

# Social Media and Marital Relations among Married Women: A Scoping Review and Islamic Ethical Analysis Using the Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a Framework

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to examine how social media use influences marital relations among married women and interpret recurring relational patterns through the maqāṣid al-sharī'a framework, integrating empirical research with Islamic ethical analysis.

**Research Methodology:** A scoping review guided by the PRISMA-ScR framework was conducted using major academic databases. Peer-reviewed empirical and theoretical studies that addressed social media and marital dynamics were included. Data were systematically extracted and analyzed using thematic synthesis. The identified themes were subsequently interpreted through the five classical maqāṣid objectives: preservation of religion, life (emotional well-being), intellect, lineage (family integrity), and property (economic trust).

**Results:** Five dominant themes emerged: emotional boundary reconfiguration, surveillance and jealousy, social comparison, gendered moral scrutiny, and digital economic participation. The findings indicate that social media functions as a relational amplifier, intensifying the pre-existing dynamics of trust, insecurity, and negotiation rather than serving as a deterministic cause of marital instability. Maqāṣid-based analysis demonstrates ethical convergence between empirical findings and Islamic objectives concerning emotional stability, moral conduct, rational discernment, family cohesion, and economic transparency.

**Conclusions:** Social media reshapes marital interactions structurally and symbolically, requiring contextual and ethically grounded evaluations. The maqāṣid framework provides a structured lens for assessing digital intimacy within marriage, emphasizing welfare, justice, and relationship accountability.

**Limitations:** This review is limited to English-language publications and heterogeneous methodologies without a quantitative effect-size assessment.

**Contribution:** This study advances interdisciplinary scholarship by bridging digital sociology and Islamic ethical reasoning and offering a structured normative framework for faith-sensitive digital literacy and marital counseling.

**Keywords:** *Digital Intimacy, Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'a, Marital Relations, Married Women, Social Media*

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## 1. Introduction

The proliferation of social media has fundamentally reshaped interpersonal communication, including marital relationships (Shabbir, 2021). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) have expanded opportunities for connection while simultaneously altering the boundaries of privacy, intimacy, and emotional disclosures. Scholars have observed that digital communication technologies restructure relational norms by enabling persistent connectivity, asynchronous interaction, and networked visibility (boyd) (Hampton, 2016). Within marriage, these affordances may reinforce emotional closeness but can also introduce new sources of tension in the relationship. Empirical research suggests that social media use is associated with both positive and negative marital outcomes (Omokhabi et al., 2025).

On the one hand, digital platforms can facilitate emotional support, shared activities, and relationship maintenance across geographic distances (Parsakia & Rostami, 2023). However, studies have linked excessive or problematic social media use to marital dissatisfaction, jealousy, and conflict (Valenzuela et al., 2014). The phenomenon of “Facebook-related conflict,” for example, has been associated with decreased relationship quality and, in some cases, relationship dissolution (González-Rivera and Hernández-Gato, 2019). Digital spaces also introduce new relational ambiguity. The visibility of past relationships, private messaging functions, and algorithmically curated content may blur the boundaries between public and private spheres. Such transformations complicate traditional understandings of marital fidelity and trust, as spouses navigate online interactions that may not fit established relationship norms (Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014). Consequently, social media does not merely supplement marital interactions; it structurally and symbolically reconfigures them.

Although social media affects all marital relationships, its implications are not gender-neutral. Research in family and gender studies consistently demonstrates that digital practices are shaped by broader social norms, including expectations regarding emotional labor, modesty, relationship maintenance, and domestic responsibility (Qian & Hu, 2024). Women are often positioned as primary relationship managers responsible for sustaining emotional bonds within families, a dynamic that may extend into digital spaces. Studies examining jealousy and surveillance behaviors indicate that women may experience heightened vulnerability to online relational threats, particularly when social comparison and public validation are central features of social media platforms (Sullivan, 2021). Additionally, women may face greater scrutiny regarding their online self-presentation, including judgments related to modesty, propriety, and social interaction (Chen, Tilburg, & Leman, 2023).

In many cultural and religious contexts, married women face layered expectations that shape their digital engagement. Social media can simultaneously function as a space for empowerment, facilitating entrepreneurship, peer support, and self-expression, and as a domain of intensified moral surveillance (Fariña-Sánchez and Gutiérrez-Santiuste, 2024). Thus, the intersection of gendered expectations and digital affordances warrants focused analytical attention. Understanding married women’s experiences requires situating digital practices within the relational dynamics and normative frameworks that govern marital conduct.

Beyond sociological transformation, social media raises normative questions about intimacy, privacy, and moral responsibility. Digital intimacy, the exchange of emotional, symbolic, or visual expressions of closeness via mediated platforms, challenges traditional ethical categories of fidelity and propriety (Wang 2025). Scholars of media ethics note that online environments often collapse contextual boundaries, making it difficult to regulate the audience, intention, and disclosure (boyd). From an Islamic ethical standpoint, marriage is frequently conceptualized as a covenant grounded in trust, exclusivity, and mutual responsibility. Islamic jurisprudential and ethical traditions, for example, emphasize the protection of marital integrity, modesty, and the avoidance of harm. Foundational principles, such as the prohibition of harm (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*) and the emphasis on safeguarding family stability, resonate strongly in discussions of digital conduct.

Contemporary Muslim scholars have begun to engage with questions regarding online behavior, including privacy, suspicion, and ethical speech. While classical sources do not directly address digital

media, jurisprudential tools such as *maṣlaḥa* (public interest) and *sadd al-dharā'i'* (blocking the means to harm) offer interpretive mechanisms for evaluating new technologies. Thus, digital intimacy is not merely a technical phenomenon but a site where evolving practices intersect with enduring moral commitments (Oluyemi, Adefemi, Odunlami, & Odigie, 2025). Despite the expanding literature on social media and romantic relationships, significant gaps remain. First, much empirical research on digital behavior and marital quality is concentrated in Western contexts and does not sufficiently account for religiously grounded moral frameworks. Second, while studies have explored jealousy, conflict, and satisfaction, fewer have examined how married women interpret their digital experiences within normative religious and ethical systems.

Moreover, interdisciplinary dialogue between social media research and Islamic ethical analysis remains limited in scope. Existing scholarship often treats religion as a demographic variable rather than a substantive analytical framework. Therefore, there is a need for integrative scholarship that synthesizes empirical findings on social media and marital relations with rigorous ethical reasoning grounded in established religious jurisprudence. This study addresses this gap through a scoping review of the existing literature combined with an analytical application of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* framework. By situating digital marital practices within empirical evidence and Islamic ethical reasoning, this study contributes to the emerging scholarship at the intersection of digital sociology, family studies, and religious ethics.

### **1.1. Research Questions**

The research was guided by the following research questions

1. What empirical evidence exists regarding the impact of social media use on married women's marital relationships?
2. What recurring themes emerge in the literature on social media-related marital dynamics, including trust, intimacy, conflict, jealousy, privacy, and well-being?
3. How can the identified patterns in the literature be analytically interpreted through the *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* framework, particularly in relation to the preservation of family integrity, dignity, moral conduct and relational justice?

## **2. Literature review and hypothesis development**

### **2.1. Social Media and Marital Dynamics: Key Concepts and Debates**

The study of social media and marital dynamics is situated at the intersection of digital sociology, communication studies and family research. Social media platforms have reconfigured patterns of interpersonal interaction by enabling persistent connectivity, public self-presentation, and networked visibility (boyd). Within marital relationships, these features influence emotional communication, boundary regulation, and relationship maintenance.

One central debate concerns whether social media strengthens or weakens intimate partnerships. Some scholars argue that digital platforms facilitate relational maintenance, particularly through expressions of support, shared content, and sustained communication (Ellison, Vitak, Gray, & Lampe, 2014). Others contend that excessive social media use is correlated with diminished relationship satisfaction and increased conflict. (Clayton, Nagurney, & Smith, 2013) found associations between Facebook-related conflict and relationship instability, suggesting that online interaction may amplify existing insecurities or create new relational ambiguities.

Concepts such as emotional infidelity, online jealousy, and privacy boundary turbulence have emerged as analytical tools in examining marital strain in the digital age (Métellus, Vaillancourt-Morel, Brassard, & Daspe, 2025). Social media's affordances, private messaging, algorithmic content suggestions, and archival traces of past relationships, can challenge traditional understandings of exclusivity and trust (McDaniel, Drouin, & Cravens, 2017). Consequently, marital dynamics must now be understood within technologically mediated environments that blur the distinctions between public and private, intimate and performative.

## **2.2. Gendered Experiences of Digital Communication in Marriage**

Digital communication practices are embedded within broader gender expectations. Sociological research has demonstrated that women often assume primary responsibility for emotional labor within intimate relationships, including communication management and relational maintenance (Horne & Johnson, 2019). These expectations extend into digital spaces, where women may be more closely scrutinized for their self-presentation and online interaction patterns. Research indicates that women are disproportionately affected by social comparison processes that are facilitated by social media. Exposure to curated portrayals of relationships and lifestyles may intensify self-evaluative concerns and marital dissatisfaction (Blanc-Brillon, Fortin, Lafrance, & Hétu, 2025).

Furthermore, digital surveillance, monitoring a partner's online interactions, has been linked to jealousy and relational conflict, with gender influencing both the perception and impact of such behaviors (Ouytsel, Walrave, Ponnet, Willems, & Dam, 2019). In culturally and religiously grounded contexts, gendered expectations may shape women's digital experiences. Norms regarding modesty, propriety, and relational boundaries influence married women's navigation of social media environments (Norton & Baptist, 2014). Thus, digital interaction is not merely a technological phenomenon but a gendered social practice embedded in moral and relational frameworks.

## **2.3. Overview of Islamic Ethical Reasoning and Social Conduct**

Islamic ethical reasoning is rooted in the Qur'an, Sunnah (prophetic tradition), and interpretive methodologies developed by classical jurists. Ethical conduct in social and familial relations is framed through the principles of justice (*'adl*), benevolence (*ihsān*), and avoidance of harm (*darar*). Marriage, in particular, is conceptualized as a solemn covenant characterized by tranquility (*sakinah*), affection (*mawwadah*), and mercy (*rahmah*) (Qur'an 30:21). Islamic jurisprudence does not explicitly address social media; however, it provides normative tools for evaluating new forms of interaction.

The core ethical principles include the prohibition of suspicion and unwarranted intrusion (Qur'an 49:12), safeguarding modesty (Qur'an 24:30–31), and the injunction against causing harm, as reflected in the prophetic maxim *lā darar wa lā dirār* (Ibn Mājah). These principles establish a moral framework that can be extended to contemporary digital environments. Islamic ethical reasoning operates not merely through textual citation but through structured interpretive methodologies, including *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), which allow for contextual application of enduring moral objectives (Muhammad, Ismail, & Muhammad, 2025).

## **2.4. Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a as an Analytical Framework**

The doctrine of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a*, the higher objectives of Islamic law, provides a systematic framework for evaluating human conduct in the light of overarching ethical goals. Classical scholars such as al-Ghazālī and al-Shāṭibī articulated five essential protections: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Kamali). Contemporary scholarship has further elaborated on these objectives as principles oriented toward human welfare and justice. Employing *maqāṣid* as an analytical framework allows for the evaluation of digital marital practices not only at the level of rule compliance but also at the level of ethical outcomes and communal well-being.

### **2.4.1. Preservation of Religion (*Hifẓ al-Dīn*) and Moral Conduct**

The preservation of religion involves safeguarding the moral consciousness and adherence to ethical norms. In digital contexts, this includes maintaining modesty, honesty, and respect in communications. Online behaviors that undermine marital trust or compromise moral boundaries may conflict with the objective of preserving ethical integrity. Qur'anic injunctions against suspicion and moral transgression provide normative guidance applicable to mediated interactions (Quran 49:12).

### **2.4.2. Preservation of Life and Emotional Well-Being (*Hifẓ al-Nafs*)**

Although traditionally associated with physical safety, *hifẓ al-nafs* encompasses psychological well-being and protection from emotional damage. Research linking social media use to anxiety, jealousy, and relational distress underscores the relevance of this objective (Muisse, Christofides, & Desmarais,

2009). Marital environments characterized by chronic digital conflict may undermine emotional stability, contravening the ethical aim of fostering tranquility within marriage (Qur'an 30:21).

#### *2.4.3. Preservation of Intellect and Judgment (Hifz al-'Aql)*

The preservation of intellect emphasizes rational deliberation and sound judgments. Algorithm-driven content exposure and emotionally charged online exchanges may distort perceptions and amplify suspicions. Ethical engagement with digital media requires critical discernment and restraint, consistent with Islam's emphasis on thoughtful conduct and avoidance of impulsive harm.

#### *2.4.4. Preservation of Lineage and Family Integrity (Hifz al-Nasl)*

The preservation of lineage centers on protecting family stability and ensuring marital fidelity. Social media interactions that blur relational boundaries, particularly private emotional exchanges, raise ethical concerns regarding exclusivity and commitment. While not every online interaction constitutes a transgression, practices that erode trust or encourage secrecy may undermine the structural integrity of marriage, thereby challenging this maqāṣid.

#### *2.4.5. Preservation of Property and Economic Trust (Hifz al-Māl)*

Digital platforms increasingly intersect with economic life through online business ventures, financial exchanges and digital entrepreneurship. Transparency and mutual consent are essential for preserving economic trust in marriage. The misuse of shared resources or concealed financial transactions through digital platforms may conflict with the objective of protecting property and economic justice.

### **2.5. Integrating Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a with Contemporary Family and Media Studies**

Integrating maqāṣid al-sharī'a with contemporary family and media scholarship enables a multidimensional analysis that bridges normative ethics and empirical studies. While communication studies provide insights into behavioral patterns and relational outcomes, maqāṣid reasoning evaluates these patterns against structured ethical objectives (Saleh, Mehellou, & Omar, 2023). This integrative framework moves beyond descriptive accounts of social media effects to normative evaluations grounded in established jurisprudential methodologies. Such interdisciplinary synthesis contributes to both digital sociology and Islamic ethical studies by demonstrating that classical normative frameworks remain analytically relevant in addressing emerging technological phenomena in the digital age. Rather than positioning religion and modernity as opposing domains, this approach highlights their potential for constructive dialogue in understanding marital life in digitally mediated societies.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1. Study Design**

This study adopted a scoping review design guided by the PRISMA-ScR framework (Tricco et al., 2018). A scoping review was selected because of the interdisciplinary and heterogeneous nature of the scholarship on social media use, marital relations, gender dynamics, and religious-ethical analysis. Unlike systematic reviews that assess intervention effectiveness, scoping reviews are particularly appropriate for mapping the existing literature, identifying conceptual patterns, and clarifying research gaps across diverse methodologies. This review integrates empirical findings from the social and behavioral sciences with normative analyses derived from the maqāṣid al-sharī'a framework. The objective was not to determine causal effect sizes but to synthesize thematic patterns in the literature and examine them through a structured lens of Islamic ethics.

### **3.2. Eligibility Criteria**

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed to ensure conceptual coherence and methodological transparency of the studies.

#### 1) Inclusion Criteria:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and reputable research reports
- Publications addressing social media use in romantic or marital relationships
- Studies involving married adults (with attention to women's experiences)
- Empirical (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method) or theoretically grounded analyses
- Publications in English

## 2) Exclusion Criteria

- Opinion pieces lacking analytical grounding
- Media articles or blog posts
- Studies unrelated to marital or romantic partnerships
- Research focused exclusively on adolescent dating relationships without relevance to marriage

### 3.3. *Information Sources and Search Strategy*

The literature search was conducted across major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. Search terms were constructed using Boolean operators and keyword combinations such as: “social media” AND “marriage” “social networking sites” AND “marital satisfaction” “Facebook” AND “relationship conflict” “digital communication” AND “ and “Islamic ethics” AND “family”. The reference lists of the key articles were manually screened to identify additional relevant sources.

### 3.4. *Selection Process*

The study selection process followed the PRISMA-ScR guidelines. Records were first screened at the title and abstract levels for relevance. Full-text screening was subsequently conducted to determine eligibility according to predefined inclusion criteria. In cases of conceptual ambiguity, inclusion decisions were based on the study’s substantive relevance to marital dynamics and digital interaction. The final corpus comprised studies that directly addressed relational outcomes linked to social media use.

### 3.5. *Data Charting Process*

Data from the included studies were extracted using a structured charting template capturing the following:

- Author(s) and year
- Geographic context
- Study design and methodology
- Sample characteristics
- Key findings related to marital dynamics
- Identified relational outcomes (e.g., trust, jealousy, satisfaction)

This structured extraction ensured a systematic comparison across diverse study types.

### 3.6. *Analytical Approach: Thematic Synthesis*

A thematic synthesis approach was used to analyze the extracted data. This process involved three stages.

1. **Open Coding** – Identification of recurring concepts and relational patterns across studies (e.g., jealousy, surveillance, intimacy, emotional disclosure, boundary erosion).
2. **Theme Development** – Grouping related codes into higher-order thematic categories that reflect dominant patterns in the literature.
3. **Interpretive Integration** – Mapping emergent themes onto the maqāsid al-sharī‘a framework to evaluate the ethical implications.

The thematic synthesis did not aim to homogenize the findings but to identify convergences, divergences, and contextual nuances.

### 3.7. *Integration with the Maqāsid Framework*

Following thematic synthesis, the findings were analytically interpreted through the five classical maqāsid:

- Preservation of Religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn)
- Preservation of Life and Emotional Well-being (ḥifẓ al-nafs)
- Preservation of Intellect (ḥifẓ al-‘aql)
- Preservation of Lineage and Family Integrity (ḥifẓ al-nasl)
- Preservation of Property and Economic Trust (ḥifẓ al-māl)

This interpretive phase involved normative reasoning rather than statistical evaluation, enabling a structured ethical assessment of digital marital practices.

### 3.8. *Quality Considerations*

Although scoping reviews do not require formal risk-of-bias assessment, attention was paid to the following:

- Methodological transparency of included studies
- Sample representativeness
- Theoretical coherence
- Consistency of findings across contexts

Studies with unclear methodologies were interpreted cautiously.

### 3.9. *Ethical Considerations*

As a secondary analysis of the published literature, this study did not require formal ethical approval. However, ethical rigor was maintained through the accurate representation of findings and avoidance of misinterpretation.

### 3.10. *Limitations of the Methodological Approach*

This study has several limitations. First, the review was restricted to English-language publications, potentially excluding relevant studies in other languages. Second, the heterogeneity of the methodologies limited quantitative comparability. Third, although the maqāṣid framework provides structured ethical reasoning, its interpretive application remains normatively analytical rather than empirically measurable.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1. *Findings: Thematic Synthesis*

This section presents the results of the scoping review through a thematic synthesis. The analysis identifies recurrent relational patterns associated with social media use in marital contexts, with particular attention to the experiences of married women. The findings are organized into five interrelated themes that directly respond to the review questions: (1) empirical evidence of social media's impact on marital relations, (2) dominant thematic patterns across studies, and (3) ethical interpretation through the maqāṣid al-sharī'a framework.

#### 4.1.1. *Digital Intimacy and Emotional Boundary Reconfiguration*

In the literature, social media platforms are consistently associated with the reconfiguration of emotional intimacy within marriage. Studies have reported that online communication enables spouses to maintain connections, share experiences, and express affection in new forms (Torreon, 2020). However, the same affordances also create opportunities for emotional exchanges beyond the marital dyads. Private messaging, "likes," and sustained interactions with former partners or acquaintances have been linked to ambiguity in relational boundaries. Several studies have highlighted the emergence of what is often termed *emotional infidelity*, characterized not necessarily by physical betrayal but by secrecy, exclusivity of emotional disclosure, or intimate digital communication with third parties (Mao & Raguram, 2009).

These practices are frequently identified as catalysts for relational tension. From a maqāṣid perspective, this theme engages primarily with ḥifẓ al-nasl (preservation of lineage and family integrity) and ḥifẓ al-dīn (preservation of moral integrity). In Islamic ethics, marriage is framed as a covenant grounded in exclusivity and trust. Digital behaviors that obscure relational transparency or redirect emotional intimacy may challenge the objective of safeguarding family stability. However, the framework also recognizes nuance: not all cross-gender or digital interactions constitute ethical breaches. The evaluative question is whether a practice undermines trust, secrecy norms, or marital tranquility.

#### 4.1.2. *Surveillance, Jealousy, and Trust Erosion*

A recurring theme in the literature is the intensification of jealousy and surveillance behaviors in digitally mediated marriages. Features such as visible friend lists, tagged photos, online status indicators, and comment histories increase transparency but also foster monitoring. Studies have documented that partners often engage in checking behaviors, which may escalate suspicion and conflict. For married women, this dynamic may operate bidirectionally: women may monitor their

partners' online interactions, but they may also experience heightened scrutiny regarding their own digital presence.

Jealousy frequently emerges from interpretive ambiguity; likes, comments, or interactions may be perceived as suggestive even when benign. This theme engages *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of emotional well-being) and *ḥifẓ al-‘aql* (preservation of sound judgment). Chronic suspicion and emotional distress undermine psychological stability and marital tranquility. Islamic ethical injunctions against unwarranted suspicion and intrusive surveillance align with contemporary concerns regarding digital mistrust. The *maqāṣid* framework clarifies that harm (*ḍarar*) may occur not only through overt misconduct but also through persistent relational anxiety.

#### 4.1.3. *Social Comparison and Marital Dissatisfaction*

The curated presentation of idealized relationships on social media frequently generates comparison processes. Married women, in particular, may encounter portrayals of romantic fulfillment, material success, and domestic harmony that invite evaluative comparisons. Empirical findings suggest that exposure to such content may correlate with reduced marital satisfaction, especially when discrepancies are perceived between online ideals and lived realities (Bouffard, Giglio, & Zheng, 2022). These dynamics are not universally negative; some women report feeling inspired or supported through online communities. Nevertheless, sustained upward comparisons may contribute to dissatisfaction, resentment, or unrealistic expectations within marriage.

This theme primarily implicates *ḥifẓ al-‘aql* and *ḥifẓ al-na*. The preservation of intellect entails critical discernment, particularly in distinguishing curated digital representations from lived experiences. When social comparison distorts perception or undermines contentment, it challenges emotional equilibrium. Moreover, the objective of fostering marital tranquility (*sakinah*) is relevant. If digital exposure systematically destabilizes satisfaction, ethical reflection requires an evaluation of the proportionality of engagement.

#### 4.1.4. *Gendered Expectations, Visibility, and Moral Scrutiny*

The literature demonstrates that married women's digital conduct is often evaluated based on gendered moral expectations. Online self-presentation, photographs, interactions, entrepreneurial activity, and public expression may attract social scrutiny that is unevenly distributed across genders. Women may negotiate the tensions between digital participation and the perceived expectations of modesty, loyalty, or domestic priority.

In some contexts, social media offers avenues for economic empowerment and social connection; in others, it intensifies domestic negotiations regarding appropriate boundaries. This theme intersects with *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, and *ḥifẓ al-māl*. Ethical evaluation must distinguish between participation that enhances welfare (economic contribution, education, and support networks) and behavior that undermines relational trust. The *maqāṣid* framework resists simplistic restrictions; rather, it assesses whether digital engagement contributes to or detracts from holistic family welfare.

#### 4.1.5. *Economic Agency and Digital Entrepreneurship*

An emerging body of literature highlights married women's use of social media for micro-enterprises, networking, and financial independence. Digital platforms facilitate home-based businesses and flexible economic participation of the workers. Such practices may enhance household income and agency. However, economic digital engagement may also generate tensions related to transparency, financial autonomy, or time allocation within marriage (Jeanfreau, Noguchi, Mong, & Stadthagen-Gonzalez, 2018). This theme engages with *ḥifẓ al-māl* (preservation of property and economic trust). Islamic jurisprudence emphasizes mutual consent and transparency in financial matters in marriage.

Digital entrepreneurship that strengthens economic stability aligns with *maqāṣid* objectives, provided that it does not compromise relational trust or equitable responsibility. Taken together, the thematic synthesis reveals that social media functions as a relational amplifier, rather than an inherently destructive or beneficial force. Its impact depends on the patterns of use, boundary management, and

interpretive frameworks. The maqāsid analysis demonstrates significant ethical convergence with empirical findings: the preservation of emotional well-being, trust, rational discernment, family integrity, and economic justice all emerge as central concerns.

#### **4.2. Discussion**

The findings of this scoping review indicate that social media does not function as a singular causal agent of marital deterioration or enhancement. Rather, it operates as a relational amplifier whose effects are mediated by patterns of use, boundary regulation, gender norms and interpretive frameworks. When positioned within the broader theories of mediated communication and family systems, the results reveal both continuity and transformation in marital dynamics. Contemporary communication theory emphasizes that digital technologies reconfigure interactional contexts rather than replacing relational foundations (Silva, 2025). The identified themes—emotional boundary reconfiguration, surveillance and jealousy, social comparison, gendered scrutiny, and economic participation—suggest that pre-existing relational vulnerabilities may be intensified in digitally mediated environments.

Social media platforms introduce persistent visibility and asynchronous communication, which may magnify trust-related tension or insecurity. However, these dynamics are not inherently destructive; they depend on relational competence, and normative expectations. This interpretation aligns with broader scholarship suggesting that digital media shape but do not wholly determine relational outcomes. Rather than depicting social media as a destabilizing external force, the evidence indicates a reciprocal relationship between technology and the marital structure. Marriages characterized by transparency and mutual trust may experience digital communication as connective, whereas those characterized by insecurity may experience it as threatening. The review highlights that married women's digital experiences are shaped by such gendered moral expectations.

In many contexts, women's online presence is subject to heightened scrutiny, reflecting the broader patterns of relational labor and moral accountability. This finding resonates with gender theory, which identifies women as the primary custodians of relational harmony within domestic spaces. Digital environments extend the moral economy into networked publics, where visibility intersects with modesty norms and expectations of fidelity. The thematic synthesis also suggests that digital empowerment and moral surveillance coexist. Married women may leverage social media for entrepreneurship and social support while simultaneously navigating the normative constraints. This duality complicates the simplistic narratives of liberation or restriction. The findings contribute to gender and family studies by foregrounding how digital interaction intersects with layered social and religious expectations.

The integration of the maqāsid framework provides a structured, normative lens through which to evaluate empirical findings. Rather than applying prescriptive judgments, the maqāsid approach assesses relational practices according to overarching ethical objectives: preservation of faith and moral integrity, emotional well-being, rational discernment, family stability, and economic security. The thematic findings demonstrate significant convergence between empirical relational outcomes and ethical objectives. For instance, surveillance-driven jealousy undermines emotional tranquility (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), whereas emotional boundary ambiguity challenges family integrity (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*). Conversely, digital entrepreneurship that enhances economic stability aligns with *ḥifẓ al-māl* when it is conducted transparently and consensually.

Importantly, the maqāsid framework resists a binary moral classification. It recognizes contextual nuances and prioritizes welfare-oriented reasoning. Digital practices are therefore evaluated not solely based on their form (e.g., platform use) but also on their consequences for relational justice and well-being. This interpretive move positions Islamic ethical reasoning as analytically relevant to contemporary digital sociology rather than a peripheral or purely doctrinal perspective. While substantial convergence exists between empirical findings and maqāsid objectives, tensions persist. Contemporary digital culture normalizes forms of visibility and emotional expression that may strain traditional relationship boundaries. The review suggests that ethical discourse must grapple with evolving communicative norms rather than assuming static models of marital conduct. Simultaneously,

empirical literature often lacks engagement with normative moral reasoning. Religion is frequently treated as a demographic variable rather than as a substantive, interpretive framework. This study demonstrates that integrating normative ethical analysis enriches the understanding of digital marital practices by foregrounding welfare, justice, and relational accountability.

## **5. Conclusions**

### **5.1. Conclusion**

This study aimed to understand how social media use influences married women's marital relationships and interpret these patterns through the *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* framework. Based on a comprehensive literature review, the main findings of this study suggest that social media functions as a relational amplifier, exacerbating pre-existing dynamics such as trust, insecurity, and negotiation in marriages rather than being a primary cause of marital instability. From the *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* perspective, social media use can be understood in relation to objectives such as the preservation of emotional well-being (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), family integrity (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and economic trust (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). The study found that social media can intensify jealousy, surveillance, and dissatisfaction due to social comparison, which impacts marital stability and emotional well-being.

However, social media also has the potential for economic empowerment, such as supporting digital entrepreneurship that contributes to household income and financial autonomy, provided that it is transparent and mutually consensual. The study also identified normative tensions related to gender expectations regarding social media use. Women are often scrutinized and expected to adhere to norms of modesty and loyalty in digital spaces. Therefore, this study contributes to family and gender studies by highlighting the influence of social and religious expectations on digital interactions. The limitations of this study lie in the heterogeneity of the methodologies used in the studies analyzed and the limited generalizability due to the focus of the research being conducted mostly in Western contexts. Future research operationalizing *maqāṣid* principles in empirical studies may further deepen the interdisciplinary dialogue between digital sociology and Islamic ethics.

### **5.2. Research Limitations**

This study had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the review was restricted to English-language publications, which may have excluded relevant studies published in other languages from consideration. Second, the heterogeneity of the methodologies of the studies included in the review limited the ability to draw quantitative comparisons across different studies. Third, while the *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* framework is a valuable tool for interpreting digital marital practices, its application is normatively analytical and not empirically measurable, meaning that it cannot provide definitive causal conclusions about the impact of social media on marital relations.

### **5.3. Suggestions and Directions for Future Studies**

Given these findings, future marital counseling and educational initiatives should focus on promoting transparency in communication about digital boundaries within marriage, particularly regarding the use of social media. It is also crucial to address the impact of social comparison on marital satisfaction by encouraging couples to critically engage with the curated digital representations. Additionally, gendered moral expectations in digital spaces should be actively addressed, especially in contexts in which women experience disproportionate scrutiny. Furthermore, faith-based counseling frameworks can benefit from incorporating discussions on *maqāṣid*-oriented ethical principles, emphasizing welfare, justice, and family integrity, rather than focusing solely on rule-based prohibitions.

Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies that examine the long-term effects of social media use on marital dynamics and satisfaction. Including dyadic marital data that captures both partners' experiences would provide a more holistic view of how social media impacts relationships. Additionally, studies should aim to gather culturally diverse samples, particularly from Muslim-majority societies, to understand how different cultural and religious contexts shape social media use in marital relationships. Finally, empirical studies that operationalize *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* principles in analyzing digital marital practices would contribute to the growing body of interdisciplinary research combining digital sociology and Islamic ethics.

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