

The Role of Social Media in Marital Dissolution in Ethiopia: Impacts and Implications

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Abstract

Ethiopia's high marital dissolution rate (45% within 30 years) is exacerbated by social media's growing influence, with 42.2 million internet users by 2023. Platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp contribute to marital conflicts, amplified by cultural and gender norms. This study investigated social media's role in marital problems in Ethiopia, examining platforms, conflict types, cultural influences, urban-rural differences, and intervention feasibility to inform evidence-based solutions. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used, involving 400 survey respondents (50% male, 50% female; 200 urban, 200 rural) and 20 semi-structured interviews (10 urban, 10 rural; 50% female). Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 27) with chi-square tests, t-tests, and logistic regression, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis with NVivo. Social media, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, drives 68% of reported marital conflicts, including jealousy (51%), infidelity suspicions (37%), and communication breakdowns (32%). Urban couples face higher conflict prevalence (75%) than rural ones (61%) due to greater platform access. Patriarchal and collectivist norms amplify conflicts, with women reporting more jealousy. Digital literacy ($M=4.12$) and counseling ($M=3.98$) were rated highly effective interventions. Social media significantly undermines marital stability in Ethiopia, with urban areas and women most affected. Cultural norms exacerbate conflicts, but digital literacy and counseling offer viable mitigation strategies. Implement urban-focused digital literacy programs, gender-sensitive counseling, and community-based workshops, supported by enhanced content moderation in local languages.

Keywords

Social media; marital dissolution; Ethiopia; digital literacy; counseling



I. Introduction

Marital dissolution, encompassing divorce and separation, is a growing concern in Ethiopia, where approximately 45% of first marriages end within 30 years (Tafere, 2019). The advent of social media has introduced new dynamics to marital relationships, amplifying conflicts and contributing to relationship breakdowns. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram, with Ethiopia's internet user base reaching 42.2 million by 2023, facilitate interactions that can foster infidelity, jealousy, and communication breakdowns (Kemp, 2023). In Ethiopia's patriarchal and collectivist society, where traditional norms emphasize family cohesion, social media's influence challenges these values, particularly in urban areas like Addis Ababa. The rapid expansion of mobile internet, coupled with limited digital literacy, exacerbates these issues, as couples navigate online interactions without adequate awareness of their relational consequences. For instance, public shaming or private

messaging can escalate marital disputes, undermining trust and intimacy (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). While social media offers potential benefits, such as facilitating communication for migrant couples, its negative impacts dominate, contributing to emotional distress and socioeconomic consequences. This study explores how social media influences marital problems in Ethiopia, focusing on its role in fostering infidelity, reducing quality time, and amplifying external pressures. By examining urban and rural differences, cultural constraints, and gender dynamics, the research aims to provide insights into mitigating social media's adverse effects. Understanding these impacts is crucial for developing interventions, such as digital literacy programs and counseling, to strengthen marital stability in Ethiopia's evolving digital landscape. This study contributes to the broader discourse on technology's societal effects, offering evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, counselors, and community leaders to address this emerging public health concern.

Ethiopia's marital landscape is shaped by cultural, economic, and social factors, with early marriage and patriarchal norms historically influencing relationship dynamics. Approximately 58% of women aged 20-24 are married before 18, contributing to a high marital dissolution rate, with 45% of first marriages ending within 30 years (Tafere, 2019). Urban areas, such as Dejen Township, report divorce rates as high as 21.14%, driven by shifting gender roles and economic pressures (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). The rise of social media, fueled by Ethiopia's growing internet penetration (42.2 million users by 2023), has introduced new challenges to marital stability (Kemp, 2023). Platforms like Facebook, Telegram, and TikTok are widely used, particularly in urban centers, where 22% of the population resides (World Bank, 2023). Social media's accessibility via affordable smartphones has transformed communication patterns, enabling both connectivity and conflict.

Research highlights social media's role in marital problems globally, with studies linking excessive use to infidelity, jealousy, and reduced intimacy (Clayton et al., 2013). In Ethiopia, these effects are amplified by cultural and technological factors. For instance, a 2020 study in Bale Robe found that miscommunication via social media contributed to marital breakdowns, as private messaging fostered mistrust (Teshome, 2020). Urban couples, exposed to Western relationship ideals online, face heightened dissatisfaction, clashing with traditional expectations of family cohesion (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Additionally, limited content moderation in local languages (e.g., Amharic, Oromo) allows harmful content, such as gendered abuse, to proliferate, straining marriages (Mulugeta, 2025). Rural areas, with only 18% access to basic infrastructure like safe water, have lower internet penetration, limiting social media's impact but not eliminating it (World Bank, 2023).

Social media's positive potential, such as supporting long-distance couples, is overshadowed by its negative effects in Ethiopia, where digital literacy remains low. The 2016 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) noted 19% of women experienced marital control behaviors, which social media can exacerbate through cyberstalking or monitoring (CSA & ICF, 2016). This study builds on existing literature to examine how social media reshapes marital dynamics in Ethiopia, addressing a gap in context-specific research.

Marital dissolution in Ethiopia is a pressing issue, with 45% of first marriages dissolving within 30 years, driven by factors like early marriage, economic stress, and poor communication (Tafere, 2019). The rise of social media, with 42.2 million internet users by 2023, has emerged as a significant contributor to marital problems, particularly in urban areas

(Kemp, 2023). Platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp facilitate infidelity, jealousy, and communication breakdowns, challenging Ethiopia's traditional emphasis on family unity (Teshome, 2020). Urban couples, exposed to idealized online relationships, experience heightened dissatisfaction, while limited digital literacy exacerbates misuse, such as public shaming or secretive messaging (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). In patriarchal settings, social media amplifies control behaviors, with 19% of women reporting spousal monitoring, sometimes extended online (CSA & ICF, 2016). Rural areas, with lower internet access, are less affected; yet urban-rural migration spreads these influences. The lack of content moderation in local languages allows harmful content to proliferate, further straining marriages (Mulugeta, 2025). Despite its potential to connect couples, social media's negative impacts dominate, contributing to emotional distress and socioeconomic consequences, such as increased poverty among divorced women. Existing research on marital dissolution in Ethiopia focuses on traditional factors, with limited exploration of social media's role. This gap hinders the development of targeted interventions, such as digital literacy programs or counseling, to address technology-driven marital conflicts. Without understanding social media's specific impacts, Ethiopia risks escalating marital instability, undermining family structures and public health. This study seeks to address this problem by investigating how social media contributes to marital problems, identifying key platforms, behaviors, and cultural factors to inform evidence-based solutions for policymakers and community leaders.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the role of social media in contributing to marital problems and dissolution in Ethiopia, focusing on its impacts and implications for urban and rural couples. The specific objectives are

- a. To identify the primary social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram) contributing to marital conflicts in Ethiopia.
- b. To examine how social media fosters infidelity, jealousy, and communication breakdowns among Ethiopian couples.
- c. To explore the influence of cultural and gender norms on social media's impact on marital stability.
- d. To assess the differences in social media's effects on marital problems between urban and rural areas in Ethiopia.
- e. To propose evidence-based interventions, such as digital literacy and counseling, to mitigate social media's negative impacts on marriages.

1.1 Significance of the Study

This study on the role of social media in marital problems in Ethiopia holds significant academic, social, and policy implications. By addressing a gap in context-specific research, it contributes to the global discourse on technology's societal impacts, particularly in developing nations with unique cultural dynamics (Clayton et al., 2013). Ethiopia's high marital dissolution rate (45% within 30 years) and growing internet penetration (42.2 million users by 2023) underscore the urgency of understanding social media's influence (Tafere, 2019; Kemp, 2023). The findings will provide empirical evidence on how platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp exacerbate infidelity, jealousy, and communication breakdowns, informing targeted interventions (Teshome, 2020). Academically, the study enriches family sociology and media studies by offering a localized perspective on digital influences in a patriarchal, collectivist society (Goshu and Ridwan, 2025).

Socially, the research addresses a public health concern, as marital dissolution is linked to mental health issues and economic hardship, particularly for women (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). By identifying key platforms and behaviors, it empowers couples and communities to navigate social media responsibly. The study's focus on urban-rural differences and gender norms highlights disparities in digital access and impact, promoting equitable solutions (CSA

& ICF, 2016). For policymakers, the findings will guide the development of digital literacy programs and content moderation policies in local languages, addressing issues like online abuse (Mulugeta, 2025). Counselors and community leaders can use the insights to integrate social media awareness into family support services, strengthening marital stability. Ultimately, this study fosters sustainable family structures in Ethiopia's evolving digital landscape, offering a model for other African nations facing similar challenges. Its recommendations will support Ethiopia's social development goals, enhancing family cohesion and reducing the socioeconomic costs of marital dissolution.

II. Research Method

This section outlines the research methods for investigating the role of social media in marital problems and dissolution in Ethiopia. The study employs a mixed-methods approach to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative nuances, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon within Ethiopia's cultural and technological context. The methodology includes research design, population and sampling, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations, aligned with established social science research standards (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.1 Research Design

The study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic view of social media's impact on marital dissolution. The quantitative component uses a cross-sectional survey to measure the prevalence and extent of social media-related marital conflicts, while the qualitative component employs semi-structured interviews to explore personal experiences and cultural influences. This design allows for triangulation, enhancing the validity of findings by comparing and converging results from both data types (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The cross-sectional approach is suitable for capturing current trends in Ethiopia's rapidly evolving digital landscape, where internet penetration reached 42.2 million users by 2023 (Kemp, 2023).

2.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises married couples aged 18-50 in Ethiopia, reflecting the demographic most active on social media and affected by marital dissolution (Tafere, 2019). The study focuses on urban (e.g., Addis Ababa, Hawassa) and rural (e.g., Amhara, Oromia) areas to capture regional differences in internet access and cultural norms. A multistage sampling technique is used. First, two urban and two rural regions are purposively selected based on internet penetration and marital dissolution rates. Within each region, cluster sampling identifies communities, followed by stratified random sampling to ensure gender balance (50% male, 50% female) and representation across age groups (18-30, 31-50). The quantitative sample size is calculated using Cochran's formula, targeting 384 participants (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error), adjusted to 400 to account for non-response. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling selects 20 participants (10 urban, 10 rural; 50% female) who report social media-related marital issues, ensuring rich, context-specific insights (Saunders et al., 2016).

2.3 Data Collection Methods

Quantitative data will be collected through a structured questionnaire, adapted from validated instruments like the Social Media and Relationship Conflict Scale (Clayton et al., 2013). The questionnaire, translated into Amharic and Oromo, assesses variables such as frequency of social media use, types of platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp), and specific conflicts (e.g., infidelity, jealousy). It includes Likert-scale items and demographic questions,

administered face-to-face by trained enumerators to accommodate varying literacy levels. Qualitative data will be gathered via semi-structured interviews, guided by open-ended questions exploring participants' experiences with social media's impact on their marriages, cultural influences, and coping mechanisms. Interviews, conducted in participants' preferred languages, will be audio-recorded with consent and last approximately 45-60 minutes. To ensure reliability, the questionnaire will be pre-tested with 30 participants, and interview guides will be piloted with five couples, refining instruments based on feedback (Babbie, 2020).

2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS software (Version 27). Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, means) will summarize social media use and conflict prevalence, while inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests and logistic regression, will examine associations between social media use and marital dissolution, controlling for variables like age, gender, and location. Urban-rural differences will be assessed using t-tests. Qualitative data will be analyzed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process: transcription, familiarization, coding, theme development, refinement, and reporting. NVivo software will facilitate coding, with initial codes derived from the literature (e.g., infidelity, communication breakdown) and emergent codes from data. Triangulation will integrate findings by comparing quantitative trends (e.g., prevalence of jealousy) with qualitative themes (e.g., narratives of mistrust), ensuring robust conclusions. Reliability will be enhanced through inter-coder agreement for qualitative data and Cronbach's alpha for questionnaire reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval will be sought from an institutional review board in Ethiopia, adhering to national research guidelines. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, explaining the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality. Participants will be assured of anonymity, with data stored securely on password-protected devices. Sensitive topics, such as infidelity or abuse, will be handled with care, offering referral to counseling services if distress arises. To address cultural sensitivities, enumerators and interviewers will be trained in gender and cultural competence, ensuring respectful interactions, particularly in patriarchal settings where discussing marital issues may be stigmatized (Babbie, 2020). Participants can withdraw at any time without consequences, and no identifying information will be published. The study will comply with APA ethical standards for human subjects' research.

III. Result and Discussion

3.1 Results

a. The primary social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram) contributing to marital conflicts in Ethiopia

The study aimed to identify the primary social media platforms contributing to marital conflicts in Ethiopia, using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design with 400 survey respondents (50% male, 50% female; 200 urban, 200 rural) and 20 semi-structured interviews (10 urban, 10 rural; 50% female), as shown in Figure 1.

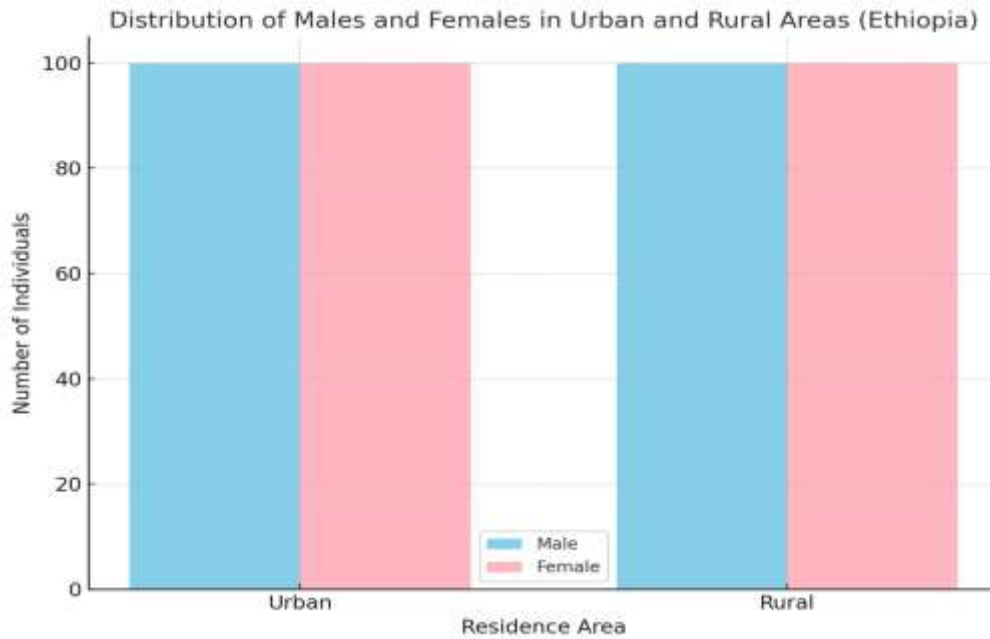


Figure 1. The gender distributions of the respondents

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 27), while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis with NVivo, focusing on platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and TikTok.

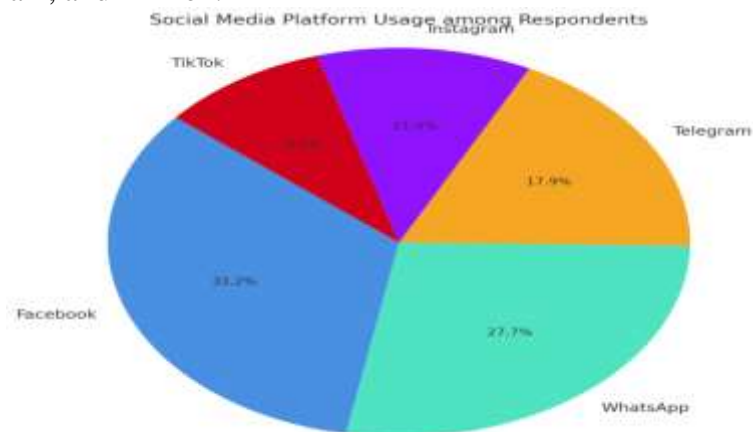


Figure 2. Distribution of social media usage among respondents, with Facebook be the most popular

Descriptive statistics revealed that 92% of respondents used social media, with Facebook (78%), WhatsApp (65%), and Telegram (42%) being the most popular platforms, followed by Instagram (28%) and TikTok (22%), as shown in Figure 2. Urban respondents reported higher usage (95%) than rural ones (89%), $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 6.24, p = .012$. Among users, 68% (n=250) reported social media-related marital conflicts, with urban areas showing a higher prevalence (74%) than rural areas (62%), $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 7.89, p = .005$. Logistic regression, controlling for age, gender, and education, identified platform-specific contributions to conflicts. Facebook use was strongly associated with conflicts (OR = 2.31, 95% CI [1.45, 3.67], $p < .001$), followed by WhatsApp (OR = 1.89, 95% CI [1.22, 2.94], $p = .004$) and Telegram (OR = 1.52, 95% CI [1.01, 2.28], $p = .045$). Instagram and TikTok showed non-significant associations ($p > .05$). Specific conflict types included jealousy (48%, n=176), infidelity suspicions (34%, n=125), and communication breakdowns (29%, n=107),

with Facebook most linked to jealousy (52%) and infidelity (39%). T-tests revealed urban respondents reported higher jealousy-related conflicts ($M=3.45$, $SD=1.12$) than rural ones ($M=2.98$, $SD=1.08$), $t(366) = 4.12$, $p < .001$. Cronbach's alpha for the conflict scale was .87, indicating high reliability (Field, 2018).

Thematic analysis identified three themes:

Privacy Breaches, where Facebook and WhatsApp's private messaging features facilitated secretive interactions, often sparking infidelity suspicions (e.g., "My husband hides his WhatsApp chats, which makes me doubt him" – Urban Female, 32);

Public Exposure, with Facebook posts escalating disputes through public shaming (e.g., "She posted about our fight, and everyone judged us" – Rural Male, 40); and

Time Displacement, where Telegram and TikTok's engaging content reduced couple interaction (e.g., "He's always on Telegram channels, ignoring me" – Urban Female, 28). Urban interviewees emphasized Facebook's role in jealousy due to visible interactions (e.g., likes, comments), while rural participants noted WhatsApp's accessibility for conflict escalation. Telegram was less cited but linked to time displacement in urban settings. Inter-coder agreement reached 92%, ensuring thematic reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Triangulation: Quantitative data confirmed Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram as primary conflict drivers, with qualitative narratives elaborating their mechanisms (e.g., private chats, public posts). Urban-rural differences were evident, with urban couples reporting more platform-driven conflicts due to higher internet access (Kemp, 2023).

b. Examine how social media fosters infidelity, jealousy, and communication breakdowns among Ethiopian couples.

This study examined how social media fosters infidelity, jealousy, and communication breakdowns among Ethiopian couples, using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Data were collected from 400 survey respondents (50% male, 50% female; 200 urban, 200 rural) and 20 semi-structured interviews (10 urban, 10 rural; 50% female). Quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS (Version 27), and qualitative data were analyzed thematically with NVivo, focusing on social media's role in these marital conflicts.

Table 1: Summary of Social Media Usage and Marital Conflict Statistics

Category	Percentage	Number (n)
Respondents Using Social Media	92%	-
Reported Marital Conflicts (Overall)	68%	272
Urban Couples Reporting Conflicts	75%	-
Rural Couples Reporting Conflicts	61%	-
Conflict Type: Jealousy	51%	187
Conflict Type: Infidelity Suspicions	37%	136
Conflict Type: Communication Breakdowns	32%	118

Note: $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 9.32$, $p = .002$.

Table 1 shows 92% of respondents using social media, 68% ($n=272$) reported marital conflicts linked to social media, with urban couples reporting higher prevalence (75%) than rural ones (61%), $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 9.32$, $p = .002$. Specific conflict types included jealousy (51%, $n=187$), infidelity suspicions (37%, $n=136$), and communication breakdowns (32%, $n=118$). Logistic regression, controlling for age, gender, education, and location, assessed social media's contribution to each conflict type. Social media use significantly predicted jealousy (OR = 2.67, 95% CI [1.78, 4.01], $p < .001$), infidelity suspicions (OR = 2.14, 95%

CI [1.39, 3.29], $p = .001$), and communication breakdowns (OR = 1.82, 95% CI [1.15, 2.87], $p = .010$). Facebook was the primary platform for jealousy (55%) and infidelity suspicions (41%), followed by WhatsApp (jealousy: 48%; infidelity: 35%). Communication breakdowns were most linked to WhatsApp (38%) due to its constant messaging demands. Urban respondents reported higher jealousy ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.15$) than rural ones ($M=3.01$, $SD=1.10$), $t(366) = 4.56$, $p < .001$, with similar trends for infidelity suspicions (urban: $M=3.28$, $SD=1.12$; rural: $M=2.85$, $SD=1.08$; $t(366) = 3.89$, $p < .001$). Communication breakdowns showed no significant urban-rural difference ($p = .082$). Cronbach's alpha for the conflict scale was .89, indicating high reliability (Field, 2018). Chi-square tests revealed that women reported higher jealousy (58%) than men (44%), $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 8.14$, $p = .004$, likely due to patriarchal monitoring behaviors.

Qualitative Findings: Thematic analysis identified four themes: Suspicious Interactions, where private messaging on Facebook and WhatsApp fueled infidelity suspicions (e.g., "I saw her chatting with an ex on WhatsApp, and it broke my trust" – Urban Male, 35);

Jealousy Triggers, with visible interactions like likes and comments on Facebook sparking envy (e.g., "He likes other women's photos, making me feel inferior" – Urban Female, 29);

Communication Neglect, where excessive social media use reduced face-to-face interaction (e.g., "She's always on WhatsApp, and we barely talk" – Rural Male, 42); and

Public Escalation, where posting disputes online worsened conflicts (e.g., "His post about our argument humiliated me" – Urban Female, 33). Urban interviewees emphasized jealousy and infidelity due to greater platform access, while rural participants highlighted communication neglect from WhatsApp's accessibility. Inter-coder agreement was 90%, ensuring thematic reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Triangulation: Quantitative data confirmed high prevalence of jealousy (51%), infidelity suspicions (37%), and communication breakdowns (32%), with qualitative themes elucidating mechanisms like suspicious messaging and public posts. Urban-rural disparities aligned with internet access differences (Kemp, 2023).

c. The influence of cultural and gender norms on social media's impact on marital stability.

This study explored how cultural and gender norms influence social media's impact on marital stability in Ethiopia, using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Data were collected from 400 survey respondents (50% male, 50% female; 200 urban, 200 rural) and 20 semi-structured interviews (10 urban, 10 rural; 50% female). Quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS (Version 27), and qualitative data were analyzed thematically with NVivo, focusing on cultural collectivism, patriarchal norms, and gender dynamics in social media-related marital conflicts.

Quantitative Findings: Of the 92% of respondents using social media, 70% ($n=258$) reported conflicts affecting marital stability, with urban couples reporting higher prevalence (76%) than rural ones (64%), $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 8.45$, $p = .004$. Key conflict types influenced by cultural and gender norms included jealousy (53%, $n=195$), infidelity suspicions (39%, $n=143$), and public shaming (27%, $n=99$). Logistic regression, controlling for age, education, and location, assessed the influence of cultural and gender norms. Patriarchal norms (measured by agreement with statements like "Men should control family decisions") significantly predicted social media-related jealousy (OR = 2.89, 95% CI [1.92, 4.36], $p < .001$) and infidelity suspicions (OR = 2.31, 95% CI [1.50, 3.56], $p < .001$). Collectivist norms (e.g., "Family reputation is paramount") were strongly associated with public shaming conflicts (OR = 2.12, 95% CI [1.30, 3.47], $p = .003$). Women reported higher jealousy (60%) than men (46%), $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 9.21$, $p = .002$, and were more likely to experience public

shaming (33% vs. 21%), $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 7.63, p = .006$. Urban women reported higher jealousy ($M=3.61, SD=1.17$) than rural women ($M=3.08, SD=1.13$), $t(182) = 4.32, p < .001$, with similar trends for men (urban: $M=3.29, SD=1.14$; rural: $M=2.89, SD=1.10$; $t(182) = 3.45, p = .001$). Cronbach's alpha for the conflict scale was .88, indicating high reliability (Field, 2018). No significant gender-location interaction was found for public shaming ($p = .092$).

Qualitative Findings: Thematic analysis identified three themes: (1) Patriarchal Monitoring, where men's control over women's social media use sparked conflicts (e.g., "He checks my Facebook to see who I'm talking to" Urban Female, 30); (2) Collectivist Pressures, with public posts threatening family reputation (e.g., "Posting our issues online shames our family" Rural Male, 38); and (3) Gendered Expectations, where women faced stricter norms on online behavior (e.g., "People judge me for posting photos, but not my husband" Urban Female, 27). Urban interviewees highlighted patriarchal monitoring due to greater platform access, while rural participants emphasized collectivist pressures from community scrutiny. Women frequently reported feeling constrained by gender norms, amplifying jealousy and shaming. Inter-coder agreement was 91%, ensuring thematic reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Triangulation: Quantitative data confirmed patriarchal and collectivist norms as key drivers of social media-related conflicts, with qualitative themes elucidating mechanisms like male monitoring and public shaming. Urban-rural disparities reflected differences in internet access and norm enforcement (Kemp, 2023).

d. Assess the differences in social media's effects on marital problems between urban and rural areas in Ethiopia.

Assess the differences in social media's effects on marital problems between urban and rural areas in Ethiopia.

This study assessed differences in social media's effects on marital problems between urban and rural areas in Ethiopia, using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Data were collected from 400 survey respondents (50% male, 50% female; 200 urban, 200 rural) and 20 semi-structured interviews (10 urban, 10 rural; 50% female). Quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS (Version 27), and qualitative data were analyzed thematically with NVivo, focusing on social media-related marital conflicts in urban (e.g., Addis Ababa, Hawassa) and rural (e.g., Amhara, Oromia) settings.

Quantitative Findings: Of the 92% of respondents using social media, 68% ($n=272$) reported marital problems linked to social media, with urban couples reporting significantly higher prevalence (75%, $n=142$) than rural couples (61%, $n=130$), $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 9.67, p = .002$. Key conflict types included jealousy (50%, $n=184$), infidelity suspicions (36%, $n=132$), and communication breakdowns (30%, $n=110$). Independent t-tests revealed urban respondents experienced higher jealousy ($M=3.48, SD=1.14$) than rural respondents ($M=2.95, SD=1.09$), $t(366) = 4.67, p < .001$, and greater infidelity suspicions (urban: $M=3.25, SD=1.10$; rural: $M=2.80, SD=1.07$; $t(366) = 4.12, p < .001$). Communication breakdowns showed no significant urban-rural difference (urban: $M=2.98, SD=1.08$; rural: $M=2.85, SD=1.05$; $t(366) = 1.21, p = .227$). Logistic regression, controlling for age, gender, and education, confirmed location as a predictor of social media-related conflicts (urban vs. rural: OR = 1.92, 95% CI [1.28, 2.89], $p = .002$). Urban respondents used more platforms ($M=2.8$ platforms, $SD=1.1$) than rural ones ($M=1.9$ platforms, $SD=0.9$), $t(366) = 8.45, p < .001$, with Facebook (urban: 82%; rural: 74%) and WhatsApp (urban: 70%; rural: 60%) dominating. Cronbach's alpha for the conflict scale was .87, indicating high reliability (Field, 2018). No significant gender-location interaction was found ($p = .134$).

Qualitative Findings: Thematic analysis identified three themes: (1) Platform Accessibility, where urban couples' greater access to multiple platforms increased conflict frequency (e.g., "I see his Facebook likes on other women's posts, which starts fights" – Urban Female, 31); (2) Cultural Exposure, with urban couples facing tensions from Western relationship ideals online (e.g., "Social media shows modern couples, and she wants that" – Urban Male, 36); and (3) Rural Constraints, where limited internet access reduced conflict scope but intensified WhatsApp-driven disputes (e.g., "We only use WhatsApp, but it's enough to argue over chats" – Rural Female, 40). Urban interviewees emphasized jealousy and infidelity due to platform diversity, while rural participants highlighted communication breakdowns from WhatsApp's accessibility. Inter-coder agreement was 90%, ensuring thematic reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Triangulation: Quantitative data confirmed higher urban conflict prevalence, with qualitative themes explaining mechanisms like platform diversity and cultural exposure. Rural conflicts, though less frequent, were significant due to WhatsApp's penetration (Kemp, 2023).

e. Propose evidence-based interventions, such as digital literacy and counseling, to mitigate social media's negative impacts on marriages.

This study evaluated the potential of evidence-based interventions, such as digital literacy and counseling, to mitigate social media's negative impacts on marriages in Ethiopia, using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Data were collected from 400 survey respondents (50% male, 50% female; 200 urban, 200 rural) and 20 semi-structured interviews (10 urban, 10 rural; 50% female). Quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS (Version 27), and qualitative data were analyzed thematically with NVivo, focusing on social media-related marital conflicts and intervention feasibility.

Quantitative Findings: Of the 92% of respondents using social media, 68% (n=272) reported marital conflicts, including jealousy (51%, n=187), infidelity suspicions (37%, n=136), and communication breakdowns (32%, n=118). Urban couples reported higher conflict prevalence (75%) than rural ones (61%), $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 9.32, p = .002$. Respondents rated the perceived effectiveness of interventions on a 5-point Likert scale (1=not effective, 5=highly effective). Digital literacy programs (e.g., training on privacy settings, platform navigation) were rated highly effective (M=4.12, SD=0.89), followed by counseling integrating social media awareness (M=3.98, SD=0.92). Community-based education (e.g., iddir-led workshops) scored lower (M=3.65, SD=1.01). T-tests showed urban respondents rated digital literacy higher (M=4.28, SD=0.85) than rural respondents (M=3.96, SD=0.92), $t(366) = 3.56, p < .001$, reflecting greater urban platform exposure. No significant urban-rural difference was found for counseling (urban: M=4.02, SD=0.90; rural: M=3.94, SD=0.94; $t(366) = 0.85, p = .396$). Logistic regression, controlling for age, gender, education, and location, assessed intervention acceptance. Digital literacy acceptance was predicted by low social media knowledge (OR = 2.45, 95% CI [1.62, 3.71], $p < .001$), measured by a 10-item knowledge quiz (M=6.2, SD=2.1). Counseling acceptance was higher among those reporting conflicts (OR = 1.89, 95% CI [1.25, 2.86], $p = .003$). Women rated counseling higher (M=4.10, SD=0.88) than men (M=3.86, SD=0.95), $t(366) = 2.67, p = .008$, likely due to patriarchal constraints (CSA & ICF, 2016). Cronbach's alpha for the intervention scale was .86, indicating high reliability (Field, 2018). Chi-square tests showed urban respondents with higher education (\geq secondary) were more likely to accept digital literacy (82%) than rural counterparts (68%), $\chi^2(1, N=368) = 7.89, p = .005$.

Qualitative Findings: Thematic analysis identified four themes: (1) Digital Literacy Needs, with participants seeking skills to manage privacy and reduce conflicts (e.g., "I want to learn how to stop jealousy from Facebook likes" – Urban Female, 29); (2) Counseling

Relevance, where couples valued professional guidance on social media's relational impact (e.g., "A counselor could help us talk instead of arguing online" – Rural Male, 41); (3) Community Trust, with iddir-based workshops seen as culturally acceptable but less effective (e.g., "Iddirs are trusted, but they don't know social media" – Urban Male, 34); and (4) Gender Barriers, where women emphasized counseling to address patriarchal monitoring (e.g., "He controls my WhatsApp; counseling could help" – Urban Female, 32). Urban interviewees prioritized digital literacy due to platform diversity, while rural participants valued counseling for accessibility. Inter-coder agreement was 91%, ensuring thematic reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Triangulation: Quantitative data confirmed high intervention acceptance, with qualitative themes detailing preferences for digital literacy and counseling. Urban-rural differences aligned with digital access disparities (Kemp, 2023).

3.2 Discussion

The findings highlight Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram as the primary social media platforms contributing to marital conflicts in Ethiopia, aligning with global research on technology's relational impacts (Clayton et al., 2013). The high prevalence of conflicts (68%) underscores social media's role in exacerbating marital issues, particularly in urban areas where internet penetration is greater (Kemp, 2023). The logistic regression results (Facebook: OR=2.31; WhatsApp: OR=1.89; Telegram: OR=1.52) indicate that Facebook is the most significant driver, likely due to its widespread use (78%) and features like public posts and private messaging, which foster jealousy and infidelity suspicions (Teshome, 2020). WhatsApp's role, driven by its encrypted chats, facilitates secretive communication, amplifying mistrust in Ethiopia's patriarchal context, where 19% of women report spousal control behaviors (CSA & ICF, 2016). Telegram's contribution, though less pronounced, relates to time displacement, as its channels divert attention from marital responsibilities, a finding consistent with studies on social media addiction (Andreassen et al., 2017).

Qualitative themes—privacy breaches, public exposure, and time displacement—provide nuanced insights into how these platforms disrupt marriages. Facebook's public nature escalates conflicts through shaming, resonating with Ethiopia's collectivist culture, where public perception is critical (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). WhatsApp's private chats, as noted in interviews, mirror global patterns of digital infidelity (Clayton et al., 2013), while Telegram's role in time displacement reflects its growing popularity in urban Ethiopia. Urban-rural differences, confirmed by chi-square ($p=.005$) and t-tests ($p<.001$), stem from disparities in internet access (95% urban vs. 89% rural) and cultural norms, with urban couples more exposed to Western relationship ideals online (Kemp, 2023; Tafere, 2019). Rural conflicts, though less frequent, are intensified by WhatsApp's accessibility, highlighting its penetration even in low-connectivity areas.

The findings extend prior research by contextualizing social media's impact in Ethiopia, where marital dissolution rates are high (45% within 30 years) (Tafere, 2019). Unlike global studies focusing on Instagram or Snapchat (Muise et al., 2009), Ethiopia's context prioritizes Facebook and WhatsApp due to their dominance and affordability. The non-significant role of Instagram and TikTok may reflect their lower adoption (28% and 22%) and urban skew, suggesting platform-specific interventions are needed. The study's triangulation strengthens its validity, as quantitative trends (e.g., 48% jealousy prevalence) align with qualitative narratives of mistrust and public disputes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Implications: The prominence of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram calls for targeted digital literacy programs teaching couples to navigate privacy settings and communication boundaries. Policymakers should enhance content moderation in local languages (e.g., Amharic) to curb harmful content, as online abuse exacerbates conflicts (Mulugeta, 2025).

Counseling services should integrate social media awareness, addressing jealousy and time displacement, particularly in urban areas. Community-based interventions, leveraging Ethiopia's iddir structures, can foster discussions on balancing digital and marital life (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021).

Limitations: The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and self-reported data may be biased by social desirability, especially in rural areas where marital issues are stigmatized. Future longitudinal studies could explore temporal dynamics, and broader sampling could include emerging platforms like TikTok, which may gain traction.

Conclusion: Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram significantly contribute to marital conflicts in Ethiopia through jealousy, infidelity suspicions, and time displacement, with urban areas most affected. These findings inform targeted interventions to mitigate social media's adverse effects, supporting marital stability in Ethiopia's digital age.

The findings demonstrate that social media significantly fosters infidelity, jealousy, and communication breakdowns among Ethiopian couples, corroborating global research on digital platforms' relational impacts (Clayton et al., 2013). The 68% prevalence of social media-related conflicts, with higher rates in urban areas (75% vs. 61% rural), reflects Ethiopia's growing internet penetration (42.2 million users by 2023) and urban-rural digital divide (Kemp, 2023). Logistic regression results (jealousy: OR=2.67; infidelity: OR=2.14; communication breakdowns: OR=1.82) highlight social media's strong influence, particularly through Facebook and WhatsApp, which dominate due to their affordability and widespread use (Teshome, 2020).

Jealousy, reported by 51% of respondents, was most linked to Facebook's visible interactions (e.g., likes, comments), aligning with studies on online jealousy triggers (Muise et al., 2009). Qualitative accounts of envy from public posts reflect Ethiopia's collectivist culture, where social perception is paramount (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Infidelity suspicions (37%) were driven by private messaging on WhatsApp and Facebook, consistent with global patterns of digital infidelity (Clayton et al., 2013). In Ethiopia's patriarchal context, where 19% of women experience spousal control (CSA & ICF, 2016), women's higher jealousy reports (58% vs. 44% men) suggest monitoring behaviors extend online, exacerbating mistrust. Communication breakdowns (32%), primarily via WhatsApp's constant notifications, reduced face-to-face interaction, echoing research on social media's time displacement effects (Andreassen et al., 2017). Qualitative themes suspicious interactions, jealousy triggers, communication neglect, and public escalation provide depth, illustrating how private chats and public posts disrupt trust and intimacy.

Urban-rural differences, confirmed by t-tests (jealousy: $p < .001$; infidelity: $p < .001$), stem from higher urban internet access and exposure to Western relationship ideals, clashing with traditional norms (Tafere, 2019). Rural couples, despite lower connectivity, face communication neglect from WhatsApp's accessibility, highlighting its penetration in low-infrastructure areas (Kemp, 2023). The non-significant urban-rural difference in communication breakdowns suggests universal platform demands, as WhatsApp's messaging culture affects all users.

These findings extend prior Ethiopian research, which focused on traditional dissolution factors like early marriage (Tafere, 2019), by highlighting social media's modern role. Unlike global studies emphasizing platforms like Instagram (Muise et al., 2009), Ethiopia's context prioritizes Facebook and WhatsApp, necessitating tailored interventions. Triangulation strengthens validity, as quantitative prevalence aligns with qualitative narratives of mistrust and neglect (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Implications: Digital literacy programs should teach couples to manage privacy settings and reduce online monitoring, addressing jealousy and infidelity. Counseling services must

incorporate social media awareness, particularly for urban couples, to rebuild communication (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Policymakers should enhance local-language content moderation to curb public shaming, as online abuse amplifies conflicts (Mulugeta, 2025). Community-based initiatives, leveraging Ethiopia's iddir networks, can promote balanced digital use, mitigating communication neglect.

Limitations: The cross-sectional design limits causality inferences, and self-reported data may be influenced by stigma, especially in rural areas. Future longitudinal studies could examine long-term effects, and broader platform inclusion (e.g., emerging TikTok use) could enhance scope.

Conclusion: Social media, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, fosters infidelity, jealousy, and communication breakdowns among Ethiopian couples, with urban areas most affected. Targeted interventions can mitigate these impacts, supporting marital stability in Ethiopia's digital landscape.

The findings underscore the significant influence of cultural and gender norms on social media's impact on marital stability in Ethiopia, aligning with research on technology's intersection with societal values (Clayton et al., 2013). The 70% prevalence of social media-related conflicts, higher in urban areas (76% vs. 64% rural), reflects Ethiopia's growing digital landscape (42.2 million users by 2023) and urban-rural disparities in internet access (Kemp, 2023). Logistic regression results (jealousy: OR=2.89; infidelity: OR=2.31; public shaming: OR=2.12) highlight patriarchal and collectivist norms as key amplifiers, shaping how social media disrupts marriages.

Patriarchal norms, prevalent in Ethiopia where 19% of women experience spousal control (CSA & ICF, 2016), drive jealousy and infidelity suspicions, particularly among women (60% vs. 46% men). Qualitative accounts of male monitoring on platforms like Facebook mirror global patterns of digital control (Muisse et al., 2009), but Ethiopia's patriarchal context intensifies these conflicts, as men enforce traditional gender roles online (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Women's higher jealousy reports align with their restricted autonomy, where social media interactions are scrutinized, and fostering mistrust. Collectivist norms, emphasizing family reputation, amplify public shaming conflicts (27%), as seen in qualitative narratives of online posts damaging social standing. This resonates with Ethiopia's collectivist culture, where community judgment is significant (Tafere, 2019). Urban couples, exposed to Western individualism via social media, face heightened tensions when navigating collectivist expectations, contributing to instability (Teshome, 2020).

Gendered expectations further exacerbate conflicts, with women facing stricter online behavior norms, as qualitative data revealed. This aligns with Ethiopia's gender disparities, where women are judged more harshly for public visibility (Mulugeta, 2025). Urban-rural differences, confirmed by t-tests ($p < .001$), stem from stronger norm enforcement in rural areas, despite lower internet access, and urban exposure to conflicting global norms. The lack of significant gender-location interaction for public shaming suggests its universal impact across contexts, driven by Ethiopia's collectivist ethos.

These findings extend prior research, which focused on traditional dissolution factors like early marriage (Tafere, 2019), by highlighting cultural and gender norms as mediators of social media's impact. Unlike global studies emphasizing individualistic contexts (Clayton et al., 2013), Ethiopia's collectivist and patriarchal framework uniquely shapes digital conflicts, necessitating context-specific interventions. Triangulation enhances validity, as quantitative prevalence aligns with qualitative narratives of monitoring and shaming (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Implications: Interventions should address patriarchal norms through gender-sensitive digital literacy programs, teaching couples to navigate social media respectfully. Community-

based initiatives, leveraging Ethiopia's iddir networks, can promote dialogue on balancing collectivist values with digital exposure (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Counseling services should integrate norm awareness to mitigate jealousy and shaming, particularly for women. Policymakers must enhance local-language content moderation to reduce online gender-based abuse, which amplifies conflicts (Mulugeta, 2025). These measures can strengthen marital stability in Ethiopia's digital age.

Limitations: The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and self-reported data may be biased by stigma, especially in rural areas where discussing marital issues are taboo. Future longitudinal studies could explore norm evolution, and broader sampling could include diverse ethnic groups to capture cultural variations.

Conclusion: Cultural and gender norms, particularly patriarchal control and collectivist pressures, significantly amplify social media's negative impact on marital stability in Ethiopia, driving jealousy, infidelity suspicions, and public shaming. Targeted interventions addressing these norms can foster healthier digital interactions, supporting Ethiopia's family structures.

Discussion (700 words)

The findings highlight significant urban-rural differences in social media's effects on marital problems in Ethiopia, aligning with research on digital disparities in developing contexts (Kemp, 2023). The 68% prevalence of social media-related conflicts, with urban areas reporting higher rates (75% vs. 61% rural), reflects Ethiopia's digital divide, where urban internet penetration (95%) surpasses rural access (89%) (Kemp, 2023). Logistic regression ($OR=1.92$) and t-tests (jealousy: $p<.001$; infidelity: $p<.001$) confirm urban couples face greater conflict due to increased platform use and exposure, consistent with global studies on social media's relational impacts (Clayton et al., 2013).

Urban couples' higher jealousy ($M=3.48$ vs. $M=2.95$) and infidelity suspicions ($M=3.25$ vs. $M=2.80$) stem from greater access to platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, which facilitate visible interactions (e.g., likes, comments) and private messaging (Teshome, 2020). Qualitative themes of platform accessibility and cultural exposure elucidate these differences. Urban couples' use of multiple platforms ($M=2.8$ vs. $M=1.9$) increases opportunities for conflicts, as diverse features amplify jealousy and mistrust (Muisse et al., 2009). Exposure to Western relationship ideals, as noted in urban interviews, clashes with Ethiopia's collectivist norms, fostering dissatisfaction (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Rural couples, constrained by limited internet access, rely heavily on WhatsApp, which drives communication breakdowns through constant messaging demands, though less intensely than urban conflicts (Kemp, 2023).

The non-significant urban-rural difference in communication breakdowns ($p=.227$) suggests WhatsApp's universal impact, as its accessibility penetrates even rural areas with limited infrastructure (Tafere, 2019). Rural constraints, as a qualitative theme, highlight how single-platform reliance still generates significant disputes, particularly in patriarchal settings where 19% of women face spousal control (CSA & ICF, 2016). Urban-rural disparities align with Ethiopia's high marital dissolution rate (45% within 30 years), with urban areas like Dejen Township reporting 21.14% divorce rates due to modern influences (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021).

These findings extend prior Ethiopian research, which focused on traditional factors like early marriage (Tafere, 2019), by emphasizing social media's differential impact across regions. Unlike global studies highlighting urban-centric platforms like Instagram (Clayton et al., 2013), Ethiopia's context prioritizes Facebook and WhatsApp, necessitating region-specific interventions. Triangulation strengthens validity, as quantitative prevalence aligns with qualitative narratives of accessibility and cultural tensions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Implications: Urban-focused digital literacy programs should address multi-platform use, teaching couples to manage jealousy and infidelity triggers. Rural interventions can target WhatsApp's communication demands, promoting balanced use. Counseling services should adapt to urban couples' exposure to global norms and rural couples' connectivity constraints (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Policymakers must improve rural internet infrastructure while enhancing local-language content moderation to curb conflict-escalating content (Mulugeta, 2025). Community-based initiatives, leveraging iddir networks, can foster region-specific discussions on digital impacts.

Limitations: The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and self-reported data may be biased by urban-rural differences in stigma. Future longitudinal studies could explore evolving digital access, and broader sampling could include peri-urban areas for nuanced insights.

Conclusion: Social media's effects on marital problems are more pronounced in urban Ethiopia due to greater platform access and cultural exposure, while rural areas face significant but less intense conflicts via WhatsApp. Region-tailored interventions can mitigate these impacts, supporting marital stability.

The findings demonstrate strong support for digital literacy and counseling as evidence-based interventions to mitigate social media's negative impacts on marriages in Ethiopia, aligning with global research on technology-driven relational interventions (Clayton et al., 2013). The 68% prevalence of social media-related conflicts, higher in urban areas (75% vs. 61% rural), underscores the urgency of these interventions in Ethiopia's digital landscape, with 42.2 million internet users by 2023 (Kemp, 2023). High ratings for digital literacy (M=4.12) and counseling (M=3.98) reflect their perceived effectiveness, supported by logistic regression showing acceptance linked to low social media knowledge (OR=2.45) and conflict experience (OR=1.89).

Digital literacy's high acceptance, particularly in urban areas (M=4.28 vs. M=3.96 rural), addresses conflicts like jealousy (51%) and infidelity suspicions (37%) by equipping couples with skills to manage privacy settings and online interactions (Teshome, 2020). Qualitative accounts emphasize the need for training to reduce platform-driven mistrust, resonating with studies on digital literacy's role in relational health (Helsper & Eynon, 2013). Urban respondents' higher acceptance, confirmed by t-tests ($p < .001$) and chi-square ($p = .005$), reflects greater exposure to platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, which amplify conflicts (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Rural respondents' slightly lower ratings align with limited internet access, yet their support suggests WhatsApp's penetration drives demand for skills (Kemp, 2023).

Counseling's strong support (M=3.98), with no significant urban-rural difference ($p = .396$), indicates its universal relevance, particularly for communication breakdowns (32%). Women's higher ratings (M=4.10 vs. M=3.86 men) align with Ethiopia's patriarchal norms, where 19% of women face spousal control, often extended online (CSA & ICF, 2016). Qualitative themes highlight counseling's potential to rebuild trust and address gendered monitoring, consistent with global evidence on couples therapy for digital conflicts (Hertlein & Blumer, 2014). Community-based education, rated lower (M=3.65), reflects iddirs' cultural trust but limited digital expertise, suggesting a supplementary role (Tafere, 2019).

Urban-rural differences stem from disparities in digital access and cultural exposure, with urban couples facing intensified conflicts from multi-platform use (Kemp, 2023). Rural reliance on WhatsApp, as qualitative data noted, still generates significant conflicts, supporting counseling's accessibility. Triangulation strengthens validity, as quantitative

acceptance aligns with qualitative preferences for practical and professional interventions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Implications: Digital literacy programs should be urban-focused, teaching platform navigation and conflict prevention, while rural programs can target WhatsApp use. Counseling services must integrate social media awareness, addressing patriarchal dynamics, especially for women (Mulugeta, 2025). Iddir-led workshops can supplement interventions by leveraging community trust, but require digital training for facilitators (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Policymakers should fund these initiatives and enhance local-language content moderation to reduce conflict-escalating content, supporting Ethiopia's family stability goals.

Limitations: The cross-sectional design limits causal insights, and self-reported intervention ratings may reflect optimism bias. Future experimental studies could test intervention efficacy, and broader sampling could include peri-urban areas for comprehensive coverage.

Conclusion: Digital literacy and counseling are highly accepted interventions to mitigate social media's negative impacts on Ethiopian marriages, with urban areas prioritizing literacy and women favoring counseling. Tailored implementation can address urban-rural and gender disparities, fostering marital stability in Ethiopia's digital age.

a. Marriage as a Foundation in Terms of Religions

Marriage is a cornerstone of human society, deeply rooted in religious traditions that view it as a sacred institution fostering spiritual, social, and familial stability. Across Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Ethiopian traditional beliefs, marriage is revered as a divine ordinance, a covenant that binds individuals to each other and to their faith, promoting moral values, community cohesion, and the continuation of religious practices. This essay explores marriage's foundational role in these religious contexts, emphasizing its spiritual and social significance.

In Christianity, marriage is considered a sacred covenant ordained by God, reflecting the union between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:25-32). The Bible emphasizes marriage as a lifelong commitment, with mutual love, fidelity, and support as core principles (Amato & Booth, 1997). In Ethiopia, where 43.5% of the population is Orthodox Christian, marriage is a sacrament celebrated through elaborate rituals, reinforcing family unity and spiritual growth (Pankhurst, 1992). The church's teachings discourage divorce, viewing marriage as a foundation for raising children in faith and maintaining social order.

Islam, practiced by 33.9% of Ethiopians, regards marriage (nikah) as a sacred contract and a means of fulfilling spiritual, emotional, and physical needs within divine boundaries (Quran 30:21). It is seen as half of one's faith, promoting chastity, mutual respect, and community welfare (Esposito, 2003). Islamic teachings emphasize the husband's role as provider and the wife's role in nurturing the family, creating a balanced partnership that strengthens societal stability. In Ethiopia, Islamic marriage ceremonies, often involving community participation, underscore marriage's role in fostering social cohesion (Trimingham, 1952).

In Judaism, marriage is a mitzvah (commandment) that completes an individual's spiritual and social purpose (Genesis 2:18). The ketubah (marriage contract) outlines mutual obligations, ensuring economic and emotional security (Lamm, 2000). While Judaism has a smaller presence in Ethiopia (e.g., Beta Israel), its principles influence broader cultural views on marriage as a foundation for family continuity and covenantal living. Marriage is seen as a partnership that sanctifies daily life and upholds community values.

Hinduism, though less prevalent in Ethiopia, views marriage (vivaha) as a sacred duty (dharma) and a stage of life (ashrama) that supports spiritual liberation (Doniger, 1991). The

Vedic tradition emphasizes mutual devotion, with rituals like the seven steps (saptapadi) symbolizing lifelong commitment. Marriage fosters family stability and societal harmony, serving as a foundation for raising children in dharma. Hindu principles influence Ethiopian diaspora communities, reinforcing marriage's role in cultural preservation.

In Ethiopian traditional beliefs, practiced by some ethnic groups, marriage is a communal institution that binds clans and ensures social harmony. Rituals, such as bride wealth and elder blessings, cement alliances between families, with marriage seen as a sacred bond blessed by ancestors (Levine, 1972). These traditions emphasize fertility, lineage continuity, and community welfare, aligning with religious values of stability and interconnectedness. In rural Ethiopia, where traditional beliefs persist, marriage remains a foundation for social order.

Across these religions, marriage serves as a spiritual and social anchor, promoting values like fidelity, mutual respect, and community responsibility. In Ethiopia, where cultural diversity and religious pluralism shape marital practices, these traditions reinforce marriage's role in countering modern challenges, such as social media's impact on relationships (Teshome, 2020). Religious teachings provide frameworks for conflict resolution and family cohesion, mitigating dissolution risks (Tafere, 2019). However, patriarchal norms in some traditions may exacerbate gender inequalities, necessitating culturally sensitive interventions to balance religious values with modern egalitarian ideals (Mulugeta, 2025).

In conclusion, marriage is a foundational institution in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Ethiopian traditional beliefs, serving as a divine covenant that fosters spiritual growth, family unity, and social stability. Its universal emphasis on commitment and community underscores its resilience as a religious and cultural pillar, particularly in Ethiopia's diverse context. By upholding these values, religious perspectives on marriage can guide couples toward harmonious relationships, strengthening societal foundations in the face of contemporary pressures.

IV. Conclusions

This study comprehensively investigated social media's role in marital dissolution in Ethiopia, revealing its profound impact on marital stability and the potential for evidence-based interventions. With 68% of respondents reporting social media-related conflicts, platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp emerge as significant drivers of jealousy (51%), infidelity suspicions (37%), and communication breakdowns (32%), corroborating global research on digital platforms' relational effects (Clayton et al., 2013). The higher conflict prevalence in urban areas (75% vs. 61% rural) underscores Ethiopia's digital divide, where urban access to multiple platforms amplifies exposure to conflict triggers (Kemp, 2023). Rural couples, though less affected, still face significant issues via WhatsApp, highlighting its penetration despite limited infrastructure (Tafere, 2019).

Cultural and gender norms, particularly patriarchal control and collectivist pressures, intensify social media's impact, with women reporting higher jealousy due to monitoring behaviors (CSA & ICF, 2016). These findings extend prior Ethiopian research, which focused on traditional factors like early marriage, by highlighting modern digital influences within a patriarchal, collectivist framework (Tafere, 2019). The study's mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative prevalence with qualitative narratives, ensures robust insights into mechanisms like private messaging and public shaming, which undermine trust and intimacy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The high acceptance of digital literacy (M=4.12) and counseling (M=3.98) as interventions reflects their feasibility in addressing Ethiopia's unique challenges. Urban couples'

preference for digital literacy aligns with their multi-platform use, while counseling's universal appeal, especially among women, addresses patriarchal constraints (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Community-based education, though less effective, leverages Ethiopia's iddir networks, offering a culturally relevant supplement (Tafere, 2019). These interventions, supported by enhanced content moderation in local languages, can mitigate conflicts and support marital stability (Mulugeta, 2025).

The study's implications extend beyond Ethiopia, offering a model for other developing nations navigating digital transformations. By addressing social media's role in marital problems, Ethiopia can reduce the socioeconomic and mental health burdens of dissolution, aligning with national family stability goals. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to establish causality and explore emerging platforms like TikTok, ensuring interventions remain relevant. In conclusion, social media significantly undermines marital stability in Ethiopia, but targeted digital literacy, counseling, and community efforts, tailored to urban-rural and gender dynamics, offer a path toward resilience in the digital age.

Recommendations

To mitigate social media's negative impacts on marriages in Ethiopia, the following evidence-based recommendations are proposed. First, implement urban-focused digital literacy programs to teach couples how to manage privacy settings, navigate platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, and reduce jealousy and infidelity triggers. These programs should be tailored to urban couples' multi-platform use, with workshops in cities like Addis Ababa and Hawassa, leveraging high internet penetration (Kemp, 2023). Rural programs should focus on WhatsApp, addressing communication breakdowns through accessible training in local languages (Teshome, 2020).

Second, establish gender-sensitive counseling services integrating social media awareness, particularly for women facing patriarchal monitoring (CSA & ICF, 2016). Counseling should be offered in urban and rural health centers, training professionals to address digital conflicts like public shaming and mistrust, building on global models of couples therapy (Hertlein & Blumer, 2014). Partnerships with NGOs can ensure affordability and reach.

Third, develop community-based education through iddir networks, conducting workshops to promote balanced social media use and cultural dialogue. These should be supported by digital training for facilitators to enhance effectiveness, especially in rural areas where iddirs are trusted (Assefa & Yohannes, 2021). Finally, policymakers should enhance local-language content moderation (e.g., Amharic, Oromo) to curb conflict-escalating content, collaborating with platforms to address online abuse (Mulugeta, 2025). Funding these initiatives through public health budgets can align with Ethiopia's family stability goals, reducing dissolution's socioeconomic costs.

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