

Love in the Digital Village: Social Media Jealousy and Marital Dynamics in Ghana

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Abstract

In a period where digital communication increasingly shapes intimate relationships, understanding how social media affects marital dynamics has become crucial. The study explored the relationship between social media-induced jealousy and marital satisfaction among married couples in Ghana. As social media becomes integral to daily life, its influence on interpersonal dynamics is increasingly significant. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 420 married couples through standardized questionnaires and analyzed using simple linear regression with 1000 bootstrap samples and bias-corrected accelerated confidence intervals. Findings revealed that social media usage significantly predicted marital satisfaction ($B = -2.723$, $\beta = -0.543$, $p = 0.001$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.291$), explaining 29.1% of the variance. Specifically, higher engagement with social media platforms was associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction. Similarly, social media usage significantly predicted jealousy among couples ($B = 0.991$, $\beta = 0.285$, $p = 0.038$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.081$), accounting for 8.1% of the variance. Furthermore, social media-induced jealousy was a strong negative predictor of marital satisfaction ($B = -0.863$, $\beta = -0.788$, $p = 0.001$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.62$), indicating that 62% of the variation in marital satisfaction was explained by jealousy triggered through social media interactions. These findings suggest that the more time couples spend on social media, the greater the likelihood of jealousy, which in turn diminishes marital satisfaction. Excessive online interactions can foster misunderstandings, emotional distance, and distrust within marriages. The results emphasize the critical role of effective communication, emotional regulation, and healthy boundary-setting in mitigating the adverse impacts of social media on relationships. The study concludes with recommendations for counselling and marital therapy, encouraging couples to engage in open discussions about their social me-

dia habits, establish mutual trust, and strengthen emotional intimacy to sustain marital harmony and satisfaction.

Keywords

Social Media, Jealousy, Marriage, Marital Satisfaction, Married Couples

1. Introduction

Individuals become more dependent on the media to fulfil their needs and desires (Baran & Davis, 2010; DeFleur, 1990; DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). When people become more dependent on social media, the influence of media on their perceptions and behaviours heightens. Nowadays, people are becoming more dependent on social media regarding the time spent on networking sites. People seek information, derive happiness, and comprehend new trends in social life (Joo & Teng, 2017; Kim & Fingerma, 2022; Lasode et al., 2020). Thus, dependency on social media changes as the environment and goals of users change. Marriage is a holy institution ordained by God (Adzaho et al., 2020). The basic foundation for marriage formulation is companionship and procreation (Macionis, 2012). Further, marriage involves commitment from both couples who have agreed to be bonded with obligations to each other (Wood et al., 2007). When couples choose to marry, they intend to live happily ever after. Thus, every married couple wants a loving, happy, successful marriage that can withstand the turbulent storms of life (Ngonidzashe, 2016). Successful marriages depend on many different things, such as trust, love, time, friendship, and understanding. The rest are honesty, loyalty, sincerity, and effective communication (Ngonidzashe, 2016). Communication is a key element that signals a level of marital satisfaction. Communication is the lubricant that eases the friction between couples (Babaee & Ghahari, 2016; Farbod et al., 2014; Shahhosseini et al., 2014). Obeng et al. (2023) concluded that a marriage without effective communication is an onset of marital disaster.

Marital instability is a phenomenon that has been on the increase in most developed and African countries, including Ghana (Obeng et al., 2023). Marriage seems to be a common topic of discussion on social media platforms. To help address challenges in marital relationships, Babaee and Ghahari (2016) and Farbod et al. (2014) admonished couples to make an effort to work on their communication challenges. Marital challenges start like a little budding flower. However, ineffective communication may escalate them beyond couples' control (Adzaho et al., 2020). Communication is an exchange of emotions and meaning as one tries to understand the other by considering each other's perspective. Communication depicts words. However, it could also be listening, silence, facial expressions, gestures, touch, and all the other non-language symbols and clues used by couples in giving and receiving meaning (Baran & Davis, 2010; DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Rigotti & Rocci, 2006). The conventional offline form, which involves face-

to-face interaction, has been the primary means of communicating until the emergence of technology (Williams, 2012). However, the proliferation of technological tools such as mobile phones, computers, and the internet hinders face-to-face communication (Kimeto, 2016).

Social media is a set of digital tools mainly characterized by social networking sites that allow users to forge and nurture relationships with unprecedented ease and frequency. Social networks are open, web-based, and user-friendly social platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Skype, LinkedIn, or WhatsApp that make it possible for one to connect with others (Asma & Waqar, 2020; Siddiqui & Singh, 2016; Venkatraman, 2017). Social media platforms have made it possible for couples today to instantly connect across geographical locations by exchanging personal information online (Williams, 2012). The number of active social media users worldwide surpassed five billion in 2023 (Dixon, 2024). Furthermore, the lockdowns to fight the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic further increased the use of social media platforms worldwide (Agormedah et al., 2020; Drouin et al., 2020; Fraser et al., 2021).

By implication, social media attracts married couples by offering content to fulfil their needs and supporting their understanding with entertainment and information. The exponential rise and over-reliance on social media in marriages are associated with positive and negative consequences that influence how people relate (Kimeto, 2016; Obeng et al., 2023; Turkle, 2011). Social media platforms help couples keep in touch with others and make it easier for individuals to share information about their romantic relationships with a wide array of people. In addition, some couples reported that their relationships became more flirtatious and exciting than ever. Social media allows couples to share pictures and have online conversations (Obeng et al., 2023; Whiteside et al., 2018; Ziha et al., 2021). Social media platforms provide unique opportunities for couples to connect to satisfy both functional and emotional needs (Parker et al., 2013). However, the frequent use of social media platforms could be detrimental to the marital institution (Obeng et al., 2023; Saleh & Mukhtar, 2015). Hertlein (2012) observed that online gaming may contribute to a couple's ability to fantasize about their relationship, acquire and improve socialization skills, and better understand their partner's context. Saleh and Mukhtar (2015) postulate that with the advent of social media, more stable marriages are likely to suffer because couples devote more attention to the virtual world than to their physical relationships, which may induce unpleasant emotions between couples. On the contrary, Obeng et al. (2023) postulated that social media could benefit marriage relationships when employed positively and meticulously.

A rising amount of research has tried to assess the possible impact of social media on marital relationships globally. The use of social media increases cyberbullying (Craig et al., 2020; Garrett et al., 2016; Kee et al., 2022). Social media platform users display repeated behaviour aimed at scaring people about marriage. Mesch and Talmud (2006) conclude that frequent usage of social media platforms results in less time spent with family among married couples. Some internet users

believe social media usage hinders mutual rapport (Cheng et al., 2017; Rahab et al., 2024). Some people felt that their spouses were often distracted by their cell phones when they were together. They got upset by the amount of time their spouses spent online (Obeng et al., 2023). The usage of Facebook is associated with harmful relationship outcomes, such as breakups, divorces, and cheating. Furthermore, conflict-related issues ensue among married couples when one posts selfies on Instagram without the concern of the other couple (Clayton et al., 2013; Obeng et al., 2023). Thus, Facebook anticipated higher divorce rates (Valenzuela et al., 2014).

Studies in Africa suggest that 45% of family institutions today have survival challenges, as husbands and wives frequently undergo strained relationships (Mbwirire, 2017). Saleh and Mukhtar (2015) suggest that sharing ambiguous information, compulsive internet use, and online portrayal of intimate relationships jeopardise romantic relationships. Social media has become a necessary evil to most marital institutions because couples devote more attention to virtuality than to their spouses. Thus, social media is a threat to stability and family cohesion (Mbwirire, 2017). Being on social media exposes married couples to jealousy-inducing information, which compels them to search for more information on the social media platforms, to induce even more jealousy (Nitzburg & Farber, 2013). This spiral effect compromises trust in the marital relationship, a foundational element of long-lasting marital commitment (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). There has been a growing body of Ghanaian literature on social media and marital satisfaction. Such literature identified how social media influences students and their learning, market women and selling, and marriage and marital communication dealt with the role of social media on students' learning (Adzaho et al., 2020; Obeng et al., 2023). Most explored discourse about marital satisfaction is centred on gender role ideology, sexual satisfaction and parental style and attachment (Awuah, 2013; Dabone, 2012). However, social media-induced jealousy and its role in marital satisfaction are less explored.

In Sogakope, South Tongu District of Ghana, most married couples rely on social media platforms for their daily interactions (Adzaho et al., 2020). However, married couples' reliance on social media has the potential to elicit negative emotions (Kimeto, 2016). These negative emotions could be suspicious feelings, jealousy, loneliness and emotional distance among married couples. Thus, this study examines the relationship between social media-induced jealousy and marital satisfaction among married couples in Sogakope in the South Tongu District of the Volta region of Ghana. The study hypothesized that (a) social media use significantly predict marital satisfaction among married couples, (b) social media use significantly predict jealousy among married couples, and (c) social media-induced jealousy significantly predict marital satisfaction.

2. Theoretical Framework

Cognitive-Behavioral Theory of Jealousy (CBTJ)

The Cognitive-Behavioral Theory of Jealousy (CBTJ), articulated by White and

Mullen (1989), explains jealousy as a multidimensional process involving cognitive appraisals, emotional reactions, and behavioral responses. Unlike earlier conceptualizations that treated jealousy as a purely emotional or instinctive reaction, CBTJ emphasizes that jealousy originates from how individuals interpret, evaluate, and respond to perceived relational threats. These interpretations are shaped by cognitive schemas belief systems and mental frameworks formed through personal experiences, cultural expectations, and individual insecurities. According to this theory, when a person perceives a potential rival or threatening situation in their romantic relationship, they engage in a process of cognitive appraisal, assessing whether their relationship, self-worth, or partner's loyalty is endangered. If the appraisal process leads to irrational or exaggerated conclusions such as assuming infidelity based on ambiguous cues the emotional outcome is heightened jealousy and distress. This emotional state then informs behavioral reactions, which may include increased monitoring of the partner's activities, confrontation, or withdrawal. Over time, such behaviors can undermine mutual trust and intimacy, key pillars of marital satisfaction.

In the context of social media, CBTJ becomes especially relevant because digital platforms create a new domain where relational information is both public and ambiguous. Married individuals are constantly exposed to their partners' online activities such as likes, comments, messages, or friendships which may be open to multiple interpretations. For instance, seeing a spouse comment affectionately on another person's post or maintain close online friendships can activate cognitive distortions like catastrophic thinking, selective attention, or confirmation bias. These distorted cognitions amplify feelings of insecurity and jealousy, leading to maladaptive behaviors such as frequent checking of the partner's phone, monitoring social media accounts, or demanding explanations for online interactions (Leahy & Tirch, 2008).

Furthermore, CBTJ underscores the reciprocal relationship between cognition and behavior. When one partner repeatedly engages in jealousy-driven behaviors (e.g., surveillance, interrogation), the other partner may respond defensively or withdraw emotionally. This defensive response confirms the jealous partner's fears, reinforcing the original cognitive distortions and perpetuating a self-fulfilling cycle of mistrust and dissatisfaction. Over time, this cycle erodes emotional intimacy and marital harmony, as spouses begin to associate social media engagement with conflict and emotional distance (Leahy & Tirch, 2008). In cultural contexts such as Ghana, where marital roles and expectations are often influenced by traditional norms of fidelity, respect, and emotional restraint, the influence of social media on jealousy can be particularly pronounced. Social media blurs boundaries between public and private spheres of marital life, creating opportunities for misinterpretations that challenge these norms. The CBTJ framework thus helps explain how the interpretive filters that individuals apply to social media interactions rather than the interactions themselves determine whether jealousy leads to constructive dialogue or destructive conflict. From the above, clearly, the Cogni-

tive-Behavioral Theory of Jealousy provides a powerful lens for understanding the mechanisms through which social media usage can threaten marital satisfaction. It posits that the thought patterns and belief systems that spouses bring to their online experiences shape their emotional and behavioral reactions. Consequently, interventions aimed at improving marital satisfaction in the digital era should focus on helping couples identify and challenge irrational thoughts, improve emotional regulation, and develop healthier cognitive responses to perceived relational threats.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between social media-induced jealousy and marital satisfaction among married couples in Sogakope, South Tongu District of Ghana. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to statistically assess the predictive and associative relationships among the study variables social media usage, jealousy, and marital satisfaction without manipulating any variables. The design also enabled the testing of the study's hypotheses using inferential statistics to determine the direction and strength of relationships between constructs.

3.2. Participants

The study population comprised married individuals residing in the Sogakope township and its surrounding communities within the South Tongu District of the Volta Region, Ghana. Using a simple random sampling technique, 420 married persons were selected to participate in the study. The simple random method was adopted to ensure that every married person in the area had an equal chance of inclusion, thereby minimizing sampling bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample. Data on the total number of married persons in Sogakope was not readily available due to the absence of a centralized marriage registry that captures both formal and informal unions. In Ghana, marriage can be classified as ordinance (civil), customary (traditional), or Islamic, with only ordinance marriages mandated by the Marriages Act (Cap 127) to be registered. Many customary and Islamic marriages, although legally recognized, remain unregistered, hence making it difficult to establish exact population figures for sampling. The demographic composition of the sample was as follows: 60% (252) were females and 40% (168) were males. In terms of age, the majority of respondents, 66% (276), were between 31 and 40 years, 28% (119) were between 41 and 50 years, and 6% (25) were between 51 and 60 years. Accordingly, among those aged 31 - 40 years, 40% (110) were males and 60% (166) were females; among those aged 41 - 50 years, 40% (48) were males and 60% (71) were females; and among those aged 51 - 60 years, 40% (10) were males and 60% (15) were females. The majority of respondents had been married for over five years, and most reported active use of at least one social media platform such as Facebook, WhatsApp, or Instagram.

This demographic distribution was considered adequate for examining the research questions and testing the hypotheses.

3.3. Measures

To ensure that the constructs were measured accurately, two standardized and validated instruments were used: the Facebook Jealousy Scale (FJS) developed by Muise et al. (2009), and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) by Crane and Middleton (2000). Facebook Jealousy Scale (FJS) The FJS was used to assess the extent to which individuals experience jealousy triggered by their partner's daily activities on social media platforms. The scale consists of 27 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very likely*) to 7 (*very unlikely*). Items cover themes such as partner monitoring, suspicion, comparison with others, and emotional insecurity arising from online interactions. Sample items include statements such as “*I would be upset if my partner added an ex-partner as a friend on Facebook*” and “*I would feel jealous if my partner frequently commented on another person's photos.*” Higher scores indicate greater levels of social media-induced jealousy. In the present study, the internal consistency reliability of the scale was acceptable, with a Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.82, suggesting good reliability for the Ghanaian context.

3.4. Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)

Marital satisfaction was measured using the RDAS, a 14-item scale assessing the quality and satisfaction of marital or romantic relationships. The scale evaluates three key dimensions: dyadic consensus (agreement on values, decision-making, and beliefs), dyadic satisfaction (perceived stability and conflict resolution), and dyadic cohesion (emotional intimacy and shared activities). Responses are captured on a 5- or 6-point Likert scale, depending on the item format. Sample items include “*How often do you and your partner calmly discuss something?*” and “*Do you and your partner agree on goals in life?*” Higher total scores indicate greater marital satisfaction. The RDAS has been widely validated across diverse cultural settings and demonstrated strong internal reliability in this study ($\alpha = 0.80$). Both instruments were pre-tested among a small group of 30 married individuals outside the main study area to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness. Minor wording modifications were made to enhance local comprehension without altering the conceptual meaning of the items.

Social Media Usage

Social media usage was assessed using a self-developed item. Respondents were to indicate on a section of the questionnaire how frequently they visited they visited some social media platform, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram, daily. The researchers limited the study to these apps because they were the commonly used among couples in the study area.

3.5. Procedure

Data collection was conducted across various schools, workplaces, and places of

worship in the Sogakope area to ensure a diverse representation of participants. Prior to data collection, formal permission was sought and obtained from the heads of the respective institutions. The purpose, significance, and confidentiality of the study were communicated to the participants through official channels (e.g., staff meetings, church announcements). On the day of administration, the researchers-built rapport with participants by reiterating the voluntary nature of participation and assuring them of anonymity and confidentiality. The questionnaires were self-administered, but trained research assistants were present to clarify questions and guide participants through the process. On average, each participant took between 15 and 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. To maximize the response rate, completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion. This strategy contributed to an exceptionally high retrieval rate of over 95%. Data collection spanned approximately two weeks, allowing adequate time to reach participants in different institutions and community settings.

3.6. Data Analysis

Completed questionnaires were carefully screened for completeness and consistency before data entry. Incomplete or improperly filled questionnaires were excluded from the final analysis. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were first computed to summarize the demographic characteristics and major study variables. To test the hypotheses, Pearson's correlation was used to examine the relationships between social media-induced jealousy and marital satisfaction, while multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive power of social media use and jealousy on marital satisfaction. All inferential analyses were conducted at a 95% confidence level, with an alpha (α) of 0.05. Prior to analysis, relevant assumptions such as normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were tested and satisfied.

4. Results

The study had three research questions. The results are presented in the ensuing pages. **Tables 1-3** summarize the study results aiming to identify the role of social media induced jealousy on marital satisfaction among married couples.

4.1. Social Media Use and Marital Satisfaction

This hypothesis sought to determine whether social media usage among married couples would predict marital satisfaction. The hypothesis was tested using a simple linear regression analysis with 1000 bootstrap samples with bias-corrected accelerated confidence intervals. The bootstrap samples were interpreted in terms of confidence intervals. For a particular result to be significant, the bootstrap upper and lower confidence intervals should not contain '0', thus, both the upper and lower confidence intervals should have the same sign ('+' or '-'). **Table 1** presents the results.

Table 1. Social media usage influence on marital satisfaction.

Dependent Variable	B	Beta	Bias	P value	Std Error	95% C. I	
						Lower	Upper
Marital Satisfaction	-2.723	-0.543	0.058	0.001	0.438	-3.515	-1.3675

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.291$.

The results in **Table 1** show that social media usage explained 29.1% of the variance in marital satisfaction. The results further revealed that social media usage was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction, $B = -2.723$, *Boot 95% CI*(-3.52, -1.37). This implies that the time a married couple spends on social media platforms influences how satisfied they are in their marital union. For example, the results suggest that a unit increase in time spent on social media platforms would lead to an inverse decrease of 2.72 in marital satisfaction among married couples. That is to say, the more time a married couple spends on social media platforms, the less happy they become in their marriage and vice versa. It can be inferred from this finding that anytime there is an increase in the use of social media, marital satisfaction may decrease.

4.2. Social Media Use and Jealousy

The purpose of this hypothesis was to determine whether social media usage would predict the emotional feeling of jealousy among couples. The simple linear regression analysis with 1000 bootstrap samples was performed to test this hypothesis. The predictor variable was social media usage, and this was measured continuously. The criterion variable was Jealousy, which was also measured continuously. Details of the results are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. How social media usage induces jealousy.

Dependent Variable	B	Beta	Bias	P value	Std Error	95% C. I	
						Lower	Upper
Jealousy	0.991	0.285	-0.055	0.038	0.454	0.038	1.693

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.081$.

The results in **Table 2** indicate that social media usage explained 8.1% of the variance in Jealousy. It was further evident from the results that social media usage significantly predicted the feeling of jealousy among married couples, $B = 0.99$, *Boot 95% CI*(0.038, 1.693). The results imply that the frequent usage of social media platforms could result in unpleasant emotional feelings, such as jealousy, among married couples. That is to say, married couples who attach a lot of importance to social media activities and hence spend more time on social media platforms without paying attention to their partners are more likely to induce jealousy in their counterparts. In other words, a social media addictive partner is more likely to experience unpleasant emotional or attitudinal responses from his/her partner.

4.3. Social Media Induced Jealousy and Marital Satisfaction

The study analyzed whether social media induced jealousy would predict marital satisfaction among couples. A simple linear regression analysis with 1000 bootstrap samples was performed. The predictor variable, social media-induced jealousy, was measured continuously. The criterion variable, marital satisfaction, was also measured continuously. Details of the results are presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. How social media induced jealousy influences marital satisfaction.

Dependent Variable	B	Beta	Bias	P value	Std Error	95% C. I	
						Lower	Upper
Marital Satisfaction	-0.863	-0.788	-0.001	0.001	-0.031	-0.922	-0.800

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.62$.

The results in **Table 3** show that social media-induced jealousy explained 62% of the variance in marital satisfaction. The results further revealed that social media-induced jealousy, $B = -0.86$, *Boot 95% CI* (-0.92, -0.80), was a significant negative predictor of marital satisfaction. The results imply that the more jealous a couple's partner becomes, the less likely they are to be satisfied with their marriage union and vice versa. In other words, the feeling of insecurity among married couples could lower one's self-esteem, making them perceive other people as threats to the married relationship. This unpleasant feeling could lead to one trying to control the other partner's activities, resulting in marital dissatisfaction.

5. Discussion

5.1. Social Media Use and Marital Satisfaction

The findings of this study corroborate those of [Hertlein and Ancheta \(2014\)](#) and [Leggett and Rossouw \(2014\)](#), who argued that technology introduces complexities in interpersonal communication that often result in misunderstandings, emotional distance, and relational dissatisfaction. In marital contexts, social media platforms amplify these risks by providing multiple avenues for misinterpretation and social comparison. Actions such as following others, liking or commenting on posts, and sharing photos can be innocuous to one partner yet perceived as inappropriate or threatening to another, especially when contextual cues are absent. These digital behaviors may disrupt open communication, generate suspicion, and weaken emotional intimacy between partners. Moreover, social media environments create opportunities for *imagined infidelity* a form of perceived betrayal where partners interpret online interactions as evidence of romantic or sexual interest ([McDaniel et al. \(2017\)](#)). Such perceptions can trigger conflicts that hinder problem-solving, reduce trust, and diminish the sense of relational security. In line with [Hertlein and Ancheta \(2014\)](#), the present finding affirms that frequent engagement with social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp have contributed to growing dissatisfaction in marriages, often culminating in emotional withdrawal and, in some cases, relationship dissolution.

These results can also be interpreted through the lens of the Cognitive-Behavioral Theory of Jealousy, which posits that individuals' perceptions and interpretations of online behaviors influence emotional and behavioral responses. Hence, excessive exposure to partners' digital interactions may foster maladaptive cognitions such as assumptions of neglect or infidelity that erode marital satisfaction over time.

5.2. Social Media Use and Jealousy

The findings of this study further align with those of [Mehmood et al. \(2025\)](#) and [Kabasakal and Kabasakal \(2022\)](#), who asserted that excessive social media use fosters a variety of negative emotional outcomes, including anxiety, guilt, distraction, suspicion, and confusion. These emotional reactions stem from the constant exposure to ambiguous online cues that can easily be misinterpreted within intimate relationships. For instance, long response times to messages or an increase in social interactions with members of the opposite sex may trigger worries about loyalty or emotional disengagement, particularly among individuals with pre-existing insecurities ([Obeng et al., 2023](#)). Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, where public and private interactions coexist, often blur relational boundaries. Partners may misread harmless comments, tagged photos, or friend requests as signals of romantic interest. These misunderstandings can escalate into disagreements and surveillance behaviors, leading to a cycle of mistrust and tension within the household. [Hertlein and Ancheta \(2014\)](#) identified these patterns as part of a broader set of challenges introduced by technology, including emotional distancing, reduced clarity in communication, and impaired trust. [Leggett and Rossouw \(2014\)](#) similarly observed that the ambiguity inherent in digital communication undermines problem-solving and intimacy development. [Whitty \(2003\)](#) found that access to a partner's personal devices or passwords often prompts investigatory behaviors such as reading private messages that may uncover or falsely suggest infidelity. [Hawkins and Hertlein \(2013\)](#) emphasized that such online behaviors disrupt intimacy processes and generate feelings of exclusion or neglect. Additionally, as [Hunt et al. \(2018\)](#) highlighted, the curated portrayals of perfection on social media can evoke jealousy and dissatisfaction through upward social comparison, where individuals measure their own lives and relationships against idealized online representations. Clearly, these findings suggest that social media fosters a psychological environment conducive to relational jealousy, shaped by both perceived threats and unrealistic comparisons. The continuous exposure to alternative potential partners, coupled with limited contextual information, may therefore heighten emotional insecurity and relational strain.

5.3. Social Media-Induced Jealousy and Marital Satisfaction

The relationship between social media-induced jealousy and marital satisfaction observed in this study supports earlier research by [Ehoro and Badey \(2021\)](#) and [Mehmood et al. \(2025\)](#), who noted that excessive social media engagement is

closely associated with heightened emotional instability and relational dissatisfaction. This link can be attributed to the erosion of trust and emotional safety that accompanies jealousy-driven behaviors, such as partner monitoring or confrontations over online interactions. Consistent with findings by Gull et al. (2019) and Tandon et al. (2021), participants who reported higher levels of jealousy also reported reduced levels of marital satisfaction. Emotional symptoms such as worry, insecurity, and self-doubt appear to mediate this relationship, often triggered by ambiguous or delayed online communication. As partners struggle to interpret online exchanges accurately, feelings of mistrust intensify, reducing relational harmony and emotional closeness. Hertlein and Ancheta (2014) again emphasized that technology-related misunderstandings can lead to distancing and impaired trust. Similarly, Kimeto (2016) and Valenzuela et al. (2014) found that digital communication opens space for misinterpretations that obstruct healthy conflict resolution and diminish intimacy. Whitty (2003) reported that partners' investigatory behaviors checking devices or accessing private messages often lead to the discovery of real or perceived infidelity, compounding emotional distress. Hawkins and Hertlein (2013) added that these dynamics produce feelings of exclusion and neglect, which further intensify jealousy and dissatisfaction. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the Cognitive-Behavioral Theory of Jealousy, which explains that cognitive distortions (e.g., overgeneralizing, mind reading, or catastrophizing) fuel emotional reactivity and maladaptive behaviors in relationships. As individuals interpret online ambiguity through a lens of insecurity or prior relational trauma, jealousy-driven responses may emerge, ultimately reducing satisfaction and increasing conflict. In call, the study accentuates that social media-induced jealousy acts as a significant psychological mechanism through which social media use impacts marital satisfaction. The findings suggest the need for intentional communication, mutual transparency, and boundary-setting among couples to mitigate the detrimental effects of social media on marital stability.

6. Conclusion and Implications for Counselling

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings from the study. It was concluded that some married couples are not satisfied with their partners' use of social media in daily interactions with others. Also, some married couple develops jealous attitudes as a result of their partners' usage of social media for their daily interactions with others. The following counselling implication can be drawn from this study. First, counsellors need to focus on enhancing communication skills among couples. Open dialogue about feelings regarding social media interactions can help reduce misunderstandings and foster a supportive environment where partners feel safe expressing their concerns. Additionally, addressing jealousy and insecurity is crucial. Counsellors can provide strategies to manage these emotions that often arise from social media interactions. By helping couples recognize their triggers and develop constructive coping mechanisms, they can work towards a healthier emotional landscape. Another important aspect of counselling involves guiding couples in establishing healthy boundaries surrounding

their social media use. This includes discussing acceptable behaviours online and agreeing on how much time should be dedicated to social media, thereby fostering mutual respect and understanding. Also, counsellors could encourage couples to prioritize quality time together, away from screens. This focus on in-person interaction can strengthen their relationship and reduce the reliance on social media for social engagement, ultimately promoting deeper connections. Finally, educating couples about the potential negative impacts of social media on relationships is crucial. By understanding these effects, couples can make informed decisions about their online presence and interactions, leading to healthier and more fulfilling relationships.

7. Limitations of the Study

This study's findings should be interpreted with caution due to some limitations. First, the cross-sectional design prevents conclusions about causality between social media use, jealousy, and marital satisfaction. Second, reliance on self-reported data may have introduced social desirability bias, as participants could underreport sensitive behaviors or emotions. Third, the study was limited to married persons in Sogakope, which restricts the generalizability of results to other cultural or regional contexts in Ghana. Fourth, the quantitative approach may not fully capture cultural nuances of jealousy and marital satisfaction; incorporating qualitative methods could provide deeper insights. Finally, the study did not consider differences across specific social media platforms, which may influence relationships in unique ways. In addition, one limitation of the current study is the unavailability of accurate population data on the total number of married individuals in the study area. Consequently, the results should be interpreted with caution, as they reflect the views of respondents within the sampled communities rather than a fully representative national sample.

Despite these limitations, the findings offer valuable evidence on how social media use and jealousy interact to affect marital satisfaction.

Declaration

Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the *Declaration of Helsinki* (2013 revision). Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Education Winneba. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection commenced across various study locations in Ghana. Participants were thoroughly briefed on the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and anticipated benefits. They were informed of their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions. Written consent was obtained either in person or electronically, depending on participant convenience. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly upheld throughout the study, with all responses coded and securely stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the research team.

Availability of Data and Materials

The data generated and analyzed during this study on social media use, jealousy, and marital satisfaction among married couples in Ghana are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Due to ethical considerations and confidentiality agreements, raw data will not be made publicly available. Data requests will be reviewed according to institutional ethical procedures to ensure participant anonymity and secure data handling.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests. The research was independently conceptualized, designed, and conducted without any external influence on its methodology, data interpretation, or conclusions.

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List of Abbreviations

- CBTJ**—Cognitive-Behavioral Theory of Jealousy;
FB—Facebook;
SM—Social Media;
SMIJ—Social Media Induced Jealousy;
MS—Marital Satisfaction;
SPSS—Statistical Package for the Social Sciences;
SD—Standard Deviation;
M—Mean;
r—Pearson Correlation Coefficient;
p—Probability Value (Significance Level).