

Social Media Usage and the Rising Cases of Divorce in Nigeria

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Abstract

Social media has transformed communication and interpersonal relationships, yet its impact on marital stability remains a growing concern. In Nigeria, the increasing rate of divorce has been linked to various factors, including excessive social media usage, which has been reported to foster infidelity, emotional detachment, and conflict among married couples. This study investigates the influence of social media on the rising cases of divorce in Nigeria, focusing on the extent of social media usage, its contribution to marital conflicts, key factors influencing instability, and strategies to mitigate its negative effects. The study is anchored on the Social Exchange Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explain how individuals assess relational costs and benefits while using media to satisfy personal needs. A survey research design was employed, targeting married men and women aged 18-60 years in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 60

respondents, thus ensuring diverse demographic representation. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings reveal that excessive social media use reduces quality time between spouses, fosters distrust, and contributes to infidelity, thereby increasing marital conflicts. The study concludes that social media plays a significant role in marital instability and recommends setting clear boundaries for online activities, promoting transparency, and integrating social media conflict management into marriage counselling sessions. Public awareness campaigns should also be conducted to educate couples on responsible digital engagement to enhance marital stability in Nigeria.

Keywords: Social media, marital instability, divorce, marital conflict, relationship satisfaction

Introduction

In recent years, Nigeria has experienced a significant rise in divorce rates, attracting considerable attention from scholars and policymakers. This increase has been linked to various factors, with social media emerging as a notable contributor. As digital platforms become more ingrained in daily life, their effects on personal relationships, particularly marriages, necessitate thorough investigation.

The advent of social media has transformed communication, providing unparalleled connectivity and interaction. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become central to social engagement, crossing geographical boundaries. However, alongside these advantages, concerns have arisen regarding the potential adverse effects of social media on marital stability. Studies have indicated that excessive social media use may lead to negative interpersonal outcomes, including infidelity, detachment, and ultimately, divorce (Aydın, Sarı, & Şahin, 2023; Ghanim & Al-Muhadeen, 2023).

In the Nigerian context, the intersection of social media usage and marital instability presents a complex scenario. Cultural norms traditionally emphasise the sanctity of marriage and the importance of direct, personal communication. The pervasive influence of social media introduces new dynamics that may conflict with these established values. Research focusing on Nigerian populations has begun to explore how digital interactions can disrupt traditional marital roles and expectations, potentially leading to increased discord and separation (Aminu, Awopetu, & Unuabonah, 2023).

Empirical evidence supports these concerns. For instance, a study revealed that 40.5% of respondents indicated their marriage was experiencing infidelity-related issues due to social media use (Obatarhe & Dinebari, 2022). Similarly, Afolaranmi (2020) noted that social media is causing a lot of infidelity in marriage and eventual divorce in present-day society. These findings underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of how digital platforms influence marital relationships in Nigeria.

The prevalence of marital dissolution in Nigeria further highlights the urgency of this issue. According to secondary data from Nigeria's most recent official population census as at the time of this study (NPC, 2006), the crude marital dissolution rate was 11 per 1,000 population (Africa Check, 2023). More recent reports indicate that Nigeria's divorce rate reached 2.9% in 2023, translating to 1.8 divorces per 1,000 people (Premium Times, 2023). This upward trend calls for an in-depth examination of the contributing factors, including the role of social media.

The justification for this study lies in its potential to inform policy and practice. As social media continues to permeate everyday life, understanding its impact on critical social institutions like marriage becomes imperative. Findings from this research could guide the

development of educational programmes and counselling strategies aimed at promoting healthy social media habits among couples. Moreover, it could assist in formulating policies that encourage responsible digital engagement, thereby strengthening marital bonds and reducing the incidence of divorce.

This study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital relationships, particularly in the Nigerian context by providing valuable insights for scholars, marriage counsellors, and policymakers. By addressing the challenges posed by social media in marital relationships, this research aims to promote marital resilience in the digital age.

Therefore, the rising cases of divorce in Nigeria necessitate a thorough examination of contributing factors, with social media emerging as a significant element. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to elucidate the relationship between social media usage and marital instability, providing a foundation for interventions designed to support marital resilience in the digital age.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing rate of divorce in Nigeria has become a pressing societal concern, with various factors contributing to the breakdown of marriages (Premium Times, 2023). While financial instability, infidelity, and communication gaps have long been recognised as key causes of marital dissolution (Institute for Divorce Financial Analysts, 2013; Marcia Mediation, n.d.), the growing presence of social media has introduced new challenges that were less prevalent in previous generations. Many couples now engage extensively with digital platforms, often at the expense of direct, personal interactions with their spouses. Excessive social media usage can lead to emotional detachment, reduced quality time, and conflicts arising from online engagements. Additionally, the anonymity and accessibility offered by

social media platforms have facilitated infidelity and secrecy in relationships, further straining marital bonds (Ehoro & Badey, 2021). As social media continues to shape interpersonal interactions, there is an urgent need to assess its role in the rising cases of divorce in Nigeria.

Despite growing concerns, limited research has been conducted to examine the specific ways in which social media contributes to marital instability in the Nigerian context. However, studies in other regions have highlighted how online interactions, digital distractions, and unrealistic portrayals of relationships can negatively impact marriages (Aydın, Sarı, & Şahin, 2023; Ghanim & Al-Muhadeen, 2023). Furthermore, sociological research has extensively explored factors contributing to marital instability and conflict within families. For instance, studies have shown that marital disagreements and anger expression are associated with increased marital instability (Birditt et al., 2017). Additionally, research has indicated that feelings of marital tension can negatively impact marital well-being, beyond the effects of overt conflict (Birditt et al., 2019). These findings underscore the complexity of marital dynamics and the need for comprehensive studies that consider various contributing factors.

In the Nigerian setting, some studies have begun to explore the intersection of social media usage and marital instability. For example, Oyinlola (2021) assessed social media and marital instability as factors contributing to domestic violence in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study revealed that social media usage could lead to marital distraction, negligence of marital roles, and conflicts arising from online engagements. Similarly, Ehoro and Badey (2021) investigated how social media impacts the attitudes of youths towards marriage in Delta State, highlighting potential implications for marital stability in the future. These studies provide valuable insights but also highlight the need for more comprehensive research focusing specifically on how social media contributes to marital conflicts and divorce in Nigeria.

Without a clear understanding of these dynamics, couples, marriage counsellors, and policymakers may struggle to develop effective interventions to mitigate the negative effects of social media on marital relationships. This study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the extent to which social media contributes to marital conflicts and divorce in Nigeria, providing insights that can inform strategies for promoting healthier digital habits among couples.

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the influence of social media on the rising cases of divorce in Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. To examine the extent of social media usage among married individuals in Nigeria.
- ii. To analyse the specific ways in which social media contributes to marital conflicts and divorce.
- iii. To identify the most common social media-related factors that influence marital instability in Nigeria.
- iv. To propose strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social media on marriages and promoting marital stability.

Literature Review

The increasing prevalence of social media has significantly impacted various aspects of human interaction, including marital relationships. In Nigeria, the rising divorce rates have prompted researchers to explore the potential link between social media usage and marital instability.

Social Media Usage among Married Individuals in Nigeria

Social media has reshaped human interaction, altering how individuals communicate, build relationships, and maintain social connections. While these digital platforms offer numerous benefits, including instant communication, access to information, and entertainment, their overuse

poses challenges, particularly in marital relationships. The nature of social media encourages continuous connectivity, blurring the boundaries between virtual and real-life interactions. For married individuals, this constant engagement can lead to neglect of spousal communication, emotional detachment, and, in some cases, secrecy, which may foster distrust. Furthermore, the curated nature of online content often exposes individuals to unrealistic portrayals of relationships, influencing expectations and perceptions of their own marriages. As social media continues to evolve, understanding its impact on marital relationships becomes crucial for fostering healthier digital habits that support, rather than undermine, marital stability.

Several studies have explored the effects of social media on marriages. Adegboyega (2022) found that social media usage often leads to disruptions in marriages, manifesting in conflicts and infidelity. Similarly, Eke, Ihejirika, and Ochonogor (2024) observed that digital intimacy interference, characterised by distraction from quality conversations and reduced physical affection, contributes to marital instability among couples in Rivers State, Nigeria. These findings highlight the need for further research into how social media behaviours shape modern marriages, particularly within the Nigerian context.

Social Media on Marital Communication

Effective communication is fundamental to marital stability. The intrusion of social media can disrupt traditional communication patterns between spouses. Eke et al. (2024) highlighted that digital media often distracts couples from engaging in meaningful conversations, leading to weakened emotional bonds. This interference can result in misunderstandings and conflicts, further straining the marital relationship.

The phenomenon of "phubbing," where individuals prioritize their smartphones over in-person interactions, exemplifies this issue. Studies have shown that partner phubbing negatively predicts life satisfaction and depression levels, leading to decreased relationship satisfaction (Roberts & David, 2016). Additionally, research indicates that individuals exposed to partner phubbing behaviors during their romantic relationships experience decreased relationship satisfaction and increased feelings of neglect (Wang et al., 2022). Moreover, the mere presence of a smartphone during face-to-face interactions can impair social engagement and cognitive function, leading to reduced relationship quality (Misra et al., 2014). These findings underscore the importance of establishing boundaries for social media use to preserve the quality of marital communication.

Social Media-Induced Infidelity and Trust Issues

The pervasive integration of social media into daily life has introduced new avenues for interactions, which, while fostering connectivity, have also facilitated behaviours that threaten marital fidelity. The anonymity and accessibility provided by platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter can lead individuals to engage in activities that may undermine trust within a marriage.

Recent studies have highlighted a correlation between excessive social media use and increased instances of infidelity. For example, research indicates that higher scores on social media addiction are related to higher scores on social media-related infidelity, with younger participants and men scoring higher in these behaviours (Abbasi, 2024). This suggests that the immersive nature of social media platforms can blur boundaries, making individuals more susceptible to engaging in inappropriate interactions outside their marital relationships.

The concept of "digital cheating" has emerged to describe such behaviours, encompassing activities like flirting, sharing intimate content, or maintaining secretive communications online (Stowe Family Law, 2024). These actions, though not physically consummated, can be perceived as significant betrayals, leading to emotional distress and erosion of trust between partners.

The consequences of social media-induced infidelity extend beyond the act itself, often resulting in heightened distrust and hypervigilance from the betrayed partner. This constant suspicion can create tension and make it difficult for the couple to rebuild trust (Inner Strength Therapy, 2024). Moreover, the public nature of social media can exacerbate these issues, as online interactions are more visible and can be easily misconstrued, further straining the marital bond.

To mitigate these risks, it is crucial for couples to establish clear boundaries regarding social media use. Open communication about acceptable online behaviours and mutual agreement on what constitutes infidelity in the digital realm can help in preserving trust. Additionally, sharing access to social media accounts and being transparent about online interactions can serve as preventive measures against potential misunderstandings and breaches of trust (Arkansas Relationship Center, 2024).

Cultural Shifts and Marital Expectations

The pervasive influence of social media has also led to shifts in cultural norms and expectations regarding marriage. Eke et al. (2024) noted that exposure to diverse lifestyles and relationship paradigms online can create unrealistic expectations among spouses. These altered perceptions may result in dissatisfaction with one's partner and increased marital discord.

Mitigating the Negative Effects of Social Media on Marriages

Addressing the challenges posed by social media requires proactive strategies. Eke et al. (2024) recommended that couples establish clear boundaries for social media usage to prevent it from encroaching on quality time and intimacy. Additionally, engaging in open dialogues about online interactions can foster trust and understanding between partners.

Empirical Review

In a study conducted by Adeagbo et al. (2023), titled "Social Media: Contributors to Relationship Dissolution?" the researchers employed the Social Exchange Theory to investigate how social media usage contributes to relationship breakdowns among Nigerian couples. Utilising a mixed-methods approach, they conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with 250 married individuals in Lagos State. The findings revealed that excessive social media engagement often leads to emotional detachment and infidelity, thereby increasing the risk of divorce. The study recommends that couples establish clear boundaries regarding social media usage to maintain marital harmony.

Eke, Ihejirika, and Ochonogor (2024) explored the concept of digital intimacy interference in their study titled "Digital Intimacy Interference Among Couples and Ruined Marriages in Rivers State, Nigeria." Applying the Media Dependency Theory, the researchers employed a qualitative methodology, conducting semi-structured interviews with 30 divorced individuals. The study found that social media platforms often serve as avenues for extramarital affairs, leading to mistrust and subsequent marital dissolution. The authors recommend that marriage counsellors incorporate discussions about social media habits into their therapy sessions to address potential issues proactively.

In this review that this is done outside Nigeria, Valenzuela, Halpern, and Katz (2023) conducted a study titled "Social Network Sites,

Marriage Well-being, and Divorce: Survey and State-Level Evidence from the United States," employing the Uses and Gratifications Theory to assess the relationship between social media usage and marital satisfaction. Utilising a quantitative approach, they surveyed 500 married individuals across various states. The study revealed a negative correlation between time spent on social networking sites and marital satisfaction, suggesting that excessive social media use may contribute to higher divorce rates. The researchers recommend that couples engage in regular offline interactions to strengthen their relationships.

In their 2023 study, Yusuf and Bello examined the impact of social media on marital relationships in Dutse, Nigeria. Titled "Social Media and Divorce: Case Study of Dutse," the research utilised the Social Penetration Theory to understand how online interactions affect marital stability. Through a survey of 200 married individuals, the study found that social media facilitates secretive behaviours, leading to conflicts and, in some cases, divorce. The authors recommend that couples practice transparency in their online activities to foster trust.

Adebayo and Ojo (2023) investigated the "Effect of Social Media Spiritual and Emotional Abuse Messages on Comprehension and Behavioural Practices of Married Couples in Lagos State, Nigeria." Applying the Social Learning Theory, the study employed an experimental design with a sample size of 150 married participants. The findings indicated that exposure to abusive content on social media negatively influences couples' behaviour towards each other, escalating marital tensions. The study recommends the implementation of educational programmes to raise awareness about the potential harms of consuming such content.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Exchange Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. The Social Exchange Theory was proposed by

sociologist George Homans in 1958 and it posits that human relationships are formed and maintained based on a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. Individuals seek to maximize rewards (such as affection, support, and status) and minimize costs (such as conflict, time, and emotional distress) in their interactions. When the perceived costs outweigh the benefits, individuals may choose to terminate the relationship (Homans, 1958). This theory provides a framework for analysing marital stability by evaluating how social media interactions may alter the perceived rewards and costs within a marriage, potentially leading to dissatisfaction and divorce.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, as developed by Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler in the early 1970s, explores how individuals actively select media channels to satisfy specific needs and desires. This theory shifts the focus from the effects of media on passive audiences to the purposive choices made by active users seeking gratifications such as information, personal identity, integration, social interaction, and entertainment (Katz & Blumler, 1974). In the context of marital relationships, this theory is relevant for understanding how individuals may turn to social media to fulfil unmet needs within their marriage, which could lead to decreased marital satisfaction and an increased likelihood of divorce.

By combining these theories, we can better understand how the pursuit of personal gratifications through social media can influence the cost-benefit analyses individuals perform regarding their relationships. For instance, if a person consistently seeks companionship or validation online due to deficiencies in their marriage, they may begin to perceive their marital relationship as less rewarding, increasing the likelihood of marital dissatisfaction or dissolution. This integrated theoretical approach elucidates the complex interplay between individual media

use motivations and relational evaluations, offering deeper insights into how social media can impact marital stability.

Methodology

This study employed the survey research design which allows for the collection of data from a large population. The population for this study comprised young married men and women within the age range of 18 and 60 years within Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. This study was conducted by selecting sixty (60) participants who are available and willing to participate in this study. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select the sample size. This method ensured that different categories of individuals, such as married couples within the different demographic backgrounds, are adequately represented. Data were collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire, distributed to the selected sample of respondents both physically at their various homes and places of work and digitally through Google Form, depending on the availability and convenience of the respondents. This method allowed for efficient data gathering while maintaining a high level of respondent participation. The researcher ensured proper instructions and assistance were provided to facilitate accurate responses. Data gathered through the copies of questionnaire distributed and retrieved were analysed using descriptive statistics to determine the influence of social media on the rising cases of divorce in Nigeria with particular reference to Ibadan.

Analysis and Discussion

Out of the sixty (60) copies of questionnaire administered on the respondents, fifty-seven (57) were returned and found useful for this analysis as the remaining three were wrongly filled by the respondents. Thus, this analysis is based on the 57 copies of questionnaire returned by the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex of Respondents		
Male	16	28.1%
Female	41	71.9%
Total	57	100%
Age of Respondents		
18-24 years	6	10.5%
25-34 years	17	29.8%
35-44 years	9	15.8%
45-50 years	14	24.6%
51-60 years	11	19.3%
Total	57	100%
Years in Marriage		
0-5 years	7	12.3%
6-10 years	24	42.1%
11-20 years	15	26.3%
21 years and above	11	19.3%
Total	57	100%

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The data in Table 1 show the sex distribution of the respondents, indicating that female participants (41 respondents, 71.9%) were significantly more represented than male participants (16 respondents, 28.1%). This suggests that women were more willing to participate in the study, which may reflect their heightened concern about the impact of social media on marital stability or their greater openness in discussing relationship matters. Regarding the age distribution, the highest proportion of respondents (17 respondents, 29.8%) were between 25-34 years, followed by those aged 45-50 years (14 respondents, 24.6%), and 51-60 years (11 respondents, 19.3%). This indicates that social media-related marital issues are prevalent across different age groups, particularly among young and middle-aged

couples who are more likely to be active on digital platforms. The distribution of respondents based on years in marriage reveals that the largest group (24 respondents, 42.1%) had been married for 6-10 years, followed by those married for 11-20 years (15 respondents, 26.3%). This suggests that social media challenges may become more pronounced as couples progress beyond the initial years of marriage. Interestingly, respondents married for 21 years and above (11 respondents, 19.3%) were still affected, demonstrating that digital interactions are not only an issue for younger couples but can also influence long-term marital relationships. These findings highlight the growing role of social media in shaping relationship dynamics and suggest the need for targeted interventions to promote responsible social media use among couples at various stages of marriage.

Table 2: Extent of Social Media Usage among Married Individuals in Nigeria

Items	Level of Agreement = 57				Mean	Std. Dev.
	SA	A	D	SD		
1. I use social media platforms daily.	25 (43.9%)	20 (35.1%)	6 (10.5%)	6 (10.5%)	3.12	1.01
2. I spend more than two hours daily on social media.	30 (52.6%)	15 (26.3%)	6 (10.5%)	6 (10.5%)	3.21	1.02
3. I frequently check social media updates during family time.	28 (49.1%)	18 (31.6%)	6 (10.5%)	5 (8.8%)	3.21	0.97
4. Social media is a significant part of my daily routine.	26 (45.6%)	20 (35.1%)	6 (10.5%)	5 (8.8%)	3.18	0.96
Grand Mean					3.18	

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Key: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree

The data in Table 2 examine the extent of social media usage among married individuals in Nigeria. A significant proportion of respondents (43.9%) strongly agree that they use social media platforms daily, with an additional 35.1% agreeing. Similarly, 52.6% strongly agree and 26.3% agree that they spend more than two hours daily on social media. Regarding social media usage during family time, 49.1% strongly agree and 31.6% agree that they frequently check updates during these periods. Finally, 45.6% strongly agree and 35.1% agree that social media is a significant part of their daily routine. The mean scores for these items range from 3.12 to 3.21, indicating a high level of social media engagement among the respondents. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.96 to 1.02, suggest a moderate variability in responses.

Table 3: Social Media's Contribution to Marital Conflicts and Divorce

Items	Level of Agreement = 57				Mean	Std. Dev.
	SA	A	D	SD		
5. Social media has led to misunderstandings between me and my spouse.	24 (42.1%)	22 (38.6%)	6 (10.5%)	5 (8.8%)	3.14	0.96
6. I have experienced jealousy due to my spouse's social media interactions.	23 (40.4%)	21 (36.8%)	6 (10.5%)	7 (12.3%)	3.05	1.01
7. Arguments in my marriage have increased because of social media usage.	25 (43.9%)	20 (35.1%)	6 (10.5%)	6 (10.5%)	3.12	1.01

8. Social media has made me consider separation or divorce.	20 (35.1%)	18 (31.6%)	6 (10.5%)	13 (22.8%)	2.79	1.14
Grand Mean					3.03	

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Key: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree

The data in Table 3 explore the perceived impact of social media on marital conflicts and considerations of divorce among married individuals in Nigeria. A considerable number of respondents (42.1% strongly agree, 38.6% agree) indicate that social media has led to misunderstandings with their spouse. Feelings of jealousy due to a spouse's social media interactions are reported by 40.4% strongly agreeing and 36.8% agreeing. Additionally, 43.9% strongly agree and 35.1% agree that arguments in their marriage have increased because of social media usage. Notably, 35.1% strongly agree and 31.6% agree that social media has made them consider separation or divorce. The mean scores range from 2.79 to 3.14, reflecting a moderate to high acknowledgment of social media's negative impact on marital relations. Standard deviations between 0.96 and 1.14 indicate a moderate spread in responses.

Table 4: Common Social Media-Related Factors Influencing Marital Instability

Items	Level of Agreement = 57				Mean	Std. Dev.
	SA	A	D	SD		
9. Excessive time spent on social media reduces quality time with my spouse.	27 (47.4%)	20 (35.1%)	6 (10.5%)	4 (7.0%)	3.23	0.93
10. I have caught my spouse engaging in inappropriate conversations online.	22 (38.6%)	19 (33.3%)	6 (10.5%)	10 (17.5%)	2.93	1.10
11. Social media has facilitated infidelity in my marriage.	21 (36.8%)	20 (35.1%)	6 (10.5%)	10 (17.5%)	2.91	1.09
12. Comparing my relationship to others on social media has caused dissatisfaction.	24 (42.1%)	21 (36.8%)	6 (10.5%)	6 (10.5%)	3.10	1.01
Grand Mean					3.04	

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Key: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree

Table 4 identifies specific social media-related factors contributing to marital instability among Nigerian couples. A significant portion of respondents (47.4% strongly agree, 35.1% agree) believe that excessive time spent on social media reduces quality time with their spouse. Discovering a spouse engaging in inappropriate online conversations is reported by 38.6% strongly agreeing and 33.3% agreeing. The facilitation of infidelity through social media is acknowledged by 36.8% strongly agreeing and 35.1% agreeing. Additionally

Table 4: Strategies to Mitigate the Negative Effects of Social Media on Marriages

Items	Level of Agreement = 57				Mean	Std. Dev.
	SA	A	D	SD		
13. Setting boundaries for social media use can improve marital relationships.	30 (52.6%)	18 (31.6%)	6 (10.5%)	3 (5.3%)	3.32	0.87
14. Couples should engage in more offline bonding activities to strengthen their marriage.	28 (49.1%)	19 (33.3%)	6 (10.5%)	4 (7.0%)	3.24	0.91
15. Transparency in social media interactions can help build trust in marriage.	26 (45.6%)	20 (35.1%)	6 (10.5%)	5 (8.8%)	3.18	0.96
16. Marriage counselling should address social media conflicts to	27 (47.4%)	18 (31.6%)	6 (10.5%)	6 (10.5%)	3.16	0.99

improve marital stability.						
Grand Mean					3.22	

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Key: SA – Strongly Agree; **A** – Agree; **D** – Disagree; **SD** – Strongly Disagree

Table 5 presents strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social media on marriages. A majority of respondents (52.6% strongly agree, 31.6% agree) believe that setting boundaries for social media use can enhance marital relationships. Similarly, 49.1% strongly agree and 33.3% agree that couples should engage in more offline bonding activities to strengthen their marriage. The importance of transparency in social media interactions for building trust is acknowledged by 45.6% strongly agreeing and 35.1% agreeing. Additionally, 47.4% strongly agree and 31.6% agree that marriage counselling should address social media conflicts to improve marital stability. The mean scores range from 3.16 to 3.32, reflecting strong support for these strategies. Standard deviations between 0.87 and 0.99 suggest a moderate variation in responses, indicating a general consensus on the effectiveness of these interventions.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study underscore the significant impact of social media usage on marital relationships in Nigeria, aligning with the research objectives and theoretical frameworks previously established. The data reveal that a substantial proportion of married individuals engage extensively with social media platforms, with 52.6% strongly agreeing and 31.6% agreeing that setting boundaries for social media use can improve marital relationships. This pervasive usage has been

linked to various marital challenges, including conflicts and infidelity. These findings align with Social Exchange Theory, first proposed by Homans (1958), which posits that individuals assess their relationships based on perceived costs and benefits. Excessive social media engagement may introduce perceived costs, such as jealousy and mistrust, thereby destabilising marital harmony.

The data further indicate that 49.1% of respondents strongly agree and 33.3% agree that engaging in offline bonding activities can strengthen marriages. This finding suggests that while social media offers avenues for connection, it may also detract from face-to-face interactions essential for marital intimacy. This observation aligns with the findings of Obatarhe and Dinebari (2022), who reported that 28.0% of respondents strongly agreed and 48.5% agreed that social media negatively impacts new marriages, leading to issues such as loss of intimacy and increased suspicion. The Uses and Gratifications Theory supports this perspective, suggesting that individuals may turn to social media to fulfil needs unmet within the marital context, potentially leading to decreased satisfaction and increased conflict.

Transparency in social media interactions emerged as a crucial factor, with 45.6% strongly agreeing and 35.1% agreeing that it helps build trust in marriage. This finding is in tandem with the study by Adegboyega (2022), which found that social media can lead to disruptions in marriages, manifesting in conflicts and infidelity. The Social Exchange Theory elucidates this by highlighting that transparent communication can enhance perceived rewards in a relationship, thereby fostering trust and stability. Conversely, secrecy or deceptive practices on social media may be perceived as costs, undermining trust and contributing to marital discord.

The role of marriage counselling in addressing social media-related conflicts is also highlighted, with 47.4% strongly agreeing and 31.6%

agreeing on its importance. This finding is consistent with the recommendations of Bahri and Widhyharto (2021), who emphasised the significance of mindful social media usage and the need for counselling interventions to mitigate its negative impacts on marital quality. Integrating discussions about social media behaviours into counselling sessions can provide couples with strategies to navigate digital challenges, thereby enhancing marital stability.

Conclusion

The findings of this study established that social media plays a significant role in shaping marital relationships in Nigeria, often contributing to conflicts, mistrust, and in some cases, divorce. The study revealed that excessive social media engagement reduces quality time between spouses, fosters emotional detachment, and facilitates infidelity, thereby undermining marital stability. Additionally, transparency in online interactions and setting clear boundaries were identified as crucial factors in mitigating the negative effects of social media on marriages. The study further highlights the importance of marriage counselling in addressing social media-related conflicts, reinforcing the need for structured interventions. These findings align with the Social Exchange Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explain how individuals assess relational costs and seek alternative sources of fulfilment through digital interactions. Ultimately, while social media remains an integral part of modern communication, its misuse can destabilise marriages, making it imperative for couples to adopt proactive strategies that enhance marital harmony while minimising digital disruptions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested.

- Couples should establish clear boundaries regarding social media usage to prevent it from interfering with quality time and marital

communication. This includes setting designated offline periods to foster stronger emotional connections.

- Transparency in social media interactions should be encouraged to build trust between spouses. Couples should engage in open discussions about their digital activities to reduce suspicion and conflict.
- Marriage counsellors and relationship therapists should integrate social media-related issues into their counselling sessions, equipping couples with strategies to manage digital conflicts effectively.
- Public awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate couples on the potential risks of excessive social media usage and promote responsible online engagement within marriages.

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