

The Role of Social Media on Online Dating and Sustainable Marriage

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Abstract— The importance of dating can never be over emphasized as it is a prerequisite that should be considered before going into any form of courtship that can either lead to marriage or not. As a result of the dramatic increase in Internet usage, there has been a proliferation of numerous online dating sites that allow people to meet and date in a virtual environment. This form of socialization has been perceived by many to be either a blessing or a curse depending on individuals' opinions and experiences due to the present level of increase in divorce rate among those who are married. The study considered the perception of online dating in sustaining marriages. This study employed descriptive statistics using quantitative research methodology which involves the use of questionnaires as the research instrument and the questionnaire. Data used for the analysis were collected with the use of a well-structured questionnaire administered to 50 respondents in the PhD family wholeness class of 2015/2016 and the analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package Service Solution (SPSS) version 21.0. The sample size was chosen based on Convenience Sampling method. Our finding shows that 26.2% of the respondents are within 21-30 years age range, 38.1% fall into 31-40 age bracket, and 23.8% are within the 41-50 years age range. 64.3% of the respondents are married while 35.7% are single. However, 51% of the respondents admitted that dating and marrying an online friend is possible if only the person has a good heart and fears God. Furthermore, 72.61% of the respondents do not believe that online dating can lead to sustainable marriage while 27.39% of the population sampled believes otherwise. The result of the analysis evidenced that a larger percentage of the population surveyed do not accept that online dating can actually lead to a sustainable marriage. The study recommends that while people may engage in online dating, it is advisable they meet physically to become more acquainted before considering marriage.

Keywords— Dating, Sustainable Marriage, Online Dating, Courtship and Social Media

I. INTRODUCTION

Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher and Scientist once referred to man as a social animal in the sense that man lives in a group and they find it difficult to stray away from that group. This does not mean that man cannot function alone in solitude but every typical man depends on each other to fulfill various kinds of needs. When God created man in the beginning, he did not want him to be alone, so out from his ribs, he created woman to be his companion, his helper and for them to share sexual intimacy. God created the first institution known as marriage which is clearly stated in the Holy Scripture as a sacred union between a man and a woman;

hence, it is deeply rooted in the divine plan of creation as evident in Genesis 2:23-24. For marriage to take place, there has to be steps that should be taken by both parties involved. Naturally, there has to be some form of acquaintance, getting to know one another, the dating process, courtship and when both parties have really known one another deeply enough, they can now go ahead with marriage planning which should involve their families and finally the marriage proper [1].

In the present technology savvy world where people spend a great deal of time with their communication gadgets like smart phones, laptops, iPad amongst others and where actual physical communication is minutely done as a result of people's hectic lifestyle and dependence on gadgets especially among the youths of marriageable age, there has to be a medium of contact which has led to the development of various Internet dating sites and Social network just for people to meet, socialize and communicate among one another [2]. Advancement in technology has led to reduced cost in accessing and using Internet facilities with various user friendly tools being embedded in various Social networking applications. This has led to the elimination of distance as a barrier in relationships [3]. One of the most significant wonders presently reshaping the world, is the worldwide accessibility to the internet, the world wide web hence, social media which comes in many forms, including blogs, forums, business networks, photo-sharing platforms, social gaming, microblogs, chat apps, and social networks. The power of social networking is such that, the number of worldwide users is expected to reach some 2.5 billion by 2018, around a third of earth's entire population [4].

According to [5], he remarked that Smartphone penetration has risen as devices continually gets cheaper and the wireless networks more ubiquitous and faster.

There are now 7.2 billion people on the planet and of those the following numbers make interesting reading.

- There are just over 3 billion active Internet users (45% of the world's internet users)
- Nearly 2.1 billion people have social media accounts
- 3.65 billion mobile users have access to the internet via smartphones and tablets
- Close to 1.7 billion people have active social media accounts

As at June 30, 2015, Nigeria had about 15 million monthly active users of Facebook followed by Kenya with 4.5 million users [6]. With this huge statistics, the medium is already in place for people to meet easily, socialize and become

acquainted online through all forms of social media, be it dating sites, blogs, forums etc.

Online Cambridge dictionary defined online dating as the way of starting a romantic relationship on the internet, by giving information about oneself or replying to someone else's information. Online dating has gained prominence and soared as a result of affordable internet devices and proliferation of various dating and social networking sites but here in Nigeria, lots of people have different perspectives and opinions when it comes to Online dating based on diverse principles, limitations, risks and benefits that Online dating promises, religious and traditional beliefs in meeting a potential partner.

Hence, the motivation of this work is to explore the novel world of Online Dating and qualitatively analyze people's opinions and views about Online Dating and Sustainable Marriage. In this work, the first section gives a brief introduction about the Marriage concept as instituted by God, online dating and present statistics of social networking site users both in developed countries and in Africa, the second section talks about Marriage deeper from its objectives to benefits, it also shed more light on what a sustainable marriage is, Online Dating concept, benefits, risks involved and how to minimize such risks, it talks about people's perception and opinions generally about Online Dating, the remaining sections gives the methodology used in this work, Results of findings, Conclusion and Recommendations.

A. Statement of the Problem

There has been a steady rise in the rate of divorce among couples who are married and this continues to have adverse impact on the family, the community of those involved and the nation at large. For marriage to take place, there has to be a point of contact first before courtship which may then lead to marriage hence the need for dating. There exist many online dating sites as a result of technological advancement and people are using this medium to meet intending spouses especially youths. As a result, some usually end up getting married to their online spouses but does this usually have a happy ending or can such marriage be said to be sustainable as a result of some on the risks involved in choosing spouses online. These questions and many more are the focus of this research.

B. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. identify the present rate of online dating worldwide
- ii. Investigate the perceived use and awareness of people about online dating, online dating site and its various platforms among 2015/2016 family wholeness class of Babcock University.
- iii. examine the extent of belief among 2015/2016 family wholeness class of Babcock University that online dating can lead to a more sustainable marriage.

C. Research Questions

- i. What is the current rate of Online dating worldwide?

- ii. What is the present level of usage and awareness of online dating websites among 2015/2016 family wholeness class of Babcock University?
- iii. Can online dating lead to a sustainable marriage?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Sustainable Marriage

Marriage expert, [7] defined marriage as a form of social and legal contract between two matured individuals (man and a woman as stipulated by God) that unites their lives legally, economically and emotionally. This implies that married couples have legal obligations to themselves in all ramifications throughout the period of that marriage and it also gives legitimacy to full sexual rights. [8] Also defined marriage as a formal and legal union of a man and a woman by which they become husband and wife. Some of the characteristics of marriage as highlighted by [9] in their book "Become a Better Family" are listed below:

- It is a divine Institution originated by God (Gen. 1:31)
- There should be oneness in marriage (Matt. 19:4-6)
- There should be permanence in marriage (Mark 10:2-9)
- Sexual Intimacy must exist among married couples (Gen. 2:24)
- Marriage is heterogeneous i.e., it should be between a man and a woman (Matt. 19:4, 5)
- There is partnership in marriage (Eph. 5:21-28)

God created marriage for procreation, mutual assistance, socialization, for bringing up children in a peaceful and happy environment and marriage is for companionship.

For a marriage to be termed viable or sustainable, it does not mean a marriage that has stood the test of time over a long period because couples can choose to be together for the sake of their children, for financial and religious reasons yet still be very miserable. A sustainable marriage is the marriage that has stood the test of time and in which both partners are still strong in love and mutual respect for one another. They do all they can to stay happy together and in God's love. They can weather any storm no matter how dark or dangerous it seems, they understand the concept of marriage and are very loyal to their marital vows. [10] explored some factors that ensure sustainability of marriage and they also found out the extent to which these measures contribute to stable marriages by using 140 respondents and from the analysis of the measuring tool, they were able to conclude that love, understanding, acceptance, respect for one another and commitment to the marriage are all factors that ensure a sustainable marriage. Suffice it to say that if couples are well acquainted, they got married for all the right reasons, have the fear of God, adhere strictly to the biblical principles of marriage, love one another unconditionally according to the gifts of the holy spirit then, that marriage will be sustainable.

One of the most important activity which has to take place before marriage can occur between a man and a woman is meeting and getting acquainted. A couple has to know one another very well in all areas and they have to be compatible emotionally, spiritually, physically, intellectually and the

families have to be very involved in this process especially in Africa before marriage can take place. In a dynamic technological and hectic world where people now spend more time with their devices rather than physical interaction, this has led to the development of various social media and dating sites where people especially the younger generations can meet and become acquainted through the use of internet which has become so affordable. Various social media platforms where people meet online includes Facebook, twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr, Bebo, Buzznet, microblogs, wikis, WhatsApp, skype amongst others.

B. Online Dating

The first Internet dating sites originated in the mid-nineties and allowed users to create a profile and search for matches. Internet dating sites went on to introduce more options for communication such as instant messaging and webcam based video dating. Some sites introduced more comprehensive character profiling questionnaires [11]. The main objective of Online Dating is to contact an individual over the Internet with the intention of developing a personal, romantic or sexual relationship through the use of cell phones or laptops. The Statistics given in the first Chapter of this article showed the extent and growth of Social network users in the world. Some prominent dating sites in Nigeria include soulsingles.com, Badoo, Naijaplanet, Friendite, SexyNaija, Meet Nigerians, Tinder and so many others including options for Muslims and Christians dating sites.

As a result of technology that has infiltrated into our everyday lives, meeting physically amongst youths either in churches, parties, schools and other areas have been replaced by meeting Online. Love cards and messages has been replaced by text messages, pings, smiley symbols and physical meetings have been replaced by Video conferencing, skype and other streaming platforms available online. The internet is remodeling the world of love and romance by playing the role of matchmakers. Stakeholders of various dating sites are getting richer by the day as a result of youths fascination with dating sites as [12] reiterated that Dating sites in the U.S. are expected to make \$1.17 billion and dating apps are expected to log \$628.8 million this year, up from \$1.08 billion for dating sites and \$572 million for dating apps in 2014, according to IBISWorld. Recent studies reveal that digital dating is the second most common way that couples get together, after meeting through friends. In United States of America, 10 Americans were said to have used an online dating site or mobile dating application before; 66% of these online daters have gone on a date with someone they met through a dating site or application, and 23% have met a spouse or long term partner through these sites [13].

Experts suggest that current trends hold, come 2015, online dating sites may be the most common way for somebody to enter into a new relationship or meet their future spouse. In another study, 38% of married couples met through family and friends, 27% met through school, while 17% met online [14]. As of December 2014, a research carried out by African Digital Statistics established that Nigeria holds the highest number of internet users with a majority of them connected to the different social media applications (apps) that has been

introduced into the Nigerian market. According to the research findings, about 80% of Nigerian youths are usually connected to at least two of the social media apps, with over 50 percent of these youths engaging themselves with the opposite sex [15].

C. Benefits of Online Dating

Highlighted are some of the reasons why using Online Dating sites have permeated our society;

- It is very easy to meet lots of people online as the Internet has made the world to become a global village removing social, class, geographical, economic and all forms of barriers.
- Online Dating sites provide users with various options of people to meet and more recently, Online dating sites comes with User profiling tools that simplifies the whole process of meeting someone of one's choice and like-minded people [16].
- Online Dating makes Instant Communication easier especially for shy people
- Online dating makes it possible and easier to meet and date people without the fear and pressure of unnecessary commitments.
- Some success rate has been recorded by high profile Online Dating sites as most now use algorithms for finding love designed by Sociologists and Psychologists although some of these algorithms are yet to be published for peer reviewed as stated by [17] in his online article titled The Science of Online Dating and Compatibility Testing.

D. Risks of Online Dating

As much as Online Dating has its numerous benefits so also does it comes with risks and limitations which is why some people will never consider it as a second option of meeting potential spouses especially in Nigeria where some people are usually skeptical about virtual relationships. Highlighted are some of the risks involved in the use of Online Dating;

- People are skeptical about using it because they simply do not believe in it, they lack trust in the whole idea of meeting and dating someone online [18]. Fraudsters see it as a way of meeting potential unsuspecting victims which is the norm among the infamously called "Yahoo boys" in Nigeria.
- Some believe that it makes cheating easy among couples who are married[19], encourages reckless communications, some even just do it for the fun of it without pausing to realize they could be toying with the emotions of their online partner, security of sensitive issues discussed online as there is a general idea that no information is safe online.
- Other reasons include fake sites who only extort users for money, people pretending to be who they are not, lots of murders and other crimes have been committed and reported by people who met through online dating sites, distance barrier amongst others.

- Some online dating sites use fake profiles in attracting unsuspecting users as [20] pointed out in an online article that one in 10 profiles are scams.

The main issue here is that users should be very careful about dating people they meet online, they should strive to meet the person physically before making any commitment either emotionally or financially.

E. Opinions of People about Online Dating

Fig. 1 shows the opinions of Online Dating among Americans in 2005 and 2013. The percentage indicates the % of Internet users who agree with each of the following statements. In 2005, a total of 3,215 were surveyed and in 2013, the sample size surveyed was 2,252. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish on landline and cellphones using adults of 18 years and above.

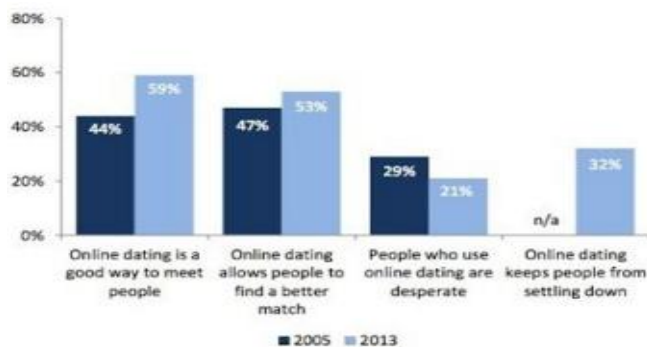


Fig. 1: Opinions of Online Dating [Source: 21, Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Spring Tracking Survey, 2005 & 2013]

[22] surveyed executives at different top dating sites in the world to get a snapshot on how Internet dating has changed society and concluded that changes that dating sites have affected include the increase in interracial marriages, more acceptance of homosexuals and the increased pickiness of singles as it is now quicker and cheaper to find a lover than ever before.

In Nigeria, the opinions that people have about online dating and Marriage Sustainability has not really been established scientifically as most are based on just assumptions, hence the reason for this work.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section explains in detail the methodology that was employed in achieving the stated objectives of this research.

To achieve the first objective, survey method of research was employed as relevant documents obtained were qualitatively analyzed for convergence and relevant details were extracted using Inductive approach.

To achieve the second and third specific objective of this research, primary data was collected by the researchers and this was used to gather people's opinions about online dating and Sustainable marriage. Quantitative research in the form of questionnaire survey was conducted to meet the objectives of the research. The use of questionnaires allowed the researchers

to focus on both the qualitative and quantitative issues, address specific research issues as the researcher controlled the research design to get their needs, it also enabled the researchers have more control over how the information was collected and decide on some requirements such as size of the project, time frame and goal. The measuring tool was now analyzed using SPSS version 21.0.

A. Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The data used in evaluating people's opinions about Online dating and Sustainable Marriage was obtained from 2015/2016 Family Wholeness Class (Doctoral Students) who are 60 in population. Convenience sampling which is a type of non-probability sampling as choosing this population was based on the judgment of the researchers and this method was used in the selection of respondents so as to have easy access to them. It was used to reach the targeted population quickly and moreover in this study, sampling for proportionality was not the main concern. Random sampling which is a probabilistic method of sampling was now used in the selection of respondents. The sampling frame is a list of the whole population of people in 2015/2016 Family Wholeness Class that could be included in the survey and it was from this sample frame that the sample size was now chosen. The sample size was determined using a sample size calculator that was designed by Creative Research Systems survey software. This software was chosen as a result of its accuracy and moreover, TopTenReviews which is an online platform that provides software, web services, electronics, video game, music and movie reviews selected this system as the best survey software of 2014.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the results of findings that were discovered in the course of this research work. The sample size was gotten by using the sample size calculator designed by Creative Research Systems and after calculation, the sample size was gotten to be 50 based on a confidence level of 95% as mostly used by researchers, confidence interval of 5.71 and a population size of 60. By putting the confidence level and confidence interval together, then, we can say that we are 95% sure that the true percentage of the population lies between a certain confidence interval. For example 85.72% of the respondents do not support the use online dating site as a substitute for physical dating when seeking life partner which means that with a confidence interval of 5.71, this implies that between 80.01 and 91.43 of the entire population do not support the use online dating site as a substitute for physical dating when seeking life partner. 50 questionnaires were administered and 42 were returned which yields a response rate of 84%.

The measuring tool consists of four Sections from A to D. Section A deals with demographic profile of respondents, Section B captures various social media platforms respondents use in connecting with friends, Section C contains questions to gather respondents awareness and perception about Online dating and Section D contains questions to gather respondents opinions about Online dating and Sustainable Marriage.

Table 1: Department of Respondent

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Accounting	3	7.1	7.1	7.1
Agronomy	1	2.4	2.4	9.5
Animal Science	2	4.8	4.8	14.3
Biochemistry	4	9.5	9.5	23.8
Bus Admin	8	19.0	19.0	42.9
Computer Science	8	19.0	19.0	61.9
Economics	1	2.4	2.4	64.3
English	1	2.4	2.4	66.7
IRM	9	21.4	21.4	88.1
Mass Communication	1	2.4	2.4	90.5
Microbiology	1	2.4	2.4	92.9
Pol Science	3	7.1	7.1	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (November, 2015)

From the result output in Table 1 above 21% of the respondent are from Information Resource Management while 19% each are from Computer Science Department and Business Administration Department while 41% are spread across the rest of the departments as shown in the table above.

Table 2: Marital status of respondent

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Single	15	35.7	35.7	35.7
Valid Married	27	64.3	64.3	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (November, 2015)

From the result output on marital status in Table 2 above 64.3% of the respondents are married while 35.7 are single respondents.

Table 3: Age of respondent

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
21-30	11	26.2	26.2	26.2
31-40	16	38.1	38.1	64.3
41-50	10	23.8	23.8	88.1
Valid 51-60	4	9.5	9.5	97.6
Above 61	1	2.4	2.4	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (November, 2015)

From the result output in Table 3 38.1% of the respondents fall within the age range of 31-40years, 26.2% fall within 21-30 years, while 23.8% fall within 41-50 years.

Table 4: Gender of respondent

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	26	61.9	61.9	61.9
Valid Female	16	38.1	38.1	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (November, 2015)

From the result output in Table 4 above 61.9% of the respondent are males and 38.1% are females.

Table 5: What is the social media platform you use most for connecting with friends

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	15	35.7	35.7	35.7
Skype	8	19.0	19.0	54.8
Instagram	4	9.5	9.5	64.3
Valid WhatsApp	9	21.4	21.4	85.7
Twitter	6	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (November, 2015)

From the result output in table 5 above 35.7% of the respondent often visit Facebook to connect with friends online, 21.4% uses WhatsApp, 19.0% Skype, 14.3% Twitter and 9.5% uses Instagram. This implies Facebook is the most widely used social media platform for connecting with friends.

Table 6: What device do you mostly use to access online dating sites

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
PC	12	28.6	28.6	28.6
Smart phone	15	35.7	35.7	64.3
IPad	6	14.3	14.3	78.6
Valid Tablet	4	9.5	9.5	88.1
Others	5	11.9	11.9	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (November, 2015)

From the result output in Table 6 above 35.7% of the respondent often use smartphones, 28.6% uses PC, 14.3% uses IPad, 11.9% uses other devices and 9.5% uses Tablets to access online dating sites. This implies most people find it most convenient accessing the site using smartphone.

Table 7: Perceived Awareness and Use of Online Dating Platforms

S/N	Awareness and Use of Online Dating Platforms	Yes (%)	No (%)
17	I often visit online dating sites	11.9	88.1
18	I got to know about online dating from my friends and colleagues	47.6	52.4
19	I have introduced someone to online dating before	9.5	90.5
20	I have dated online before and it lasted for a while	11.9	88.1
21	Online dating is preferable	9.5	90.5
22	My experience was worthwhile	14.3	85.7
23	I believe I can meet my future partner through online dating	9.5	90.5
24	Online dating sites can give you a satisfactory life partner	11.9	88.1
25	I believe that Online dating is more preferable than Physical dating	4.8	95.2
26	Will you advice someone to date online?	11.9	88.1
	Total	142.8	857.2
	Total in %	14.28%	85.72%

Source: Field Data (November, 2015)

Table 8: Sustainable Marriage

	Section D: Sustainable Marriage	Yes (%)	No (%)
27	I believe that getting married with someone that I met online can lead to a happy home	16.7	83.3
28	I believe I can meet my future partner through online dating	26.2	73.8
29	Online dating sites can give you a satisfactory life partner	16.7	83.3
30	I know married couples that met Online and are happy together	26.6	71.4
31	Have someone close to you gotten someone or married via online date	33.3	66.7
32	I have met my online friends before and it was cool	31	69
33	Has it led to marriage before or close to marriage	19	81
34	As Christians there is nothing wrong with online dating	31	69
35	If I meet a God fearing woman or man, we can get married	45.2	54.8
36	I can advise someone to date/marry someone via the social media	26.2	73.8
	Total	273.9	726.1
	Total in %	27.39%	72.61%

Source: Field Data (November, 2015)

The Table 7 above is a cumulative average of question 17-26 which is addressing the perceived awareness and use of online dating platform. The cumulative total arrived is 142.8 and 857.2 and the percentage of cumulative total are

(142.8/100 (**14.2%**)) said yes to the question asked on the perceived awareness and use of online dating platforms while (857.2/100 (**85.7%**)) said no. This means that 85.72% of the respondents who do not support the use of online dating site. This implied that they preferred physical dating when seeking life partner while 14.28% support the use of online dating. Taking a closer look at the data above, 47.6% respondents are aware of online dating as evident in question 18. Although, there is a significant number of the respondents (90.5%) as showed above in question 23 who believe they cannot meet their future partner through online dating. Also 88.1% said they will not advise someone to date online neither will the platform provide future partner.

The Table 8 above is a cumulative average of question 27-36 which is addressing sustainable marriage. The cumulative total arrived is 273.9 and 726.1 and the percentage of cumulative total are (273.9/100 (**27.39%**)) said yes to support the online dating can lead to sustainable marriage while (726.1/100 (**72.61%**)) said that online dating cannot lead to sustainable marriage.

A closer observation of the above data, reveal that online dating may lead to a sustainable marriage if a God fearing partner is met as addressed in question 36 with 45/2% while 54.8% said no. although 26.6% of the respondents reported seeing couples who were married via online dating site against 71.4% who reported not to have seen any union via online dating as evident in question 30. Furthermore, 31% of the respondent reported to have initiated online dating although only 19% of the respondent agreed it has led to marriage or close to marriage as evident in question 32 and 33.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been well established in research papers about the important of dating before marriage. Physical dating and online dating have been highlighted as means of dating among singles. From the reviewed literatures there is a synergy with our research study that online dating may lead to a sustainable marriage if a God fearing partner is found even though 73.8% of the respondent said they will not advise to marrying a partner via online dating.

We cannot give a strong assertion due to the mixed response from our respondent. Hence our study is at synergy with Laju (2104). More closely, the marital status of our respondents. (64.3% are married) implying that they did not use online dating as a medium in getting their partners, the age of our respondents (over 60% ranges from 20-50) implying they are all adults who understand the importance of courtship and marriage and 61.9% of the respondents are males who are the one in the forefront for seeking the hand of their partner (female) in marriage.

Hence, we conclude that even though all respondents are aware of online dating, have seen people engage in online dating but there is no strong affirmation that online dating can lead to a sustainable marriage but it can. We therefore recommend that while people may engage in online dating, it is advisable that they meet physically to gain more acquaintance before considering marriage. Furthermore, for further studies, more youths should be involved in such study to get their opinions and perceptions as they are the ones who

actually make use of different social sites the most in Nigeria, the sample should also be larger to get more scientifically proven results and more geographical locations should be taken into consideration.

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