Virtual Manifestations of Patriarchy: Digital Experience of Pakistani Women

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Abstract
The official launch of Facebook in 2004 and Twitter in 2006 in Pakistan ushered in an era of new socio-virtual experiences for Pakistani citizens. A number of studies have examined the use of different social networking sites and explored their effects on the public at large. However, to date, little attention has been paid to Pakistani women’s experiences in social media. The current article aims to draw attention to women’s digital experience in a male-dominated society of Pakistan. Through the use of in-depth interviews, this qualitative study documents the lived experience of seven female social media users. Findings suggest that offline harassment and male family members’ control over their social media activities are norms in these women’s social media experiences. Even among the highly educated, patriarchal notions of jamalah (veil) and irgaz (honor) continue to define Pakistani women’s lives in the virtual world.

Key words
social media, digital patriarchy, women and new media, online harassment, online veil

Introduction
The massive impact of social media on its users has drawn researchers’ attention to the phenomenon, especially in developing regions of the world (Drai & Sabhe, 2016). Developing countries with rampant poverty, gender disparities, and traditional cultures have low literacy rates and limited access to the Internet (Chuang & Schechner, 2015). Nevertheless, the globalization of social media has...