cues, vocal tones, physical proximity, and attraction (Riva, 2002).

Around 42.8% somewhat agree, and 38.8% completely agree that Facebook offers substantial content for virtual relationships while dulling its users, 58.6% of women and 41.4% of men, share this sentiment. Moreover, a significant portion (40%) firmly disagrees that social networks foster meaningful sexual connections, contradicting Cooper and Sportolari (1997) stance that these platforms contribute positively to interpersonal relationships, including romantic ones. The gender distribution of opinions (65.4% women, 36.4% men) supports skepticism toward replacing live interaction with virtual communication, particularly among women. However, this study does not show significant differences in the participants' attitudes regarding the idea that time spent on social platforms, such as Facebook, cannot replace what direct emotional communication provides for people.

### **Facebook and other social networks enable new forms of sexual communication, which affect the quality of relationships between women and men**

Facebook introduces new avenues for sexual communication, fostering the objectification of both genders and detrimentally impacting the cultivation of intimate relationships between men and women in the realm of sexuality. The survey results reveal that 42.5% of respondents strongly feel (with an additional 26.9% feeling to some extent) a lack of genuine, face-to-face human contact and social interactions. This digitization and reliance on social networks, which commercialize human relationships, exacerbate feelings of alienation. This sense of disconnectedness is equally experienced by both genders, aligning with prior research (Riva, 2002).

Around two-thirds of respondents do not consider traditional social outings, like going to shows or dinners with friends and family, as outdated experiences, with 49.62% of women and 32.69% of men sharing this perspective. Amidst this evolving landscape, 62% of respondents strongly agree that meeting individuals for sexual liaisons is easier on social networks than in real-world interactions. This trend aligns with the notion that computer-mediated communication contributes to cyberspace becoming a limitless social medium (Postmes et al., 1998: 698), fostering a sense of promiscuity. Women, in a slightly larger proportion of participants in this study, are more inclined than men to view social networks as conducive to engaging in sexual encounters compared to real-life interactions.

However, despite this inclination, the majority (two-thirds) of respondents, especially women, express reservations about seeking long-term love partnerships online. A staggering 85% deny engaging in sexual discussions via social networks, with 51.5% of women and 31.5% of men outright rejecting this mode of communication. It appears that in our sample, the discreet nature of online relationships, as opposed to face-to-face interactions (Pauley and Emmers-Sommer, 2007), does not necessarily encourage explicit content exchange.

Regarding attraction in social network interactions, men tend to be more drawn to physical appearance, while women prioritize other non-physical qualities and values in individuals. This echoes the notion proposed by Cooper and Sportolari (1997) that computer-mediated connections, particularly in social networks, reduce the emphasis on physical attributes in attraction, highlighting factors like emotional closeness, relational compatibility, and mutual disclosure. It allows both genders to move away from traditional gender roles prevalent in face-to-face interactions. Regardless of all the opportunities that social media provide to their users in terms of new forms of sexual communication and superficiality in selecting potential communicators, it seems that neither men nor women, at least in this, still quite toward traditional values oriented geographic area, are inclined to seize such opportunity.

### **Social networks and the “false” sense of security for communicating about sexuality**

There’s a common misconception that social networks provide a sense of security to communicators—offering the guise of anonymity with one’s own room and a fake profile name—thereby fostering freer thinking and communication about sexuality. However, research suggests otherwise. Around 70% of respondents indicate that they don’t express themselves any more openly on social networks compared to real-life situations; this notion is merely a stereotype. Interestingly, almost two-thirds

of respondents have never found a sexual partner via social networks. Despite assertions by some authors, like Fox et al. (2013), that Facebook plays a significant role in accelerating romantic relationships, there's a differing perception among users. While a certain segment considers it suitable for building romantic connections due to minimal disparity between online and offline behavior, creating an equivalence in emotional realities (Goldberg et al., 2022), the majority in this survey disagree.

The same percentage of respondents believes that maintaining a love relationship through a social network is more intricate than in real life. Additionally, a significant 84% place greater trust in their friends and relatives over social networks—a wise choice considering Walther (1996) research. He concluded that people tend to present themselves in ways expected of them on social platforms, resulting in lasting impressions that aren't necessarily accurate (Hancock and Dunham, 2001). Despite the belief that sharing personal details is easier and less pressured online (Joinson, 2001; Benz-Ze'ev, 2003), an overwhelming majority (about 2/3) find it more comfortable to discuss love and sex directly, in real-time conversations, than through online chats. Men do not differ from women on this issue and it seems they do not perceive social media as a significantly safer place for freer sexual behavior.

### **Social networks as a challenge for sexual adventures and diversion in female-male relationships**

According to the prevalent beliefs of individuals, social networks offer an easy and swift way to make numerous acquaintances, posing as an appealing platform for various forms of sexual fraud. However, this discourse isn't entirely accurate. More than 90% of respondents in the survey express a lack of trust in social networks, even in instances involving sexual fraud or infidelity. It's evident from the research that traditional values still hold sway in our society, with 22% of men and 44% of women considering flirting as a form of fraud or infidelity.

The majority, about two-thirds, of respondents agree that Facebook, as a technical system, significantly facilitates sexual excursions, scams, and other adventures. This aligns with Pauley and Emmers-Sommer (2007) findings, indicating that online extradyadic relationships can be more discreet than face-to-face interactions, making people less hesitant to engage. When vocal and physical attributes are added, these interactions can be as intimate as offline ones. Additionally, research by Clayton et al. (2013) demonstrates a positive correlation between intensive Facebook use and negative outcomes in offline emotional relationships. It often leads to partner neglect, jealousy, resulting in arguments, and the temptation for emotional or physical affairs.

Despite the evident mistrust of social networks as a communication medium, respondents wouldn't necessarily prevent their partners from joining or signing up for these platforms if given the chance. This respect for their partners' autonomy might suggest either emotionally empty relationships or an exceptional sexual culture of the times. However, the monitoring of a partner's behavior via Facebook, despite low levels of declared jealousy (only 9% for men and 14% for women), might stem from a desire to control or improve the relationship, as observed by for example Seidman et al. (2017) or Družeta and Zgrabljic Rotar (2017). Nonetheless, this surveillance can escalate anxiety and detrimentally affect relationship stability and satisfaction, as highlighted by Fox and Warber (2014). Echoing evolutionary theories of jealousy, men tend to experience more jealousy in cases of sexual infidelity, whereas women are more prone to emotional infidelity jealousy (Buss et al., 1999). In the context of social media, women tend to express more jealousy on platforms like Facebook compared to men, as observed in various studies including this sample (Muisse et al., 2014; Muscanell et al., 2013).

From all that has been mentioned, it can be concluded that despite the perception of social media by both male and female participants as a tool for quick and numerous acquaintances, which also enables various forms of deceit, participants do not express themselves in a way to use them for such types of communication, as they consider such communication to be deceitful.

## **Conclusion**

The cornerstone of social research undoubtedly lies in examining interactive processes within communication communities and various social structures across all organizational levels. Communication is intrinsic to existence; where communication ceases, existence becomes dubious. Presently, nearly all social communication realms undergo rigorous scrutiny in pursuit of fresh insights and models conducive to fulfilling communicative objectives. Technological advancements, especially in information and communication technologies, not only innovate methods and research tools but also introduce new communication mediums significantly impacting human relationships. The pervasive influence of modern technologies, particularly media, commonly leads to alienation, notably evident in emotional relationships between men and women.

Ironically, research into emotional relationships, built on fundamental human aspects like erotica, love, and seks, has been overlooked, relegated to the realms of literature and art. Consequently, these vital aspects of creativity shifted to novels, paintings, sculptures, and music studios, leaving real relationships emotionally va-

cant. Although the internet and digital social networks offer diverse communication benefits and information sharing, the foremost prospect is encountering new people and engaging with them. Notably, it's not surprising that more individuals lean toward connecting through these platforms despite scientific evidence indicating increased loneliness due to screen exposure and social media usage (Chaterjee, 2018; Twenge et al., 2018; Song et al., 2014; Meier and Reinecke, 2021). This represents a contradiction: while people seek social interaction online, excessive use of digital interfaces makes them lonelier (Spitzer, 2019).

Tettegah's observations and our research align in suggesting that individuals are immersed in algorithmic corporate digital networks, bombarded with content that fails to meet their genuine needs or desires (medialiteracy.hr, 2023; Tettegah, 2016: 9). This is particularly pronounced in terms of emotionality and intimacy and applies equally to members of both genders.

Our study revealed significant reservations among respondents regarding the use of social networks in emotional male-female relationships, particularly mistrust toward applications facilitating emotional, erotic, and romantic communication. Respondents, regardless of gender, regard sexuality as an intensely personal and private sphere they are reluctant to expose publicly. Furthermore, the research highlighted women's sensitivity to emotional deceit and men's vulnerability to physical deceit, which intersects with gender representation and asymmetry prevalent in numerous social spheres. Our findings confirm that prevailing stereotypes in media discourse, depicting men as more confident, decisive, and less emotional compared to women, still influence social perception, but may not necessarily reflect the true state of affairs. Human emotionality and its expression in any modality are not one-dimensional and depend on many factors, including intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Respondents, regardless of gender, recognize that ICT and social networks segregate emotional and biological aspects, separating love and sex and leading to the objectification or dearth of emotional depth and tenderness, crucial aspects of intimate relationships. According to respondents, ICT and social networks fail to facilitate such emotional depth; they equate a long-distance hug to emotional sterility.

However, the majority of respondents welcome any technical advancement in communication. The public interest, alongside capital interest, will drive further communication and media channel developments, and consequently, an increasing number of people will use the internet as a tool for casual encounters, entertainment, or even finding romantic partners. However, it is likely that this massive trend could spread somewhat more slowly in areas where traditional views on emotional experiences and romantic relationships prevail, as is the case in this study.

The limitations of this study include possible sample non-representativeness, participant self-selection, and differences in participants' actual behavior on Facebook compared to what they were willing to honestly answer in questionnaire responses, despite participation being voluntary and anonymous. Additionally, constructs susceptible to various influences were included in the study, which could not be controlled, potentially affecting the results of this research.

For future research, it is recommended to explore the nature of online emotional relationships in the context of the negative implications of social media use, as well as to study the impact of Facebook on emotional relationships among older demographic groups. Such an approach could provide valuable insights into the "gray areas" of emotionality through the lens of the inevitability of social platforms entering every internet-connected home worldwide.

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## Attachment

Questionnaire on participants’ attitudes towards the role of Facebook in changing patterns of interpersonal communication and perceptions of romantic relationships (Đumić and Veljković, 2023)

1. I find online exchange of affection with someone more satisfying than in-person.
2. Social media is a platform that enables the dissemination of more false than true information about emotional values and sexuality.
3. It’s easier for me to express feelings, desires, and needs online than in face-to-face interaction.
4. Online messages are impersonal and do not convey the full context of feelings or situations, leading to easier misunderstandings or arguments.
5. On Facebook, verbal communication is increasingly replaced by emojis, abbreviations, or short video clips, losing the emotional depth we want to convey to someone.
6. Social platforms (like Facebook) provide us with a lot of entertaining content and amusement as well as opportunities for virtual intimacy, but at the same time they also dull or dumb us down.
7. Social media is a good medium for forming sexual connections and quality emotional relationships.
8. I miss real human contact and face-to-face interactions.
9. Dinners out, movie nights, etc., are outdated.

## The Role of Facebook in Changes in Interpersonal Communication Patterns

10. Nowadays, it's common and much easier to find someone for a sexual adventure or a date on social media than in person.
11. I get more excited about searching for potential sexual/romantic partners online than in real life.
12. I often use Facebook to exchange sexual content (images, words, gifs, etc.) with other people.
13. I usually reach out on Facebook to those individuals who attract me solely based on their physical appearance, i.e., profile picture, rather than the information they post about themselves or the content on their profile.
14. I behave (sexually) more freely on Facebook and other social media than in face-to-face relationships.
15. I have met some of my emotional/sexual partners on Facebook.
16. Maintaining a long-distance romantic relationship (via social media) is more complicated than in real life.
17. I am by nature an extrovert.
18. I trust information on Facebook more than I trust friends or relatives.
19. I find it easier to talk to someone, especially about love or sex, via chat than in person.
20. I check my partner's Facebook profile because I don't trust him/her.
21. I consider myself a jealous person.
22. I spend most of my time in front of a phone or computer screen because of exchanging emotional and/or sexual content with someone.
23. If I had the opportunity, I would forbid my partner from having an open Facebook profile because I hear/know what people do online.
24. Flirting on Facebook is not considered cheating.
25. Facebook, as a technical system, greatly facilitates sexual escapades, infidelity, and various adventures.

# Uloga Facebooka u promjenama obrazaca interpersonalne komunikacije i poimanju romantičnih odnosa

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## SAŽETAK

*Digitalna tehnologija u masovnim medijima pruža novi način prijenosa informacija, ali često ne prikazuje istinitost i emocionalnu dubinu informacija kao što to čini neposredna ljudska interakcija. Osim konvergencije koju mediji nude, rezolucija informacije jednim od digitalnih ili kanala masovnih komunikacija ostaje inferiorna u odnosu na direktnu ljudsku komunikaciju. Postavlja se pitanje kako društvene internetske platforme utječu na odnose između žena i muškaraca te na vrijednosnu i emocionalnu strukturu tih odnosa. Unatoč brojnim istraživanjima koja su se fokusirala na utjecaj društvenih medija na kvalitetu komunikacije i života djece i mladih, vidljivo je da se pitanje utjecaja društvenih mreža na odnose među spolovima često zanemaruje ili se smatra manje važnim. Ovim istraživanjem željelo se ispitati percepciju javnosti prema alijenacijskim efektima Facebooka na području iskonske i primarne socijalne interakcije između žena i muškaraca kao prethodne komunikacije svim drugim oblicima i vrstama komuniciranja. Rezultati su pokazali da većina ispitanika ne podržava korištenje društvenih mreža za druženja seksualne prirode ili emotivne veze, smatrajući virtualnu komunikaciju nedostatnim nadomjeskom stvarnim emotivnim kontaktima, koji uključuju neverbalne znakove privlačenja, i ne doživljava ih kao prikladno sredstvo za upuštanje u emotivne ili erotske doživljaje. Iako ih većina ne smatra prijetnjom stabilnim emotivnim odnosima, ugroza su duhovnoj komponenti i dostojanstvu partnera te se percipiraju kao prilika za spolne avanture, izlete i prijekave.*

*Ključne riječi:* društvene mreže, spolni identitet, komuniciranje, emotivni odnosi, humana spolnost