INFIDELITY AMONG MARRIED MEN IN IMO STATE: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE

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ABSTRACT

The study assesses the influence of social media on infidelity among married men in Imo state. Survey method was adopted for this study with population of 5,408,800 and a sample size of 400 was arrived using Taro Yamani formula. Multistage sampling technique was adopted and questionnaire was the instrument of data collection. Finding revealed that 44.98% of the respondents agree that social media is the cause of infidelity among married men, 36.24% of the respondents agree that infidelity can be controlled through the social media and 54.24% respondents affirm that Facebook is the social media handle mostly used to perpetuate infidelity. The study concluded that social media is the cause of infidelity among married men in Imo state but can be controlled through the social media. Also, Facebook is the social media used by married men in Imo state to perpetuate infidelity. Hence, the study recommended that married men should leverage on the good side of the social media than exploring the negative aspect of it, Messages about family goals should be displayed more on the social media and married men should try use other social media handle leveraging on it good side in order to avoid the risk of being infidel to their spouse.

Keywords: Social media, infidelity, married men, Imo State

Introduction

Over the last 20 years, there has been a significant shift in information and communication technology, with the rise of social media being one of the major developments. Social media continues to be an essential component of modern life and plays a big role in it. It can play a significant role in our lives and is woven into the fabric of who we are (Etumnu & Williams-Etumnu, 2023). More is changing in social media than in communication. Real-world actions have been impacted by communication ever since the first caveman grumbled at his wife twice to indicate he was lonely and once to indicate he was hungry (Quintana, n.d).

Social networking has helped many new relationships start, but it has also caused some marriage problems. Depending on how it's used, social media use can have a favourable or detrimental impact on relationships, according to study (Hallet & Moore, 2020). Couples may spend more time building a "image" of themselves on social media than actually focusing on their relationship, for example, and this can lead to unhealthy comparison and inflated expectations for what partnerships should be like. Use of social media has also been connected to depression and a bad body image, both of which can harm relationships. It's normal to ask how social media impacts our relationships and other aspects of our lives. Even though social media can help us remain in touch with our loved ones, find new wedding ideas, network, and make new friends, it can also have an impact on our offline realities because of the lifestyles we lead online. When one partner's online activity begins to alter the dynamic of a relationship, it might even become alarming.

Social networking can strengthen romantic relationships, but it can also weaken them. It's simple to feel envious of our partner's online experiences, whether it's a "like" on a picture or someone interacting with others. However, what occurs when the issue stems not from the people we converse with, but rather from our own use of social media? (Savoie, 2021).

Numerous couples have used social media to expose their spouses' infidelity. It's simple to strike up a discussion with a coworker or an old crush on social media. These discussions may eventually result in further stuff. At first, it might seem innocent, but as you converse more, you might grow closer. This can therefore result in you flirting or confiding in someone else about important issues instead of your partner. It is possible that after taking your spouse out for lunch or coffee, you will cheat on them. In terms of emotions or sexuality. Research has indicated that Facebook contributes to contemporary infidelity. An individual uses Facebook for fifty minutes a day on average. Globally, Facebook stands as the most popular online media platform (Beyens et al., 2016; Steers, 2016). Facebook and Twitter, two of the most popular social media platforms, each have over 100 million members (Gull et al., 2019). People are uploading things they want you to see, which is the issue. Nobody is uploading pictures of their hardships. If you see someone else on social media and you're feeling a little uncomfortable in your relationship, you could assume that person has the ideal life. However, this is not how things really work. Social media diverts attention from interpersonal relationships, making it more difficult to live in the moment (David, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Studies have shown that the social media is one of the common causes of infidelity in marriages. Social media is now a contributing factor to about a third of all divorces. A couple of years ago, that number was 25% (Gornbein, 2021). Social media though a means of leveraging on business opportunities and creating healthy friendship has over the years shifted from its main purpose to creating problems between and among couples. The research seeks to understand the role the mass media has played in causing infidelity among men to their wives. An understanding of this will enable homes know how to use wisely the various social media handles and improve on marriage goals.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out if social media is the cause of infidelity among married men
2. To find out if infidelity can be controlled through the social media
3. To ascertain the most used social media handle for perpetuating infidelity among men

Review of Related Literature

Infidelity

A breach of an emotional and/or sexual couple's exclusivity, infidelity (synonyms for cheating, wandering, adultery, being unfaithful, or having an affair) frequently causes feelings of resentment, sexual jealousy, and competitiveness. When a married individual or someone in a committed relationship has sex with someone else, it is called infidelity (Collins, 2021). Anything that involves emotional or sexual acts that go against the commitment of the primary relationship might be considered infidelity (Moller & Vossler, 2015). Additionally, according to Meyer (2021), infidelity is defined as the act of being disloyal to a spouse or other partner. It usually refers to having romantic or sexual interactions with someone other than one's significant other while also breaching a pledge or commitment. A partner's previous agreement to maintain their emotional and/or sexual exclusivity is broken when they commit infidelity (Choosing Therapy, 2021).

Schneider et al. (2012) identified three distinct forms of marital infidelity: emotional infidelity, which entails a strong emotional connection and profound feelings for another individual. This can be

having erotic thoughts about that individual); Sexual Infidelity: This kind of infidelity entails having sex and being physically intimate with someone else. essentially having sex or acting as though one is having sex with someone other than their spouse); Cyber Infidelity (occurs when a person is emotionally and physically drawn to someone online). Individuals who engage in online flirtation and even have virtual affairs. Additionally, according to Meyer (2021), there are five (5) distinct kinds of infidelity: conflict romantic infidelity, opportunistic infidelity, required infidelity, romantic infidelity, and commemorative infidelity.

Choosing Therapy (2021) explains that there are different types of infidelity. These include:

- **Physical Infidelity:** external to the partnership physical or sexual contact. There could be an emotional element between partners, or not.

- **Emotional Infidelity:** intimacy or emotional attachment to another individual. A partnership can suffer just as much, if not more, from emotional affairs as from physical ones.

- **Cyber Infidelity:** People can now participate in online forums, groups, chats, and communications with sexual material more easily thanks to social media. A further aspect of cyber infidelity is the viewing of erotic materials like pornography.

- **Object Infidelity:** An object affair might arise from an obsession or interest outside of the partnership. This is a circumstance where one partner's attention is diverted from the relationship by anything, such work or their phone.

- **Financial Infidelity:** In many relationships, the subject of money eventually comes up for discussion. A spouse may lie about their income, how they make it, how much debt they have, how they spend it, or how they lend it out if the relationship reaches the point of financial adultery. It's possible that they conceal money in cash or other bank accounts, which their partner is unaware of.

- **Micro-cheating:** A word used to describe behaviours that annoy a partner but don't want to leave the relationship, like flirting.

- **Combined Infidelity:** when more than one kind of infidelity is present. Both emotional and sexual intimacy are present in many infidelities. Alternatively, a cyber-affair could be viewed as a type of emotional infidelity.

Social Media

Social media was first used by friends and family as a means of communication, but businesses soon embraced it as a way to reach out to customers and capitalise on a popular new communication tool (Jumbo et al., 2023). Over 3.8 billion people utilise social media worldwide (Dollarhide & Drury, 2021). While some people use social media to communicate with various communities, many people use it to remain in touch and engage with friends and family. Social media is a popular tool used by companies to advertise and promote their goods. A collection of web-based applications known as social media facilitates the production and sharing of user-generated content. It is a term that is frequently used. Social media may also be defined as a way for individuals to communicate with one another through creating, sharing, exchanging, and commenting on various networks (Matyek et al., 2022).

Dollarhide and Drury (2021) define social media as computer-based technology that makes it easier for people to share information, ideas, and thoughts by creating online communities and networks. According to Andreas and Michael (2010), social media is a collection of web-based applications that

support the interchange of user-generated material and expand on its ideological base. According to Wigmore (2020), social media refers to a group of online apps and platforms that emphasise community-based input, communication, interaction, sharing of content, and teamwork. Popular social media platform types include Wikipedia, Pinterest, Twitter, Facebook, and Wikipedia (Wigmore, 2020).

According to Hudson (2020), social media refers to any digital tool—including a variety of websites and apps—that enables users to instantly generate and share information with the public. "A collection of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content," is how Kaplan (2018) describes social media. According to Hudson (2020), there are three different types of social media: discussion networks, media networks, and social networks.

According to Tufts (n.d.), social media refers to the ways in which individuals engage with one another through the creation, sharing, and/or exchange of ideas and information within online groups and networks. Popular social networking sites and tools include: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube/Vimeo, Twitter, Facebook blogs, and Instagram

Empirical Review

In a study, Abbasi (2018) looked at the behaviours associated with infidelity and social media addiction in a sample of 365 partners—242 women and 123 men. We also investigated if age affects this relationship. According to the findings, age moderates the association between SNS addiction and behaviours connected to adultery on SNSs. The study also reveals a negative correlation between age and adultery on social networking sites and addiction to them. Adams (2017) looked on the elements that lead to using social networking sites for online infidelity. Impulsivity predicts those who seek to commit online infidelity, a category not previously studied. Both professionals and people can use the study's findings to enhance their individualised therapy practices. The study's conclusions suggest that further research should be done on social networking site usage, online adultery, and the demographic of those who try to commit infidelity.

The study by Widiantari et al. (2019) looks at the impact of online infidelity and Facebook exposure of marital personal information on divorce. 16 Facebook users who are single and have divorced within the last five years were interviewed online. Additionally, this study looked into the information in their Facebook status updates and disclosures, their online adultery, and the impact of all of them on divorce.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on The Uses and Gratification Theory was credited to Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler and Michel Gurevitch in 1974 as cited in Baran and Dennis (2012, p. 290), this formed the theoretical base for study. The theory makes emphasis on how the media influence on people is limited to what they want the media to do. This theory suggests that people's needs influence the type of media they would choose. According to Esimokha (2014), the theory holds that the media consumer actively influences the media's consumption or reception because he or she chooses, pays attention to, interprets, and retains the media's messages according to needs or beliefs.

This idea focuses on how individuals interact with the media. The idea originated with surveys that questioned respondents about their media consumption habits. The idea also highlights the supposition that people utilise social media in the hopes that it would fulfill some of their requirements. As a result, married men take advantage of social media and use it to their advantage in order to feel satisfied. This argument is also applicable because media is used by audiences to meet their requirements. According to the use and gratification theory, people utilise media to satisfy particular needs and wants. Unlike many theories of media that consider media consumers to be passive.

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Methodology

The study adopted the survey method was adopted for this study. Through this method, the researcher selects a representative sample from the population and later generalizing on the said population (Okoye et al., 2022). The population of the study consisted of male adults in Imo State. According to ZhujiWorld.com (2022) population projection, Imo State has 2,260,613 male population. In determining the sample size, the researcher used the Taro Yamane's method and got 400 as the sample size. For the sampling technique the multistage sampling technique was used to select the representatives of the sample.

First Stage; Stratified Sampling: Ten local governments were selected by the researcher.

Second Stage; Non-proportionate Sampling Technique: The researcher divided the sample size by the number of local government area sampled. The researcher randomly selected 10 community from which the 400 copies of the questionnaire was distributed. Therefore, 40 audience members were sampled for each of the communities. The 40 respondents will be accidentally sampled.

Third Stage; Purposive Sampling Technique: This was used to select sample of respondents in selected local government areas based on their level of literacy and use of social media. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data collected from the field through questionnaire as an instrument was presented in tables, using numbers and simple percentages. The researcher distributed 400 copies of the questionnaire to the local governments (LGA). From the numbers distributed, 389 (97%) valid copies were retrieved and found valid. This means that 11 (3%) copies were lost to the field.

Table 1 Analyzing the responses of respondents on social media being the cause of infidelity among married men

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	36	9.25%
Agree	175	44.98%
Strongly Disagree	72	18.50%
Disagree	106	27.24%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The analysis from Table 1 above revealed that 44.98% of respondents agree that social media is the cause of infidelity among married men. This means that majority of the respondents agreed that social media is the cause of infidelity among married men.

Table 2: **Analyzing the responses of respondents on infidelity being controlled among married men through social media**

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	72	18.50%
Agree	141	36.24%
Strongly Disagree	70	17.99%
Disagree	106	27.24%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Analysis from Table 2 indicated that 36.24% of the respondents agree that infidelity can be controlled through the social media. This implies that infidelity can be controlled through the social media.

Table 3: Analyzing the responses of respondents on the social media handle mostly used to perpetuate infidelity among married men

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	211	54.24%
WhatsApp	107	27.50%
Instagram	35	8.99%
Twitter	36	9.25%
Total	**389**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the above data in Table 3 above, 54.24% respondents said Facebook is the social media handle mostly used to perpetuate infidelity. By implication, majority of the respondents said Facebook is the social media handle mostly used to perpetuate infidelity.

Discussion of Findings

The data analyzed indicated that 44.98% of respondents agree that social media is the cause of infidelity among married men. 27.24% and 18.50% of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree respectively, while 9.25% strongly agree that social media is the cause of infidelity among married men in Imo state. This means that the majority of the respondents agree that social media is the cause of infidelity among married men in Imo state. There is no gainsaying the fact that social media is the cause of infidelity among married men in Imo state. This finding is consistent with that of Abbasi (2018) who found out that SNS addiction and behaviours connected to adultery on SNSs.

Analysis revealed that 36.24% of the respondents agree that infidelity can be controlled through the social media. While 27.24% disagree to this, 18.50% strongly agree and 17.99% strongly disagree. This means that the respondents agree that social media can be used to control infidelity among married men in Imo state.

Interpretatively, the data analyzed revealed that 54.24% respondents affirmed that Facebook is the social media handle mostly used to perpetuate infidelity among marry men in Imo state, 27.50% respondent said it Whatsapp, 9.25% respondent said it is twitter and 8.99% respondents said it is Instagram. This implies that the married men use Facebook to perpetuate infidelity among married men in Imo state. This finding is consistent with the uses and gratification theory which postulated that people use the media to gratify their needs.

Conclusion

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the study avow that social media is the cause of infidelity among marred men in Imo state but can be controlled through the social media. Also, Facebook is the social media used by married men in Imo state to perpetuate infidelity.

Recommendations

1. Married men should leverage on the good side of the social media than exploring the negative aspect of it
2. Messages about family goals should be displayed more on the social media
3. Due to the finding that Facebook is used to perpetuate infidelity, married men should try use other social media handle leveraging on it good side in order to avoid the risk of being infidel to their spouse.

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