



The impact of facebook usage on marital bonds in the digital age: A comprehensive analysis

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Abstract

The paper examines Facebook's effect on marriage happiness from both a good and negative perspective. Couples get closer on Facebook when they engage in positive activities like liking and sharing messages. Moreover, engaging in joint hobbies and seeking out assistance are factors that enhance marital contentment. But problems like unjustified comparisons and envy stoked by Facebook may undermine connection and trust. Overuse of Facebook can also cause neglect or resentment by taking time away from in-person relationships. Couples need to prioritise in-person relationships, establish clear limits, and speak honestly in order to manage these difficulties. Facebook can provide social support, but it can also lead to alienation and envy. The key to overcome these challenges is having fruitful conversations and setting clear boundaries. Many people express happiness with their partner's Facebook usage, despite certain problems. There is always space for growth, though, as there is still a difference between the dynamics of relationships live and online. All things considered, the study emphasises how critical deliberate participation and honest communication are to creating fulfilling love relationships in the digital age.

Keywords: Alienation, boundaries, communication, envy, happiness

Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms like Facebook have transformed the landscape of human interactions, including relationships and marriages. This essay aims to explore the multifaceted impact of Facebook use on marital satisfaction, examining both positive and negative aspects while drawing upon existing research findings. Facebook, being one of the leading social networking sites, offers various avenues for couples to connect, communicate, and share aspects of their lives with each other and their social networks. Studies have indicated that positive interactions on Facebook, such as liking, commenting, and sharing posts, can contribute to marital satisfaction by enhancing feelings of closeness and connection between partners (Papp *et al.*, 2012) ^[13]. These interactions serve as virtual expressions of affection and support, reinforcing the emotional bond within the relationship.

Moreover, Facebook facilitates shared activities and experiences among couples, ranging from planning events and vacations to sharing interests and hobbies. Research suggests that engaging in joint activities on social media platforms can strengthen marital satisfaction by fostering a sense of togetherness and collaboration between partners (Hancock *et al.*, 2013) ^[7]. By participating in shared online spaces, couples can create virtual environments that mirror real-life interactions, thereby enhancing their sense of unity and partnership. Furthermore, Facebook serves as a platform for couples to seek advice, support, and validation from their social networks. Studies have shown that couples who perceive social support from online sources report higher levels of marital satisfaction compared to those who do not (Braithwaite *et al.*, 2010) ^[3]. Whether seeking guidance on parenting, career decisions, or relationship issues, couples can leverage their online connections to gain insights and perspectives that contribute to their relationship's well-being. Despite these potential benefits, excessive or inappropriate use of Facebook can pose challenges to

marital satisfaction. Research has identified a phenomenon known as "Facebook-induced jealousy," wherein individuals experience jealousy or insecurity in response to their partner's interactions on social media (Muisse *et al.*, 2009). This jealousy can stem from perceived threats to the relationship, such as flirting or communicating with members of the opposite sex, and may lead to conflicts and erosion of trust within the marriage.

Moreover, the curated nature of social media can create unrealistic expectations and comparisons within relationships. Couples may feel pressure to present an idealized version of their relationship online, leading to feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction when their reality fails to measure up to the polished images portrayed by others (Tandoc *et al.*, 2015) ^[16]. This discrepancy between online portrayals and offline realities can contribute to feelings of disconnection and disillusionment within the relationship.

Additionally, excessive time spent on Facebook and other social media platforms can detract from real-life interactions and responsibilities, leading to feelings of neglect or resentment within the marriage (McDaniel & Drouin, 2015) ^[10]. The constant availability of distractions and entertainment on social media can impede meaningful communication and intimacy between partners, thereby undermining marital satisfaction. In conclusion, Facebook use can have both positive and negative impacts on marital satisfaction in the digital age. While it offers opportunities for communication, bonding, and support within relationships, it also presents challenges such as jealousy, comparison, and distraction. It is essential for couples to navigate these complexities by maintaining open communication, setting boundaries, and prioritizing real-life interactions to ensure that Facebook use enhances rather than detracts from marital satisfaction.

Review of Literature

(Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky 2010) ^[1] look at the relationship between social network activity and personality factors. They examine the ways in which people's characteristics influence the way they use social media sites. They shed light on how personality qualities like conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion affect the quantity and kind of social networking interactions through empirical study. Their research sheds insight on the complex interplay between personality traits and online behaviour, with important implications for comprehending user motives and behaviour. All things considered, their research advances our knowledge of how unique personality qualities interact with the dynamics of using social networks in the digital age. Based on in-depth research by the Pew Research Centre, (Anderson and Jiang 2018) ^[2] present a thorough assessment on youths' use of social media and technology in 2018. The study provides insightful information on how teenagers use, like, and feel about different digital platforms and technology. The writers explore subjects including teen internet behaviour, smartphone ownership, and social media usage patterns through surveys and data analysis. Their results provide insight on how younger populations are interacting digitally and emphasise how critical it is to recognise and take advantage of the benefits and problems that technology presents to teenagers. The possible connection between Facebook use and relationship problems including infidelity, breakups, and divorce is examined by (Clayton, Nagurney, and Smith 2013) ^[3]. Their research explores if using Facebook adds to these unfavourable consequences in romantic relationships. The authors find links between relationship issues and Facebook use through empirical study, implying that excessive use of the social media site might worsen marital strife. The results of their study emphasise the necessity of doing more research on the effects of social media on interpersonal relationships and stress the significance of responsible digital behaviour in preserving positive partnerships. According to their (Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler, and Barab, 2002) ^[8] explore the intricacies of overseeing online safety, specifically focusing on the issue of "trolling" on feminist forums. They investigate tactics used by forum members to reduce disruptive behaviours and maintain a secure online environment using qualitative study. Their research highlights the difficulties in sustaining productive discourse in virtual settings and throws insight on the intricacies of online relationships. The writers provide insightful perspectives to the larger conversation on digital communication and community management in online forums by examining how users navigate and react to trolling behaviour. In their study, (Muise, Christofides, 2009) ^[11] and Desmarais explore the phenomena of envy sparked by Facebook use. They investigate if the platform causes sentiments of jealousy and insecurity in romantic relationships using empirical study. Their research reveals a link between jealousy and Facebook use, indicating that some behaviours—like spying on partners and interacting with others—may make problems in relationships worse. The authors contribute to a deeper understanding of online jealousy phenomena by exploring the psychological effects of social media usage, especially in the context of romantic partnerships. This analysis sheds light on the intricacies of digital interactions and how they affect interpersonal dynamics.

(Papp, Danielewicz, and Cayemberg 2012) ^[13] investigate the significance of couples' Facebook usage and profiles on relationship satisfaction. Through empirical analysis, they explore how partners' interactions and behaviours on Facebook influence their intimacy levels and overall relationship satisfaction. Their study reveals that certain Facebook activities, such as publicly acknowledging relationship status ("Facebook official"), can positively impact relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of communication and mutual agreement regarding online behaviours within romantic partnerships, shedding light on the evolving dynamics of digital interactions in intimate relationships. (Rui and Stefanone 2013) ^[14] conduct a cross-cultural study on strategic self-presentation online. Their research examines how individuals from different cultural backgrounds engage in self-presentation strategies on social media platforms. Through survey data analysis, the authors uncover cultural variations in online self-presentation tactics, highlighting the influence of cultural norms and values on digital identity construction. Their findings provide valuable insights into the nuances of online communication across cultures, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive approaches to studying and interpreting digital behaviours in diverse sociocultural contexts. (Stafford and Stafford 2017) ^[15] conduct a longitudinal study on jealousy within married couples, exploring its relationship to marital satisfaction over time. Through extensive data analysis, they reveal that jealousy levels fluctuate within marriages and are significantly associated with marital satisfaction. Their findings highlight the complex interplay between jealousy and relationship dynamics, emphasizing the importance of addressing jealousy issues to maintain marital happiness and stability. (Tandoc, Ferrucci, and Duffy 2015) ^[16] investigate the relationship between Facebook use, envy, and depression among college students. Through empirical analysis, they examine whether spending time on Facebook contributes to feelings of envy and depression. Their study reveals a positive correlation between Facebook use and envy, suggesting that excessive engagement with the platform may exacerbate negative emotions. These findings underscore the need for mindful social media consumption to mitigate adverse psychological effects among college students. (Utz, Tanis, and Vermeulen 2012) ^[18] explore the influence of the need for popularity on social network site (SNS) usage. Through empirical research, they investigate how individuals' desire for popularity affects their engagement with SNS platforms. Their findings indicate that individuals with a higher need for popularity tend to use SNS more frequently and actively seek social validation online. This study sheds light on the underlying motivations driving SNS use, emphasizing the role of social needs and aspirations in shaping digital behaviours and interactions.

Research Gap

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into various aspects of social media use and its impacts on interpersonal relationships, there remains a significant research gap in understanding the nuanced dynamics of digital interactions within specific demographic groups, particularly in the context of emerging adulthood. Much of the research focuses on broad trends and general patterns of social media use, without delving deeply into the diverse

experiences and perspectives of young adults navigating the complexities of online communication. Additionally, there is limited research examining the intersectionality of social media use with other socio-cultural factors such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, which may shape individuals' digital behaviours and interactions in unique ways. Furthermore, there is a need for more qualitative and longitudinal studies to capture the rich, contextualized narratives of individuals' experiences with social media over time, allowing for a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations, coping mechanisms, and outcomes associated with digital engagement. By addressing these research gaps, a scholar can provide more comprehensive insights into the multifaceted nature of social media use among young adults, thereby informing interventions, policies, and practices aimed at promoting positive digital experiences and fostering healthy interpersonal relationships in the digital age.

Research Questions

1. In what ways Facebook interactions affect marital bonds?
2. What's the role of shared online activities in a marriage?
3. What causes "Facebook-induced jealousy" and its impact on marriage?
4. Whether excessive Facebook use harm marital relationships or not?

Research Objective

1. Investigate positive Facebook interactions on marital bonds.
2. Examine shared online activities' importance in marital bonding.
3. Explore dynamics of "Facebook-induced jealousy" and marital satisfaction.
4. Analyse excessive Facebook use effects on marital well-being.

Theoretical Framework

A comprehensive theoretical framework may be used to analyse the effects of Facebook usage on marriage relationships in the digital era. The costs and advantages of Facebook connections in marriages are explained by social exchange theory, which emphasises the dynamic balance between costs and benefits that affect marital happiness. These costs and benefits include social approval and jealousy (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) ^[17]. While acknowledging Facebook's ability to drain resources that could be invested in the marriage, Social Capital Theory also highlights Facebook's importance as a platform for growing social networks and getting support (Putnam, 2000) ^[12]. This has an effect on the marriage connection. According to individual attachment styles, attachment theory explains how Facebook connections cause attachment-related behaviours and feelings that impact the strength of attachment ties in marriages (Bowlby, 1969) ^[4]. The Media Richness Theory evaluates how Facebook's diversified communication style could not accurately capture the depth of interpersonal connection felt in in-person contacts, which could have an influence on intimacy and communication in marriages (Daft & Lengel, 1986) ^[6]. Furthermore, by comprehending the underlying causes of Facebook use, the Uses and Gratifications Theory investigates people's motivations for using the platform and the gratifications they pursue, offering insights into its effect

on marital bonds and satisfaction (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) ^[9]. Combining these theories provides a sophisticated understanding of how Facebook use affects marriages, taking into account a range of digital-age psychological, social, and communicative aspects.

Methodology

The researcher employed both primary and secondary methods to complete the study. The primary method involved data collection, primarily through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms for easy online distribution. The link to the questionnaire was randomly circulated on various digital media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Gmail, and Messenger. Additionally, some responses were collected offline through survey methods. Random sampling was utilized to select respondents for the study, aiming to obtain a diverse pool of participants. The researcher selected a sample size of 357 respondents. After a comprehensive review and exclusion of incomplete or invalid responses, a final sample size of 226 was determined. The respondents were predominantly in the age group of 18-35, characterized as active users of Facebook, and had been married for at least 5 years. This demographic frame methodology ensured a targeted approach to gather relevant data for the study.

Data Analysis

Demographic Profile

Frequency Distribution for Educational Qualification

In the analysis of the demographic profile, it was observed that a significant portion of the respondents possessed higher educational qualifications. Specifically, 55.3% of the participants held a 'Post Graduate' degree, while 39.4% were 'Graduate'. A smaller proportion, accounting for 3.1%, indicated attainment of 'PhD and Above' qualifications. Moreover, 2.2% of the respondents reported having completed 'Class 12', with no representation from the 'Class 10' educational level.

Frequency Distribution for Gender

Regarding the distribution by gender, the data revealed a predominant presence of female respondents. Approximately 62.4% of the surveyed individuals identified as female, while 37.6% identified as male.

Frequency Distribution for Age Group in Years

Analysis of age demographics indicated varying representations across different age groups. Among the respondents, 29.2% fell within the age bracket of '26 – 29' years, followed by 21.7% in the '34 – 35' age range. Additionally, 20.4% were categorized within the '22 – 25' age group, while '30 – 35' years encompassed 19% of the respondents. The lowest representation was observed among individuals aged '18 – 21', comprising 9.7% of the total.

Frequency Distribution for Years of Marital Life

In terms of marital life duration, the majority of respondents reported being married for '4 years and Above', constituting 34.9% of the sample. Subsequently, 32.3% indicated a marital duration of '0 – 1 year', followed by 13.9% for '1 – 2 years'. The distribution further revealed that 11.7% of respondents reported a marital duration of '2 - 3 years', while 7.5% were married for '3 – 4 years'.

Frequency Distribution for positive interactions on Facebook (e.g., likes, comments, shares) contribute to your marital life

Examination of the frequency of positive interactions on Facebook contributing to marital life unveiled that a notable proportion of respondents acknowledged the significance of such interactions. Specifically, 34.1% agreed that positive interactions on Facebook contribute to marital well-being, with an additional 20.8% strongly endorsing this viewpoint.

Frequency Distribution for posting pictures of events, sharing hobbies on Facebook to strengthen marital bonds

Analysis of the frequency distribution concerning the posting of pictures and sharing hobbies on Facebook to strengthen marital bonds depicted a substantial inclination towards the importance of such activities. Notably, 39.85% of respondents deemed these actions as 'Extremely Important', with an additional 23% considering them 'Moderately Important'.

Frequency Distribution for How beneficial do you find Facebook-based social support from your partner in enhancing your relationship well-being?

Evaluation of the perceived benefit of Facebook-based social support from one's partner in enhancing relationship well-being revealed varying degrees of endorsement. Approximately 27.6% of respondents found such support to be 'Very Beneficial', while 26.1% deemed it 'Extremely Beneficial'.

Frequency Distribution for to what extent do you experience feelings of jealousy due to your partner's interactions on Facebook with other users?

Exploration of the extent of jealousy experienced due to partner interactions on Facebook uncovered prevalent sentiments of jealousy among respondents. A substantial majority, comprising 63.3%, reported experiencing feelings of jealousy 'Frequently' or 'Always'.

Frequency Distribution for How significantly do you think "Facebook-induced jealousy" impacts your marital satisfaction?

Examination of the significance attributed to 'Facebook-induced jealousy' in impacting marital satisfaction highlighted its considerable influence. A majority of respondents, amounting to 63.7%, perceived Facebook-induced jealousy as significantly affecting their marital satisfaction, with 37.2% categorizing it as 'Very Significant'.

Frequency Distribution for How often do you and your partner discuss your Facebook usage habits and their impact on your relationship?

Regarding discussions pertaining to Facebook usage habits and their impact on relationships, the analysis indicated varying levels of engagement. Notably, 61.5% of respondents reported engaging in such discussions, albeit often occurring 'Rarely' or 'Never' for a considerable proportion.

Frequency Distribution for How satisfied are you with the amount of time you and your partner spend together offline compared to online (on Facebook)?

Evaluation of satisfaction levels regarding the time spent offline versus online (on Facebook) with one's partner illustrated diverse perspectives. While 26.1% expressed dissatisfaction with the offline time spent, an equal proportion reported satisfaction, with 50% indicating overall contentment with the balance between offline and online engagement.

Frequency Distribution for How often do you and your partner engage in joint activities (both offline and online) to strengthen your relationship?

Analysis of joint activities undertaken to strengthen relationships highlighted varying levels of engagement among respondents. A notable proportion, comprising 47.8%, reported infrequent engagement in such activities, with 'Never' or 'Rarely' being the predominant responses.

Frequency Distribution for to what extent do you feel that excessive Facebook use negatively impacts your marital well-being?

Examination of the perceived impact of excessive Facebook use on marital well-being uncovered significant concerns among respondents. A majority, totaling 57.5%, acknowledged the negative impact of excessive Facebook use on their marital well-being.

Frequency Distribution for How often do you feel disconnected from your partner when they are excessively engaged in Facebook

Evaluation of the frequency of feeling disconnected from one's partner due to excessive Facebook engagement revealed prevalent sentiments of disconnection. A majority of respondents, constituting 64.4%, reported feeling 'Always' or 'Frequently' disconnected under such circumstances.

Frequency Distribution for How often do you and your partner express affection towards each other on Facebook (e.g., through posts, comments, messages)?

Exploration of the frequency of expressing affection towards one another on Facebook indicated varying levels of engagement among respondents. While 48.7% reported occasional to frequent expression of affection, a considerable proportion, accounting for 31.4%, reported infrequent to nonexistent displays of affection.

Frequency Distribution for to what extent do you feel that Facebook strengthens your overall marital satisfaction?

Analysis of the perceived role of Facebook in strengthening overall marital satisfaction unveiled diverse perspectives among respondents. Notably, a majority, comprising 59.7%, expressed scepticism regarding the role of Facebook in enhancing marital satisfaction.

Frequency Distribution for How satisfied are you with the boundaries you and your partner have set regarding Facebook usage within your relationship?

Evaluation of satisfaction levels regarding the boundaries set regarding Facebook usage within relationships showcased varying degrees of contentment. A significant

proportion, totaling 65.9%, reported being 'Very Satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with the established boundaries, with a smaller fraction expressing dissatisfaction.

Findings

The study explored several Facebook usage topics related to romantic relationships. It was discovered that a sizable majority, or around 62.8%, thought that posting photos of activities and interests on Facebook improved marriages. Furthermore, almost 53.7% of respondents said they had received social support from their spouses on Facebook, which improved the quality of their relationships. Still, a portion of respondents—roughly 63.3%—admitted to experiencing envy as a result of their partner's activities on the site. Moreover, over 63.7% of respondents said that envy sparked by Facebook had a major negative influence on their marital happiness. In spite of these obstacles, a segment—61.5%—reported talking about their Facebook usage patterns and the influence on their relationships. Additionally, around half of the respondents said they were happy with how much time they spend with their spouses both outside and online. But nearly half (47.8%) said they didn't do much together to build their connection through physical and online activities. Furthermore, the majority, 64.4%, reported feeling distant from their relationships while using Facebook excessively, and 48.7% reported frequently seeing public displays of affection on the social media site. Finally, 65.9% of respondents said they were happy with the limits their spouses had placed on their use of Facebook in their relationships.

Conclusion

The study emphasises how Facebook affects romantic relationships in two ways: it may be a source of social support and connection, but it can also be a cause of jealousy and estrangement. Having productive discussions regarding Facebook usage patterns and establishing clear boundaries is essential to overcoming these obstacles. Even though people frequently feel jealous and detached from their spouses, a significant percentage of people say they are happy with the way their partners use Facebook in their relationships. Nonetheless, a notable disparity persists between cooperative offline and virtual endeavours, indicating a potential avenue for augmenting the calibre of relationships. Overall, these results highlight the complex link between Facebook use and marital dynamics and highlight the value of thoughtful participation and open communication in creating satisfying romantic relationships in the digital age.

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