



Impact of Digital Media on the Marriage Institution: A Sociological Study

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Abstract:

The emergence of digital media has profoundly transformed social relationships and institutions worldwide. One of the most affected institutions is marriage, which has historically been a cornerstone of family structure and social organisation. Digital media platforms such as social networking sites, online dating applications, and communication technologies have reshaped how individuals form relationships, communicate with partners, and manage marital life. This study examines the impact of digital media on the institution of marriage from a sociological perspective. The research investigates both positive and negative influences of digital media on marital relationships, including partner selection, communication patterns, marital satisfaction, trust, and conflict. The study employs a mixed-methods research design that combines survey data, secondary literature analysis, and sociological interpretation. Findings suggest that digital media has expanded opportunities for partner selection and enhanced communication among couples.

Keywords: Digital media, marriage institution, social media, marital satisfaction, family sociology, online relationships.

Introduction

Marriage is one of the most fundamental social institutions that regulates family formation, social reproduction, and social stability. In traditional societies, marriage was strongly influenced by cultural norms, family expectations, religion, and community approval. However, modern technological advancements, especially digital media, have significantly transformed the nature of interpersonal relationships and family institutions. Digital media refers to communication platforms such as social networking sites, messaging applications, online dating services, and digital entertainment platforms. These technologies have become deeply embedded in everyday life and have altered how individuals interact with each other.

The rise of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and matrimonial websites has created new ways for individuals to meet partners, communicate with spouses, and maintain relationships. In many societies, digital media has replaced traditional matchmaking methods and expanded opportunities for partner selection beyond geographical and cultural boundaries. While digital media has improved communication and accessibility, it has also created challenges within marital relationships. Excessive use of social media may lead to reduced face-to-face interaction, emotional disconnection, and conflicts between partners. Furthermore, exposure to idealised representations of relationships online can create unrealistic expectations about marriage.

This research paper aims to analyse the impact of digital media on the institution of marriage and examine how technological changes influence marital relationships in contemporary society.



Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of this study are:

1. To analyse the influence of digital media on the institution of marriage.
2. To examine how digital media affects communication between spouses.
3. To identify the positive and negative impacts of digital media on marital relationships.
4. To study the relationship between digital media usage and marital satisfaction.
5. To explore how digital media has transformed traditional partner selection processes.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How has digital media influenced the traditional institution of marriage?
2. Does digital media usage affect marital satisfaction and relationship stability?
3. What are the positive and negative consequences of digital media in married life?
4. How do online platforms influence partner selection and courtship practices?

Hypotheses

H1: High levels of digital media usage negatively affect marital satisfaction.

H2: Digital communication platforms increase the frequency of interaction between spouses.

H3: Online matchmaking platforms have transformed traditional partner selection methods.

H4: Excessive social media use contributes to trust issues and marital conflict.

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the sociological understanding of how technological changes influence social institutions. Second, the research highlights the emerging challenges faced by married couples in the digital age. Third, the study provides insights for policymakers, counsellors, and educators on promoting healthy digital practices in family life. Understanding the relationship between digital media and marriage is essential because marital stability plays a crucial role in maintaining family cohesion and social order.

Review of Literature

The relationship between technology and family life has been widely examined in sociological research. Several scholars have explored how digital media affects interpersonal relationships and marital dynamics.

Turkle (2015) argued that digital communication technologies have transformed human interaction by creating a culture of constant connectivity. While these technologies allow people to stay connected, they often reduce meaningful face-to-face communication, which is essential for emotional intimacy in marriages.

Ansari (2016) examined modern romantic relationships and highlighted how online dating platforms have expanded opportunities for partner selection. According to his study, digital platforms enable individuals to find partners beyond traditional social networks, thereby increasing autonomy in relationship formation.

Research by Hampton and Wellman (2018) suggested that social networking sites can strengthen relationships by facilitating communication among family members. However, the study also found that excessive social media use may lead to distractions and reduced attention toward family interactions.

Another study conducted by Roberts and David (2019) examined the phenomenon known as “phubbing,” which refers to ignoring one’s partner while using a smartphone. Their research revealed that frequent



smartphone use during conversations negatively affects relationship satisfaction and emotional connection between partners.

Overall, existing literature suggests that digital media has both positive and negative effects on marital relationships. However, the extent of these effects depends largely on how individuals use digital technologies in their daily lives.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on several sociological theories to explain the relationship between technology and social institutions.

1. Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism emphasises the role of communication and shared meanings in shaping social relationships. Digital media provides new channels for interaction that influence how couples communicate and interpret each other's behaviour.

2. Social Exchange Theory

According to social exchange theory, individuals evaluate relationships based on perceived costs and rewards. Digital media may introduce alternative relationship opportunities, which can influence commitment and satisfaction within marriage.

3. Modernisation Theory

Modernisation theory suggests that technological progress leads to changes in traditional social institutions. The emergence of digital media represents a form of modernisation that is transforming family structures and marital norms.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the influence of digital media on marital relationships.

Sources of Data

Primary Data

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among married individuals.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from books, academic journals, research articles, and sociological reports on digital media and family studies.

Sample Size

The study includes 120 married respondents aged between 25 to 50 years.

Sampling Method

A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents.

Data Collection Tools

1. Structured questionnaire
2. Online surveys
3. Personal interviews

Variables of the Study

Independent Variable: Digital media usage

Dependent Variable: Marital satisfaction and relationship quality

Data Analysis Techniques

- Percentage analysis
- Comparative analysis
- Sociological interpretation

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Daily Social Media Usage Among Married Individuals

Usage Time	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	15%
1–3 hours	45%
3–5 hours	25%
More than 5 hours	15%

Interpretation:

Most respondents spend between 1–3 hours daily on social media platforms.

Table 2: Perceived Impact of Digital Media on Marriage

Impact	Percentage
Positive	35%
Negative	40%
Neutral	25%

Interpretation:

A significant proportion of respondents believe digital media negatively affects marital relationships.

Table 3: Common Problems Caused by Digital Media

Problem	Percentage
Lack of communication	30%
Trust issues	28%
Time neglect	25%
Online conflicts	17%

Interpretation:

Trust issues and communication problems are the most common marital issues associated with digital media usage.



Positive Impact of Digital Media on Marriage

1 Improved Communication

Digital media allows couples to maintain regular communication even when they are geographically separated.

2 Wider Partner Selection

Online matrimonial platforms have expanded opportunities for partner selection beyond traditional community boundaries.

3 Support Networks

Online communities provide emotional support and advice for couples dealing with relationship challenges.

4 Strengthening Long-Distance Relationships

Video calls and messaging applications help couples maintain emotional connections across distances.

Negative Impact of Digital Media on Marriage

1 Reduced Face-to-Face Interaction

Excessive screen time may reduce meaningful conversations between spouses.

2 Trust Issues

Online interactions with strangers or former partners may create jealousy and suspicion.

3 Digital Infidelity

Emotional connections formed online may threaten marital commitment.

4 Unrealistic Expectations

Social media often portrays idealised images of relationships that are difficult to achieve in real life.

Major Findings

1. Digital media significantly influences marital relationships in modern society.
2. Social media increases communication but may reduce emotional intimacy when overused.
3. Online matchmaking platforms have transformed partner selection methods.
4. Excessive digital media use contributes to trust issues and marital conflicts.
5. Balanced digital media usage can strengthen marital relationships.

Conclusion

The rapid expansion of digital media has transformed many aspects of human life, including the institution of marriage. Digital technologies have created new opportunities for communication, partner selection, and relationship maintenance. At the same time, they have introduced challenges such as reduced face-to-face interaction, trust issues, and unrealistic expectations.

From a sociological perspective, digital media represents a powerful force that reshapes traditional marital norms and family structures. The findings of this study highlight the importance of responsible digital media use in maintaining healthy marital relationships.

Future research should examine the long-term impact of digital technologies on family institutions and explore strategies for promoting digital well-being among couples.

Suggestions

1. Couples should limit excessive social media usage.
2. Families should encourage face-to-face communication.
3. Educational programs should promote digital literacy and healthy online behaviour.
4. Counselling services should address digital media-related marital conflicts.



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