

Social Media, Digital Technology, and Sex-Related Conflicts among Christian Couples in the Good Message Baptist Association, Lagos State, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62154/ajrts.2025.04.01015>

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of social media and digital technology on sex-related conflicts among Christian couples in the Good Message Baptist Association, Lagos, Nigeria. In recent years, increased digital engagement among Christian couples has been linked to emotional disconnection and declining sexual intimacy, yet limited empirical research has addressed this issue within faith-based marital contexts in Nigeria. This gap has hindered the development of effective ethical and pastoral responses to marital crises related to digital life. The study argued that digital engagement, particularly through social media, disrupts sexual intimacy in marriages but can be addressed through targeted interventions like digital literacy and faith-based counselling. Adopting a descriptive mixed-methods approach, the research combined quantitative and qualitative data collection. A total of 300 participants were selected from a population of 1,200 Christian couples married for 5 to 25 years, using stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Quantitative data were gathered through a 20-item structured questionnaire, while qualitative data were drawn from semi-structured interviews with 20 participants. The results revealed a significant negative correlation between time spent on social media and sexual satisfaction ($r = -0.58$), and a strong positive correlation between technoference (digital distractions) and conflicts stemming from online interactions ($r = 0.66$). Thematic analysis highlighted recurring issues such as emotional disconnection, jealousy linked to social media activity, body image concerns influenced by idealized online personas, and the role of faith-based counselling in conflict resolution. The study concluded that excessive digital engagement erodes marital intimacy and contributes to sex-related conflicts among Christian couples. However, digital literacy and religious counselling were identified as effective interventions. These findings underscored the importance of setting clear digital boundaries, encouraging open communication, and incorporating social media awareness into marital counselling. The study offered relevant empirical evidence from a Nigerian Christian context and contributed to the broader discourse on technology's impact on marital intimacy, particularly sexual intimacy.

Keywords: Digital Technology, Sex-Related Conflicts, Technoference, Christian Couples, Good Message Baptist Association, Lagos, Nigeria.

Introduction

In today's digital age, technology and social media have significantly reshaped interpersonal relationships, including marriage. Couples now navigate a fast-evolving digital landscape that offers both increased connectivity and new relational challenges. This transformation is particularly relevant for Christian marriages, where core values such as fidelity, mutual respect, open communication, and covenantal commitment underpin the marital bond.

Digital technology and social media have increasingly shaped how couples interact, often affecting emotional and sexual intimacy. In Christian marriages, especially within urban faith communities like The Good Message Baptist Association in Lagos, these changes raise ethical and relational concerns. While digital tools provide new forms of connection, they also introduce distractions that can disrupt communication and intimacy (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; Hertlein & Blumer, 2014).

Previous studies have surveyed how technology contributes to marital dissatisfaction and communication breakdown (Eke, Omoike, & Nwoke, 2024; Ibrahim & Okafor, 2024), but few have examined its direct influence on sexual satisfaction and conflict among Christian couples. Even less attention has been given to faith-based responses such as pastoral counselling and spiritual support. Within The Good Message Baptist Association, where spiritual values guide family life, these gaps present both a pastoral and research concern. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how digital engagement affects sex-related conflicts among Christian couples in the Association. It also examines how faith-based interventions may help restore intimacy and resolve conflict, contributing to the broader understanding of digital ethics in Christian marriages.

The core argument of this study is that while digital technology poses risks to marital intimacy, intentional faith-based interventions rooted in counselling, media awareness, and spiritual guidance can help Christian couples maintain intimacy and navigate the pressures of the digital age.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the relationship between social media usage, technoferece, and sexual satisfaction among Christian couples.
2. To identify the lived experiences and coping strategies of couples facing sex-related conflicts linked to digital technology.
3. To evaluate the role of faith-based counselling in addressing and mitigating digital-related marital conflicts.

Literature Review

Tecnoference and Intimacy

In recent years, the issue of technoferece- the disruption caused by digital technologies within intimate relationships has drawn increasing attention from scholars and counsellors alike. It refers to how frequent technology use, particularly smartphones and social media,

interrupts or replaces quality interpersonal interactions between partners. Within the Nigerian context, where mobile phone penetration has grown rapidly and digital connectivity has become part of everyday life, the implications of technoference in marriages are essential.

Studies such as those by McDaniel and Coyne (2016) suggested that constant technological interruptions, especially during shared time between couples, are strongly associated with reduced emotional intimacy and growing marital dissatisfaction. Their findings indicated that when devices intrude on private conversations or moments meant for bonding, couples experience less connection and more conflict. In Nigeria, where urban families increasingly rely on digital communication even within the same household, the intrusion of smartphones into family time is becoming a growing concern (Adeniran & Iwu, 2022).

Similarly, Hertlein and Twist (2018) argued that although technology can assist in communication, excessive or misaligned use of digital tools can create emotional distance, confusion, and even distrust between spouses. For Christian couples in Nigeria, these challenges are elaborated by religious expectations around togetherness, trust, and communication in marriage. While many churches promote unity and open dialogue, the digital age introduces distractions that make sustained, meaningful engagement increasingly difficult.

Beyond communication, digital technology is also reshaping the landscape of sexual intimacy in marriage. Social media, online forums, and mobile applications now serve as primary platforms for engaging with discussions, images, and opinions around sexual intimacy. This access has not only changed how sexual content is consumed but also influenced beliefs about what intimacy should look like. For many Christian couples in Nigeria, these developments present moral and relational tensions. While the church emphasizes chastity, covenantal love, and mutual respect, digital platforms often promote values that are at odds with these teachings (Okonkwo, 2023).

Rambukkana (2015) noted that the digital environment frequently celebrates freedom of sexual expression and experimentation, which can conflict with religious values about sexuality and marital exclusivity. Nigerian Christian couples, in particular, may feel torn between biblical teachings and the alluring but conflicting messages online. Uche and Oluwafemi (2021) discovered that many Christian couples in Southern Nigeria face pressure to conform to unrealistic romantic and sexual standards presented on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, which may negatively affect their contentment and sexual confidence within marriage.

In line with this, Penner and Penner (2020) observed that the polished and often exaggerated portrayals of romance and intimacy online can lead spouses to question their own relationships, enhancing feelings of inadequacy and disappointment. For Christian couples, this dissatisfaction is not only emotional but spiritual, as they may begin to feel they are failing to meet both cultural and religious standards of a "perfect" marriage. Unfortunately, many churches in Nigeria have yet to provide adequate teaching on digital

engagement, leaving believers ill-equipped to evaluate or resist these pervasive influences (Obinna, 2023).

Another pressing concern is the prevalence of online pornography, which represents a major challenge for Christian marriages worldwide, including Nigeria. Struthers (2019) stressed that repeated exposure to pornographic material can distort one's understanding of sex, promoting a mechanical and often dehumanized view of intimacy. In Nigeria, young married men have reported early exposure to pornography, which later affects their ability to build emotionally satisfying sexual relationships (Eze & Balogun, 2021).

Levine (2020) also associated pornography use with negative impacts on trust, self-esteem, and sexual fulfilment in marriage. In response, many church leaders advocated for confession and abstinence. However, Adewale and Nwosu (2022) contended that such spiritual responses, while important, are not sufficient without counselling, open dialogue, and educational interventions that help couples address the root causes of addiction and relational breakdown.

Despite these challenges, digital technology also holds constructive possibilities for enhancing intimacy. McMinn (2018) noted that when used intentionally, online platforms can provide Christian couples with access to therapy, sexual education, marriage enrichment programmes, and safe spaces for honest conversation. In Nigeria, some ministries are beginning to offer online courses, counselling sessions, and webinars on marital issues, integrating scriptural teaching with psychological insights (Ibrahim & Okafor, 2024).

As such, Christian educators and counsellors must adopt a balanced approach. Rather than portraying technology solely as a threat or evil, they should engage it as a tool that requires wisdom and discernment. Within the Nigerian setting, where digital culture is evolving quickly, the church must provide couples with both spiritual grounding and practical tools to navigate intimacy in a digitally saturated world. A thoughtful integration of biblical truth, psychological care, and cultural awareness can help Christian spouses build deeper emotional and physical connection, even amid technological change.

Social Media as a Catalyst for Marital Conflict

Scholars universally recognize social media as a significant catalyst for marital conflict. Clayton et al. (2014) contended that platforms such as Facebook enhance opportunities for jealousy and emotional infidelity, as spouses engage in romantic or secretive online behaviour. Such interactions erode trust and create insecurities that often result in withdrawal from emotional and sexual intimacy. Similarly, Dakanalis et al. (2015) highlighted that idealized body portrayals on social media negatively affect women's body image and sexual confidence, further escalating marital tensions.

Ayantayo (2018) contextualised social media within the broader media ecology as dynamic communication tools that have evolved beyond personal interaction to include religious outreach and business networking. These platforms' high interactivity enables users to present curated identities, which can distort expectations within intimate relationships.

In Nigeria, limited but consistent research revealed these global concerns. Adegboyega (2022) reported that social media distractions increase misunderstandings and conflicts among married couples in Ilorin, while Eke et al. (2024) discovered that social media use disrupts physical and emotional intimacy among Christian couples in Rivers State. Adegoke (2023) further stressed that Christian faith can both challenge and support couples in managing these tensions, highlighting faith-based counselling as a crucial conflict resolution resource.

As a researcher, my contribution lies in critically integrating these insights to argue that while social media introduces relational risks such as jealousy, unrealistic expectations, and secrecy, these challenges are compounded in Christian marriages by inadequate engagement with digital media literacy and faith-informed coping strategies. Unlike existing scholarship that focused solely on social media's disruptive potential, this research advanced a proactive framework that combines theological reflection, psychological insight, and media education to empower Christian couples. It proposed that intentional spiritual and practical interventions can transform social media from a source of conflict into an instrument for marital enrichment and resilience in Nigeria's contemporary digital context.

The Christian View of Marriage

Christian marriage is fundamentally understood as a lifelong covenant grounded in scripture, emphasising unity, love, complementarity, and mutual sacrifice. It is regarded not merely as a social contract but as a sacred, exclusive union between a man and woman that demands commitment beyond emotional satisfaction, with biblical teachings outlining roles that promote fidelity, permanence, and holiness (Hebrews 13:4). This spiritual framework situates marriage as an institution requiring faithfulness, particularly in times of conflict, reinforcing its divine origin and unbreakable nature.

From a biblical perspective, marriage is a divinely sanctioned covenant and legal union between a mature man and woman, created for companionship, procreation, and societal stability, as rooted in Genesis 2:24. David (as cited in Smith, 2015) explained marriage as both a legal and spiritual bond, while scholars like Nwagwu (2019) described it as a foundational social relationship, albeit challenged by contemporary complexities. Nwobi (2017) further emphasised the moral and legal responsibilities that marriage carries, impacting societal order. However, this study argued that legal and social obligations alone are insufficient without emotional and spiritual maturity, as idealizing marriage without adequate preparation often leads to weak and unstable unions.

Blitchington (2018) advocated for distinct but complementary gender roles to foster marital harmony; however, this research critiqued rigid gender roles as potentially outdated, advocating instead for equality and mutual respect that enrich biblical values rather than contradict them. Ireton (2020) perceived marriage as an unbreakable divine covenant but can overlook evolving cultural and relational dynamics, while Omolola (2016) rightly

emphasized the importance of emotional and psychological health alongside spiritual grounding as vital to enduring marriages.

Furthermore, this study argued that Christian marriage should foster individual fulfilment within God's purpose, responding to critiques like Akinrinmade's (2019) caution against reinforcing inequality through traditional role models. Citing Galatians 3:28, it supported egalitarian partnerships that promote communication, autonomy, and shared responsibility. While Walrond-Skinner (2017) upheld marital permanence, this research suggested for theological flexibility, recognizing trauma and abuse that may necessitate temporary separation.

Adewale (2018) focused on joy, peace, and emotional support, aligning with this study's call to integrate relational skills such as empathy and communication into Christian marriage education. Ultimately, a holistic Christian approach must combine conflict resolution, counselling, and spiritual maturity, offering a balanced theology rooted in scripture yet responsive to contemporary realities, thus preparing couples for the complex challenges of modern marriage.

Christian Ethics and Digital Use

Christian ethics provide a grounded moral framework for navigating sexual and relational conflicts within marriage, particularly in the context of digital disruptions. Biblical teachings emphasize that marriage is a sacred covenant characterized by fidelity, love, and mutual respect- principles rooted in passages such as Hebrews 13:4. From this perspective, marital intimacy must be preserved against digital intrusions that undermine trust, emotional connection, or spiritual unity.

Behaviours that threaten marital unity- such as neglect, jealousy, or secrecy are often escalated by excessive social media use or device distraction. Christian ethical teaching emphasizes self-control, patience, and responsible stewardship of one's time and attention, including digital habits (Galatians 5:22–23). Additionally, believers are encouraged to heed the guidance of the Holy Spirit in moral discernment when interacting with technology (John 14:26), discerning which digital practices support relational health and which pose risks.

Accountability to God and a commitment to reconciliation when conflict arises agreed with the biblical injunction to love one another deeply (John 13:34). In practical terms, faith-based counselling and community accountability systems play a vital role in helping couples manage technoference and maintain intimacy. Nigerian scholars such as Okonkwo and Adeyemo revealed the importance of integrating media literacy into pastoral ministry: they argued that equipping couples to critically evaluate and resist harmful digital influences, while adopting intentional, faith-centred engagement, enhances marital unity and spiritual resilience.

The researcher proposed a structured model that links Christian ethical values, digital discernment training, and spousal covenant agreements. This model emphasizes proactive spiritual and digital boundaries—such as “device sabbaths,” mutual transparency routines,

and digital content covenanting that are informed by scriptural ethics and tailored to Nigerian cultural contexts. Unlike existing literature that addresses ethics and media literacy in isolation, this study integrated them into a cohesive framework designed to equip Christian couples with both moral clarity and practical tools in a technology-saturated environment.

Causes of Sex-Related Conflicts

Sex-related conflicts remain a significant source of conflict and crisis in marriage, often rooted in sexual dissatisfaction when intimate needs feel unmet. Yücel and Gassanov (2021) engaged dyadic analysis to establish a strong correlation between sexual and marital satisfaction, affirming sexual intimacy as a vital indicator of relational health. Sprecher and Cate (2022) cautioned that the relationship is bidirectional: dissatisfaction can both stem from and trigger broader marital issues. Commonly, mismatched desire where one partner has a higher libido originates frustration, emotional distance, and rejection.

Mark (2020) highlighted gendered dimensions in mismatched desire, yet Conley et al. (2019) opposed that considerable individual variation transcends gender norms. This critique supported Gottman's emphasis on spousal communication about intimate needs to prevent misunderstanding and conflict. Nigerian research aligns- Uche and Balogun (2023) found that couples in Southern Nigeria experience heightened conflict when partners avoid discussing sexual expectations, leading to unmet needs.

Infidelity- both emotional and physical is widely acknowledged as deeply damaging to trust. Glass and Wright (2020) observed that emotional infidelity, especially via digital media, can be as devastating as physical betrayal. In Nigerian Christian contexts, Ellison et al.'s (2018) insights are reflected in Obinna's (2022) findings that framing sex as an obligation often induces guilt and diminishes satisfaction, especially when emotional connection is lacking.

Pargament (2018) provided an alternative by framing sex as sacred, suggesting that sanctifying intimacy can deepen marital bonds. Uche (2022), writing from Nigeria, applied this concept to local marriage education, showing that viewing sex through a spiritual lens reduces conflict and increases satisfaction.

Emotional and psychological barriers such as anxiety, trauma, or relational stress further disrupt intimacy and are often under-addressed in faith-based settings. Nigerian scholar Adebayo (2023) emphasized the need for trauma-informed Christian counselling to support couples holistically.

As the researcher, my contribution integrates these insights into a culturally and spiritually dynamic model. The researcher proposed a holistic framework that combines sexual communication exercises, trauma-aware Christian counselling, and spiritual reflection on intimacy as sacred. These structured interventions- rooted in scripture, emotional intelligence, and Nigerian cultural context equip faith-based couples to address and resolve sex-related conflicts in a holistic manner.

The Good Message Baptist Association, Lagos

The Good Message Baptist Association was formed in June 2011 as a breakaway from the Good News Baptist Association. Comprising over 19 churches and 26 pastors, the Association serves as a spiritual network fostering Christian fellowship, doctrinal teaching, community outreach, and holistic development. Governed by an executive council, the Association emphasizes scriptural and marital faithfulness, fidelity, love and communal support.

Despite its spiritual depth, the association, like many others in Nigeria, faces increasing pastoral counselling demands due to rising cases of digital-induced marital tension and disharmony. This study contributes to the internal efforts of this Association by providing empirical insights and ethical recommendations.

Methodology

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media influences sex-related conflicts among Christian couples. The use of a mixed approach enabled data triangulation, enhancing the credibility and robustness of the findings through the convergence of numerical patterns and personal narratives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Sampling Techniques

The quantitative part involved stratified random sampling of 300 married adults affiliated with The Good Message Baptist Association in Lagos. Stratification was based on age group, gender, and church branch, ensuring demographic representation across key variables. This technique enhanced generalizability by reducing sampling bias within subpopulations. Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 55 years, with marital durations between 5 and 25 years.

In contrast, the qualitative section employed purposive sampling to select 20 couples from the initial pool. Selection was based on survey indicators showing varying levels of technoference and sexual satisfaction, enabling deeper exploration of differing relational experiences. Purposive sampling was appropriate here to access rich, context-specific narratives related to the study's central themes. The quantitative questionnaire consisted of four core sections:

1. Demographic profile (age, marital duration, number of children)
2. Average daily time spent on social media
3. Technoference scale – adapted from McDaniel and Coyne's (2016) scale, measuring digital interruptions during couple time (e.g., "My partner gets distracted by their phone during intimate moments"; 5-point Likert scale)
4. Sexual satisfaction and conflict indicators – using a 5-item scale measuring frequency of sex-related conflict, satisfaction with sexual communication, and

perceived intimacy, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

Reliability was tested through Cronbach's alpha: technoference scale $\alpha = .84$; sexual satisfaction/conflict scale $\alpha = .81$, indicating strong internal consistency. Content validity was ensured through expert review by three specialists in Christian counseling, family therapy, and pastoral care. Pilot testing with 15 couples led to minor adjustments in item wording for cultural clarity.

The semi-structured interview guide included open-ended questions such as:

- "Can you describe a time when social media interfered with your sexual relationship?"
- "What role does faith play in how you manage intimacy issues?"
- "How do you and your spouse resolve digital-related conflict?"

Interviews lasted 30–40 minutes and were conducted in private, church-approved spaces.

Data Analysis and Integration

Quantitative data were analysed using Pearson correlation to examine relationships between daily social media use, technoference frequency, and sex-related conflict indicators. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) method, involving coding, theme development, and interpretation. Themes were cross-referenced with survey trends to identify consistencies and contradictions.

In this convergent design, both data strands were analysed separately and then merged during interpretation. For example, if a quantitative correlation showed that high technoference related to low sexual satisfaction, qualitative insights were used to explain how and why this occurred in specific marriages. This approach enabled a richer, contextual understanding beyond numerical trends alone.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of a Nigerian theological institution. Informed consent was secured from all participants, who were briefed on the study's aims, confidentiality assurances, and their right to withdraw at any point without penalty. Participants' identities were anonymised using pseudonyms, and data confidentiality was maintained through secure storage of digital and physical records. Additionally, participants experiencing distress during interviews were referred to a church-based Christian counselor for follow-up support.

Theoretical Model: Virtue Ethics

This study adopted Virtue Ethics- a moral framework rooted in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and later developed within the Christian tradition by thinkers like Reinhold Niebuhr and Stanley Hauerwas to explore how character formation influences marital intimacy, digital use, and conflict (Aristotle, trans. 2009; Hauerwas, 1981; Niebuhr, 1932).

At its core, Virtue Ethics emphasizes the development of moral character through habitual practice of virtues such as fidelity, patience, self-control, and love (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2022). Virtue Ethics focuses on who individuals are becoming- an emphasis especially pertinent for Christian couples navigating digital-age challenges (Wadell, 1992). This framework is applied to the study in three key ways:

1. **Digital Use:** Virtue Ethics addresses the moral dimensions of digital behaviour such as excessive screen time, online secrecy, and consumption of inappropriate content by encouraging self-control and integrity. These virtues help couples form disciplined habits that resist digital overreach into emotional and relational space.
2. **Marital Intimacy:** The virtues of fidelity and emotional availability are key to sustaining intimacy. By shaping character toward selfless love, fidelity and empathetic presence, Virtue Ethics promotes the kind of personal transformation that deepens emotional and physical connection between spouses.
3. **Conflict:** Rather than attributing marital conflict solely to external digital pressures, this model frames conflict as a reflection of underdeveloped moral character. Growth in virtues such as humility, patience, and forgiveness equips couples to manage tensions constructively.

In faith-based counselling and pastoral care, Virtue Ethics offers a valuable approach: it integrates spiritual disciplines such as prayer, accountability, Scripture, meditation as practices that nurture moral resilience. These habits not only mitigate emotional detachment and jealousy triggered by online interactions but also cultivate enduring relational harmony (Hauerwas, 1981; Wadell, 1992). Summarily, Virtue Ethics influences digital use moderated by self-control, integrity, intimacy enhanced by love, fidelity, empathy and conflict reduced through humility, patience, forgiveness.

Data Analysis and Findings

Data Analysis

The study used a mixed-methods approach, integrating descriptive and correlational statistics (quantitative) with thematic analysis (qualitative). A total of 300 Christian couples participated in the survey, while 20 couples were selected for semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and Pearson correlation coefficients to explore relationships between variables. While advanced techniques (regression or structural equation modeling) were considered, the current phase of the research prioritized clarity and accessibility for applied pastoral and community contexts. All correlations reported include significance levels and are based on $n = 300$.

1. Quantitative Results

A. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Interpretation
Time on Social Media (hrs/day)	3.1	1.43	1	6	Participants spend an average of 3.1 hours/day on social media.
Technoference Frequency	3.7	1.15	1	5	Indicates a moderate-to-high level of digital interference.
Sexual Satisfaction Level	3.2	1.27	1	5	Moderate satisfaction; signs of dissatisfaction exist.
Conflict Due to Online Content	3.4	1.22	1	5	Moderate level of conflict attributed to digital activity.

($n = 300$)

Scale used: 1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High

B. Correlation Matrix with Significance Levels

Variables Compared	Pearson r	Sig. (p-value)	Strength	Interpretation
Time on Social Media ↔ Technoference	0.64	$p < 0.01$	Strong Positive	Increased screen time is linked to higher interference.
Time on Social Media ↔ Sexual Satisfaction	-0.60	$p < 0.01$	Strong Negative	More screen time relates to lower sexual satisfaction.
Time on Social Media ↔ Conflict Online	0.62	$p < 0.01$	Strong Positive	Greater usage causes more digital-content-related conflict.
Technoference ↔ Sexual Satisfaction	-0.53	$p < 0.01$	Moderate Negative	Interference disrupts intimacy and satisfaction.
Technoference ↔ Conflict from Online Content	0.68	$p < 0.01$	Strong Positive	Digital disruption increases marital conflicts.
Sexual Satisfaction ↔ Conflict from Content	-0.65	$p < 0.01$	Strong Negative	Lower satisfaction leads to higher conflict levels.

($n = 300$ couples; 2-tailed significance test)

$r \geq 0.5$ considered strong; 0.3–0.5 moderate; below 0.3 weak

2. Qualitative Findings (Thematic Synthesis)

A thematic analysis of interview responses from 20 couples identified four dominant patterns affecting marital intimacy in the digital age.

Theme 1: Emotional Disconnect

Participants reported neglect and emotional distance due to partners' excessive phone use.

"My wife is always on her phone when we should be talking. It makes me feel alone even when she's beside me." (Respondent 7, Male, 42)

Theme 2: Suspicion and Jealousy

Social media interactions, such as private chats and public engagements, triggered mistrust.

"I caught my husband chatting privately with a woman online, and I couldn't stop thinking he was cheating." (Respondent 13, Female, 35)

Theme 3: Body Image and Sexual Confidence

Exposure to idealized online images affected participants' body esteem and willingness to initiate intimacy.

"After seeing perfect bodies on Instagram, I felt unattractive and stopped initiating sex." (Respondent 4, Female, 38)

Theme 4: Faith as a Coping Resource

Church counselling and prayer were cited as effective tools for resolving digital-related conflict.

"Our pastor helped us set rules about phone use and spending quality time together; it saved our marriage." (Respondent 20, Male, 47)

3. Discussion of Findings

The study confirmed a significant and negative relationship between digital engagement and marital intimacy among Christian couples. The average of 3.1 hours/day on social media correlates with increased technofence and reduced sexual satisfaction. This supported previous literature (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; Clayton et al., 2013) while extending insights into the faith-based Nigerian context.

Importantly, Christian counselling, spiritual accountability, and prayer emerged as practical buffers against technofence-related marital stress. These findings suggest the integration of digital literacy and relational ethics into church-based marriage education programmes. The implication is that faith communities have a strategic role in mediating the effects of digital culture on Christian marital life.

This study affirmed that social media and digital technology have a measurable impact on sex-related conflicts among Christian couples. The average 3.7 hours daily social media use corresponds to increased technofence and diminished sexual satisfaction. The negative relationship between digital engagement and intimacy underscores the challenge technology poses to marital harmony.

In Nigerian Christian contexts, where marriage is a spiritual covenant, the tension between digital realities and biblical values intensifies conflict. However, faith-based counselling emerges as an effective mitigating factor, helping couples re-align their values and communication.

The findings aligned with global studies (McDaniel and Coyne; Clayton et al.) but provide fresh insight into a Nigerian faith-based setting. The study highlights the necessity for

religious communities to incorporate digital literacy and address technoference openly within marriage education.

Contributions to Knowledge

1. This study expanded technoference research into faith-based contexts, illustrating how Christian doctrines such as covenantal intimacy and spiritual maturity interact with digital disruptions. This lens, largely absent in previous technoference studies, added theological nuance to the field.
2. The research identified the absence of structured digital literacy in Christian marital education. It proposed media ethics curricula for premarital and marital counselling, encouraging a proactive, faith-informed response to digital-era challenges.
3. Unlike abstinence-based or condemnatory approaches, this study presented a constructive theology of technology, emphasizing discernment and virtue-guided use rather than rejection. This reframing helps Christian couples and educators engage digital tools ethically.
4. By grounding the research within the Good Message Baptist Association, Lagos, the study offered empirical evidence on how digital use affects sexual satisfaction and conflict in African Christian marriages, addressing a gap in regional and religious marital studies.
5. The study demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between average social media use (3.1–3.7 hours/day) and lower sexual satisfaction, increased technoference, and conflict. Qualitative data reinforce these findings, offering depth and context.
6. It introduced Virtue Ethics as a novel framework for guiding Christian couples in digital interactions, promoting virtues such as self-control, fidelity, empathy, and patience to reduce digital-induced marital strain.
7. The research provided practical models for pastoral care, shifting from moral condemnation to restorative tools like counselling, accountability groups, and faith-based therapy.
8. It proposed an integrated model combining Scripture, psychology, digital literacy, and ethical reflection to help Christian couples thrive amidst technological influence.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that digital technology especially the pervasive use of social media—has a substantial impact on sexual satisfaction and is a growing source of marital conflict among Christian couples. The average daily engagement of 3.7 hours with digital devices often disrupts intimacy, enhances emotional distance, and increases instances of technoference in the marital relationship. These disruptions, if unaddressed, can gradually

erode trust, communication, and emotional connection between spouses. However, the study also identified that faith-based interventions such as Christian counselling, shared spiritual practices, and values-driven communication serve as powerful tools to mitigate these effects and restore relational harmony. As digital life becomes increasingly integrated into daily routines, churches, counsellors, and Christian families must respond with urgency and intentionality. A deliberate focus on digital discipline, spiritual bonding, and ethical awareness is essential to preserve intimacy, strengthen marital resilience, and uphold the sanctity of Christian marriage in the digital age.

Recommendations

1. Couples should set clear, faith-based boundaries on phone and social media use during shared and intimate moments to reduce digital distractions.
2. Churches should include media ethics and digital awareness in premarital and marital counselling to prepare couples for challenges in the digital age.
3. Spouses should be encouraged to openly discuss their digital habits to prevent secrecy, mistrust, and misunderstandings.
4. Churches should establish counselling groups and accountability teams to address technology-related issues in marriages.
5. Churches can partner with psychologists and media experts to hold workshops on managing technology and maintaining healthy relationships.
6. Couples should regularly engage in shared spiritual practices like prayer, Bible study, and screen-free retreats to strengthen intimacy.
7. Churches and seminaries should monitor the impact of digital media on marriages and update their counselling strategies accordingly.

Further Research Areas

1. Explore how digital media literacy can be effectively added to Christian counselling and pastoral training.
2. Study how men and women differ in their experiences and responses to digital interference in Christian marriages.
3. Compare how different denominations and cultures respond to digital influences on intimacy and marriage.
4. Assess the effectiveness of online Christian platforms, apps, and digital ministries in supporting couples and resolving conflicts.
5. Examine how exposure to online pornography affects intimacy and trust in Christian marriages, and how couples use spiritual strategies for healing.

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