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Social media and emotional abuse in marriage: Evidence from Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Emotional abuse among married couples is one of the social vices Nigeria is contending with currently, especially in Lagos State, one of the most prominent of the country's 36 political subdivisions. The problem is heightened by the ignorance of the abused persons and low visibility or non-availability of research on the subject. This descriptive study investigates the awareness and attitude of married couples toward emotional abuse in the social media environment, using *Facebook* as the intervening platform. Eighty-eight respondents out of 100 attended to questionnaire items, which produced the data that helped test four hypotheses, using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Results, among others, showed that at the pre-intervention stage, married men and women's level of awareness of emotional abuse in marriage was minimal, with an attendant similar receptive attitude towards it. At the post-intervention stage, the awareness increased although their attitude becomes less receptive. Despite the increased awareness, evidence exists to show that there is still a lot to be done in creating more awareness, leading to the recommendation that couples should consciously seek information on the malaise for more profound insight to avoid becoming victims. Marriage counsellors should also emphasize the nature of emotional exploitation in marriage to enable potential victims to detect abuse signals and take safety measures. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2021; 25[5s]: 68-79).

Keywords: Facebook, abuse signals, awareness, Lagos State, Nigeria

Résumé

La violence psychologique parmi les couples mariés est l'un des vices sociaux auxquels le Nigeria est actuellement confronté, en particulier dans l'État de Lagos, l'une des plus importantes des 36 subdivisions politiques du pays. Le problème est aggravé par l'ignorance des personnes maltraitées et la faible visibilité ou l'absence de recherche sur le sujet. Cette étude descriptive examine la sensibilisation et l'attitude des couples mariés envers la violence psychologique dans l'environnement des médias sociaux, en utilisant Facebook comme plate-forme d'intervention. Quarante-vingt-huit répondants sur 100 ont répondu aux items du questionnaire, qui ont produit les données qui ont permis de tester quatre hypothèses, en utilisant les outils statistiques descriptifs et inférentiels. Les résultats, entre autres, ont montré qu'au stade de la pré-intervention, le niveau de sensibilisation des hommes et des femmes mariés à la violence psychologique dans le mariage était minime, avec une attitude réceptive similaire à son égard. Au stade post-intervention, la prise de conscience s'est accrue bien que leur attitude devienne moins réceptive. Malgré la prise de conscience accrue, des preuves existent pour montrer qu'il reste encore beaucoup à faire pour sensibiliser davantage, ce qui a conduit à la recommandation que les couples devraient rechercher consciemment des informations sur le malaise pour une compréhension plus approfondie afin d'éviter de devenir des victimes. Les conseillers conjugaux devraient également mettre l'accent sur la nature de l'exploitation émotionnelle dans le mariage pour permettre aux victimes potentielles de détecter les signaux d'abus et de prendre des mesures de sécurité. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2021; 25[5s]: 68-79).

Mots-clés: Facebook, signaux d'abus, sensibilisation, État de Lagos, Nigéria

Introduction

Emotional abuse can be triggered by actions or processes that demean a person's self-worth. Someone could be insulted, mocked, condemned, intimidated, or humiliated, leading to an adverse mental reaction and emotional breakdown¹⁻⁵.

According to the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS)⁶, many people are of the opinion that physical abuse is the only form of abuse in any relationship. Still, the hurt triggered by unguarded words can be as unpleasant as those provoked by physical abuse. An individual slurred, ridiculed, or condemned regularly is prone to feeling inferior or

worthless, with attendant pains as terrible as those associated with physical abuse.

Scholars agree that, in marriage, emotional abuse involves denying spousal love and support, finding faults, preventing one's spouse from either attending school, socializing with friends, or having religious or denominational affiliations⁷⁻¹⁴. Emotional maltreatment could also result from ridiculing, consistently making absurd requests, and threatening someone verbally or physically¹⁵. The UMHS also notes that these could be upshots of other forms of abuse. Nesheen *et al*¹⁶ acknowledge emotional abuse in marriage to be in the form of domination (wanting have control at all times), humiliation (mocking spouse), isolation (isolating spouse to intensify reliance), or intimidation (frightening spouse). Others include threats (terrorizing spouse to do partners bidding) and denial/blame (denying or faulting spouse).

Corbett¹⁷ and Lamont¹⁸ further state that emotional abuse in the absence of physical abuse is often not evident given that the controlling and threatening behaviors, which are the bases of emotional abuse, are used for bruising the mind rather than the body. Often, women are not aware that they have suffered emotional abuse until they their relationships have ended¹⁹. Such a situation hails from the reality that the media in their movies or other forms of popular culture mainly focus on physical abuse, which is what becomes decipherable to the audience as abuse, thus neglecting other forms of spousal violence. The latent nature of emotional abuse, scholars have observed, could be a reason for the dearth of knowledge and ignorance of sufferers²⁰⁻²². Mengu and Mengu²³ affirm that social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook is employed for awareness creation against abuse within media literacy. Facebook is a contemporary way of communication with several features like messaging, audio, image and video sharing- all of which facilitates interaction with diverse persons globally. Usually, people have a lot of information that they can either choose to reply or ignore. However, the feedback to disseminated information denotes the communication chain given that a source sends a message, and the receiver responds to that message. With this, the communication process creates a level of understanding between the sender and

receiver²⁴⁻²⁷. In this manner, SNS like Facebook provides access to several messages and fosters interaction about the disseminated information. Facebook has been valuable in launching manifestos for debating on several matters that have been given diminutive or no consideration in the Nigeria.

Global statistics show that there were 1.47 billion daily active consumers on Facebook and above 2 billion every month in June 2018²⁸. According to Oludimu²⁹, there were over 16 million Nigerians who actively used Facebook monthly in 2016, indicating that between 2016 and 2018; about 10 million more Nigerians registered to be Facebook users. Furthermore, people were active on the SNS, which rationally tells that there were 26 million active users in Nigeria as at 2018. Similar to other SNS, any person with an active email can use Facebook to be in touch with old friends, and make new ones. But, they must first register to be users, create personal profiles, and then send friend requests to people they know and people they do not know³⁰⁻³³. Users can also upload pictures or videos of whatever interests them, view and repost content of other users, and comment or like other users' posts. This communication flow permits users to connect with other people who could be distant or close.

Facebook is a globally recognized SNS that has made people deeply involved in social issues. This platform has permitted users to advocate for the obliteration of intimate partner violence (IPV), thereby creating an environment for people to be knowledgeable about what emotional abuse entails in marriage. For instance, the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) has a Facebook page that encompasses posts on domestic violence and the helplines to contact if anyone knows or has been a victim. The effectiveness of the DSVRT page on Facebook is commendable given that it has become a place of succor to those who have experienced abuse in their relationships. The rapid shift from the traditional media to the new media, have provided people with ample opportunity to be resourceful and free in their expression of opinions on burning issues affecting the growth and development of the nation. Facebook has become influential to subscribers owing to this shift. The attainment of knowledge is

essential to development, and it is a major determinant to how much a society achieves. In this regard, Facebook's swift rise and wide reach has and is still serving a vocal platform where victims of abuse speak up rather than keep mute about their experience.

The media serve several needs, such as communication, social control, cohesion, and cultural continuity. The uses and gratification theory takes a more humanistic view of this assertion. It is concerned with what people do with the media, as opposed to what the media does to people^{34,35}. The theory attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for groups, individuals, and society. By inference, the uses and gratification theory proposes that digital or social media users play an active role as they know what substitute option to select to gratify their required needs^{36,37}. The authors also affirm that the theory centers on individuals' activities and their reactions to social media - specifically, in this work, the attitude and awareness of married couples toward emotional abuse. This work adopts the social media platform, Facebook^{38,39} as the intervening platform.

Sustainable development goals 5 and 16: Emotional abuse in marriage

United Nation's SDGs are seventeen action plans to elevate humanity globally continuously. They are to counter the hemorrhaging effects of poverty, hunger, ill-health, and poor education. On the other hand, the goals seek to promote gender equality, environmental purity, clean energy, decency at work, and economic development⁴⁰. These global agendas are wide-ranging and co-dependent. Among the seventeen SDGs, goals number five and sixteen are central to this paper. According to Ekhatior⁴¹, Manful *et al*⁴², and Mbadugha⁴³, IPV in Africa and Nigeria is associated with projected gender roles and labeled as a communication of socially accepted behavior patterns that let men to wield control over women. This patriarchal system has become dangerous to both men and women. Men also undergo abuse but the fear of being seen as pathetic and condemned for sharing their experience as victims of IPV would not allow them speak up since society erroneously considers women to be the vocal victims as they weaker to men. Women also do not gain from this system,

which expects them to be silent when abused based on the patriarchal culture of the Nigerian society- an act that has led to several deaths of women. The focus of the United Nations SDG 5 is on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. This goal includes two definite objectives on the eradication of violence and harmful practices. Target 5.1 set out to "end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere". The goal of target 5.4 is to "recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate". The inclusion of these specific targets is acknowledged to promote the termination of all practices of inequality against all women and girls universally and equal household duties within the family setting.

SDG 16 is another universal call to action that promotes peace, justice, and robust and sustainable development institutions. It puts forward target 16.1 to "significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere." Target 16.2 further sets out to "end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children." Target 16.3 also proposed to "promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all" as patriarchy is a major cause for domestic violence in Nigeria. Thus, the importance of all victims to get justice regardless of their gender is essential.

In conclusion, there is a need to nurture nontoxic and equitable relationships for all, which will subsequently enhance health, guarantee a safer and just world for all, and stimulate sustainable development. Declines in abuse between men and women will also aid the achievement of several other SDG targets.

Statement of the problem

Emotional abuse is widespread globally. Some think it is maltreatment but overlook it because it does not produce easily visible marks. Others regard the aphorism "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" as the standard, meaning that emotional abuse transmitted through words are not worth contesting. In Nigeria,

abuse in the family is portrayed as physical or sexual through media content, films, and cultural beliefs. The huge Nigerian movie industry – Nollywood – is a culprit in this case.

Furthermore, the DSVRT, which is to cover all aspect of domestic violence has data on physical and sexual assaults, while information on how these assaults relate to social media does not exist. While the data gathered is beneficial, emotional abuse as an autonomous form of maltreatment and an effect of other forms of abuse should be given some attention. Not doing so could prolong the problem and make it unmanageable. This work establishes a discourse trajectory to create awareness and elicit discussions in the public domain to help tackle the issue. It helps to determine men's and women's awareness of and attitude towards emotional abuse in marriage in a social media environment, with Facebook as the intervening platform since the increasing influence of social media on people's lives is evident and can no longer be ignored.

Research objectives

1. To ascertain the difference between married men and women's awareness of emotional abuse in marriage at the pre-Facebook intervention stage.
2. To assess the difference between married men and women's awareness of emotional abuse in marriage at the post-Facebook intervention stage.
3. To evaluate the difference between married men and women's attitudes towards emotional abuse in marriage at the pre-Facebook intervention stage.
4. To examine the difference between married men and women's attitudes towards emotional abuse in marriage at the post-Facebook intervention stage.

The objectives transpose to the following hypotheses:

H₀₁- There is no significant difference between married men and women's awareness of emotional abuse in marriage at the pre-Facebook intervention stage,

H₀₂- There is no significant difference between married men and women's awareness of emotional

abuse in marriage at the post-Facebook intervention stage,

H₀₃- There is no significant difference between married men and women's attitude towards emotional abuse in marriage at the pre-Facebook intervention stage; and

H₀₄- There is no significant difference between married men and women's attitudes towards emotional abuse in marriage at the post-Facebook intervention stage.

Scope and significance of the study

This study's scope was Lagos State, a metropolitan area occupied by numerous individuals with diverse ideologies and backgrounds. Besides, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) telecoms statistics for the 3rd quarter in 2019 recorded a general overview of Lagos State ranking the highest in internet penetration with a total number of 16,871,806 users cutting across all segments of the society. However, the specific population of married men and women in Lagos could not be drawn from the NBS as it was not specified. Married men and women were the target participants of this study because emotional abuse is a form of cruelty that may occur in different ways in marital settings. Affirmed by marriage registries in Lagos state, married people's precise data in the country where indefinite or withheld. Online statistics were also inconsistent. These constraints caused the study population to be non-finite.

This study will aid victims of emotional abuse to know when they are being abused and make their mental health a priority by building a support network. With this, the study is also relevant to marriage counsellors in the sense that it will enable them to help married persons to detect emotional abuse and take safety measures before it spirals. Findings of this study will further aid film and media practitioners to ascertain where they are flawed to create content that highlights emotional abuse as a form of violence in a marriage that has several negative consequences. The study will benefit non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by urging them to create help-lines, support groups, and refer counsellors to victims who do not have access to one. Lastly, this study will be significant

to the general public as it would urge them not to underrate the effect of emotional abuse than physical and sexual abuse because it is a latent form of abuse that is highly detrimental to one's life and relationships.

Methods

This study adopted the true-experimental pre-test and post-test design that allows assigning participants unsystematically to different groups. This research method entails an experimental group typically provided the treatment while subjects in the control group are not. The true-experimental design became relevant because the study population was non-finite, and thus, participants had to be selected randomly. According to Katz *et al*¹⁴, attaining the sample size of a non-finite population can be calculated as follows:

$$N = \frac{(Z\alpha + Z\beta)^2 \cdot 2 \cdot p(1-p)}{(d)^2}$$

Where:

N = Sample size

Z α = 1.96 (95% confidence level to prevent Type I error)

Z β = 0.84 (80% power to identify Type II error)

p = 0.5 (50% the variance of the proportion)

d² = 0.40 (90% - 50%) mean difference to be identified

$$N = \frac{(1.96 + 0.84)^2 \cdot 2 \cdot 0.5(1-0.5)}{(0.40)^2}$$

$$N = \frac{(1.96 + 0.84)^2 \times 2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.16}$$

$$N = 24.5_{25}$$

N = 25 participants per group

This study comprised of two experimental groups and two control groups for both men and women. That is, 25 participants were each assigned to Facebook experimental and control groups for men and *vice versa* for women. Hence, 100 participants formed the sample size of this study. The sampling techniques employed in this study were the subjective and snowball method. Lagos State comprises of 20 local government areas (LGAs).

The latest data on the frequency of abuse shows that the following LGAs: Alimosho, Kosofe, Ikorodu, and Ikeja had the highest abuse rate in 2018⁴⁴. As a result, the researcher purposely chose to experiment on participants from the abuse-penetrated LGAs.

Furthermore, based on the voluminous number of married men and women in the selected LGAs and the inability to determine which of them met the inclusion criteria, the snowball sampling method was used to contact initially chosen respondents. They then helped to refer the researchers to other suitable participants. The inclusion criteria entailed people who are married or were married at one point or the other, having a Facebook account and using it twice a week at the least. The exclusion criteria encompassed people who do not live in Lagos and have inactive or no Facebook account. Participants who met these yardsticks were asked for their Facebook account names in Section A, number 6 of the questionnaire. With this, they were added to the experimental and control groups formed for the study. Also, all participants were met randomly in offices, houses, and workshops located in the chosen LGAs. This arrangement facilitated the researcher and research assistants to trail the questionnaire's drop-off and pick-up since it was a pre-test and post-test intervention process.

The provision of the treatment comprised a four-phase procedure across all groups. The pre-intervention process involved two phases, while the post-intervention entailed the last two stages. The intervention for this study was self-structured messages on emotional abuse in marriage disseminated through the Facebook platform. In the pre-intervention phase, the first step was compiling self-structured materials on emotional abuse in marriage in the form of text, images, audio, and video recordings. Relevant to the second step was the experimental and control group's pre-test examination of their fundamental awareness of and attitude towards emotional abuse in marriage. This pre-test assessment was necessary to make a comparison in the post-intervention phase. For the post-intervention stage, conveying emotional abuse information to only the experimental group denoted the third step.

The application of the treatment to the experimental group was on-going for four weeks.

After the one-month duration, the last step involved the post-test assessment in which the same questionnaire administered during the pre-test was distributed once more at the post-test phase to the experimental and control groups, which means that only the experimental groups were exposed to the Facebook intervention. The control groups were exempt to ensure the determination of what causes a difference in the results between groups, as only one variable can be measured at a time. A control group is a vital part of an experiment because it permits researchers to exclude and separate variables. In other words, the goal was to find out if the Facebook intervention influenced participants' awareness of and attitude towards emotional abuse in marriage before (pre) and after (post) the intervention.

Results

Based on the inclusion criteria for this study, data emerged from only 88 participants (Men = 44; Women = 44). Table 1 indicates that married participants dominated this study (Experimental, 88.6%; Control, 72.7%). Participants' gender was equally represented in both the experimental (male=50%; female=50%) and the control groups. All the 44 respondents in each experimental and control group were selected based on the Facebook social media platform.

Test of hypotheses

To test the hypotheses, inferential analysis statistics helped to test the significant difference in the experimental and control groups' awareness of and attitude towards emotional abuse in marriage (pre and post-intervention). The t-test is relevant because it shows the significant difference between the means of two groups from the same population.

Decision Rule: If the probability value is less or equal to 0.05, the hypothesis is said to be accepted. However, if it is more significant than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected.

H₀₁- There is no significant difference between married men and women's awareness of emotional abuse in marriage at the pre-Facebook intervention stage.

Table 2 indicates that there was no significant difference in the men's and women's experimental groups' awareness of emotional abuse before the Facebook intervention ($t(42) = -1.079, p > 0.05$). As a result, the hypothesis was rejected. There was also no significant difference in men's and women's awareness of emotional abuse ($t(42) = -0.668, p > 0.05$) for the control group.

H₀₂- There is no significant difference between married men and women's awareness of emotional abuse in marriage at the post-Facebook intervention stage

Table 3 depicts that there was no significant difference in the men's and women's experimental groups' awareness of emotional abuse after the Facebook intervention ($t(42) = 0.737, p > 0.05$). This outcome suggests that both male and female participants in the experimental group had a similar level of emotional abuse knowledge after the Facebook intervention. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. The result of the control group shows that there was also no significant difference in men's and women's awareness of emotional abuse ($t(42) = -0.615, p > 0.05$).

H₀₃- There is no significant difference between married men and women's attitude towards emotional abuse in marriage at the pre-Facebook intervention stage.

As presented in Table 4, there was no significant difference in the men's and women's experimental groups' attitudes towards emotional abuse before the Facebook intervention ($t(38) = -0.741, p > 0.05$). This outcome implies that both genders had similar attitudes towards emotional abuse before the intervention. Consequently, the hypothesis was rejected. For the control group, there was a significant difference in men's and women's attitudes towards emotional abuse ($t(38) = 4.504, p < 0.05$).

H₀₄- There is no significant difference between married men and women's attitudes towards emotional abuse in marriage at the post-Facebook intervention stage.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants

Variable		Experimental Freq. (n)	Experimental Percentage	Control Freq. (n)	Control Percentage
Marital Status	Married	39	88.6	32	72.7
	Divorced	2	4.5	2	4.5
	Separated	3	6.8	6	13.6
	Widowed	-	-	4	9.1
	Total	44	100	44	100
Gender	Male	22	50.0	22	50.0
	Female	22	50.0	22	50.0
	Total	44	100	44	100
Social Media	Facebook	44	100	44	50.0

Table 2: Descriptive and inferential statistics for test of difference between married men and women's awareness of emotional abuse in marriage (pre-intervention)

Group	Construct	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	Awareness of Emotional Abuse	Male	22	19.50000	5.04975
		Female	22	21.2273	5.55434
			T	df	Sig
			-1.079	42	0.287
Control	Awareness of Emotional Abuse	Male	22	19.7727	5.17256
		Female	22	20.9091	6.07030
			T	df	Sig
			-0.668	42	0.508

Table 3: Descriptive and inferential statistics for test of difference between married men and women's awareness of emotional abuse in marriage (post-intervention)

Group	Construct	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	Awareness of Emotional Abuse	Male	22	25.2273	4.67956
		Female	22	24.7727	4.23063
			T	df	Sig
			-0.338	42	0.737
Control	Awareness of Emotional Abuse	Male	22	19.5909	5.26135
		Female	22	20.6818	6.43936
			T	df	Sig
			-0.615	42	0.542

Table 4: Test of difference between married men and women's attitude towards emotional abuse (pre-intervention)

Group	Construct	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	Attitude towards Emotional Abuse	Male	22	13.3182	3.35781
		Female	22	12.4091	4.67678
			T	df	Sig
			0.741	38.105	0.463
Control	Attitude towards Emotional Abuse	Male	22	17.0455	4.35865
		Female	22	11.9091	3.10006
			T	df	Sig
			4.504	37.917	0.000***

Table 5: Descriptive and inferential statistics for test of difference between married men and women's attitude towards emotional abuse (post-intervention)

Group	Construct	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	Attitude towards	Male	22	8.9091	.92113
	Emotional Abuse	Female	22	8.8636	1.85922
			T	df	Sig
			0.103	30.723	0.919
Control	Attitude towards	Male	22	17.1364	4.47528
	Emotional Abuse	Female	22	11.9545	3.25836
			T	df	Sig
			4.390	38.380	0.000***

Table 5 shows that there was no significant difference in the men and women's experimental group's attitude towards emotional abuse after the Facebook intervention ($t(31) = -0.103$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. For the control group, however, there was a significant difference in men's and women's attitudes towards emotional abuse ($t(38) = 4.390$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The first and second hypotheses tested if there is a significant difference in married men's and women's awareness of emotional abuse in marriage at the pre and post-Facebook intervention stages. Results revealed that there was no significant difference between married men and women's awareness of emotional abuse in marriage before the Facebook intervention, implying that both married men and women were slightly aware of emotional abuse in marriage. However, their awareness was not far-reaching. Starting with the women who were found to be faintly aware of emotional abuse in the marriage, Lykhina⁴⁵ referred Horrill and Berman's study⁴⁶ that found out that women's awareness of mistreatment like emotional abuse may be low because they construe abuse to be only physical. As a result, they could not report the incident because it was a latent form of abuse whenever they were emotionally abused. After this finding, Lancer⁴⁷ also stated that women have little or no awareness of emotional abuse due to acclimatizing with preceding emotional abuse experiences, so; they cannot understand what it resembles or encompasses. Men in this study also had an increase of awareness after the intervention. However,

before that, their awareness level was low. Ramos⁴⁸ avers that this is due to men being more conversant with the perpetration of physical abuse than emotional abuse, which they do not recognize. Moreover, this study's cognition of both men and women validates Gollub *et al*⁴⁹ claim that the practices or encounters people have had while learning shapes what is learned. That is to say, people's experiences are a way of learning which shapes what they know.

Given the positions above, Grovert⁵⁰ avows that emotional abuse is embedded in practically all forms of abuse in relationships, which is why it is challenging to differentiate it from other violations. Based on the preceding, it is imperative to note that awareness of emotional abuse as a form of maltreatment in marriage depends on how it is conceived by society. Meaning that emotional abuse being regularized in marriage will make it hard for married men and women to identify it as abuse. Therefore, the abusive act becomes a behavioral prototype for the future conduct of couples.

Furthermore, Adekoya *et al*⁵¹ assertion gives meaning to this finding by stating that the Nigerian society has factors responsible for the seemingly low awareness of emotional abuse in marriage. A significant factor is the exertion of religious or cultural superiority over women, which has made emotional abuse in marriage appear as the norm. Because of this, both sexes are unable to recognize or differentiate between exerting control to manipulate and genuine authority to rule⁵¹. This position upheld that of Barkhuizen⁵², affirming that male dominance and moral mandates that support marital hierarchy are why men do not recognize emotional abuse and misuse their control. It is also

why women find it difficult to fight against abuse in their marriages, given that their retaliations are regarded as wrong. Rakovec-Felser⁵³ further asserts that patriarchy, as dominated within families, cultures, religion, and society, has paved the way for spousal abuse and its non-recognition.

At the post-intervention stage, the respondents' awareness took a relative shift as married men and women now had a similar level of awareness of emotional abuse in marriage. Firstly, this finding has given credence to the claim that social media such as Facebook can influence one's perception of a given subject matter. This is because a change in awareness level was identified at the post-intervention stage compared to the pre-intervention phase. The reading of emotional abuse messages in marriage via Facebook and discussion with other participants in the intervention group aided learning and knowledge of the rudiments of emotional abuse in marriage. Gollub *et al.*⁴⁹ affirm that learning is accelerated when novel and general information is designed around crucial subject matter ideas. The process is further expedited and improved through social relations. On this premise, it is safe to say that the Facebook intervention on emotional abuse in marriage gave men and women insight on the issue. Also, findings showed that married men and women in the control groups at the pre and post-intervention stages had no significant difference in their awareness of emotional abuse in marriage, which was expected because they were not administered the intervention.

The test of the third and last hypotheses for the experimental groups at the pre-intervention stage showed that; there was no significant difference between married men and women's attitudes towards emotional abuse in marriage. WHO⁵⁴ asserts that cultural and social norms do not necessarily agree with people's attitudes but may influence their attitudes if those customs are adopted. This assertion supports the views of Bazza⁵⁵, Ekhaton⁴¹, Manful, *et al.*⁴², and Mbadugha⁴³, recognizing that the social standard that permits men to exert power over women is an issue that has made people consciously or unconsciously accept the act of emotional abuse. With this, Ngwankwe⁵⁶ notes that attitudes have a critical role in which abuse occurs, given that men with healthy and traditional gender role attitudes are

likely to perpetrate emotional abuse. It further forms women's reactions to victimization. Although men and women in this study had relatively the same attitude at the post-intervention stage, male and female receptiveness towards emotional abuse in marriage had reduced, indicating that Facebook intervention was effective. The intervention's effectiveness validates Haubrich's⁵⁷ claim that Facebook continues to be the most effective social media network for publicizing.

There was a significant difference in married men's and women's attitudes towards emotional abuse in marriage for the control groups at the pre-intervention stage. This outcome stayed moderately the same at the post-intervention stage and was expected due to the pre-intervention results. The difference in attitude between men and women in the experimental and control groups shows several dissimilarities between different men and women. To some extent, these are captured in the orthodox representations of these groups. Stereotypes about the way men and women reason and perceive things are noticeable every day, signifying a kernel of truth. However, stereotypical outlooks not only reveal prevailing differences but also influence the way men and women express themselves, act towards people, and are treated by others⁵⁸.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study contributed to the existing literature in the area of using social networking sites (SNS) to seek emotional abuse information. Although studies have been carried out on the role/influence of SNS on abuse; using experimental design in ascertaining the effect of SNS messages on emotional abuse in marriage remains scarce. Therefore, this study has contributed to knowledge in this area, and also serves as groundwork for imminent academics. The scores for the awareness and comprehension of emotional abuse in marriage for the experimental group at post-intervention were more than the pre-intervention scores. This outcome suggests that the intervention for the experimental group for awareness of emotional abuse in marriage was effective. The result for attitude towards emotional abuse in marriage for the experimental group yielded a mean difference for the pre and post-intervention scores, which denotes that the

intervention for the experimental group was effective. This is because their acceptance of emotional abuse in marriage declined after the intervention compared to the pre-intervention stage. The researchers, therefore, recommended that;

1. Married men and women and the general public need to educate themselves about emotional abuse as it is highly detrimental to one's life, spouse, and marriage itself.
2. Victims of emotional abuse need to make their mental health a priority by building a support network. This can be achieved by visiting counselors or therapists, venting to a trusted family member or friend, and making a conscious effort to avoid abusive situations. Perpetrators can also follow this path because some of them are not aware of their actions being abusive.
3. Moreover, film and media programs should create content that highlights emotional abuse as a significant form of violence in a marriage with several negative consequences. Content should further draw attention to emotional abuse emanating from other forms of abuse, as this would help people recognize and comprehend its entirety.
4. Marriage counselors should also emphasize the nature, causes, and effects of emotional abuse in marriage. This would help married persons identify signs of emotional abuse and take precautions before it escalates.
5. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should make help available to emotional abuse victims by creating help-lines, support groups, and referring counselors to victims who do not have access to one.

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Contributions of authors

Oluwaferanmi Adebayo – Conception of Research, Fieldwork, Writing.

Oladokun Omojola - Design of Research Methodology, Field Work, Research Supervisor, Editing.

Kikelomo Evbuomoh – Fieldwork, Data Analysis, Writing, Discussion of Findings.

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