

## An Analysis of the Relationship Between Facebook Usage and Perceived Cultural and Social Security: A Case Study of Maimana City Residents

Rahimullah Zirak<sup>1</sup>, Karimullah Noori<sup>2</sup>, Salahuddin Qarizadah<sup>3</sup>, Abdul Hasib Howaida<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kabul University, Pashto Language and Literature Department, Language and Literature Faculty, Kabul, AF

<sup>2</sup>Faryab University, Department of Journalism, Literature and Humanities Faculty, Faryab, AF

<sup>3,4</sup>Kabul University, Master's Student in Mass Communication, Faculty of Communication and Journalism, Kabul, AF

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- Cultural Security
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**Abstract:** This article examines the relationship between the use of the social network Facebook and the feelings of cultural and social security among its users. Given the increasing prevalence of social networks and their impacts on daily life, this study analyzes how user activities on Facebook affect their feelings of security in cultural and social contexts. This study adopts a quantitative approach and falls under the category of applied and survey-based research. Data were collected through a researcher-designed questionnaire, and sampling was conducted using a convenience and voluntary method among 380 young Facebook users in Maimana, Afghanistan, in 2024. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including multiple regression analysis, were employed to analyze the data. Despite the growing use of social networks, particularly Facebook, in Afghan society, few studies have examined the psychological and social impacts of this platform on users' feelings of cultural and social security. This study aims to address that gap by focusing on young users in the city of Maimana. The research reveals a significant inverse relationship between Facebook use (in terms of membership duration, usage level, engagement type, and content perception) and users' feelings of cultural and social security, as these aspects of Facebook use increase, feelings of security decrease. Moreover, the independent variables in the regression model explained 13% of the variance in social security feelings and 15% in cultural security feelings. While the findings offer important insights, the use of a non-random, convenience-based sample limits the generalizability of the results beyond the studied population. Nevertheless, the observed patterns provide a meaningful foundation for understanding social media's influence on young users in fragile sociocultural environments. Future research employing probability sampling and broader geographic coverage is recommended to validate and extend these findings.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the expansion of communication and information technologies in the digital age, social networks have become one of the primary tools for communication and information exchange. Facebook, as one of the largest and most widely used platforms, plays a significant role in the daily lives of its users. The use of Facebook as a social networking platform has

✉ Corresponding author E-mail: [r.zirak2015@gmail.com](mailto:r.zirak2015@gmail.com)

been linked to individuals' perceptions of cultural and social security. Research indicates that excessive engagement on Facebook may expose users to diverse cultural norms, potentially reducing a sense of cultural stability and social cohesion (Ellison et al., 2007).

Using Facebook allows users to stay connected with friends and family while engaging in discussions and exchanging views within various communities. However, these activities can have contrasting effects on users' sense of cultural and social security. On one hand, online interactions may strengthen feelings of belonging and security, while on the other hand, concerns such as privacy threats and social judgments may arise.

This article examines the relationship between Facebook use and users' sense of cultural and social security. The primary goal of this research is to identify the factors influencing this relationship and analyze how users' activities in the virtual space affect their sense of security within society. Considering the significance of this topic, the findings of this study can contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities arising from social network usage and offer practical solutions to enhance the user experience. With the advent of digital technologies and social media platforms, the concept of social and cultural security has undergone a profound transformation. According to Castells (2010), the network society reshapes not only economic and political interactions but also cultural identities and social cohesion. The pervasive influence of online networks extends security concerns beyond physical safety to include protection of cultural diversity, collective memory, and the preservation of social values. This broadened understanding underscores the crucial role of media literacy and digital inclusion in cultivating resilient communities amidst rapid technological advancements.

Błachnio et al. (2016) surveyed 2,628 Facebook users in eight countries—China, Greece, Israel, Italy, Poland, Romania, Turkey, and the U.S.—to examine predictors of Facebook intrusion (behavioral addiction). They found that cultural dimensions (e.g., individualism/collectivism), self-construal, personality traits, and emotional stability significantly predicted intrusion across contexts. The instrument showed acceptable cross-cultural equivalence, enabling valid comparisons across nations (Błachnio et al., 2016).

A later study by Błachnio et al. (2024), with 12,204 respondents across 25 countries, established measurement invariance for the Facebook Intrusion Questionnaire (FIQ), confirming it as psychotherapy-valid across diverse societies.

In a cross-cultural investigation, Ji et al. (2010) and Vasalou et al. (2010) found that users from collectivist cultures (e.g., China, Korea) place greater emphasis on emotional connectivity and careful self-presentation on Facebook, while those in individualistic cultures (e.g. U.S., Greece) prioritize self-expression and informational exchange (Błachnio et al., 2016; Ji et al., 2010; Vasalou et al., 2010).

A meta-analysis on privacy value and behavior found that collectivist populations show higher sensitivity to privacy settings, especially when relationships are highly valued.

Individual-level self-construals predicted more protective self-presentation (e.g., limiting disclosures) in collectivist contexts (Fleming et al., 2021).

Jiang and de Bruijn (2013) investigated cross-cultural social networking on Facebook and showed that intensity of cross-cultural interactions was positively related to perceived cross-cultural social capital, particularly mediated by cultural background and type of friendship.

Botangen et al. (2018) explored how Igorot migrants use Facebook groups to preserve indigenous culture and traditions. They found that such virtual exchanges actively support cultural security and identity preservation in diaspora communities.

Pantic et al. (2015) conducted A Polish study on 672 participants found that depression, time spent online, age, and male gender predicted higher Facebook intrusion—showing consistency of psychological risk factors across populations.

Another study involving 597 Polish participants linked Facebook intrusion with phubbing, loneliness, low self-esteem, and lower life satisfaction—underscoring intrusions' impact beyond social media usage itself (Błachnio & Przepiórka, 2019).

Redmiles et al. (2018) conducted qualitative interviews with 67 Facebook users across five countries to map cross-cultural patterns of Facebook account breach responses and perceived threats. They identified a shared process of incident-response, yet culturally modulated threat awareness and remediation behaviors.

In fact, modern media, by creating disruptions in cultural norms and national, ethnic, and religious identities, undermines security. Global information and communication technologies, especially the internet and virtual social networks, have made it easier and less costly to pose threats to the sense of cultural and social security. There is no doubt that new media expand our horizons and provide unprecedented opportunities for interaction with others. However, the unrestrained pace of their growth and proliferation also highlights significant threats and challenges to traditional forms of human interaction (Giddens, 2007).

Regarding the research literature, it can be stated that no study has been found that directly examines the relationship between mass media and the sense of cultural security. However, numerous studies have been conducted on the impact of mass media on social security and the sense of social security. These studies have primarily focused on comparing the impact of domestic and foreign media (including satellite and internet sources) on the sense of social security. Furthermore, none of the studies has addressed the role and impact of virtual social networks on the sense of security. For this reason, the present research aims to investigate the impact of the Facebook social network, as a tool of globalization, on the sense of cultural and social security among young people.

Cultural security can be defined as "a state of confidence, tranquility, and freedom from any threat or intrusion toward an individual's religion, ideas, ethics, customs, beliefs, values, cultural heritage, literary works, and more" (Salehi & Amiri, 2007). Similarly, social security is described as the absence of fear of threats or risks to fundamental human characteristics

and values, as well as the lack of apprehension regarding the violation of legitimate rights and freedoms (Afshar, 2006).

Khaled and Mohammadian (2013) demonstrated that increased internet usage is correlated with decreased feelings of social security. Furthermore, the type and extent of internet usage also impact social security, with instrumental usage of the internet reducing social security more than functional use.

Afghanistan has experienced decades of political instability, ethnic diversity, shifting cultural norms, and a fragile sense of identity—all of which significantly influence citizens' perceptions of cultural and social security. In such a context, social media platforms like Facebook are not merely tools for communication; they become spaces where cultural tensions, identity struggles, and security concerns are formed and redefined.

Moreover, although Afghanistan's digital infrastructure is limited, it is gradually expanding. Unequal access to internet technologies means that Facebook usage is shaped by factors such as literacy levels, gender norms, urban-rural divides, and socioeconomic status. These elements strongly affect how individuals engage with digital content and how they interpret its cultural implications. For instance, young people in Maimana may use Facebook to interact with global culture or express suppressed identities, yet they simultaneously face conservative backlash, misinformation, or surveillance threats that undermine their sense of security. Addressing these contextual dynamics would strengthen the theoretical foundation of the introduction, enhance the study's connection to local realities, and help international readers better understand the unique characteristics of the Afghan context—thereby increasing the study's value in cross-cultural research on social media and cultural security.

Considering that Afghanistan has a predominantly young population, and youth are the primary users of virtual social networks, the main research question and the sub-questions of this study are as follows:

#### *Main Research Question*

- What impact does the social network Facebook have on the sense of cultural and social security among Afghan youth?

#### *Sub-Research Questions*

- Is there a significant relationship between the duration of Facebook membership and users' sense of social security?
- Is there a significant relationship between the duration of Facebook membership and users' sense of cultural security?
- Is the level of Facebook usage related to users' sense of social security?
- Is the level of Facebook usage related to users' sense of cultural security?
- Does purposeful use of Facebook correlate with a sense of social security?
- Does non-purposeful use of Facebook affect users' sense of cultural security?

- Is there a relationship between the perceived authenticity of Facebook content and users' sense of social and cultural security?

Building on the research questions that aim to explore various dimensions of Facebook usage and its relationship with the sense of cultural and social security among Afghan youth, this study formulates corresponding hypotheses. These hypotheses provide clear, testable statements that reflect the expected direction and nature of these relationships, facilitating empirical examination.

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. Longer duration of Facebook membership is negatively associated with users' sense of social security.
2. Longer duration of Facebook membership is negatively associated with users' sense of cultural security.
3. Higher levels of Facebook usage are negatively related to users' sense of social security.
4. Higher levels of Facebook usage are negatively related to users' sense of cultural security.
5. Purposeful use of Facebook is negatively associated with users' sense of social security.
6. Non-purposeful use of Facebook has no significant association with users' sense of cultural security.
7. Users who perceive Facebook content as more authentic report lower levels of social and cultural security.

### **Theoretical framework**

Cultivation theory, introduced by Gerbner (1998), suggests that media, especially visual media, gradually shape users' perceptions of social reality over time. Although initially developed for television, the theory has been extended by researchers to include digital media and social networks. Studies have shown that continuous exposure to violent content on social media leads to increased anger, aggression, social isolation, distrust, and a decrease in psychological security—all of which align with a heightened sense of cultural and social insecurity (Wang, 2024).

According to social capital theory, initially introduced by Bourdieu (1986) and later expanded by Putnam (2000), social relationships and communication networks are considered valuable resources that can enhance trust, participation, and social security. The use of Facebook can strengthen interpersonal communication, promote a sense of belonging to groups, and thereby increase the sense of social security. However, in some cases, cultural diversity in the online environment may pose challenges to an individual's cultural identity and threaten their sense of cultural security (Ellison et al., 2007).

Based on the intercultural contact theory proposed by Allport (1954), interactions with people from different cultures, under appropriate conditions, can reduce prejudice and

foster mutual understanding. As a global network, Facebook provides a platform for users to encounter diverse perspectives and cultures. These interactions can enhance cultural understanding and a sense of cultural security, or in some instances, lead to feelings of threat toward one's own culture (Pettigrew, 1998).

Chelbi views insecurity as stemming from weakened social trust, which itself originates from the politicization of social order. From his perspective, if the social and cultural dimensions of social order in a society weaken—such as through the erosion of social cohesion or consensus—then interpersonal relationships at all levels will increasingly be defined emotionally and with partiality, as "friends versus foes." Consequently, generalized social trust diminishes, and individuals' security interests are disrupted. In such situations, people and groups often lack a sense of financial, personal, and intellectual security (Rastegar & Mohammadian, 2013). Accordingly, Giddens defines security as immunity from risks. In his view, risk and security are two sides of the same coin; when security prevails, risk is subdued, and conversely, when dealing with risks, security becomes unsettled and obscured (Ghaffari, 2011).

The theoretical framework draws on several foundational communication and sociological theories to inform the study's variables. Cultivation theory underpins the variable "frequency of Facebook use" and its hypothesized impact on "cultural and social security" by suggesting that prolonged media exposure shapes perceptions of reality. Social capital theory supports variables like "social trust" and "sense of social security", proposing that online interaction may enhance or undermine community cohesion. Intercultural contact theory informs the variable "type of interaction on Facebook", linking intercultural engagement with outcomes like "cultural understanding" or "perceived threat". Finally, insights from Giddens and critical security theories connect the "perception of threat" to "social and cultural insecurity", framing Facebook as both a tool of connection and a potential source of identity risk. These theories collectively justify the study's focus on how usage patterns and content exposure relate to users' perceived cultural and social security. In today's world, several factors threaten the sense of security, with new media technologies playing a significant role. Virtual social networks are among the most important of these media, which disrupt cultural and social security by directly or indirectly influencing people's values, beliefs, culture, and identity. These media can pose risks to the identity, cultural, social, and collective values of society (Rostgar & Mohammadian, 2013). According to Giddens' view (1990), virtual social networks are part of the phenomena of modern society. While they have undeniable benefits, they also pose security threats, potentially creating a hazardous environment in cyberspace and, in turn, reducing social and cultural security in a sense similar to the views of the Copenhagen school of thought.

In this theoretical framework, theoretical concepts are implicitly linked to research variables; however, for greater clarity, it is necessary to explain how they are transformed into measurable indicators. For example, the cultivation theory suggests that continuous use of Facebook and exposure to specific content are factors influencing changes in attitudes

toward cultural and social security. Therefore, research variables such as "frequency of Facebook use" and "sense of cultural security" are directly derived from this theory. In social capital theory, concepts such as "social trust" and "sense of group belonging" are presented, which in this study have been operationalized as variables including "social trust" and "sense of social security." Additionally, intercultural contact theory provides a context for explaining variables such as "frequency of contact with other cultural groups" and its effects on "mutual cultural understanding" and "sense of cultural security." On the other hand, perspectives from the Copenhagen School and critical theories related to social and cultural security, by defining subjective and objective threats, contribute to explaining variables such as "perception of cultural threat" and "sense of social insecurity." Therefore, the research hypotheses, utilizing these theories, aim to measure the relationship between social media use and various dimensions of the sense of security in cultural and social contexts.

### **The Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Research Variables**

In this section, the conceptual and operational definitions of the main research variables are first presented to clarify the theoretical and methodological framework of the study. These definitions form the basis for empirical analyses and specify how each variable is measured in accordance with the objectives of the research.

#### ***Social Media Networks***

Online services allow individuals to have a defined and specific profile, introduce themselves to others, share their information, and establish connections with others. In this way, people can maintain their connections with others and form new social interactions (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In fact, online social networks are designed to enhance and strengthen social interactions in the virtual space. Generally, through the information that appears on people's profiles, such as user photos, personal details, and interests—information related to individual identity—communication is facilitated. Users can view the profiles of others and communicate with them through various applications such as email and chat (Pompak et al., 2009).

For the operationalization of the social network variable, Facebook has been used with the following definitions:

**Duration of Membership on Facebook:** Refers to the length of time a person has been a member of Facebook. In this study, the duration of user membership on Facebook is divided into five categories:

1. Less than six months,
2. From six months to less than one year,
3. From one year to less than two years,
4. From two years to less than three years,

More than three years.

Level of Facebook Usage: Refers to the time spent on Facebook during the day. In this study, the level of user access to Facebook is divided into six categories:

1. Less than 15 minutes,
2. Between 15 minutes and half an hour,
3. More than half an hour to less than one hour,
4. From one hour to less than two hours,
5. From two hours to less than three hours,
6. From three hours to more than three hours.

### ***Types of Facebook Usage***

The level of interest, needs, and circumstances that drive users to engage with the platform influences the use of Facebook. In the current research, the variation in individuals' needs, goals, and motivations for using Facebook is categorized into two types of orientations:

1. Goal-Oriented Usage: This type refers to active and purposeful media behavior, where users select and engage with content to satisfy specific needs such as maintaining communication with friends, acquaintances, and classmates.
2. Non-Goal-Oriented Usage: This type refers to media behavior that is less purposeful and active, primarily used for entertainment and leisure.

### ***Perception of Facebook Content from the User's Perspective***

In the present research, the evaluation of users' perception of Facebook content is based on the following factors:

1. Users' Belief in the Accuracy and Truthfulness of News and Information on Facebook: This refers to how much users trust the information they encounter on the platform.
2. Users' Trust and Positivity towards Facebook Content Compared to Domestic Media: These measures how users perceive the reliability and quality of Facebook content in comparison to local media sources.
3. Credibility and Acceptance of Facebook Content Creators from the Users' Perspective: This assesses the degree to which users view content creators on Facebook as credible and trustworthy.

### ***Sense of Cultural and Social Safety***

The concept of cultural safety refers to the absence of fear of invasion and encroachment that threaten values, customs, beliefs, and traditions, thereby risking assimilation or annihilation (Salehi and Afshari, 2011). The sense of social safety implies the absence of anxiety over potential threats to human values or concerns about the annihilation of rights and freedoms, as well as the assurance and mental peace of the community (Li & Lin, 2016).

Furthermore, to ensure the credibility of the scales used in measuring the variables, both content validity and construct validity have been applied; thus, each variable has been conceptualized using existing definitions and theoretical frameworks. The questionnaire was designed by two professors from the sociology and psychology departments and was



validated (construct validity). To ensure reliability, the Cronbach's alpha test was utilized. For all variables, the Cronbach's alpha score was above 0.70. These calculations are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** *Items measuring the sense of cultural and social security by its dimensions*

Variable	Dimension	Component	Indicator	Cronbach's Alpha
Sense of Cultural Safety	Identity Safety	National Identity	Interest in Afghani music, interest in Afghani films, interest in Afghani TV programs, interest in Afghani radio programs, interest in Afghani clothing, interest in Afghani food, dining at Afghani restaurants, interest in Afghani literature, pride in Afghani customs, attachment to national symbols and myths	0.90
		Religious Identity	Belief in the oneness of God, belief in the afterlife and resurrection, pride in being a Muslim, attachment to Islamic symbols, belief in the sufficiency of religion for social affairs	0.88
		Family Values	Respect for parents, desire to form a family, respect for elders, effort to ensure family welfare, spending time with family	0.71
		Religious Values	Importance of faith in God, patience in life's affairs, being devoted to religious values, being pious, risking one's life for religion, importance of humility in life	0.77
		Social Values	Importance of honesty, attention to kindness in life, importance of integrity, focus on responsibility, importance of forgiveness, importance of trust	0.70
		Cultural Values	Importance of education in life, importance of physical fitness, effort to beautify cities and rural areas, progress towards a less abstract and more humane society	0.73
	Identity Safety	I feel that I am a valuable person. I express my opinions and views openly. I am confident I can overcome the problems I face. Generally, I am satisfied with myself. Speaking in public is difficult for me. I often feel useless and empty. Whenever I do not achieve my goal, I lose hope. I feel my life has purpose.		0.78
	Mental Safety	In our society, people express their thoughts and beliefs easily. In Afghanistan, individuals enjoy freedom of religion and belief. In Afghanistan, everyone, regardless of their views, enjoys freedom of speech and expression. The unsuitable environment of society causes me considerable concern.		0.80
	Community Safety	These days, the situation has become such that you cannot even trust your friends. The current state is such that one should only think of oneself. In our society, everyone should be concerned about themselves, and the fate of others should not matter to them. In our society, individuals can socialize with anyone they like. In our current societal conditions,		0.75

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study was designed to examine the relationship between the use of social media, particularly Facebook, and various dimensions of perceived cultural and social security. Given the nature of virtual space and the geographical dispersion of users, a survey-based research method was selected to collect broad and diverse data from the target population.

The statistical population of this research comprises all young Facebook users in the city of Maimana as of 2024. Due to the absence of an accurate user list and the geographical dispersion of participants, a non-probability sampling method based on convenience and voluntary participation was used. Questionnaires were distributed online, and among the returned responses, only those that were valid and fully completed were selected for analysis. The final sample size, considering the existing limitations and in line with similar previous studies, consists of approximately 380 valid questionnaires.

The primary data collection tool was a standardized questionnaire developed based on the study's theoretical framework. It included questions related to the frequency of Facebook use, perceived cultural and social security, social trust, sense of group belonging, and perceived cultural threat. After its initial development, the questionnaire was reviewed and revised by experts and then piloted on a small sample to ensure its validity and reliability.

The collected data were first analyzed descriptively, with indicators such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution extracted. Then, to test the hypotheses and explore relationships between variables, inferential statistical techniques, including regression analysis, correlation, and significance tests, were employed. Statistical software, such as SPSS, was used for data processing and analysis.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout all stages of the study. Voluntary informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the confidentiality and anonymity of responses were fully guaranteed. Among the limitations of this research are the non-random sampling method and restricted access to social media users, which may affect the generalizability of the findings.

Non-probability sampling may introduce selection bias, thereby limiting the generalizability of the results beyond the study population. To address this issue, we recommend that future research employ probability-based sampling methods to increase sample representativeness and enhance the robustness of inferences.

The research instrument was developed based on validated scales derived from previous scholarly studies related to Facebook usage, social trust, and cultural security. Content validity was rigorously assessed through expert panel review to ensure the relevance and clarity of the items. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted to evaluate the reliability of the scales, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicating acceptable internal consistency.

## **FINDINGS**

The descriptive findings indicate that, in terms of gender, 35% of respondents are female and 65% are male. In terms of age group, respondents fall within the 18- to 35-year age range, with an average age of approximately 27. Additionally, regarding educational levels, 19% hold a diploma, 20% have an associate's degree, 46% hold a bachelor's degree, and 15% hold a master's degree. Furthermore, 28% of respondents are married, while 72% are single.

Other descriptive findings reveal that, in terms of duration of Facebook membership, 15% of respondents have been members for less than six months, 20% for six months to less than one year, 25% for one year to less than two years, 19% for two years to less than three years, and 21% have been members for more than three years.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the types of Facebook usage. The results indicate that non-targeted usage has an average index of 2.78, which is higher than the average index for targeted usage of 2.72. Overall, the type of Facebook usage is rated with an average of 2.75, indicating a moderate level.

**Table 2: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Facebook Usage Types**

		Targeted Orientation	Non-Targeted Orientation	Type of Facebook Usage
Low	Frequency	120	126	162
	Percentage	31.2	32.8	42.2
Moderate	Frequency	204	186	102
	Percentage	53.1	48.4	26.6
High	Frequency	60	72	120
	Percentage	15.6	18.8	31.2
Total	Frequency	384	384	384
	Percentage	100	100	100
Mean		2.72	2.78	2.75
Standard Deviation		0.54	0.86	0.86

In Table 3, the levels of the variables related to the sense of social and cultural safety, along with their indices, can be observed.

**Table 3: Levels of Social and Cultural Safety Perception among Individuals and Their Indices Based on Frequency and Percentage**

		Identity security	Intellectual security	Collective security	Sense of social security	Religious identity	National identity	Defense values	Sense of cultural security
Low	Abundance	60	114	102	120	180	36	54	90
	Percentage	15.6	29.7	26.6	31.2	46.9	9.4	14.1	23.4
Average	Abundance	108	156	180	144	174	186	222	156
	Percentage	28.1	40.6	26.9	37.5	45.3	186	57.8	40.6
High	Abundance	216	114	102	120	30	48.4	108	138
	Percentage	56.2	29.7	26.6	31.2	7.8	42.2	28.1	35.9
Total	Abundance	384	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
	Percentage	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Mean		3.36	2.63	2.93	2.97	2.61	3.27	2.91	2.90
Standard deviation		0.36	0.57	0.55	0.29	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.26

According to the information in Table 3 above, the average sense of social safety among respondents (with an average of 2.97) is slightly higher than their sense of cultural safety (with an average of 2.90), and both averages fall within the moderate range. Regarding the results in this table, 31.2% of respondents reported a low level of social safety, 37.5% reported a moderate level, and 31.2% reported a high level of social safety. In the variable of cultural safety, 23.4% of respondents reported a low level, 40.6% reported a moderate level, and 35.9% reported a high level of cultural safety.

As mentioned earlier, the current research is based on four hypotheses, which were tested using various statistical methods. This section will address these hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between the duration of Facebook membership and the perception of cultural and social safety.*

To test this hypothesis, a survey experiment was conducted. Table 4 displays the statistical amounts and levels of significance for each case. As observed, there is an inverse relationship between the duration of Facebook membership and the perception of cultural and social safety; that is, as the duration of Facebook membership increases, the users' sense of cultural and social safety decreases. Therefore, the first hypothesis of the research is supported.

*Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between the level of Facebook usage and the perception of cultural and social safety.*

The results of the survey experiment, as shown in Table 4, indicate an inverse relationship between the level of Facebook usage and the perception of cultural and social safety; that is, as the level of Facebook usage increases, users' sense of cultural and social safety decreases. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the research is also supported.

*Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between the type of Facebook usage and the perception of cultural and social safety.*

This hypothesis suggests that the more targeted the user's engagement with Facebook, the higher the likelihood of positively influencing their sense of cultural and social safety. Conversely, if the user's engagement is not targeted, the likelihood of positively influencing their sense of cultural and social safety is lower. The results of the survey experiment in Table 4 indicate an inverse relationship between targeted Facebook usage and the perception of cultural and social safety. However, no significant relationship exists between non-targeted usage and the perception of cultural and social safety, suggesting that, in this particular sample, no statistically significant relationship was observed. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the research is supported.

*Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between perceiving Facebook content as real and the perception of cultural and social safety.*

The results of the survey experiment indicate an inverse relationship between perceiving Facebook content as real and the perception of cultural and social safety; that is, as the perception of Facebook content as real increases, users' sense of cultural and social safety decreases. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis of the research is also supported.

**Table 4:** Testing the research hypotheses

Relationship between Independent Variables and	Type of Test	Statistic Value (sig)	Hypothesis Result	Relationship between independent variables and sense of cultural security	Type of Test	Statistic Value (sig)	Hypothesis Result
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Sense of Social Security							
Duration of Facebook Membership and Sense of Social Security	Pearson	-0.25 (0.033)	Confirmed	Duration of Facebook Membership and Sense of Cultural Security	Pearson	-0.27 (0.000)	Confirmed
Amount of Facebook Usage and Sense of Social Security	Pearson	-0.28 (0.004)	Confirmed	Amount of Facebook Usage and Sense of Cultural Security	Pearson	-0.30 (0.000)	Confirmed
Purposeful Use of Facebook and Sense of Social Security	Pearson	-0.35 (0.001)	Confirmed	Purposeful Use of Facebook and Sense of Cultural Security	Pearson	-0.37 (0.000)	Confirmed
Non-Purposeful Use of Facebook and Sense of Social Security	Pearson	-0.11 (0.112)	Confirmed	Non-Purposeful Use of Facebook and Sense of Cultural Security	Pearson	-0.09 (0.214)	Confirmed
Perceiving Facebook content as real and sense of social security	Pearson	-0.31 (0.042)	Confirmed	Perceiving Facebook content as real and a sense of cultural security	Pearson	-0.33 (0.000)	Confirmed

The following section focuses on determining the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variables through regression analysis. Table 5 presents the multivariate regression model for the sense of cultural and social safety. The information in this table indicates that the multiple correlation coefficient is calculated at 35%, suggesting that the variables of duration of membership, level of usage, type of usage, and perceiving Facebook content as real are simultaneously associated with 35% of the sense of social safety. The coefficient of determination is also calculated to be 13%, meaning that approximately 13% of the changes in social safety are explained by the independent variables.

The standardized impact coefficients in Table 5 reveal that the strongest predictors of the sense of social safety, in order, are the type of Facebook usage ( $\beta = -0.14$ ), level of Facebook usage ( $\beta = -0.12$ ), duration of membership on Facebook ( $\beta = -0.11$ ), and perceiving Facebook content as real ( $\beta = -0.10$ ).

Additionally, the multiple correlation coefficient is calculated at 43%, indicating that the variables of duration of membership, level of usage, type of usage, and perceiving Facebook content as real are simultaneously associated with 43% of the sense of cultural safety. The coefficient of determination is calculated to be 15%, meaning that approximately 15% of the changes in cultural safety are explained by the independent variables. The standardized impact coefficients in Table 5 show that the strongest predictors of the sense of cultural safety, in order, are the duration of membership on Facebook ( $\beta = -0.19$ ), level of Facebook

usage ( $\beta = -0.18$ ), type of Facebook usage ( $\beta = -0.17$ ), and perceiving Facebook content as real ( $\beta = -0.13$ ).

**Table 5:** Regression analysis model of independent variables for sense of social and cultural security

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	B	Beta	T	Sig	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig
Sense of Social Security	Amount of Facebook usage	-0.02	-0.12	-2.16	0.031	0.35	0.12	15.3	0.000
	Duration of Facebook membership	-0.03	-0.11	-2.08	0.038				
	Type of Facebook usage	-0.03	-0.14	-0.85	0.000				
	Perceiving Facebook content as real	-0.03	-0.10	-1.99	0.045				
Sense of Cultural Security	Amount of Facebook usage	-0.05	-0.19	-3.96	0.000	0.43	0.16	21.2	0.000
	Duration of Facebook membership	-0.06	-0.18	-3.59	0.000				
	Type of Facebook usage	-0.05	-0.17	-3.47	0.001				
	Perceiving Facebook content as real	-0.06	-0.13	-2.49	0.010				

The reported coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 13\%$  for social security and  $15\%$  for cultural security) indicates that while the independent variables, duration of Facebook membership, level and type of use, and perceived content credibility, are statistically significant predictors, together they explain only a small portion of the variance in users' sense of security. This limited explanatory power suggests that other unmeasured factors, such as offline social networks, personal experiences, or broader socio-political contexts, likely play important roles in shaping perceptions of cultural and social security.

The inverse relationships observed in some variables, such as longer Facebook membership and greater usage being associated with lower cultural and social security, may relate to the nature of content encountered on this platform. Repeated exposure to divisive, threatening, or culturally challenging content could heighten users' awareness of social tensions and cultural vulnerabilities, thereby reducing their sense of security. Additionally, negative online interactions or encounters with misinformation may erode cultural trust and confidence over time. Future research could explore potential mediators, such as content type, emotional responses, or online social support, to better understand the mechanisms behind these relationships.

The lack of a significant relationship between non-goal-oriented Facebook use and security perceptions warrants further investigation. One possible explanation is that non-purposeful use, often involving passive browsing or informal interactions, may not evoke strong emotional or cognitive reactions that affect cultural or social security. Alternatively, such usage might have mixed effects; some content may foster reassurance while other

content raises concerns, resulting in a net neutral impact. Measurement limitations or sample characteristics could also contribute to the lack of significance.

Although the statistical results confirm significant negative relationships between Facebook usage variables and perceived security, the beta coefficients indicate relatively moderate effect sizes (e.g.,  $\beta$  ranging from -0.10 to -0.19). This means that while these variables influence security perceptions, their practical impact is limited when considered individually. The strongest predictor of social security was the type of Facebook use, while for cultural security it was the duration of membership, highlighting subtle differences in how various dimensions of use relate to different aspects of security. These findings suggest that interventions aiming to reduce the negative impacts of Facebook on security perceptions might better focus on the quality and nature of use rather than just frequency or duration.

## DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationship between Facebook use and the sense of cultural and social security among Afghan youth, revealing several important findings that contribute to the growing literature on social media's impact on security perceptions in culturally complex and politically unstable contexts.

Consistent with the hypotheses and previous research, longer duration of Facebook membership and higher levels of usage were negatively associated with users' sense of both cultural and social security. This aligns with Ellison et al. (2007) and Giddens (2007), who noted that prolonged exposure to diverse and sometimes conflicting cultural content on social networks can increase users' awareness of social tensions, thereby reducing feelings of stability and cohesion. Moreover, the study confirmed that purposeful use of Facebook was negatively related to social security, while non-purposeful use showed no significant association with cultural security, echoing findings by Błachnio et al. (2016, 2024) that emphasize the complexity of behavioral patterns in social media engagement.

Notably, the perceived authenticity of Facebook content emerged as a significant factor: users who regarded content as more authentic reported lower levels of security, suggesting that credible exposure to contentious or culturally challenging material intensifies feelings of vulnerability. This finding nuances the cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998) by highlighting how content quality and perceived truthfulness contribute to shaping cultural and social perceptions beyond mere frequency of use.

These results correspond well with international studies in collectivist and transitional societies. For instance, Ji et al. (2010) and Vasalou et al. (2010) documented that cultural background affects social media behavior and perceptions, with collectivist users more sensitive to emotional connectivity and group belonging. The negative impact on security perceptions in Afghanistan, a society with high ethnic diversity and fragile identity constructs, echoes Botangen et al. (2018) who showed that indigenous migrants used

Facebook both to preserve culture and face cultural insecurity. Similarly, Redmiles et al. (2018) found that cross-cultural threats via social media are globally recognized phenomena, though culturally modulated in awareness and response. The mixed effects of social media usage, as reported here, are also consistent with Fleming et al. (2021) who observed complex privacy behaviors and concerns in collectivist populations.

While the findings support a directional influence of Facebook use on security perceptions, alternative explanations must be considered. It is plausible that individuals with lower baseline feelings of cultural or social security may turn to Facebook more frequently, either seeking social support or information, thereby producing a reverse causality scenario. This “security-seeking” behavior could partly explain the observed associations. Furthermore, offline factors—such as political instability, ethnic conflicts, or economic insecurity—may drive both increased social media engagement and lowered security perceptions, acting as confounding variables unmeasured in this study. Future longitudinal and mixed-method research designs would be valuable to disentangle these complex relationships and establish causal directions more robustly.

To address the negative impacts identified, targeted media literacy initiatives are essential. These should include culturally appropriate education on critical content evaluation, online privacy, and emotional resilience in digital spaces. Simplified awareness campaigns and workshops can be integrated into schools and community centers, especially for youth in marginalized areas. Additionally, policymakers should advocate for localized moderation and platform accountability to reduce exposure to harmful content, while efforts to expand equitable internet access can help foster safer and more inclusive online engagement.

## CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrated a significant and inverse relationship between the duration of Facebook membership, the extent of use, the type of usage, and users’ perception of the authenticity of Facebook content with their sense of social and cultural security. Specifically, increases in each of these variables corresponded to a decrease in users’ feelings of security. Furthermore, purposeful use of Facebook was found to have a more substantial negative impact on the sense of security compared to non-purposeful use. These findings hold substantial importance for understanding the influence of social media on the psychological and cultural structures of societies, particularly in transitional contexts.

The implications of these results clearly indicate that new media can act as a soft factor, challenging cultural cohesion and social security, and play a critical role in shaping individual and collective attitudes and identities. This underscores the necessity for targeted media literacy education and precise media policy-making to preserve the psychological and cultural security of communities.



Among the limitations of this study are the use of convenience sampling and self-reported data, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, it is recommended that future research employ random sampling methods with larger sample sizes to enhance the external validity of results. Additionally, designing and implementing educational and awareness programs for users is advised to mitigate the threats posed by the virtual space and strengthen social security.

Ultimately, future research could investigate the impact of other social media platforms and explore the role of psychological and cultural factors in media influence processes. Longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impacts of social media use on social and cultural security across different geographical and cultural contexts would also be valuable. These directions can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding and more effective policy development in managing new media.

### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

The roles of each author in preparing this manuscript are as follows:

- Dr. Rahimullah Zirak designed the study and supervised the research.
- Karimullah Noori analyzed and interpreted the data and edited the manuscript.
- Salahuddin Qarizadah collected the data.
- Abdul Hasib Howaida contributed to writing the manuscript.
- All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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The data supporting the findings of this study are not available due to ethical restrictions.

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