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Stalking and Relationship Satisfaction among Partners

Farah Kanwal¹ Sadia Iqbal² Asma Javed³

Abstract: *The goal of the current study, which included gender as a moderator, was to assess the effect of Facebook stalking on romantic partners' satisfaction with their relationships. Online A-priori statistics were used to justify the sample (Soper, 2018). Purposive sampling was used to select 320 university students from Punjab, Pakistan's four public and private universities (University of Central Punjab, Bahauddin Zakariya University, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan Campuses). The Relationship Assessment Scale created by Hendrick et al. (1998) and the Cyber-Obsessional Pursuit Scale created by Spitzberg and Cupach (1999) were both used to gather the data. To analyze the data, SPSS (24.0) was used.*

Key Words: Stalking, Facebook Stalking, Relationship Satisfaction, Hyper Intimacy, Real-Life Transference

Introduction

There has been an increase in the popularity of the Internet in the past ten years (Arnett, 2010). The Internet is not only considered important for the sources of gathering information but also for communications and interactions with others through different social networking sites. As described by Brown and Bobkowski (2011) media and technology have provided opportunities for individuals for the interaction and selection of social groups. Social networking sites are considered one of the latest forms of computer-aided communication relationships between individuals. Facebook is one of the most commonly used social networking sites which enables people to communicate and interact with each other. The combination of Facebook with different tools allows individuals to communicate with the help of messages at various times (Vrocharidou & Efthymiou, 2012). The increasing amount of time spent on these social networking sites raises the question of how they affect the interpersonal relationships of individuals. Many factors are being observed in the relationship satisfaction (Valenzuela et al., 2009) shyness among them (Orr et al., 2009), and self-esteem of the romantic partners in their relationships (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). Although there hasn't been much research done on how these social networking sites affect people's love relationships. In the past, research on Facebook use alone was not enough; other domains and aspects of how people present themselves on Facebook, as well as the social and psychological effects that Facebook has on people in terms of their relationships and behaviors, were not studied (Mod, 2010; Muise et al., 2009; Utz & Beukeboom 2011; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Helsper & Whitty, 2010; Steinfield et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2011; Tosun, 2012; Valenzuela et al., 2009; Hum et al., 2011; Krämer & Winter, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Walther et al., 2008; Zhao et al., 2008). There is a great influence of social media on romantic relationships and it has gained a lot of attention in recent years. The most dangerous concern here is the popularity of Facebook in the past years, which is associated with stalking behavior. Most specifically, Facebook stalking is increasing as the days pass. Along with the growing body of literature on Facebook stalking (Chaulk & Jones, 2011; Darvell et al., 2011; Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Lyndon et al., 2011),

¹ Ph.D Scholar, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan.

² Senior Special Education Teacher, Government Shadab Training Institute for Mentally Challenged Children, Government of Special Education.

³ M.Phil Scholar, Department of Psychology, The National College of Business Administration and Economics, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.



few researchers also studied the link between Facebook and romantic relationships. Many studies have been limited to the sample of undergraduate students (Christofides et al., 2009; Dong et al., 2008).

So the lack of research is also considered to be inappropriate in building an understanding of the interaction with romantic relationships and the use of social media in the diverse and national sample consisting of young adults or adults (Christofides et al., 2009; Lyndon et al., 2011; Papp et al., 2012). Through the lens of gender disparities, the current study seeks to determine how Facebook stalking affects romantic partners' relationship satisfaction.

Facebook Stalking

Facebook stalking is considered to be a playful term in which the information provided on Facebook is monitored by friends, family, or even virtual strangers who are never our friends. Examples of Facebook stalking consist of reading posts on timelines, checking the latest updates, and going through the photos uploaded (Lyndon et al., 2011). Facebook stalking is linked with the use of Facebook in which individuals follow the actions of other Facebook users online. It may include the excessive viewing of user's pictures or other profile activities. It may also be accompanied by messaging and posting comments on the posts of other Facebook users (Clayton et al., 2013).

It is quite clear that many stalkers are engaged in multiple kinds of pursuit behaviors. Spitzberg and Hobbler (2002) have also identified that there are three types of cyber-obsessional relational pursuit which consist of hyper-intimacy, RL-transference, and threat (Whitty & Carr, 2006).

Hyper-intimacy

The hyper-intimacy is also considered to depict five types of behaviors, which are discussed below.

Affection Expressions: The gestures or statements, which indicate attraction and desire of an individual.

Flirtation: It mainly consists of the prototypical gestures that help in exploring or suggesting the pursuit of romance within the individuals.

Ingratiation: This type of hyper intimacy offers the performance of compliments and giving positive regard, support, and favor to the individuals.

Relational Bids: There are a few kinds of attempts, which are given to negotiate the level of relational intimacy at the most preferred level.

Hypersexuality : It is described as the symbols, texts, or behaviors, which show the suggestibility of sexual activity such as the picture of undergarments or pornographic pictures (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004).

Real-life Transference

Real-life transference also known as RL-Transference consists of the first online meeting then giving threats to the individual, meeting the person on an online network, and then attempting to disable the computer of the individual (Whitty & Carr, 2006).

Threat

The intention of any person to punish hurt or exert any kind of damage to the reputation or asset of another person, which may affect the freedom of living of that particular person (Hough, 1990). Facebook stalking is also considered a common practice for the influence of attachment style which can become damaging after the romantic relationship and may also affect the relationship satisfaction of these romantic partners differently (Fox, 2016).

Relationship Satisfaction

The degree to which a person is pleased and satisfied with their relationship is referred to as relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988). Because it contributes to success over the long term, satisfaction is a powerful indicator of how long a relationship will last. Relationship satisfaction is also examined as the satisfaction in which the individuals and collective constructs are studied in terms of the perception towards their partners, their behaviors, and their communications with each other (Guerrero, 1994). As a result, relationship satisfaction also reflects the people's feelings, ideas, and behaviors that are connected to their romantic relationships (Hendrick, 1988). The link between online networking sites such as Facebook and relationship satisfaction is also observed. Many negative experiences consist of unwanted messages, publicizing private information, or even stalking (Stern & Taylor, 2007).

Facebook Stalking and Romantic Relationships

The social media network has been diverse in its scope over the past few years, still, Facebook also dominates as having the most used site for social contacts and making relationships (Duggan et al., 2015). According to many types of research on social networking sites, romantic relationship is related to Facebook (Clayton et al., 2013; Cravens & Whiting, 2014; Fox & Warber 2014; Muise et al., 2009; Utz et al., 2015) which also focuses upon the adverse effects on relationship satisfaction among intimate partners (Cravens et al., 2013; Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Muscanell et al., 2013) and on the empathic skills which would affect the overall life satisfaction of individual (Chan, 2014; Stewart et al., 2014).

Gender and Stalking

Gender is considered as the way of an individual's orientation toward the perception of stalking behavior (Lyndon et al., 2011; Reyns et al., 2016). There several researches, which have found that gender doesn't only influence the determination of being part of a crime but it is also inflicted to be linked with stalking behavior. Many researchers consider stalking to be of "gendered crime" (Logan and Walker 2009; White et al. 2000). Harassment is more likely to occur in an intimate setting, where it may occur during a relationship's formation or after it ends, much like any other gendered crime like intimate partner violence (Baum et al., 2009; Tjaden & Thoennes 1998; Hall 1998; Mullen et al., 1999). Particularly it depicts the concern for the target population along with the perception of causing potential harm to the gender who is being an actor in the stalking behavior (Phillips et al., 2004; Sheridan, Gillette al., 2003; Sheridan & Scott, 2010). Similar to how participants are more likely to develop the law and enforcement to seek the assistance needed for the stalking behavior of male pursuers and the females becoming stalking victims. To define the ratings across the many aspects of this perspective, it is also crucial to take into account the perception of stalking (Dennison & Thomson, 2002; Perrilloux & Buss, 2008; Phillips et al., 2004). Men are often expected to seek women while women are the targets in romantic relationships. The physical dominance of the masculine realm continues to be greater since women are often smaller than their male partners (Bem, 1981; Goffman, 1977).

Literature Review

Many studies have investigated whether students use Facebook to find new friends and maintain offline communities. They also use Facebook to meet offline people initially (Lampe et al., 2006; Muise et al., 2009). They see Facebook as a rapidly evolving phenomena in nature and close relationships that also raises the possibility of envy and stalking on the site.

Tassy and Winstead (2014) have examined the unwanted pursuit which is accompanied by individual characteristics, jealousy, attachment, intimate relationships, neuroticism, and the styles and relationships between the variables along with the investment and quality of alternatives being provided with the commitment and aggression. Therefore, the anxious attachment patterns as well as behavioural neuroticism, jealousy, and investment are also differentiating factors between pursers and non-pursers. As a result, behavioral jealousy and investment were strongly linked with pursuit and aggressiveness. Although the aggressiveness and uneasy attachment style also indicated the pursuit.



According to Lyndon et al. (2011), Facebook, in particular, is responsible for improper social networking site behavior. The goal of this study is to determine if people have harassed their ex-partners on Facebook, which is connected to those who participate in cyber-obsessional pursuit and people who have stalked others. Dardis (2015) accessed that the theories of Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors have included real-life incidents with cybercrimes and sending threatening text messages with the monitoring of Facebook accounts. Theories such as the investment model, attachment theory, interdependence theory, and relational goal pursuit theory are considered to describe the models of integration that have predicted the individual's form of cyberbullying real-life stalking, and unwanted checking of partner's contacts. The predictors are varied by the type of unwanted contact which is compared to the threatening of unwanted pursuit behavior which motivates and maintains the desperate desires to reclaim the love relationships and to control the control, power, and desire of the individuals.

De Smet et al. (2015) have also researched that the unwanted pursuit behavior (UPB), which involves the pursuit of proximity and is common on the severe level of stalking, is regarded to be the perpetration with the ex-partners. Therefore, the presence of these distinct risk variables influences unwanted pursuit behavior and is explored for the gender disparities between female and male ex-partners in the same gender or the opposite gender. Hence the male and female partners have shown an equal number of UPB. There are many perpetrators according to the relationship characteristics and through the characteristics which may ask to be involved. Facebook is considered the medium through which the person can monitor and investigate the activities of other people who are connected with them through Facebook. Although, little is known about the individuals who investigate the activities of monitors. There is so little known about the monitoring of a romantic partner's Facebook which may be causing any psychological reason for this behavior.

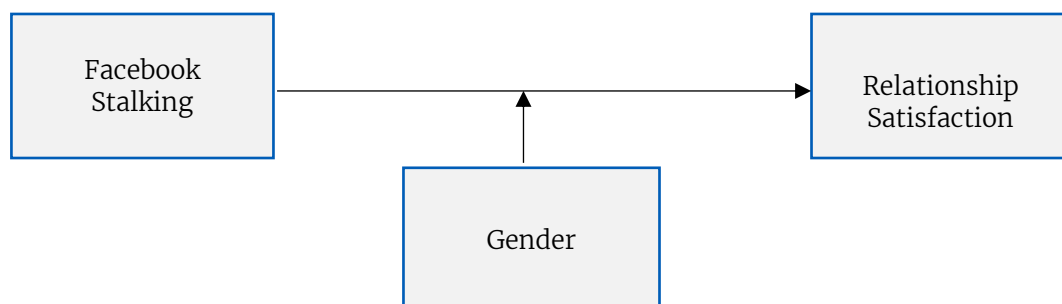
It is also believed that the tendency of Facebook stalking also results in the relationship satisfaction of romantic partners and is moderated by the gender of the partner along with the extent to which they were involved in the relationship and having satisfactory approaches towards their relationship (Strand & McEwan, 2011). Yanowitz and Yanowitz (2012) have examined the influence of gender on college students and stalking behaviors, it has been reported that women generate more examples of being involved in romantic relationships and it also provides non-aggressive and ambiguous relationships with men.

Apart from the concept that either male or female causes such online pursuits and behaviors in which females have experienced higher levels of harm. These behaviors need to be controlled. The findings suggested that women who have been victims at any time must submit the identity and activity related to males being victimized (Hamberger, 2005; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1

Hypothesized research model (Self-constructed)



Rationale of Study

Many researchers proved that stalking is increasing as a communal disease of youth. Lyndon et al. (2011) also found that the individual's Facebook use mainly affects the online and offline behaviors of individuals. Hence people also use Facebook to remain in contact with their online or offline partners and to stalk and monitor their activities (Hendrick, 1988; Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Lyndon et al., 2011). It is also increased

in romantic relationships in which there is satisfaction at stake. Relationship satisfaction is the most vital part of the romantic partner. There is a need to evaluate the impact of Facebook stalking on relationship satisfaction (Clayton et al., 2013). The purpose of the current study is to provide evidence for the fundamental claim that gender-moderated effects of Facebook stalking on romantic partner relationship satisfaction.

Objectives

1. To check the effect of Facebook stalking on relationship satisfaction among romantic partners.
2. To measure the impact of gender between Facebook stalking and relationship satisfaction of romantic partners.

Hypotheses

- H1:** It was hypothesized that there would be significant correlation between Facebook stalking and relationship satisfaction among romantic partners.
- H1_a:** There would be significant negative correlation between hyper-intimacy and relationship satisfaction.
- H1_b:** There would be significant negative correlation between real life transference and relationship satisfaction.
- H1_c:** There would be significant negative correlation between threat and relationship satisfaction.
- H2:** Gender plays a significant moderating role between Facebook stalking and relationship satisfaction among romantic partners.

Method

Participant's Characteristics

Participants of the study were 320 university students from four universities in Punjab Pakistan; The Islamia University of Bahawalpur and Yar Khan Campuses, The University of Central Punjab Lahore, and The Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan. This study included both male and female participants equally.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In this study, persons between the ages of 18 and 28 who are in a romantic relationship that has lasted at least one month (Norona, Roberson & Welsh, 2016), have a Facebook account or attend university in the province of Punjab, Pakistan, were included. All other respondents and those exhibiting any medical or psychiatric symptoms were also disqualified from the study. Sample Size, Power, and Precision.

The sample of 320 adults was justified using multiple hierarchical regression with online A-priori statistics (Soper, 2018), where the effect size was 0.15 while the desired statistical power level was 0.8, the number of predictors in set A was 1, and the number of predictors in set B was 2 at 0.05 probability. With a 20% attrition rate from these four universities, the minimum sample size computed was 80 for each group, and 320 respondents were surveyed.

Research Design

Cross-sectional research was used in this quantitative study.

Sampling Technique

Utilizing purposive sampling methods, the information was gathered from four Universities in Punjab, Pakistan.

Measures

Demographic Sheet

Demographic characteristics of the sample were collected which asked about the age, gender, Facebook account, and relationship status of the participants.



Informed Consent

Informed consent was signed by the respondents which showed their willingness to participate in this research.

Relationship Assessment Scale

A brief scale called the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (Hendrick et al., 1998) evolved to assess the general satisfaction in relationships. It is unique in that it goes with every kind of romantic relationship. This scale has 7 items and is rated on 5 point Likert scale. According to Vaughn and Baier (1999), the scores might be negatively skewed. According to Graham, Diebels, and Barnow (2011), the average reliability score for RAS across several investigations was .872. According to Hendrick (1988), the scale's mean inter-item correlation was .49, and its alpha value was .86.

Cyber-Obsessional Pursuit Scale

This scale was developed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1999) which consisted of 24 items. This was at .70, indicating acceptable intercorrelation. The COPS consists of three subscales: hyper intimacy ($\alpha = .88$); RL-transference ($\alpha = .74$); and threat ($\alpha = .77$) (Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002).

Procedure

After successfully choosing the study's goals, measuring tools were chosen, and their concerned authors were contacted to request permission to utilize the scales in the investigation. The total sample size comprised of (N=320). The sample was collected from four universities in Punjab by using a purposive sampling technique. After explaining the goal of the study and assuring them that their answers would remain private, the participants were invited to complete all of the questionnaires. Following the collection of all the necessary sample data, SPSS (24.0) was used to analyze it.

Results

Table 1

Demographic Sheet Frequency and Percentage Distribution (N=320)

Participants Characteristics		f(%)
Gender	Male	160 (50.0)
	Female	160 (50.0)
Education	Intermediate	14 (4.3)
	Graduation	68 (21.0)
	Master	216 (68.0)
	M. Phil	22 (6.8)
City	Lahore	80 (25.0)
	Bahawalpur	80 (25.0)
	Multan	80 (25.0)
	Rahim Yar Khan	80 (25.0)

The frequency and proportion of the demographic factors are displayed in this table.

Table 2

Descriptive and Reliability Analysis of FS and RS Scales (N=320)

Variables	M	SD	α	Range		
				Potential	Actual	Skew
Age	27.07	3.41	-	-	18-39	1.50
Facebook Stalking	30.68	17.63	.93	0-80	0-80	.14
Relationship Satisfaction	22.30	6.07	.74	7-35	7-35	-.67

This results table displayed the appropriate Cronbach's alpha values for the reliability analysis of all measures (Facebook Stalking = .74 and Relationship Satisfaction = .93). The skewness values for all variables

(Age = 1.50, Facebook Stalking = .14, and Relationship Satisfaction = -.67) likewise fell within acceptable bounds.

Table 3

Correlation between Facebook Stalking and Relationship Satisfaction (N=320)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1.Facebook Stalking	-	.82**	.81**	.77**	-.32**
2.Hyper-Intimacy		-	.56**	.64**	-.37**
3.Life Transference			-	.65**	-.22**
4.Threat				-	-.26**
5.Relationship Satisfaction					-

**p < .01

The results of this table revealed that Facebook stalking was significantly ($p < .01$) and positively correlated with ($r = .82$) hyper-intimacy, ($r = .81$) life transference and ($r = .77$) threat. While, Facebook stalking was significantly ($p < .01$) and negatively correlated with ($r = -.32$) relationship satisfaction. Whereas, hyper-intimacy in Facebook stalking was significantly ($p < .01$) and negatively correlated with ($r = -.37$) relationship satisfaction. Additionally, life transference from Facebook stalking was also significantly ($p < .01$) and negatively correlated with ($r = -.22$) relationship satisfaction. Finally, the threat from Facebook stalking was significantly ($p < .01$) and negatively correlated with ($r = -.26$) relationship satisfaction.

Table 4

Moderation Analysis for the Moderating Role of Gender between Facebook Stalking and Relationship Satisfaction (N=320)

Variables	Relationship Satisfaction		
	R ²	B	95% CI
Step 1	.04*		
Control Variables*			
Step 2	.10**		
Gender		-3.07**	(-4.28, -1.86)
Step 3	.16**		
Facebook Stalking		-.09**	(-.12, -.06)
Step 4	.17**		
Facebook Stalking __X__ Gender		-.06*	(-.09, -.03)
Total R ²	.14**		

Note: Control Variables = age and education; Gender (male = 1 & Female = 0) **p<.01; *p<.05

The results of the moderation analysis are displayed in the following table. For relationship satisfaction, the overall model explained 14% of the variance with $F(2, 397) = 31.26$, $p < .01$ after controlling demographic variables (i.e., age and education) in step 1, gender (male = 1 & Female = 0) as moderator in step 2, Facebook stalking as an independent variable in step 3, and interaction terms between Facebook stalking and gender in step 4. Facebook stalking from step 3 was also shown to be a highly significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. The link between Facebook stalking and gender was also shown to be significant in step 4.

Discussion

The current study's findings for H1 indicated that "it was hypothesized that Facebook stalking was significantly negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction among romantic partners" (Table 4.3), which revealed that stalking on Facebook was significantly and negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Similar findings were made in earlier studies, and De-Smet et al. (2015) revealed that unwanted pursuit behavior, which includes the pursuit of proximity and is common on the severe level of stalking, is believed to be committed by ex-partners. Therefore, the presence of these distinct risk variables



influences unwanted pursuit behavior and is explored for the gender disparities between female and male ex-partners in the same gender or the opposite gender.

The current study's findings for H1a indicated in Table 4.3 that "there would be a significant negative correlation between hyper-intimacy and relationship satisfaction among romantic partners" and that "hyper-intimacy was significantly negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction among romantic partners." Tassy and Winstead (2014) have examined the unwanted pursuit which is accompanied by individual characteristics, jealousy, attachment, intimate relationships, neuroticism, and the styles and relationships between the variables along with the investment and quality of alternatives being provided with the commitment and aggression. Therefore, the anxious attachment patterns as well as behavioural neuroticism, jealousy, and investment are also differentiating factors between pursers and non-pursers. As a result, behavioral jealousy and investment were strongly linked with pursuit and aggressiveness.

According to Table 4.3, which summarises the study's findings, "there would be a significant negative correlation between real life transference and relationship satisfaction among romantic partners" for hypotheses H1b. Dardis (2015) accessed that the theories of Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors have included real-life incidents with cybercrimes and sending threatening text messages with the monitoring of Facebook accounts. Theories such as the investment model, attachment theory, and relational goal pursuit theory are considered to describe the models of integration that have predicted the individual's form of cyberbullying real-life stalking, and unwanted checking of partner's contacts. The predictors are varied by the type of unwanted contact which is compared to the threatening of unwanted pursuit behavior which motivates and maintains the desperate desires to reclaim the love relationships and to control the control, power, and desire of the individuals. The research mentioned above supports the conclusions of the current study, hence this theory is accepted.

Threat and relationship satisfaction among romantic partners have a substantial negative connection for H1c. The findings in Table 4.3 revealed danger was significantly inversely connected with romantic partner relationship pleasure. The findings of the most recent study are consistent with those of earlier ones (Chew, 2014; Marcum et al., 2017). This hypothesis is accepted since the results of the current study are corroborated by earlier research.

The study's findings for hypothesis H2 indicated that "gender plays a significant moderating role between Facebook stalking and relationship satisfaction among romantic partners" in table 4.4, which displayed moderation analysis, moderation after the controlling demographic variables (i.e., age and education) in step 1, gender as a moderator in step 2, Facebook stalking as an independent variable in step 3, and terms of interaction between Facebook stalking and gender. Facebook stalking from step 3 was also shown to be a highly significant predictor of relationship happiness. The link between Facebook stalking and gender was also shown to be significant in step 4. It is also believed that the tendency of Facebook stalking also results in the relationship satisfaction of romantic partners and is moderated by the gender of the partner along with the extent to which they were involved in the relationship and having satisfactory approaches towards their relationship (Strand & McEwan, 2011). Overall it has been revealed that the higher degree of similarity is involved with the stalking behavior which functions with the gender. However, women generate such hyper-intimacy in which the behavior of the individual is facilitated by the part of their scripts and has been proven to be more significantly related to gender-specific behavior.

The results revealed that the dissatisfaction of the partner and mistrust of the relationship predicted frequent Facebook use. Moreover, daily log-in on Facebook predicts the behavior and intention of the partners which affects the length of the relationships. Overall this study reported that partner monitoring and stalking is due to such attitudinal and relational factors that occur due to the excessive use of Facebook (Darvell et al., 2011). The H2 of this study is accepted since the results of recent research are comparable to and supported by the research mentioned above.

Conclusion

It is concluded that Facebook stalking among romantic partners affects relationship satisfaction. The amount of relationship happiness among romantic partner's declines as Facebook stalking increases. Facebook stalking and romantic partner relationship satisfaction are moderated by gender. Males tend to

have lower relationship satisfaction and higher Facebook stalking rates. Whereas, female romantic partners are associated with low Facebook stalking and high relationship satisfaction.

Limitation

This study contained of population based upon only four universities in Punjab; so the results are not generalized to the whole of Pakistan. Future research should focus on the college population or compare the populations of colleges and universities as the sample of the current study consisted primarily of university students. Moreover, this study was also limited and could not categorize the marital status of respondents that affects Facebook stalking and relationship satisfaction. For upcoming studies, it is encouraged to research Facebook and gender (separate or composed) as prognostic factors with other decision-making phenomena.

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