

Research Article



Social media use and marital communication of Christian couples in Sogakope, Ghana



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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the influence of social media use on marital communication of Christian couples in Sogakope. A descriptive survey design was used. The population of the study comprises all married Christian couples in the Sogakope Township with estimated population of 1,500. Stratified and convenience sampling techniques was used to sample 450 respondents for the study. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. It emerged from the study that the social media use by couples in Sogakope were Whatsapp and Facebook. In terms of demographic differentials, it was reported that the nature of social media use was similar across couples when they were grouped according to gender and age. Among the nature of social media use, instagram was positively correlated with reported marital communication of couples in Sogakope. It was concluded that the flexibility in the use of Whatsapp and Facebook encouraged couples in Sogakope to rely on them in their daily interactions. It was recommended among others that religious leaders, family members, friends and media institution should create awareness of the unwanted result of the improper social media use in marriages to save marriages in the township. Also, marriage counsellors should expose the would-be couples to the use of social media in marriages. On regular basis, couples online activities should be discussed with partners to reduce jealousy and mistrust since sound marriages are built of trust.

Keywords: Christian couples, marital communication, social media

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Public Interest Statement

Social media has become an integral part of our everyday life activity. Its advent has influenced all sphere of life including marriage among Christian couples. Communication in marriage is one of the ingredients that ensures the success of most marriage. The study therefore investigates the influence of social media use on marital communication of Christian couples in Sogakope.

Introduction

Marriages over the world are recognised as sacred institution ordained by God. Marital unions are formed on the basis of economic cooperation, companionship and procreation (Gove, 1986; Macionis, 2008). White (2015) adds that marriage involves emotional and legal commitment that is quite important in defining the couples' rights and obligations to each other (White, 2015). Communication is key in every marriage and relationship. Esere (2006) and Joo and Teng (2017) assert that communication is a life wire of marriage relationship as it signifies the way couples express love and other emotions to each other. In the words of Olagunju and Eweniyi (2002), marital communication is the elixir for ailing marital relationship. With so many Christian marriages ending tragically on the rock, Adegoke and Esere (1998) admonish couples to work on their communication challenges. This is because many marital problems escalate when there is little or no effective communication between couples. Marital communication may be viewed as how couples exchange feelings and meanings as they try to understand one another and come to see problems and differences from the other person's point of view (Wondemu, 2006). In the words of Bienvenu (1970), communication is not limited to words but also occurs through listening, silences, facial expressions, gestures, touch and all the other non-language symbols and clues used by couples in giving and receiving meaning. According to Williams (2012), prior to the digital age, couples were using the traditional offline communication, whereby couples maintained intimacy primarily through face-to-face interaction. However, the proliferation of the Internet, mobile phones and social media revolutionized the way couples are now communicating in recent times. Social media in particular make it possible for couples today to instantly connect across geographical locations by exchanging personal information online.

Social media are open, web-based and user-friendly applications that provide new possibilities for couples when it comes to the co-creation of content, social networking, the sharing of taste and relevance, connectivity and collective intelligence (Hassan & Thomas, 2006). Social networking exist so as to provide communication among people regardless of the distance, making it open to people easily share information, files and pictures and videos, create blogs and send messages, and conduct real-time conversations. Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter are among the most often mentioned social media among users, especially couples. As of 2011, Facebook accounted from more than 700 million active users, 50% of whom log on to their Facebook accounts on a daily basis and spend about 12 billion hours per month (Facebook website statistics, 2011). However, Alladi (1985) feels technology has affected the life of a household including couples in a number of different ways and has become a basis for future social behaviour. The introduction of social media have led to major social change which has meant that couples have had to adapt in a number of ways.

Studies in Africa and Europe show that 45% of the family institution today is struggling to survive. Husbands and wives frequently undergo strained relationships (Mbwirire, 2017). In fact, several studies have found that social media (e.g. Facebook) induced jealousy, partner surveillance, posting ambiguous information, compulsive Internet use, and online portrayal of intimate

relationships which could be damaging to romantic relationships (Clayton, 2014; Saleh & Mukhtar, 2015; Mbwirire, 2017). Social media have become a necessary evil today, with lots of harm to marital stability and family cohesion.

In Ghana, though few studies have been conducted to examine the role of social media on students' learning (Mahama, 2015) and market women (Djanie, 2015), there still exist paucity of empirical evidence on the influence of social media on marital communication among Christian couples. The havoc over-indulgence in social media is posing to couple cohesion in Sogakope appears to be very alarming. This havoc includes divorce and breakdown of families leading to such situation as psychiatric cases neglect of children and its attendant spill overs. As counsellors, many complaints of poor attention among partners were brought to counselling. It has also been the popular social networks such as the Facebook and Whatsapp that have contributed to a number of marriage breakdowns with the families. The use of social media may disrupt intimacy processes and introduce feelings of exclusion from one area of their partner's life, potentially resulting in perceived neglect and jealousy (Hawkins & Hertlein, 2013).

Despite the succinct study on the use of social media in the family, politics, religion, work and business settings, there is little empirical evidence in establishing the influence of social media on marital communication of Christian couples in Sogakope in the South Tongu District of the Volta region of Ghana. It was observed that perspectives into social media use were mainly mixed with Western civilisation. This study, therefore attempts to assess the influence of social media on marital communication among Christian couples with collective cultural orientation which is mainly dominated by sharing economy. Since no one had made such attempt for the township, this research was worth the effort.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The study tested the following hypotheses at an alpha level of 0.05;

H₁: There is a statistical significant gender difference in social media use among couples in Sogakope.

H₂: There is no statistical significant age difference in social media use among couples in Sogakope.

H₃: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media use and marital communication of couples in Sogakope.

Literature Review

Nature of social media use among couples

Social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram have attracted millions of users including couples, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily communication practices. Facebook is handled among other social networks in this study because of being the most popular and most heavily visited social network website (eBizMBA, 2010). A quantitative study on Facebook group uses and gratifications examined the needs and real-world social conditions that drive Facebook group use (Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009). Participants joined political groups primarily for socializing, entertainment, and to seek status and information (Park et al., 2009). While this study highlighted the usefulness of political Facebook groups, the motivations can potentially be applied toward other topics as well. However, qualitative research on Facebook groups has not been done. Assessing the actual interaction between group members will provide more insight into the motivations for using Facebook groups as support for real world circumstances (Sharaievska,

2012). A case study conducted by Saleh and Mukhtar (2015) in Dutse L.G.A Jigawa State, Nigeria revealed that the Facebook is the most frequently used social media in the study area. According to Sharaievska (2012), while the overall number of Facebook users globally is still on the rise, the majority of the increase comes from developing countries. Snow (2011) called this phenomenon "Facebook fatigue" among users and explained it as the conscious desire of people to decrease the amount of time spent on Facebook. Sharaievska (2012) added that this fatigue arose because people want to live their real lives in a more meaningful ways: spending time in face-to-face interaction, talking to family members on the phone, studying or participating in other activities they found to be more important.

The number of people who use Twitter has been on the rise and from the year of its inception in 2006 till 2010 has gained about 180 million users (Yarov, 2010). Twitter provides users a communication platform to initiate and develop connections in real time with thousands of people with shared interests (Sarno, 2009). It is also a way to get to know strangers who share the details of their daily lives (Thompson, 2013). Although users can access Twitter across many electronic devices, user interactivity is still somewhat limited compared to other social media platforms. Twitter is still popular among various groups of population in many countries of the world. Unique feature of Twitter, that makes it different from Facebook and MySpace, is the user's ability to "tweet" a response to the question "What's happening?" in 140 symbols. Using this micro-blogging system various "elite" (media, celebrities, organizations, and bloggers) and "ordinary" users give other users of Twitter an opportunity to "follow" their lives (Wu, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011). Twitter provides opportunity for variety of individuals and organizations to publicize their actions which made it attractive to users, including couples of various age groupings.

Instagram was launched as an iPhone app at October 2010 and rapidly gained popularity, reaching 10 million users in September of 2011. It is a social media app that uses images as the means of communication (Huang & Su, 2018). According to Dungo (2018), Instagram gives users the choice to either make their personal profile public, for anyone to view, or private, where they have control over who follows them and can view their profile and posts. Instagram acts like a virtual photo album which can be appealing to some individuals, but may also have negative drawbacks such as greater social comparison, greater false self-presentation, and greater need for popularity (Brandtzaeg, 2012; Dungo, 2018; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Tobin & Chulpaiboon, 2016). Twitter is a microblog network where members interact through concise messages of up to 280 characters (Rosenfeld, Sarne, Kraus, Sina & Avidov, 2018). Casas (2016) added that Instagram allows the user to take a picture or a short video, edit its visual and metadata properties and post it to the network. Edition of the media content can be made by a variety of pre-defined filters - considered one of the main features of the service. Moreover, users can add captions, hashtags and geolocation metadata. After posting a media, other users can interact with it through comments and signs of approval ("likes"). The user can also share this content in other online social networks, which extends the post's reach to beyond Instagram.

Whatsapp, a mobile instant messaging application, has reached 500 million users worldwide, sharing 700 million photos and 100 million videos daily (Acton & Koum, 2014). Built as an alternative to short messaging service (SMS), Whatsapp offers real-time texting or communication, including the ease of sharing information (e.g. contact list) or media content (e.g. audio, video files, images, location data). WhatsApp also provides additional social information to its users, e.g., contacts can

see when their friends are online, when they are typing and when they last accessed the application. Finally, WhatsApp provides delivery notifications, highlighting when a message is sent and when it's delivered to the recipients' device. Church and Oliveira (2013), in their multi-method study involving 140 individuals (between 20 and 60 year olds) in Spain, found that WhatsApp was commonly adopted for convenience in communication and cost benefits. WhatsApp is currently the most popular social media app among people irrespective of race, location and access around the world. The current study also examines whether couples in Sogakope over-indulge in WhatsApp for their daily communication with the rest of the world.

Gender and social media usage

Gender is well known predictor of online behaviour (Casas, 2016). Most of these studies investigated specific usage of social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.). For instance, Pfeiffer, Kleeb, Mbelwa, and Ahorlu (2014) report that the use of social media platforms in Africa is gendered, with Tanzania reporting 71% male users and 29% female users. Saleh and Mukhtar (2015) found that more women are subscribing to the social media than their male counterparts in Dutse L.G.A Jigawa, Nigeria. Tufekci (2008) also found that women are four to five times more likely than men to use social networking sites. A study by Rungta (2015) indicated that gender did influence the usage of Whatsapp in some cases, but there were a lot of elements like usage style, pattern, preference that showed little or no significant difference among genders. Rungta's study further reported that females were more visible in the area of usage of emotions, changing of profile pictures and status, sharing pictures, sharing emotional outburst, etc.

Mazman and Usluel (2011) examined gender differences in the use of Facebook on four sub-constructs (namely maintaining existing relationships, making new relationships, using for academic purposes and following specific agenda). From the study, it was found that females use Facebook for maintaining existing relationships, academic purposes and following agenda higher than males while males use it for making new relationships at a rate higher than the females. A study by Bartholomew, Schoppe-Sullivan, Glassman, Dush and Sullivan (2012) confirmed that mothers have greater use of Facebook than fathers, and more of mothers' Facebook friends includes their family members and their relatives, but fathers with their Facebook friends, communicating in outside of Facebook.

On gender issues in the use of Instagram, different perspectives were reported. For instance, a background survey of Instagram users in Taiwan revealed that female users constitute the majority and are also more active (Huang & Su, 2018). However, Casas's (2016) study revealed that the differences in the behaviour of male and female users are not very pronounced. Despite reporting statistically significant results, Casas attributed this to the large size of the sample size. Also, although the distributions for the average of comments and likes are practically the same for both genders, females have a slightly higher ratio of average likes and comments per follower than males. Similarly, Al-Kandari, Al-Hunaiyyan and Al-Hajri (2016) investigated the gender differences on Instagram use among 539 Kuwaiti higher education students. The study confirmed that males are more likely than females to post their personal pictures on Instagram, more likely to disclose their personal information and more likely to have public accounts unlike females who are more likely to have private accounts than males. Instagram use by males and females will not eschew from those uses of other social media. Females use it to socialize and provide opinion while males use it to collect information and pass time.

Finally, Goudreau (2010) posited that females compose the majority users of Twitter. Females prefer Twitter and other related social media because they are interpersonal and discussion-oriented while males gravitate towards information and content-oriented media (William, Consalvo, Caplan & Yee, 2009; Guadagno, Muscanell, Okdie, Burk & Ward, 2011). Al-Kandari et al. (2016) argued that females prefer social media more than males because these media are primarily social in their nature and this nature is similar to the social makeup of females. Men and women use Twitter in roughly equal proportions today (Duggan & Smith, 2014). Nilizadeh, Das, Ahn, Kapadia, Groggel, Lista and Rojas (2016) also found statistically significant differences between male and female users, in terms of self-presentation, activity, as well as how much they are followed, retweeted, and listed. Female users tweet more, follow more, have younger accounts, are more likely to have profile images, and to be retweeted and listed. At the same time, female users are less likely to be verified and to provide a location or URL in their profiles.

From the perspectives so far presented, it appears that the influence of gender on social media use is more profound in related studies. However, little or no attention is given to gender influence on social media use among couples in the Sogakope. This study aimed at finding out whether gender of marriage couples would affect the nature of social media use in Sogakope.

Age and social media usage

Statistics on social media suggests that majority of social media users are young adults (Pew Research Centre, 2010). However, some evidence suggest that number of older social media users are picking up (Madden, 2010; Smith, 2018). According Pew Internet research on older adults, social media use among internet users age 50-64 years grew by 88% (Pew Research Centre, 2010). Substantial differences in social media use by age was established in Smith's study (2018). The author found that 78% among those ages 30 to 49, to 64% among those ages 50 to 64 and to 37% among Americans 65 and older use any social media. There are pronounced differences in the use of various social media platforms within the young adult population. Americans ages 18 to 24 are substantially more likely to use platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter even when compared with those in their mid- to late-20s. With the exception of those 65 and older, Facebook is used by a majority of Americans across a wide range of demographic groups. But other platforms appeal more strongly to certain subsets of the population. Madden and Zickuhr (2011) reported that social networking sites have been very popular with young adults ages 18-29 almost since their inception. Between February 2005 and August 2006, the use of social networking sites among young adult internet users ages 18-29 jumped from 9% to 49%; during this same time period, use of these sites by 30-49 year olds remained essentially unchanged. Since then, users under age 30 have continued to be significantly more likely to use social networking sites when compared with every other adult age group. In May 2011, over eight in ten internet users ages 18-29 use social networking sites (83%), compared with seven in ten 30-49 year-olds (70%), half of 50-64 year-olds (51%), and a third of those age 65 and older (33%).

These statistics reveal one thing; that the adult population is gradually participating online. Though literature established that young adults use social media for communication in various subjects (Papp, Danielewicz, & Cayemberg, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2015), little is known about the variations in the use of social media by couples who appeared to be relatively older and medium-low socio-economic status. The study is intended to fill this knowledge in literature.

Impact of social media use on marital communication of couples

Henline and Harris (2006) states that technology in general introduces a potential to misinterpret messages between partners in relationships and marriages. This may create barriers in problem solving and intimacy development. There are also complaints of poor attention partners because one may concentrate with the gadget at the expense of his/her partner (Ngonidzashe, 2016). For instance, Hawkins and Hertlein (2013) claim that online gaming in relationships may disrupt intimacy processes and introduce feelings of exclusion from one area of their partner's life, potentially resulting in perceived neglect and jealousy. As such, these communication technologies may also disrupt communication between parties. Whitty (2003) also discovered that if a partner's computer is left accessible or a spouse's password is known, partners will often engage in investigatory behaviours that lead to the discovery of infidelity activities. It has also been the popular social networks such as the Facebook and WhatsApp that have contributed to a number of marriage breakdowns with the families. For instance, Lumpkin (2012) stated that 33% of divorce cases mentioned Facebook in 2011 and involved inappropriate messages to individuals of the opposite sex.

Social networks such as the Facebook introduce a potential to misinterpret messages on another's profile. Some make some comments on another's photograph, can send private messages and chat online. If this information is misinterpreted with a partner, it may lead to some disagreements within the household. Hertein and Anchet (2014) summarise by stating that the other challenges introduced by technology into relationships include distancing, lack of clarity and impaired trust. Joo and Teng (2017) reiterated that online communication may bring to a bad experience on online behaviour too. It is stated by Christofides, Muise, and Desmarais (2012) that postings on Facebook may also lead to feelings of regret if negative consequences such as loss of opportunity or punishment are experienced. Online disclosures may also result in negative consequences for romantic relationships that those who spend more time on Facebook are more likely to experience jealousy in response to ambiguous information that they see on the site, which may have consequences for their intimate relationships (Christofides, et al., 2012).

According to a study by Chou and Edge (2012), Facebook is a powerful influence in digital lives nowadays. It has changed their users' perceptions of the lives of friends and family members. The highlight is that the longer the people log on Facebook, the more they start to believe that others have a better life than they do. This may even cause most of them having bad impression and looking down on their family members which eventually leads to a negative conversation and relationships. Prono-Australia (2012) has further elaborated the negative aspect of social media use. Our practitioners say that separating and divorced families often use Facebook, email and mobile phones unconstructively. Abuse and bullying of previous partners through these methods is a common issue, where guidance may be required to ensure that such contact is less emotional, more business-like and productive (Prono-Australia, 2012). According to Si (2012), WhatsApp festers negative emotions in users; including anxiety, guilt, pressure, distraction, embarrassment, suspicion, and confusion. Symptoms of these emotions include worrying and a decreased self-esteem when faced with long replies, pressure to respond to messages immediately, relationship mistrust with who another person is contacting, confusion with regards to what the intended meaning of the message is, and more (Ali & Kootbodien, 2017).

Communication scholars Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukopadhyay, and Scherlis (1998) conducted a study to examine how Internet use affects social involvement. They found that

increased Internet use was associated with withdrawal from one's social circle and resulted in less psychological well-being (Kraut et al., 1998). Kraut et al. (1998) explained that strong personalities are usually supported by physical closeness or proximity, and that the Internet diminishes the significance of physical closeness in initiating and maintaining strong social connections. These physical connections are what safeguard people from the stresses of life and a withdrawal from these physical relationships may have negative implications for one's sociality (Kraut et al., 1998).

In a subsequent study, Clayton (2014) examined how SNS use, specifically Twitter use, influences negative interpersonal relationship outcomes. Clayton specifically examined the mediational effect of Twitter-related conflict on the relationship between active Twitter use and negative relationship outcomes, and how this mechanism may be contingent on the length of the romantic relationship. A total of 581 Twitter users aged 18 to 67 years completed an online survey questionnaire. The results suggested that active Twitter use leads to greater amounts of Twitter-related conflict among romantic partners, which in turn leads to infidelity, breakup, and divorce.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses in the use of social media, some studies show that young adults in romantic relationships are using SNS to connect with their partners in a positive way, which may increase relationship satisfaction (Papp et al., 2012; Pew Research Center, 2015). They found that partners that share their relationship status were more likely to state they were satisfied with their relationship. Posting partner updates and posting pictures with their partner also led to a higher degree of relationship quality (Steers, Øverup, Brunson, & Acitelli, 2015). In a study by Mesch and Talmud (2006), some portion of the youth reported their online relationships to be important and valuable. Mesch and Talmud explained that people used online relationships as a source of social support that was not available at home. Their need for social support allowed their online friendships to become more important, strong and intimate. Hertlein and Webster (2008) agreed that the development of modern communication technology has led to changes in the dynamics of interaction among people as well as to changes in how personal identities, families, friendships and communities are experienced and perceived. Opportunities provided by modern technologies and the Internet (instant sharing of pictures, immediate and inexpensive video connection, availability of countless online communities and groups) help people not only to maintain relationships with relatives and friends around the world but also to broaden their circle of acquaintances with similar interests and experiences.

Sharaievska (2012) indicates that though technologies limit face-to-face interactions, they open the world of cultures, people, and online communities. Sharaievska further argued that social network sites in particular, have redefined our perceptions of ourselves, our friendships, our families and communities. We interact differently with people and communities around us, we assign new value to privacy and intimacy, we build relationships with avatars and redefine what partnerships and relationships in real life mean. We spend a lot of time engaging in various activities that involve technology that compete for the attention of those around us. From the literature as presented, there is little knowledge regarding the impact of social media use on marital communication among married Christian couples in Sogakope Township. This study is designed to fill the gap created.

Materials and Methods

The researcher adopted the quantitative approach for the study with the help of descriptive survey design which emphasized the measurement and analysis of relationships between variables

(Creswell, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This design also helped the researcher to gather facts and contain precise information concerning "Social media use and marital communication of Christian couples in Sogakope, Ghana" with a single administration of questionnaire to large spectrum of respondents. Stratified and convenience sampling technique were used to select 450 respondents for the study. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Each person responds to exactly the same questions because standard instructions were given to the respondents Data was analysis using independent sample t-test, ANOVA and Pearson product moment correlation for research hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

Results

Hypothesis One (1)

To assess whether there is a statistical significant gender difference in the nature of social media use among couples, the alternative hypothesis was generated. Thus "There is a statistical significant gender difference in social media use among couples". To test for gender difference in social media use among couples, an independent samples t-test was conducted on the data and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: T-test analysis on gender and nature of social media use

Social Media	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	t	p
Facebook	Male	186	3.223	.700	448	1.265	.207
	Female	264	3.136	.728			
Twitter	Male	186	2.589	.877	448	.259	.796
	Female	264	2.588	.886			
Instagram	Male	186	1.477	.522	448	.754	.452
	Female	264	1.563	.533			
Whatsapp	Male	186	3.578	.545	448	-.076	.940
	Female	264	3.658	.554			

Table 1 shows that differences exist in the individual mean scores of male and female respondents with respect to the nature of social media use among couples. For instance, male respondents reported highly on Facebook usage (M=3.223, SD=.700) than the female respondents (M=3.136, SD=.728). Similar result was recorded for Twitter usage among male respondents (M=2.589, SD=.877) and female respondents (M=2.588, SD=.886). However, female respondents seemed to score highly on Instagram use (M=1.653, SD=.533) than male respondents (M=1.477, SD=.522). Also, female respondents scored highly on Whatsapp usage (M=3.658, SD=.554) than their male counterparts (M=3.578, SD=.545).

Though it can be observed that there are differences in the reported means of nature of social media when respondents are grouped according to gender, however, these means are not statistically significant. This is because the t-value for each of the reported social media use is less than the critical value of -1.96 to 1.96. Also, the computed significance levels are greater than the set

value of 0.05 (5%). The hypothesis is therefore rejected. The results indicate that social media usage does not significantly differ among couples when there are categorised in terms of gender. This suggests that differences in the reported means were due to chance. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. By implication, husbands and wives approximately use social media in equal measure.

Hypothesis Two (2)

To assess whether there is a statistical significant age difference in the nature of social media use by couples in Sogakope, the null hypothesis was generated. Thus "There is no statistical significant age difference in social media use among couples". ANOVA test was run to answer the hypothesis and the results are presented in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on the nature of social media use by age

Social media	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Facebook	Less than 30 years	26	3.058	.759
	31-40 years	272	3.188	.711
	41-50 years	152	3.163	.723
Twitter	Less than 30 years	26	2.587	.877
	31-40 years	272	2.622	.852
	41-50 years	152	2.528	.934
Instagram	Less than 30 years	26	1.510	.492
	31-40 years	272	1.527	.538
	41-50 years	152	1.531	.524
Whatsapp	Less than 30 years	26	3.702	.561
	31-40 years	272	3.595	.531
	41-50 years	152	3.666	.583

From Table 2, it can be observed that differences exist in the use of social media when couples are classified according to age. For Facebook use, couples aged between 31-40 years reported highly ($M=3.188$; $SD=.711$), followed by those within 41-50 years ($M=3.163$, $SD=.723$) and respondents who reported 30 years or less ($M=3.058$, $SD=.759$). Similarly, respondents aged 31-40 years scored highly on Twitter usage ($M=2.622$, $SD=.852$), followed by respondents aged 30 years or less ($M=2.587$, $SD=.877$) and respondents aged 41-50 years ($M=2.528$, $SD=.934$). Regarding Instagram usage, it was found that respondents aged between 41-50 years scored highly among the age groupings. It was followed by respondents aged 31-40 years ($M=1.531$, $SD=.524$). However, Whatsapp usage was reported highly among respondents who were 30 years or less ($M=3.702$, $SD=.561$), followed by respondents aged 41-50 years ($M=3.666$, $SD=.583$) and respondents aged 31-40 years ($M=3.595$, $SD=.531$). To ascertain whether the reported means have reached statistical significance, One-way ANOVA test was run and the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA test on nature of social media use by age

Social media		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Facebook	Between Groups	.426	2	.213	.413	.662
	Within Groups	230.477	447	.516		
	Total	230.903	449			
Twitter	Between Groups	.867	2	.433	.557	.573
	Within Groups	347.684	447	.778		
	Total	348.551	449			
Instagram	Between Groups	.011	2	.005	.019	.981
	Within Groups	125.843	447	.282		
	Total	125.854	449			
Whatsapp	Between Groups	.661	2	.331	1.088	.338
	Within Groups	135.745	447	.304		
	Total	136.406	449			

The ANOVA table revealed that there is no statistical significant age difference in the social media use by couples in Sogakope. This is because the F-ratios for each of the nature of social media use are less than the critical value of -1.96 to 1.96. Also, the computed significance levels are greater than the set value of 0.05 (5%). The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis Three (3)

In ascertaining whether there is relationship between nature of social media use and marital communication of couples, the null hypothesis was generated. Thus, "there is no statistically significant relationship between social media use and marital communication of couples in Sogakope". Pearson product moment correlation analysis was performed and the result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Pearson correlation on nature of social media use and marital communication of couples

		Marital comm.	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Whatsapp
Marital Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.030	-.040	.104*	.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.522	.401	.027	.344
	N	450	450	450	450	450
Facebook	Pearson Correlation	.030	1	-.011	.153**	.107
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.522		.814	.001	.023
	N	450	450	450	450	450
Twitter	Pearson Correlation	-.040	-.011	1	.077	-.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.401	.814		.105	.978
	N	450	450	450	450	450
Instagram	Pearson Correlation	.104*	.153**	.077	1	.259**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	.001	.105		.000
	N	450	450	450	450	450
Whatsapp	Pearson Correlation	.045	.107*	-.001	.259**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.344	.023	.978	.000	
	N	450	450	450	450	450

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlational test in Table 4 revealed that Facebook use ($r(450) = .030, p = .552$), Twitter use ($r(450) = -.040, p = .401$) and Whatsapp use ($r(450) = .045, p = .344$) were insignificantly correlated with reported measure of marital communication. The results suggest that the observed relationships were due to chance. However, a positive relationship was ascertained for Instagram use and reported measure of marital communication ($r(450) = .104, p = .027$). The result suggests that the observed relationship was not due to chance. It can be inferred from the results that statistical relationship exists between some social media forms than others with Instagram use and marital communication producing positive significant relationship. The practical implication of this result is that anytime there is an increase in the use of Instagram, a discord in marital communication may also increase.

Discussion

To assess whether “there is a statistical significant gender difference in the nature of social media use among couples in Sogakope”, the result contradicts the findings of Pfeiffer et al.’s (2014) who reported that the use of social media platforms in Africa is influenced by gender. Similarly, the result contradicted the position of Saleh and Mukhtar (2015) that more women are subscribing to the social media than their male counterparts in Dutse L.G.A Jigawa, Nigeria. Tufekci (2008) also found that women are four to five times more likely than men to use social networking sites. In terms of specific findings, it was established that differences in the use of Facebook is not gendered as Bartholomew et al. (2012) and Mazman and Usluel (2011) reported in their respective studies. Huang and Su (2018) and Goudreau (2010) revealed that female users constitute the majority and are also more active on Instagram. Finally, Rungta (2015) indicated that gender did influence the usage of Whatsapp in some cases. It is deduced that knowledge in the use of social media is similar among couples in Sogakope irrespective of gender. One reason that helped to explain this finding was that couples in general relied more on, and often used social media when attempting to acquire or share information with others. For example, messaging, following, tweeting and videoing are common phenomena among social media users irrespective of gender. This finding also implied that social media platforms are not gender sensitive. It seems couples similarly use social media for specific purposes (such as messaging, downloading, reading trending news among others).

To assess whether “there is no statistical significant age difference in social media use among couples in Sogakope”, the results indicate that the reported differences were mainly due to chance. The results confirmed that number of older social media users is increasingly picking up (Smith, 2018). However, differences in the use of the various social media platforms are not profound among marriage couples when they are considered according to age. The results suggest that marriage couples, irrespective of age use social media platforms similarly. Couples in Sogakope use social media to organize and join events and groups for individuals with similar interests and connect with public figures and other people through comments, pictures, and posts. Social media also seemed to afford couples tremendous opportunity in exchanging information in a rapid, efficient, low-cost manner. Similarly, these social media platforms appeared to provide timely and accurate information in incredibly reassuring ways to couples.

In ascertaining whether “there is no statistically significant relationship between social media use and marital communication of couples in Sogakope”. The findings support the assertion of Henline and Harris (2006) that the use of social media introduces a potential to misinterpret messages between partners in marriages. According to Ngonidzashé (2015), misinterpretation may come as a result of poor attention among partners because one may concentrate on the gadget at the expense of his/her partner. Social media use in marriage may disrupt intimacy processes and introduce feelings of exclusion from one area of their partner’s life, potentially resulting in perceived neglect and jealousy. Aggrieved partners may engage in investigatory behaviours that could lead to the discovery of infidelity activities. Some of these investigatory behaviours may lead to divorce.

In addition, the findings agreed with the thought of Henline and Harris (2006) that technology in general introduces a potential to misinterpret messages between partners in relationships and marriages. Following people, viewing pictures and commenting on post may create barriers in problem solving and intimacy development. Hawkins and Hertlein (2013) believed that online activities may disrupt intimacy processes and introduce feelings of exclusion which may result in

perceived neglect and jealousy. With Instagram use, people are free to post or share number of sensitive comments without thinking about the influence the shared information may have on the marriage.

Conclusion, recommendation and implications for counselling

The following conclusions are drawn based on the findings from the study. Concerning gender and age differences, it was concluded that the use of social media is similar across various gender and age groups. It was further concluded that couples recognise the consequential effects of social media on marriages. Divorce in marriage characterised by social media addiction is imminent as online infidelity is likely to compromise stability of relationship. The following recommendation and implication for counselling were made. Couples' gender and age should not be significant variables used by marriage counsellors when creating awareness on applications of social media in marital communication. For enhancement in marital communication, couples are encouraged to use Whatsapp and Facebook whenever they are online.

Religious leaders, family members, friends and media institution should create awareness of the unwanted result of the improper social media use in marriages. This will reduce online infidelity and incidence of divorce intentions among couples in Sogakope. Couples should be encouraged to interact with each other on social media for instance having a group on WhatsApp platform where they can exchange views about a particular subject even when they are on holiday. This will in turn encourage the use of social media to improve couples' relationship. As part of premarital counselling procedures, marriage counsellors should expose the would-be couples to the use of social media in marriages. On regular basis, couples online activities should be discussed with partners to reduce jealousy and mistrust since sound marriages are built of trust.

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Authorship and Level of Contribution

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