

The Prevalence of Social Media Obsession Among Couples in Selected Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Migori County

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ABSTRACT: Digital technologies have transformed interpersonal interactions, making social media an important platform through which couples communicate, share experiences, and sustain relationships. However, increasing engagement with social media has been accompanied by growing concerns over obsessive use, a behavioural phenomenon associated with compulsive engagement and adverse social, psychological, and relational outcomes. Despite growing evidence of social media obsession globally and in Kenya, little is known about its prevalence among couples within faith-based settings, particularly among Seventh-day Adventist churches in Migori County, Kenya. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of social media obsession among couples in selected Seventh-day Adventist churches in Migori County. The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design involving 362 couples selected from a target population of 3,805 couples across selected Seventh-day Adventist churches. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews and focus group discussions and analysed narratively. The findings revealed a high prevalence of social media engagement, with 58.0% of respondents accessing social media four or more times daily, 40.3% spending more than 30 minutes per session, and 63.5% reporting usage at any time of the day. Social media obsession was primarily influenced by loneliness, fear of missing out, real-time notifications, and the accessibility of digital platforms. Real-time updates emerged as the strongest contributor, with 60.2% of respondents indicating that notifications made it difficult to disengage from social media. The study concludes that social media obsession among couples is shaped by emotional, cognitive, and technological factors that reinforce persistent online engagement. The study recommends the promotion of digital wellness programmes, responsible social media practices, and self-regulation strategies among couples to foster healthier relationships and balanced technology use.

KEYWORDS: Social media obsession; Prevalence; Couples; Digital behaviour; Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media has emerged as a dominant mode of communication, significantly influencing how couples interact, share experiences, and maintain their relationships. However, the widespread adoption of social media has been accompanied by a growing prevalence of obsessive use, with recent studies indicating that a substantial proportion of users exhibit compulsive engagement patterns that interfere with their social, psychological, and relational functioning (Casale et al., 2023; Cheng et al., 2021). Social media obsession takes the form of a psychological condition characterized by excessive concern with social networking platforms, compulsive engagement, and difficulty controlling social media use despite its adverse consequences (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2014; Zhao et al., 2022). This is reflected on how frequent a user visits a particular social media site, the duration taken while engaged, the time of the day, the type of content viewed and the motive behind the engagement.

The diverse forms in which social media exists, including social networking sites (SNS), messaging applications, mediasharing platforms, blogging and publishing networks, discussion forums, review sites, social shopping platforms, interest-based networks, and audio-based applications makes them highly accessible to target users (Vaid & Harari, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2021). The access increases the possibility of prevalence of social media obsession. Studies conducted in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia report increased misunderstandings, emotional distance, jealousy, and conflict among couples with high levels of social media engagement (Ioannidou, 2023; Marzo et al., 2024; Chakraborty & Dey, 2024; Abbasi, 2021). Excessive social media involvement has been extensively reported in studies focusing on how it often leads partners to divide their attention between online interactions and in-person communication, resulting in distracted conversations, reduced empathy, and superficial engagement during shared moments (Harrigan et al., 2021; Whelan et al., 2020). Neurological studies suggest that social media

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platforms activate reward pathways in the brain in ways similar to addictive substances, reinforcing repetitive use through instant gratification mechanisms such as likes, comments, and shares (Huang & Fan, 2022). This reinforcement often leads users to prioritize online interactions as part of high frequency routine.

The Communication Authority of Kenya's (2024) reported that 87.2% of Kenyans access the internet primarily through their smartphones, underscoring the significant role that social media plays in shaping interpersonal interactions in the country. This is reflected in recent evidence suggesting that social media obsession has become a growing behavioural concern worldwide, with studies reporting that between 18% and 24% of users exhibit problematic or addictive patterns of social media use (Salari et al., 2023). Couples are devoting substantial portions of their daily routines to online activities such as messaging, posting, and checking updates on platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2024). Despite increasing social media use among couples, limited research has examined social media obsession within faith-based settings in Kenya.

Existing studies in Kenya have largely examined social media use and family relationships among urban, secular, or mainstream Christian populations, with limited attention to faith-specific contexts and the unique relational dynamics of Seventh-day Adventist couples (Mutua et al., 2022; Wathigo, 2019; Ogalle, 2022). Consequently, little is known about the prevalence of social media obsession among the Seventh-Day Adventist couples in Migori County. Thus, the aim of this study is to determine the prevalence of social media obsession among couples in selected Seventh-day Adventist churches in Migori County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories have been proposed to explain the occurrence of certain events. One of these theories is Albert Ellis' 1955 cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which is a branch of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) (David et al., 2018). The theorist views people to have fluidity and complexity as biopsychosocial beings who lean towards establishing and pursuing goals. Humans rely on goals that define their need to survive towards being reasonably content or satisfied and free from pain (Terjesen et al., 2020). REBT is considered an action-oriented method for managing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral disturbances. According to Wade (2022), the theory deals entirely with cognitive distortion and irrational beliefs. REBT, as one of the pillars of CBT, applies practical techniques in assisting people to confront and overcome adversity, which includes goal achievement.

REBT focuses on the present rather than the past. Irrational beliefs and cognitive distortion manifest in unhealthy emotions (which include depression, unhealthy anger, guilt, and anxiety) and Dysfunctional behaviors (which include addictive behaviors, procrastination, unhealthy eating, aggression, and sleep disturbances, among others) (Zayed, 2022). According to Michler (2019), irrational thinking is among obsessive behaviors' key constituents. The occurrence of irrational thinking is manifested in cognitive distortions translating to negative emotions, which later advance into maladaptive behaviors. The escalation might progress towards other mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression, both of which have a significant impact on the risk of obsession. REBT helps in managing or reducing obsessive behaviors through patient psychoeducation while focusing on problem causation (Michler, 2019). The causation is the irrational or harmful belief or both.

The irrational belief results in several reactions leading to risky behaviors, such as obsession (Steglich-Petersen and Varga, 2024). By exposing patients to the identification of cognitive distortions, REBT aids them in fixing these irrational beliefs by way of healthier coping techniques and more positive choices (Dryden, 2019). By so doing, patients gradually stop compulsive or obsessive behaviors as a way of escaping from the challenges they face. Consequently, REBT is highly recommended for managing obsessive behaviors (Michler, 2019). It helps individuals with an obsession to stop the pattern that aids them in making similar conventional choices or decisions. Through this methodology, the patients experience empowerment and encouragement that help them keep or maintain healthier ways to handle adverse situations.

REBT employs treatment intervention known as the ABC Model (Abdollahpour, et al., 2023). This form of intervention is also called the ABCs of REBT. The ABC principle works towards targeting dysfunctional beliefs and thoughts. REBT treatment intervention of the ABC model activates situations triggering negative responses in patients and is represented by letter A. Letter B represents irrational thoughts and beliefs regarding the specific situation. Additionally, C is representative of consequences that result from specific irrational beliefs (Kurniawati, et al., 2020) Generally, distressing emotions are the consequences. Following the ABC rational emotive behavior core principles, the D, E, and F principles come next in line. Contextually, D is representative of the dispute, including how individuals question their beliefs, whereas E represents effective behavior. The last step is effective behavior, which is the ultimate therapy goal whereby patients develop new feelings that are represented by the letter F (Young et al., 2023).

Despite its advantages, CBT exhibits certain limitations. Its emphasis on present-focused cognition and behaviour may insufficiently address deeper relational or emotional dynamics, which can be particularly salient in couple communication (Spengle

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et al., 2022). Cultural factors and collective belief systems—in this case, faith-based values—may also interact with cognitive schemas in ways that standard CBT protocols do not fully encompass (Terjesen et al., 2020). Moreover, CBT requires a level of cognitive insight and motivation that some participants may find challenging without supplementary support or psychoeducation (Wade, 2022). CBT's strengths and limitations notwithstanding, its application remains highly appropriate for this study. By targeting the precise irrational beliefs and behavioral patterns underpinning excessive social media use, REBT techniques can directly reduce withdrawal symptoms and conflict triggers—two dimensions shown to erode interpersonal communication. The model's clearly delineated steps facilitate practical skill acquisition, enabling couples to negotiate “techfree” periods, set realistic usage goals, and replace compulsive checking with alternative coping strategies. Given the study's focus on measurable changes in communication quality, CBT provides both the theoretical rigor and the empirical evidence base needed to design and evaluate effective intervention measures.

Recent research literature has shown that the rapid growth of digital technology is significantly increasing the use of social media platforms among married couples. While these platforms facilitate communication and information sharing, excessive engagement may lead to patterns of compulsive or obsessive use (Kuss & Griffiths, 2023; Sun & Zhang, 2022). Social media obsession is often characterized by frequent checking of platforms, prolonged online presence, and difficulty disengaging from digital interactions (Andreassen et al., 2022; Bányai et al., 2023). Among couples, such patterns may influence the quality of interpersonal communication and the amount of time devoted to face-to-face interaction (Roberts & David, 2023; McDaniel & Coyne, 2022).

Internet usage at home is associated with family antagonism, creating communication barriers, and fostering obsession, which affects social interaction within the family structure (Huang and Fan, 2022). Moreover, families that spend time together engaging in shared activities enjoy higher quality communication compared to those that spend most of their time online. Wang et al. (2020) supported this view, the frequency of social media use not only interferes with social interactions, such as marriages, but also affects the health of the participants. Wang et al. (2020) further argued that since interpersonal relationships are contingent on healthy mental well-being, negative impacts on relationships can lead to mental health problems such as depression. The study by Hwang and Fan (2022) focused on social media as a tool for encouraging healthy communication among new Chinese couples using key informant interviews; the study highlighted the contextual gap. Similarly, the study by Wang et al. (2020) aimed to establish the link between social media and the mental health of couples, also indicating a conceptual gap.

The increasing concern over couples' growing attachment to social media has become a notable societal issue. Research by Harren et al. (2021) indicates that excessive internet and social media engagement is shaped by individuals' underlying beliefs about their own thought patterns and self-control. As a result, excessive or unhealthy use of social media has been linked to mental health challenges, which may lead to serious consequences in relationships, including potential marital breakdowns. Benucci et al. (2021) explain that internet-related cues can automatically trigger cognitive distortions, which may contribute to addictive behaviors similar to substance dependence. Supporting this perspective, Harren et al. (2021) also explored how compulsive social media use relates to psychological difficulties in couples, pointing out a significant gap in understanding the wider effects of social media on romantic relationships.

Couples' patterns of checking and posting at particular times of day, whether first thing in the morning, during shared meals, or late at night, carry distinct relational consequences. Hand et al. (2013) coined the term “phubbing” to describe the phenomenon of one partner attending to their phone rather than engaging in face-to-face conversation over dinner or during date nights; over time, these intrusions erode mutual attentiveness and create a sense of emotional absence at key relational moments. Ubiwa (2020) further demonstrated that obsessive users experience peak cravings upon waking and just before bedtime, such that inability to access social media during these windows trigger irritability and withdrawal symptoms. When partners habitually check devices at these sensitive times, the resulting mood swings and interruptions to shared routines can amplify conflict and reduce opportunities for meaningful connection (Hand et al., 2013; Ubiwa, 2020). Abbasi (2021) similarly reported that frequent viewing or sharing of intimate photos, videos, or status updates heightens emotional volatility; partners may oscillate between reassurance and resentment as they seek both validation and privacy. Over time, such cycles of emotional arousal and subsequent cooling-off periods undermine trust, weaken perceived commitment, and divert energy away from direct, in-person communication (Abbasi, 2021; Bouffard et al., 2021).

Underlying motives for social media use—ranging from alleviating loneliness to seeking social affirmation—play a pivotal role in fostering compulsive patterns that detract from couple communication. Hussain et al. (2020) identified compensation for isolation as a primary driver, showing that individuals who turn to social platforms to fill emotional voids report lower levels of in-person engagement with their partners. Chakraborty and Dey (2024) expanded this view by linking mood-regulation motives—such as stress relief or emotional numbing—to increased tolerance and dependence; users learn to expect rapid, dopamine-driven

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feedback online, which weakens their capacity for patience and empathy in real-world interactions. As motives shift from casual connection to emotional sustenance, couples report more frequent misunderstandings, reduced conflict resolution efficacy, and a gradual displacement of face-to-face dialogue by scrolling, liking, and commenting rituals (Chakraborty & Dey, 2024; Hussain et al., 2020).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and integrated during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of social media obsession among couples. The study was conducted among married couples in selected Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) churches in Migori County, Kenya. The target population comprised 3,805 couples drawn from 23 selected churches with a combined membership of 13,702 congregants within the Ranen Conference. Using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% level of precision, a sample size of 362 couples was obtained and participated in the quantitative survey. In addition, 26 key informants, including church leaders and communication officials, were purposively selected to provide expert perspectives on social media use among couples. Four focus group discussions involving 48 participants were also conducted to generate in-depth qualitative insights.

A multistage sampling procedure was employed. The conference was first stratified into stations, districts, and local churches, after which the participating churches were selected. Simple random sampling was then used to select the couples who participated in the survey, ensuring that each eligible couple had an equal chance of inclusion. To participate, respondents were required to be married for at least three years, possess an active social media account, and be members of the SDA Church. Individuals without active social media accounts, widowed persons, and newly married couples were excluded from the study.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to the sampled couples, interview schedules administered to key informants, and focus group discussion guides used during group sessions. The questionnaire gathered information on demographic characteristics, social media use patterns, prevalence of social media obsession, and couple communication. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics were applied to examine relationships among study variables. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions were analysed narratively to identify recurring experiences and perceptions regarding social media obsession among couples. Findings from both strands of data were integrated during interpretation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the prevalence of social media obsession among SDA couples in Migori County.

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university ethics committee and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), while informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection commenced.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prevalence Levels of Social Media Obsession

The study revealed that the majority of respondents (58.0%) engage with social media four or more times a day, suggesting a high level of daily activity on these platforms. Another 18.8% use social media twice a day, while 15.7% report once-a-day usage.

Table 1: Frequency of Daily Social Media Use at Home

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Four times+	210	58.0	58.0	58.0
Once a day	57	15.7	15.7	73.8
Thrice a day	27	7.5	7.5	81.2
Twice a day	68	18.8	18.8	100.0
Total	362	100.0	100.0	100.0

However, a smaller portion (7.5%) indicates using social media thrice a day. These findings point to a considerable reliance on social media for everyday communication and possibly other needs, reflecting its pervasive role in participants' routines. Qualitative data illuminate the rhythms behind these numbers:

"I find myself opening WhatsApp every hour to see if there's a new message from my wife—it's just become automatic by midday." (Focus Group 1, Participant 3)

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“When we argue, both of us retreat to our phones and end up checking social media as a way to calm down. I do it at least four times before lunch.” (Focus Group 2, Participant 6)

“Even when I’m cooking or tending the children, I’ll glance at my screen to catch up on church group updates. Sometimes I don’t realize it’s been five or six alerts already.” (Interview, Key Informant 4)

Such high checking frequency echoes Huang and Fan’s (2022) findings that constant social media engagement can fragment family interactions, while Wang et al. (2020) link repeated logins to an increased risk of depressive symptoms when digital use becomes a habitual coping mechanism. In the terms of Cognitive-Behavioral Theory, frequent checking reflects elevated salience—an obsessive preoccupation with social media—and emerging tolerance, as users require ever-more frequent hits of digital stimulus to satisfy emotional needs (Hand et al., 2013).

The study further also sought to establish the exact time estimates that participants commit to social media use. The largest proportion of respondents (40.3%) spend more than 30 minutes on social media per login session, while a notable 38.1% use it for 5–15 minutes. About 17.4% report durations of 16–30 minutes, and only 4.1% engage for less than 5 minutes. These findings suggest that although some participants limit their usage to shorter sessions, a significant portion devotes extended periods to social media, potentially reflecting deeper engagement or dependency. The participants described how easily short visits stretched into long sessions:

“I tell myself I’ll scroll for five minutes, but next thing I know, it’s been forty minutes—I lose track of time.” (Focus Group 1, Participant 4)

“After dinner, my wife and I settle in to watch a quick sermon clip on YouTube, and before we realize it, we’ve binged videos for nearly an hour.” (Focus Group 3, Participant 7)

“I tried setting a timer for 15-minute sessions, yet when a group chat lights up, I end up chatting for over half an hour.” (Interview, Key Informant 2)

These reflections underscore a common experience of “just one more scroll” turning into prolonged screen time. From a CBT perspective (David et al., 2018; Zayed, 2022), extended sessions signal rising tolerance—users need ever-longer engagement to achieve the same mood relief—and mood modification, as social media becomes a tool for managing stress or boredom. Under Emotionally Focused Therapy (Johnson, 2019; Wong et al., 2018), these lengthy online intervals can disrupt connection and intimacy, as partners substitute in-person emotional bids with digital distractions. Instead of turning to each other for reassurance, individuals retreat into their devices, weakening the secure attachment that EFT deems vital for relationship satisfaction. Recognizing these patterns of extended use is crucial for understanding how digital habits may erode face-to-face interaction and emotional responsiveness within couples.

It was also instrumental to determine at what times of the day participants used social media (see Table 2).

Table 2: Time of Day for Social Media Use

Response	Frequency	Percent
Anytime	230	63.5
In the night	72	19.9
Mostly in the evening	52	14.4
Mostly in the morning	8	2.2
Total	362	100.0

The results show that 63.5% of participants use social media “anytime,” indicating flexibility in their engagement throughout the day. Meanwhile, 19.9% primarily go online at night, and 14.4% prefer the evening. Only 2.2% use social media mostly in the morning. These findings suggest that while many individuals access social platforms around the clock, a noteworthy subset favor late-night or evening use, possibly reflecting varying personal schedules and daily routines. Participants described how these flexible—or nocturnal—habits shape couple routines:

“I find myself scrolling through messages before bed; sometimes I don’t sleep until I’ve replied to everyone.” (Focus Group 2, Participant 4)

“My wife checks our family group on WhatsApp at midnight to catch up on prayer requests. I worry it steals time from our conversations.” (Interview, Key Informant 6)

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"I open social media whenever I feel a lull in the day—could be at work or while cooking. There's no set time; it's just whenever." (Focus Group 3, Participant 1)

The study revealed that the majority of participants (80.9%) primarily access social media while at home, suggesting that most usage occurs in domestic settings, possibly during leisure or family time. By contrast, 19.1% of respondents use social media mainly when away from home, which may include workplaces, educational institutions, or public areas. This distribution highlights the centrality of home environments in shaping social media consumption patterns and underscores the potential impact such usage could have on family interactions. The participants described how home environments both facilitate and strain couple interactions:

"I check WhatsApp first thing after waking—while still in bed—before my spouse even opens their eyes." (Focus Group 1, Participant 6)

"My breaks at the office are my only chance to scroll Instagram. At home, my partner expects me to put the phone down." (Focus Group 2, Participant 9)

"During family devotion time, my husband sometimes sneaks peeks at Facebook on his phone. It interrupts our prayers." (Focus Group 3, Participant 2)

Key informants noted the domestic tensions:

"Couples tell me they spend more time on their screens in living rooms than talking over supper—home should be their refuge, not another digital space." (Interview, Key Informant 8).

Factors Influencing the Prevalence Social Media Obsession

The findings revealed that social media obsession among Seventh-day Adventist couples in Migori County is influenced by a combination of emotional, cognitive, and technological factors. One of the notable drivers was loneliness. The study found that 46.2% of respondents acknowledged using social media to cope with loneliness, compared to 44.2% who disagreed. This suggests that social media serves as an important source of emotional support for a substantial proportion of couples. Qualitative findings reinforced this observation.

"After my children go to bed, I feel alone and open WhatsApp to chat with my partner—it feels like company when the house is quiet" (Focus Group 2, Participant 5).

Another participant noted that scrolling through Facebook provided a sense of connection and relief after stressful experiences (Focus Group 4, Participant 2). These findings indicate that social media is often used as a substitute for social and emotional companionship. Similar observations were reported by Wang et al. (2020), who found that individuals experiencing loneliness increasingly rely on social media for emotional gratification, thereby heightening the risk of problematic use. While digital interaction may temporarily alleviate feelings of isolation, excessive dependence on online engagement may reduce opportunities for direct interpersonal interaction and emotional intimacy between spouses.

Fear of missing out (FOMO) also emerged as an important contributor to social media obsession. Approximately one-third of respondents (33.2%) indicated that concerns about missing important updates motivated them to remain active on social media platforms, whereas 42.5% disagreed. Qualitative evidence suggested that many participants experienced anxiety associated with remaining disconnected from online information. As one key informant observed:

"Missing even one update can make you feel disconnected, which is why FOMO is such a powerful motivator in our digital lives" (Interview, Key Informant 9).

Another respondent explained that social media engagement is often driven not merely by the desire to be informed but by *"the anxiety that comes from the possibility of missing something important"* (Interview, Key Informant 24). These findings support Harren et al. (2021), who reported that fear of missing out promotes compulsive checking behaviours and persistent digital engagement. The findings suggest that for some couples, social media use extends beyond communication needs and becomes a mechanism for managing uncertainty and maintaining social relevance.

The strongest indicator of social media obsession was the difficulty respondents experienced in avoiding social media because of real-time updates. A majority of participants (60.2%) agreed that real-time notifications and updates made it difficult to stay away from social media, while only 27.1% disagreed. Participants consistently described the compelling nature of notifications and group alerts.

"The immediacy of updates and group notifications create a loop where you feel you must check your phone; it's almost impossible to disconnect once you start" (Interview, Key Informant 19).

Similar sentiments were echoed by other respondents who described feeling continually drawn back to their devices despite attempts to disengage. These findings align with Benucci et al. (2021), who observed that notifications act as environmental cues

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that reinforce habitual checking behaviours and increase digital dependency. The results demonstrate that technological features embedded within social media platforms significantly contribute to obsessive use patterns among couples.

Despite these tendencies, the findings also revealed evidence of self-regulation. More than half of the respondents (57.5%) reported allocating specific times for social media engagement, compared to 23.5% who did not. Participants viewed this strategy as a practical way of balancing digital engagement with family responsibilities. One respondent explained that scheduling social media use helped reduce unnecessary phone checking and improved interactions with family members (Interview, Key Informant 13). Similarly, another participant noted that setting specific time slots was a conscious effort to balance online activities with family obligations (Interview, Key Informant 22). These findings corroborate Peck (2018) and Dogan et al. (2019), who found that structured digital-use schedules and notification controls are effective strategies for reducing compulsive social media engagement. The results suggest that intentional self-regulation may play a critical role in preventing excessive social media use among couples.

Affordability also emerged as a factor influencing social media engagement, although its effect appeared less pronounced than emotional and technological drivers. While 42.3% of respondents viewed low cost as an important reason for social media use, 39.2% disagreed. Participants acknowledged that affordable internet access and low-cost messaging services facilitated frequent communication with spouses and family members.

"The low cost makes it accessible to almost everyone, which amplifies its role in daily communication" (Interview, Key Informant 9).

However, qualitative evidence suggested that convenience, accessibility, and instant connectivity were often more influential than cost itself. This finding is consistent with Akanle et al. (2021) and Obi and Ezennwanne (2023), who reported that affordability promotes sustained communication but does not necessarily explain excessive engagement. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that social media obsession among SDA couples is shaped by a complex interaction of emotional needs, fear of missing out, technological reinforcement mechanisms, and accessibility factors. These drivers contribute to persistent engagement with social media platforms and underscore the need for interventions that encourage responsible and balanced digital behaviours within marital relationships.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the prevalence of social media obsession among couples in selected Seventh-day Adventist churches in Migori County, Kenya. The findings indicate that social media has become deeply embedded in the daily lives of couples, with most respondents accessing social media multiple times a day, spending considerable time on various platforms, and engaging with social media at different times throughout the day. The results demonstrate that social media obsession is prevalent among a significant proportion of couples and is influenced by a combination of emotional, cognitive, and technological factors. Loneliness emerged as an important motivator of social media use, while fear of missing out contributed to persistent engagement among some participants. The strongest influence was the constant availability of real-time notifications and updates, which encouraged frequent checking behaviours and made disengagement difficult. Although affordability enhanced accessibility and use, it was not the primary driver of obsessive engagement. Importantly, the findings also revealed that many couples actively employ self-regulation strategies, such as allocating specific times for social media use, to maintain a healthier balance between digital engagement and family life.

The study concludes that social media obsession among couples is not merely a result of technological access but rather a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by emotional needs, behavioural habits, and platform characteristics. While social media offers opportunities for communication and connection, excessive and uncontrolled use has the potential to interfere with meaningful interpersonal interactions and healthy relationship functioning. Therefore, promoting responsible and balanced social media use is essential for strengthening family relationships and preserving the quality of couple interactions.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that church leaders, family ministries, and marriage counsellors develop awareness programmes to educate couples on healthy social media habits and the risks associated with excessive use. Couples should be encouraged to establish mutually agreed boundaries regarding social media use, including designated device-free periods during family activities, meals, and couple interactions. Social media users should also be sensitized on the importance of managing notifications and adopting self-regulation practices that reduce unnecessary online engagement. In addition, faithbased institutions should integrate digital wellness and responsible technology use into family enrichment and marital support programmes.

Future studies should examine the relationship between social media obsession and specific marital outcomes such as communication quality, relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and conflict management. Comparative studies involving different

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religious denominations, geographical regions, and age groups would also provide a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Longitudinal research is further recommended to examine how social media obsession develops over time and how changing digital behaviours influence couple relationships in the long term.

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