

Social Media and Divorce Case Study of Dutse L.G.A. Jigawa State

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Abstract: *This paper examined the impact of social media on marital relationship. Specifically, it aims at studying how social media can lead to divorce among couples. Using stratified random sampling technique, a structured questionnaire was distributed to 140 respondents as well as interview with two more respondents. The data collected from the surveys were presented in a frequency distribution table with simple percentage. Qualitative method was also employed to reflect the data sourced from interview. The study found that, more women are subscribing to the social media and irrespective of sex differences, social media users are spending more time using the social network sites. Facebook is the most frequently used social network site in the study area. Moreover, majority of the respondents believed social media can lead to infidelity and all of them agreed it can lead to divorce. The paper suggests that, people should be wary of how they utilize the social media, who they interact with in social media platform, and what they post or share. New human invention is not entirely positive; society should therefore check the possible damages it can cause to our collective morality. Society can achieve this by orientating young people and adults alike on proper social media usage.*

Keywords: *Communication, divorce, infidelity, social media, social network sites*

I. Introduction

The information revolution is both a blessing and a vice to the modern man and woman alike. One remarkable aspect of the revolution is not just the bombardment of news but also drastic transformation of social network. In some recent decades, the term social network was merely a form of social connectedness between individuals by virtue of physical interaction and communication. With the emergence of social media, electronic-based forums are created, discovery of new information and new acquaintances are enhanced, reconnection with lost friends is facilitated, and communication by people from around the world has become easier. And it had been interestingly found that, before the year 2012, in every four people worldwide, one uses social network sites to communicate and share ideas with one another (Seopressor, 2014).

This is fascinating because with the widespread of internet usage around the world, social media have become important platforms for establishing intellectual connections, social movements' outreaches, awareness creation, sharing political views and/or interest. In addition, the social media websites are also strategic for engagement of businesses with customers. Besides all these functions, social media are threats to families and moral values. Marriage, an institution that surmounts interpersonal interaction and attraction, is very important topic of sociological concern. People who became friends through social media can subsequently be declared as husband and wife, but the marriage is becoming more vulnerable to threats posed by the social media. In other words, Social media connect individuals who found themselves mutually compatible and ultimately become spouses. Just like they build homes, social media equally break families.

Because of the possible damages that divorce can cause, social media should be used as a avenue for warning against marriage dissolution rather than instigating more spousal disputes. Divorce is one of the most often mentioned major life events (Gähler, 1998) and can cause major stress and upheaval for many, and a sense of relief and opportunity for personal growth for others. It is no wonder that divorce and family instability have attracted wide attention among social scientists (Harkonen, 2013). With so many people online and connecting in new ways, it's hard to predict just how far this problem will go before it's routed (Stetzer, 2014).

This paper aims at examining the contribution of social media increase in divorce among couples. Like other human inventions, social media has both the good and bad sides. As one of the emerging negative roles, the relationship between social media and divorce would be brought to empirical appraisal in this study. Suggestions will also be made at the tail end of the paper on how to properly utilize social media lest any possible termination of marital union at any home due to social media.

Statement of the Problem

The evolution of social network sites (SNSs) and their widespread usages have provided communication and psychology researchers with an avenue to investigate, more than ever, computer mediated

communication. As a result, scholars have compiled a body of research that has systematically investigated the dynamic, complex interactions between SNS use, health, and romantic relationship outcomes. In fact, several studies have found that 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).

Social media have become a necessary evil today, with lots of harm but a trend cannot be done without. With Facebook having the greatest number of users (over 900 million) worldwide (2014), one-third of females aged 18-34 check Facebook when they first wake up, even before going to the bathroom. In the U.S. alone, Facebook has been linked to 66 percent of divorces and the 81 percent of the nation's top divorce lawyers claiming clients have cited using social networks as damning evidence against their spouses in the past five years (Abramovich, 2013). Another study released July 2014, analyzed the relationship between social media platforms, marriage satisfaction, and divorce found that there is a link between Facebook and increasing divorce rates (Snider, 2014).

The above facts and figures are telling the world that, social media have effect on marital instability and destroy family. The facts also showed that, Facebook is the busiest social network sites. It is not surprising that Nigerian people subscribe and log on to the Facebook more than they do to the other social network sites. With the current wave of the social media subscription, the paper therefore seeks to draw attention of the people, especially young people who have been reported to be more tech savvy (very proficient) in using ICTs in general, and social media in particular (Bashir, 2013), to make cautious use of such sites for education, entertainment, awareness creation, positive relationship and spread the message of peace and unity across the not spousal cheating and evil. Uthaymin (2011) also warned the youth against non judicious utilization of time. If social media is to be regarded as something beneficial to the society, it must be used be used wisely and in productive manner not on flirting and obscenity.

Definition of Concepts

Social media, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary (2014) referred to as electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and micro-blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos).

It is worth noting that, social media has evolved and become more complex whereby no single concept can represent the variety of services it enhances. As a result, communication scholars developed a systematic typology so that each social network site can neatly fall under one category or the other. Grahl (2014) identified six (6) types of social media: 1) social networks, 2)bookmarking sites, 3)social news, 4)media sharing, 5)micro-blogging, 6)blog comments and forums. Divorce is the termination marital union. From the legal point of view, divorce is defined as "the legal separation of man and wife, effected, for cause, by the judgment of a court, and either totally dissolving the marriage relation, or suspending its effects so far as concerns the cohabitation of the parties (The Law Dictionary,2014).

II. Methods And Tools

Because the study is on social media and divorce, the target population consists of the entire male and female users of the social media in the study area (Dutse L.G.A.) that are married and those who once were married but are presently not living with the partner due to divorce or death (widow/widower). However, the study is also beneficial to young people who are the future husbands and wives, but they are not part of the study population.

From the entire population, a sample of 142 is selected. Out of the 142 respondents, 140 were given structured questionnaires. The questionnaire inquired on issues demographic characteristics, type of social network site(s) used, intensity or frequency of the usage, the gender category that has highest share among respondent's friends in the social media, relationship problem due to social media usage, respondent's perception on social media and infidelity and possibility for social media can lead to divorce. The sampling technique used was stratified random sampling method because there are areas with preponderance of educated people such as Yadi/Gida Dubu, Takur site/Godiya Miyetti, Garu, Zai,Bokoto, danmasara, and Fatara. These areas usurped more of the respondents; therefore the stratification is on the literacy level not on the basis of population size of a given area. And it descended based on the same criteria. For example, 12 questionnaires were administered in the perceived highest educated area, Takur site/Godiya Miyetti, because majority of the residents in the area are civil servants and by implication active social network sites' users are found there. The area with least literacy level is Chai-Chai, where only two (2) questionnaires were administered.

The remaining two respondents were interviewed an open-ended questions. The instruments of the data collected are therefore mixed modes of inquiry rather than qualitative or quantitative alone. This would be reflected in the presentation and interpretation of the result. Another source of the data in this study is secondary source-journals, internet sources and text books.

III. Results

Here, the outcomes of the survey in this study are to be presented. But out of the 140 questionnaires being distributed, 125 were retrieved and only 119 are useful for they are legible and correctly filled (except where option is given). Thus, the result is built on the available and useful questionnaires (N=119).

Table 1: Respondents' gender distribution (N=119)

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	49	41.2
Female	70	58.8
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 2: Types of social network site(s) used by the respondents (N=119)

Type of social network site	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	58	49
Twitter	-	-
Watsapp	20	17
2go	-	-
Vadoo	-	-
Two or more	41	34
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 3: Distribution of frequency on respondents' log in to social media (N=119)

Time	Frequency	Percentage
Once a day	69	58
Two times a day	22	18.5
One time in a week	8	6.7
Two times in a week	20	16.8
Two times in a month	-	-
Once in a year	-	-
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 4: Whether or a respondent's spouse uses social media (N=119)

Respond	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	59	49.6
No	60	50.4
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 5: Whether a respondent ever had a relationship problem because of social media (N=119)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	16.8
No	99	83.2
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 6: Respondent's perception of whether social media usage can lead to infidelity (N=119)

Can it lead to infidelity	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	94	79
No	25	21
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 7: Respondents' opinions on whether social media lead to divorce (N=119)

Can social media lead to divorce?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	119	100
No	0	0
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2014

In addition, respondents were asked of the gender category that has the highest share among their social network site friends. It was found that, 34 males (28.6% of the total sampled and 69% of the number of males in the total sample) have more male friends than females. 15 male respondents (12.6% of the total sample and 31%

of the number of males in the total sample) have more female friends than male in the social media. From the female respondents also, 33 respondents (27.7% of the total sampled and 47% of the number of females in the total sample) have more male friends than their female counterparts. So also, 37 female respondents (31.1% of the total sampled and 53% of the number of female within the total sample) have more female friends than males.

During the conduct of interview, the first and second respondents were asked on the experience they had because of the social media usage. Each of them was asked whether social media can lead to spousal cheating or infidelity. However, the interviews took place at different places and times, both reflected similar responses (Yes!). The first responded confessed how the use of social media connected him to one lady with whom he never came in physical contact, unless by phone contact, and they began to love each other while, it was few weeks to his marriage. The respondent said,

I met a woman whom I never seen or known before. But because of the frequency of our chat and exchange of mails, I began to develop interest in her, although my wedding was around the corner as at then. We even began to communicate on phone and we have been communicating till her marriage few months ago... This happens, in fact, my friend a woman via social network site contacts. It depends on your intention.

Although, the other respondent believes social media can lead to divorce, he said, "I do not have any chaos at home because of social media. I have time for the Facebook and time for my wife also".

IV. Discussions

The results of the study feed the research with important information. Beginning from the respondents' gender in Table 1 it surprisingly represents an irony of our society. Our society is known to be patriarchal or male dominated society, but the finding shows that female outnumbered the male here, where female respondents account for 70 (58.8%) and male respondents 49(49.2%).

Coming to the Table 2, Facebook, like in other societies, is the most patronized social network sites in the study area and probably in the whole world. Facebook has 58(49%), Whatsapp 20(17%), while 2go, twitter and vadoo had zeroes. But there are respondents that subscribed to more than one social media sites and they took the rest of the figures, i.e. 41(34%).

The Table 3 represented the frequency of the respondent's log in to the social network site. This is important because it shows how active social media user is different from the non-active. And the intensity of login into the sites determines the possibility for domestic crisis as a user gives little or no attention to the partner's rights. Here, those that log in once a day are 69(58%). Those that log in twice a day account for 22 (18.5%), weekly log in was 8(6.7%), twice a week has 20(16.8%), monthly logging and one time in a year had nil. This implies that, people are increasingly devoting much of their times on social media, hence active social media usage was ranked highest. Clayton (2014) cautions that, while social network sites may be beneficial in helping users keep in touch with others, research has shown that excessive social network sites use can be detrimental to romantic relationships. Relationships, both personal and impersonal, are social in nature, and therefore involve one's social networks. Since Twitter and Facebook use maps on to one's social networks it has potential role in the process of relationship maintenance and termination seems quite likely (Tong 2013).

Table 4 showed the responses of the sampled elements on whether or not their spouse subscribed to any social network site. Out of the 119 respondents, the partners of 59 (49.6%) of them are using the social media. Those whose partners are not using social media were 60 (50.4%).

In the Table 5, we had seen how some of the respondents faced relationship problems because of the social media usage. As indicated on the table, very few of them, 20 (16.8%) had familial crisis because of social media. The vast majority of the respondents, 99(83.2%) did not have any relationship problem due to the social media. We can discern that, if people can use the social media cautiously, they may not face any conflict. Failure to that can cause a person a great cost, lost of reputation and marital union. The U.S. Census shows that the divorce rate in 2008 was 5.2 persons per 1,000 people, aged 15 to 64 years. This was down from the rates of 6.2 in 2000 and 7.2 in 1990. The divorce rate may have dipped in the past few decades, but drama still exists in the courtroom. Now, social media and web information has become a factor in many divorce cases, with lawyers taking the online evidence to support their clients (Landers, 2013).

As table 6 shows, 94 (79%) of the respondents agreed that social media can lead to infidelity in marriage, while 25 (21%) believed that it will not. The issue of infidelity on social media is worrisome, because individuals with propensity to infidelity might have no opportunity to cheat before the emergence of these modern communication technologies. With the advent of the social media, connections of like minds become very easy. According to the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), 81% of its members have used evidence plucked from social networking sites, including Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, and LinkedIn, in the past five years. The AAML has a membership of 1,600 matrimonial attorneys throughout the country. "Sometimes a person will discover a spouse's infidelity through a Facebook posting," says Ken Altshuler, president of the AAML. "More commonly, lawyers can gather evidence from people who post

information on their Facebook page concerning their income and employment, lifestyle activities, or a change in relationship status.”Web information is used in court, particularly if it shows that one party is seeking out companionship while still married, according to Dickey.

The last table (table 7), the study found that, all of the respondents agreed that social media can lead to divorce. There is no established causality (on the direct impact of social media on divorce), but the outcome supported the study as people generally believed that, there is relationship between the two variables.

In addition, the remarks made by the first respondent who was subjected to interview indicated that infidelity can creep into the social media users’ romantic relationships. Notwithstanding, people shall not turn a blind eyes on the positive sides of the social networks in our socio-economic and political lives. Social media is really fascinating in the contemporary era for many reasons. A Divorce Financial Strategist, Jeff Landers states that:

I am seeing more and more that not only can social networks and digital communications contribute to the breakup of a marriage, they can have unforeseen consequences in divorce settlement negotiations, as well. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Instagram and other social and professional networking websites and smartphone applications have become important part of how people interact in today’s culture. They are fun and useful, and these days, they are second nature to many of us. When something happens in our lives, we post about it to let our friends know. When something happens in our careers, we update our profiles to enhance professional connections. We are sharing personal and professional news, triumphs and tragedies, laughs and tears.... And lots and lots of pictures (Landers, 2013).

V. Conclusion

The study explored the relationship between social media and divorce and it found that majority of people that subscribe to one or more social network sites have it in mind that it can lead to infidelity and to divorce as well. It also discovered that more females are now subscribing the social network sites. This trend reveals that, unlike before, women are not underrepresented in the social activities today. The new trend also shows how literacy level among females is increasing nowadays. While social media can be a fun place to reconnect with old friends and keep up with new and current ones, it can also play a deadly role in a marriage. With so many people online and connecting in new ways, it is hard to predict just how far this problem will go before it is routed (Stetzer, 2014). Society must therefore orientate young people and adults on proper use of the social media if it is to safeguard its moral tenets and prevent media-mediated divorce.

VI. Recommendations

The paper recommends the following:

- more studies on the same or related topic should be taken to contribute more to the area because there are few studies;
- people should be wary of how they use social network facilities. There are always two ways of acting-the good and the bad. Let us cherish our moral values and avoid the bad company even through the faceless interaction;
- Usmani(2011) advice people in marriage about avoiding anything that can injure the marriage relationship. If social media can cause a slight domestic problem, person shall do away with it and make their marital lives survive. Despites its significance, social media is new trend and avoiding it will not subject a person to emotional disturbance, but marital breakup will. Marriage is an oldest institution in human history as such it must not be downplayed by the social media;
- people should also know with whom they are interacting. Some people could come to your life in order to destroy it rather than improving it. Some may seek to know your secret and then leak it to the world. Some friends are disguised enemies. So knowing about the sincerity of friendship they establish with fellow social network users is paramount;
- there is growing concern on the activities of hackers in the social media today. Not all information and content is real, therefore, if one sees something shocking or immoral related to their spouse, they should jump and take action. Simulation of reality has in many ways came to be easy by ICT experts. The appropriate action is to investigate carefully about the veracity of the content or information;
- lastly, religious leaders, family members, friends and media institution shall create awareness of the unwanted result of the improper social media use.

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