Addressing family mutism: Expert perspectives and intervention strategies in the context of excessive social media use in Saudi Arabian families

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perspectives of social science experts on the emergence of family mutism resulting from the misuse of social networking platforms. It also seeks to identify the most effective social intervention program to restore Saudi Arabian family bonds strained by excessive social media use. This research is theoretically grounded in the cognitive framework of clinical sociology. The researchers adopted a descriptive methodology and conducted directed interviews with 20 experts from different disciplines at Hail University in Saudi Arabia, during the months of October and November 2022. The study reveals that the experts reached a unanimous consensus on the goals of the therapeutic intervention program, emphasizing the enhancement of family members' awareness and the provision of guidance on the prudent use of social media. From a theoretical perspective, all experts agreed that ecological theory served as the most appropriate framework to inform professional practice and guide the social intervention program. In addition, the study found that individual and group interviews with family members, along with individual and group sessions, were the most effective social intervention strategies. Professionals reflected on the complex social and psychological issues associated with family mutism, particularly in children and adolescents who are enmeshed in technological addiction and excessive reliance on social networking platforms. According to these specialists, family structure plays a pivotal role in mitigating family mutism, as they assert their competence in identifying the problem. This study provides invaluable insights into the optimal goals, theoretical paradigms, methodologies, and tools to address family mutism resulting from the inappropriate use of social media.

1. Introduction

After the discovery of electricity, which was the first revolution, the rise of the internet is seen as the second revolution in modern economies. At the beginning of the 20th-century, electricity had a big effect on social relationships and norms, especially in the family. The widespread use of the internet in the 21st-century has had a similar effect on social and family norms, self-representations, and communication relationships (Lopez and Cuarteros, 2020; Lawrence, 2021).

When the internet reached most of the world's countries in the year 2000, a new way of talking about society emerged. This new way of talking about society was characterized by the compression of time and space, economic and intellectual growth, openness to other societies and cultures, and especially participation in the process of globalization. But the Internet has also changed the way people interact with each other, especially now that social networking sites are so popular (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Studies show that social media networks have had a huge impact on social

relationships. The modernization-driven process of individualizing social relationships, which began in the 17th century, is how this impact manifests itself. It also weakens the direct social interaction and communication between individuals in the same social groups (Cohen, 2022). Whether they are communities, nations, tribes, or families.

Lopez and Cuarteros (2020) and Savci et al. (2022) said that social media has made its way into social relationships and given people an alternative to face-to-face interactions. Smartphones have made communication easier because they have technological features that let people talk, write, and share pictures and sounds over the internet. This has replaced face-to-face communication with a method that doesn't depend on time or place (Jung et al., 2007; Belk, 2013; Chen, 2019): "Social media has allowed people to expand and diversify the spaces they live in. It has also given them the ability to build wide relationships and form other groups that have become an alternative to primary affiliation groups, especially families."

Even though social media has a lot of different uses, it has made people less close to each other because they can build their own private worlds where they are the center and everything revolves around them and their needs and wants (Jung et al., 2007). The extended self and the stage of the self are just two ways that jealousy, interaction, and communication between people in social groups have become more limited (Chen, 2019). As the basic unit of society, the family may be the most important and most affected by social media.

In fact, studies indicate that the repercussions of social media on social relationships go beyond the rapid transformations observed at the level of the family structure, and these repercussions exacerbate and multiply, especially in societies where the family still has a symbolic status and social value, considering the culture of the society and its cultural characteristics, leading to psychological, behavioral, and relational disorders such as electronic addiction, isolation, communication disorders, selective mutism, and family silence (Alhassan et al., 2018; Keles et al., 2020; Dworkin et al., 2018)

The importance of studying the phenomenon of Family Mutism is not only due to its various causes related to the excessive use of social media networks but mainly due to its implications on the family, which are manifested in family disintegration, divorce, and deviance. Because of this, it seems important to look into social intervention programs that aim to stop the problem and lessen its effect on families and society as a whole. Several studies have tried to figure out how using social media affects family relationships, and they have all found that it makes family relationships weaker and leads to more silence at home (Sanders et al., 2000; Ellemers et al., 1990; Castells, 2014). Chen (2019) showed that too much time spent on the internet hurts social relationships within the family, makes people feel more stressed out, and makes them less interested in real life. This gap between reality and awareness is a big reason why problems like silence, violence, separation, falling apart, or divorce happen in families (Fine and Harvey, 2006).

It is true that studies on the phenomenon of domestic silence in relation to electronic addiction or excessive use of social media have greatly increased, especially in Western countries. However, research on the treatment of this phenomenon has not developed at the same pace. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is the focus of this research, studies on this topic are limited. They have linked addiction to psychological and physical symptoms but have not addressed the social dimensions of the phenomenon, its treatment methods, or how to reduce it (Alhassan et al., 2018; Al-Khani et al., 2021). Therefore, the importance of this research lies in being the first to seek to formulate the basic orientations of a therapeutic program for this phenomenon, considering the cultural specificity of families in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This can be a starting point for the social policies of institutions working in the fields of family, childhood, adolescence, and youth.

For this reason, the study adopted the epistemic framework of clinical sociology (Fritz, 2008; 2017; 2022; Bouilloud, 1997) as a framework that allows experts to combine study, diagnosis, and treatment in terms of objectives and combines the individual, groups, and society in terms of methodology (Seedat-Kahn and Ehiane, 2021).

The goal of this study is to come up with a way to lessen the bad effects of more people using social media and how that affects the nature, cohesion, and stability of Saudi family relationships, which can make family problems worse and make it harder for people to talk to each other (Chen, 2019).

Social media networks have offered significant opportunities to reshape social relations between individuals and society since their emergence. Individuals can now interact with both known and unknown individuals, present themselves with characteristics and features that may not be true to their identity, and create a virtual identity that appears real. As opportunities for self-expression and relationship building in virtual space increased, so did the potential for the dangers of isolation and withdrawal from the individual's closest real-life relationships, which could threaten family stability due to internet and social media usage.

Studies have shown a parallel increase in "pathological" cases with psychological, behavioral, and relational symptoms as internet usage and excessive social media site usage have become more prevalent (Alhassan, 2018; Al-Khani et al., 2021; Waldo, 2014). Research has explored how social media networks have caused silence within families, and although they have contributed to the diagnosis of some behaviors related to this phenomenon, they have not proposed a definition or scientific methodologies to address it for the purpose of reducing or treating it.

The relationship between family silence and excessive time spent on social networks is a multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be

oversimplified by claiming causality in one direction or the other. It is insufficient to suggest that either family silence precedes the excessive use of social media to the extent of replacing silence, or that social media usage alone defines and amplifies the phenomenon of silence within the family. Instead, family mutism is a complex issue that encompasses various sociological aspects spanning individual, familial, and societal levels.

The idea behind social intervention programs, according to experts, is that excessive use of social media networks can explain family mutism and also reflect weak communication, cohesion, and family compatibility, leading to an increase in family problems. At the same time, behaviors such as excessive use of social media are considered a result of family mutism and its aforementioned manifestations. Therefore, analyzing the phenomenon of family mutism requires adopting a systematic approach to the family and its problems. As a result, the relationship between family mutism and the use of social media becomes circular, where weakened cohesion, increased family problems, and poor marital compatibility push family members towards isolation and immersion in social media networks. Excessive use of social media may also fuel individuals' isolation, weak interpersonal communication within the family, and poor marital compatibility.

This description highlights the interconnection between the societal dimension, represented by social change resulting from the widespread use of communication technologies and increased networking levels among Saudi families, the familial dimension as a fundamental and central nucleus of the social system in the Kingdom, and the individual dimension, considering the individual as an active agent, consumer, and primary producer of the phenomenon of domestic silence through excessive behaviors in using social networking platforms.

The goal of this study is to come up with a professional program to help reduce the effects of domestic silence. Professional intervention here refers to a set of professional actions, efforts, and roles performed by a specialist relying on the selective input in the assistance process, which depends on selecting the most appropriate and best methods, approaches, models, and strategies and working on skillfully and efficiently employing them to help family members develop their awareness of the risks of the misuse of social media and develop positive attitudes, rationalize and regulate the optimal use of these media, work on rebuilding the direction of interactions and good relationships between family members, especially spouses, and work to reduce the severity of the manifestations of family mutism to enable family cohesion and restore family stability.

The study aims to design a professional intervention program to reduce the manifestations of family mutism and the misuse of social media from the experts' point of view. This general goal can

be achieved through a set of sub-objectives, which are:

1. Identify the manifestations of family mutism from the experts' point of view
2. Identify the objectives of the professional intervention to reduce the manifestations of family mutism from the experts' point of view
3. Determine the most important scientific theories that the professional intervention program is based on from the experts' point of view
4. Determine the most important therapeutic strategies for the professional intervention program from the experts' point of view
5. Identify the most important tools that can be used in the professional intervention program from the experts' point of view.

The study aims to answer a general question, which is: What is the content of a professional intervention program to reduce Family Mutism associated with excessive use of social media networks from the perspective of experts?

This general question can be answered through addressing a set of sub-questions:

1. What are the manifestations of Family Mutism associated with the misuse of social media networks from the perspective of experts?
2. What are the objectives of the professional intervention program to reduce Family Mutism from the perspective of experts?
3. What are the main theoretical approaches that should underlie the professional intervention program from the perspective of experts?
4. What are the important therapeutic strategies and tactics used in the program from the perspective of experts?
5. What are the tools that can be used in the intervention program to reduce Family Mutism from the perspective of experts?

2. Theoretical orientations of professional intervention program

2.1. The concept of professional intervention in social work

In social work, "professional intervention" refers to the actions and practices that social Workers engage with their clients (individuals, groups, or communities), based on their ability to work effectively with them. It involves scientific activities that are planned to assist clients in changing, growing, and addressing their problems (Dubois and Miley, 2004). Professional intervention in social work also involves the activities that social workers undertake at different levels (micro, meso, and macro) to effect social change. This requires knowledge, values, and skills to address social situations and problems experienced by individuals, groups, and communities (Adams et al., 2002). The intervention involves a set of professional activities

that the social worker performs in response to the circumstances and problems of their clients, and includes specific professional strategies and tactics (Johnson and Yanca, 2010). According to a recent study, professional intervention comprises a set of professional behaviors and actions associated with the social work profession, based on the scientific assumptions of social theories that guide all professional behaviors and actions. These assumptions contribute to the selection of many therapeutic strategies used to achieve desired changes, depending on the nature of the problem or situation (Afshari and Rezai, 2023).

A study also confirmed the effectiveness of the selective model in addressing various social, psychological, and behavioral problems by using various theories such as behavioral, cognitive, and psycho-social approaches, based on the nature of the problem and the client's personality style (Jensen et al., 1990).

2.2. Directed theories

According to the ecological theory, which studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment, the ecological perspective includes the environment in the process of change (Johnson and Yanca, 2010). According to this perspective, the problem or need arises from the relationship between the person or persons and their environment (Ungar, 2002).

The cognitive-based approach, based on cognitive theory, includes all inputs that can alleviate psychological stress by correcting faulty mental concepts, but this does not mean neglecting emotional responses, which are a direct source of sadness, but rather means correcting beliefs and changing excessive and inappropriate emotional responses (Bandura, 1999; Martin, 2004; Freeman and Ronen, 2006).

Systems theory is characterized by the mutual influence between the part and the whole; it deals with problems within the framework of their dimensions, forms, and multiple images and relies on the use of interconnected models to achieve desired goals (Payne, 1997; 2002). It assumes that a system consists of a set of reciprocal communications, expectations, and role performances, and roles are the basic unit of the system (Miller, 1975).

The functional structural theory is concerned with the relationship between the family as one of the main social systems in society that is functionally related to other systems to ensure the continuity of society. It also focuses on the internal relationships between members of the same family, which represent a social pattern consisting of parts that interact with each other and functionally support each other (Ellis and Yeager, 1989; Greene, 2016).

2.3. Social intervention strategies

A cognitive restructuring strategy is used to help members change their patterns of irrational and illogical thinking and replace them with positive, rational thoughts, as thoughts and knowledge form the basis of behavior. Therefore, when behavior changes, it is necessary to change irrational thoughts, get rid of them, and replace them with new positive ones (Schmitter-Edgecombe and Dyck, 2014; Cormier et al., 2009).

Free expression of feelings and thought strategy aims to provide opportunities for all family members to express their feelings, thoughts, opinions, and personal feelings, whether towards themselves or their problems and needs, as well as towards each other, and to try to influence and convince them of the importance of self-expression to know their own awareness and the reality of the family situation (Greenberg and Vandekerckhove, 2008; Wright, 2008).

Users of the religious awareness strategy emphasize that it is an important step in understanding an individual's feelings in the context of religious beliefs and thoughts since religions direct thoughts, emotions, and behavior and regulate them. It serves as a motivator and incentive for individuals to adopt a set of positive ideas and beliefs aimed at guiding behavior in accordance with the fundamental characteristics of faith (Payne, 1999; Ellor et al., 1999; Richards and Bergin, 2005).

To achieve desired goals and outcomes, a wide range of training methods are employed, often involving role-playing in diverse fields. This approach aims to equip participants with various life skills by exposing them to multiple situations (Compton and Galaway, 1999; Miller, 1980).

The positive appraisal strategy generally aims to identify ideas, feelings, and behaviors to be changed, as well as past events related to the problematic behavior and their various effects on the individual, in addition to identifying the situations, sources, and factors that affect it. This requires identifying the physical, cultural, and social characteristics of the environment surrounding the individual, as well as identifying their strengths and weaknesses and the potentials that can be employed (Wrenn, 1980; Morrison, 2007; Thyer et al., 2008).

The refutation of irrational ideas and beliefs technique is based on extracting irrational ideas through discussion, then refuting them by identifying these ideas and clarifying their illogical nature. Then, debating and discussing these irrational and unrealistic beliefs with individuals, and clarifying that they do not benefit them and bring them harm while developing the client's ability to distinguish irrational ideas (David et al., 2009). It also means helping the client change their thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors and making them more consistent or more in line with reality.

Confrontation means confronting the individual with their illogical ideas and turning them into rational ideas while encouraging, urging, and convincing them to modify their unacceptable emotions and behaviors. Confrontation here mainly means exposing contradictions and inconsistencies with reality. Confrontation should only be used

through a strong professional relationship between the specialist and the client, based on respect, appreciation, willingness, and assistance (Cooper and Lesser, 2010).

Self-report writing strategy is considered one of the therapeutic approaches in which the therapist helps the client write self-reports in which they review their distorted and harmful thoughts, emotional reactions, behaviors, and negative attitudes. This process aims to evaluate oneself and assess the logical and rational interpretations of one's thoughts in order to replace them and enable the individual to recognize the danger and irrationality of these thoughts on their own. It involves recalling past situations and experiences and connecting what is rational and what is irrational. This serves as training for self-learning and changing self-perception by linking situations and thoughts to interpretations, leading to self-evaluation, and working towards recognizing the danger and irrationality of these thoughts (Lambert, 2010; McManus et al., 2012).

Problem-solving training is a directed thinking approach toward solving a specific problem. It requires two types of activities: first, coming up with specific responses that are formulated, and then selecting appropriate responses from them to solve the problem (Goldenson, 1970).

The goal of the communication-building strategy is to build communication between family members so that they can talk about their feelings and thoughts in a psychologically safe environment (Aye et al., 2016).

Family therapy is considered an exhibition of the symptoms of problems that a family suffers from certain disorders, and accordingly, treating this exhibition requires treating the whole family. Family therapy is defined as a therapeutic approach that aims to modify or change some elements of the family relationship pattern with negative effects and help the family replace them with more appropriate behavior (Walsh, 1996; 2012; 2015).

Ellis (1996) said that positive personality change, self-growth, and personality building happen when a person is self-aware, has a strong desire and motivation to change, works hard to understand himself and help find solutions to his problems, and is able to change and meet his own needs. It has been found that a person always acts in ways that are in line with how he sees himself. The self-focused attention model (Cully and Teten, 2008) says that if you want someone to change their behavior, you have to change how they see themselves. This strategy also depends on the practitioner's help with the person to help him understand his thoughts and feelings better, whether these thoughts and feelings are directly or indirectly linked to his bad behavior.

2.4. Tools of the professional intervention program

- The individual interviews with family members.
- The group interviews family members.

- Individual sessions with family members.
- Group sessions with family members.
- Individual role-play for family members.
- Group role-play for family members.
- Individual training sessions for family members
- Group training sessions for family members.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted during the months of October and November in the year of 2022 and it employed a social survey method, using a sample of experts in the fields of social work, sociology, and psychology from Hail University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with a total of 20 participants.

Based on Table 1, which shows the number and specialties of the experts who were interviewed about the proposed professional intervention program to reduce domestic violence caused by the wrong use of social media, twenty experts whose fields are directly related to being able to understand and analyze the professional intervention program to stop domestic violence took part in the study. The experts' specializations were in the fields of social work, sociology, and psychology. The experts' numbers were almost identical, with 35% for social work and sociology and 30% for psychology, creating a greater balance in terms of specializations and expert numbers (Table 1).

Table 2 shows the distribution of a research sample based on the academic rank of the participants. The sample consists of a total of 20 individuals.

Table 1: Distribution of the sample according to the scientific specialization variable

Specialization	Frequency	Percentage
Social work	7	35%
Psychology	6	30%
Sociology	7	35%
Total	20	100%

Table 2: Distribution of research sample according to the variable of academic rank

Academic rank	Frequency	Percentage
Professor	15	75%
Associate professor	3	15%
Assistant professor	2	10%
Total	20	100%

There are three different academic ranks represented in the sample: Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor. Table 2 shows the number of individuals in each academic rank category and the percentage of the total sample they represent.

There are 15 individuals (75% of the sample) who hold the academic rank of Professor, 3 individuals (15% of the sample) who hold the academic rank of Associate Professor, and 2 individuals (10% of the sample) who hold the academic rank of Assistant Professor.

The last row in Table 2 shows the total number of individuals in the sample, which is 20.

4. Results

4.1. Definition of family mutism from experts' perspectives

- Experts agree that Family Mutism is a phenomenon that manifests in weak communication, in terms of both the time allocated for it and the content, meaning the nature of communication topics with all family members, with some of them, or the discontinuation of communication between them, which leads to the absence of information, dialogue, and emotional interaction among family members. Experts also believe that family mutism is perceived through the escalation of its reflections on social and communicative relationships among family members. They estimated that there are three levels that reflect those reflections.
- Weak relationships and a low level of marital dialogue: Marital dialogue refers to the interaction between spouses in one family through discussing and talking about everything related to family affairs, including goals, components, and obstacles, and developing solutions for them by exchanging ideas and opinions between spouses around several axes, which leads to intimacy and communication. This silence between spouses reduces the chances of harmony and intimacy, and the absence of communication methods not only between spouses but may also extend to the rest of the family members, leading to an addiction to the use of social media. This means that the excessive use of social media by family members has become a substitute for communication and relationships within the family, which has weakened effective communication among family members.
- Marital incompatibility: Marital compatibility is a pattern of social compatibility in which a person tries to have harmonious relationships with their spouse. This means that both the husband and wife find what they need to satisfy their physical, emotional, and social needs in their marriage, which leads to marital satisfaction. One of the main factors leading to it is each spouse's knowledge of their duties and roles in marital life. When a couple doesn't get along, they feel and act like they don't like each other and try to avoid each other. Over time, this creates a tense atmosphere in the family. This atmosphere also affects the children, which makes it hard for family members to talk to each other and feel close.

With weakened relationships, decreased levels of familial dialogue, and a decline in interaction and responsiveness among family members, the effectiveness of the family is diminished (Shumow and Lomax, 2002; Lawrence, 2021). This is a reference to its capacity for raising children and controlling their behaviors and orientations, both of which call for communicative interactions to make sure that kids take actions that are acceptable to society's culture and systems. Differences in perspectives increase due to the lack of exchange of opinions and ideas and the absence of a language of discussion among members of the same family, leading to a lack of homogeneity, symmetry, or convergence of shared interests between spouses.

- Weak cohesion and escalating family problems signify a decrease in the degree of positive relationships that occur within the internal environment of the group. As relationships within the family weaken and shift towards external groups, internal cohesion declines. Decreased family cohesion is defined as a decrease in the degree of interconnectedness between the units of the family structure and the family's ability to provide a degree of attraction for its substructures in a manner that allows them to continue. Family cohesion weakens because of family disputes and conflicts, indicating a failure in social performance or a form of dysfunctional performance that has a negative impact on the individual as a member of the family or the family.

4.2. The manifestations of family mutism from the point of view of experts

Table 3 shows what experts have found to be the different signs of domestic silence and how often they occur. There are nine manifestations listed, ranging from weak family relationships to weak influence of the family on children. The frequency of each manifestation ranges from 10% to 20%, and the percentage of experts who identified each manifestation ranges from 50% to 100%. Poor family compatibility and adaptation and the increasing severity of family problems are identified by all experts as manifestations of domestic silence. Family mutism can lead to further isolation and weaken family relationships, which may result in high divorce rates.

Table 3: Manifestations of domestic silence from the experts' perspective

Manifestations of domestic silence	Frequency	Ratio
Weakness of family relationships	18	90%
Low level of family dialogue	18	90%
Weakness of social interaction	17	85%
Low level of family cohesion	16	80%
Poor family compatibility and adaptation	20	100%
Increasing severity of family problems	20	100%
Increasing rates of family abandonment	10	50%
Increasing rates of divorce	10	50%
Weak influence of the family on children	15	75%

4.3. Guidelines of the professional intervention program

Table 4 shows that lists the goals of the intervention program from the experts' point of view clarifies the different answers about professional

intervention goals. Eighty percent of experts agreed that it was important to get to know family members, and most of them thought it best to start with family awareness. This is because many problems stem from family members' lack of awareness of the dangers of family mutism and the negative effects it has on the family. Experts agreed with 100% certainty on the necessity of confronting problems resulting from the non-guided use of social media. The inability to handle these problems leads to their aggravation and development in a way that makes finding solutions difficult, resulting in an inevitable increase in separation and divorce cases. Therefore, it is essential to work quickly to restore balance to families and achieve family cohesion, which, in turn, leads to more positive interactions among family members (Table 4).

Table 4: Intervention objectives from the experts' point of view

Program objectives	Frequency	Ratio
Developing awareness among family members to rationalize the use of communication tools	16	80%
Confronting problems resulting from the misuse of communication tools	20	100%
Restoring family balance and stability	19	95%
Achieving family harmony and adaptation	17	85%

According to experts' perspectives, the ecological theory is the most relied-upon theoretical orientation in intervention programs, as shown in Table 5. This theory emphasizes the influence of environmental factors on the family system and understands the problem beyond the family system itself, taking into account the impact of globalization and rapid changes in communication and technology. Therefore, social media has become the preferred means of communication in modern times. Moreover, experts agree on the importance of modifying individual family members' characteristics to a percentage of 95%. It is essential to note that modifying traits and behaviors

necessarily requires changing attitudes, increasing family knowledge, and raising awareness about the risks of family silence. The experts reached an agreement on the importance of several theories with varying percentages, as demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 6 shows, according to the experts' perspective, the most important therapeutic strategies and tactics that can be used in the intervention program. It is evident that family cognitive restructuring came in at 100%, which we have encountered through the most important theories, as family problems primarily result from a lack of awareness and perception. Therefore, the most important and best strategies from the experts' perspective are the cognitive restructuring of the family, which leads to significant family cohesion. This is evident through the experts' 100% agreement on changing behavior as a strategy that can be relied upon. It leads to modifying the behaviors of all family members. The self-awareness strategy came in with the agreement of 80% of the experts. Self-awareness of one's desires, strong motivations for change, and serious efforts to understand oneself and participate in finding solutions to one's problems, as well as one's ability to change and satisfy one's needs, ultimately lead to positive personality changes, self-growth, and personality development, thus creating family harmony.

Table 5: Theoretical orientations of the professional intervention program

The most important guidelines that the program depends on	Frequency	Percentage
Ecological theory	20	100%
Cognitive-behavioral theory	12	60%
Symbolic interaction theory	16	80%
Functional constructional theory	18	90%
Pattern theory	17	85%
Trait modification theory	19	95%

Table 6: Proposed therapeutic strategies from experts' perspective

Proposed therapeutic strategies from experts' perspective	Frequency	Percentage
Family cognitive restructuring	20	100%
Expressive emotion and thought strategy	13	65%
Positive mutual appreciation strategy	11	55%
Religious and spiritual awareness strategy	10	50%
Refuting irrational thoughts and beliefs	7	35%
Confrontation and challenge	15	75%
Writing self-reports	15	75%
Family therapy	8	40%
Behavior modification	20	100%
Problem-solving training	10	50%
Self-awareness	16	80%
Role-playing	15	75%

Table 7 indicates the identification of intervention tools from the experts' point of view. Individual and group interviews of family members and individual and group sessions of family members came to a 100% agreement. Individual and group training sessions with a 90% agreement.

Family members were exposed individually and collectively to certain life situations with an 85% agreement. The role was represented individually to gain the correct information and shout the wrong information with an 80% agreement.

Table 7: Professional intervention tools from the experts' perspective

Intervention tools	Frequency	Percentage
Individual family interviews	20	100%
Group family interviews	20	100%
Individual sessions	20	100%
Group sessions	20	100%
Individual training sessions	18	90%
Group training sessions	18	90%
Responsive situations in an individual setting	17	85%
Responsive situations in a group setting	17	85%
Role-playing and acting in an individual setting	16	80%
Role-playing and acting in a group setting	16	80%

5. Conclusions

In contrast to prior investigations primarily addressing the physical, psychological, and relational repercussions of domestic silence, the present study endeavors to delineate a therapeutic framework, informed by the perspectives of subject matter authorities in the field. It aims to delineate the constituent components and gauge the dimensions of this phenomenon. This study distinguishes itself by amalgamating insights and clinical expertise from scholars specializing in sociology, psychology, and social work, with the ultimate objective of formulating a treatment protocol designed for individuals and families grappling with domestic silence. This protocol can be regarded as a seminal endeavor, paving the way for further contributions and akin research endeavors, particularly within the context of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Professionals concur on the imperative of establishing intervention program objectives predicated upon elevating awareness among family members. There is a unanimous consensus among experts on the significance of initiating intervention efforts with a focus on family awareness. This emphasis on family awareness derives from the recognition that many issues emanate from the dearth of awareness among family members regarding the gravity of domestic violence and its pernicious impact on familial dynamics. Moreover, experts overwhelmingly concur on the necessity of addressing issues stemming from unregulated utilization of social media platforms. The incapacity to effectively address these issues exacerbates their proliferation and complexity, rendering them recalcitrant to resolution.

1. Concerning the delineation of therapeutic strategies pivotal to the professional intervention program's efficacy in mitigating manifestations of domestic violence, experts concur that an emphasis on the cognitive restructuring of the family unit is paramount. This prioritization stems from the acknowledgment that family dysfunctions principally arise from a lack of awareness and comprehension, thus rendering cognitive restructuring the foremost strategic initiative.
2. To foster diversity and intellectual integration, experts from diverse academic backgrounds - encompassing social work, sociology, and psychology - contribute varied skillsets and scientific perspectives. This diversity in academic qualifications augments the richness of scientific and academic experiences, promoting a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue at hand.
3. In the experts' estimation, manifestations of domestic violence are attributed to a dearth of compatibility and adaptability, coupled with a exacerbation of underlying problems. Consequently, domestic violence assumes the role of an escape mechanism from familial issues, engendering further isolation and undermining familial bonds.
4. Experts contend that the indicators of family silence are rooted in compatibility and adaptability challenges, exacerbated by the exacerbation of extant issues. Consequently, family silence becomes an escape route from these familial challenges, ultimately fostering increased isolation and debilitated family dynamics.
5. With regard to the professional intervention objectives aimed at mitigating family silence, experts overwhelmingly converge on the identification of objectives centered on elevating awareness among family members. This unanimous consensus underscores the paramount importance of commencing intervention efforts with a focus on family awareness. This collective perspective emerges from the recognition that many familial problems stem from family members' inadequate appreciation of the gravity of family silence and its deleterious impact on the familial unit. Moreover, experts concur on the imperative of addressing issues stemming from unregulated social media usage, given that failure to effectively address these problems leads to their exacerbation and entrenchment, rendering them difficult to ameliorate.
6. In the context of identifying scientific orientations guiding professional practice and forming the bedrock of the professional intervention program, ecological theory emerges as the preeminent orientation. This prominence derives from the theory's inherent focus on factors enveloping the familial structure itself, transcending a myopic understanding of the problem solely within the confines of the family context.
7. Regarding the identification of therapeutic strategies upon which the professional intervention program hinges to ameliorate family silence, experts concur that family cognitive restructuring assumes primary importance. This prioritization is rooted in the acknowledgment

that familial issues are fundamentally underpinned by a dearth of awareness and comprehension. Consequently, cognitive restructuring within the familial context is deemed the most pivotal and efficacious strategy from the experts' vantage point.

8. In terms of the ranking of professional intervention tools instrumental in combatting family silence precipitated by the misuse of social media, experts delineate the following hierarchy: individual and group interviews for family members, individual and group counseling sessions for family members, stress management training, problem-solving interventions, individual and group role-play exercises aimed at identifying positive and negative emotions, viewpoints, thoughts, and attitudes among family members, and role-playing exercises aimed at reshaping negative cognitions and attitudes towards oneself or other family members, replacing them with positive emotions, viewpoints, thoughts, and attitudes.

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations emerge:

1. Mitigating family incompatibility and maladaptation can be achieved through the facilitation of effective communication among family members and the prompt resolution of familial issues to prevent their accumulation. Consequently, the study advocates for addressing family isolation, recognizing it as a precursor to the onset of family silence.

2. To counteract the phenomenon of family silence, it is advisable to minimize the utilization of social media or employ it judiciously. Furthermore, increasing family members' awareness of the detrimental consequences of family silence on the familial unit is imperative.

3. Embracing ecological theory as the foremost conceptual framework for comprehending family silence is recommended. This theoretical perspective encompasses factors encompassing the familial structure itself, transcending a limited understanding confined solely within the family context. Accordingly, the study suggests conceptualizing family silence as a phenomenon that extends beyond the familial sphere and necessitates intervention at various societal levels.

4. Prioritizing cognitive restructuring within the family is underscored as pivotal for addressing the root causes of family issues, primarily rooted in a deficiency of awareness and perception. Thus, experts concur that cognitive restructuring for the family stands as the most salient and effective strategy.

5. In response to family silence, the study proposes a repertoire of tools and methodologies. These encompass individual and group interviews with family members, individual and group counseling sessions, training initiatives, role-playing exercises, and playful interventions aimed at

reshaping negative self-perceptions and attitudes towards family members, substituting them with positive cognitions, sentiments, and attitudes.

6. Given the dearth of studies directed towards formulating intervention plans for the prevention, reduction, or treatment of domestic silence, particularly within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this research underscores the necessity of directing scholarly inquiry and investigations within relevant academic disciplines towards clinical research endeavors. The primary aim should be the development of intervention programs and treatment protocols to address this pervasive phenomenon effectively

The implications of this study are multifaceted:

1. This research delves into the phenomenon of family mutism stemming from the utilization of social networking platforms, emphasizing the imperative of societal interventions to ameliorate its adverse impact on familial relationships.

2. The study underscores the symbiotic collaboration of experts in social work, sociology, and psychology as essential for devising efficacious strategies to aid individuals facing such challenges.

3. The study accentuates the pivotal role played by poor compatibility and adaptability in the emergence of family mutism. It underscores the necessity of addressing underlying familial issues as a means to mitigate this phenomenon.

4. The study accentuates the importance of family awareness concerning social media usage and the provision of guidance on its judicious utilization to counteract family silence and its detrimental influence on familial bonds.

5. The adoption of ecological theory as a guiding framework for social interventions is recommended, as it underscores the significance of contextual elements in shaping familial dynamics.

6. The study underscores family cognitive restructuring as one of the foremost strategies for addressing familial issues arising from inappropriate social media usage.

7. The identification of a spectrum of professional intervention tools to mitigate the adverse effects of family silence due to improper social media usage is a significant contribution. These tools encompass individual and group interviews, counseling sessions, stress management training, problem-solving techniques, and role-playing exercises.

The study's limitations are as follows:

1. The research was conducted within a specific geographical region with a limited sample size, potentially constraining the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts.

2. The study primarily relied on expert opinions and perspectives, neglecting the inclusion of insights

and experiences from families directly impacted by family mutism arising from social media use.

3. The employment of a descriptive research methodology may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate and dynamic nature of how social media influences familial relationships.

4. Future directions stemming from this study encompass:

5. Further research endeavors could delve into the experiences and viewpoints of families directly affected by family mutism attributed to social media use. This would contribute to a more holistic comprehension of the phenomenon.

6. Prospective research could explore the efficacy of various tools and strategies in mitigating the challenges precipitated by social media within familial relationships.

7. To enhance the generalizability of findings, future studies could replicate this research in diverse settings with larger and more diverse sample sizes.

8. Subsequent research endeavors could investigate the influence of additional factors, such as cultural and social norms, in shaping the manifestations of family mutism arising from social media utilization.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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