

Social Media Use and Its Impact on Interpersonal Relationships among Couples

BY

God's Power OTOIDE

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS
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MARCH, 2025

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

1. This project is based on a research undertaken by me, **God's Power OTOIDE MGS2010137** of the department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, under the supervision of Dr. E. A. Oshodin
2. The work has not been previously submitted for the award of a degree elsewhere.
3. All the ideals and views expressed herein are products of my personal research and where the views of others have been expressed they have been duly acknowledged.

God's Power OTOIDE
MGS2010137

Date

CERTIFICATION

We the Undersigned certify that this research work was successfully carried out by **God's Power OTOIDE MGS2010137** in the Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) Degree in Business Administration, of University of Benin, Benin City.

Dr. Lawal Bamidele
(Project Supervisor)

Date

Dr. S. A. Adekunle
(Project Co-ordinator)

Date

Dr. Omorodion Omoregbe
(Head of Department)

Date

DEDICATION

This work in its entirety is dedicated to God Almighty for His infinite mercies and grace which made it possible for me to come this far. Indeed he has been faithful beyond imagination and to him I owe everything.

I faithfully dedicate this work to my family and friends for their continued support throughout the whole process. May God bless you all

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I offer my sincerest thanks to Almighty God for His endless blessings, guidance, and strength throughout this project. Without His favor, none of this would have been achievable.

I extend my profound gratitude to my project supervisor Dr. Lawal Bamidele for their exceptional guidance, unwavering support, and encouragement during this journey. Their wisdom and commitment have been pivotal to the success of this endeavor.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the distinguished lecturers of the Department of Business Administration, University of Benin, for their invaluable contributions to my academic development. Their teachings and mentorship have greatly influenced my educational path.

My heartfelt thanks go to my beloved father, Mr. OTOIDE Reuben, and my amazing mother, Mrs. OTOIDE Laurretta, for their constant support, encouragement, and sacrifices throughout my degree program. Their love and belief in me have been my greatest motivation.

Special thanks to my biggest supporters, Victor Blessed and Isreal for their advice and Acknowledgment
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May God bless you all. encouragement.

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May God bless you all

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ABSTRACT

The study goal was focused on examining the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationships among couples. In achieving the study goal, specific objectives were developed that include: investigating the opportunities and potential problems created by social media usage on interpersonal relationships among couples; assessing the preference for social media on interpersonal relationships among couples as a means of communication; and ascertaining the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationship among couples. Adopting the survey research design, the primary source served as the means of gathering the study's data. Data collected from respondents using a questionnaire was then used for additional analysis. This study also used the snowballing sampling technique. From the entire population, 110 people who are or have been in relationships were chosen as a sample using the snowballing method, though 109 respondents actually completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire, which allowed for the collection of data from respondents, served as the survey research instrument. Utilising both descriptive and inferential statistics, the study found that among other things, distraction was the common factor that affected couples that are engrossed in the use of social media. The study therefore concludes that some of the challenges arising in interrelationship among couples and affect their relationships include distraction, easy communication, sharing of information, staying connected, entertainment and suspicion of distrust. Despite recognising some benefits, the study recommends that couples should be open to each other despite on the extent of the use of social media.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The use of social media is a universal occurrence (Pittman and Reich, 2016). The world's population is more connected than ever thanks to social media's pervasiveness in daily life. Today's societies are observing a significant increase in social interactions via social media. Numerous changes have been caused by the Fourth Industrial Revolution in various spheres of existence. The extraordinary developments in ICT have led to a forceful drive of improvements that have covered and reached a high number of its users, changing individuals social relationships, communication styles, and interactions. Individuals, groups from all corners of the world can easily share information, thoughts and photos, on social media and in advertisements, according to Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017).

Every aspect of family life has been impacted by social media, which has also profoundly altered and transformed our lives. There are many benefits to social networking, such as the ability to make new connections, maintain contact with friends and family, communicate with others, exchange letters and photos, and more. Even though using social media can have many positive effects, it can also have negative effects on interpersonal relationships, particularly couples in relationships, to the point where separation may happen. The relationship is impacted by social media use because there is less face-to-face interaction and communication between the two people. Couples may feel distant from one another's affection and intimacy despite sharing a home because they are all absorbed in social media and have their own virtual realities to live in. According to Davis (2015), social media are a collection of shared online applications that make it simpler for individuals to produce and share user-generated

content. These online applications are routine in the lives of people. Rather than something separate from the actual world, social media can be seen as an essential part of a complex social landscape. Social media are a set of information technologies that encourage schmoozing and interface. The concept of social capital is centred on the notion that frequent interfaces among individuals strengthen ties or relations (Kapoor et al., 2017).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007), online interactions serve as a bridge and a bond for social capital. Social networks, social structures, and the reciprocity and dependability they produce are all examples of social capital (Putnam, 2000). Users who interact with others on social media should incorporate mutually bridging and bonding techniques in order to fully capitalize on the social capital provided by social media usage. In general, a person's online influence increases with the strength of their social capital. A bridging technique includes connecting with people who hold different viewpoints; these connections are frequently weaker, more delicate, and more likely to encourage social inclusion. While bonding techniques are similar, there are also some key differences, including the promotion of social exclusion due to resolute in-group loyalty and the need to connect with like-minded individuals. For example, Putnam (2000) cites clans, inaccessible group meetings, and relatives.

Being social beings is one of the most distinctive qualities of people. Since the dawn of civilization, interpersonal relationships have served as the foundation of our social structure. An interpersonal relationship is defined as a strong connection between two or more people. A component of internal communication is an interpersonal relationship. The development of relationships between teammates is the main focus in this section (Johanna et al., 2022). Bonding techniques place a greater emphasis on

interpersonal connections. Interpersonal relationships are interactions between two or more people that can take place offline as well as online. Social media has an effect on every aspect of interpersonal communication.

Brandon et al. (2017) found that a smaller percentage of the research respondents participants engaged in actions related to social media infidelity. The study also established a strong association between increased use of unfaithfulness-related social media behaviors and both opposite genders' decreased relationship satisfaction, increased relationship uncertainty, increased abstinence from affection, and nervousness. According to Stephen et al (2017) research, 80% of participants agreed that social media interaction strengthens their relationship. Lenhart and Duggan (2014) discovered that ten percent of married couples who use social media alleged it to have a significant influence, compared to the 17% who claimed it to have a slight influence.

Al-Sharqi et al (2015) state that social media has changed cultural norms. Couples' interpersonal relationships have experienced many challenges and detrimental effects as a result of social media usage. In truth, it's difficult to say how social media affects couples. In an instance, social media can be a place to get care, but it can also lead to arguments and unfavorable feelings in interactions.

Many changes in how humans interact are thought to have taken place since the development of social media in the 20th century. In fact, social media is thought to be changing how society functions as well as the development and upkeep of relationships. A study by Ngonidzash (2016) examined the impact that excessive social media usage has on the physical and emotional ties that unite family members. According to Britt's (2017) research, the participants' interpersonal relationships at home become less satisfying and of lower quality the more time they spend using social media. Ngonidzash (2016) also

concluded that spending additional time online at home will reduce direct verbal interactions with family members and harm interpersonal relationships.

According to Udeze, et al. (2022), family involvement in social media undertakings reduces displays of fondness among each other. The bulk of participants thought that extreme social media use had a significant impact on how much time they spent with their families. The Internet and American Life Project of the Pew Research Center conducted a study in 2008 and found that the ability to communicate with family members. Families were able to reduce the stress of modern life by staying in touch while apart via email, cell phones, and texting. However, this might deprive family members of care, interaction, and a sense of security within the family.

In the past ten years, academics and research organizations have given close attentiveness to the detrimental effects of social media and how these changes are affecting relationships. The rate of persons engaged in face-to-face time in their homes amplified in the last 11 years starting from the year 2000 by 26% (ProCon, 2015). In addition, the investigation revealed social media usage makes people less likely to interact with others in person. The various social media platforms have hooked the users so tightly that they are unable to live without their smartphones, laptops, and other technology. Research works by different authors have consented to the fact that social media impart on interpersonal communication and relationships, however, there is no agreement on the level and kind of impart it has (Hughes and Hans, 2017).

1.3 Aim and objectives

The study aim is to examine the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationships among couples. The specific objectives include:

1. To investigate the opportunities and potential problems created by social media usage on interpersonal relationships among couples.
2. To assess the preference for social media on interpersonal relationships among couples as a means of communication
3. To ascertain the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationship among couples.

1.4 Research Questions

The study research questions include:

1. What are the opportunities and potential problems created by social media usage on interpersonal relationships among couples?
2. What are the preferences for social media on interpersonal relationships among couples as a means of communication?
3. Is there an impact of social media use on interpersonal relationship among couples?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The ability of social media to personalize communication, according to several research efforts, may have both fruitful and damaging effects on interpersonal associations, especially those between couples (Hughes and Hans, 2017). Amid this concern, the rationale for this study to get empirical and concrete evidence to corroborate the postulations encircling the influence of social media usage on interpersonal relationships. This study will significantly benefit the academic community by identifying salient factors which have not been considered to core element affecting interrelationship among couples. The study outcome will benefit the wider community by proffering recommendations on how best to mitigate

against potential challenges in social media use and its effect on interpersonal relationship. To this end, this study aims to ascertain the influence of social media use on interpersonal relationships among couples in Nigeria.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The study is aimed at examining the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationship among couples. The study is delimited to participants in Nigeria within a particular period. Some of the limitations include the ability to cover a wider range of respondents and limited qualitative data. These limitation would have made the study more robust and global.

1.7 Research Methodology

Research methodology is a guiding process in which the researchers intends to provide answers to research questions. Therefore, this study adopted the Saunders research onion model as developed by Saunders and Lewis (2007). Adopting the survey research design, the primary source served as the means of gathering the study's data. Data collected from respondents using a questionnaire was then used for additional analysis. This study also used the snowballing sampling technique. From the entire population, 110 people who are or have been in relationships were chosen as a sample using the snowballing method. The questionnaire, which allowed for the collection of data from respondents, served as the survey research instrument. Participants were gathered online, and the questionnaire had six sections with each one addressing a particular topic. To offer answers to the research questions, the participants must be connected to one another. Participants' responses were assessed using online statistical analysis methods like descriptive and inferential statistics.

1.8 Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation will cover five chapters which are explained briefly below:

Chapter One:

The chapter discusses issue pertaining to the study's context which is examining the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationships among couples. The study is briefly introduced with references to the contexts to which it is connected. In addition, the study's motivation, significance, and justification for being conducted are all discussed. The chapter gave readers a better understanding of the goals and objectives of the study's research questions.

Chapter Two:

The chapter provided information in terms of extant literature on the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationships among couples. The various key issues highlighted in the study include the concept of social media, sociological literature on old media, the growth of new media technology, challenges caused by social media use on couples and the theoretical framework.

Chapter Three:

This chapter discusses methodology. It explains the steps taken and methods used to answer the research questions. As a manual for action and decision-making, the study will use the Saunders research onion model. The choice of the subsequent layer in a model with multiple layers is dependent on the decision made regarding the first layer. The methodology includes the research philosophy, research design, research approach, research method selection, time horizon, research data collection and analysis, and ethical consideration.

Chapter Four:

The majority of this chapter is devoted to reporting on the research's results. The investigation's descriptive and inferential analysis will specifically be included in this chapter. The findings will be carefully examined to identify variables, connections, and the effects of social media use on interrelationships between couples. This chapter continues the discussion from chapter four. By connecting the findings to previously found literature in the study, it gives a detailed explanation of the results. The chapter will also note any instances in which the findings of this investigation are contradicted or supported by the literature.

Chapter Five:

The chapter provides a concise summary of the entire work in relation to the study's goals and objectives. Valid conclusions will be drawn that emphasize the study's findings strongly and offer suggestions for future research as well as policy recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter provide insights on the concept of social media and interrelationship among couples, the growth of new media technology, and the encounters accompanying social media usage among couples and the theoretical framework.

2.2 Social Media

Social media is playing a significant role in the social interactions taking place in today's societies. Numerous changes have been brought about by the fourth industrial revolution in various spheres of existence. The noteworthy evolutions in electronic communication technology, which have sparked a vibrant drive of improvements and blow-out among a high number of users, have led to a modification in individuals communal relationships, communication patterns, and interfaces. Since ancient times, societies have carefully studied the phenomenon of communication, one of the most crucial components of human interaction. Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017) emphasized that the popularity of social media can be found in its ability to exchange information, ideas, pictures, and motivational quotes by persons from all phases of life.

Social media has dominated every aspect of family life and has significantly altered and transformed our lives. Social networking websites and blogs are examples of social media platforms where individuals can reach each other. Applications and websites that are used to share information and engage in social interaction with others over the Internet via computers or mobile devices are referred to as social media

(Dollarhide, 2019). Social networking has many advantages, including allowing us to communicate with others, share photos and letters, stay up to date on news, and more. Social networks have many negative aspects in addition to their positive ones. Additionally, to a number of other detrimental consequences like extreme and pointless social networking, many people spend lengthy amounts of time in front of computer screens, interacting virtually rather than in person.

In order to exchange information, thoughts, views, mails, and other penned, visible, auditory, and file content with other people electronically via social media, a user must first create an account through which they can do so (Fernández, 2023). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) described the concept of social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the theoretical and technical foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content." This definition of Web 2.0 introduces users to a participatory, interactive, and collaborative web experience (Solis and Breakenridge, 2009). Kietzmann et al. (2011) offered a wider description by asserting that social media entails employing mobile and internet-based technologies to design an innovative and collaborative channels through which individuals can exchange, develop, deliberate and adjust user-generated content. With the development of social media and computer-mediated communication (CMC), interactions in interpersonal relationships can now be carried out virtually as well as verbally and nonverbally. However, not all interactions between people result in constructive dialogue and/or mutual satisfaction. The effectiveness of the communication, its message, and subsequent interfaces are all influenced by the satisfaction of interpersonal relationships (Anderson and Emmers-Sommer, 2006). In a situation where there is the presence of close relationship, contentment encourages conversation and a relief level with the interaction. Additionally, experiencing contentment in a conversational context promotes immediateness, closeness, and a higher degree of self-disclosure with a relational partner.

2.2.1 Social media use and interrelationship among couples

Social media is a program that allows users to share content and connect with others with tap of a key. Social media's popularity has increased significantly in recent years due to the widespread use of mobile devices in society (Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019).

Social networks can be expanded very practically by making connections with people without having to meet them in person thanks to the availability of social media (Nesi et al., 2018).

Social capital, which is essential for long-term growth on the individual and specialised facades (Hu et al., 2014), will eventually intensify as a consequence of one's social identity being created via networking on social media. Furthermore, social media gives consumers the opportunity to connect with a wider population than they could in person (Gunduz, 2017), which is helpful for those seeking influences for psychological and emotive reasons. One aspect of socialization that social media has a significant impact on is the development and maintenance of relationships among couples.

Interrelationships between couples have inherent benefits like security, friendship, affection, and passionate care and understanding. Nonetheless, excluding these factors measured on marriage, marital life also includes a great deal of anxieties, strains, disputes, and differences between partners. Several studies have continued to be developed on the issues bothering on the impact of social media usage on married couples and their sexual lives. According to a Lenhart and Duggan (2014) study conducted in America, 10% of online users accept as true that social media has had a "major impact" on their relationship, though 17% accepted that they experience a "minor impact." Lenhart and Duggan (2014) stated that online conversations made individuals feel more intimate to their partners, and many individuals were able to resolve disagreements via social media than physically.

Contrarily, a few individuals have sensed that their partner was constantly absorbed using their mobile phones despite being with their partner especially, when one of the partner goes online and or engage in inappropriate behaviour.

Clayton (2013) conducted a cutting-edge study and found that Facebook use projected poor relationship aftermaths, like split-up, divorce and unfaithfulness.

According to 920 married couples surveyed by Helsper and Whitty (2010), engaging in flicking, sexting, and romantic relationships with strangers online are all examples of online infidelity. Cravens et al. (2013) found that Facebook offers services that might promote infidelity. For instance, responding to private messages, accepting friend requests from ex-partners, commenting on and liking eye-catching photos, and plaicng fictitious relationship statuses are all examples. These online behaviors have been linked by researchers to particular facets of relationship commitment, and they have been noted as potential dangers to loyalty and faithfulness.

Utilizing social media, people can connect with one another, share information, and build networks. While social media makes it simple to form relationships, it can be problematic for those who are in romantic relationships (Bouffard et al., 2022). Due to the use of social media, a number of negative aspects, especially between couples, have emerged. These include surveillance jealousy, despair, suspicion, obliviousness, inappropriate communication with others, etc. Infidelity in married relationships is reportedly harmed by jealousy and surveillance, which are both significant and influential factors. Excessive social media use in passionate relationships can result in less attraction and more absent-minded to their partners when together. By implication, their time spent together might be of lower quality, which might affect and degrade the intimacy of their relationships (Hand et al., 2013).

A person who is enthusiastic about social media usage can cause their mates to feel isolated and unappreciated despite being physically together.

According to Harris and Darby (2010), the rival, the loved one, and the admirer are the three roles that must be represented in a love triangle in order to arouse jealousy. An actual or imagined threat may be reacted to by a jealous reaction (Farrugia, 2013). Utz and Beukeboom (2011) found that envies is common among persons that have low self-esteem compared to person with high self-esteem. By enabling the disclosure of evidence that was otherwise inaccessible, social media use has given rise to new ways for jealousy to manifest itself (Farrugia, 2013; Utz and Beukeboom, 2011).

On the other hand, social media platforms can display strong indicators of promise and dedication. Due to social media, partners who live apart from one another no longer have a serious problem maintaining their romantic relationships and feeling close. As a result, kinfolks are constantly attached to each other and do not view physical distance as a barrier (Utz and Beukeboom, 2011). When one of the partners in a new relationship alters the status on one of the websites to "In a relationship," it marks a significant turning point in the relationship (Mod, 2010). Additionally, it was claimed that making love known to one another on social media is a sign of love and that partners appreciate such audacious romantic gestures.

Compared to the West, social media attitudes among Middle Easterners are a little more nuanced. Generally speaking, Middle Eastern societies are more traditional than Western ones (Gull et al. 2019, 2019). It is typical and expected that men and women will not engage in casual conversation with those who are the other sex. The strict and formal separation of the sexes, for instance, exists in Saudi Arabia (Gull et al., 2019). Our social norms and culture are being impacted by social media, which is quickly

ingrained in everyone in our society. Social media's effects on relationships, families, and couples have been the subject of research over the past few years.

The purpose of using social media by a couple is examined in a study by Brandon et al. (2017). Brandon et al. (2017) further examined the use of social media by couples to participate in perfidy acts, and the impact on the relationship satisfaction, uncertainty, and interpersonal addition. The outcome of the study revealed married couples indulges in infidelity acts and as such those involved portray low level of relationship satisfaction and less addition, and high uncertainty level.

Vincent (2017) studied the effect of social media on interpersonal communication between couples in Tanzania. Employing the survey design method with a sample size of 17, the author found that four hours per day were spent on social media by 80% of those who responded and that 80% of participants claimed that social media communication helps them to improve their relationship.

According to Al-Sharqi, et al (2015), social media has changed culture and norms. According to research by Lenhart and Duggan (2014), 10% of married couples accepted that social media had altered their culture, norms and relationship heavily compared to the seventeen percent who said it had a minor impact. Nomar (2012) looked at a sample of Facebook users in Algeria to investigate "The use of social networking sites and its impact on social relationships." A statistical analysis of male and female use was revealed by the study. Women were more conscious of the potential consequences of using Facebook. Additionally, there was an adverse relation between Facebook use time and the quantity and quality of interpersonal interactions within families and groups of friends. When the subject was denied access to the Internet, the study discovered withdrawal syndrome.

Social media's effect on marriage was investigated by Helsper and Whitty (2010), who also identified possible sources of conflict. With a sample size of 920 couples, the outcome revealed that philandering,

sexting, plummeting in love, and disclosing personal information are among the behaviors that contribute to online infidelity. Additional research by Hand et al., (2013), Farrugia (2013), Utz and Beukeboom, (2011) had a common discovery that the use of social media can result to and they include: covetousness, tailing, distrust, obliviousness, sadness, and absence of communication.

2.2.2 Sociological Literature on Old Media

The world's population is more connected than ever thanks to social media's pervasiveness in daily life. People may believe that they are better-off due to higher social acquaintances. Nezlek, et al. (2002) found that socially active participants reported higher psychological well-being and greater life satisfaction. A different picture is painted by social interaction in the virtual world, particularly when those connections have an impact on our interpersonal connections in the real world (Christensen, 2018). The way we conduct business, interact socially, and consume news has all changed as a result of social media. People used a variety of communication methods before social networks were around.

Direct communication

The most intimate form of communication is face-to-face interaction, which requires close proximity and direct eye contact. This type of interaction was commonplace before social media. The best way to learn what people are really thinking and feeling is to ask them directly. The way we communicate online has changed significantly (Valerie, 2020).

SMS text messaging

Text message communication is a fast and easy method of communication. More practical than calling or sending emails, messaging is another advantage. Text messaging is a swift and practical method of communication, but it can also be a very private one. When people first started using mobile phone communication technology, there were no access to the Internet, so texting was something they did

while waiting for someone or while they were out and about (Valerie, 2020). Despite the lack of images or videos, it was an instant social exchange.

Email

Internet users started using email more frequently once everyone had access to the World Wide Web. Email is a great way to communicate with people who are far away. Social media has altered how we conduct business, interact socially, and consume news. People used a variety of methods to communicate before social networks were around (Valerie, 2020).

Writing Letters

Before social media, letters were among the most widely used forms of communication. Faster than email and instant messaging, letter writing is a slower form of communication. Because it required more time than simply pressing "send" or typing an instant message, this method of communication had a more personal touch (Valerie, 2020).

Fax

Prior to the invention of the Internet, the fax was the most efficient means of written communication, particularly for business communications. Fax machines have been used by businesses all over the world for many years, and they were very helpful for contracts that we can now sign electronically (Valerie, 2020). Faxing, however, is still widely believed to be obsolete by many people. A fax machine can send a document much more quickly than an email or other method, such as regular mail. For instance, it would take days to mail a formal document. It only took a few minutes to fax. When compared to other methods, such as mail, fax machines were more dependable because there was no chance that your message would be lost or delayed. This is crucial when sending contracts or other legal paperwork that both parties must digitally sign before moving forward with the transaction in question (Valerie, 2020).

Telegraph

The development of communications that gave rise to the Internet began with the invention of the telegraph. The transition from the telegraph to the Internet has been a difficult one (Valerie, 2020).

2.3 The Growth of New Media Technology

The new media technologies generally known as Web 2.0 include a wide spectrum of web-related communication technologies, such as “blogs, wikis, online social networking, virtual worlds”, and other social media platforms. There has been much discussion in the past regarding the alleged "death" and decline of old media, such as newspapers, magazines, television, and radio, due to the fact that news reported in newspapers is significantly older than news reported online. In some cases, traditional media has even been compared to the telegraph, which was mostly substituted by the phone and, more lately, by email. Friedman and Friedman (2008) note that new media serve to supplement current ones rather than to replace them in order to further the organization's goals.

The term "new media" is frequently used in a variety of contexts. The message, the technology, and the social context in which it is used are the focus of Lievrouw and Livingstone's (2002) analysis. Gitelman and Pingree (2003) coined the phrase "media in transition" to refer to a period when a new medium is emerging and acting as a kind of counterpoint to and competitor to traditional media. Manovich (2002) described the concept of new media as cultural artefacts that present and transmit information using digital computer technology.

It is obvious that there are numerous ways to describe new media. This is largely due to the inherent ambiguity of the study's object, which includes the message, the medium, the technology, the time period, and the social context, as well as the variations in how new media is defined by different sources. In reality, although it still frequently refers to the technology, the word "media" today increasingly refers to the message itself, i. e. the channel used for communication. This appears to be the polar opposite of what McLuhan famously asserted in 1964, namely that the medium has a greater social impact than the content of the message (Friedman and Friedman, 2008).

Web 2.0 is the name given by some to the technological underpinnings of a lot of what we consider new media. The amount of online content produced by newspapers, magazines, and television networks is significant. Today, old and new media are frequently combined. Some of this evolution has been prompted by concerns that new media is undermining the influence of the latter, which has forced old media to change in order to survive. By defining the "newness" of new media in terms of production changes brought on by the fusion of technology and media, storage, presentation, and distribution via telecommunication networks. The new media are specifically contrasted with their analogous old media counterparts by Voithofer (2005). The five C's—communication, collaboration, community, creativity, and convergence—can be used to characterize the various traits of these new media technologies.

2.3.1 The Advent of Social Media

Social media was rarely used in the 20th and early 21st centuries, and Internet services were not widely available to the general public. The meanings it conveyed varied depending on the situation and the needs of the speakers when it made an appearance (Veenstra et al., 2017). For instance, "social-media-legal adventure" (Picard, 1994) or "social-media acrobatics" (Riding, 1994) were terms used in some articles from the middle of the 1990s to describe the interaction between a sensational social issue and

news coverage. Another news report from 2001 referred to a piece of art as "happy social media" (Hunte, 2001).

Social media histories typically begin with the essential unfolding of the experimental period of the Internet's development in the 1960s, comprising the earliest message sent over the Arpanet in 1969, which is remembered in Werner Herzog's documentary *Lo and Behold, Reveries of the Connected World* (Capalbo, 2016). Many histories then fast-forward to 1989, the year Tim Berner-Lee developed the protocols that would link hypertext documents to create the World Wide Web. It usually takes us five years to learn that Mosaic Netscape, the first browser ever, was released. Then, in 2004, Facebook was established, ushering in the era of social media that we are all familiar with today (Kozinets, 2019). But those inevitable histories actually omit a lot of the action. Although those particular turning points are undoubtedly significant for our comprehension of social media and, consequently, of netnography, many other significant events actually contributed to the development of the social media landscape between Charley Kline's 1969 "lo" message sent from UCLA to Stanford and the introduction of Mosaic in 1994 (Kozinets, 2019).

The online social experience has always included politics, ideologies, conflict, and virulent disagreement (Kozinets, 2019). The desire to meet someone in person that one has met online is just one example of how easily different types of social communications and accompanying acts can be combined. This is another aspect of the online experience that has existed for a long time. All of these topics can be found in the 50-year history of social media, including sexuality, dating, close relationships, con games, and religion. All modern netnographers should be familiar with the history and characteristics of all of these institutionalized social media components in order to avoid getting sucked

into the apparent "newness" of social phenomena that, in all likelihood, have existed since before they were even born (Kozinets, 2019).

The social web grew throughout the 1990s and the first part of the 2000s as more businesses and people provided more specialized and unique online experiences. Social media features were incorporated by businesses of all stripes into their review and purchasing processes. These social media features helped reshape and start to disrupt the 1990s travel, entertainment, retail, and journalism sectors as well as lay the foundation for the development of social networking sites (Kozinets, 2019).

2.3.2 The impact of social media on the social world

Without a doubt, social networking has a significant impact on how people interact with one another. The conversations that result from networking experiences frequently have an impact on the choices that individuals make in their personal and professional lives. People need to understand and value how much other people affect them and how much that enriches their own experiences. People's conscious and subconscious behaviors have been shown to significantly increase when they participate in social networking. Since humans are emotionally dependent on one another, many people will share traits, both positive and negative (Fayaz and Khalique, 2016).

Social networking makes it very simple to get carried away due to the wide user participation and ease of access. However, it is best to proceed cautiously and be informed of the policies, including benefits and drawbacks, before logging into social networking sites.

The interpersonal relationships are influenced by social networking sites in many different ways. Users of social media meet new people, and these encounters have the potential to positively or negatively impact the relationships the users have. An interpersonal relationship is a sustained association based on feelings like love or liking, regular business interactions, or another kind of social commitment. In a

wide range of settings, including families, friendships, romantic acquaintances, workplaces, and neighborhoods, interpersonal relationships take place. Laws, traditions, or unspoken agreements may all govern them. Global social scientists have taken notice of their growing effects on interpersonal relationships (Manjunatha, 2013). Social networking can provide all the advantages desired if used properly. In the business world, it can also help to reach a large number of potential customers.

We are all now aware of the significant influence social networking has had on our culture, business, and the entire world. Today, almost every adult uses social networking sites to maintain close social ties. The most well-known online dangers come from a few social networking sites. They have completely changed how people interact and communicate online (Fayaz and Khalique, 2016). Numerous aspects of our lives are impacted by social networking, including messaging, expressiveness, intimidation, loneliness, acquaintances, and view of kindness. Social networks like Facebook were developed exclusively to facilitate communication between people. Additionally, it has been observed that Facebook rekindles "dormant" relationships. To communicate with friends in other cities, states, or even countries, many people use social networking sites. You can meet new people using these networks in addition to communicating with friends. There are fewer in-person interactions as a consequence of the prevalence use of social media. Due to the lack of interpersonal interaction, many people are growing more isolated. Less personal conflict in daily life is becoming more manageable. Many individuals are accustomed to only communicating via their mobile devices or computers (Fayaz and Khalique, 2016). Social networks allow users to meet new people, exchange ideas, share content and photos, and engage in a number of other activities. Users can also reconnect with old friends and acquaintances. Users can participate in the campaigns and activities of their choice, as well as keep up with local and global news. Social networking sites for professionals, like LinkedIn, help them increase their chances of having a

successful business and career. A user can learn about various cultures and societies by interacting with people from other countries.

2.3.3 The use of social media

The Web 2.0 landscape is filled with user generated content, also referred to as content developed and printed by handlers of these social media platforms. Popular social media websites with millions of users include Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and LinkedIn. There are countless additional websites that each serve an exclusive need for a user, and new websites are perpetually being developed to boost participant communication and interaction in both directions. In this situation, the user of these social media platforms who benefits from the more personalized communication is referred to as the end-user (Porter et al., 2012).

In earlier studies, the effectiveness of social media was evaluated based on how frequently it was used. How frequently a user logs in and uses social media during a given day or week is referred to as the user's activity frequency on a social media platform. Another metric for assessing social media use is the regularity with which updates are made on a user's social networking site and the degree of communication that exists between a user and those with whom they are connected there. Frequency of social media use should be understood because it can have an impact on a person's interpersonal relationships. It might also affect young adults' perceptions of what constitutes a social media addiction. In a recent study, Sheldon (2008) used the Uses and Gratifications Theory to look at how students use social media. Sheldon was interested in learning the reasons why students use Facebook and the advantages they gain from it. Due to the fact that students are already online, Sheldon (2008) claimed that checking Facebook has become a common Internet activity for them. Eight factors contribute to internet use satisfaction, according to Charney and Greenberg (2001): career, coolness, communication,

good feelings, distraction and entertainment, peer identity, and informational purposes. According to Sheldon's research (2008), the frequency with which students logged into their Facebook accounts and the benefits they anticipated deriving from their time online were significantly predicted by the maintenance of relationships, passing the time, entertainment, and coolness motives. According to Sheldon (2008), the reasons for using Facebook to pass time and maintain relationships both predicted how many hours' users would spend using it.

2.3.4 Social Media and Social Life

One of the most popular websites on the Internet are social networking sites. They are used as a form of online friendship-making and communication by people. The two most popular social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, each have over 100 million users (Al-Jabri et al., 2015). Posting about one's personal life, ideas, and perspectives is the norm on social media. Feedback from online friends on a user's post serves as validation for the user. Social media is expected to provide social and emotional needs rather than information needs (Farrugia, 2013).

Even the way romantic relationships are formed and maintained can change as a result of social media. The act of holding hands or giving hugs is considered an offline public display of affection. On the other hand, online displays of affection, also referred to as open displays of devotion, occur when people like photos, comment on posts, or share inside jokes. A virtual endorsement can be expressed by liking content. A significant other's photo and social media post serve as a sign of commitment to other users as well (Farrugia, 2013). Ultimately, changing the relationship's status online signals that it is now a formal one. It is also thought to serve as a deterrent against people flirting with their romantic partners (Mod, 2010). Relationship issues may result from using social media. Monitoring a partner using social media is simple. Envy, nervousness, and distrust can result from monitoring a partner's online activities.

Because of this, they may feel less satisfied in their relationships (Farrugia, 2013). People with low self-esteem may also view their partner's social media behavior as a flaw.

These days, seniors and their families frequently live apart, which can cause anxiety on both sides, especially when the elderly family members are living independently. We have all heard tales of elderly family members falling in their homes, forgetting to take important prescription medications, or going days without food without anyone realizing it until it became a serious issue. It is impossible to overstate the value of socializing and being a part of a community, especially for senior citizens who spend a lot of time alone at home. Social networking gives elderly people and the people who are caring for them a convenient way to check in every day or at any other frequency that is preferred, bringing comfort to both parties.

2.4 Challenges caused by social media usage on interpersonal relationships among couples

Due to the issues that social networks have created, the stability of families, interpersonal relationships, and marital and emotional relationships are all in danger. Couples go online conversing with friends and guest and also developing new relationships while neglecting themselves. This act has led to several social problems not beforehand experienced, thus, the study of social media influence on relationship among couples is cogent (Fernández, 2023).

After a couple breaks up, the effects of social media on them as romantic partners continue. When a study found that 64 percent of Facebook users engage in the activities of re-reading and over-analyzing old posts and messages, post-breakup effects were discovered. Additionally, following a divorce, Facebook surveillance habits become a common occurrence for couples. Unbelievably, 88 percent of ex-partners who kept their Facebook friendships have looked at their ex-partner's profile.

According to Ridgway and Clayton (2016), social media use can lead to arguments, betrayals, and even divorce. According to popular literature, social media use has been linked to mental illness, a decline in relationship satisfaction, and lower marital quality among those who are already married (Roberts and David, 2016).

The widespread use of social media revealed that social ceremonies had largely reduced to being ornamental. Addiction to social networking sites (SNS) can cause a number of psychological and social issues that reduce one's ability to commit to a relationship. However, this lack of commitment also encourages people to become interested in other people as romantic partners. Additionally, it was discovered that younger couples were more vulnerable to SNS addiction than older couples (Christensen, 2018). In other words, younger couples had a higher likelihood of SNS infidelity than older couples did (Abbasi, 2019). A little over 39% of the respondents, according to Emmanuel (2014), frequented social media. Response from the participants indicated that they were either married or betrothed. Barely 35% of participants share photos of themselves and their spouses together, while 12% are open about their relationship position.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

People's lifestyles have been profoundly impacted by online social networking. The world and human life are fundamentally changing, as Bandura (2002) asserts, as a consequence of the revolutionary development in information technologies. The Uses and Gratifications theory is the most popular approach to figuring out why people use social media and will be the underpinning theory for this study. Katz, et al (1973) developed this theory using it to examine why people interact with the media and how doing so satisfies their needs. The uses and gratifications theory is a psychological perspective on

communication that postulates that people actively seek out media that they think will satiate particular needs (Rubin, 2009). According to Uses and Gratifications theory, media consumers make their own decisions about the media they choose to consume in order to satisfy their needs as fully as possible (Alajmi et al., 2016). To sum up, the uses and gratifications theory concentrates on the reasons why consumers use particular media types and the satisfaction they derive from doing so.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section covered all issues relating to the adopted research philosophy, approach, design and strategy, methods, data collection and instrument for data collection. Also, ethical concerns were highlighted.

3.2 Research Philosophy

What the investigator considers to be fact, realism, and knowledge is referred to as their research philosophy (Ryan, 2018). Several research philosophies exist in guiding research. Reviewing each of the philosophies based on the assumptions and knowledge directing them, the positivism philosophy will be adopted.

Meanwhile positivism, a division of empiricism, is regularly connected with experimentations and statistical investigation, thus, adopting the positivist philosophy is appropriate. Empiricism is about maintaining knowledge should be objective and void of prejudice ensuing from the investigator's morals

and principles, according to Phillips and Burbules (2000). The positivist philosophy allows the use of hypotheses to infer relationships, as well as statistics and arithmetical data, to offer clarifications regarding the effects of social media use on interpersonal relationships between couples.

3.3 Research Approach

Saunders and Lewis (2017) recommended that research approaches could either be deductive or inductive in nature. Drawing from our research philosophy that supports empiricism, statistical investigation and the use of research hypotheses, the study therefore embraced the deductive approach. Bryman (2008) noted that investigation that involves experimentation such hypotheses testing through verifiable laws is referred to a deductive approach to research.

3.4 Research Design and Strategy

The survey research design is the most appropriate for this research. The survey research design is a common measurement technique employed in the management sciences that consists of a sequence of questions or statements to which participants provide their responses. It is an account on the participant outlooks, views, assertions, and emotiveness. The survey research design and deductive reasoning will therefore be used in this investigation because it is the most suitable for this kind of reasoning. The entire research process will benefit from the guidance and direction provided by the research design.

3.5 Research Methods

In research, the use of both qualitative and quantitative is referred to as the mixed method and as such, the mixed method was applied in this study. Creswell (2014) defined mixed methods research as “an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. It involves

philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study.” The rationale for using the mixed methods is based on the fact that the study will obtain divergent viewpoints, several perspectives and create a better understanding of the research.

Triangulating data sources is an avenue for searching conjunction through qualitative and quantitative research methods (Jick, 1979). On the other hand, Creswell and Clark (2007) assert that both qualitative and quantitative data can be integrated into a single big archive or the outcomes employed side by side to strengthen each other. Therefore, the concurrent triangulation approach was adopted whereby data on both qualitative and quantitative was obtained at the same time and to ascertain if there are differences, similarities or some other combination.

The questionnaire will be used to gather data for the quantitative analysis, while the thematic analysis of Braun and Clark (2006) will be used to develop themes based on the trends and patterns discovered. The use of questionnaire indicates that the study is empirical in nature and therefore supports the basis of the positivist paradigm adopted.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

For fair and equal representation of every member of the population, the probability random sampling method was implemented, thus, our study population covers all couples in interpersonal relationship. The snowball sampling technique will be employed by recruiting future respondents from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group is said to grow like a rolling snowball. Randomly, 110 persons in interpersonal relationship will be selected to be part of the sample size, and the size will be achieved based on first 110 person to complete the questionnaire.

Data Saturation

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 61) defined saturation as “the criterion for judging when to stop sampling the different groups pertinent to a category is the category’s *theoretical saturation*. *Saturation* means that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated. He goes out of his way to look for groups that stretch diversity of data as far as possible, just to make certain that saturation is based on the widest possible range of data on the category.” Data saturation is similar to the thematic analysis of Braun and Clark (2006) that permit the development of themes through identifying trends and patterns.

3.6 Source of Data Collection

Since the study involves gathering information from respondents, primary data will be collected and this was aided through the use of questionnaire. A snowballing technique was used to select a sample of 110 people who are or have been in relationships from the complete population. The researcher had admission to the sample respondents through a small number of participants who served as the snowballs.

3.7 Research Instrument

Utilising the structured questionnaire, opinions, views and perception of every sample was collected. The questionnaire will comprise of six sections with each addressing specific areas and the participants will be recruited through online means. The participants must be involved in a relationship to be able to proffer solution to the research questions. Through online means, responses from participants will be evaluated using statistical analytical techniques such as descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically,

the descriptive statistics to be employed will be means, percentage and graphs, while the inferential statistic include regression analysis.

3.8 Ethical Consideration and Issues

Based on the ethical rules and regulations provided within my institution, all protocols regarding this study, especially in terms of data collection was duly followed. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity in research is expected to be maintained all through the course of the investigation. Springer and Norman (2002) state that "for all research involving human subjects, freely-given, informed consent to participate in the study must be obtained from participants and a statement to this effect should appear in the manuscript... if any of the sections are not relevant to your manuscript, please include the heading and write 'Not applicable' for that section."

It is critical to protect data retrieved from participants. The consequent information must be divulged in order to get informed permission: the aim of the study, its methodology, persons that would read the data and for what reason, risks to the participants, expected advantages, the significance of readiness, and a statement guaranteeing to respond to questions from the participants. Confidentiality on the other hand denotes the circumstance in which the researchers are conscious of the participants but take necessary actions to conceal their personality and data (Coffelt, 2017). In other words, it is keeping the data secure and only sharing gathered results that are anonymous.

The study will ensure that issues relating participant consent, confidentiality and anonymity will be addressed. The study will provide adequate information to participants involved in the study and data collected in the course of this investigation this study will be safely warehoused in line with the university and GDPR guidelines.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data obtained through questionnaire administration to the respondents. Out of the 110 sampled respondents, 109 respondents electronically filled the questionnaire. A total of 109 questionnaires were submitted causing the response rate to be 99.1%. An overview of the participant demographics, analyses of participant's social media usage and interest, and the impact of social media on interpersonal relationship among couples are presented. Additionally, regression output and developed themes are shown before finally summarising the discussion of findings.

4.2. Description of Participant Demographics

This section provides a detailed description of the respondents in relation to their profile, while subsequent section provided a detailed analysis of the result and linking the result to literature review.

Profile of the Respondents

Variables examined here include the gender, years in relationship, employment status, age, ethnicity and relationship status of the participants. The results are presented in Table 4.1 below:

1. Gender

The distribution of the gender is presented in the pie chart below:

Figure 4.1: Pie Chart

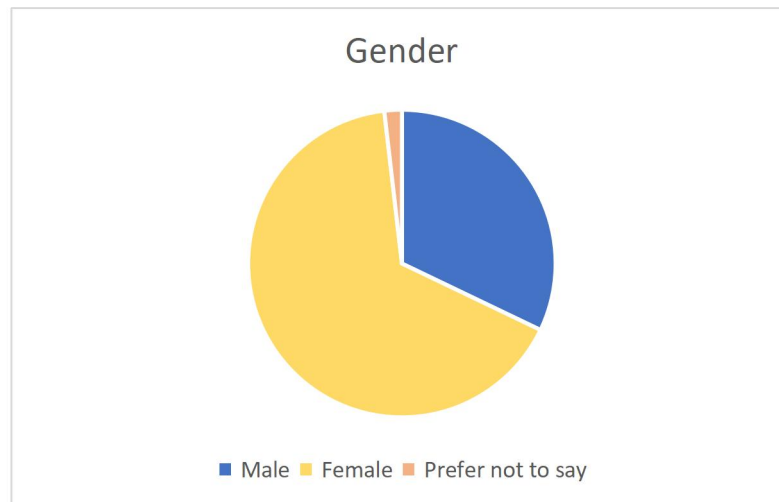
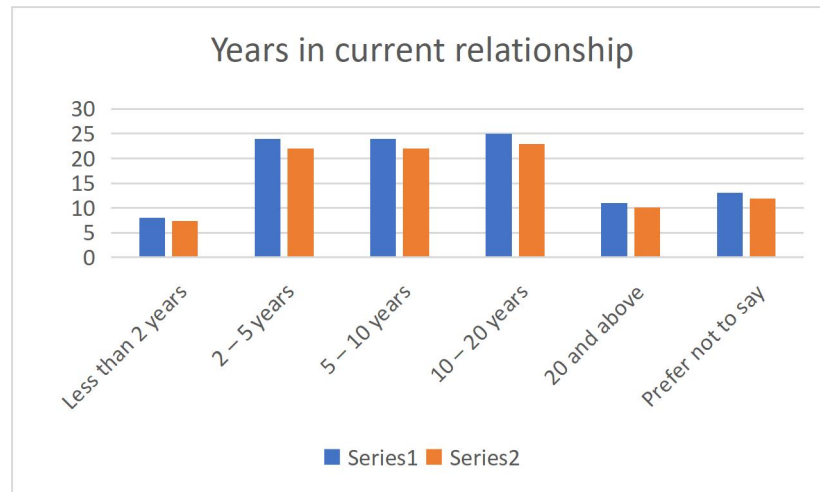


Figure 4.1 above illustrates that there are more females (72, 66.1%) than the male respondents (35, 32.1%). While 1.8% constitutes persons that prefer not to say.

2. Years in current relationship

Below is figure 4.2 illustrating the years in current relationship using bar chart

Figure 4.2: Years in current relationship



The figure above illustrates the current years in relationship by the respondents. Series 1 represent the values in terms of the number of respondents and series 2 represent the values in terms of percentages. There are six categories identified and the respondents with the highest number of years in their current relationship are between 10 – 20 years. The categories between 2 – 5 years and 5 – 10 years both have 24 respondents.

3. Employment Status

Below is a graphical distribution of the employment status of the respondents.

Figure 4.3: Clustered Bar Chart of Employment Status

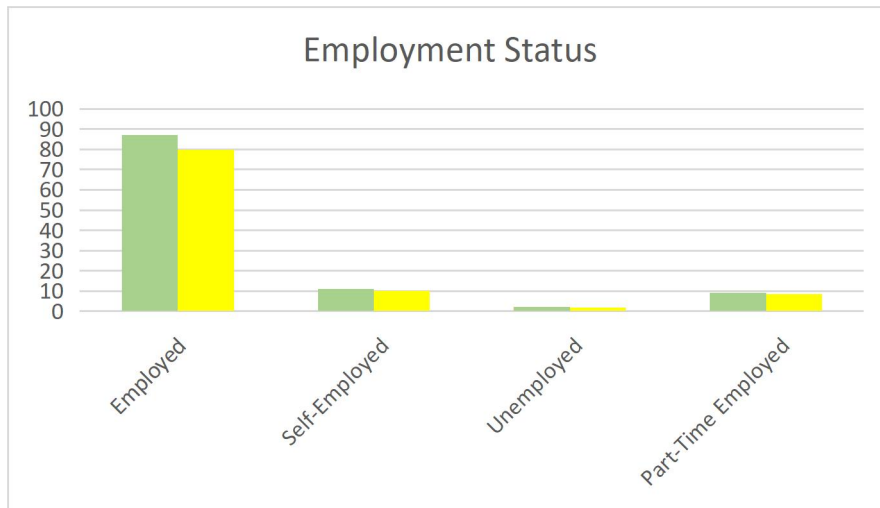
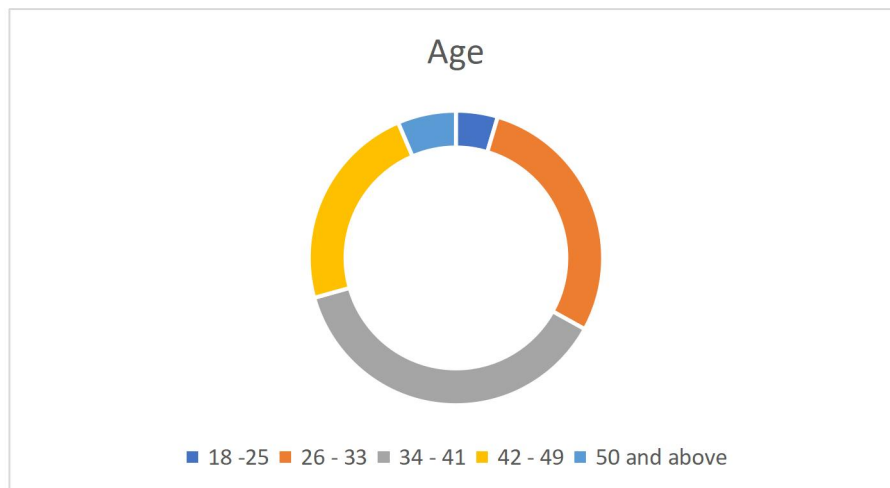


Figure 4.3 shows that most of the respondents are employed (87, 79.8%), followed by self-employed (11, 10.1%), part-time employment (9, 8.6%) and unemployed (2, 1.8%).

4. Age

The chart below represents the age group of respondents.

Figure 4.4 Chart representing Age of respondents.

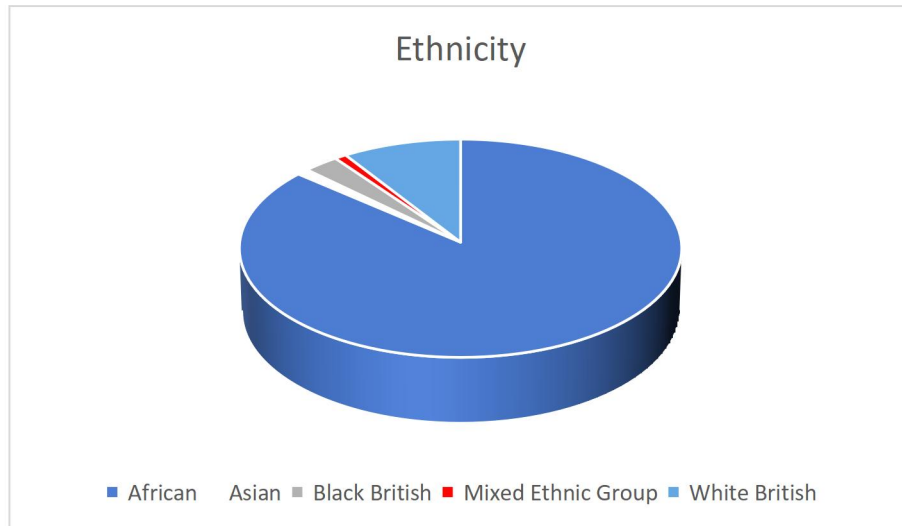


Most of the respondents as shown in Figure 4.4 are within the age bracket of 34 – 41 years (41, 37.6%), then to the least 5 respondents between 18 – 25 years.

5. Ethnicity

The pie chart below indicates the number of persons that belong to a particular ethnicity.

Figure 4.5: Pie chart of Respondents Ethnicity



Most of the respondents are Africans and they constitute 86.2% of the entire sample size. The next highest is the White British with a size of 10 respondents, followed by Black British (3), Asian (1) and mixed ethnic group (1).

6. Relationship Status

The relationship status of the respondents is presented in the bar chart below:

Figure 4.6: Bar chart of respondent's relationship status

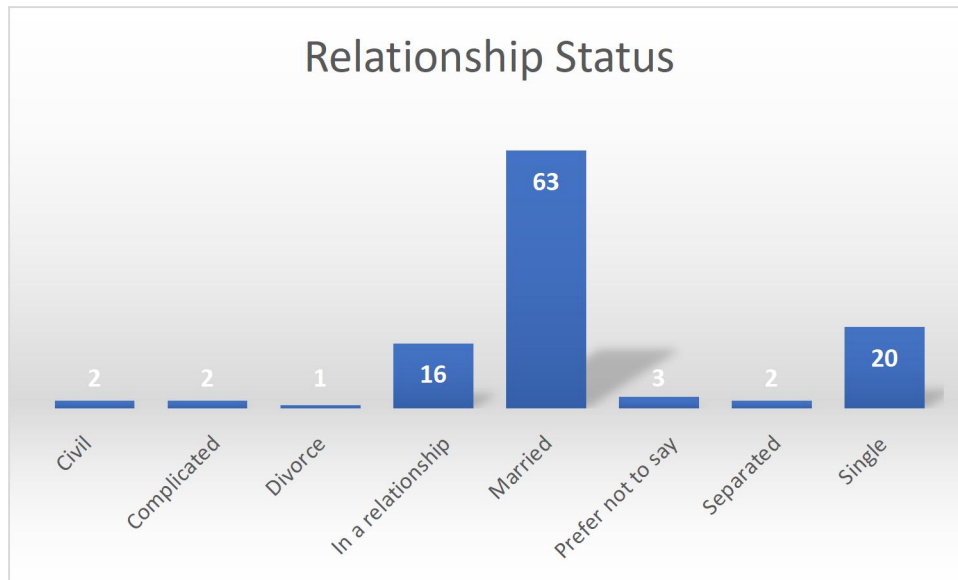


Figure 4.6 indicates that most of the respondents are married (63, 57.8%), single (20, 8.4%), in a relationship (16, 14.7%), prefer not to say (3), civil, complicated, and separated (2, 1.8% each), and 1 respondent divorced. The significance of the above section is to provide insights on the subjects being studied, while the subsequent section is to provide detailed analysis of the result with respect to the research objectives.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis of Social Media

The descriptive analysis performed represent the section 2 of the questionnaire on social media usage and social media platforms being used.

Figure 4.7: Pie chart on Social media use

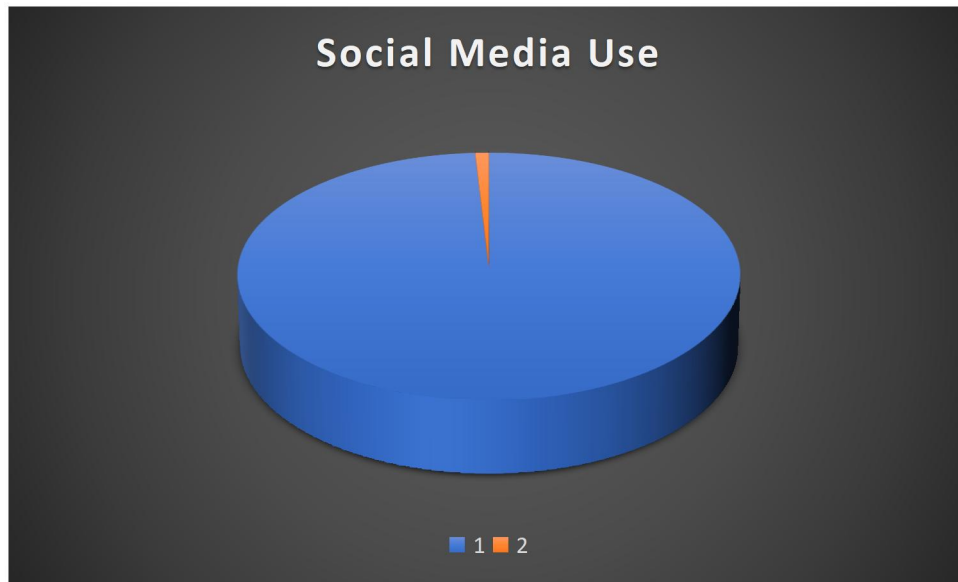
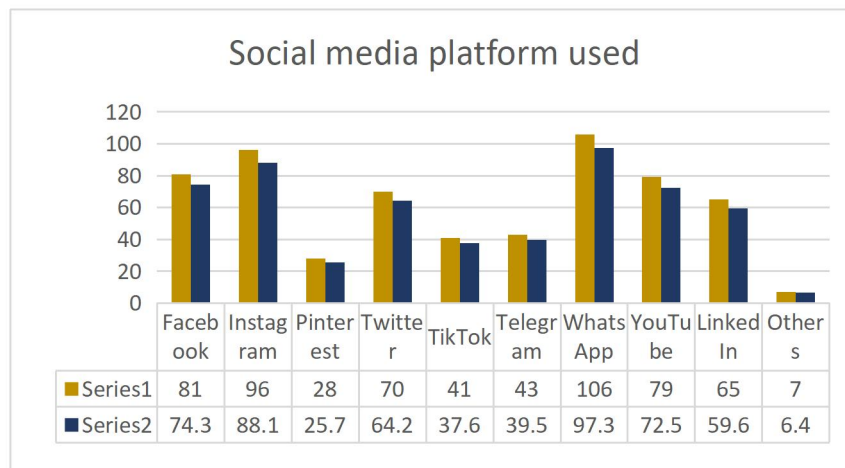


Figure 4.7 above shows that 99% of the respondent agreed to the statement that they use social media, while 1% declined. In the study by Gull, et al (2019), the researchers using a population of 287 respondents revealed most of the respondents if not all actually use social media.

Figure 4.8: Clustered bar chart on social media platform used



Participants were present with 14 different social media platforms, out of which WhatsApp had the highest frequency indicating that they prefer to use WhatsApp than any other channels. The analysis further shows that most of the respondents are either one and/or more than one social media platform. In comparison to the study by Gull et al, (2019), Instagram was found to be the most social media platform used by couples in the Middle East, followed by Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube. However, in another study, the outcome suggest that Facebook appeared to be the most used social media platform followed by WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter (Okeibunor, 2019).

4.4 Descriptive Analysis of Social Media Interest

This section describes the level of interest of respondents in relation to social media.

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics of level of Social Media Interest

Q	Items	YES	NO	OTHERS
10	Do you have specific interest in using the social media above	91 (83.5%)	16 (14.7%)	2 (1.8%)
11	If yes, what specific uses do you have for these social media platforms?			
	Connecting with family and Friends	96	88.1%	
	Inspiration/Motivation	64	58.7%	
	News and Politics	80	73.4%	
	Content Creation	27	24.8%	
	Marketing and Business	33	30.3%	
	Entertainment	72	66.1%	
	Socialize with others	74	67.9%	
	Work	47	43.1%	
	Others	1	0.9%	
Don't have interest	3	2.8%		

Table 4.1 above shows that most of the respondents agreed that they have specific interest in using the social media platforms mentioned in Table 4.3. The most common specific reason for using social media as consented by the respondents are to connect with family and friends (88.1%), followed by news and politics (73.4%), socialising with others (67.9%), entertainment (66.1%), inspiration and motivation (58.7%), work (43.1%), marketing and business (30.3%), and content creation 24.8%). As indicated, family and friends is the driving force behind the use of social media platforms. Kuske (2020) noted that several reasons exist why couples utilize social media, nevertheless, the author mentioned communication and public content as the foremost reasons.

Figure 4.9: Most or least time spent on social media platforms

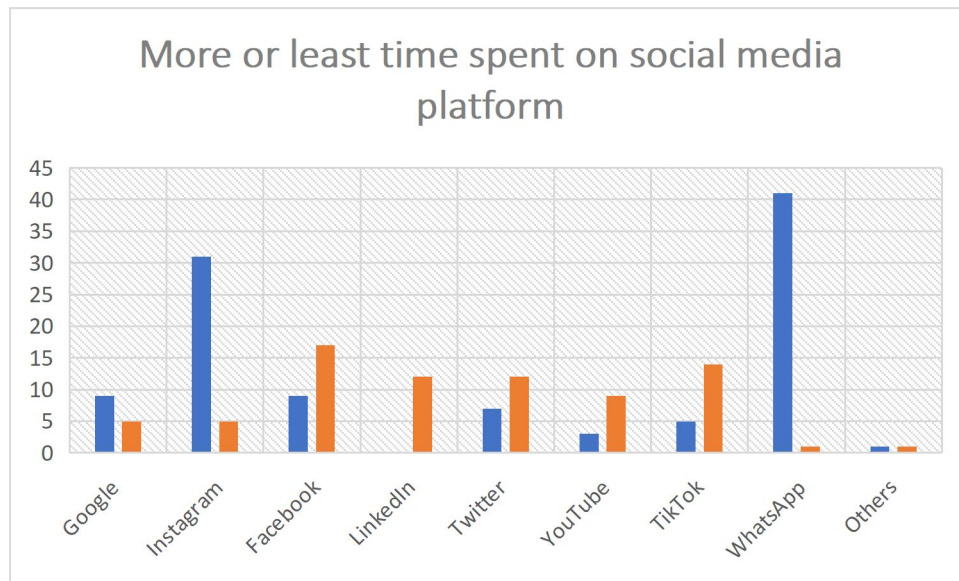
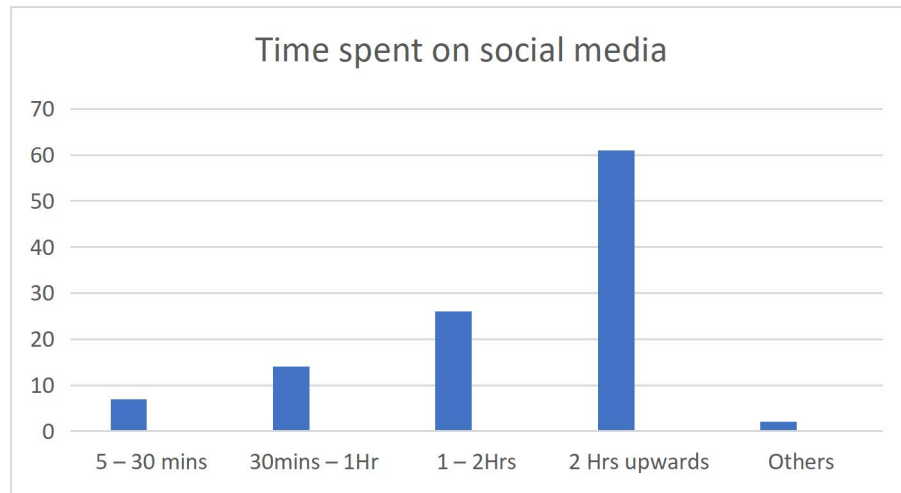


Figure 4.9 indicate that most respondent spend their time using WhatsApp social media platform, followed by Instagram, Google, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube. However, other respondents agreed that they spend lesser time on Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Google and WhatsApp. Okeibunor (2019) noted that Facebook is the social media platform most couples prefer to

spend time. An obvious reason for the discrepancy is the location of the study, where different factors play to affect the variables of interest.

Figure 4.10: Time spent on social media



Most respondents agree that they spend over 2 hours daily on social media platforms, while 26 respondents spend between 1 to 2 hours, 14 respondents 30mins to 1 hours, and 7 respondents between 5 to 30 mins. Nevertheless, 2 respondents under the category of others claim that they spend 3 hours and 24 hours respectively. In a similar study by Mpepo (2017) claimed that most couples, precisely, eighty percent of couples spend at least 4 hours daily on social media use.

Figure 4.11: Bar chart on social media check

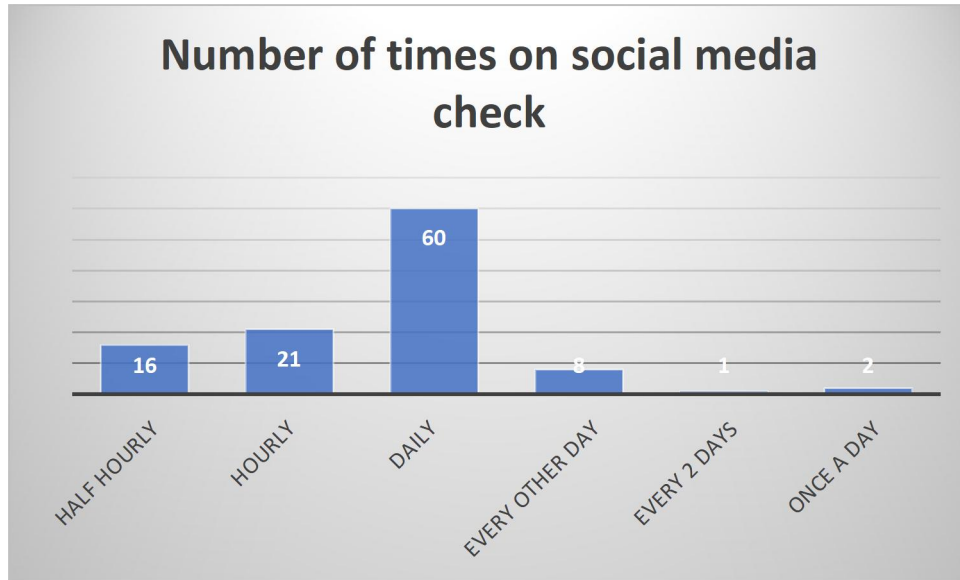


Figure 4.12 shows that 60 respondents check their social media daily, 21 respondents hourly, 16 respondents half hourly, 8 respondents every other day, 1 respondent every two days and 2 respondents once a day.

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics of social media check

	Item	Very likely	Likely	Never	Unlikely	Very unlikely	Prefer not to say
15	I check social media during my intimate time with my partner	16 (14.7%)	21 (19.3%)	60 (55.1%)	8 (7.3%)	1 (0.9%)	2 (1.8%)
16	I check my social media when I am out on a date	10 (9.2%)	43 (39.5%)	11 (10.1%)	20 (18.5%)	17 (15.6%)	4 (3.7%)
17	I check my social media when I am with my partner	12 (11%)	41 (37.6%)	10 (9.2%)	26 (28.9%)	11 (10.1%)	5 (4.6%)
18	I rarely check my social media when I am with my partner	15 (13.8%)	31 (28.4%)	6 (5.5%)	25 (22.9%)	21 (19.3%)	6 (5.5%)

Note: intimate time represent holding hands, cuddling and skin to skin touching

Also, 55.1% of the respondents agree they check their social media during their intimate time with their partner, 39.5% agreed that they check their social media when on a date, 37.2% when with their partner and 28.4% rarely do check their social media when with their partner. Regardless of when do partners check their social media, Luam et al (2015) noted that social conditions such as relationship ties, articulacy, personal rules and information exchange are core reasons partners are motivated to check their social media. The author further indicated that perceptual and consumption-based conditions stimulate partners at any time to check their social media behaviour and to disseminate their consumption experiences by using mobile devices.

The results show that the social condition (e.g., tie strength, subjective norms, expressiveness, social support, and information sharing) play the most critical role in motivating people to engage in 10check

in behavior. In addition, the perceptual (e.g., perceived social benefit, perceived enjoyment, and perceived value) and consumption-based conditions (such as customer satisfaction and communicator involvement) also motivate people to engage in check-in behavior and to disseminate their consumption experiences by using mobile devices.

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Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics of social media with partner

	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19	I feel anxious and stressed when I cannot access social media	15 (13.8%)	24 (22%)	35 (32.1%)	18 (16.5%)	14 (12.8%)
20	Social media distracts me from spending time with my partner	2 (1.8%)	29 (26.6%)	19 (17.4%)	43 (39.5%)	11 (10.1%)
21	I spend so much time on social media and it affects my partner	0	12 (11%)	24 (22%)	46 (42.2%)	22 (20.2%)
22	I have to manage the time I spend on social media to avoid conflict with my partner	12 (11%)	22 (20.2%)	25 (22.9%)	34 (31.2%)	12 (11%)
23	I rarely use social media when I am with my partner	10 (9.2%)	22 (20.2%)	33 (30.3%)	31 (28.4%)	8 (7.3%)

Table 4.3 reveals that 32.1% of the respondents feel anxious and stressed when they cannot access social media, 39.5% agreed that social media causes distraction by not spending time with their partners, 42.2% agreed that they spend much time on social media and it affects their partners, 31.2% agreed they manage their time on social media to avoid conflict with their partners and 30.3% agreed that they rarely use social media when they are with their partner. According to McLuhan (1984), individuals have their respective symbolic relationship with media technology which in turn affects their discernment, outlooks and morals of society. Isah (2016) added that media technology affect individuals differently in terms of their values, beliefs and awareness/insights. As described in the table above, several perceptions, feelings and values are factors that have brought about the different dispositions toward social media.

4.5 Descriptive Analysis of the impact of social media on interpersonal relationship between couples

Table 4.4: Descriptive statistics on interpersonal relationship between couples

	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
24	Social media distracts my partner from spending time with me	10 (9.2%)	18 (16.5%)	23 (21.1%)	43 (39.5%)	11 (10.1%)
25	My partner spend too much time on social media	7 (6.4%)	28 (25.7%)	25 (22.9%)	31 (28.4%)	14 (12.9%)
26	Social media interferes with my relationship with my partner	4 (3.7%)	16 (14.7%)	16 (14.7%)	43 (39.5%)	31 (28.4%)
27	I feel neglected by my partner due to excessive social media use	6 (5.5%)	11 (10.1%)	14 (12.9%)	34 (31.2%)	12 (11%)
28	My partner rarely use social media	8 (7.3%)	11 (10.1%)	24 (22%)	43 (39.5%)	18 (16.5%)
29	Social media makes communication with my partner easy	24 (22%)	39 (35.8%)	24 (22%)	13 (11.9%)	4 (3.7%)

Table 4.4 shows that 39.5% of the respondents who are couples disagreed that social media distracts their partner from spending time with them, 28.4% also disagrees that their partner spend too much time on social media, 39.5% disagreed that social media interferes with their relationship with their partner, 31.2% disagreed that they feel neglected by their partner due to excessive social media use, 39.5% also disagreed that their partner rarely use social media and 35.8% agreed that social media makes communication easy with their partner. Linking this to research, Christensen (2018) focused on the negative impact of social media use on couples by examining their emotions and interpersonal relationship. Christensen (2018) established that social media use impact on the emotion of couples negatively as it leads to frustration, depression, and social comparison. On the other hand, the author

argued that it causes distraction, irritation, and decreased quality time with respect to interpersonal relationship.

Despite the negative aspect, Hyacinth (2023) noted that social media use by couples have also brought about easy communication between partners, improved relationships, and the ability to share common interest, ideas.

Social media has made it easier for people to connect with each other, regardless of geographical boundaries. It has allowed people to stay in touch with friends and family members who live far away, and it has also facilitated the creation of new friendships and relationships. Social media has also made it easier for people to find and join communities of like-minded individuals who share common interests, hobbies, and goals.

Moreover, social media has provided a platform for people to express themselves and share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences with others. This has fostered greater empathy and understanding among people, and has helped to break down barriers that may have existed in the past.

Figure 4.13: Pie chart on effect of social media on couple interpersonal relationship

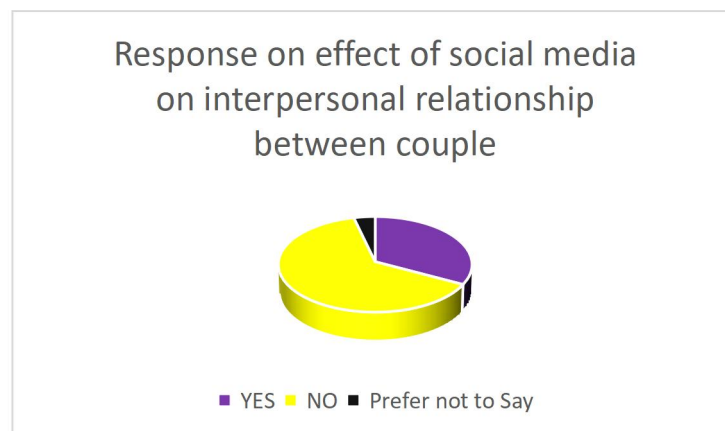


Figure 4.13 indicate that 63.6% of the respondent agreed that social media has not affected their relationship with their partner, while 32.7% agreed that their relationship is affected by social media and

3.7% prefer to remain neutral on the issue. Gull et al (2019) conducted a study using 287 respondents, the outcome revealed that most of the respondents agreed that social media affect their relationship positively, while some negatively. However, the authors found and concluded that social media plays a major negative part in the lives of couples.

Therefore, the impact of social media on partners differs from person to person and as such depends on several factors the level of understanding between the partners, degree of jealousy, communication and trust among others.

4.6 Theme Development Using Thematic Analysis

The essence of theme development is to find trends and patterns according to Clark and Braun (2006). Braun and Clark (2006) described thematic analysis as a means to identifying trends and patterns in a qualitative study. By so doing, themes are developed from critical review and screening of initial themes. This study therefore employed NVIVO in developing themes and these themes were developed from codes which are repetitive words formed from patterns in the responses (see table 4.10 below).

Table 4.5 Matrix Coding

	A : impact of social media usage on interpersonal relationship RQ2	B : opportunities and problems caused by social media usage on interpersonal relationships RQ1	C : preference for social media RQ3
1 : distraction theme	35	0	0
2 : easy communication theme	65	0	0
3 : mental health theme	2	0	0
4 : sharing information, ideas etc theme	57	0	0
5 : distraction theme	0	10	0
6 : easy communication theme	0	14	0
7 : share information theme	0	9	0
8 : stay connected theme	0	0	54
9 : promotes bonding and improves relationship theme	0	3	0
10 : suspicion of infidelity and distrust theme	0	8	0
11 : business and professional development	0	0	8
12 : entertainment	0	0	21
13 : networking and meeting people	0	0	11
14 : online shopping	0	0	2

Based on the objectives of this study, the following themes were developed: Distraction (45 references), Easy Communication (79 references), Sharing of Information (66 references), Staying Connected (54 references), Entertainment (21 references) and Suspicion of Distrust (8 references). Others are business and professional development (8 references), networking/meeting people (11 references) and online shopping (2 references) which had low rate of references. Thus, study on the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationships among couples resolved in developing six themes which was found very crucial to the respondents (see word cloud in figure 4.14 below) which highlights the themes with the highest frequency. These will be discussed and linked to literature accordingly.

Figure 4.14 Word Frequency Query

Distraction

The study finds distraction to be a common element in the impact of social media usage on interpersonal relationship and also as a challenge. This study found that couples who spend time on social experience issues like lack of communication, lack of quality time, neglect and time consumption which results in distraction in the relationship. Christensen (2018) findings corroborate with the outcome of this research that distraction is one of the three major factors caused by social media. Gull et al (2019) established that some couples are frequently distracted by the use of social media whenever they spend time together and leads to them being upset. Similarly, Hand, et al (2013) acknowledged that excessive use of social media by couples often result in distraction which in turn leads to less time spent together and or less attention giving to each other. The authors further stated that most often than not, it often leads to a collapse in the level of intimacy among couples.

Gull, et al (2019) maintained that couples that are often distracted by social media use leads to irritation by the other partner. Distraction may therefore be a resulting factor that affect couples that engage in or spend most time in social media when they are with their partners.

Easy Communication

The outcome of the thematic analysis showed that social media usage by couple enhances easy communication which presents itself as an opportunity in building interpersonal relationship. According to respondents, social media promotes easy communication especially for those in long distance relationships or couples who travel for business etc. it also helps in creating understanding and creates balance in communicating with their partners. Theme development showed that Mpepo (2017) findings support this study by stating that most couples, precisely, eighty percent spend a considerable amount of time (4 hours) on social media use daily. Nevertheless, the study showed that the impact of social media

use by couples improves their communication relationships. Communication is an important factor in human relationships and according to Perry and Hawks (2013) notwithstanding the dangers associated with communication technology, it enhances opportunities for couples to improve their relationship and meet their emotive requirements. Fuch (2017) noted that communication prospects caused by social media platforms create room for the growth of social relationships especially in long distance relationship.

Social media use has made it easier for people in romantic relationships to communicate, particularly wedded couples (Leighton et al., 2021). Couples can now stay in touch on social media during working hours or when expense is an issue.

Partners can exchange messages, photos and tapes in the process of showing emotive care to each other. Marriages have gained a significant amount of intimacy, according to Pew Research's (2015) analysis of mediated communication technologies. Since couples can now resolve any disagreements via social media communication, they feel tighter (Lenhart and Duggan, 2014).

Sharing Information and Ideas

The study showed that sharing information and ideas by couples is influenced by the impact of social media usage on interpersonal relationship. Respondents tend to share information and ideas on relationships with a view to gaining knowledge and further promote bonding while creating connection. They also share updates on news and politics with family and friends as well as memories to create intimacy and promote bonding between partners. Sanchez (2020) findings supports this research outcome by stating that intimate partners usually engage in social media use to share information and idea. According to Berscheid et al., (2004) the exchange or sharing of information aid in improving the level of existing relationship. In line with Laurenceau et al. (2004) asserts that intimacy requires the

exchange of personal information between two people. Partners must open up to one another in order for intimate relationships to grow.

Stay Connected

The study showed that couples that have high preference for social media because they want to stay connected with friends, family and happening around the world. Christensen (2018) findings support this study by indicating that people around the world are more connected than ever before thanks to social media's pervasiveness in daily life. This could lead to the misconception that people are happier because of their increased social connections. Maintaining relationships with friends and family through social media is among the most popular uses of these platforms. Additionally, this backs Seo et al. (2016), it may seem counterintuitive, but employing social media to remain connected makes partners more actually makes us feel more lonely than direct interface with our partners. Christensen (2018) did point out that despite being connected online, lonely people or partners claim that their use of social media caused them to feel cut off from their peers.

Entertainment

Entertainment was found to be a significant factor considered by couples especially as it relates to the reason for preference for social media. These couples engage in sharing funny memes, videos to each other which helps in promoting communication in their relationships. Christien (2018) argued in his research that aside the need to connect with family and friends, entertainment is the next need after news why couples engage in social media use. Fernández (2023) affirmed that some couples' social media mainly for entertainment purpose, which supports the findings of this study.

Suspicion of Infidelity and Distrust

This study found that among couples and interpersonal relationships there are suspicion of infidelity and distrust. A portion of respondents attested to social media causing conflicts, access to wrong/bad content/connections, creates suspicion, and invasion of privacy. Supporting this finding include that claim that social media use has led to the increase in distrust/dishonesty and divorces issues. Latifi (2015) study also affirmed that social media use by couples have a strong relationship marriage issue and or cause for divorce. Also, Saleh and Mukhtar (2015) claimed that social media use not only impair communication among couples or interpersonal relationship but results in spouse seeking for more online interface than interpersonal interaction. Helsper and Whitty (2010) report that 920 wedded couples affirmed that certain immoral or infidelity acts are engaged in as a result of social media use. According to a study by Cravens et al, (2013), Facebook offers services that might encourage infidelity. Study by Hand et al, (2013) acknowledged the mistrust among others as a factor experienced by couples due to continuous or excessive use of social media.

An as essence, some couples now monitor the activities of their partners either due to distrust or suspicion of infidelity (Fox and Warber, 2014). Gull, et al (2019) noted that monitoring the activities of partners on social media use is due to jealousy, nervousness, uncertainty and distrust.

4.7 Estimation and Interpretation Regression Model

In this section, multiple regression analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the factors impacting social media and interpersonal relationship among couples such as distraction, easy communication, sharing information and ideas, staying connected, entertainment and suspicion of infidelity and distrust. The output is shown in Tables 4.6:

Table 4.6: Relationship among couples and Factors impacting on interrelationship

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.823	.229		4.264	.000
Distraction	.433	.094	.714	9.211	.000
Easy communication	.081	.042	.007	.089	.028
Sharing information and ideas	.731	.012	.531	4.011	.004
Staying connected	0.344	.066	.515	5.532	.001
Entertainment	.042	.097	.009	.0145	.641
Suspicion of infidelity and distrust	.413	.031	.166	3.235	.017
$R^2 = 0.618$; Adj $R^2 = 0.655$; F-Statistic = 91.231; F-Statistic (Prob) = 0.000; D-W Stat = 1.823 a. Dependent Variable: Relationship among couples [RAC]					

a. Dependent Variable: RAC, N =109

The regression result further shows that when the independent variables (distraction, easy communication, sharing information and ideas, staying connected, entertainment and suspicion of infidelity and distrust) were regressed on the dependent variable (relationship among couples), a coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.618 was obtained. The value of Adjusted R^2 (0.655) implies that the independent factors (distraction, easy communication, sharing information and ideas, staying connected, entertainment and suspicion of infidelity and distrust) affect the dependent variable (relationship among couples). Also, with a F-statistic of 91.231 at $p < 0.05$, it is concluded that there exist a positive and significant association between the independent variables (distraction, easy communication, sharing information and ideas, staying connected, entertainment and suspicion of infidelity and distrust) and the dependent variable (relationship among couples).

4.8 Discussion of Research Findings

Based on the developed themes, the study found that distraction is common factor that affect couples that are engrossed in the use of social media. This is supported by Christensen (2018), Gull et al (2019) and Hand et al (2013) stating that couples are often distracted by excessive use of social media causing them to spend less time together. Furthermore, the study established that social media use aids in improving and permitting easy communication among couples. According to Mpepo (2017), social media use improves communication relationship among couples. Also, Perry and Hawks state that social media use is an opportunity to improve the emotive relationship of couples, while Fuch (2017) write that social media use create avenues for social relationship growth.

Additionally, social media use by couples is to share information and ideas, and supporting these findings is Sanchez (2020) stating that couples that engage in social media use share information and idea. Berscheid et al., (2004) and Laurenceau et al. (2004) couples that engage in social media use can improve their current level of intimate relationship and this can be achieved through sharing of information, ideas etc.

The study further revealed that couple's preference for social media use is to stay connected with each other. This is supported by Christensen (2018) that social media use by couples is becoming more increasing and mainly for the purpose of staying connected. However, Seo et al. (2016) asserts that social media use by couples to remain connected makes the couple lonelier due to lack of spending quality time. Social media use as found in this study was mainly for entertainment purpose. Christensen (2018) and Fernandez (2023) write that couples using social media do so because the of entertainment purpose. They, however, acknowledge that staying connected is the core reason before entertainment.

Supporting the findings of this study that the specific reason for engaging in social media is to communicate with family and friends is the research by Nesi, et al, (2018) that claimed that gaining admittance through social media makes connection with individuals better. However, Bouffard, et al (2022) noted that though social media makes it easy to develop good relationships but can also be difficult especially for couples in relationship that is suspicion, jealousy, invasion of privacy which may lead to break up or divorce. Relationship building and maintenance among couples is one aspect of socialization that social media has a significant on as it has been seen to promote bonding and intimacy through sharing of ideas, funny content and allows frequent communication.

Furthermore, research by Vincent (2017) posit that most people use social media for four hours every day, which is a bit higher than the amount of time found in this study (2 hours) which may be because of respondents being secretive for fear of being judged/discriminated against or study participants size being mostly from a particular race hence not enough to draw hypothetical relationship between the resulting experience among couples around the globe. More so, Vincent (2017) further acknowledged that social media communication helps partners to strengthen their relationship by fostering intimacy, promote bonding and allow them to easily and freely express themselves through communication, which supports the findings of this investigation. This supports our findings that social media use by partner make communication relaxed and simple between partners. Aligning with the finding of this study, Hand et al (2013) argued that excessive social media use can make people distracted and less attentive to their partners while they are together. As a result, their time together may be of lower quality, which may affect and degrade the intimacy of their relationships. Without social media usage the study revealed that a small percentage of couples become anxious and stressed. However, with social media usage, the study showed that it causes distraction which in turn affect their partners. Helsper and Whitty

(2010) research support the findings of this investigation that the impact of social media on couples could result in potential conflict-producing factors as well as bonding-promoting factors.

Lastly, the study revealed that social media use creates suspicion of infidelity and distrust among couples. Helsper and Whitty (2010), and Cravens et al, (2013) revealed that social media use by couples have often led to infidelity behaviors. Again, Hand et al, (2013) contends that distrust among couples is as a result of excessive use of social media. Fox and Warber (2014), cited that suspicion of infidelity and distrust has led to the couples engaging in monitoring or surveillance behavior. While Gull, et al (2019) noted that monitoring the activities of partners on social media use is due to jealousy, nervousness, uncertainty and distrust.

The study found that most of the respondents prefer to use WhatsApp social media platform to communicate mostly. Others that follow include Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Telegram, TikTok, Pinterest, Snapchat, Reddit, WeChat, Chitchat, and Google. Furthermore, the study established that the specific reason for engaging in social media is to communicate with family and friends before news and politics, socialising with others, entertainment and so on, with content creation as the least specific reason to engage in social media. Nevertheless, some challenges were found to be common among couples which were the distraction and interference in relationships. A major limitation to this study was the race of the participants. Most of the participants were African and had led to an interesting findings that most African prefer WhatsApp as a social media channel than other platforms.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The chapter encapsulate the concluding parts of this research, proffers recommendations, and acknowledges the limitations encountered and suggestions for further study.

5.3 Conclusion and Recommendation

To provide acceptable conclusions and suitable recommendations, this study examined the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationships among couples. Based on the research questions, which include: what are the opportunities and potential problems created by social media usage on interpersonal relationships among couples; what are the preferences for social media on interpersonal relationships among couples as a means of communication; and is there an impact of social media use on interpersonal relationship among couples, the following conclusions have been reached.

The study found that the most prevalent potential problems facing couples who spend a lot of time on social media frequently is distraction. This study found that couples who spend time on social experience issues like lack of communication, lack of quality time, neglect and time consumption which results in distraction in the relationship. Joo and Teng, (2017) claimed that high reliance on social media influences partners perception and behaviors. Also, Christensen (2018) established that high usage of social media is associated with low emotiveness and relationship satisfaction. All these and more are potential problems that couples face using social media. Thus, by implication distraction caused by social media can affect existing relationship to the point where new relationships is formed with

alternative person. This in turn will lead to infidelity-related behaviours, dissatisfaction, separation, and divorce.

Social media usage has the capacity to create positive and negative impacts in relationship among couples, specifically to keep couples connected and may also result in less quality time being spent by partners. Opportunities social media provides abound especially in terms of improving communication between partners including long-distance relationship.

Based on the preferences for social media on interpersonal relationships among couples as a means of communication, the study concludes that social media sustains the relationship between couples particularly those relationships that involves long distance. Interaction have been made possible, relationships getting stronger, and more virtual or online communication leading to the configurations that affect information-sharing patterns among the couples. by implication, the study affirms that social media use couples encourages information sharing and as a means of staying together. Linking this to research, Christensen (2018) affirms that couples are using social media more frequently as a means of communication to keep in touch. Additionally, the preference for social media use by couple implies that it fosters harmony, easy communication, relationship building, entertainment, knowledge sharing, intimacy and bonding, and maintains communication balance. This is supported by Christensen (2018), Nesi, et al. (2018), and Fernandez (2023) studies that couples use social media for entertainment purposes; to connect with people without having to meet them in person, to grow social networks, and to communicate with family and friends.

On the impact of social media use on interpersonal relationship among couples, the investigation reveals that there are high tendencies of suspicion of infidelity and distrust among couples. The impacts extend to negative effects such as causing conflicts, suspicious activities, and invasion of privacy by partners.

Study by Latifi (2015) noted that such impact could imply that social media use by couples, especially those extensively engrossed in it can lead to distrust/dishonesty and divorces issues.

The study therefore concludes that some of the challenges ensuing in interrelationship among couples and affect their relationships include distraction, easy communication, sharing of information, staying connected, entertainment and suspicion of distrust. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered: first, couples should be open to each other despite on the extent of the use of social media. This act will build trust, confidence and dependability among couples, and discard any form of problems or potential problems that may arise. Secondly, where there are issues of suspicion or distrust due to use or excessive use of social media, the partner involved should desist from such addiction in order to avoid separation or divorce in the future. Lastly, social media usage comes along with several benefits which have earlier being mentioned, therefore, couples should harness the inherent benefits to build a stronger relationship.

5.3 Limitation of the Study

Some of the limitations include the ability to cover a wider range of respondents, limited qualitative data and the clustered race that was surveyed (majorly Black African). These limitations would have made the study more robust and global.

5.4. Suggestions for Further Studies

This study found that social media usage can result to infidelity behaviours. Nevertheless, there are several reasons why partners engage in infidelity behaviours, thus, more research or investigation can be done to unveil the reason behind the behaviour and the impact on interpersonal relationship among

couples. Also, this research can further be expanded to cover more geographical areas such as other countries in other continents, make comparisons and draw inferences.

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