

**The Impact of Social Media Usage on Marital Satisfaction Among Couples: A  
Comprehensive Mixed-Methods Research Proposal**

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### **Abstract**

This research proposal explains the influence of the use of social media on marital satisfaction among married people within the age brackets of 25-50 years. As more integration of social media in daily life is taking place, one question regarding its impact on intimate relationships becomes relevant. This study will adopt a mixed-methods design in order to quantify the relationship between social media engagement and levels of marital satisfaction, as well as identify the perceptions of couples and their strategies in dealing with the effect of using social media on their marriage. It will involve a purposive sample of participants totaling 200, who will answer standardized questionnaires, and a subsample of 20 who will undergo semi-structured interviews. Ethical considerations, particularly informed consent and assurances of confidentiality, will be observed throughout the research process. The present study might provide an articulate understanding of how digital connectivity shapes modern marital dynamics by addressing possible limitations.

### **Introduction**

Social media dominates modern communication, and such communication has changed the way in which people connect with each other. There are, however, some possible downsides to these sites, particularly where intimate relationships are concerned, although these platforms do at times provide greater avenues for communication. Research has shown that these sites sometimes can represent a chance for one to connect and yet simultaneously be a source of conflict in marital relationships (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011). Excessive use has been linked to increased jealousy, reduced quality time, and breakdown in communication since those involved are not communicating because they are busy on social media sites (Clayton, Nagurney, & Smith, 2013). On the contrary, other research indicates that there is increased closeness and

understanding between partners if social media are used productively (Valenzuela, Halpern, & Katz, 2014).

In view of these conflicting views, this present study deems it necessary to develop a balanced and nuanced examination of the relationship between social media use and marital satisfaction. It merges quantitative measures with qualitative insights in a comprehensive analysis of this dynamic, hence providing substantial knowledge to the literature of family therapy and digital communication studies.

Theoretical framing for the following research will be supported by Social Exchange Theory, by Homans (1958), and the Digital Age Marital Interaction Model proposed by Hertlein & Blumer in 2013 (Homans, 1958; Hertlein & Blumer, 2013). According to Social Exchange Theory, it is perceived costs and rewards that maintain relationships. In contrast, the Digital Age Marital Interaction Model places these exchanges into digital communication ecosystems. Together, these theoretical frameworks will provide a guide in interpreting the findings to illustrate how digital tools shape marital dynamics.

### **Research Question**

How does social media usage affect marital satisfaction among couples aged 25 to 50?

### **Hypothesis**

H1: Higher levels of social media usage are associated with lower marital satisfaction among couples aged 25 to 50.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Social Media and Relationship Dynamics**

Much research has explored how social media relates to intimate relationships. According to Utz and Beukeboom (2011), during positive usage of the social media sites, it could improve relationship satisfaction since it allows the partners to share daily experiences and keep in contact with one another despite physical distance. Similarly, in support, Hampton et al. (2014) identify that social media potentially supports intimacy as evidenced by allowing couples to share interests and participate in meaningful dialogues.

On the other hand, there are those studies that have found opposite signs. Clayton et al. (2013) cite that intense utilization of Facebook is directly associated with jealousy and distrust. This has been the case, especially when individuals perceive one's self or partner as flirting or being secretive online. These findings share resonance with Tokunaga (2011), who reported that ambiguous online communication is often the cause of misunderstandings, conflict, and emotional hurt.

### **Marital Satisfaction**

Marital satisfaction may be defined as emotional intimacy, quality of communication, and perceived support in marriage (Spanier, 1976). While companionship time, conflict resolution behavior, and such external stressful events as economic or social pressures remain the determinants; with the advent of social media, increased importance has been catapulted to hitherto new aspects of online communication practices and exposure to external social networks-these have now become significant predictors of marital relations (Valenzuela et al., 2014).

### **Gaps in Literature**

While much of the previous research indeed provides important insights, it often lacks the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. This means that subjective experiences constituting the basis of quantitative correlations were not understood. Again, most studies take into consideration only single platforms or fail to take into account cultural and socio-economic differences in social media use. This study attempts to address such gaps through the application of a mixed-methods approach and a diverse participant pool.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The methodological design for this study is a mixed-methods design, setting a combination of quantitative data collection and qualitative interviews. This study is merited by the capability to not only capture measurable patterns but also nuanced personal experiences that contribute to those patterns (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). In this respect, the integration of the different methods will guarantee a strong analysis, as both statistical trends and individual perspectives are taken into consideration.

### **Participants**

The sample will include 200 married people aged between 25 and 50 years. The respondents to the study should be active users of at least one social networking site and should have been married for at least two years to allow the marital dynamics to be well established. The responses will be collected through purposive sampling, where participants will be targeted through advertisements on social media, local community organizations, and marital counselling centres. Efforts must be made to ensure diversity in gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

### **Instruments**

1. Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS): This scale is used to measure marital satisfaction, which functions across domains: consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. This instrument is already a standard because it has gone through validity and reliability for marital studies (Spanier, 1976).

2. Social Media Usage Questionnaire: The frequency of the use of social media shall be assessed by a self-designed questionnaire, including the time spent and the type of interaction (I.e. commenting and messaging).

3. Semi-Structured Interviews: These interviews will discuss the perceptions that participants have regarding the impact of social media on a marriage, specifically touching on issues relating to trust, communication, and time allocation.

### **Procedure**

The online survey that participants will go through shall consist of demographic questions, RDAS, and questionnaires about the use of social media. The surveys shall be followed by qualitative interviews for 20 participants, who shall be chosen based on the variance in social media usage and RDAS scores. Interviews shall be recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed thematically.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data analysis will be done using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis in order to understand the predictive relationships between these measures. Qualitative data will be thematically analyzed by using open, axial, and selective coding for deriving patterns and unique insights. NVivo software is to be utilized for data management and analysis.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval has been sought from an Institutional Review Board. Informed consent forms with detailed explanations regarding the purpose of the study, the procedures, and confidentiality will be provided to the participants. Data anonymization and storage in a locked location is important in maintaining participant privacy. The participants will also be at liberty to withdraw at any stage of the study without any adverse implications. Additionally, referral resources regarding marital counseling will be provided in case the research invokes emotional responses.

### **Potential Limitations**

#### **Self-Report Bias**

Self-report methods are vulnerable to underreporting negative experiences and overestimating positive behaviors. Validated instruments like RDAS will be used for this purpose, while triangulation with qualitative data will also be considered.

#### **Cross-Sectional Design**

This study is cross-sectional in nature; thus it cannot allow causal inferences. And further research might opt for a longitudinal design to capture temporal change or shifts in marital satisfaction.

### **Cultural Considerations**

The current study will approach the limitation that cultural and socio-economic factors may act as moderators in the relationship between social media use and marital satisfaction with diverse sampling and subgroup analyses.

### **Practical Implications**

Such findings could help marital therapists to pinpoint those social media behaviors that are either hurting or helping marriages. It could also help in educating couples on the best way they can view and use social media to strengthen relationship quality. Results can also help the designers of social media networking sites in developing features that foster good relational outcomes.



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