

# Effect of Digital Infidelity in Marital Communication among Couples in Enugu Metropolis

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## Abstract

This study examined effect of digital infidelity in marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis. The objectives of the study include to: determine the extent to which couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity, identify the platforms through which digital infidelity is committed more, ascertain the extent digital infidelity affects marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis and evaluate the factors that encourage digital infidelity in marital communication. The descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study. The sources of data used were the primary and secondary sources of data. The population of the study was 315,238 while the sample size of 399 was determined using the Taro Yamane's formula. The findings included that couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity to a large extent, the platforms through which digital infidelity is committed more include Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and You tube, digital infidelity affects marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis to a large extent and the factors that encourage digital infidelity in marital communication include reliance on social media, change in world view, socialization etc. The researcher recommended that spouses should be careful with the amount of time they spend on social media because it can negatively affect their marital life, spouses should be aware that personal interaction and discussions with their spouse should be paramount instead of wasting time chatting on Facebook, twitter and Whatsapp, trust should be a priority among couples which could be gained by close interpersonal relationship/communication and marital leisure and satisfaction should be given serious consideration by spouses through devoting more time to each other and it was concluded digital infidelity in marital communication has significant effect among couples in Enugu metropolis.

## Introduction

Human beings are faced with numerous choices every day. These choices vary from the most trivial ones to the most important ones. One important choice is the marital choice, especially the choice of whom to marry. One phenomenon that is influencing people's choices in this modern age is the social media in particular and the Internet in general. The social media and the Internet have influenced many facets of human endeavours. The contemporary marriage is not exempted from this influence. As a matter of fact, many people are now using social media to meet and connect with others and some of such connections have led to marital choice and marriage.

Whereas the new media and its social media features offer many advantages for interaction and communication, it is believed to also increase the risks of failure in personal communication and intimacy in marriages. Social media has changed the way we meet and interact with each other. It provides a platform to learn more about people you associate with. Growing research has shown that increased usage of social media has had a negative effect on marriages and relationships. Higher levels of socaial media usage have been noted to lead to marital problems, including increased domestic violence, jealousy, divorce and infidelity.

With the development of the Internet, the definition of infidelity now includes a romantic and/or sexual relationship with someone other than the spouse, which begins with an online

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contact and is maintained mainly through electronic conversations that occur through e-mail and chat rooms (Scott, 2019) The emphasis is on the process whereby individuals already involved in a committed relationship seek to be involved in computer synchronous, interactive contacts with members of the opposite sex. A cyber affair can either be a continuous relationship specific to one online user or a series of random erotic chat room encounters with multiple online users. There exists a debate on whether chat room contacts constitute 'infidelity'. Mileham (2019) has defined it as amounting to infidelity based on three factors: First, the institution of marriage involves emotional and sexual exclusivity and hence, sexual involvement with someone other than the spouse is considered unacceptable. Second, it typically occurs in secrecy, and is usually kept hidden from the spouse. Third, the consequential nature of chat room liaisons and the breach of trust it can create, substantiate their classification as infidelity. Drigotas (2019) avers that spouses feel as betrayed, angry, and hurt by online infidelity as they would if skin-to-skin adultery had taken place.

Social media provides easy access for a jealous or suspicious spouse to seek out information about the interactions of a significant other. Whether suspicions are founded or unfounded, people often feel uneasy about their relationship after discovering something on their partner's Facebook account. This often leads to increased monitoring, jealousy, and conflict in a relationship. In fact, researchers have found that the more a person examines their partner's Facebook activity, the more that person reports jealousy and mistrust.

Unfortunately, suspicions about a partner's social media interactions are often warranted. One in ten adults admits to hiding messages and posts from their significant other. Eight percent of adults in relationships admit to having secret accounts. And one in three divorces now start as [online affairs](#). With smartphones and social media apps, it's never been easier for dissatisfied spouses to look for a new relationship, get in contact with an ex, or seek out a fling. A whopping 30% of Tinder users are married. Sites like AshleyMadison.com even cater to married people looking for affairs – over 130 million people worldwide visit Ashley Madison each month.

Hertlein (2018) asserts that digital infidelity occurs when a person gets, or remains, in touch with someone via technology, and engages in activity they would not want their current partner witnessing. It could be simply keeping tabs on an old flame, or flirtatious exchanges, or sexting and intimate photographs, but carrying out this kind of relationship in secret makes it potentially damaging. To many people, contacting another via email or [Facebook](#) isn't 'real life' as the person could be in any part of the world and separated by a computer or phone screen. They do not think that they are being unfaithful and would never agree that they have online affairs, but their partner would not see it the same way. They would be traumatized if they discovered what is going on and be very emotional. From the point of discovery, it is likely that the injured partner feels betrayed and loses all their trust in the other. Once trust is lost, it is very difficult to regain and can often lead to a break up.

Marriage is actually a partnership designed by God for a man and a woman in a husband - wife relationship. It is intended to be an intimate relationship built upon mutual understanding between husband and wife. According to Kisombo, Mgesa and Shorter (2019), marriage is a formal commitment between a man and a woman to cohabit more or less permanently. It is the union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. For this union to stand the test of time, there must be interaction between the married couple initiated by communication. Married partners need to share their thoughts, emotions and feelings in the experiences of daily living. Thus if a couple did not know each other well before marriage, they will come to know themselves within the marriage. This can be accomplished through marital communication. To know and be known, their past experiences, feelings, likes and dislikes problems and weakness, married partners must communicate effectively with each other.

Marital communication can be defined as the transmission of information from husband to wife and vice versa. It is a bridge between husband and wife so that they can share what they feel and know or seek explanation for an issue when in doubt. It is based on this background that this study will examine effect of digital infidelity in marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis

### **Statement of the Problem**

Concern has been raised about social media —that people may be spending too much time on these social media sites, creating problems in their family life and making it difficult to maintain good relationships with their spouses. It is based on these anomalies that this study will examine effect of digital infidelity in marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent do couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity?
2. What are the platforms through which digital infidelity is committed more?
3. To what extent does digital infidelity affect marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis?
4. What are the factors that encourage digital infidelity in marital communication?

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Concept of Digital Infidelity**

Digital infidelity occurs when people use social media and other electronic communication to cross marital boundaries. This can take the form of suggestive chatting or picture messaging, or when you emotionally bond through email with someone other than your spouse. Because of the physical separation, couples may not necessarily view this as "real" infidelity – but that doesn't make it any less dangerous than a physical encounter. Digital infidelity occurs when a person gets, or remains, in touch with someone via technology, and engages in activity they would not want their current partner witnessing. It could be simply keeping tabs on an old flame, or flirtatious exchanges, or sexting and intimate photographs, but carrying out this kind of relationship in secret makes it potentially damaging. To many people, contacting another via email or [Facebook](#) isn't 'real life' as the person could be in any part of the world and separated by a computer or phone screen. They do not think that they are being unfaithful and would never agree that they have online affairs, but their partner would not see it the same way. They would be traumatized if they discovered what is going on and be very emotional. From the point of discovery, it is likely that the injured partner feels betrayed and loses all their trust in the other. Once trust is lost, it is very difficult to regain and can often lead to a break up.

Do not think that digital infidelity will go unnoticed. There are classic signs that give someone away such as spending time online in private, smiling about messages received without elaborating on them, and deleting messages or search history as a matter of course. Usually behavior changes as things are kept secret and there is a need to tell small lies. Withdrawal from home life can also occur, as does going to bed later than normal, or getting up in the night. If you suspect your partner is engaging in online affairs, look out for some of these common traits. The majority of people will give themselves away at some point if you look for the signs. If you suspect digital infidelity is taking place, discuss it openly so you can tackle the issue. You never know, there could be other reasons for the odd behavior such as stress at work or money problems.

With so much at stake, it is important to establish what exactly is inappropriate behavior online when you're in a relationship. As people have different feelings about what is unfaithful and what isn't, the best thing to do is to speak with your partner about the issues. Some people are happy with some online activity but would be upset for partners to remain in contact with exes. If you understand your what your other half would consider online affairs, it will help you to avoid the situation. A good rule of thumb to follow, if you are considering your own life online, is that anything you do that you would not wish your partner to know about is potentially damaging. If you act in secret, especially if it is on a regular basis, you need to question your motives. Once you are found out, your partner could feel you have been utterly disloyal which could ruin your relationship forever.

### **Characteristics of Digital Infidelity**

Underwood and Findlay (2018) suggest that Internet infidelity relationships are based strongly on emotional intimacy. Furthermore, Underwood and Findlay report that people engaging in Internet infidelity are gaining something not received in their primary relationship from the online relationship. Experiencing a strong emotional connection with one's Internet partner and not having that connection in one's primary relationship might contribute to limited discussions about problems in the primary relationship and "coming clean" about the Internet infidelity (Cooper et al., 2018).

Cooper's (2018) "triple A" engine identifies three aspects of Internet infidelity that distinguish it, to some degree, from traditional infidelity. These three factors are accessibility, affordability, and anonymity. Accessibility refers to the access an individual has to the Internet. For example, the individual with only minimal access to the Internet will be less likely to engage in infidelity compared to someone with greater access to the Internet. Affordability refers to the cost of engaging in Internet infidelity. For a very small price, a computer user can visit many sites and meet multiple potential sexual needs. In addition, people who might feel uncomfortable purchasing sexually charged material in stores could quickly download similar information in the privacy of their own home.

Finally, anonymity comes with the ease with which one can establish an identity on the Internet (Cooper, 2018). In person, carrying on an affair means the other person gets to know who you are, can see you, and can potentially judge you. On the Internet, users can backspace, erase, and change what they say to promote a specific identity. For example, Cooper, Scherer, Boies, and Gordon (2019) reported that more than half of the respondents in their survey (61%) admitted to pretend to be a different age either occasionally or often. As Maheu and Subotnik (2001) describe it,

### **The Use of Facebook platform in Digital Infidelity**

The largest and most well-known social networking site is Facebook. According to statistics on Facebook, the social media has more than 700 million active users (Facebook, 2012). Social networking sites are mainly used for the maintenance of social relationships, especially for upholding contact with weaker social ties (Dorcan, 2017). They also offer a platform for idealized self-presentation. Suleiman (2013) maintains that Facebook is used for social engagement as follows:

The popularity of Facebook cuts across all age groups and has no relationship to individual characteristic with different class of people who use it ranging from clerics, actors, politicians to ordinary citizens. Facebook gives the impression that the entire world is meeting online and among youths, it is strange to come across a person without a Facebook account. It has become a good avenue for sourcing long lost friends and acquaintances because prior knowledge of password is not a condition for assessment of a person's account or sending a message unless if the account holder uses his privacy settings to restrict those who can read his wall. Even if the privacy settings allow only friends to assess the wall, the Facebook search engine can still find the person using any of his registered names, hometown or present location and an inbox message can be sent to him.

He also concludes, "social media have become an avenue for creating new online families. There are people who had not known each other before Facebook but afterwards, could not spend a day without interacting. Facebook is also a tool for the creation of many romantic relationships. Suleiman (2019) argues, "many male friends keep texting obscene messages online with the basic intent of establishing romantic relationships. Girls have also turned the social media into an avenue of online dating. They take beautiful pictures and upload them online. These days, many relationships start this way".

The use of social media for romantic relationships can be done in several ways. Users can display their relationship status on social media, use a profile picture that displays them together with the partner, or upload several pictures showing the couple (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011).

According to Utz and Beukeboom (2011), the first characteristic of social networking sites or social media is that they increase the amount of information that individuals receive about their partners. Even though people have always received information about their partners from friends and acquaintances, social networking sites centralise much of this information at one point. The second characteristic is that social media offers a socially accepted way of monitoring the partner.

A third characteristic of social media sites is that information that is relevant to the romantic relation is publicly displayed (Utz and Beukeboom, 2018). Utz and Beukeboom (2018) do not assume that the use of social networking sites is good or bad per se; instead, they assume that the direction of the effects mainly depends on the quality of the relationship and the behaviour of the partner. With the growing number of internet users (more than one billion users to date) (Internet world stats, 2006), infidelity on the internet is an issue of contention for many romantic partners.

According to Dorcan (2017), internet infidelity is defined as using the internet to take “sexual energy of any sort - thoughts, feelings and behaviours - outside of a committed sexual relationship in such a way that it damages the relationship, and then pretending that this drain will affect neither partner nor the relationship as long as it remains undiscovered”. However, “internet relationships are a relatively new occurrence, and internet infidelity has affected some couples in ways we do not yet understand” (Blow & Hartnett, 2019).

Some scholars (Stalk, 2012; Shield & Binder, 2013) believe that emotional infidelity is strongly interlinked with internet infidelity, a situation in which an individual forms a deep emotional attachment with another person outside the primary relationship. Stalk (2012) identifies several warning signs of emotional infidelity as follows: (1) Thinking and saying you are ‘just friends’ to the opposite-sex; (2) Treating them as a confidant, sharing intimate issues; (3) Discussing troubling aspects of your marriage and partner; (4) Comparing them verbally and mentally to your partner; (5) Fantasizing about a love or sexual relationship with the person; (6) Giving or receiving personal gifts from the person; and (7) Planning to spend time alone together or letting it happen.

Emotional infidelity is having an emotional involvement with another person, which leads one’s partner to channel emotional resources to someone else (Pittman, 1989; Vaughan, 1989; Shield & Binder, 2013). Also, Knapp and Dixon (2013) maintain, “many couples are under the misconception that infidelity only occurs when a man and a woman have sex together. Yet, there are other forms of infidelity such as emotional infidelity. This type of infidelity is important to address because it can possibly be more damaging than the act of sexual infidelity”. In essence, emotional infidelity transfers deep and lasting emotions like love and care to the heart. Having an emotional affair can ultimately lead to sexual infidelity or affair, as well. Emotional infidelity has the same impact, if not, worse than sexual infidelity. The heart of the individual is stolen from her/his partner through emotional infidelity. Sexual infidelity puts the partner at risk of sexually transmitted diseases whereas emotional infidelity puts the individual’s partner at a risk of mental abuse which has very serious and damaging consequences.

## **Empirical Review**

Most empirical studies on the impact of Internet infidelity on the primary relationship have examined the role of pornography or Internet sexual compulsivity, with few studies looking at other forms of Internet infidelity (Bridges, Bergner, & HessonMcInnis, 2003; King, 1999; Schneider, 2000; Zitzman & Butler, 2005). Although pornography and Internet sexual compulsivity may not be forms of infidelity where a partner is interacting with another person online, in Bergner & Bridges (2002) participants who were the partners of heavy pornography users stated that they overwhelmingly viewed their partners’ activity as an act of infidelity because it reduced the exclusivity of their relationship. For this reason, studies that examined pornography, Internet sexual compulsivity, and Internet infidelity will all be reviewed in this section.

One of the first researchers to examine the impact of Internet behaviors on the primary relationship was King (1999), who looked at how the wives of Clergy members who engaged in compulsive sexual behaviors were impacted by their husbands' online behaviors. Eighty-two percent of the women in the study stated that they interpreted their husband's behavior as a betrayal and there had been loss of trust in the relationship as a result. Additional impacts were the loss of relationship, debt, and loss of identity within their church community.

In 2000, Schneider sought to examine the role cybersex has in relationships, becoming the first empirical study that looked at the impact of Internet infidelity. Ninetyfour participants (only 3 men) responded to an online survey about the impact of cyber affairs on their relationship. Partners reported feeling hurt, betrayal, rejection, abandonment, devastation, loneliness, shame, isolation, humiliation, jealousy, and anger as well as loss of self-esteem. Participants noted a change in the relational dynamics, with 68% of the respondents stating that one or both partners had lost interest in relational sex. Close to one third of the participants (22.3 %) in this study reported that they had either separated or divorced due to the cybersex addiction of their partner. Once again, the issue with this study is the ability to generalize the findings, since this study only represents the experiences women have. The remainder of empirical studies that examine the impact of Internet behaviors on the relationship focused on pornography as the medium for the behavior.

Bergner, Bridges, & Hesson-McInnis (2003) found that partners of pornography viewers interpreted the behavior as a direct threat to their relationship, with participants reporting feeling loss, betrayal, devastation, anger, and mistrust. Zitzman and Butler (2005) found similar results, with the primary issue reported by participants as the need to regain trust in the relationship. Bergner et al., (2003) findings are similar to the experiences reported by the participants in Schneider (2000) study; however, it is important to recognize that although damaging and often interpreted as being a form of infidelity, these behaviors may not have the same impact as an actual online affair with another person.

Researchers have yet to examine how pornography and compulsive online sexual behaviors compare to Internet infidelity behaviors that require the emergence of a third person into the relationship. Over the past twelve years, researchers have begun to examine what impact Internet infidelity behaviors have on the primary relationship; however, limitations still exist. A large amount of attention has been placed on the impact of pornography or compulsive sexual behaviors, which may be qualitatively different than a couples' experience with an online affair.

Jones and Hertlein (2012) identified four key dimensions that determine the difference between Internet infidelity and Internet sex addiction: (1) involved partners, (2) view of the problem, (3) symptomology, and (4) presence or absence of addictive properties. Although these criteria were created for diagnostic purposes, it highlights that there are distinguishing factors between these two Internet issues, which may suggest differences in the impact of the differing behaviors on the partner

Henline and Lamke (2003) performed a study examining how respondents experienced sexual and emotional infidelity. Using a sample of 237 college students, they asked participants to complete a questionnaire about the nature and consequences of Internet infidelity. Specifically, they were asked to identify online behaviors that they would consider unfaithful if the individual was in a committed relationship. The researchers also asked participants to rate the probability that someone communicating online with someone other than their partner would lead to a face-to-face meeting. Results indicated that online infidelity was not only characterized by sexual components but also by emotional components. Respondents reported that they would be more concerned about an emotional relationship leading to a face-to-face meeting, more so than an online sexual relationship leading to a face-to-face meeting. This research uses a relatively small sample of college students. This type of research can be problematic as younger individuals are less likely to be married and less likely to be in cohabitating relationships (Whitty, 2003).

Whitty (2003) performed a similar study to Henline and Lamke (2003) in exploring men and women's attitudes on online infidelity. Whitty asked 1,117 respondents to rate behaviors on a 5-point, Likert-type scale assessing whether an activity could be considered unfaithful to one's partner. Respondents viewed certain behaviors online as acts of betrayal, thus supporting the more recent ideas that betrayal in a relationship is not restricted to physical or sexual contact with another person. In relation to gender, women viewed a wider range of behavior as infidelity as compared to men. For example, in a study examining the differences in flirting online and offline, talk of sexual behavior and appearance was found to play a prominent role in flirting over the Internet. It was particularly important to communicate one's emotions over the Internet (e.g., laughing, emoticons; Whitty, 2004).<sup>2</sup>

Whitty (2003) also reported that there were three separate components of infidelity: sexual, emotional, and pornography. In considering age as a variable in one's assessment of infidelity, results of this study indicated that younger individuals rated more acts as fitting the criteria of betrayal than did older adults, but women in the older age group (45 to 70) considered flirting to be more related to betrayal than did younger women (23 to 44).

Scholars such as Hirschlag (2015); Cravens (2013), and Gardner (2010) have also argued that social media may be contributing to the increase in marital instability and has become really significant in divorce cases across the world. For Hirschlag (2015), the internet-enabled technology is affecting social relationships indifferent ways including exposing couples to unwarranted interference from admirers, former intimate partners, and explicit content that can urge infidelity and secrecy. These issues are also found in Nigeria where marital instability is gradually occurring regularly.

As noted by Asa and Nkan, (2017) and Udobong, (2016), whereas the causes of marital problems in most societies, including Nigeria, consist of factors such as: economic hardship, sickness, sexual incompatibility, unsatisfactory sexual relationship, childlessness, and preference for male children; social media usage have emerged as forerunners of marital disputes and breakdown. Today, it is more common to find couples who have social media-related marital challenges than those who do not. As opined by Udobong (2016), social media accounts for the breakdown of many marital relationships in our society today. As a result of social media usage, many couples report that their partners communicate intimately with other men and women, connect with former lovers, search for sexual partners, and maintain affairs with others.

## Theoretical Framework

### Social Network Interference theory

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Social Network Interference theory which is hinged on the assumption that marriage is largely an exclusive institution that can be affected negatively by external influences from one or both partners' social networks. Pioneers of the theory, such as Dickson-Markman and Markman (1988) and Johnson and Milardo (1984), argue that interferences from external networks including friends, parents and acquaintances, contribute to marital challenges. When individuals begin romantic relationships or marry, they are expected to spend more time with their new family, and as a result spend less time with the members of their social network.

However, when this arrangement is altered as a result of interference, there may be friction in the marriage and conflict may occur. Trotter, Orbach, and Shrout (2019), have also argued that marital relationships thrive and solidify when there is less exogenous influence such as from friends, family, and society. For these scholars, couples need seclusion or *social withdrawal* to build intimacy, love, interdependence, and trust which are important pillars of enduring relationships. When this exclusiveness is breached or interrupted, there may be tension in the marriage as the couples struggle to meet the needs of the two domains.

Thus, in the context of this theory, it is proposed in this study that the phenomenon of social withdrawal and marital intimacy becomes more difficult in new marriages where couples who are still struggling to bond and create intimacy which includes trying to detach from their social networks and the social interactions within those networks, now add social media to their array of marital challenges.

### **Media System Dependence Theory**

This study relies on the Media Systems Dependency theory. The theory assumes that the more a person depends on having his or her needs met by using the media, the more important the role that media plays in the person's life will be, and therefore, the more influence the media outlets will have on that person (Baran & Davis, 2009). If more and more people depend on the media, media institutions will be reshaped, the overall influence of media will rise, and the role of the media in society will become more central (Baran & Davis, 2009). Secondly, "the degree of audience dependence on media information is the key variable in understanding when and why media messages alter audience beliefs, feelings, or behaviour." (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 274).

In other words, the uses people make of media determine the influence of the media. Thirdly, "as our world becomes more complex and as it changes more rapidly, we not only need the media to a greater degree to help us make sense, to help us understand what our best responses might be, and to help us relax and cope, but also we ultimately come to know that world largely through those media" (Baran & Davis, 2009). By using the media to make sense of the social world, people allow the media to shape their expectations. Finally, "the greater the need and consequently the stronger the dependency...the greater the likelihood" that the media and their message will have an effect. Those who have greater needs and thus greater dependency on media will be most influenced (Baran & Davis, 2009).

According to Baran and Davis (2009), the argument raised by the media systems dependency theory is that human beings have developed a range of routine uses for various media, and can easily adapt these uses to serve their needs. Many individuals, young married couples, in particular, use the social media (Facebook) to connect with potential partners outside their marriages. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that young married women have resorted to the Facebook to meet their needs of loneliness, intimacy, self-disclosure and, ultimately, happiness outside their primary relationship.

### **Research Design**

This study adopted the survey research method, which is appropriate in attitudinal studies as this. The method notes, selects and studies samples drawn from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution and inter-relations of sociological and psychological variables.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of a study refers to all the conceivable elements that make up a group. The researcher will study the population of married men and women (couples). The population is 315,238 (NPC Projected population of couples, 2022).

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

Taro Yamane's formula was used to draw a sample size 399. Simple random method will be used to select those that the questionnaire will be administered on. This is to increase the probability or chance of each element of the population being selected. The simple random sampling method will be applied by giving out the copies of questionnaire randomly. The number selected will serve as a representative of the entire population because each respondent will be selected randomly. This enables us collect data that were representative of our population in order to generalize the result.



## Data Presentation, Analysis and Results

### 4.1.1 Research Question One: To what extent do couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity?

**Table 4.2.1: Mean rating of the extent couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity**

S/N	ITEMS	VHE (5)	HE (4)	U (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	Total	Mean
1	Emotional bond with someone other than my spouse through the social media	154 (41%)	113 (30%)	81 (21%)	20 (4%)	17 (3%)	385	4.03
2	Spending time online in Private	132 (35%)	104 (28%)	73 (19%)	41 (10%)	35 (8%)	385	3.71
3	Smiling about messages received without elaborating on them	136 (36%)	102 (27%)	93 (24%)	29 (7%)	25 (6%)	385	3.82
4	Suggestive Chatting and Picture Messaging	129 (34%)	114 (30%)	71 (18%)	36 (9%)	35 (8%)	385	3.74

**Grand Mean of Table = 3.83**

Table 4.2.1 shows that 154 respondents representing 41% of the total respondents said to a very high extent that emotional bond with someone other than their spouse through the social media is the extent couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity, 113 respondents representing 30% said high extent, 81 respondents representing 21% were undecided, 20 respondents representing 4% said low extent while 17 respondents representing 3% said to a very low extent with a mean of 4.03

Table 4.2.1 shows that 132 respondents representing 35% said to a very high extent that spending time online in private is the extent couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity, 104 respondents representing 28% said to a high extent, 73 respondents representing 19% were undecided, 41 respondents representing 10% said low extent while 35 respondents representing 8% said to a very low extent with a mean of 3.71

Table 4.2.1 shows that 136 respondents representing 36% said to a very high extent that smiling about messages received without elaborating on them, 102 respondents representing 27% agreed, 93 respondents 24% were undecided, 29 respondents representing 7% disagreed while 25 respondents representing 6% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.82

Table 4.2.1 shows that 129 respondents representing 34% said to a very high extent that suggestive Chatting and Picture Messaging is the extent couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity, 114 respondents representing 30% agreed, 71 respondents representing 18% were undecided, 36 respondents representing 9% disagreed while 35 respondents representing 8% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.74

**Research Question Two: What are the platforms through which digital infidelity is committed more?**

**Table 4.2.2: Mean rating of the platforms through which digital infidelity is committed more.**

S/N	ITEMS	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
1	Facebook	126 (38%)	114 (30%)	68 (18%)	42 (10%)	35 (8%)	385	3.71
2	Twitter	124 (33%)	111 (29%)	66 (17%)	48 (12%)	36 (9%)	385	3.66
3	Whatsapp	128 (34%)	104 (28%)	77 (20%)	39 (9%)	37 (8%)	385	3.69
4	You tube	120 (32%)	106 (28%)	68 (17%)	46 (12%)	45 (11%)	385	3.58

**Grand Mean of Table = 3.66**

Table 4.2.2 shows that 126 respondents representing 38% strongly agree that Facebook is the platform through which digital infidelity is committed more, 114 respondent representing 30% agree, 68 respondents representing 18% were undecided, 42 respondents representing 10% disagree while 35 respondents representing 8% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.71

Table 4.2.2 shows that 124 respondents representing 33% strongly agree that Twitter is the platform through which digital infidelity is committed more,, 111 respondents representing 29% agree, 66 respondents representing 17% were undecided, 48 respondents representing 12% disagree while 36 respondents representing 9% strongly disagree with a mean of 3.66

Table 4.2.2 Shows that 128 respondents representing 34% strongly agree that Whatsapp is the platform through which digital infidelity is committed more, 104 respondents representing 28% agreed, 77 respondents representing 20% were undecided, 39 respondents representing 9% disagreed while 37 respondents representing 8% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.09

Table 4.2.2 shows that 120 respondents representing 32% strongly agreed that You tube is the platform through which digital infidelity is committed more, 106 respondents representing 28% agreed. 68 respondents representing 17% were undecided, 46 respondents representing 12% disagreed while 45 respondents representing 11% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.58

**Research Question Three: To what extent does digital infidelity affect marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis?**

**Table 4.2.3: Mean rating of the extent digital infidelity affects marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis**

S/N	ITEMS	VHE (5)	HE (4)	U (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	Total	Mean
1	Conflict in spouses relationship	155 (41%)	112 (30%)	83 (21%)	20 (4%)	15 (3%)	385	4.04
2	Parental infidelity produces anxiety, confusion and distress among children	132 (35%)	103 (28%)	74 (19%)	40 (10%)	35 (8%)	385	3.74
3	It causes emotional responses and behaviours such as depression and suicidal idea	137 (36%)	101 (27%)	92 (24%)	28 (7%)	25 (6%)	385	3.85
4	Divorces and	130	113	72	35	35	385	3.75

	Physical aggression	(34%)	(30%)	(18%)	(9%)	(8%)		
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**Grand Mean of Table = 3.84**

Table 4.2.3 shows that 155 respondents representing 41% of the total respondents state to a very high extent that conflict in spouses relationship is the extent that digital infidelity affects marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis, 112 respondents representing 30% agree, 83 respondents representing 21% were undecided, 20 respondents representing 4% disagree while 15 respondents representing 3% strongly disagreed with a mean of 4.04

Table 4.2.3 shows that 132 respondents representing 35% state to a very high extent that parental infidelity produces anxiety, confusion and distress among children is the extent that digital infidelity affects marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis, 103 respondents representing 28% said high extent, 74 respondents representing 19% were undecided, 40 respondents representing 10% said low extent while 35 respondents representing 8% said low extent that with a mean of 3.72

Table 4.2.3 shows that 137 respondents representing 36% strongly agree that digital infidelity causes emotional responses and behaviours such as depression and suicidal idea, 101 respondents representing 27% agreed, 92 respondents 24% were undecided, 28 respondents representing 7% disagreed while 25 respondents representing 6% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.82

Table 4.2.3 shows that 130 respondents representing 34% strongly agreed that divorces and Physical aggression is the extent that digital infidelity affects marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis 113 respondents representing 30% agreed 72 respondents representing 18% were undecided, 35 respondents representing 9% disagreed while 35 respondents representing 8% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.75

**Research Question Four: What are the factors that encourage digital infidelity in marital communication?**

**Table 4.2.4: Mean rating of the factors that encourage digital infidelity in marital communication**

S/N	ITEMS	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
1	Reliance on Social media	127 (38%)	113 (30%)	69 (18%)	41 (10%)	35 (8%)	385	3.73
2	Change in world view and way of life	125 (33%)	110 (29%)	67 (17%)	47 (12%)	36 (9%)	385	3.68
3	Socialization	129 (34%)	103 (28%)	78 (20%)	38 (9%)	37 (8%)	385	3.71
4	Spending less time in real life relationship	121 (32%)	105 (28%)	69 (17%)	45 (12%)	45 (11%)	385	3.59

**Grand Mean of Table = 3.67**

Table 4.2.4 shows that 127 respondents representing 37% strongly agree that reliance on social media is a factor that encourages digital infidelity in marital communication, 113 respondent representing 28% agree, 69 respondents representing 18% were undecided, 41 respondents representing 10% disagree while 35 respondents representing 8% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.73

Table 4.2.4 shows that 125 respondents representing 33% strongly agree that change in world view and way of life is a factor that encourages digital infidelity in marital communication, 110 respondents representing 29% agree, 67 respondents representing 9% were undecided, 47 respondents representing 12% disagree while 36 respondents representing 9% strongly disagree with a mean of 3.68

Table 4.2.4 Shows that 129 respondents representing 34% strongly agree that socialization is a factor that encourages digital infidelity in marital communication, 103 respondents representing 28% agreed, 78 respondents 20% were undecided, 38 respondents representing 9% disagreed while 37 respondents representing 8% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.70

Table 4.2.4 shows that 121 respondents representing 32% strongly agreed that spending less time in real life relationship is a factor that encourages digital infidelity in marital communication, 105 respondents representing 28% agreed. 69 respondents representing 17% were undecided, 45 respondents representing 12% disagreed while 45 respondents representing 11% strongly disagreed with a mean of 3.59

### **Discussion of Findings**

Couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity to a large extent. The study confirmed this through the comparison of the finding with the literature review. The evidence is shown in the grand mean value (3.83) which is greater than the average value (2.50). Hence, the research accepted that couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity to a large extent.

The platforms through which digital infidelity is committed more include Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and Youtube. The study confirmed this through the comparison of the finding with the empirical review. The evidence is shown in the grand mean (3.66) which is greater than the average value (2.50). Hence, the research accepted that the platforms through which digital infidelity is committed more include Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and Youtube

Digital infidelity affects marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis to a large extent. The evidence is shown in the grand mean value (3.84) which is greater than the average value (2.50). Hence, the research accepted that digital infidelity affects marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis to a large extent.

The factors that encourage digital infidelity in marital communication include reliance on social media, change in world view, socialization etc. The evidence is shown in the grand mean value (3.67) which is greater than the standard average value (2.50). Hence, the research accepted that the factors that encourage digital infidelity in marital communication include reliance on social media, change in world view, socialization etc

### **Summary of Findings**

1. Couples in Enugu metropolis engage in digital infidelity to a large extent. The grand mean value (3.83) is greater than the average value (2.50).
2. The platforms through which digital infidelity is committed more include Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and You tube. The grand mean (3.66) is greater than the average value (2.50)
3. Digital infidelity affects marital communication among couples in Enugu metropolis to a large extent. The grand mean value (3.84) is greater than the average value (2.50).
4. The factors that encourage digital infidelity in marital communication include reliance on social media, change in world view, socialization etc

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings.

- 1) Spouses should be careful with the amount of time they spend on social media because it can negatively affect their marital life
- 2) Spouses should be aware that personal interaction and discussions with their spouse should be paramount instead of wasting time chatting on Facebook, twitter and Whatsapp

- 3) Trust should be a priority among couples which could be gained by close interpersonal relationship/communication
- 4) Marital leisure and satisfaction should be given serious consideration by spouses through devoting more time to each other.

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