Influence of Social Media on Marital Relationships among Couples in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of social media on marital relationships among couples in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. Six objectives guided the study. The study adopted a survey research design. The population for the study consisted of 288 teaching staff out of which a sample of 119 married staff were purposively selected. Data were collected with a structured questionnaire which was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha with a coefficient of 0.82. Data were analysed using percentages, means, and standard deviations. The results showed that the majority of the respondents used social media platforms like Email (100%), Facebook (96.2%), WhatsApp (98.1%), and Instagram (87.6%) to keep in touch with friends and family (3.53), and finding products to purchase (3.50). The study also showed that married couples spend two hours and more on the platforms (3.31). The study highlighted some of the positive influences of social media such as improving family cohesion and bond (3.90) and also the negative influences which include being distracted from paying attention to what is happening in one's spouse's life (2.71). The findings of the study also showed that making video calls, especially in long-distance relationships (3.80) can be used to improve marital communication. In conclusion, the respondents spend a lot of their free time engaging in social media activities which influence their communication with their spouses. It is recommended that couples reduce the time spent on social media and invest more of it in their spouses.

Keywords: Social Media, Communication, Married Couples, Marital Relationship

Introduction

Interaction is an inevitable and important aspect of marital relationships. A marital relationship is a relationship between husband and wife who are united civilly or religiously. It involves a deep emotional and physical connection between the partners, and it is built on trust, respect, and love. Factors such as intimacy, locus of control, and self-esteem all account for marital satisfaction (Udofia et al., 2021). Good communication skills are the key to any successful relationship because relationships are emotional and rely on interpersonal verbal and nonverbal exchanges between the two people involved (Smith, 2017). Effective personal communication is essential for building and maintaining strong relationships, including spousal relationships. The success of one's relationship is determined by how well one can communicate one's needs and actively listen to the needs of one's partner (Seattle Christian Counselling, 2020). Couples discuss their goals, ambitions, plans, daily encounters, and fears, as well as their challenges during interactions. According to Wedgate (2023), couples who spend quality time together can better understand each other's personalities and find the perfect balance in their relationship. Sometimes, the personal and private discussions are hindered as couples spend their time on social media use thereby, limiting the amount of time they spend with one another.

Communication has drastically advanced over the past few years due to the invention of the internet. Notably, the world can be referred to as a 'global village' as individuals can easily communicate with one another from all over the world at any time of the day. The internet has brought about tremendous changes in the society. Most importantly, it has led to the introduction of social media platforms whereby users can virtually interact with one another through messages, video calls, and sharing pictures. Social media has become an indispensable component of modern daily functioning.

Social media has been defined by several authors. According to Dollarhide (2021), the term social media refers to a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities. Social media can be defined as any platform that allows you to share media such as pages, videos, or text in different formats (Kudumula, 2022). Social media is internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content, such as personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Users engage with social media via a computer, tablet, or smartphone via web-based software or applications (Dollarhide, 2021). The various types of social media according to Kudumula (2022) include; social networking sites which are sites mainly used for connecting with friends and family and focus more on person-to-person conversations for instance

Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter; Image-based sites -image-based types of content like infographics, illustrations, and images capture the attention of users more, examples are social media apps like Pinterest, Instagram, and Snapchat are designed to amplify the sharing of images; Video sharing/streaming platforms -one major platform that reshaped how people interact with video content is YouTube; and Discussion forums which are very essential because they allow users to ask questions and get answers from different people. Such platforms include Quora and Reddit (Kudumula, 2022).

Social media have taken on a large and growing part of the lives and daily functioning of not only the youth but also adults and old people (Zabadi, 2019). Individuals use it for work, and education, to search for information, communicate, interact with others, and have contact with popular culture (Stanislaw, 2015). People can use social media to stay connected to long-distance friends and family members or improve communication with their partners, children, and healthcare professionals (Jarai, 2022). A study by Kuske (2020) found that long-distance romantic relationship couples use social media sites that are more convenient and user-friendly.

In contrast, social media use can lead to less quality one-on-one time spent with loved ones and relationship dissatisfaction. These drawbacks may be related to pre-existing relationship issues or psychological conditions. As people spend more and more time communicating online and handling their daily tasks in cyberspace, they could spend less time interacting with one another in the physical world is the main anxiety (Giddens, 2002). A study by Zabadi (2019) found that married couples have access to most social networking, especially Facebook and WhatsApp, and spend a significant part of their time using social networking sites. Afolaranmi (2020), since more and more time is being devoted to the use of social media these days, couples are having less time to be together. Experiences and studies have shown that social media is causing a lot of infidelity in marriage and eventual divorce in present-day society (Afolaranmi, 2020). A study carried out by Saleh & Mukhtar (2015) explored the relationship between social media and divorce and it found that the majority of people that subscribe to one or more social network sites are aware that it can lead to infidelity and divorce as well.

Presently, individuals, as well as couples, always make use of various social media platforms at different times of the day and some individuals spend so much time on the media that their efficiency in other roles is affected. This has led to a widening communication gap among family members and married couples. However, social media use could be effectively incorporated into the daily lives of modern couples to obtain a more satisfying marital relationship. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the influence of social media on marital relationships among couples in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe.

Objectives of the study: The objectives of the study were to:

1. identify the social media platforms used by married couples in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe;
2. investigate the social media activities of married couples;
3. identify how much time married couples spend on social media;
4. identify the positive influence of social media on communications among married couples;
5. identify the negative influence of social media on communications among married couples; and
6. identify ways in which social media can be used to improve communications among married couples.

Methodology

Design of the study: The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the influence of social media on marital relationships among couples in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. According to Nworgu (2015), a descriptive survey is a type of research design in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analysing data from only a few people or items considered representative of the entire population

Population of the study: The population for the study comprised 288 teaching staff of Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe from the 26 departments in the college.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The sample of the study consisted of 119 married teaching staff of the college. This sample was purposively selected based on their current marital status. All the married staff who were available and gave their consent participated in the study.

Instrument for Data Collection: A structured questionnaire titled Influence of Social Media on Marital Relationship among Couples was used for data collection. The instrument consisted of seven sections (A, B, C, D, E, F, and G) based on the research objectives. Section A contained data on the demographic data of the respondents. Section B elicited responses on social media platforms used by married couples. Section C obtained data on the social media activities of the respondents. Section D elicited data on the time spent on social media platforms. Sections E and F obtained data on the positive and negative influences of social media on marital communications and Section G assessed ways in which social media can be used to improve marital communication. Section B of the instrument was designed on a percentage scale of 'used' social media platforms while sections C-D were designed on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA, 4 points), Agree (A, 3 points), Disagree (D, 2 points) and Strongly Disagree (SD, 1 point)

Validation and Reliability of the Instrument: The instrument was validated by three experts; one from Measurement and Evaluation, one from the Home Economics Department in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, and one from the Department of Home Science and Management of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The corrections made by the experts were

effected and final copies of the instrument were obtained which were then used for the study. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability testing conducted at Grundtvig Institute, Oba, Anambra State. Twenty (20) respondents participated. The Cronbach Alpha procedure yielded a co-efficient of 0.82 indicating a high internal consistency of the items.

Method of Data Collection: Data were collected with the help of two trained research assistants using the questionnaire. One hundred and nineteen (119) hard copies of the questionnaire were distributed by hand to the married teaching staff of the college and a total of 105 completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved after two days for analysis by the researchers and the two trained research assistants. The data collection exercise lasted a total of seven days. The percentage of the instrument retrieved was 88%.

Data and Statistical Analysis: The data collected for this study were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 23). Frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. The percentages were used for the responses on social media platforms used by the respondents. Means and standard deviation were used on respondents' social media activities, time spent on social media, negative and positive influences of social media as well as ways to improve communication among married couples. A percentage of 50% and above was considered an accepted used platform, and the reverse was the case when the percentage was below 50%. The cut-off mean score was 2.50. This formed the basis for accepting or rejecting any item on the questionnaire. A mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted as common social media activities, time spent on social media, negative and positive influences of social media as well as ways to improve communication, while a mean score less than 2.50 was rejected.

Results
Demographic characteristics of the respondents
The demographic characteristics of the married teaching staff of Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe were as follows; many (40%) of the respondents were between 41 years and above; 41.9% have been married for 16 to 20 years and 38.1% of the respondents had a total of 4 children.

Commonly used social media platforms by the respondents
Table 1 presents nine social media platforms used by the respondents. The social media platforms mostly used were Email (100%), WhatsApp (98.1%) Facebook (96.2%) Instagram (87.6%), and LinkedIn (53.3%). While Twitter (49.5%) Tiktok (47.6%) Youtube (48.6%) and Snapchat (45.7%) had percentages of less than 50% and were not accepted as used social media platforms.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage (%) Responses on commonly used Social Media Platforms by the Respondents

Social Media Platforms Used	Frequency	Percentage	Decision
Facebook	101	96.2	Accepted
WhatsApp	103	98.1	Accepted
Instagram	92	87.6	Accepted
Twitter	52	49.5	Rejected
LinkedIn	56	53.3	Accepted
Tiktok	50	47.6	Rejected
Youtube	51	48.6	Rejected
Snapchat	48	45.7	Rejected
Email	105	100	Accepted

Table 2 presents eight activities done on social media by the respondents. All of the activities listed were accepted except for Meeting new people which had an overall mean of 2.36. The accepted items had their overall mean from 2.61 to 3.56 and include; 'staying up-to-date with news and current events (mean =3.56); 'keeping in touch with friends and family (mean = 3.53); 'finding products to purchase/inspiration for things to do (mean = 3.50); 'finding entertaining content' (mean = 2.92) and 'sharing photos or videos with others (mean = 2.70).

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Responses on Social Media Activities of the Respondents

Activities Done on Social Media	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation	Decision
Keeping in touch with friends and family	3.53	0.50	Accepted
Meeting new people	2.36	1.14	Rejected
Finding entertaining content	2.92	0.84	Accepted
Finding products to purchase/inspiration for things to do	3.50	0.50	Accepted
General networking with other people	3.49	0.50	Accepted
Filling up spare time	2.61	1.21	Accepted
Sharing photos or videos with others	2.70	1.06	Accepted
Staying up to date with news and current events	3.56	0.50	Accepted
Grand Mean ($\bar{x}$)	**3.08**	**0.78**	**Accepted**

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation responses on time spent on social media by the respondents. Two items, 'I spend 2 to 3 hours daily on

social media' (mean = 2.99) and 'I spend more than 3 hours daily on social media' (mean = 3.31) were accepted as time respondents spend on social media. Four items with corresponding means less than 2.50 rejected as time spent on social media by the respondents include; "I spend less than 30 minutes daily on social media (1.92);" 'I spend 30 minutes to 1 hour daily on social media (1.96);' 'I spend 1 to 2 hours daily on social media (2.13);' and 'I go days without visiting any social media platform (2.13).'

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Responses on Time Spent on Social Media by the Respondents

Time Spent on Social Media	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation	Decision
I spend less than 30 minutes daily on social media	1.92	0.83	Rejected
I spend 30 minutes to 1 hour daily on social media	1.96	0.88	Rejected
I spend 1 to 2 hours daily on social media	2.13	0.81	Rejected
I spend 2 to 3 hours daily on social media	2.99	0.79	Accepted
I spend more than 3 hours daily on social media	3.31	0.80	Accepted
I go days without visiting any social media platform	2.13	0.77	Rejected

Table 4 shows mean and standard deviation responses on the positive influence of social media by the respondents. All of the items listed were accepted and had their overall means from 3.46 to 3.90, these include; 'they improve our family cohesion and bond (3.90);' 'they improve healthy communication between my spouse and me (3.88);' 'they help us in facing up to life cycle transitions (3.60);' 'I feel more connected to my spouse as I can see his/her daily happenings on social media (3.59);' 'they reduce physical distance between my spouse and me (3.55);' 'they strengthen family resilience (that is the ability to face up positively to traumatic events, to reorganize functionally after some difficulties) (3.50);' and 'social media help my spouse and me relive amazing family moments (3.46).'

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Responses on the Positive Influence of Social Media by the Respondents

Positive Influence of Social Media	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation	Decision
They improve healthy communication between my spouse and I	3.88	0.33	Accepted
They improve our family cohesion and bond.	3.90	0.31	Accepted
They reduce the physical distance between my spouse and I	3.55	0.50	Accepted
They help us in facing up to life cycle transitions.	3.60	0.49	Accepted
They strengthen family resilience (that is the ability to face up positively to traumatic events, to reorganize functionally after some difficulties).	3.50	0.50	Accepted
Social media help my spouse and I relive amazing family moments	3.46	0.50	Accepted
I feel more connected to my spouse as I can see his/her daily happenings on social media	3.59	0.49	Accepted
Grand Mean ($\bar{x}$)	**3.64**	**0.45**	**Accepted**

Table 5 presents nine positive influences of social media by the respondents. From the table, it was found that the majority of the items were upheld except for those of 'either I or my spouse has had an affair with someone we met on social media' which had an overall mean of 2.31 and 'I feel jealous when my spouse is communicating with someone of the opposite sex on social media' which had an overall mean of 2.41. The accepted items had their overall means from 2.50 to 2.97 and include; 'my spouse and I often have disagreement and conflict over the amount of time he/she spends on social media' with a mean of 2.97; 'when I am on social media, I sometimes get distracted from paying close attention to what is happening in my spouse's lives' with a mean of 2.71; 'my spouse and I do not spend quality time together because of social media' which had a mean of 2.69; 'either I or my spouse have been tempted to have a romantic relationship with someone we met on social media' with a mean of 2.55; 'I feel upset and enraged with some of the things my spouse shares on social media' which had a mean of 2.53; ' I compare my life with those of other people on social media' with a mean of 2.50; and 'I do not trust what my husband/ wife does on social media' which had a mean of 2.50.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation Responses on Negative Influences of Social Media by the Respondents

Negative Influences of Social Media	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation	Decision
My spouse and I do not spend quality time together because of social media	2.69	1.24	Accepted
Either I or my spouse has been tempted to have a romantic relationship with someone we met on social media	2.55	1.13	Accepted
Either I or my spouse has had an affair with someone we met on social media	2.31	1.13	Rejected
I feel upset and enraged with some of the things my spouse shares on social media	2.53	1.13	Accepted
I compare my life with those of other people on social media	2.50	1.18	Accepted
I feel jealous when my spouse is communicating with someone of the opposite sex on social media	2.41	1.12	Rejected
I do not trust what my husband/ wife does on social media	2.50	1.09	Accepted
My spouse and I often have disagreements and conflicts over the amount of time he/she spends on social media	2.97	0.81	Accepted
When I am on social media, I sometimes get distracted from paying close attention to what is happening in my spouse's life.	2.71	0.99	Accepted
Grand Mean ($\bar{x}$)	**2.57**	**1.09**	**Accepted**

Table 6 presents six ways social media can be used to improve communication by the respondents. From the table, all of the items listed were accepted and had their overall mean from 3.45 to 3.77. Among the accepted ways social media can improve communication are; 'making video calls, especially in long-distance relationships' (3.80); 'sending checking-in texts to a spouse to let them know they are being thought about' (3.77); 'expressing public admiration and appreciation on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram' (3.54); 'sharing possible gift ideas found online, date night ideas and locations as well as silly pictures, jokes and memes' (3.50); 'spending time together by watching funny video clips and movies on social media' (3.48); and 'sharing interesting and entertaining social media posts to spouses' (3.45).

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation Responses on Ways Social Media can Improve Communication by the Respondents

Items	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation	Decision
Sending checking-in texts to a spouse to let them know they are being thought about	3.77	0.42	Accepted
Making video calls, especially in long-distance relationships	3.80	0.40	Accepted
Expressing public admiration and appreciation on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram	3.54	0.50	Accepted
Sharing interesting and entertaining social media posts with spouses	3.45	0.50	Accepted
Sharing possible gift ideas found online, date night ideas and locations as well as silly pictures, jokes and memes.	3.50	0.50	Accepted
Spending time together by watching funny video clips and movies on social media	3.48	0.50	Accepted
Grand Mean ($\bar{x}$)	**3.59**	**0.47**	**Accepted**

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of social media on marital relationships among couples. Social media influence marital relationships both positively and negatively. The research findings showed that most couples spend time on social media platforms such as Email, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. This is probably because social media platforms such as Email can be used for work and work-related activities. Also, these social media platforms facilitate keeping in touch with friends and family members. These findings are in line with Kudumula (2022), who listed various types of social media commonly used in modern times, such as social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter; image-based sites examples are social media apps like Pinterest, Instagram, and Snapchat; and video sharing/streaming platforms for example YouTube.

The findings of the study also showed that married couples use social media platforms for such activities as keeping in touch with friends and family, finding entertaining content online, staying up to date with news and current events, and finding products to purchase/inspiration for things to do. These may be attributed to the fact that social media can be applied to almost every aspect of family life and interaction. It is often easier and more convenient to access information, provide information and communicate through social media. These findings are in agreement with Stanislaw (2015), who stated that we use social media for work, education,

to search for information, communicate, interact with others and have contact with popular culture.

The findings of the study showed that married couples spend two hours and more daily on social media. This is probably because most of the social media platforms are easily operated on mobile phones, hence it is more likely for one to lose track of time while scrolling through the platforms on the phone. This is in support of findings by Zabadi (2019) that married couples have access to most social networking, especially Facebook and WhatsApp and spend a significant part of their time using social networking sites. These findings are contrary to the study by Gull et al (2019) which found one to two hours as an ideal time for couples to spend on social media sites daily. The finding of this study indicates that couples might be overusing social media platforms.

Also, the study found that social media use influences married couples positively such as improving healthy communication between spouses, improving family cohesion and bond as well as reducing physical distance between spouses. This is probably because social media allows a variety of communication channels such as texts, and calls as well as sharing pictures and videos which help married couples feel connected to one another. These findings are in agreement with Jarai (2022), who posited that people can use social media to stay connected to long-distance friends and family members or improve communication with their partners, children, and healthcare professionals.

However, the study found that social media use influences married couples negatively such as less quality time spent together by couples because of social media, the temptation of having a romantic relationship with someone on social media and sometimes getting distracted from paying close attention to what is happening in one's spouse's lives. This may be so, because of a breakdown in communication between spouses caused by social media, as couples spend less time talking to each other but rather spend more time scrolling through social media feeds on their phones. Also, the findings of the study showed that spouses often have disagreements and conflicts over the amount of time they spend on social media. These findings are in line with Afolaranmi (2020) who posited that since more and more time is being devoted to the use of social media these days, couples are having less time to be together and that social media is causing a lot of infidelity in marriage and eventual divorce in the present-day society.

The findings of the study also showed ways in which social media can be used to improve communication among couples such as making video calls, especially in long-distance relationships, sharing interesting and entertaining social media posts with spouses and spending time together by watching funny video clips and movies on social media. These findings are in agreement with Games (2023) who stated that in romantic relationships, where couples are long-distance or have to travel often for work, it can help them feel like they are part of each other's day-to-day life, even when apart

Conclusion

Married couples in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe spend a lot (two hours and more) of their free time on social media platforms like Email, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. They engage in social media activities such as keeping in touch with friends and family, finding entertaining content online, staying up to date with news and current events, and

finding products to purchase/inspiration for things to do. Although social media usage positively influenced their communication with their spouses in ways such as improving healthy communication between spouses, improving family cohesion and bond as well as reducing physical distance between spouses. However, there were negative influences of social media on marital relationships such as less quality time spent together by couples because of social media, the temptation of having a romantic relationship with someone on social media and sometimes getting distracted from paying close attention to what is happening in one's spouse's lives. However, there are ways in which social media can be incorporated into their interaction with their spouses to improve communication and they include making

video calls, especially in long-distance relationships and sharing interesting and entertaining social media posts with spouses.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;
1. Married couples should reduce the amount of time they spend on social media to spend more of their leisure time with one another.
2. Spouses should spend some of their social media time together. This they can do by watching funny video clips and movies on social media.
3. Spouses should try to keep in touch with one another through social media, especially in long-distance relationships

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