

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON SPOUSAL ABUSE AGAINST
MARRIED WOMEN IN KWALE COUNTY: A CRIMINOLOGY
PERSPECTIVE**

BERNADINE MBULA

**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Criminology and Security Studies of Chuka University**

CHUKA UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER, 2025

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for an award of diploma or conferment of degree in any other university

Signature.......... Date..... 14/10/2025
Bernadine Mbula
AD17/58031/22

Recommendation

This thesis has been examined, passed and submitted with our approval as University supervisors.

Signature.......... Date..... 14/10/2025
Prof. Anne Sande, PhD
Chuka University

Signature.......... Date..... 14/10/2025
Dr. Samuel K. Mufuka, PhD
South Eastern Kenya University



COPYRIGHT

©2025

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means, mechanically or electronically, including photocopying, or any information retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the author or Chuka University.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my daughters; June Vata and Valerie Muthoni, to my beloved to my parents; Mrs. Jane Kanini Mutunga and Mr. Raphael Mutunga Kavendellah for the encouragement, inspiration and support accorded to me throughout my entire education life. Also, to my Sisters Immaculate Mbithe and Valentine Nthambi for constantly encouraging and praying for my excellence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First I give thanks to our Heavenly Father for His inspiration, guidance and strength which has enabled me to work through this research. Secondly, thank my supervisors Prof. Anne Sande and Dr. Samuel Mutukaa who have constantly guided me through the preparation of this research. Further, I express my heartfelt appreciation to my family and friends for the moral support and prayers during the planning and preparation of this thesis. Finally, I appreciate Chuka University for the support rendered to me during the thesis writing.

ABSTRACT

Globally, spousal abuse continues to evolve alongside advancements in technology, with social media platforms increasingly becoming tools that enable or exacerbate abuse. Kwale County, in the coastal region of Kenya, has been observed as having high prevalence of spousal abuse. While social media continues to evolve and impact spousal relationships, studies exploring its role in spousal abuse are not keeping pace with these changes. Spousal abuse is a serious violation of criminal laws, human rights, and societal values, particularly when examined from a criminological perspective. This study aimed to examine the effect of Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp in facilitating spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County from a criminological perspective. The study also compared the impact of social media use on spousal abuse among urban and rural married women. The study was guided by the radical feminist theory, functionalist social change theory, and the diffusion of innovations theory. These theories offered valuable insights into the dynamics of social media and spousal abuse. A correlation research design was employed to guide data collection. The study population comprised 118,646 married women in Kwale County, from which a sample of an actual sample of 263 was selected using multistage, purposive and snowball sampling methods. Data collection instruments were; questionnaires and key informant interviews. Data was analysed using SPSS version 25. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), while inferential statistics included analysis of variance, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and linear regression. Qualitative data were analysed using narrative and thematic methods. The findings revealed nuanced impact of spousal media use patterns among married women on their risk of experiencing physical abuse, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviour of their spouses. Significant disparities between rural, peri-urban, and urban areas regarding the impact of social media use on spousal abuse against women were evident in the study. The findings of this study provided critical insights for policy review and inform intervention strategies, including digital literacy campaigns, legal reforms, and the development of security protocols to address technology-facilitated domestic abuse.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION	ii
COPYRIGHT	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background Information	1
1.2 Statement of the Research Problem	5
1.3 Purpose of the Study	6
1.4 Objectives of the Study	6
1.5 Hypotheses	6
1.6 Significance of the Study	7
1.7 The Scope of the Study	8
1.8 Limitations of the Study.....	9
1.9 Assumption of the Study.....	9
1.10 Operational Definitions of Terms	10
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
2.1 Social Media Use among Married Women.....	12
2.2 Spousal Abuse against Married Women.....	13
2.3 Social Media Use and Spousal Abuse	15
2.4 Facebook and Spousal Abuse	19
2.5 TikTok and Spousal Abuse.....	23
2.6 WhatsApp and Spousal Abuse.....	27
2.7 The Impact of Rural-Urban Residency	32
2.8 Digital Literacy and Spousal Abuse	40
2.9 Research Gaps.....	45

2.10 Theoretical Framework.....	47
2.10.1 The Radical Feminist Theory.....	48
2.10.2 Functionalist Social Change Theory.....	49
2.10.3 Diffusion of Innovations Theory	50
2.11 Conceptual Framework.....	51
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS.....	54
3.1 Study Location.....	54
3.2 Research Design.....	55
3.3 Population of the Study.....	55
3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size	56
3.4.1 Sample Size Determination.....	56
3.4.2 Sampling Method.....	56
3.5 Research Instruments	57
3.5.1 Questionnaire	57
3.5.2 Interview Schedule.....	58
3.6 Pilot Study.....	58
3.6.1 Validity of the Instrument.....	59
3.6.2 Reliability of the Instrument	59
3.7 Data Collection Procedures.....	59
3.8 Data Analysis	60
3.9 Ethical Considerations	61
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	63
4.1 Introduction.....	63
4.2 Response Rate of the Married Women	63
4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	64
4.3.1 Distribution of Respondents by Age Bracket across Kwale Counties.....	64
4.3.2 Rural-Urban Residency.....	65
4.3.3 Education Background.....	66
4.3.4 Employment and Occupation of Respondents	67
4.3.5 Income Level of Respondents.....	68
4.3.6 Duration in Marriage.....	70

4.4 Spousal Abuse against Married Women.....	71
4.5. Reporting Abuse	73
4.6 Contribution of Social Media to Misunderstanding or Conflicts with Spouse..	74
4.7 The Effect of Facebook Use on Spousal Abuse.....	79
4.7.1 Responses of Respondents in Relation to Facebook Use	79
4.7.2 Influence of Facebook on Behaviour and Emotions.....	82
4.7.3 Correlation of Facebook Use and Spousal Abuse.....	84
4.7.4 The Impact of Facebook Use on Spousal Abuse	86
4.8 The Effect of Using TikTok on Spousal Abuse.....	89
4.8.1 Responses of Respondents in Relation to TikTok Use.....	89
4.8.2 Influence of TikTok on Behaviour and Misunderstanding/Conflict.....	93
4.8.3 Correlation of TikTok Use and Spousal Abuse	94
4.8.4 The Impact of Using TikTok on Spousal Abuse	97
4.9 The Effect of Using WhatsApp on Spousal Abuse.....	101
4.9.1 Responses of Respondents in Relation to WhatsApp Use.....	101
4.9.2 Influence of WhatsApp Use on Misunderstandings or Conflicts	105
4.9.3 Correlation of WhatsApp Use and Spousal Abuse.....	108
4.9.4 The Impact of WhatsApp Use on Spousal Abuse.....	110
4.10 Impact of Social Media Use on Spousal Abuse in Urban and Rural Areas... 114	
4.10.1 Spousal Abuse Based on Rural-Urban Residency	114
4.10.2 Social Media Use Based on Rural-Urban Residency	118
4.10.3 Impact of Rural-Urban Residency on Spousal Abuse	120
4.11 The Role of Digital Literacy	122
4.11.1 The Level of Digital Literacy	122
4.11.2 Online Safety Practices	126
4.11.3 Moderation of the Impact of Social Media Use on Spousal Abuse	129
4.12 Qualitative Findings.....	133
4.12.1 Social Media as a Catalyst for Suspicion and Jealousy	133
4.12.2 Online Visibility and Cultural Expectations	134
4.12.3 Digital Surveillance and Control	134
4.12.4 Neglect, Distraction, and Communication Breakdown	135
4.12.5 Peer and Media Influence on Behaviour.....	137
4.12.6 Underreporting and Normalisation of Abuse.....	137

4.12.7 Community Attitudes and Social Stigma.....	138
4.12.8 Digital Literacy as a Protective Factor.....	139
4.12.9 Effective Interventions.....	140
4.12.10 Rural-Urban Divide	141
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION.....	143
5.1 Summary	143
5.2 Conclusion	147
5.3 Recommendations of the Study	148
5.4 Recommendation for Future Research.....	150
REFERENCES.....	151
APPENDICES	169
Appendix I: Introductory Letter	169
Appendix II: Questionnaire for Married Women.....	170
Appendix III: Interview Guide for Key Informants.....	175
Appendix IV: Chuka University Ethics Review Committee Approval	177
Appendix V: National Commission for Science, Technology and Innaovation (NACOSTI) Research Authorisation.....	178
Appendix VI: CEC Health - Kwale County.....	179
Appendix VII: County Commissioner Kwale Approval to DCCs.....	180
Appendix VIII: County Commissioner Kwale Approval to Kwale County Police Commander.....	181
Appendix IX: County Commissioner Kwale Approval to County Criminal Investigation Officer	182
Appendix X: Map of Kwale County.....	183

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of Data Analysis Methods	61
Table 2: Response Rate per Sub-County	63
Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age across Six Sub-Counties	64
Table 4: Distribution across Urban, Peri-Urban, and Rural Areas	65
Table 5: Highest Level of Education of Respondents	66
Table 6: Occupation of Respondents	68
Table 7: Monthly Income of Respondents across Kwale County.....	69
Table 8: Duration in Marriage	70
Table 9: Frequency of Spousal Abuse	72
Table 10: Reporting Spousal Abuse	74
Table 11: Contribution of Social Media Use to Misunderstanding or Conflicts with Spouse.....	75
Table 12: Contribution of Social Media Sites to Conflict and Misunderstanding.....	76
Table 13: Time Spent on Facebook Daily	80
Table 14: Facebook Use across the Sub-Counties of Kwale County	81
Table 15: Influence of Facebook Use on Behaviour and Emotions	83
Table 16: Correlation of Facebook Use and Spousal Abuse	84
Table 17: Regression Analysis of Spousal Abuse and Facebook Use.....	86
Table 18: The Use of TikTok in Kwale County	89
Table 19: The Use of TikTok Across Six Sub-Counties of Kwale County.....	92
Table 20: Influence of TikTok on Behaviour and Misunderstandings	93
Table 21: Pearson’s Correlation of TikTok Use and Spousal Abuse	95
Table 22: Linear Regression Analysis for the impact of TikTok Use on Spousal Abuse	98
Table 23: WhatsApp Use among Respondents in Kwale County	102
Table 24: WhatsApp Use across the Sub-Counties of Kwale County.....	104
Table 25: Misunderstanding, Quarrels, or Conflicts Caused by WhatsApp Use.....	105
Table 26: WhatsApp’s Influence on Misunderstanding or Conflicts across the Sub-Counties	107
Table 27: Pearson’s Correlation of WhatsApp Use and Spousal Abuse	109
Table 28: Linear Regression Analysis for the Impact of WhatsApp Us on Social Media.....	111
Table 29: Differences in Spousal Abuse Based on Rural-Urban Residency	114

Table 30: One-Way ANOVA for Social Media Use in Rural, Urban, and Peri-Urban	118
Table 31: Tukey’s Post-Hoc Analysis of Social Media Use based on Rural-Urban Residency	119
Table 32: Rural-Urban Residency vs. the Impact of Social Media Use on Spousal Abuse	121
Table 33: Digital Literacy Levels Based on Rural-Urban Residency.....	123
Table 34: Digital Literacy Levels across the Sub-Counties of Kwale County	125
Table 35: Online Safety Practices in Kwale County	126
Table 36: Table Online Safety Practices across the Sub-Counties of Kwale County.....	127
Table 37: The Moderating Role of Digital Literacy	129

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Researcher).....	52
Figure 2: Most Frequent Social Media Site Causing Spousal Conflicts or Misunderstandings.....	76

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

2FA	Two-Factor Authentication
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
DCIO	Divisional Criminal Investigation Officer
DOI	Diffusion of Innovation
FB	Facebook
GBV	Gender-based violence
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KDHS	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NACOSTI	National Council of Science, Technology and Innovation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NCAJ	National Council of the Administration of Justice
OCPD	Officer Commanding Police Division
SA	Social Media
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TFA	Technology-facilitated Abuse
TT	TikTok
WA	WhatsApp

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

Spousal abuse is a serious global crime affecting the well-being of individuals, families, and societies. It involves physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional abuse within marriages, often driven by one partner's desire to control the other (Brown, 2020). Studies showed that women are the most affected, with 27-30% experiencing physical or sexual violence from their spouses (Sardinha et al., 2022). Despite its widespread nature, many cases remained unreported due to stigma, fear, and cultural barriers (Femi-Ajao et al., 2020), making the true scale of the problem difficult to determine.

Spousal abuse is an international problem since research evidence reveals cases in different parts of the world. Sardinha et al. (2022) indicate that nearly 1 in 3 women across the world experience physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner during their lifetime. There is regional variation in the prevalence and reporting of spousal abuse cases. For example, in Europe and particularly in the United Kingdom, 26.2% of adult women experience some form of spousal abuse in their lifetime (Skafida et al., 2022). However, Femi-Ajao et al. (2020) mention that accurate forecasts of the prevalence of spousal abuse are limited since a considerable portion of victims fail to report the cases. Cultural, economic, and environmental factors contribute to variations in the prevalence of spousal abuse across the world. In Peru, South America, hardships caused by drought increased the incidence of spousal abuse violence in Peru increased by more than 65% (Díaz & Saldarriaga, 2023). Economic downturns and environmental stressors, such as droughts, have been shown to increase the risk of spousal abuse, as evidenced in Peru, where violence spiked by 65% during dry seasons (Díaz & Saldarriaga, 2023). Therefore, parts of the world with high exposure to cultural, economic, and environmental stressors have a higher prevalence of spousal abuse.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, spousal abuse has remained a persistent challenge across the region determined largely by economic hardships, cultural norms, and gender inequality. Previous studies have revealed that factors such as alcohol use, male-dominated decision-making, religious beliefs, and women's lack of economic empowerment sustain the abuse of married women in African countries like Ghana,

South Africa, Zambia, and Burkina Faso (Takyi & Lamptey, 2020). Regional disparities also exist, with Sierra Leone reporting the highest prevalence of physical violence against women at 50%, while Comoros recorded the lowest at 5.7% (Seidu et al., 2021). Overall, spousal abuse prevalence in Sub-Saharan Africa stands at 44.4% among women aged 15-49 years (Muluneh et al., 2020), with nearly 37% reporting severe forms of violence (Anik et al., 2023). Despite these alarming figures, underreporting remains a challenge due to stigma, fear, and cultural barriers, suggesting actual prevalence rates could be higher than recorded (Femi-Ajao et al., 2020).

Despite the fact that traditional drivers of spousal abuse, such as patriarchy, economic dependency, and religious beliefs, seem well-researched, the emerging role of social media in perpetuating spousal abuse in Africa remains underexplored. Al-Alosi, (2020) points out that social media platforms are increasingly serving as tools for abusive partners to monitor, harass, and control their spouses through cyberstalking, emotional manipulation, and public shaming. Nevertheless, most African studies focus on physical and sexual abuse without examining how digital platforms intensify psychological abuse among married women. Based on the rapid growth of internet access and smartphone use across Africa, understanding this dimension is essential for designing effective intervention strategies.

In the East Africa, studies indicate that spousal abuse affects both men and women, with women reporting higher prevalence rates. According to Mshana et al. (2022), about 56% of married women in Uganda experienced spousal abuse compared to 44% of men. Although men reported fewer cases, the consequences of abuse were severe, including physical injuries, resorting to alcoholism, drug abuse, and loss of self-worth. Interestingly, women were more likely than men to report incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV) to healthcare services and formal structures, reflecting the gendered nature of help-seeking behaviours. However, cultural norms rooted in patriarchy and religion continue to hinder the prevention of spousal abuse. For instance, Mohammed (2023) explains that in Tanzania, women endure spousal abuse due to societal expectations that encourage them to worship their husbands and remain submissive in marriage.

While traditional drivers of spousal abuse are well-documented, the role of social media in perpetuating spousal abuse in East Africa remains underexplored. Social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are increasingly being used by abusive spouses to monitor, harass, and control their partners through cyberstalking, online shaming, and emotional manipulation (Al-Alosi, 2020). Yet, there is a critical research gap regarding the extent to which digital abuse contributes to IPV against married women in East African countries. Future research should focus on how digital platforms enable new forms of psychological and emotional abuse, which often go unnoticed by existing IPV intervention frameworks.

In Kenya, spousal abuse remains a persistent challenge, with both men and women experiencing violence, though women remain disproportionately affected. According to the 2014 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, 41% of ever-married women reported experiencing spousal abuse (Kaggiah et al., 2022), while recent statistics indicate that 34% of women aged 15-49 have endured physical violence and 14% sexual violence (KNBS, 2022). The legal and policy framework in Kenya has made significant strides in addressing spousal abuse, with various instruments contributing to the prevention, protection, and prosecution of gender-based violence. The National Policy on Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence (2014) provides a comprehensive framework for coordination among stakeholders and promotes awareness, prevention, and victim support services. The Sexual Offences Act, No. 3 of 2006 criminalises a wide range of sexual violations, offering crucial legal redress for survivors of sexual abuse within intimate relationships. The Protection against Domestic Violence Act, No. 2 of 2015 is particularly significant for spousal abuse since it recognises emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse. This law also seeks to guarantee the security of victims by allowing for protection orders to be issued against perpetrators. Additionally, The Constitution of Kenya (2010) enshrines the right to freedom and security of the person (Article 29), and the right to be free from all forms of violence (Article 28), giving spousal abuse victims constitutional backing. However, despite these legal advances, several limitations persist. Implementation and enforcement remain weak due to limited resources, inadequate training of law enforcement, and social-cultural barriers that discourage reporting. Moreover, legal

gaps and challenges in prosecuting spousal abuse, undermine the effectiveness of these policies.

In Kwale County, there is increasing evidence linking social media use to spousal abuse. Although spousal violence is attributed to social constructs like patriarchy and male dominance, little is known about the dynamic nature of abuse brought about by technological advancement (Hardesty & Ogolsky, 2020). A study carried out by Barchi et al. (2022) in Kwale County, Kenya, indicated high incidences of spousal abuse among married women where 9.9% had experienced physical abuse in the previous year, while 17.3% endured emotional abuse and 7.2% faced sexual abuse. Factors contributing to spousal abuse include poverty, drug abuse, and low education, particularly in regions like Kwale County where more than 70% of households face such risks (Kamenderi et al., 2023; Barchi et al., 2022).

The rise of social media use, facilitated by smartphones, has introduced new dynamics in marital relationships, including in Kenya where over 13.5 million people actively use social media (Mumbi, 2024). Social media can promote communication between spouses but can also fuel jealousy, mistrust, and unrealistic comparisons, thereby increasing the risk of spousal abuse (Emond et al., 2023; Annet, 2024; Bouffard et al., 2022). Technology-facilitated abuse (TFA), such as digital surveillance, incessant texting, and social media harassment, has emerged as a modern form of spousal abuse (Rogers et al., 2023). Studies in Kenya and Nigeria indicate that social media use can contribute to marital conflicts, emotional distance, and even physical abuse (Kimeto, 2016; Ehoru et al., 2021), signalling the urgent need to understand the specific pathways through which social media contributes to spousal abuse in the Kenyan context.

While feminist theories attribute spousal abuse primarily to patriarchal traditions (Kuskoff & Parsell, 2020; Ahinkorah, 2021), studies also show that spousal abuse exists even in societies with high gender equality, such as the Nordic countries (Karlsson et al., 2021), suggesting that additional factors, such as technological advancements, may be influencing the persistence of spousal abuse globally. Significant research gaps remain in Kenya where there is limited empirical research focusing on how social media specifically influences spousal abuse against married women, including the extent to

which technology-facilitated abuse occurs. Furthermore, whereas social media use is growing rapidly, existing studies have not fully explored how addiction to these platforms affects spousal relationships or how social media-fueled protectiveness translates into physical or emotional abuse (Shakeri et al., 2019; Bosch et al., 2020). Addressing these gaps is crucial for developing informed interventions that target the role of social media in exacerbating spousal abuse and safeguarding women's rights in the evolving digital landscape in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Spousal abuse remains a significant social and criminal concern in Kenya, particularly affecting married women despite existing laws, policies, and awareness campaigns aimed at curbing the vice. Statistics indicated that 33% of married women in Kenya experience physical, emotional, or sexual violence perpetrated by their husbands. Such abuse results in serious consequences like; physical injuries, psychological distress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and strained family relationships. Kwale County is located in Kenya's coastal region and is a suitable site for this research due to its high prevalence of spousal abuse cases against married women. Reports indicate that 9.9% of women aged 15-49 in Kwale County have experienced physical abuse, 17.3% emotional abuse and 7.2% sexual abuse in the recently. Although such reports provide information about abuse against women, it fails to address spouse abuse against married women in Kwale County.

While traditional factors, such as patriarchy and male dominance, contributing to spousal abuse are well-documented, emerging research points to social media as a new factor influencing spousal abuse. However, yet this area remains underexplored, especially in developing countries. The Nordic paradox implies that there is insufficient knowledge about the changing nature of abuse influenced by emerging factors, such as social media. The rapid growth of social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and TikTok has introduced new dimensions to spousal abuse, including cyberstalking, online harassment, emotional manipulation, and digital surveillance (Al-Alosi, 2020). Furthermore, most studies focus on general intimate partner violence without isolating the specific role of social media in spousal abuse. Research on the role of social media

in facilitating spousal abuse has been inadequate due to its complex and evolving nature, particularly in Kenya.

This study explored the role of social media use in spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County from a criminological perspective. It sought to understand how social media contributes to new forms of abuse, reinforces power and control dynamics in the digital space, and presents challenges for law enforcement and policy-making. The findings were expected to inform more effective prevention and development of intervention strategies suitable to the unique social and technological context in Kenya

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore the role of using social media platforms in spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County by using a criminology perspective.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the effect of using Facebook on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya.
- ii. To determine the effect of using TikTok on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya
- iii. To assess the effect of using WhatsApp on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya.
- iv. To compare the impact of social media use on spousal abuse among urban and rural married women in Kwale County, Kenya.

1.5 Hypotheses

H₀₁ There is no significant effect of using Facebook on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya.

H₀₂ There is no significant effect of using TikTok on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya.

H₀₃: There is no significant effect of using WhatsApp on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the impact of social media use on spousal abuse among urban and rural married women in Kwale County, Kenya.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study was significant as it generated crucial knowledge to enhance understanding of the relationship between social media use and spousal abuse against married women from a criminological perspective. Specifically, the findings are expected to inform the National Government investigation agencies and security officers in designing criminology strategies aimed at deterring and preventing spousal abuse by shedding light on how digital platforms enable new forms of abuse, control, and surveillance within marriages. Additionally, the study can equip policymakers with valuable insights for developing or revising criminal laws to address online-facilitated spousal abuse effectively. This would ensure that virtual networking platforms are factored into the legal framework when tackling crimes against women. Moreover, the study contributed to Kenya's Vision 2030 by promoting the safe and responsible use of digital technology and innovation in the society without increasing the vulnerability of women to abuse in their marriages. The study can also benefit community leaders, and family counsellors, by creating pathways for interventions that foster peaceful and long-lasting relationships among couples in the local communities.

The findings can be helpful to Kwale County given the increasing penetration of social media into daily life globally and in Kenya. This study was timely and necessary, particularly within the unique cultural and socio-economic context of Kwale County. The research provided localised knowledge on how social media use contributes to spousal abuse, influenced by the county's specific traditions, beliefs, and economic conditions. The study can help women empowerment organisations since it explored why married women are more susceptible to such abuse and the ways in which social media exacerbates their vulnerability. By unveiling these dynamics, the study can guide the formulation of targeted policies, education programs, legal interventions, and support services designed to protect women from digital forms of abuse. Finally, the study has benefited researchers in the area of criminology and social justice. The study offers valuable reference for future researchers interested in exploring the intersection

between social media, technology, and gender-based violence in Kenya and similar settings.

1.7 The Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in the six sub-counties of Kwale County; Matuga, Kinango, Msambweni, Shimba Hills, Samburu, and Lunga Lunga. Kwale County was intentionally selected for this study to explore the emerging effects of social media on spousal abuse in underrepresented, semi-rural or rural communities. Kwale offered a unique context where social media use is growing but not yet mainstream. Furthermore, most studies on social media and spousal abuse focus on urban centres with high internet use, leaving rural and peri-urban populations under-researched. Studying Kwale County helped broaden the criminological understanding of how technology-related behaviours evolve in such settings. In low-internet-use areas, conflict arising from social media might be less visible but more stigmatised or harmful due to cultural sensitivities. This made it essential to examine how even limited digital interactions can trigger misunderstandings or conflicts in marriage. Therefore, Kwale County was appropriate because it presented a context where even minimal social media use can disproportionately affect marital dynamics, due to limited digital literacy, prevailing gender norms, and tightly-knit community structures.

The study primarily focused on married women as the main respondents since they are the direct victims of spousal abuse, allowing for accurate first-hand data collection. Supplementary data were gathered from security officers and administrators (chiefs) who directly or indirectly interact with cases of social media-related spousal abuse cases. Their insights provided a law enforcement perspective, which was crucial for a criminological analysis of the issue. The study also engaged community health workers and professional counsellors operating within Kwale County to understand the support systems available to victims and how these professionals perceive the impact of social media on spousal abuse. This comprehensive approach ensured that the study captured the experiences, responses, and challenges associated with spousal abuse in the digital age within the county's unique socio-cultural setting.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

First, the sensitive nature of spousal abuse subjects increased the likelihood of the study to face challenges in obtaining accurate and honest information from married women due to fear of stigma, victimisation, or possible revenge. Cultural norms and the private nature of spousal abuse discouraged victims from disclosing their experiences. To overcome this and encourage openness, the researcher assured participants of confidentiality and anonymity. Secondly, the qualitative approach in data collection normally have subjectivity perspectives where respondents give their side of the story on what they know using specific probing questions aligned to the research objectives to retrieve collective answers that best define the reality of the matter.

Thirdly, identifying victims may be difficult since such cases are often underreported; this will be addressed using the snowball sampling method to reach hidden participants through referrals. Finally, considering the criminological focus on social media use, the study may also encounter challenges related to respondents' willingness to disclose their online activities or limited digital literacy, especially in rural settings. This could affect the depth of information gathered on how social media contributes to spousal abuse. The researcher mitigated this limitation by creating a safe, non-judgmental environment and clarifying the purpose of the study to ensure voluntary participation and truthful responses.

1.9 Assumption of the Study

This study assumed that spousal abuse was highly prevalent in Kwale County, influenced by the county's cultural and socio-economic dynamics. The study also assumed that spousal abuse is a gender-related crime, where married women are disproportionately affected due to societal structures and power imbalances within marriages. The study further assumed that even limited use of social media can affect spousal dynamics and lead to abuse against married women. Finally, the study assumed that, the selected respondents will answer questions as required.

1.10 Operational Definitions of Terms

Criminology:	A multidisciplinary field that uses behavioural and social sciences to study crime and criminals
Digital Literacy:	The ability of an individual to access, manage, understand, sharing, evaluate and generate information safely and appropriately using digital technologies.
Digital Technologies:	Electronic devices that people use to create, access and communicate information. In this study, digital technologies refer to social media, smartphone and the internet.
Facebook:	A social networking platform that allows users to create profiles, connect with friends, share photos, videos, and updates, join groups, and interact through comments, likes, and messages.
Effect:	The direct outcome of a cause.
Internet:	A vast network of interconnected computers that enables users to share information and communicate from any location.
Married women:	Adult female individuals who are currently joined in marriage to a male partner under civil, religious, or customary law, including those in monogamous or polygamous unions.
Intimate Partner Violence:	Any form of physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological harm inflicted by a current or former partner or spouse in an intimate relationship
Smartphone:	A portable electronic device that combines the functionality of a mobile phone with that of a computer
Social media:	Digital platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content like; WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok.
Spousal Abuse:	Any form of physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological harm inflicted by male spouse on the other within a marital or intimate relationship.

Technology-Aided Abuse: The use of digital technology, such as social media, by perpetrators to abuse a partner.

TikTok: A social media platform that allows users to create, share, and watch short-form videos, often set to music, featuring entertainment, dance, comedy, and educational content.

WhatsApp: A free messaging app that allows users to send texts, make voice and video calls, and share media over the internet.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media Use among Married Women

Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok have become integral to global communication, enabling users to connect, share information, and engage in entertainment. Globally, Facebook remains the largest social networking platform, boasting over 3 billion monthly active users by 2024 (Statista, 2024). It allows individuals to create profiles, share photos and videos, communicate, and engage with various communities. WhatsApp, also owned by Meta, is the most widely used instant messaging app globally, with over 2 billion users relying on it for personal chats, business communication, and group messaging due to its end-to-end encryption and user-friendly features (Data Reportal, 2024). TikTok, known for its short-form videos, has grown exponentially worldwide, reaching over 1.5 billion monthly active users as of 2024. The platform attracts mostly younger users, making it a global hub for trends, entertainment, and social influence.

In the African region, the growth of social media use mirrors global trends, driven by increased smartphone penetration and improved internet access. Facebook and WhatsApp dominate, providing essential platforms for social interaction, marketing, and news dissemination. TikTok is also rapidly expanding, particularly in urban centres, as more users create content that addresses social issues, humour, music, and dance (Kemp, 2023). Studies show that in Sub-Saharan Africa, these platforms increasingly shape social relations, influence behaviour, and sometimes fuel domestic conflicts due to digital surveillance and exposure to external influences (Mutsvairo & Ragnedda, 2019).

In Kenya, social media usage has grown rapidly, with Facebook and WhatsApp being the most commonly used platforms. According to the *Communications Authority of Kenya* (2025), WhatsApp is the leading messaging platform, widely used for family interactions, community engagements, business communication, and information sharing due to its affordability and ease of use. Facebook remains a key platform for social networking, marketing, and content sharing. TikTok, though relatively new, has gained significant popularity among Kenyan youth, who use it to participate in global

trends, comedy skits, and music content creation. However, while these platforms offer numerous social and economic benefits, they also pose risks such as digital surveillance, emotional manipulation, and jealousy, which may contribute to spousal abuse within marriages, especially when partners monitor or misinterpret online interactions (Rizzo et al., 2023).

2.2 Spousal Abuse against Married Women

Spousal abuse remains a significant global concern affecting individuals across diverse socio-economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Forms of abuse range from physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological to economic violence. According to Osakwe and Odungiweru (2020), in the United States, nearly 4.8 million women and 2.9 million men experience spousal abuse annually, with women disproportionately affected. Similarly, Tur-Prats (2019) notes that globally, 30% of women and 6% of men in intimate relationships have suffered some form of abuse, as per the World Health Organisation. Jaradat (2018) emphasises that while both genders are affected, women face chronic impacts such as extreme fear, physical injury, and even death. Spousal abuse has also been linked to severe health consequences, including chronic pain, psychological disorders, and increased mortality (Jaradat, 2018). In developed nations, such as the United States, studies associate spousal abuse with adolescent mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, risky behaviours, and substance abuse (Taquette & Monteiro, 2019). Mehri et al. (2021) advocate for women's empowerment through education, social capital, and employment to mitigate these risks. However, existing global literature lacks a comprehensive exploration of how emerging technological factors, particularly social media, contribute to spousal abuse, creating a critical gap in understanding contemporary triggers of intimate partner violence (IPV).

At the regional level, Sub-Saharan Africa reports even higher prevalence rates of spousal abuse. Tessema et al. (2023) estimate the regional prevalence at 36%, surpassing the global average of 30%. Factors such as deep-rooted traditional beliefs, gender inequality, and socio-economic vulnerabilities exacerbate IPV in Africa. In Nigeria, over 30% of women have experienced spousal abuse, resulting in mental health challenges, physical injuries, and socioeconomic losses (Osakwe & Odungiweru, 2020). Similarly, a study in Yaoundé, Cameroon by Nguefack-Tsague et al. (2024)

linked IPV to physical trauma, mental disorders, and even fatalities. Risk factors such as extreme jealousy, sexual refusal, and cultural endorsement of male dominance were identified as major triggers (Nguefack-Tsague et al., 2024; Imudia, 2021). Despite this, regional research has largely focused on traditional socio-cultural causes of spousal abuse, with limited attention to the role of digital technologies like social media in shaping modern marital dynamics and aggravating abuse.

Kenya and other East African countries like Uganda exhibit some of the highest rates of spousal abuse globally. Tessema et al. (2023) report that Kenya's prevalence stands at 46.79% well above the global average. Factors such as rural residency, poverty, low education levels, and weak family support systems exacerbate spousal abuse in Kenya. Gichuhi (2022) notes that coastal counties, including Kilifi and Kwale, report high levels of gender-based violence (GBV), including rape and defilement cases. However, literature in Kenya remains sparse on how social media platforms contribute to the escalation of spousal abuse. With the rapid rise in social media use in Kenya, there is insufficient empirical research exploring how digital interactions, online jealousy, surveillance, and unrealistic expectations triggered through platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok contribute to spousal abuse. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating the criminological perspective of social media use and its role in spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County.

Although Kenya has policy frameworks addressing spousal abuse, their implementation, interpretation, and reach remain a subject of ongoing scholarly inquiry and critique. Mureithi (2022) examines the challenges of litigating under the Protection against Domestic Violence Act, indicating that the Act represents a major step forward in recognising emotional and psychological abuse within marriage. However, Mureithi (2022) contends that the policy's vague definitions and limited enforcement mechanisms hinder effective legal redress. Additionally, Wanjala et al. (2023) concluded that while policies exist, systemic inefficiencies such as corruption, delays in judicial processes, and lack of victim support infrastructure have weakened their impact on spousal abuse. Therefore, the mere existence of policies is insufficient without strong institutions to enforce them. According to the findings of Karimi et al. (2023), poverty, stigma, and lack of legal literacy significantly hinder access to justice

by victims of spousal abuse in Kenya. The implementation of policy frameworks against spousal abuse may be challenging because they do not adequately capture the contributions of emerging trends, such as social media use. Therefore, research evidence implies that existing policies in Kenya inadequately address intersectional barriers and emerging factors involved in spousal abuse.

2.3 Social Media Use and Spousal Abuse

As the popularity of social media keeps on growing, its role in transforming social interactions among couples continues to persist (Emond et al., 2023). Social media has enabled users to communicate, express themselves, get entertained, and get updated about events across the world. While these benefits improve the well-being of users, Emond et al. (2023) reveal that social media may aid intimate partner violence among married couples. Jealousy is among the factors that can cause or escalate conflict between spouses because it weakens trust and strength of relationships. In the same respect, Emond et al. (2023) found a positive association between social media jealousy and spousal abuse perpetration. Marganski et al. (2013) also found that virtual relationship violence is a common phenomenon among couples who frequent social media sites. The worrying concern of social media jealousy and virtual relationship violence is the possible transferability into spousal abuse.

Since social media has become part of daily life, it has the potential to interfere with the normal activities and social life of an individual. Satici et al. (2023) argue that the excessive and irrational use of social media can cause negative consequences due to addiction. Using the relationship assessment scale and social media disorder scale, Satici et al. (2023) reveal that the excessive use of social media reduces satisfaction with relationships. Bouffard et al. (2022) also found that social media addiction reduces relationship satisfaction and the tendency to make sacrifices for relationships. Low relationship satisfaction is a risk factor for marital conflict, which may easily escalate to spousal abuse due to the weak relationship. Social media addiction weakens spousal relationships by reducing the time spouses allocate for bonding and meeting their social needs (Bouffard et al., 2022). These findings imply that social media use can lead to or escalate conflicts among spouses by reducing satisfaction with relationships and weakening their bond.

The cross-sectional study by Chattopadhyay et al. (2021) also shows that the negative consequences of social media use may predispose couples to spousal abuse. Chattopadhyay et al. (2021) reveal that social media use negatively affects marital life and predisposes couples to conflicts and spousal abuse. Their study shows uncontrolled use of social media increases the risk of spousal abuse through undesirable consequences on marital satisfaction, rejection, self-disclosure, role function, understanding, and despair. Bouffard et al. (2022) associate such outcomes with poor-quality relationships and frequent conflicts among romantic partners. Social media use may create conditions that precede spousal abuse Khodabakhsh and Le Ong (2021) since found that it promotes partner phubbing, a behaviour that discourages effective conflict resolution. Instead of ignoring each other, couples should have adequate time to solve their issues amicably.

Furthermore, the excessive use of social media promotes spy culture, which helps perpetrators to control their spouses. Bailey et al. (2024) contend that abusive spouses use social media to monitor and coercively control their partners, especially after a conflict. The findings of Bailey et al. (2024) reveal that the use of social media increases the risk of technology-aided spousal abuse. Social media surveillance helps spousal abuse perpetrators to weaponise all forms of contact communication, and social presentation to control their victims. Therefore, social media surveillance makes it possible for perpetrators to isolate victims from the outside world by restricting their communication. Bailey et al. (2024) found that social media use may promote spousal psychological abuse through attempts that humiliate and shame victims on social media sites.

Social media is among the technologies that Fiolet et al. (2021) identify to be used by perpetrators of spousal abuse use to control their intimate partners. Social media platforms enable TFA behaviours such as stalking and omnipresence, tracking, intimidation, impersonation, humiliation, threats, and image-based sexual abuse. Fiolet et al. (2021) reveal that the use of social media may predispose spouses to technology-aided sexual abuse and psychological abuse. According to the findings of Rogers et al. (2023), social media use may promote behaviours, such as surveillance, that infringe on the rights of spouses by their partners. Additionally, their findings reveal that may

amplify psychological and sexual abuse via TFA. The preoccupation with social media may inform the TFA behaviours seeking to tame their partners' online interactions and activities (Rogers et al., 2023). Therefore, the prevention of spousal abuse should also incorporate strategies that address social media use.

Adeyeye (2023) highlights that social media use among married women can exacerbate psychological distress, particularly following marital trauma. For women who have experienced spousal abuse, exposure to online triggers including public shaming, intrusive messaging, and digital stalking can intensify post-traumatic symptoms. This psychological impact is compounded by the way social media enables constant connection and monitoring, making escape from an abusive partner's influence more difficult. Similarly, Jabali, Hamamra, and Mahamid (2024) examine digital husband–wife interactions, revealing that social media often fuels conflicts over jealousy, time allocation, and perceived infidelity. These tensions can serve as precursors to emotional or physical abuse, particularly in relationships already characterised by power imbalances.

Several studies link social media use to broader patterns of marital instability that heighten the risk of abuse. Mehmood, Alam, and Afzal (2025) find that excessive online engagement is associated with interpersonal strain and mental health challenges among married individuals, factors that can deteriorate conflict resolution capacities within marriages. Abu-Elenin et al. (2022), focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic in Egypt, report that increased online activity during lockdowns coincided with a rise in domestic violence, as digital platforms became both a coping mechanism and a battleground for marital disputes. Arikewuyo et al. (2022) further establish that social media can escalate romantic conflicts by amplifying miscommunications, spreading misinformation, and providing a stage for public disputes, all of which can feed into cycles of abuse.

Social media's role in spousal abuse is also mediated by intersecting identities and social contexts. Le-Phuong, Lams, and De Cock (2022) note that for Vietnamese female migrants, social media use intersects with vulnerabilities related to migration status, gender, and cultural expectations, making them more susceptible to online-facilitated control and isolation by spouses. In Tehran, Latifian et al. (2024) identify a link between

internet addiction, domestic violence, and emotional divorce, suggesting that compulsive online behaviours can undermine marital bonds and increase abuse risk. Adeleke, Iyanda, and Chris-Emenyonu (2024) similarly find that in Nigeria, higher female internet use correlates with increased experiences of intimate partner violence, possibly due to cultural norms that interpret women's online autonomy as threatening to male authority.

From a psychological and relational standpoint, Zhou, Xu, and He (2023) demonstrate that new media use impacts married women's mental health through its effect on marital quality. Poor marital quality, often stemming from online jealousy or perceived neglect, can serve as a catalyst for abuse. Nnam and Dastile (2025) introduce the concept of "social media insecurity," where fears of surveillance, public humiliation, or online threats directly contribute to IPV. Their findings also reveal that some victims resort to substance use as a coping strategy, potentially deepening their vulnerability.

The broader societal and attitudinal influences of social media on IPV cannot be overlooked. Gillanders and McNamara (2024) provide evidence from Africa showing that increased smartphone use is associated with more permissive attitudes toward intimate partner violence, indicating that online exposure may normalise controlling or aggressive behaviours. Conversely, Bazan (2024) offers a more optimistic perspective, suggesting that social media can empower women through access to information and support networks that challenge domestic violence. However, as the literature indicates, such benefits are often undermined in contexts where patriarchal norms and digital harassment prevail.

Collectively, these studies reveal that social media impacts spousal abuse against married women through multiple, interlinked mechanisms: (1) enabling direct abuse via harassment, surveillance, and public humiliation; (2) indirectly fostering marital dissatisfaction and mistrust that escalate into violence; and (3) shaping societal attitudes that normalise or challenge abuse. The digital environment thus functions both as a site of empowerment and as a tool of coercion, with outcomes heavily dependent on cultural context, gender norms, and individual relationship dynamics. Effective interventions

must address both the technological features that facilitate abuse and the offline social structures that sustain it.

2.4 Facebook and Spousal Abuse

The increasing prevalence of Facebook use has raised concerns about its potential role in shaping intimate partner relationships, particularly in cases of spousal abuse against married women. Existing literature suggests that Facebook use can serve as both a risk factor and a protective factor in intimate relationships, depending on the nature and context of engagement. Several studies have examined the link between Facebook use and spousal abuse, highlighting both psychological and physical implications. However, gaps remain in understanding the nuanced mechanisms through which Facebook influences intimate partner violence (IPV), as well as the mediating variables that may exacerbate or mitigate abuse.

One major concern in existing research is the role of Facebook in fostering jealousy and controlling behaviours. Alsharif et al. (2021) found that excessive surveillance of a spouse's Facebook activities, such as monitoring their interactions, posts, and friendships, can lead to increased mistrust and possessiveness. This aligns with findings from Nguyen et al. (2022), who reported that conflicts stemming from Facebook interactions, including perceived infidelity or misinterpreted comments, were significant triggers for IPV incidents. Similarly, Mwangi and Otieno (2023) demonstrated that Facebook use in Kenya has been linked to heightened suspicion, particularly when partners engage with members of the opposite sex, often leading to verbal and physical confrontations. This finding is further supported by Mwangi (2021), who explored how social media contributes to marital conflicts in middle-class couples in Kenya, emphasising the negative impact of digital interactions on trust and communication.

Another critical aspect explored in the literature is the time spent on Facebook and its impact on marital dynamics. Patel and Singh (2020) found a positive correlation between prolonged Facebook usage and increased IPV cases in urban India, attributing this trend to reduced face-to-face communication and increased misunderstandings. Likewise, Mojahed et al. (2024) noted that heightened social media engagement during

the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated relational stress, which in turn contributed to psychological IPV. Dayton (2020) added that excessive Facebook use was associated with lower marital satisfaction, with individuals reporting that online interactions often replaced meaningful face-to-face communication, leading to emotional disconnect.

In addition to these risk factors, some studies have examined Facebook's potential to act as a protective factor. Rodriguez et al. (2022) argued that shared Facebook activities, such as joint profiles or public affirmations of love, were associated with lower IPV rates, likely due to enhanced transparency and mutual trust. Similarly, Silva and Martins (2020) emphasised that positive engagements on Facebook, such as supportive messages and shared memories, can strengthen marital bonds and reduce the likelihood of abuse. Moreover, Ahmed and Khan (2021) explored the role of Facebook support groups in empowering abused women, showing that access to online support networks can help victims seek assistance and reduce the effects of abuse. Chakraborty and Dey (2024) highlighted that while Facebook can serve as a space for social support and relationship strengthening, it also introduces challenges such as envy and unrealistic comparisons that can undermine trust and intimacy.

Nwafor, Guanah, and Okowa-Nwaebi (2022) found that Facebook use is perceived by some as contributing to domestic conflicts, including violence, through jealousy, suspicion, and misinterpretation of online interactions. While their study focused primarily on domestic violence against men, the findings suggest a parallel dynamic for women, as gendered expectations and online communication often fuel mistrust in relationships. This aligns with Leitão's (2021) qualitative analysis, which documents technology-facilitated intimate partner abuse (TFIPA), where Facebook is exploited by abusers to monitor, harass, and publicly shame victims. These behaviours transform digital platforms into tools of coercive control, blurring the boundary between online harassment and offline violence.

Boethius, Åkerström, and Hydén (2023) further describe this dual nature of digital technology, noting that while Facebook can provide abused women with access to support networks, it simultaneously increases their vulnerability to surveillance and abuse. The "double-edged sword" effect is particularly acute in contexts where

perpetrators use Facebook's visibility features, such as tagging, photo sharing, and status updates, to exert psychological pressure. Similarly, Islam (2024) explores patriarchal masculinities in Bangladesh, revealing how Facebook becomes a conduit for cyberbullying rooted in entrenched gender norms. These online aggressions often extend into physical and emotional abuse within marriages, reinforcing patriarchal control mechanisms.

The broader societal discourse surrounding domestic violence on Facebook also contributes indirectly to spousal abuse dynamics. Bas, Ogan, and Varol (2022) show that social media, including Facebook, has the potential to amplify awareness about violence against women, mobilising public engagement. However, increased visibility may provoke retaliation from perpetrators who feel publicly exposed or challenged, thereby escalating abuse. This unintended consequence underscores the complexity of using Facebook as both an advocacy tool and a platform where abuse can be instigated. From a psychosocial perspective, Zhou, Xu, and He (2023) demonstrate that excessive new media use, including Facebook, negatively impacts marital quality, which in turn affects women's mental health. Deteriorating marital quality linked to online disputes, often over privacy breaches or social comparisons, can intensify conditions conducive to IPV. Nnam and Dastile (2025) add that social media insecurity, whereby women fear surveillance or manipulation on platforms like Facebook, is associated with increased intimate partner violence. In some cases, victims turn to substance use as a coping mechanism, which may further entrench their vulnerability.

Cultural and religious contexts also shape Facebook's role in spousal abuse. Hasanudin et al. (2023) highlight that in Indonesia, online behaviours conflicting with Islamic marital expectations can lead to accusations, humiliation, and violence against women. This demonstrates how Facebook interactions may be interpreted through moral or religious lenses, amplifying the perceived severity of "transgressions." Gavin and Kruis (2022) indirectly support this link by showing that media violence exposure influences IPV perpetration, suggesting that aggressive online content on Facebook could normalise abusive behaviour. Additionally, Greyson et al. (2023) note that many young parents adopt online safety practices to mitigate risks, yet women in abusive

relationships may have limited autonomy to apply such strategies, leaving them vulnerable to partner-imposed digital risks.

Collectively, the literature indicates that Facebook contributes to spousal abuse through three interrelated pathways: (1) enabling direct abuse via harassment, surveillance, and public shaming; (2) indirectly fostering marital conflict and mistrust that escalate into violence; and (3) amplifying societal discourses that may trigger or legitimise abusive behaviours. While Facebook also offers potential for victim support and advocacy, its structural features and cultural embedding make it a potent vector for abuse in intimate relationships. Addressing these harms requires not only platform-level interventions, such as enhanced privacy controls, but also broader socio-cultural change to challenge the patriarchal and coercive norms that underpin both online and offline abuse.

Despite these findings, research gaps persist. One major limitation in the existing literature is the lack of longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of Facebook use on IPV. Most studies, including those by Chen and Huang (2021) and Potts et al. (2023), rely on cross-sectional data, making it difficult to establish causal relationships. Additionally, while studies such as Lee and Park (2023) suggest that personality traits and offline relationship quality mediate the impact of Facebook on IPV, further research is needed to explore how specific psychological and social factors interact with social media use in intimate relationships. Konyar and Ersanli (2022) also emphasised the role of social media addiction in diminishing marital happiness, suggesting that excessive online engagement negatively impacts relationship satisfaction.

Another significant gap is the lack of research focusing on cultural and contextual differences in how Facebook use influences spousal abuse. While studies have examined different geographical contexts, such as India (Patel & Singh, 2020) and Kenya (Mwangi & Otieno, 2023), there remains a need for comparative studies that assess the impact of Facebook use on spousal abuse across diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, future research should explore the role of Facebook's evolving features, such as private messaging apps and AI-driven content recommendations, in shaping relationship dynamics and contributing to IPV risk factors.

Existing literature highlights a complex relationship between Facebook use and spousal abuse, with both positive and negative implications. While some studies suggest that Facebook fosters jealousy, surveillance, and misunderstandings that may escalate to IPV, others indicate that it can enhance transparency, trust, and support for victims. Research gaps, including the need for longitudinal studies and culturally diverse analyses, underscore the necessity for further exploration of this critical issue. Future research should aim to uncover the underlying mechanisms of Facebook's influence on IPV and identify effective interventions to mitigate its harmful effects while leveraging its potential benefits for relationship well-being.

2.5 TikTok and Spousal Abuse

The increasing use of social media platforms such as TikTok has transformed interpersonal relationships, communication, and conflict resolution among married couples. While TikTok provides entertainment and social connectivity, it also raises concerns about its potential influence on relationship dynamics, particularly spousal abuse. Existing literature explores the role of social media in intimate relationships, yet the direct impact of TikTok on spousal abuse remains an emerging area of study (Langlais et al., 2024). This review critically examines current research on TikTok's influence on spousal abuse, identifying key findings and gaps in the literature.

Several studies have found that TikTok can be a source of tension in romantic relationships. Langlais et al. (2024) reported that TikTok use often interfered with face-to-face interactions, leading to relationship dissatisfaction. Some participants expressed frustration when their partners prioritised TikTok over communication, leading to conflicts similar to phubbing—ignoring a partner in favor of a smartphone (David & Roberts, 2021). Additionally, conflicts arose when one partner engaged with content perceived as inappropriate, such as videos promoting unrealistic relationship expectations or glorifying infidelity (Langlais et al., 2024). Furthermore, TikTok's unique algorithm-driven content exposure influences perceptions of relationship dynamics. Mendelson and Smith (2024) highlighted how TikTok's trend culture influences relationship narratives by promoting idealised versions of romance, potentially fostering dissatisfaction. Liu and Li (2024) found that problematic TikTok

use is associated with increased stress and compulsive behaviours, which may translate into interpersonal conflicts, including emotional and verbal abuse.

There is growing concern that social media, including TikTok, contributes to spousal abuse by facilitating digital control and surveillance. Some studies have shown that abusive partners use social media to monitor their spouses' activities, leading to increased emotional and psychological abuse (Langlais et al., 2024). For instance, excessive scrutiny over online interactions can manifest as jealousy, accusations, and coercive control, key components of spousal abuse (Eaton et al., 2022). TikTok's algorithm, which personalises content based on user activity, may further exacerbate controlling behaviours by reinforcing exposure to gendered stereotypes and toxic relationship dynamics. In addition to surveillance, TikTok also serves as a medium for public shaming and harassment. Some individuals use the platform to share personal relationship grievances, potentially escalating private conflicts into public disputes. Mendelson and Smith (2024) noted that TikTok's public nature can amplify relationship tensions when partners post content exposing private conflicts, leading to retaliation or emotional abuse. Moreover, Emezue (2020) argued that digital platforms could both perpetuate and combat IPV, as they provide resources for victims but also enable coercive control tactics used by abusers.

While TikTok may contribute to relationship strain, some studies suggest it can also serve as a tool for conflict resolution. Langlais et al. (2024) found that some individuals use TikTok to share humorous content as a way to diffuse tension in relationships. Additionally, TikTok provides educational resources on healthy relationships and domestic abuse awareness, potentially empowering victims to seek help. Homan et al. (2020) demonstrated how social media discourse on IPV can be leveraged for intervention and prevention efforts, suggesting that TikTok could serve a similar role in addressing abusive behaviours. However, there is limited research on whether exposure to such content translates into meaningful behavioural change in abusive relationships.

The literature suggests that TikTok has both positive and negative implications for marital relationships. While it can serve as a source of entertainment and connection, it also fosters conflicts that may escalate into emotional or psychological abuse. Despite emerging studies on social media and relationship dynamics, the specific impact of TikTok on spousal abuse remains understudied. Most existing research focuses on general social media usage rather than TikTok-specific behaviours. The direct relationship between TikTok use and spousal abuse remains insufficiently studied. Research is needed to understand the platform's role in either exacerbating or mitigating IPV, ensuring that digital spaces contribute to healthier marital dynamics. One significant pathway through which TikTok may contribute to spousal abuse is the spread of narratives that instil fear, mistrust, and hostility toward marriage. Sari and Musyafaah (2025), using the Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah framework, analysed the “Marriage is Scary” trend and found that TikTok content often amplifies negative portrayals of marital life, depicting marriage as inherently oppressive or conflict-ridden. While such portrayals can raise awareness of genuine marital issues, they can also foster cynicism and hostility between spouses, weakening marital bonds and potentially escalating conflicts. Similarly, Hidayah and Sessiani (2025) found that this trend significantly increased Gen Z women's anxiety toward marriage, which may influence marital expectations and coping behaviours in later relationships. The cumulative effect of these narratives can normalize suspicion, emotional withdrawal, and adversarial dynamics within marriages, creating conditions conducive to emotional and psychological abuse.

Another documented contribution of TikTok lies in its role as a medium for public shaming and social punishment of women. Ella et al. (2023) examined how aggressive TikTok videos in traditional societies are used to enforce gender norms, often portraying women who deviate from cultural expectations as deserving of ridicule or punishment. This public digital humiliation not only reinforces patriarchal control but can also embolden offline spousal abuse by legitimizing coercive behaviours. In this way, online aggression and offline violence can be mutually reinforcing. Zeng's (2023) study on Chinese women's representation on Douyin (TikTok's Chinese version) further supports this notion, finding that platform algorithms often privilege content that frames women in objectified or submissive roles, thus perpetuating gender

stereotypes that underpin domestic abuse. Beyond public shaming, TikTok can also serve as a vehicle for relationship surveillance and control. Ramirez (2025) quantitatively demonstrated that high TikTok use among romantic partners is linked to lower relationship satisfaction and more negative relationship outcomes, with jealousy and monitoring behaviours emerging as significant mediators. The visibility of personal activities on TikTok makes it easier for controlling spouses to monitor their partners, potentially escalating into coercive control—one recognised form of spousal abuse. Similarly, Sihombing and Tambunan (2023) found that “a day in my life” videos by married young women both affirm and negotiate femininity, often subtly reinforcing domestic ideals. While these portrayals can be empowering, they can also be co-opted into rigid expectations for women’s roles, leading to conflict if wives deviate from these socially curated ideals.

The broader influence of social media messages, including those disseminated via TikTok, on domestic violence has also been documented in regional contexts. Odenigbo et al. (2024) found that exposure to certain online messages in Southeast Nigeria reinforced patriarchal attitudes and increased the justification for domestic violence against cohabiting and married women. This finding echoes Omokhabi et al.’s (2025) study in Southwestern Nigeria, which linked social media use to heightened marital conflict, particularly when online interactions sparked suspicion or were perceived as undermining trust. These conflicts can escalate into verbal, psychological, or physical abuse, particularly in contexts where gender norms legitimize male dominance. From a religious and ethical perspective, Rosli et al. (2025) highlight that excessive and uncritical consumption of social media content, including TikTok, can undermine the Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah principles of preserving family stability and dignity. Content that glamorizes infidelity, objectifies women, or promotes unrealistic relationship ideals can create dissatisfaction and resentment in marriages, indirectly fostering abusive environments.

While the literature converges on TikTok’s potential to exacerbate marital discord and spousal abuse, there are nuances to consider. Some portrayals of marriage on TikTok may function as legitimate critiques of abusive practices, offering support networks and awareness-raising that could empower women to resist violence. However, the

boundary between empowerment and provocation is fragile when critiques are framed aggressively or disrespectfully. As such, they risk entrenching defensive and retaliatory behaviours from abusive spouses. Moreover, algorithmic amplification of sensationalist content can skew perceptions of marriage, disproportionately exposing users to conflict-centred narratives rather than constructive marital discourse.

In sum, the reviewed literature demonstrates that TikTok can contribute to spousal abuse against married women through four primary mechanisms: (1) amplifying negative and fear-inducing marital narratives, (2) enabling public shaming and gender-based social punishment, (3) facilitating surveillance and coercive control, and (4) reinforcing patriarchal norms and unrealistic marital expectations. While TikTok is not inherently abusive, its content dynamics and algorithmic structures create a fertile environment for narratives and behaviours that may exacerbate marital tensions and justify abuse. Addressing these risks requires both digital literacy initiatives and platform accountability to mitigate the harmful consequences of online content on offline marital relationships.

2.6 WhatsApp and Spousal Abuse

The increasing use of WhatsApp in marital relationships has been linked to various social and psychological consequences, including spousal abuse. Studies have explored its role in facilitating communication between spouses but have also highlighted its potential to trigger conflicts, reduce intimacy, and contribute to relationship dissatisfaction. Ehoru and Badey (2021) examined the implications of social media, including WhatsApp, on marital stability. Their study found that excessive social media use contributed to infidelity, domestic violence, and reduced face-to-face interactions among couples. While the study provides insights into the role of digital communication in marital conflicts, it does not directly address spousal abuse against married women. A more focused exploration of how WhatsApp use escalates emotional, verbal, or physical abuse in marriages is needed.

Adebayo and Evbuoma (2021) analysed the effects of WhatsApp messages containing religious abuse content on married individuals in Lagos, Nigeria. Their findings indicated that such messages influenced behavioural changes, with women displaying

increased awareness of abusive tendencies post-intervention. Although this study sheds light on how WhatsApp can propagate abusive ideologies, it does not explicitly investigate the link between WhatsApp and spousal abuse, leaving a gap in understanding the direct role of digital communication in marital violence. Oginyi et al. (2020) explored psychological distress and personality profiling as predictors of domestic violence among married couples. Although WhatsApp was not the primary focus, their findings suggest that stress and specific personality traits influence spousal abuse. Given that WhatsApp use has been linked to increased stress in relationships, future studies should integrate digital communication patterns as a variable in predicting domestic violence outcomes.

A qualitative study on WhatsApp use among working couples found that while it facilitates communication, it also serves as a medium for conflicts due to misunderstandings and lack of boundaries (Setiawan et al., 2025). The study emphasises the need for couples to establish clear digital communication guidelines. However, it does not explore the gendered impact of WhatsApp conflicts, particularly on women who may experience heightened vulnerability to emotional and psychological abuse. The study by Faye et al. (2020) on WhatsApp use among specialist doctors and its effects on their marital relationships can shed more light the impact of this platform on spousal abuse. Their findings showed that 36% of participants reported a significant negative impact on their marriages, including reduced quality time with their spouses, increased conflicts, and concerns about online infidelity. Although this study provides critical insights into how WhatsApp use influences marital dissatisfaction, it does not directly examine how such conflicts translate into different forms of spousal abuse against married women.

Research on WhatsApp's role in infidelity and relationship dissatisfaction (Galily, 2022) has suggested that frequent messaging with individuals outside of the marital relationship fosters distrust and emotional distancing. However, the study primarily addresses emotional detachment rather than outright abuse, indicating a gap in understanding the progression from digital communication breakdowns to abusive dynamics. De Haan (2017) examined the effects of WhatsApp usage with professional contacts on work-life conflict and stress. The study found that WhatsApp use blurred

work-life boundaries, increasing stress and potential interpersonal conflicts at home. While the study does not focus on spousal abuse, its findings suggest that increased stress from WhatsApp use may contribute to tensions in marital relationships. Future research should examine whether such stress-induced conflicts lead to abusive dynamics.

Rosales and Fernández-Ardèvol (2016) analysed WhatsApp usage among older individuals in Spain, revealing generational differences in mobile communication patterns. Their study indicates that WhatsApp is widely used for maintaining relationships but does not delve into marital conflicts or spousal abuse. A more detailed exploration of how WhatsApp affects marital power dynamics and potential abuse is needed. Ehoru and Badey (2021) studied the implications of social media on new marriages, reporting that WhatsApp and other platforms contribute to infidelity, misunderstandings, and even domestic violence. Their study provides strong evidence linking WhatsApp use to marital discord but lacks a focused analysis on its role in spousal abuse against women. Future research should quantify the extent to which WhatsApp contributes to various forms of abuse within marriages.

Mutua (2022) investigated the influence of mobile device use on marital satisfaction among couples in Kenya, emphasising the role of social media, including WhatsApp. The study highlighted that excessive use of WhatsApp leads to decreased communication quality, emotional detachment, and potential marital dissatisfaction. While it connects WhatsApp use to negative relationship dynamics, it does not directly measure its role in spousal abuse, leaving room for further research on the escalation of these issues into abusive behaviours. Another Kenyan study Mwangi (2021) examined the influence of social media on marital relationships among young middle-class couples in Nairobi. The study found that excessive WhatsApp use led to an increase in suspicion and jealousy among partners, contributing to marital dissatisfaction. Mwangi (2021) also highlighted that WhatsApp was the most commonly used social media platform, and its overuse negatively impacted spousal communication and trust. This study fails to directly analyse its role in enabling spousal abuse.

WhatsApp, as one of the most widely used mobile instant messaging platforms, has emerged as both a tool for social connection and a medium that can facilitate spousal abuse against married women. Research shows that while WhatsApp can empower women to access information and support, it is equally implicated in fuelling marital conflict, surveillance, and abuse (Asuquo, 2025; Aje et al., 2025). In the Nigerian context, Asuquo (2025) notes that WhatsApp serves as a double-edged sword. While it is leveraged to create awareness of domestic violence, its private, encrypted nature also makes it an enabling space for infidelity, secrecy, and hostile communication that can escalate tensions in marriages. This aligned with Odenigbo et al. (2024), who found that social media messages, including those disseminated through WhatsApp, shape attitudes toward women and domestic roles, sometimes reinforcing patriarchal norms that legitimise controlling behaviours and spousal aggression.

The private, real-time communication afforded by WhatsApp can exacerbate controlling behaviours, as partners may demand constant updates or monitor “last seen” timestamps, fuelling suspicion and conflict. Harony et al. (2023) examined Generation X couples and observed that WhatsApp’s instant connectivity fosters expectations of immediate responses, which, when unmet, can trigger arguments and emotionally abusive exchanges. This technological immediacy, combined with features such as read receipts, can be weaponised in relationships marked by distrust. Similarly, Kagwiria (2022), in a Kenyan study, highlighted that excessive mobile device use, particularly WhatsApp, was linked to reduced marital satisfaction, partly because of secrecy in online interactions and the erosion of quality face-to-face communication.

In certain contexts, WhatsApp facilitates direct abuse by serving as a medium for threats, harassment, and intimidation. Aje et al. (2025) identify digital technology as a growing dimension of gender-based conflicts in families, noting that instant messaging applications like WhatsApp are frequently used to send abusive texts, share humiliating content, or coordinate cyberstalking. This finding resonates with Shaaban (2023), who reported that in Egyptian marriages, WhatsApp interactions often become arenas for disputes over perceived online flirtations or group affiliations, with these digital misunderstandings spilling over into offline emotional or physical abuse. The

platform's multimedia sharing capabilities can further amplify harm, for example, through the non-consensual sharing of private images.

International research underscores that the risks associated with WhatsApp are not confined to one region. Thakkar et al. (2023) found in India that increased mobile phone and internet access among married women correlated with higher reported experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV), particularly when digital communication disrupted traditional gender expectations. Tasnima and Md Syed (2024) similarly observed in Bangladesh that while smartphone applications like WhatsApp could empower women to respond to domestic violence by accessing support networks, they also exposed them to heightened surveillance by abusive partners. These studies indicate that the platform's role in spousal abuse is complex and context-dependent, influenced by local gender norms, access dynamics, and relationship histories.

Moreover, the integration of WhatsApp into daily life blurs boundaries between public and private spaces, making it easier for abusive partners to exert constant psychological pressure. Ehoru and Badey (2021) found that in Nigerian marriages, social media, including WhatsApp, created new opportunities for jealousy and mistrust, especially in early-stage marriages where trust had not yet been firmly established. This constant digital proximity can serve as a form of coercive control, where abusers monitor their partners' communications and social networks to enforce dominance. Such patterns are consistent with Odenigbo et al.'s (2024) findings that social media use can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to the normalisation of surveillance as a form of "care" or "protection," further entrenching abuse.

While WhatsApp can serve as a lifeline for victims to seek help discreetly, its role in perpetuating abuse often outweighs its protective potential in contexts where patriarchal power structures remain strong. Studies show that digital literacy and gender norms determine whether the platform becomes a tool for liberation or control (Tasnima & Md Syed, 2024; Aje et al., 2025). The platform's design, which emphasises privacy, speed, and constant connectivity, can be empowering in egalitarian relationships but becomes a conduit for coercive control in abusive ones. Therefore, understanding WhatsApp's contribution to spousal abuse requires an intersectional lens that considers

not only technological affordances but also the socio-cultural conditions in which it is embedded.

Despite these valuable contributions, existing research evidence lacks a comprehensive analysis of how WhatsApp use specifically contributes to spousal abuse against married women. Most studies focus on general marital dissatisfaction, infidelity, or digital communication patterns, without addressing how WhatsApp may facilitate or exacerbate abusive behaviours. There is a need to quantify the extent to which WhatsApp-induced conflicts escalate into emotional, physical, or economic abuse within marriages, with a particular focus on gendered vulnerabilities. The proposed study can address this gap by direct impact and correlation between WhatsApp-induced jealousy and instances of physical, emotional, and psychological abuse.

2.7 The Impact of Rural-Urban Residency

Recent research has increasingly shown that geographic location often influences the prevalence, risk factors, and consequences of spousal abuse against women. Through a study that screened pregnant and postpartum women in the US, Kozhimannil et al. (2024) found stark rural-urban disparities in spousal abuse. The study revealed that rural women have a higher risk for abuse but are less likely to be screened. Such disparities point to systemic barriers in rural areas that increase the risk of spousal abuse while discouraging reporting. Terrazas and Blitchtein (2022) provide a different perspective by examining the influence of rural-urban migration on spousal abuse among women in Peru. The study found that women who migrate from rural to urban areas have higher risks of abuse than those who remain in rural areas. Therefore, such migration exposed women to new risk factors, including isolation, economic precocity, and weakened social networks. A Kenyan study conducted in urban informal settlements in Nairobi by Njuki et al. (2023) highlights the high prevalence of spousal abuse. Njuki et al. (2023) found that the living conditions in urban informal settlements mirrored many rural vulnerabilities. As such, structural inequalities should also be considered besides simplistic rural-urban dichotomies.

Access and usage pattern disparities in social media use between rural and urban settings influence the risk for spousal abuse against women. Sutherland et al. (2025)

consider social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, essential tools for the economic independence of women. However, unreliable internet connectivity and limited digital literacy in rural areas impede the ability of women to leverage social media for escape or advocacy compared to their urban counterparts. Iqbal's (2021) ethnographic study revealed that gender norms severely restrict women's autonomy over smartphones and internet use in rural areas, often with direct spousal oversight. Ongare (2023) also found urban women to have had greater freedom in platform use and less spousal control over their digital interactions compared to rural women. Although not focused on married women, Tsuma (2023) found that urban social media users reported higher daily engagement across different platforms, including Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok compared to their rural counterparts. Therefore, compared to rural women, urban women are more exposed to social media addiction, which is a strong predictor of spousal abuse.

Rural-urban differences are a growing area of research interest in the intersection between social media use and spousal abuse among women. For example, Kamimura et al. (2022) found that frequent use of platforms, like Instagram and Snapchat correlates with higher spousal abuse risk factors, including online monitoring and digital abuse. This finding raised concerns about the replication of abusive dynamics in virtual spaces, especially in urban environments where access to digital resources is high. On the same note, a study in Northern Uganda by Richmond et al. (2023) observed that while urban women were more likely to experience technology-facilitated abuse, rural women faced more traditional forms of control. Such disparities in social media access and use patterns between rural and urban women may explain this difference. Nabaggala et al. (2021) confirm such implications through their finding that rural residency and lower education levels were strongly associated with higher spousal abuse rates. These findings suggested that the impact of social media on spousal abuse against married women is more evident in urban than rural areas.

Digital divide and access differences. Several studies foreground structural differences in connectivity and device access that underlie divergent patterns of social media use. Nivetha and Radha (2024), comparing undergraduate female students in urban and rural settings, document marked differences in platform access and intensity of use linked to

infrastructural and socio-economic factors. Yu, Ang, and Zhang (2024) showed that rural - urban disparities in internet use among older adults correlate with cognitive engagement outcomes, a pattern that implies baseline access differences across residency groups. These works reinforced the fundamental point that unequal access based on broadband availability, affordable devices, and stable electricity determined what married women could do on social media platforms. For married women in rural areas, limited access could have constrained privacy management strategies and reduced opportunities for informational and social resources available to urban counterparts. Although these studies combined survey and population data to capture access differentials, they did not disaggregate results by marital status, undermining important intersections, such as household device-sharing norms for cohabiting spouses.

Residency influenced not only whether people go online but how they use social media. Nivetha and Radha (2024) reported that urban female undergraduates showed broader platform repertoires and more varied uses, including networking, activism, entertainment. However, rural users rely more on a narrower set of platforms, usually for social connection or practical information. Cui et al. (2022), while studying social media language signals across China, found urban-rural differences in stress expression and topics discussed, suggesting that the content and communicative norms of social media vary by locality. Applied to married women, these findings suggested that urban residency could have facilitated more diverse online repertoires, including professional networking, health information-seeking, and formal support groups. On the other hand, rural residency could have constrained women to more localized, family- or community-oriented uses. However, differences in life stage, responsibilities, and digital literacy complicate simple urban-rural generalisations. Qualitative research would help reveal how married women negotiate platform choices within domestic contexts.

A growing strand linked digital engagement to mental health outcomes with rural - urban residency moderating associations. Wang and Wang (2024), in a national cross-sectional study of Chinese women, identified associations between digital engagement and depressive symptoms that varied by urban city, suggesting that the psychosocial impacts of internet use were context-dependent. Atherton et al. (2024) document rural-

urban differences in personality and well-being across adulthood, implying that observed mental-health correlates of social media use may partly reflect underlying dispositional or community-level differences rather than platform effects per se. Cui et al. (2022) further showed that urban and rural social-media language use differentially signals stress. For married women, particularly those whose spousal relationships create distinct stressors, such as spousal abuse and economic dependency, the interplay among residency, social-media exposure, social support received online, and mental health outcomes is likely complex. Since much of the evidence is correlational and cross-sectional, causal direction remains unresolved.

Migration intentions, livelihood transitions, and social networks. Social media's role in migration and economic change emerged in studies of youth and young adults. Iwana et al. (2022) found that internet exposure shaped rural villagers' intentions to migrate to urban areas, while Tulibaleka and Katunze (2024) showed social networks and social media assist rural-urban youth migrants' transitions into self-employment in Uganda. Translated to married women, these studies suggested that social media could be a conduit for information about urban opportunities, peer role models, and microenterprise formation, potentially empowered some women to pursue economic mobility. However, migration dynamics differ for married women because of family responsibilities, spousal consent, and potential social stigma. As such, social media's enabling role becomes constrained.

Studies covering older adults, including Yu et al. (2024) and adulthood well-being including Atherton et al. (2024), revealed that age interacts with residency in shaping internet use consequences. Older rural residents could use the internet less intensively and for different cognitive or informational purposes than younger urban adults, which, when coupled with marital roles, such as caregiving and patriarchal household structures, produces heterogeneous outcomes for married women across life stages. For example, older married women in rural settings could have benefitted cognitively from modest internet engagement yet face higher barriers to uptake. (Yu et al. (2024). Conversely, younger married women could have used social media intensively but face distinct social pressures, such as surveillance and reputational risks, that shape their online behaviour (Atherton et al., 2024). These studies cautioned against monolithic

claims and pointed to the necessity of life-course-sensitive analyses when studying married women's social media practices.

On average, urban married women were likely to have better access, wider platform repertoires, and greater opportunities for diverse network ties and economic uses of social media than rural married women (Nivetha & Radha, 2024; Tulibaleka & Katunze, 2024). Urban contexts may have also exposed women to different normative discourses and greater anonymity, which could facilitate information seeking and help-seeking for marital or health issues. However, urban social-media exposure could also link to distinct stressors and depressive symptom patterns (Wang & Wang, 2024; Cui et al., 2022). Rural married women face greater infrastructural and social constraints that limit both access and the range of safe uses. Social media could still have provided migration information, local marketplace access, and low-cost social support if barriers, such as shared device use and lower digital literacy, are addressed (Iwana et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2024). The balance of risks and benefits was mediated by household power dynamics: partner monitoring could severely have constrained a married woman's ability to use platforms for empowerment, regardless of urbanicity, which is underexplored by existing literature.

Meta-analytic evidence by Nabaggala et al. (2021) provided a broad continental perspective on the influence of rural-urban residency on spousal abuse against married women. They revealed that residence interacted with educational attainment to influence spousal abuse risk. Their pooled results suggested that rural residence is associated with different IPV odds across countries and population subgroups, and that higher education attenuates the rural disadvantage in many settings. This meta-analytic framing was important in the study because it aggregated heterogeneous national contexts. However, it also smooths over local variations, such as distinctions between remote villages and peri-urban settlements.

Contextual nuance appeared strongly in country- and setting-specific studies. Chen et al. (2025), analysed spousal abuse in urban slums across 34 low- and middle-income countries, report high prevalence and notable disparities within urban contexts. Their findings showed that urban residence per se is not protective when it is accompanied

by extreme poverty, overcrowding, and social exclusion. This finding complicated any claim that urbanicity uniformly reduced spousal abuse risk and highlighted the importance of distinguishing formal urban neighbourhoods from informal settlements. In Ekiti State, Nigeria, Adeoye et al. Owoeye (2024) similarly present comparative evidence showed differing prevalence in a rural and an urban area, reinforcing that local socioeconomic and cultural conditions often shape the rural–urban contrast.

Migration and mobility were also mechanisms that could explain rural - urban differences in spousal abuse among married women. Terrazas and Blitchtein (2022), using Peruvian national data, showed that rural - urban migration correlated with increased odds of physical and sexual IPV for some groups. Migration may have changed household power dynamics, social supports, and exposure to new stressors, such as economic insecurity and cramped housing, which can elevate risk. Tulibaleka & Katunze (2024) and Iwana et al. (2022) suggested social networks and online exposure shaped migration intentions and transitions, which were likely to interact with spousal relationships and spousal abuse. Migration’s effect is, therefore, multi-faceted since it can be a route to autonomy for some women but a source of vulnerability for others, depending on social networks, employment, and spousal control.

Attitudinal and normative differences across the rural–urban continuum mediate both prevalence and reporting of spousal abuse. Zegeye et al. (2021) use decomposition analysis to show urban–rural disparities in wife-beating attitudes in Senegal, identifying that part of the gap is attributable to differences in education, media exposure, and wealth. Amare et al. (2024) similarly document variation in attitudes toward IPV across Ethiopia’s rural–urban continuum, showing that normative tolerance of wife-beating remains a predictor of IPV and that this tolerance is often higher in more rural or remote communities. These attitudinal patterns matter because they influence both the incidence of abuse by social sanctioning of male aggression and the likelihood that married women will report abuse or seek help.

Service availability, screening, and healthcare interactions differ by residency and influence detection of abuse. Kozhimannil et al. (2024) examine rural-urban differences in IPV screening among pregnant and postpartum people in the United States and find

disparities in both rates and predictors of screening: rural residents may be less likely to be screened or to receive follow-up services, reflecting workforce shortages, stigma, and limited referral pathways in rural health systems. This had been practical implications for married women because under-screening in rural areas could have delayed identification and assistance. Although the study by Kozhimannil et al. (2024) was notable for linking health-system processes to residency, its focus on perinatal populations limits generalisability to married women in Kwale County.

Several studies illuminated the role of socioeconomic factors, including education, wealth, and employment, that co-vary with residency. Nabaggala et al. (2021) emphasised that education's protective role, showed that educational gains reduced IPV risk more sharply in some rural contexts. While focused on sex preference and marital dissolution, Okyere et al. (2023) illustrated how family-level preferences and gender norms intersected with rural - urban contexts to shape marital outcomes. Such household-level norms plausibly influenced spousal abuse dynamics. Adeoye et al. (2024) confirmed that local economic conditions and social support structures underlied differences in prevalence between rural and urban study sites.

Methodologically, most of these studies rely on cross-sectional survey data, which is appropriate for population - level prevalence estimation but weak for causal inference regarding residency effects. Nabaggala et al.'s (2021) meta-analytic approach increased power and scope but inherited heterogeneity in measurement instruments across studies. The secondary analysis by Terrazas and Blitchtein (2022) was valuable for hypothesising migration - spousal abuse links but cannot fully rule out selection bias, such as women who migrate may differ pre-migration in unmeasured ways. Although Chen et al. (2025) advanced the field by focusing on intra-urban heterogeneity, included slums vs. non-slum, its cross-sectional method could not capture temporal trends or the effects of urbanization processes over time.

Research evidence highlighted measurement issues, such as frequently treating “urban” and “rural” as binary categories, yet Amare et al. (2024) and Zegeye et al. (2021) argued for treating residency as a continuum that included peri-urban and slum contexts given that risk factors and norms varied along that continuum. Moreover, spousal abuse

measurement itself varied between self-reported past-year vs. lifetime and physical vs. sexual vs. emotional abuse, making cross-study comparisons challenging. These definitional inconsistencies could have produced seemingly contradictory findings unless analysts carefully accounted for the specific spousal abuse outcome and the urbanicity metric used. A critical gap across the literature was the limited attention to causal mechanisms operating within households, particularly the role of male partner behaviours, household authority, and surveillance technologies, which may differ by residency. While population studies pointed to associations with education, wealth, and migration, fewer papers provided in-depth qualitative or longitudinal evidence that showed how urban or rural living concretely changes spousal power dynamics that lead to abuse. This is important for married women specifically, whose experiences were shaped by co-residence, economic dependence, reproductive burdens, and local kinship expectations.

For research, the next steps include longitudinal studies that could tease out selection versus causal effects of residency and migration on spousal abuse; mixed-methods work that linked survey prevalence data with ethnographic and interview evidence on household power; and intervention trials testing whether education, economic empowerment, or community mobilization have had differential effectiveness across rural - urban contexts. Greater attention to measuring peri-urban, slum, and migrant experiences and to disaggregating findings by marital status and by the presence of co-residence with an abusive partner will make evidence more actionable for programs aimed at married women.

Overall, the reviewed scholarship demonstrates that rural - urban residency matters for spousal abuse against married women, but its effects are contingent on local socioeconomic conditions, migration processes, normative beliefs, and service availability. Rural residence often correlated with higher attitudinal tolerance and, in many contexts, higher IPV prevalence. However, urban poverty and slum residency produced important exceptions where urban women face equal or greater vulnerability (Nabaggala et al., 2021; Zegeye et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2025). Therefore, addressing spousal abuse required nuanced, place-based strategies that combined prevention,

service delivery, and norm change while accounting for migration dynamics and intra-urban heterogeneity.

2.8 Digital Literacy and Spousal Abuse

The emergence and consistent development of novel technologies such as social media platforms and high-speed internet connectivity led to many fundamental challenges including TFA and violence among intimate partners or couples. For instance, Louie (2021) carried out a study on the factors that continued to expose diverse women to TFA and violence from their partners in Australia. The study established that digital literacy limitations alongside migration and financial status as well as language literacy deficiency were among the main contributors to the TFA and violence endured by diverse women in the hands of their partners. Similarly, Emezue (2020) indicated that technical and digital illiteracy ranked high among the challenges faced by victims of spousal abuse in reporting and seeking help in ending TFA and violence from their partners. As such, one of the greatest steps in preventing and ending spousal abuse aided by social media includes digital literacy.

Digital literacy helped victims of spousal abuse to understand the existence and possibility of TFA as well as how to address different forms of TFA such as using spyware, use of tracking and surveillance apps. According to Louie (2021), in recent years, the reports of usage of technologies including phones, wristwatches, and clocks by men to remotely stalk, monitor, and control their women had been on the surge in different countries including Australia. West et al. (2019) indicated that cases of TFA such as monitoring women's movement and activities using the women's mobile phones even without their knowledge are more prevalent in the developing countries where digital literacy remains low among women. West et al. (2019) underscored that although women reporting abuse instances involving the use of digital technologies such as social media had been on the rise, in most cases women were always unaware of and unable to comprehend when these technologies were deployed by their intimate partners remotely for the sole purpose of monitoring their actions, movement and activities. As such, it was appropriate to claim that digital literacy was one of the ingredients that could enable women at risk of spousal abuse to use social media platforms to identify, report, and resolve such abuses.

Digital literacy was an important aspect in impeding TFA among couples as it involved enhancing the ability of individuals to understand, apply, and use different forms of technology such as the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms. Such importance of digital literacy among individuals was echoed in the definition of the concept developed by the International Telecommunications Union, International Labour Organisation, and UNESCO. According to West et al. (2019, p. 13) the three organisations define digital literacy as "the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital devices and networked technologies for participation in economic and social life". In this regard, digitally illiterate persons were not able to adequately understand, access, manage, and develop information safely and appropriately using digital devices such as wristwatches, mobile phones, and surveillance applications. Notably, Treuthart (2019) underpinned that the availability and adequate digital literacy promoted not only social connections but also enhanced empowerment, education, and political involvement of marginalised population groups including women. Therefore, the revelation by Treuthart (2019) suggests that digital illiteracy not only impeded the ability of people especially marginalised populations such as women to connect with others but also limits their education and political rights.

On the same breadth, digital illiteracy is linked with increased vulnerability of women and men to new forms of spousal abuse known as TFA and violence. The courtesy of digital illiteracy by the victims the abusers in the cases of spousal abuse use sophisticated digital devices and infrastructure such as the internet, social media, and smartphones to harass, intimidate, stalk, manipulate, humiliate, and monitor their partners. For example, Brookfield (2024) highlights that because women are generally less digitally literate and have lower technological confidence compared to men, they are more vulnerable to TFA from their partners. Furthermore, Louie (2021) shows that digital illiteracy left many women powerless when experiencing TFA from their partners during and even after separation as they deployed social media, internet-connected devices, and smartphones to monitor their activities and actions remotely. On the same note, Rogers et al. (2023) indicate victims of spousal abuse with limited digital literacy or skills experience significant challenges in resolving TFA cases as professionals they sought help from tended to believe that they did not know how to

use their devices. In other words, victims or survivors of TFA are in most cases rendered powerless by the professionals who fail to believe their stories by suggesting that they are the ones who do not know how to use social media safely. Therefore, it is noteworthy to assert that digital literacy can either promote or curtail spousal abuse among couples.

Spousal increasingly intersects with digital life since spouses use social media, messaging apps and other online tools both to perpetrate abuse and as venues where victims can seek help or safety. Several behavioural studies document the protective practices that users adopt to reduce online risk. Greyson et al. (2023), studying young parents, show that people actively curate audiences, limit personal information sharing, and use blocking or unfollowing as everyday tactics to reduce exposure to harm. Van Schaik et al. (2018) similarly found that risk perceptions predict precautionary behaviours. Individuals who perceive higher privacy and security risks are more likely to adopt protective actions such as adjusting privacy settings or restricting friend lists. Redmiles et al. (2019), using a diary-method approach, emphasise the emotional dimension of perceived safety is shaped not only by concrete technical protections but also by subjective feelings of control and trust. Collectively, these works suggest that promoting simple, user-accessible actions, including audience management, content minimisation, blocking/reporting, can reduce everyday opportunities for surveillance, harassment and coercive control by spouses. However, Greyson et al. (2023) and Van Schaik et al. (2018) also warn that user practices are uneven since awareness and uptake vary with digital literacy, time pressures, and fear of escalation if a partner monitors or reacts to privacy changes.

Technical and cybersecurity measures, such as account hardening (strong passwords, 2FA), encrypted communication, device security (locking, regular updates), and privacy-preserving platform settings, can reduce the risk of married women being abused by their husbands. Aslan et al. (2023) revealed that many digital abuses exploit weak configurations or outdated software to gain access to social media accounts. Jain et al. (2021) synthesize the state of social network security and emphasise both user interface and server-side responsibilities. These technical solutions are only sufficient when there is a high user awareness, usability of tools, and increased ability of users to

circumvent them. Redmiles et al. (2019) show that the perceived responsiveness and transparency of platform reporting mechanisms strongly influence whether users will take appropriate steps to prevent abuse. Mukherjee et al. (2021) critique major social networking platforms for inconsistent moderation, insufficient safety features designed specifically for women, and design choices that can amplify exposure. Van Schaik et al. (2018) point out that people's informal strategies, such as blocking and reducing visibility, are often used precisely because formal reporting channels feel slow, ineffective or risky. Thus, evidence supports platform improvements as vital complements to individual precautions.

Mukherjee et al. (2021) frame online safety for women within broader issues of inclusion and representation, arguing that interventions must consider marginalized groups' specific vulnerabilities. The authors remind readers that technical fixes may have limited uptake if social constraints remain unaddressed. Greyson et al. (2023) similarly show that caregiving responsibilities and socioeconomic pressures shape what safety practices are realistic for young parents, a concern that likely applies to married women more broadly. These studies make clear that online safety measures must be nested within offline support systems and policy frameworks to be effective in preventing or mitigating spousal abuse.

While the literature provides descriptive and theoretical grounds for multiple safety measures, there is limited rigorous evaluation of which combinations of measures actually reduce spousal abuse outcomes. Much of what exists is cross-sectional survey data, qualitative diaries, or technical vulnerability reviews (Redmiles et al., 2019; Van Schaik et al., 2018; Aslan et al., 2023; Jain et al., 2021). Since a given digital safety intervention reduces the incidence or severity of spousal abuse, causal claims are generally unproven. Furthermore, samples often skew toward younger, more digitally active populations or are geographically concentrated in high-income countries or on young parents, limiting generalisability to married women across age ranges, socioeconomic statuses, and cultural contexts (Greyson et al., 2023; Mukherjee et al., 2021). The cybersecurity reviews by Jain et al. (2021) and Aslan et al. (2023) are strong on threat taxonomy but cannot substitute for user-centred trials showing real-world reductions in abuse.

Research evidence underscore a crucial complication that many technical protections assume a distinction between victim and attacker that is blurred in domestic contexts. Shared devices, joint accounts, surveillance apps, and the abuser's social proximity enable circumvention of privacy settings or monitoring of changes (Mukherjee et al., 2021; Van Schaik et al., 2018). In this regard, the digital literacy of married women or their use of safety measures may not effectively shield them from the excesses of their husbands regarding social media use. Redmiles et al. (2019) highlight how even formal platform responses can feel inadequate when the abuser is nearby or when reporting triggers retaliatory escalation. Thus, recommended online safety measures, such as changing passwords and hiding posts, must be applied with careful safety planning; otherwise they risk provoking further harm. This nuance is essential for interventions aimed at married women, many of whom cohabit with the abuser.

Critical gaps remain in research evidence regarding the use of safety measures used by women who use social media. First, rigorous evaluations of interventions using randomised or quasi-experimental methods to target married women are scarce. Such a gap revealed the need for studies that measure reductions in spousal abuse incidence or severity following digital-safety training, platform changes, or combined interventions. Second, research must broaden demographic representation by including older married women, women in low-resource settings, and those with limited literacy, to ensure recommendations are equitable and practical (Greyson et al., 2023; Mukherjee et al., 2021). Third, interdisciplinary work that links cybersecurity threat models with social-science insights into intimate-partner dynamics is underdeveloped. Such integration is significant because it would better anticipate how abusers adapt to technical countermeasures (Aslan et al., 2023; Jain et al., 2021). Finally, legal and policy analyses on data access, digital stalking, and evidentiary standards in IPV prosecutions are necessary to align technical safety with accountability mechanisms.

The assembled literature makes a compelling, though cautious, case that online safety measures can reduce exposure to digital forms of spousal abuse when embedded in wider support structures. Behavioural studies by Greyson et al. (2023), Van Schaik et al. (2018), and Redmiles et al. (2019) show that users do adopt protective behaviours but that uptake is shaped by perceptions, emotional safety, and usability. Jain et al.

(2021) and Aslan et al. (2023) offer concrete tools but also reveal that technological sophistication alone cannot address abuse rooted in unequal power relations and cohabitation dynamics. Mukherjee et al. (2021) importantly ground the conversation in gendered and social-structural realities, reminding policymakers and technologists that centring women's voices, legal protections and socio-economic options is non-negotiable.

For practitioners working with married women at risk of spousal abuse, the evidence supports integrating digital-safety assessments into risk planning, offering tailored guidance on device security and platform settings, and coordinating with technology-savvy advocates who can implement safer account configurations discretely. For platforms, the literature argues for default privacy protections, simplified safety tools, rapid and survivor-centred reporting workflows, and partnerships with domestic violence organisations to align moderation practices with survivor safety (Redmiles et al., 2019; Mukherjee et al., 2021). Researchers should prioritise intervention trials and intersectional samples to build the causal evidence base necessary for confident policy recommendations.

2.9 Research Gaps

The literature reviewed above provides a comprehensive background on spousal abuse against married women, social media use, and their relationships. The review reveals several research gaps, which justify and guide the present study on the role of Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp in spousal abuse among married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The first gap is the limited empirical research examining how social media platforms specifically contribute to spousal abuse against married women in the Kenyan context. Global studies (Bailey et al., 2024; Fiolet et al., 2021; Rogers et al., 2023) and regional ones in Nigeria and Cameroon (Osakwe & Odungiweru, 2020; Nguéfack-Tsague et al., 2024) have explored technology-facilitated abuse. However, the Kenyan literature mainly focuses on traditional socio-cultural and economic causes of gender-based violence (Gichuhi, 2022; Mureithi, 2022). Therefore, there is a contextual gap concerning how social media sites, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok, fuel marital conflict and spousal abuse within the Kenyan socio-cultural environment.

The review reveals a knowledge gap since there is limited studies focusing the impact of using social media on spousal abuse against married women. Most studies (Bailey et al., 2024; Fiolet et al., 2021; Nguetack-Tsague et al., 2024) focus on technology-facilitated abuse, which focuses on how husbands use digital technology to abuse or control their women. Therefore, there is scarce knowledge on how women's use of social media increase their risk of being abused by their husbands. The scarcity is on findings about how the use social media influences conventional forms of abuse by triggering abusive behaviours from their husbands. Another knowledge gap is that most studies investigate IPV, which is not specific to married women. IPV is broad since it included forms of abuse that occur between intimate partners, which includes boyfriend-girlfriend relationships and married couples. However, Brown et al. (2022) reveals significant differences in relationship dynamics between partners who are dating and married couples.

The review also reveals scarcity of research on TikTok and spousal abuse. Most available studies (Langlais et al., 2024; Mendelson & Smith, 2024) focus on general relationship dissatisfaction or online conflicts, without examining gendered power dynamics or specific forms of abuse resulting from using TikTok. The absence of studies exploring how TikTok's algorithmic exposure and trends contributed to marital conflict in African settings marks a substantial knowledge gap the current study intends to fill. Another gap is the limited research focusing on the contribution of specific features of social media platforms to spousal abuse. For example, although studies have explored the influence of WhatsApp on communication and relationship satisfaction (Ehoro & Badey, 2021; Mwangi, 2021; Harony et al., 2023), few have explicitly examined how WhatsApp features, such as "last seen," read receipts, or group participation, influence the risk of experiencing emotional, psychological, or physical abuse. Most research focused on marital dissatisfaction or infidelity, giving less attention to spousal violence. This gap underscores the need for targeted investigation into the link between WhatsApp-induced jealousy, surveillance, and different abuse forms among married women in Kenya.

The fifth gap that emerge from the review is that existing studies mainly use cross-sectional and descriptive designs, limiting the ability to infer causal relationships

between social media use and spousal abuse. For instance, most studies on Facebook, such as those by Patel and Singh (2020) and Chen and Huang (2021), provide correlational findings without longitudinal insights. This methodological gap leaves uncertainty about whether social media use leads to abuse or existing abusive relationships drive problematic digital interactions. The proposed study addressed this by collecting empirical data capable of identifying patterns and correlations among different platforms and types of abuse.

Although previous studies recognise that urban-rural differences affect social media use and spousal abuse risk (Nabaggala et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2025), few studies compare these contexts directly among married women. Existing research often treats residency as a binary category or overlooks intermediate contexts, such as peri-urban settlements. Therefore, it remains unclear how access disparities, cultural norms, and digital literacy differences shape the manifestation of social media-related spousal abuse in urban, peri-urban, and rural Kenya. This study addressed that gap by comparing these three contexts populations within Kwale County. Additionally, there is a growing recognition that digital literacy can protect against technology-facilitated abuse (Louie, 2021; Brookfield, 2024; Greyson et al., 2023). However, empirical evidence demonstrating how digital literacy levels among married women influence their vulnerability to or protection from social media-induced abuse in low-resource settings is insufficient. The lack of such contextual findings data limits effective policy formulation.

Therefore, there being no specific studies that link social media use to spousal abuse in Kwale county, related studies show social media can be both a tool for abuse such as stalking, surveillance and a source of support for victims such as media for seeking help, sharing experience thus the need for this study.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on three complementary theories: the radical feminist theory, the functionalist social change theory, and diffusion of innovations theory.

2.10.1 The Radical Feminist Theory

The radical feminist theory provided a critical framework for understanding spousal abuse against married women, particularly in patriarchal societies where men are culturally and socially granted power over women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The theory argued that spousal abuse, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, stems from male dominance and societal structures that normalise such control. In the context of Kwale County, Kenya, traditional norms and beliefs reinforce male authority in marriages, making women particularly vulnerable to abuse (Harvey, Garcia-Moreno, & Butchart, 2019).

With the rise of social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok, new forms of control and abuse have emerged. Abusive spouses used these platforms to monitor, threaten, and manipulate their wives, extending traditional forms of abuse into the digital space (Rizzo, Drouin, Harms, & Miller, 2023). Radical feminist view social media-related spousal abuse as an extension of coercive control. In this regard, social media served as a tool for abusive males to exercise constant surveillance and psychological pressure on their partners (Nikulina & Brumbaugh, 2024). This perspective is essential in understanding how the digital environment, particularly social media use, contributed to spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, and why policy interventions must address both physical and virtual forms of abuse.

Although radical feminist theory had exposed gender oppression and power relations that characterised traditional societies and had weaknesses that limited its applicability to explaining spousal abuse. For example, this perspective adopted an essentialist view of gender that portrayed women as a homogeneous group united by shared experiences of patriarchy (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020). This approach overlooked the diverse experiences of women shaped by race, class, culture, sexuality, geography, and technology. The single focus on patriarchy as the root cause of spousal abuse against blinded radical feminism not to account for intersectionality. The weakness of this single focus is exposed by Karlsson et al. (2021) who revealed that an elevated prevalence of IPV against women in Nordic countries, which have high levels of gender equality. The radical feminist theory adopted a confrontational or separatist stance

toward men and existing social structures (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020). Such a perspective promoted the idea of rejecting heterosexual relationships and creating women-only spaces to resist male dominance. Since heterosexual relationships were inevitable, the separatist stance of radical feminism was impractical and destructive to marriages. The focus on eradicating patriarchy without offering clear strategies for systemic reform could not address spousal abuse against women. Sexual politics and personal autonomy advanced by radical feminism neglected other crucial factors, such as social media use, which was the focus of this study. Functionalism was adopted to provide a broader approach to understanding spousal abuse against married women and the role of social media use.

2.10.2 Functionalist Social Change Theory

The functionalist social change theory offered a valuable lens through which to understand the role of social media in spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County. Rooted in structural functionalism, the theory viewed society as a system of interrelated parts that functioned together to maintain stability and social order (Siregar, 2022). The theory was appropriate for this study because it provided a structural perspective on how changes in social institutions and technologies affect social norms, relationships, and individual behaviours. Any change within one component of the system such as the increasing use of social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, or TikTok could trigger changes in other components, including marital relationships.

Marriages, like societies, depended on the balance of roles, expectations, and behaviours. As new external influences such as social media penetrate marriages in Kwale County, they introduced new dynamics that challenged traditional roles and expectations. For instance, exposure to alternative lifestyles, social comparisons, or digital interactions outside the marriage could create tensions and conflicts. Tasew and Getahun (2021) argued that such conflicts emerge as the marital system adapts or resists these new contextual factors. In this context, spousal abuse could be viewed as a reaction to the perceived disruption of the marital equilibrium caused by social media influences. A partner may resort to abuse as a way of expressing displeasure, asserting control, or resisting the behavioural changes introduced through digital interactions. This theoretical perspective aligned with the criminological focus of the study,

highlighting how social media contributed to marital conflicts and spousal abuse by disrupting traditional family structures and expectations within Kwale County.

Although the functionalist social change theory provided a broader approach to spousal abuse that accommodates the role of social media use, it has some limitations. Its first weakness was the emphasis on social order, equilibrium, and the maintenance of harmony within society. Functionalist theorists considered social problems, including marital conflict, as temporary dysfunctions that serve to restore balance (Sigerar, 2022). Therefore, the theory overlooked the deep-rooted power inequalities, gender-based oppression, and other factors underlying spousal abuse. By treating domestic violence as a deviation from normal family functioning rather than as a manifestation of structural inequality, the functionalist approach minimized the severity of abuse and failed to adequately address the patriarchal systems that perpetuated it. The functionalist social change theory often assumed that all social institutions, such as marriage, function to benefit society as a whole (Siregar, 2022). This assumption masked how these institutions could reinforce unequal gender roles that enabled spousal abuse. Such perspectives could inadvertently normalize male authority and female dependence. Since functionalism tended to focus on the positive functions of social systems, it could not adequately capture the realities of spousal abuse and the influence of social media. For example, digital surveillance of married women by their husband represented power imbalances rather than social adaptations as the functionalist social change theory viewed it. The fact that functionalism considered change as a slow process, it could not adequately capture the rapid technological and cultural transformations that affected relationship dynamics. These weaknesses informed the decision to use the diffusion of innovation theory to guide this study.

2.10.3 Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The diffusion of innovations theory (DOI), developed by Everett Rogers in 2003, offered a valuable perspective for understanding how new ideas or technologies spread within a society. The theory is appropriate for this study because it provided a robust framework for understanding how the adoption of technologies, such as social media, influenced social behaviours and marital dynamics. DOI showed how the adoption of social media platforms influenced its perpetration and prevention. Social media was a

rapidly diffusing innovation that had transformed communication patterns, potentially altering power dynamics within intimate relationships. While it could serve as a tool for empowerment and access to support networks, it also presented avenues for surveillance, harassment, and control by abusive partners (Bailey et al., 2024). The DOI framework could help analyse how the characteristics of social media affected its adoption and the subsequent impact on spousal relationships.

Empirical studies have applied DOI to examine the intersection of technology adoption and spousal abuse. For instance, Mattu and Saha (2024) utilised DOI to explore how the diffusion of mobile technologies in Sub-Saharan Africa influences women's attitudes toward spousal. The findings of Mattu and Saha (2024) suggested that increased access to mobile innovations could lead to shifts in social norms and behaviours, potentially reducing the tolerance of spousal. Conversely, the pervasive nature of social media could also facilitate the extension of abuse beyond physical boundaries, enabling perpetrators to exert control through digital means (Bailey et al., 2024). Social media use could also lead to unhealthy behaviours weaken spousal relationships. For example, Konyar and Ersanli (2022) identify that social media addiction as a risk for marital dissatisfaction and spousal abuse. This duality underscored the importance of understanding the nuanced ways in which social media, as a diffusing innovation, could both mitigate and exacerbate spousal abuse. As such, the DOI provided a theoretical perspective on how the adoption and use of social media platforms influence the dynamics of spousal abuse among married women

2.11 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in figure 1 above showed the relationship between the independent variable (social media use) and dependent variable (spousal abuse against married women) under the influence of intervening variable (digital Literacy). The framework was grounded in three interrelated theories that collectively explained the role of social media in disruption of traditional norms hence triggering of social change, which collectively influenced the prevalence of gender related spousal abuse in Kwale County.

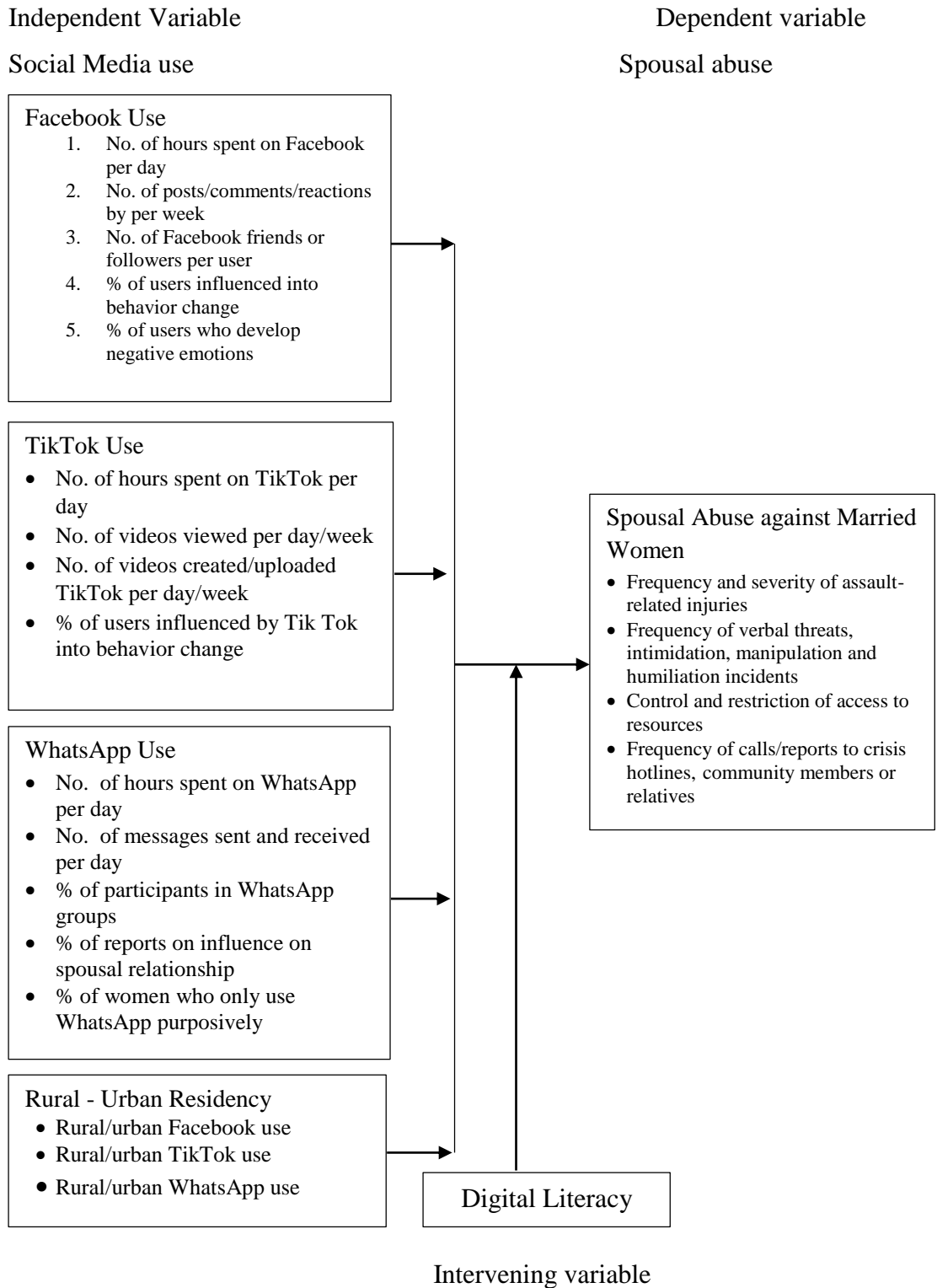


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Researcher)

The Feminist Theory highlights the role of patriarchy, gender inequality and traditional cultural norms in perpetuating spousal abuse. According to this theory, social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok may expose women to alternative

lifestyles, empowerment movements, and gender equality campaigns, which could challenge existing patriarchal dominance. This perceived threat to male authority may provoke abusive behaviours from spouses attempting to maintain control. The Functionalist Social Change Theory explains that social media represents a dynamic factor that introduces new behaviours and expectations into marriages and as spouses adapt the changes brought by digital interactions, conflicts may arise, leading to abuse. The conceptual framework displays some of the measurable indicators of the social media and spousal abuse in the study area. The DOI theory reveal how the penetration of social media in society influences human behaviours and relationship dynamics. When the influence of social media disrupts spousal relationship dynamics, the risk of spousal abuse becomes high.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Study Location

Kwale County is located in Kenya's Coastal Region, covering an area of 8,270.2 square kilometres and comprising six sub-counties: Kinango, Msambweni, Matuga, Shimba Hills, Samburu, and Lunga Lunga. The county's blend of urban and rural settings exposes residents to diverse socio-economic dynamics and cultural practices that influence both social media usage and the manifestation of spousal abuse (Mwatsahu, 2022). Despite relatively low social media penetration, many adults in Kwale have significant exposure to digital platforms (Stats Kenya, 2024). Additionally, strong adherence to traditional cultural values, including practices like arranged marriages of underage girls (Ali, 2017), further complicated the social context, making Kwale County ideal for exploring the intersection of social media and spousal abuse from a criminological lens.

Kwale County was also purposely selected for this study due to its rising cases of gender-based violence (GBV) including spousal abuse, exacerbated by poverty, low literacy levels that create a permissive environment for spousal abuse and entrenched patriarchal norms (National Council on the Administration of Justice, 2022). The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) reveal that 43% of women and 35% of men in Kwale believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances (KNBS, 2023). Such findings reveal entrenched patriarchal norms that encourage husbands to abuse their wives. The report also indicated among women who are currently married or cohabiting in Kwale County, 37% have experienced physical violence, while 4% experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives (KNBS, 2023). This figure is based on reported cases, which are often underreported. Also, 40% of women who have ever been in a relationship have experienced economic, psychological, emotional, physical, or sexual violence from their most recent intimate partners (KNBS, 2023). These figures demonstrate the high magnitude of spousal abuse in Kwale County, highlighting the need for investigation into the matter. Furthermore, the rapid growth in mobile phone penetration and internet access has increased social media use, introducing new factors in marriage, such as poor communication and jealousy due to excessive use of social media (Communications Authority of Kenya,

2022). Such factors can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, which can escalate to spousal abuse. This context presented a critical criminological concern, making Kwale County an ideal location to study the role of social media in spousal abuse against married women.

3.2 Research Design

The correlational research design was used to facilitate the study. The correlational design was appropriate because it allowed the measurement and analysis of the relationship between variables or the impact of one variable on another. Therefore, it facilitated the evaluation of the impact of social media use on spousal abuse. A correlational design was effective in identifying whether and how variables were related without manipulating them. Similarly, the study aimed to determine how social media use affects spousal abuse without manipulating these variables. Since spousal abuse is a sensitive and potentially traumatic topic, experimental designs that required manipulation would be unethical. Correlational design enabled the use of statistical tools, such as Pearson's correlation and regression analysis, which evaluated impact and relationship. This research design was also suitable because it enabled controlling confounding variables such as age, education level, or socioeconomic status.

3.3 Population of the Study

The study population refers to the general group of people, objects, items, or cases sharing identical features or characteristics (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). According to Majid (2018), it is important to identify the population of interest early in research in order to ensure relevance and precision in data collection. The County has an estimated population of 866,820 of which 49.0 percent is male and 50.9 percent female (KNBS, 2019). The target population was married women who have undergone spousal abuse who were aged 15 years and above in Kwale County. The study assumed all married women have experienced some form of spousal abuse (psychological, physical and emotional) in Kwale County. Therefore, the 118,646 married women in Kwale County (County Government of Kwale, 2023) formed the target study population.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

A sample is the element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016).

3.4.1 Sample Size Determination

The study used Yamane's method to calculate the sample size as indicated below (Kharuddin et al., 2020).

$$N = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

Where;

N is the population of the study

e is the margin of error

The study population in Kwale County is 118,646. Since the confidence interval is 95%, the margin of error is 5% (0.05).

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{118,646}{1+(118,646 \times 0.05^2)} = 398.7$$

3.4.2 Sampling Method

Out of the married women in Kwale County, a sample of 399 was obtained through the use of multistage, snowball and purposive sampling methods. The purposive sampling technique guided a researcher to select participants based on their specific characteristics (Ahmed, 2024). The inclusion criteria for this study was married women, aged 18 years and above, and live in Kwale County. In each of the six sub counties: Matuga, Msambweni, Samburu, Shimba hills, Lunga Lunga and Kinango, two locations were sampled. The researcher purposively selected a rural and urban location in each of the sub counties. Snowball method was used to identify the spousal abused women. Although the calculated sample size was 399, the actual sample size that was obtained was 263 which was about 65% of the sample, and is acceptable as a strong response rate in social science according to Kharuddin et al., (2020).

The study also purposively included the following Key Informants; security officers (OCPD and DCIO), professional counsellors, community health assistants, and chiefs. Six OCPD, 6 DCIO, 12 professional counsellors, 6 community health assistants, and 12 chiefs in Kwale County. Community health assistants and professional counsellors were crucial informants due to their role in handling abuse cases and offering

psychosocial support, while administrators and security officers were key stakeholders in enforcing laws and policies addressing spousal abuse and cyber-related crimes. This diverse group ensured the study captured the multifaceted nature of social media-facilitated spousal abuse, including its social, psychological, and legal dimensions, which is critical from a criminological perspective.

3.5 Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires and interview schedules as the instruments for collecting data on the independent and dependent variables.

3.5.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was chosen as the primary data collection instrument for this study because it enables systematic, quantifiable measurement of both social media usage and spousal abuse indicators across a large sample. Its structured format facilitated the collection of standardised responses that can be readily compared and statistically analysed. Additionally, using a questionnaire helped ensure consistency and objectivity in the data collection process, which was essential for a study that aimed to explore sensitive topics such as spousal abuse and the influence of platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp on marital dynamics.

The questionnaire was divided into A-F sections. It started with a demographic segment comprising close-ended questions on age, gender, education, occupation, income, and years of marriage, providing a contextual background for each respondent. Subsequent sections focused on social media usage, featuring items such as the number of hours spent on each platform per day, frequency of posts, comments, reactions, and messages sent or received. The last sections addressed experiences of spousal abuse by measuring the frequency and severity of various abuse types, including physical, emotional, and economic abuse, as well as assessing the influence of social media on spousal relationships. This comprehensive approach ensured that both quantitative and

qualitative aspects of the study are effectively captured, allowing for robust analysis and meaningful insights.

3.5.2 Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was chosen as a complementary data collection tool because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of experiences and perceptions that are often difficult to capture through structured questionnaires alone. Given the sensitive nature of spousal abuse and the nuanced role that social media may play in these dynamics, an interview schedule enabled key informants to articulate their insights in their own words. This flexibility encouraged rich, detailed narratives that can reveal underlying contexts, emotions, and complexities that standardised instruments might overlook. Furthermore, the open-ended nature of the interview schedule supported a more adaptive approach, allowing interviewers to probe and clarify responses, thus enhancing the validity and depth of the data collected.

The interview schedule was structured into distinct sections that mirror the key themes of the study. It began with general questions to build rapport and gather preliminary contextual information about the participant's role and experiences with spousal abuse and social media. Subsequent sections delved into specific areas such as the impact of social media usage (across platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp) on marital relationships, the various forms and triggers of spousal abuse, and the mechanisms of support and intervention. Each section included open-ended questions followed by potential probes that helped to explore the participant's experiences and observations in greater detail. This design ensured that while the interview remains flexible and conversational, it still systematically covered all critical areas of the research topic, thereby complementing the quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire.

3.6 Pilot Study

Before the actual fieldwork is conducted, a pilot study was conducted to test research instruments to ensure they answer the objectives as intended. To achieve this, pilot testing was done on individuals having similar characteristics to the population to be studied. The pilot study used 10% of the sample size of the proposed study. The Pilot study was done in Likoni Sub-County and used to evaluate the validity and reliability

of the instruments. Likoni Sub-County was chosen because of having a representative population given that it borders Kwale County to the North East.

3.6.1 Validity of the Instrument

The development of research instruments (Questionnaire and Interview schedules) was done by examining the research objectives, hypotheses, and the related literature. The researcher read through the study instruments and confirm proper coverage of all the objectives. The supervisors and other research experts were also contacted to further establish the validity of the study instruments. This established the content validity of the instrument.

3.6.2 Reliability of the Instrument

The test-retest method was used to establish the reliability of the instruments. Data from the pilot study were used to evaluate the clarity and reliability of the instruments. The analysis of the internal consistency of the questionnaires reveal a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.79. Since a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7 is acceptable, the questionnaire had a high internal consistency.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Upon obtaining a research permit from NACOSTI, the researcher proceeded to select and train six suitable research assistants. The researchers then obtained permission from the relevant gate keepers (Government Institutions) in the area of study. The principal researcher trained six research assistants on ethical data collection methods.

The actual study instruments (questionnaires and interview schedules) were administered by the principal and six assistant researchers after confirmation of their validity and reliability. The researchers guided the respondents in understanding the questions within the research instruments. In the event of illiteracy, the respondents were assisted by the research assistants. Data was collected by the research team in each sub county where three research assistants were allocated to the urban location while the other three were allocated to the rural ward. The principal researcher supervised the work accordingly. Sessions with key informants were mainly conducted by the principal researcher in each sub county using interview schedule as a guide. Both the

quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and subjected to SPSS version 25 for cleaning (sorting and coding) and analysis.

3.8 Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was done using SPSS version 25. Descriptive analysis was done using frequencies and percentages. The inferential statistics Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis were utilised to analyse the influence of WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok on various forms of spousal abuse. The analysis enhanced quantification of variables like; hours on social media, messages sent, and abuse severity indices among others in the document thus determining the strength of the association between social media usage patterns and abuse levels. Independent sample t-tests and ANOVA was used to compare the use of different social media platforms. The comparison of social media use and spousal abuse between rural and urban married women will also be done using independent sample t-test. Linear regression was used evaluate the impact of single predictors (Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, rural-urban residency) on spousal abuse incidence or severity. Multiple regression was used to determine the impact of two or more predictors on spousal abuse incidence or severity and the moderating role of digital literacy. Below is the regression equation for the study.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \dots + \beta_n X_n + \epsilon$$

Where:

- Y = Dependent variable (e.g., Spousal Abuse Score or incidence)
- β_0 = Intercept (the expected value of Y when all Xs = 0)
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$ = Coefficients (indicating the effect size of each predictor)
- X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n = Independent variables (aspects of social media use)
- ϵ = Error term (residuals/unexplained variance)

Qualitative data was analysed using themes and narratives which are suitable because the study involves sensitive social issues like spousal abuse and social media influence, which require deep understanding of experiences. The themes and narratives captured common patterns in qualitative data collected using questionnaires and interviews. They also allowed the researcher to explore how social media contributes to or escalates abuse, control, or emotional manipulation.

Table 1: Summary of Data Analysis Methods

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Statistical Methods
H ₀₁ : There is no statistical significance on the effect of Facebook use on spousal abuse among couples in Kwale County, Kenya.	Facebook use	Spousal abuse	Frequencies and Percentages Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis Linear Regression Themes and Narratives
H ₀₂ : There is no statistical significance on effect of TikTok use in spousal abuse among couples in Kwale County, Kenya.	TikTok use	Spousal abuse	Frequencies and Percentages Pearson correlation coefficient analysis Linear Regression Themes and Narratives
H ₀₃ : There is no statistical significance on influence of WhatsApp use on spousal abuse among couples in Kwale County, Kenya.	WhatsApp use	Spousal abuse	Frequencies and Percentages Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis Linear Regression Themes and Narratives
H ₀₄ : There is no significant difference in the impact of social media use on spousal abuse among urban and rural married women in Kwale County, Kenya.	Facebook use TikTok use WhatsApp use	Spousal abuse	Frequencies and Percentages Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis ANOVA T-test Linear and multiple regression Themes and Narratives

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study involved human participants and sensitive topics, such as spousal abuse linked to social media usage. Therefore, several ethical principles guided the research process. Participation was entirely voluntary. All respondents were fully informed of the study's objectives, potential risks, and benefits before providing written informed consent. They were also assured of their right to withdraw at any stage without facing any consequences. Given the delicate nature of the subject, strict confidentiality and anonymity was observed. No personal identifiers were collected. All data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. The study also ensured non-maleficence

by protecting participants from harm, exploitation, or emotional distress. Where necessary, participants experiencing distress were referred to professional counsellors or gender-based violence (GBV) support services. Additionally, the study upheld the principle of justice by ensuring fair participant selection without discrimination and balancing risks and benefits. Sensitivity and empathy were prioritised during data collection, with research assistants trained on handling cases of spousal abuse. Legal and ethical compliance were observed through securing research permits from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) (Appendix V) and approval from local County and Sub-County authorities (Appendix VI, VII, VIII & IX). Furthermore, any disclosure of ongoing abuse was handled professionally, maintaining confidentiality while guiding the participant toward appropriate support services in line with legal and ethical requirements.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the results on the role of using social media in spousal abuse among married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The findings focused on the three major social media sites used by Kenyans, including Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp.

4.2 Response Rate of the Married Women

Data was collected from married women from the six Sub-Counties of Kwale County. They were asked to fill the questionnaires appropriately by marking their respective sub-counties using a tick. The calculated sample size of married women, 399, were distributed across the sub-counties proportional to their populations. The findings on the response rate are presented on Table 2 below.

Table 2: Response Rate per Sub-County

Sub-County	Frequency	% of Received Responses	Sample Size	Response Rate
Kinango	29	11.0	44	65.91%
Lunga Lunga	62	23.6	91	68.13%
Matuga	37	14.1	53	69.81%
Msambweni	56	21.3	82	68.29%
Samburu	64	24.3	92	69.57%
Shimba Hills	15	5.7	37	40.54%
Overall	263	100.0	399	65.91%

As shown in Table 2, an overall response rate of 65.91% was realised. The response rate varied across the six sub-counties, with Matuga having the highest at 69.81% and Shimba Hills having the lowest at 40.54%. Although the researcher delivered some of the questionnaires personally to each respondent, the response rate was not so high due to inaccessibility of some parts of the study area. For example, Shimba Hills was the most inaccessible sub-county among the six, making it difficult to reach communities. Deppuh and Ng'ang'a (2022) found poor road infrastructure the main factor behind limited accessibility of many parts of Kwale County.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This part presents the findings on the background information of the respondents, comprising married women and key informants. The demographic details of married women were based on age, highest level of education, current occupation, rural-urban residency, monthly income, and years in marriage. These demographic characteristics were significant because they informed the researcher's comprehension of the respondents' nature, which was a critical consideration for appropriate analysis of the study findings. They aided comparison, enabling the researcher to evaluate the role of social media use in spousal abuse among married women based on their demographic background.

4.3.1 Distribution of Respondents by Age Bracket across Kwale Counties

The study collected information about the age of respondents. The information in Table 3 presents the distribution of the respondents into different age brackets in percentages across the six sub-counties of Kwale County.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age across Six Sub-Counties

Age Bracket (Years)	Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
≤ 20	7.6%	6.9%	6.5%	8.1%	7.1%	9.4%	6.7%
21-30	35.8%	41.4%	30.6%	35.1%	30.4%	40.6%	46.7%
31-40	34.2%	41.4%	41.9%	21.6%	37.5%	31.3%	20.0%
41-50	16.7%	6.9%	11.3%	32.4%	23.2%	10.9%	20.0%
≥ 51	5.7%	3.4%	9.7%	2.7%	1.8%	7.8%	6.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The findings presented in Table 3 revealed that the majority of married women involved in the study were aged between 21 and 30 years (35.8%). This may have been explained by the low socioeconomic status of communities in Kwale County that predisposed women to early marriage after finishing their primary and/or secondary education school. Married women aged between 31 and 40 years formed the second-largest age group (34.2%). The third and fourth-largest age groups comprised women with 41-50 years and ≤ 20 years, respectively. Married women aged 51 years and above formed the smallest age group (5.7%). This small proportion may have been explained by the

low life expectancy and youthfulness of the population (County Government of Kwale, 2025). From the recorded percentages findings implied that most (70%) of married women in Kwale County were aged between 21 and 40 years. Table 3 also revealed that the age brackets of married women vary across the six sub-counties. The proportion of respondents in age brackets 21-30 years and 31-40 years were similar in Kinango Sub-County. However, Lunga Lunga was the only sub-county with a higher proportion of married women aged 31-40 years compared to their counterparts aged 21-30 years.

4.3.2 Rural-Urban Residency

The respondents were requested to indicate describe where they lived as urban, peri-urban, or rural. Such informed and was considered important to collect because it would provide insights into environmental factors that influenced social media use and risk of spousal abuse. The information about the rural-urban residency was presented in Table 4 below. The results showed that the majority (61.2%) of the respondents resided in rural areas while 24% and 14.8% of them lived in peri-urban and urban parts of Kwale County. This finding implied that most of married women in Kwale County were predominantly exposed to rural dynamics that shaped spousal abuse and penetration of social media.

Table 4: Distribution across Urban, Peri-Urban, and Rural Areas

Residency	Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Rural	61.2%	62.1%	58.1%	56.8%	57.1%	70.3%	60.0%
Peri-urban	24.0%	31.0%	24.2%	18.9%	23.2%	20.3%	40.0%
Urban	14.8%	6.9%	17.7%	24.3%	19.6%	9.4%	0.0%

The rural-urban residency trends in Kwale were consistent across the sub-counties except for Matuga where there were more respondents from urban areas than those in peri-urban areas. The information in Table 4 placed Matuga as the most urban sub-county since it had the largest proportion (24.2%) of respondents living in urban areas and smallest percentage (56.8%) of respondents living in rural areas compared to other sub counties. Samburu was depicted as the most rural sub-county since it had the largest proportion of respondents coming from rural areas compared to other sub-counties. Shimba Hills had no respondent coming from an urban setup, suggesting low urbanization of the sub-county. Most of Kwale County is rural, which Gracia et al.

(2021) associated with increased risk of spousal abuse due to traditional customs, early marriages, poverty, low education, and other socioeconomic disadvantages.

4.3.3 Education Background

Married women involved in the study were required to indicate the highest level of education they achieved. This information was significant to the study because it would help to determine whether the level of education influence the risk of spousal abuse and the use of various social media platforms. Table 5 presents the findings of the analysis of the data collected about the highest level of education. The results indicate that married women who completed secondary education as their highest level of education made up 40.7% of their population, making them the majority. The second-largest group based on the highest level of education comprised of graduates of colleges or technical training institutions. Married women who end their education at the primary level were 19.4% while those with no formal education were only 2.7%. However, respondents with no formal education were more than those with postgraduate degree, indicating educational gaps among married women in Kwale County.

Table 5: Highest Level of Education of Respondents

Highest Level of Education	Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
No formal education	2.7%	3.4%	3.2%	2.7%	1.8%	3.1%	0.0%
Primary Level	19.4%	17.2%	17.7%	16.2%	17.9%	23.4%	26.7%
Secondary level	40.7%	48.3%	37.1%	48.6%	44.6%	34.4%	33.3%
College/Technical Training	27.8%	20.7%	33.9%	18.9%	26.8%	31.3%	26.7%
Bachelor's Degree	7.2%	6.9%	4.8%	10.8%	8.9%	6.3%	6.7%
Postgraduate Degree	2.3%	3.4%	3.2%	2.7%	0.0%	1.6%	6.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 5 also indicated that only 7.2% of married women in Kwale County have a bachelor's degree as their highest educational attainment. Having 78% of married women with at least secondary education is a positive indication for Kwale County in its quest to improve the socioeconomic status of its women. Married women with secondary education as the highest educational level were the majority across all the six sub-counties of Kwale County. Respondents with a postgraduate degree formed the smallest group across all sub-counties except Shimba Hills, with 6.7% of its respondents having this educational achievement. Matuga had the highest percentage

(48.6%) of women who did not proceed with their education at the end of their secondary school, closely followed by Kinango at 48.3%. The findings also show that Lunga Lunga had respondents with the largest proportion (33.9%) of married women with college diploma or technical training.

The low percentage of women with no formal education across the sub-counties signifies consistent efforts in improving their educational background, which is a known predictor of vulnerability to spousal abuse. Oluwagbemiga et al. (2023) revealed that women with high education statuses have a low risk of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse by their spouses. Education provides structured opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills regarding digital technologies and their application in daily activities (Haleem et al., 2022). Therefore, moderate educational levels of married women in Kwale County reduced their likelihood of being abused while improving their ability to use digital tools, such as social media platforms.

4.3.4 Employment and Occupation of Respondents

The information about the employment status and current occupation of respondents helped the researcher to evaluate their socioeconomic background, which influenced spousal abuse. The majority of married women in Kwale County included in the study were unemployed (40.7%), followed by those who identify as farmers (22.4%). Such results implied that most married women in Kwale County had no or low income given that farming was mainly for subsistence. Additionally, the information places farming as the biggest employer in Kwale County. Respondents who are formally employed, either by the government or private sector, form the third-largest group (15.6%). Table 6 also indicated that self-employed married women and those who worked as casual labourers were 13.3% and 7.2%, respectively. Therefore, married women who were involved in the study with a reliable source of income were about a third (36.1%). Women who were studying made up only 0.8% of the respondents. As such, women face significant challenges that discourage them from exploring educational opportunities.

Table 6: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Unemployed	40.7%	44.8%	48.4%	35.1%	32.1%	42.2%	40.0%
Self-employed	13.3%	17.2%	9.7%	13.5%	14.3%	14.1%	13.3%
Formal employment	15.6%	13.8%	16.1%	13.5%	16.1%	15.6%	20.0%
Casual Labourer	7.2%	6.9%	6.5%	8.1%	5.4%	10.9%	0.0%
Farmer	22.4%	17.2%	17.7%	29.7%	32.1%	17.2%	20.0%
Student	0.8%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%

The employment trends in Kwale County are also consistent across the sub-counties except for Kinango where self-employed people were equal to those absorbed in farming. Additionally, it is only in Kinango where self-employment absorbed more women than formal employment through the public and private sector. In Msambweni, the number of married women who did farming were equal to their unemployed counterparts. This trend indicated that the exploration of agricultural opportunities in Kwale County created employment for married women.

The high unemployment rate among married women in Kwale County had significant implications for their risk of spousal abuse. This finding aligned with research evidence, such as Molina et al. (2025), that associated unemployment with a high risk of spousal abuse. Such findings reinforced the feminist perspective that tied the risk of abuse to the dominance of husbands in marital relationships. In this regard, being unemployed increased the financial reliance and dependence of women on their husbands, elevating their risk of being abused. On the other hand, Bourey et al. (2023) found that women's employment increased their risk of being abused by their husbands. This evidence aligned with the functionalist social change theory, which posited that factors that disrupt social order in marriages caused conflicts and even abuse. As such, the high unemployment among married women in Kwale County could be a protective factor.

4.3.5 Income Level of Respondents

Monthly income was among the demographic characteristics that respondents were required to provide when collecting data. This information was deemed significant to the study because income was a crucial socioeconomic factor that influenced the use of social media and risk of spousal abuse. Therefore, monthly income data helped the

researcher to better understand the dynamics between social media use and spousal abuse among married. The demographic characteristic also helped to conduct comparison of spousal abuse and the use of social media by married women with different income levels.

Table 7: Monthly Income of Respondents across Kwale County

Monthly Income (Ksh.)	Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Below 5,000	43.0%	44.8%	48.4%	40.5%	37.5%	42.2%	46.7%
5,001-10,000	20.2%	13.8%	19.4%	29.7%	28.6%	14.1%	6.7%
10,001-20,000	17.9%	27.6%	16.1%	10.8%	14.3%	23.4%	13.3%
20,001-30,000	9.1%	6.9%	9.7%	5.4%	3.6%	12.5%	26.7%
Above 30,000	9.9%	6.9%	6.5%	13.5%	16.1%	7.8%	6.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The findings presented in Table 7 revealed that respondents with a monthly income of less than Ksh. 5,000 were the majority (43%). Additionally, there was a general reduction in the number of respondents up the income levels at the county level. The Ksh. 5,001-10,000 income level was the second-largest (20.2%), followed by the next income level (Ksh. 10,001-20,000) that had 17.9% of the respondents in Kwale County. Surprisingly, respondents earning more than Ksh. 30,000 monthly were more (9.9%) than those earning Ksh. 20,001-30,000 monthly (9.1%).

The general decline of the proportion of respondents up the income levels were not consistent across the six sub-counties of Kwale. Lunga Lunga had the highest proportion (48.4%) of respondents earning below Ksh. 5,000 while Msambweni had the smallest percentage of respondents earning similar monthly income, followed by Matuga (40.5%). The largest group of respondents earning above Ksh. 30,000 monthly were from Msambweni (16.1%), followed by Matuga (13.5%). In Kinango, Samburu, and Shimba Hills sub-counties, there were more Ksh. 10,001-20,000 income earners than those who earn Ksh. 5,001-10,000. The general trend in monthly income in Kwale

County indicated that the socioeconomic predisposition of married women to spousal abuse given that their low income made them economic dependents of their husbands.

The finding that the majority of married women in Kwale County had no or less income indicated their high risk for spousal abuse based on the feminist perspective. When women have no or less income, they are dependent on their husbands. Financial dependence reinforces male dominance, which feminist theories associated with a high risk of spousal abuse. However, if having no income was reinforced, the roles of wives in marriage, their risk of abuse would become minimal.

4.3.6 Duration in Marriage

The respondents were also required to indicate the duration there have been in marriage. The researcher considered this information significant to the study because it helped evaluate the marital experience of the respondents and how it influences their exposure to spousal abuse and use of social media platforms. The findings presented in Table 8 below show that all the respondents were married for at least one year at the time of data collection. The majority (33.5%) of respondents had been married for the last 1-5 years. They were followed by those who had been in marriage for 6-10 years (31.2%), 11-15 years (22.8%), and >15 years (12.5%), respectively.

Table 8: Duration in Marriage

Years in Marriage	Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
< 1 year	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0%
1-5 years	33.5%	41.4%	29.0%	37.8%	23.2%	39.1%	40.0%
6-10 years	31.2%	20.7%	40.3%	24.3%	33.9%	31.3%	20.0%
11-15 years	22.8%	27.6%	21.0%	10.8%	32.1%	18.8%	33.3%
> 15 years	12.5%	10.3%	9.7%	27.0%	10.7%	10.9%	6.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

While Kinango had the highest proportion of respondents who had been married for 1-5 years, it does not follow the general trend of Kwale County where the number of married women reduces as the duration in marriage increases. Only Kinango and Samburu had consistent proportion of respondents based on their years married compared with the general trend in Kwale County. Msambweni had the smallest

number of participants who were married for 1-5 years since most of them were in marriage for the last 6-10 years. Matuga had the highest proportion of respondents who had been in married for at least 15 years. Generally, these results suggest that most of married women were still in their youthful stage. The differences in the duration in marriage across the sub-counties were expected to reflect in spousal abuse and its relationship with social media use.

Being married for a long duration can be a protective factor for spousal abuse against women. Being new in marriage increases the risk of spousal abuse due to the shifting norms, social expectations, and power dynamics in marital relationships (Ali et al., 2022). Therefore, the high proportion of women who have been married for a short duration may indicate a high rate of spousal abuse. This implication aligns with the functionalist social change theory since starting a marital relationship involves a shift in roles, social expectations, and power dynamics that can lead to disagreements, which can escalate to spousal abuse.

4.4 Spousal Abuse against Married Women

The study inquired the respondents about their experience of spousal abuse by asking them how often they sustain physical injuries from abuse, their spouses threaten them, and their spouses control their access to phones or social media. Collecting this data was significant because it helped the study to achieve the four objectives, which included spousal abuse. The findings are presented in Table 9 below. After analysing data from Kwale County, the study found that married women who had never experienced physical injuries from spousal abuse were 51.0% while those who rarely had physical injuries were 19%. Those who had physical injuries from spousal abuse occasionally and frequently were 17.5% and 12.5%, respectively. Therefore, about a third of married women in Kwale County have experienced physical abuse.

Table 9: Frequency of Spousal Abuse

Frequency of Spousal Abuse		Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Physical	Never	51.0%	48.3%	54.8%	48.6%	51.8%	45.3%	66.7%
Injuries	Rarely	19.0%	20.7%	19.4%	13.5%	19.6%	20.3%	20.0%
From SA	Occasionally	17.5%	6.9%	19.4%	16.2%	17.9%	21.9%	13.3%
	Frequently	12.5%	24.1%	6.5%	21.6%	10.7%	12.5%	0.0%
Spousal	Never	37.3%	31.0%	37.1%	37.8%	37.5%	43.8%	20.0%
Threat	Rarely	14.8%	31.0%	12.9%	16.2%	8.9%	14.1%	13.3%
	Occasionally	38.0%	34.5%	40.3%	32.4%	35.7%	39.1%	53.3%
	Very Often	9.9%	3.4%	9.7%	13.5%	17.9%	3.1%	13.3%
Control	Never	50.2%	55.2%	62.9%	37.8%	42.9%	46.9%	60.0%
Access	Rarely	12.9%	6.9%	9.7%	16.2%	16.1%	17.2%	0.0%
To	Sometimes	25.9%	34.5%	16.1%	24.3%	28.6%	29.7%	26.7%
Phones	Always	11.0%	3.4%	11.3%	21.6%	12.5%	6.3%	13.3%
SM								

The findings also revealed that 38% and 9.9% of all respondents reported that their spouses had threatened them occasionally and very often, respectively. Those with no and rare experience of spousal threats were 37.3% and 14.8%, respectively. These results implied that spousal threats (physical abuse) were more prevalent than other forms of abuse among married women in Kwale County. More than half of the respondents (50.2%) have never had their access to phones or social media controlled by their spouses. Respondents who had rarely, occasionally, and always experienced controlled access to phones or social media were 12.9%, 25.9% and 11%, respectively. These findings placed psychological abuse the second-most prevalent form of spousal abuse after verbal abuse (spousal threats).

Form Table 10, the findings revealed significant differences from the sub-counties of Kwale County. Respondents from Matuga who reported occasional and frequent physical injuries from SA were 16.2% and 21.6%, respectively, which indicated that it was the sub-county with the highest prevalence of physical spousal abuse. Shimba Hills had the lowest proportion of respondents with the occasional and frequent experience of physical injuries from SA (13.3% and 0%, respectively). About two-thirds of respondents (66.7%) from this sub-county indicated that they have never had physical injuries from SA. However, Shimba Hills had the highest proportion of respondents who experienced spousal threats occasionally (53.3%) and very often (13.3%). Msambweni matched Shimba Hills since 35.7% and 17.9% of its respondents had experience spousal threats occasionally and very often, respectively. Matuga had the highest proportion of respondents who had experienced controlled access to phones and social media occasionally (24.3%) and frequently (21.6%). Lunga Lunga had the lowest

proportion of married women whose access to phone and social media had been controlled by their spouses since 62.9% of indicated that they had never had such an experience.

The findings aligned with Ikwara et al. (2025) who analysed data from the 2022 KDHS IPV against women aged 15–49. The study revealed that intimate partner sexual violence affects nearly one in five Kenyan women, underscoring the persistence of gender-based power imbalances and cultural norms that normalize male dominance in relationships. Melkam et al. (2024) also found that IPV remains widespread among reproductive-age women across Kenya. They estimated that approximately 34% of married women had experienced either physical, sexual, emotional within their relationships. Emotional abuse and controlling behaviour were particularly prevalent, with many women reporting experiences, such as verbal humiliation, jealousy-driven restrictions, and being prevented from visiting family or friends. These findings were consistent with the study of Kwale which found that at least 40% of the respondents had frequent or occasional experience of emotional abuse or controlling behaviour of their husbands. Melkam et al. (2024) attributed these patterns to entrenched patriarchal norms and regional disparities in women’s empowerment, noting that rural women and those economically dependent on their partners were more likely to experience control and violence. As such, the high frequency of physical, emotional abuse, and spousal control among married women in Kwale County may stem from patriarchal traditions that encourage husbands to dominate their wives.

4.5. Reporting Abuse

Information on reporting spousal abuse to a crisis hotline or anyone including relatives or community members was significant to the study because it helped to evaluate the help-seeking behaviours of married women experiencing spousal abuse. Such information would shape the recommendations of this study. The findings on respondents’ response to frequency of reporting abuse are presented in Table 10. The majority (55.2%) of respondents in Kwale County had never reported being abused by their spouses. About 17.1%, 24.0%, and 3% had reported cases of abuse by their husband rarely, occasionally, and frequently, respectively.

Table 10: Reporting Spousal Abuse

Reporting Abuse	Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Never	55.9%	55.2%	62.9%	51.4%	57.1%	50.0%	60.0%
Rarely	17.1%	10.3%	12.9%	13.5%	17.9%	26.6%	13.3%
Occasionally	24.0%	24.1%	22.6%	32.4%	19.6%	23.4%	26.7%
Frequently	3.0%	10.3%	1.6%	2.7%	5.4%	0.0%	0.0%

Matuga had the highest rates of reporting spousal abuse since 32.4% and 2.7% (35.1% cumulatively) of respondents from this sub-county reported abuse occasionally and frequently, respectively. Kinango also had a high proportion of help-seeking respondents experiencing spousal abuse since 24.1% and 10.3% (34.4% cumulatively) reported abuse occasionally and frequently, respectively. Lunga Lunga had the lowest reporting rate since 62.9% of respondents had never reported any spousal abuse incident, followed by Shimba Hills with 60% of respondents never reporting abuse. The high proportion of married women in Kwale County who did not report spousal abuse is worrisome and indicated the need for urgent intervention.

Previous evidence reflected that the underreporting of spousal abuse incidences found in this study. For example, Okyere et al. (2024) noted that while a substantial proportion of women experience IPV, only a fraction report or disclose these incidents. The study associated underreporting with fear of stigma, retaliation, and limited trust in law enforcement or social support systems. Okyere et al. (2024) noted that women's willingness to report spousal abuse was also influenced by education, economic independence, social awareness, and rural-urban residency. They further identified underreporting as one of the factors affecting the fight against spousal abuse. Ikwara et al. (2025) also found out that many women did not report cases of spousal abuse because they normalized or internalized spousal violence as part of marriage, particularly in patriarchal communities. Underreporting of spousal abuse underrepresented the true prevalence due to social silence surrounding sexual and physical abuse in marital settings.

4.6 Contribution of Social Media to Misunderstanding or Conflicts with Spouse

The study asked the respondents to respond to items that inquired whether social media use caused conflicts, misunderstanding, or quarrels with spouse. Such data were important to the study because it provided insights into married women's awareness or

perceptions of whether their use of social media may lead to being abused by their husbands. The information also provided a clue into what could have been expected from the correlation and regression analyses involving social media use and spousal abuse. Table 11 below presents the findings of the analysis. The majority (41.4%) of the respondents indicated that social media use had never caused misunderstandings, quarrels, or conflicts with their spouses. This group was followed by those whose indicated that SM sometimes (31.9%), frequently (16.3%), and rarely (10.3%) caused misunderstandings, conflicts, or quarrels with their husbands. These findings suggest that social media use caused conflicts and misunderstandings between married women and their husbands that lead to spousal abuse.

Table 11: Contribution of Social Media Use to Misunderstanding or Conflicts with Spouse

How often SM Use Causes Misunderstanding	Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Never	41.4%	48.3%	51.6%	37.8%	35.7%	34.4%	46.7%
Rarely	10.3%	6.9%	8.1%	10.8%	10.7%	15.6%	0.0%
Sometimes	31.9%	27.6%	27.4%	35.1%	39.3%	34.4%	13.3%
Frequently	16.3%	17.2%	12.9%	16.2%	14.3%	15.6%	40.0%

From Table 11, the findings on the contribution of social media use to spousal conflicts and misunderstandings were not consistent across the six sub-counties of Kwale. For example, Lunga Lunga had the highest proportion (51.6%) of respondents who indicated that social media use had never caused or contributed to misunderstanding or conflicts with their husbands. However, the majority of respondents who admitted that social media sometimes (34.4%) or frequently (15.6%) contributed to spousal conflicts or misunderstandings. Such inconsistencies suggest variations in the factors that caused spousal conflicts and misunderstanding across the six sub-counties of Kwale County.

The study determined the social media site that was the most contributor of conflicts and misunderstandings between the respondents and their husbands. This analysis was significant because it helped the study to evaluate the risk of spousal when using different social media sites. The findings are presented in Figure 2 and Table 12 below. The respondents indicated that Facebook was the most common social media site (28.2%) that caused misunderstanding or conflicts with their husbands. It was closely followed by WhatsApp (28.2%) and distantly by TikTok (13.3%). Some (9.5%) of the respondents indicated that WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok equally contributed to

conflicts and misunderstandings with their husbands. Therefore, different social media sites had different level of contributions to misunderstandings or conflicts that could lead to spousal abuse. About 22.4% of the respondents indicated that none of the social media sites cause misunderstandings or conflicts with their spouses. These findings suggested that some married women either were not using social media or their use of social media did not affect their risk of causing conflicts or misunderstanding with their husbands.

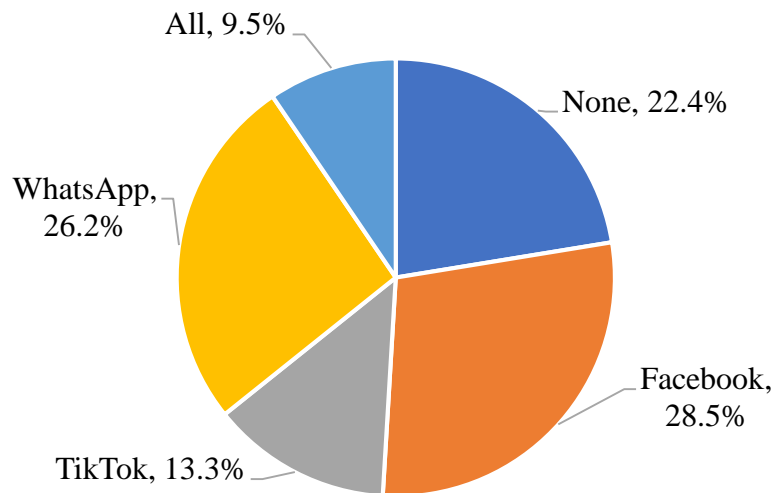


Figure 2: Most Frequent Social Media Site Causing Spousal Conflicts or Misunderstandings

The findings from the six sub-counties presented in Table 12 below revealed different patterns. For example, Facebook was the major culprit in Kinango (37.9%), Matuga (32.4%), Samburu (37.5%), and Shimba Hills (40%). WhatsApp was the major contributor of spousal misunderstandings or conflicts in Lunga Lunga and Msambweni. Lung Lunga had the largest proportion of respondents who indicated that none of the social media site caused misunderstanding or conflicts with their husbands.

Table 12: Contribution of Social Media Sites to Conflict and Misunderstanding

	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
None	24.1%	32.3%	21.6%	19.6%	17.2%	13.3%
Facebook	37.9%	14.5%	32.4%	23.2%	37.5%	40.0%
TikTok	13.8%	9.7%	16.2%	14.3%	14.1%	13.3%
WhatsApp	13.8%	30.6%	27.0%	28.6%	25.0%	26.7%
All	10.3%	12.9%	2.7%	14.3%	6.3%	6.7%

The findings on the contribution of social media on marital conflicts and misunderstandings mirror existing research evidence, which indicated that exposure to violent or aggressive content on media platforms could normalize abusive behaviours and contribute to higher frequencies of spousal abuse. For example, Gavin and Kruis (2022) found that individuals frequently exposed to violent media content were more likely to perpetrate spousal abuse. Although this study linked social media use to spousal abuse, it showed its significance to the cases of married women in Kwale county since it showed how social media content led to disagreements, conflicts, and misunderstandings among couples. Bailey et al. (2024) found that married women were at an increased risk of spousal abuse when their husbands also used social media sites. In such situations, social media use led to conflicts and misunderstandings in marriage. However, the findings of Grogger et al. (2024) revealed that the potential of social media use to reduced marital conflicts and misunderstandings by enhancing access to information, support, and intervention resources.

The feminist perspective, functionalist social change theory, and the diffusion of innovation theory enhanced the understanding of the findings on the contribution of social media use to marital conflicts and misunderstandings. From a radical feminist perspective, social media use contribute to marital conflicts and misunderstandings by reinforcing patriarchal power structures. For example, it introduced new forms of male dominance extending patriarchal control, where men can monitor, manipulate, and publicly undermine their wives. Extending patriarchal control to social media fuelled conflict and misunderstanding in marriages. Jabali et al. (2024) revealed that many men use social media to monitor their wives' online activities, friendships, and communications because they consider women's digital independence as a threat to male authority. This digital surveillance created mistrust and limits women's freedom of expression, mirroring traditional patriarchal control. Social media platforms often objectified women through algorithms that rewarded appearance-based validation (Brasil et al., 2024). In this regard, social media may reinforce patriarchal expectations that women must conform to certain ideals to gain acceptance. When married women engage with such platforms, their partners may perceive their participation as attention-seeking or disloyal, leading to jealousy and conflicts.

According to the functionalist social change theory, social media use could lead to conflicts and misunderstandings between married couples as a result the broader transformation of communication patterns, social structures, and marriage dynamics. The use of social media emerge could disrupt existing norms and relationships, leading to temporary dysfunctions, which can manifest as conflicts and misunderstandings, before married couples adapt to restore equilibrium. Social media fundamentally changed how spouses communicated, spend time together, expressed intimacy, and managed social boundaries. Social media introduced users to new forms of interaction outside the marital unit, expanding their social networks and exposing them to alternative values and lifestyles (Gebremariam et al., 2024). These changes created misunderstandings whereby, their husbands interpreted online behaviours, such as liking photos, chatting privately, and following certain accounts, as violations of trust. Additionally, Langlais et al. (2024) revealed that social media use had shifted communication toward public and performative spaces, sometimes reducing direct interpersonal intimacy. The functionalist theory considered this shift as a period the marriage struggled to adjust to new modes of interaction. The resulting conflicts and misunderstandings mirror a temporary dysfunction as the marital system integrated new technological norms. Although these conflicts were disruptive, they enabled couples to negotiate new patterns of communication, trust, and equality suited to the digital era.

The diffusion of innovations theory emphasised on the roles of innovation characteristics, communication channels, and social context. This theory explained how differences in married women' use of social media and their husbands' acceptance and understanding created tension and misunderstanding. Furthermore, the imbalance in the adoption rates often leads to misunderstandings about motives, privacy, and boundaries (Irene et al., 2025). For instance, a married woman who frequently interacted online may have been considered to neglect the relationship or seek external validation, while their husbands may have felt excluded or mistrustful. Such tensions reflected disparities in technological adaptation rather than inherent relationship flaws. The diffusion of innovations theory noted that users must have developed shared meanings and practices around their use for technologies to be fully integrated (Frei-Landau et al., 2022). In many marriages, this adaptation process was incomplete because partners may have disagreed about what constitutes appropriate online behaviour, how much privacy

should have been maintained, or how transparent digital interactions should have been. These differences led to misinterpretations of social media activities as forms of disrespect or infidelity. Jain et al. (2025) extended this discussion and argued that social media offered advantages such as connectivity and entertainment, but its public nature exposed romantic partners to external influences and comparisons. Constant exposure to idealized portrayals of relationships or interactions with others created jealousy and insecurity. The theory held that over time the disruptive effects of social media tended to diminish as it became fully institutionalized. Therefore, misunderstandings and conflicts resulting from social media use reduced with time as spouses gradually established clearer digital boundaries, communication rules, and trust mechanisms.

4.7 The Effect of Facebook Use on Spousal Abuse

The first objective of the study was evaluated the effect of using Facebook on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The usage aspects under discussion include: time spent on Facebook, the frequency of online activity on Facebook, number of Facebook followers, influence on behaviour, and influence on negative emotions. The data for analysis was obtained through questionnaires for married women.

4.7.1 Responses of Respondents in Relation to Facebook Use

The study evaluated married women's use of Facebook based on the amount of hours spent daily, frequency of weekly reactions, and number of friends and followers. This information was collected since Facebook is a commonly used social media platform, which was important to the study by determining its influence on spousal abuse. The respondents were required to rate their Facebook activity using a 4-point likert scale, by ticking their response to the given statements. Data was analysed using frequencies and percentages. The results are presented in Table 13. Most of the respondents across Kwale County rarely use Facebook because 43% of them spend less than 1 hour every day on this platform. Those who spend 1-2 hours, 3-4 hours, and more than 4 hours on the platform were 30%, 18.3%, and 8.7% respectively. A similar trend was evident across Facebook users in rural and urban areas while those from peri-urban areas have a unique pattern. Heavy users (>4 hours) of Facebook are in peri-urban areas (14.3%), followed by urban respondents (15.4%) and rural respondents (6.2%). The fact that about half

(50.9%) of rural respondents spend less than 1 hour on Facebook implies that married women in rural areas are low consumers of Facebook.

Table 13: Time Spent on Facebook Daily

Facebook Use		Kwale County	Rural	Peri-Urban	Urban
Hours Spent on FB Daily	<1 hour	43.0%	50.9%	25.4%	38.5%
	1-2 hours	30.0%	27.3%	33.3%	35.9%
	3-4 hours	18.3%	15.5%	27.0%	15.4%
	>4 hours	8.7%	6.2%	14.3%	10.3%
Weekly Frequency of Facebook Posts, Comments, Reactions	Never or Rarely	47.1%	55.9%	28.6%	41.0%
	1-5 times	47.1%	39.1%	63.5%	53.8%
	6-10 times	4.9%	4.3%	6.3%	5.1%
	>10 times	0.8%	0.6%	1.6%	0.0%
Number of Facebook Friends & Followers	<100	48.3%	50.3%	42.9%	48.7%
	100-300	15.2%	11.8%	19.0%	23.1%
	301-500	7.2%	9.3%	6.3%	0.0%
	>500	29.3%	28.6%	31.7%	28.2%

The results in Table 13 provide insights into how active married women are on Facebook based on their posts, comments, and reactions to content. Respondents who were never or rarely active on Facebook are 47.1%, which was similar to the proportion of their counterparts who post, comment, or react to contents in Kwale County. There were few married women (4.9%) who posted, commented, or reacted to content 6-10 times a week in Kwale County. Highly active married women on Facebook were also very few in Kwale county because they represented only 0.8% of their population. Compared to urban areas with 41% of married women who were dormant or did not use Facebook, rural areas of Kwale County had more dormant or non-Facebook users. The majority of respondents (48.3%) had less than 100 Facebook friends and followers. This group in number was followed by those (29.3%) who had more than 500 friends and followers on Facebook. The findings revealed that married women with 301-500 followers and friend form the smallest group in Kwale County. This trend was not consistent among married women who lived in urban, rural, and peri-urban areas of the coastal county. As such, the effect of social media use on spousal abuse against married women was expected to vary based on their rural-urban residence.

The finding presented in Table 14 revealed notable variations in Facebook usage patterns among married women across the six sub-counties of Kwale County.

Table 14: Facebook Use across the Sub-Counties of Kwale County

		Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Hours spent on Facebook daily	<1 hour	44.8%	51.6%	43.2%	39.3%	37.5%	40.0%
	1-2 hours	24.1%	25.8%	35.1%	30.4%	35.9%	20.0%
	3-4 hours	17.2%	19.4%	13.5%	19.6%	20.3%	13.3%
	> 4 hours	13.8%	3.2%	8.1%	10.7%	6.3%	26.7%
Weekly frequency of posting or reacting to content on Facebook	Never/Rarely	44.8%	58.1%	35.1%	42.9%	50.0%	40.0%
	1-5 times	51.7%	35.5%	62.2%	48.2%	45.3%	53.3%
	6-10 times	0.0%	4.8%	2.7%	8.9%	4.7%	6.7%
	>10 times	3.4%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
FB Followers Friends	>100	55.2%	46.8%	51.4%	48.2%	45.3%	46.7%
	100-300	13.8%	14.5%	16.2%	16.1%	14.1%	20.0%
	301-500	6.9%	12.9%	2.7%	1.8%	6.3%	20.0%
	>500	24.1%	25.8%	29.7%	33.9%	34.4%	13.3%

In terms of daily time spent on the platform, the largest proportion of respondents in all sub-counties reported using Facebook for less than one hour per day, with Lunga Lunga (51.6%) and Kinango (44.8%) leading in this category. Usage between one and two hours daily was also common, particularly in Matuga (35.1%) and Samburu (35.9%). Moderate use of three to four hours per day was highest in Samburu (20.3%), while heavy use exceeding four hours daily was most pronounced in Shimba Hills (26.7%), suggesting a relatively more intensive engagement in this sub-county compared to others, where this figure remained below 14%.

Regarding to the weekly frequency of posting or reacting to Facebook content, the majority of respondents across sub-counties fell into the “Never/Rarely” or “1–5 times” categories. Notably, more than half of respondents in Lunga Lunga (58.1%) and Samburu (50.0%) rarely engaged in content interaction, indicating lower active participation despite possible platform access. On the other hand, Matuga recorded the highest proportion of users engaging 1–5 times weekly (62.2%), followed closely by Shimba Hills (53.3%). Higher posting frequencies (6–10 times per week) were relatively rare, peaking in Msambweni (8.9%), while engagement exceeding 10 times per week was almost non-existent, with minimal occurrence in Kinango (3.4%), Lunga Lunga (1.6%), and absent in the other sub-counties.

The distribution of Facebook friends showed that a substantial proportion of women in all sub-counties had more than 100 friends. The largest group across the board consisted of those with over 100 but fewer than 300 friends, although the most common individual category was having more than 100 friends in general, ranging from 45.3% in Samburu to 55.2% in Kinango. High friend counts above 500 were most prevalent in Msambweni (33.9%) and Samburu (34.4%), suggesting stronger online networking in these areas, while Shimba Hills had the lowest proportion in this category (13.3%).

Overall, the data suggested that while passive Facebook use (spending short daily periods on the platform and low posting frequency) is dominant among married women in Kwale County, there are pockets of higher engagement. Shimba Hills stood out for heavy daily use, Matuga for moderate but consistent weekly activity, and Msambweni and Samburu for large online friend networks, pointing to different social media usage cultures within the county.

4.7.2 Influence of Facebook on Behaviour and Emotions

The influence of Facebook use on their behaviour and negative emotion experience was evaluated. This analysis was considered important because it would help understand the contribution of Facebook use on behaviours and emotions that may give husbands the excuse for abusing their wives in Kwale County. The findings presented in Table 15 below show that the content on Facebook influence the behaviour of only 39.5% of respondents. The remaining 60.5% indicated that the contents they interact with on Facebook did not affect their behaviours, such as dressing style, hobbies, and relationships. The findings also revealed that there were less married women whose behaviours was affected by Facebook content in rural areas (33.3%) compared to their counterparts in urban areas of Kwale County. When the negative effects of Facebook content spills over to their marital relationships, their risk for spousal abuse may rise.

Table 15: Influence of Facebook Use on Behaviour and Emotions

		Kwale County	Rural	Peri-urban	Urban
FB content influence on behaviour	No	60.5%	62.1%	52.4%	66.7%
	Yes	39.5%	37.9%	47.6%	33.3%
Experience negative emotions due to Facebook use	Never	39.9%	47.2%	31.7%	23.1%
	Rarely	17.5%	17.4%	14.3%	23.1%
	Sometimes	35.7%	28.0%	49.2%	46.2%
	Frequently	6.8%	7.5%	4.8%	7.7%

The findings in Table 15 also revealed that some married women in Kwale County admitted that the use of Facebook exposed them to experiencing negative emotions, including sadness, stress, and jealousy. Respondents who never, rarely, sometimes, and frequently experience negative emotions due to Facebook use in Kwale County were 39.9%, 17.5%, 35.7%, and 6.8%, respectively. Rural areas had more married women who never experience (47.2%) compared to their counterparts in peri-urban (31.7%) and urban areas (23.1%). As such, rural-urban residency may determine whether married women experience negative emotions when or after using Facebook. These findings revealed that married women would develop behavioural changes or negative emotions due to their Facebook use. The behavioural changes and negative emotions were significant in spousal abuse because they would cause conflict or misunderstanding between husbands and their wives.

The findings above were consistent with the study by Stangl et al. (2023) which revealed that that excessive or uncontrolled Facebook use is associated with a range of detrimental behavioural and emotional outcomes: heightened perceived anxiety, depression, loneliness, lower self-esteem, reduced life satisfaction, and disrupted sleep quality. Such changes are significant because they may increase the risk of disagreements between married women and their spouses. Latifian et al. (2024) which linked Facebook use to behavioural and emotional changes that triggered spousal abuse against women in Tehran, Iran. The study identified excessive use or addition to Facebook a source of behaviours and attitudes husbands find intolerable, leading to arguments and marital conflicts. Facebook use was significantly linked to intimate partner violence (IPV), where Facebook-related jealousy mediated the relationship, especially when both partners are highly jealousy of each other.

4.7.3 Correlation of Facebook Use and Spousal Abuse

Correlation of physical injuries incurred from spousal abuse and hours respondents spent on Facebook daily was evaluated using the Pearson’s correlation coefficient. The correlation analysis was repeated by replacing physical injuries from spousal abuse with spousal threats and controlling access to phone and social media separately. These correlation analyses were significant to the study because they provided insights into patterns that could help predict the impact of using Facebook on spousal abuse against married women. The findings of the correlation analyses are presented in Table 16 below. Having physical injuries from spousal abuse had a weak, positive, and significant correlation with daily hours spent on Facebook ($r= 0.180$, $p= 0.003$) and the frequency of Facebook activity ($r= 0.169$, $p= 0.006$). This finding implied that as married women in Kwale County spend more time or increase the frequency of posting or reacting content on Facebook, they become more predisposed to physical spousal abuse leading to injuries. Having physical injuries from spousal abuse had a weak, negative, and significant correlation with the number of Facebook friends and followers ($r= -0.164$, $p= 0.008$). Therefore, the more Facebook friends and followers married women have the less likely they are to have physical injuries due to spousal abuse.

Table 16: Correlation of Facebook Use and Spousal Abuse

		Physical Injuries from Spousal Abuse	Spousal Threats	Control Access to Phone and Social Media
Hours Spent FB Daily	Pearson Correlation	0.180**	0.425**	0.315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003	0.000	0.000
	N	263	263	263
FB Activity Frequency	Pearson Correlation	0.169**	0.448**	0.349**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.006	0.000	0.000
	N	263	263	263
Number of FB Friends & Followers	Pearson Correlation	-0.164**	-0.026	-0.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.008	0.672	0.247
	N	263	263	263

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It is evident that spousal threats had a positive and significant correlation with the daily hours spent on FB ($r= 0.425$, $p< 0.001$) and the frequency of FB activity ($r= 0.448$, $p<$

0.001). The correlation of spousal threats with these two aspects of FB use are moderately strong, implying that married women are more prone to threats from their husbands the more they spend time or post/react to content on this social media platform. However, spousal threats have no significant correlation with the number of FB friends and followers ($r = -0.026$, $p = 0.672$). This finding suggested that lack of association between the number of FB friends and followers and the likelihood of married women being threatened by their husbands. The experience of controlled access to phone and social media has a positive and significant correlation with the hours spent on FB daily ($r = 0.315$, $p < 0.001$) and the frequency of FB activity ($r = 0.349$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the more time married women in Kwale County spend or the more they posted or reacted to content of Facebook, the more they were likely to experience restricted access to their phones and social media.

These findings were consistent with existing evidence, such as the study by Daspe et al. (2018) that found a significant correlation between Facebook use and the perpetration of IPV. Their study demonstrated that excessive use of Facebook increased surveillance, jealousy, and conflict within romantic relationships. Daspe et al. (2018) found that frequent exposure to partners “liking” or commenting on others’ posts triggered jealousy and insecurity. These patterns aligned with controlling behaviours or psychological and physical aggression. Negriff (2019) offered insights into how online behaviour of married women could reflect or exacerbate their risk factors associated with interpersonal violence. Her study revealed that online interactions of abused individuals on Facebook reflected victimization, which may have reinforced cycles of abuse.

Through the lens of functionalist social change theory, Facebook and related platforms have reshaped interpersonal norms and marital structures: while they offer new channels for connection, they also inadvertently enabled surveillance, jealousy, and control, disrupting traditional marital equilibrium and potentially fostering spousal abuse. Meanwhile, applying diffusion of technology theory, Facebook’s pervasive adoption means such behavioural patterns rapidly permeate social systems. As more married couples adopt the platform, the rate of jealousy, surveillance, and conflict increases, potentially amplifying rates of spousal abuse. In combination, these theories

helped explain how a seemingly neutral innovation like Facebook could, over time and through diffusion exert destabilizing effects on marital relationships that could lead to spousal abuse.

4.7.4 The Impact of Facebook Use on Spousal Abuse

Linear regression analyses were conducted to determine whether the time spend on FB, FB activity frequency, and FB friends and followers predict physical injuries from spousal abuse, spousal threats, and access to phones and social media. These analyses were significant to the study because they helped to evaluate the first objective and test the first hypothesis. The findings of the regression analyses are presented in Table 17 below. Hours spent on FB and the number of FB friends and followers were significant positive (B= 0.203, p= 0.021) and negative predictors (B= -0.203, p< 0.001) of physical injuries from spousal abuse, respectively.

Table 17: Regression Analysis of Spousal Abuse and Facebook Use

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Physical Injuries From Spousal Abuse	(Constant)	1.640	0.181		9.055	0.000
	Hours Spent on FB Daily	0.226	0.097	0.203	2.331	0.021
	FB Activity Frequency	0.247	0.151	0.141	1.633	0.104
	FB Friends and Followers	-0.253	0.054	-0.304	-4.670	0.000
Spousal Threats	(Constant)	1.162	0.157		7.394	0.000
	Hours Spent on FB Daily	0.307	0.084	0.286	3.657	0.000
	FB Activity Frequency	0.595	0.131	0.351	4.538	0.000
	FB Friends and Followers	-0.228	0.047	-0.282	-4.845	0.000
Control Access to Phones and Social Media	(Constant)	1.172	0.175		6.677	0.000
	Hours Spent on FB Daily	0.232	0.094	0.206	2.474	0.014
	FB Activity Frequency	0.549	0.146	0.309	3.751	0.000
	FB Friends and Followers	-0.236	0.053	-0.278	-4.486	0.000

This finding implied that as married women in Kwale County spend one more hour on FB, they increase their risk of sustaining physical injuries from spousal abuse by 0.203.

Additionally, the risk of physical injuries due to spousal abuse reduce as married women increase the number of their Facebook friends and followers. FB activity frequency was found as an insignificant predictor of physical injuries ($B= 0.141, p= 0.104$).

The linear regression analysis also revealed that hours spent on FB ($B= 0.286, p< 0.001$) and the frequency of FB activity ($B= 0.351, p< 0.001$) as statistically significant positive predictors of spousal threats against married women in Kwale County. However, the number of FB friends and followers was a negative and significant predictor of spousal threats against married women in Kwale County ($-0.282, p< 0.001$). From Table 17, it is also evident that hours spent on FB daily ($B= 0.206, p= 0.014$) and the frequency of FB activity ($B= 0.309, p< 0.001$) were significant positive predictors of married women having their access to phones and social media controlled by their husbands. The number of FB friends and followers were found to be a significant negative predictor of married women having their access to phones and social media restricted ($B= -0.278, p< 0.001$).

Regression analysis revealed a nuanced relationship where more time and activity on Facebook tend to increase the risk of spousal abuse in the form of threats, control, and in some cases physical harm, potentially due to jealousy, suspicion, or conflict arising from online interactions. In contrast, having a larger online network appears to reduce the risk across all forms of abuse, possibly serving as a deterrent to abusive behaviour by increasing public scrutiny or offering women more avenues for support. This conclusion is arrived at based on the hours married women spend on Facebook, the frequency of their posts and reactions to contents, and the number of friends and followers they have. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant effect of Facebook use on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County is rejected.

The findings on the impact of Facebook use align with existing evidence, such as the study by Daspe et al. (2018) that found positive correlation between increased Facebook use and higher levels of relationship-related jealousy. Their study revealed that Facebook use caused jealousy through online activities, such as commenting, liking, and private messaging. As such, husbands developed jealous tendencies when their

wives had frequent Facebook activities. A jealous husband could abuse their wives as a reaction to their increased Facebook use. Zhou et al. (2023) also found that excessive use of Facebook can deteriorate marital satisfaction by reducing face-to-face communication and fostering emotional distance between partners. Their findings revealed that women with lower marital satisfaction and increased emotional strain due to online communication patterns are more vulnerable to spousal abuse.

From a functionalist social change theory perspective, the findings could be explained by viewing Facebook use as a driver of shifts in social roles and household power dynamics. Functionalism held that social institutions, including marriage, seek stability and equilibrium, and any disruption could create tension until new norms emerge. Increased Facebook use by married women, particularly in terms of time spent and frequency of activity, may challenge traditional expectations of wives' communication patterns, privacy boundaries, and social exposure. This triggered spousal abuse as a maladaptive attempt to restore the perceived "balance" in the marital structure. However, the protective effect of having more friends and followers could reflect a new equilibrium where public visibility and external social ties act as informal social controls, discouraging abuse and fostering accountability within the marriage.

The technology adoption theory offered a complementary explanation by focusing on how individuals' adoption and use of innovations, like Facebook, can create interpersonal tensions during the diffusion process. Early or heavy adopters may encounter resistance from spouses who perceive the technology as threatening to intimacy, loyalty, or authority. Increased activity could heighten perceived risks of infidelity, gossip, or exposure, leading to controlling behaviours or abuse as a form of resistance to the technology. Conversely, the finding that women with larger networks face less abuse indicated that once the technology becomes widely adopted and integrated into social life, it is normalized and less contested. Here, broader networks could also signal a later adoption stage where both partners adapt to the technology's presence, reducing conflict and associated abuse.

4.8 The Effect of Using TikTok on Spousal Abuse

The second objective of the study was to evaluate the effect of using TikTok on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The usage aspects under this objective include: the duration of using TikTok, hours spent on TT daily, number of videos viewed daily, number of videos uploaded per week, influence on behaviour, and leading to misunderstandings or conflicts. The data for analysis was obtained through questionnaires for married women.

4.8.1 Responses of Respondents in Relation to TikTok Use

The information on the aspect that described how married women use of TikTok was important helped the study by providing insights into the platform's influence on spousal abuse. The respondents were required to rate their TikTok activity using a 4-point Likert scale, by ticking their response to the given statements. Data was analysed using frequencies and percentages. The results are presented in Table 18.

Table 18: The Use of TikTok in Kwale County

		Kwale County	Rural	Peri-urban	Urban
Duration of using TT	<1 year	46.8%	52.8%	38.1%	35.9%
	1-2 years	19.4%	18.0%	23.8%	17.9%
	3-5 Years	20.2%	17.4%	23.8%	25.6%
	>5 years	13.7%	11.8%	14.3%	20.5%
Hours spent on TT daily	<1 hour	46.0%	52.2%	33.3%	41.0%
	1-2 hours	25.5%	21.1%	28.6%	38.5%
	3-4 hours	17.9%	16.1%	27.0%	10.3%
	>4 hours	10.6%	10.6%	11.1%	10.3%
Videos viewed daily	<5 videos	35.7%	44.1%	20.6%	25.6%
	5-10 videos	13.7%	14.9%	9.5%	15.4%
	11-20 videos	21.3%	16.1%	27.0%	33.3%
	>20 videos	29.3%	24.8%	42.9%	25.6%
Videos uploaded	Never	71.9%	74.5%	63.5%	74.4%
	1-2 times	14.1%	11.8%	19.0%	15.4%
	3-5 times	5.7%	6.2%	6.3%	2.6%
	>5 times	8.4%	7.5%	11.1%	7.7%

The findings showed that TikTok use among married women in Kwale County varied notably across rural, peri-urban, and urban settings, with differences in adoption history, daily engagement, viewing patterns, and content creation. Regarding duration of use, countywide data indicated that almost half of respondents (46.8%) had been on

TikTok for less than one year, highlighting the platform's relatively recent uptake. This was especially pronounced in rural areas (52.8%), suggesting later adoption compared to peri-urban (38.1%) and urban (35.9%) areas. Longer-term use of three to five years was most common in urban areas (25.6%), while over five years of use was also more frequent among urban residents (20.5%) than rural (11.8%) or peri-urban (14.3%), reflecting earlier adoption and possibly better access to digital infrastructure in urban locations.

In terms of daily hours spent on TikTok, lighter use of less than one hour dominated overall (46.0%) and was particularly high in rural areas (52.2%). Peri-urban residents were more likely to spend one to two hours daily (28.6%), while urban women had the highest share in this category (38.5%), suggesting more consistent daily engagement. Interestingly, moderate use of three to four hours was most common in peri-urban areas (27.0%), possibly reflecting a group of highly engaged viewers, whereas heavy use exceeding four hours daily remained low across all areas at around 10–11%.

When looking at videos viewed daily, rural women were more likely to watch fewer than five videos (44.1%), pointing to lower engagement levels, while peri-urban respondents had the highest rate of watching more than 20 videos daily (42.9%), indicating more intensive consumption patterns. Urban users tended toward moderate viewing, with a substantial share watching 11–20 videos daily (33.3%), possibly reflecting balanced but steady use. For video uploads, most respondents across all settings never posted content, with non-posting rates highest in rural (74.5%) and urban (74.4%) areas. Peri-urban women were slightly more active, with lower non-posting rates (63.5%) and higher proportions uploading one to two times weekly (19.0%) or more than five times (11.1%). This suggests peri-urban areas may have a more participatory TikTok culture, possibly driven by both access and a stronger appetite for content creation.

Overall, these results indicated that rural married women in Kwale County tended to be newer and lighter TikTok users, urban women show earlier adoption and moderate consistent use, while peri-urban women emerge as the most engaged group in terms of both viewing and content creation. This pattern reflected differences in digital literacy,

internet accessibility, and social norms across the three settlement types. Sapienza et al. (2023) found that rural users, including likely married women, spend less overall time on their smartphones compared to urban users. However, rural users disproportionately allocated more of that time to social media apps, unlike urban users who favour navigation, news, business, and productivity apps. Rural areas showed a significant tilt toward platforms like Facebook and Snapchat, compared to Instagram and Twitter in urban contexts (Sapienza et al., 2023). By extension, this suggests that married women in rural settings may be similarly oriented toward TikTok for entertainment and connection, whereas married urban women may engage more instrumentally with technology. This pattern highlighted an environment-driven divergence in smartphone use, where TikTok penetration among married women likely reflects a stronger presence in social media-driven rural usage, while urban usage leans toward diverse, goal-oriented app engagement.

The findings of TikTok use among married women in Kinango, Lunga Lunga, Matuga, Msambweni, Samburu, and Shimba Hills are presented in Table 19 below. There were notable variations in TikTok use among married women across the six sub-counties of Kwale County, with distinct patterns in platform adoption, intensity of use, and content creation. Regarding duration of TikTok use, a substantial proportion of respondents in all sub-counties had been on the platform for less than one year, with particularly high rates in Shimba Hills (60.0%), Samburu (53.1%), and Lunga Lunga (51.6%). Longer-term use of three to five years was more common in Kinango (24.1%), Matuga (27.0%), and Msambweni (23.2%), while over five years of use was most prominent in Kinango (20.7%) and Shimba Hills (20.0%), suggesting these areas may have had earlier adopters of the platform.

In terms of daily hours spent on TikTok, the most common usage category across all sub-counties was less than one hour per day, especially in Lunga Lunga (53.2%), Samburu (51.6%), and Shimba Hills (53.3%). Moderate use of one to two hours daily was most frequent in Kinango (31.0%) and Samburu (26.6%). High use of three to four hours per day stood out in Matuga (27.0%) and Msambweni (26.8%), while very heavy use exceeding four hours daily was highest in Shimba Hills (20.0%) and Kinango (17.2%). This suggests a mix of casual and intensive user groups, with Matuga and

Msambweni leaning towards longer daily engagement. When looking at videos viewed daily, a significant proportion of respondents reported watching more than 20 videos per day in Shimba Hills (46.7%), Msambweni (39.3%), and Kinango (37.9%), indicating highly active content consumption in these areas. In contrast, lighter viewing of fewer than five videos daily were most common in Lunga Lunga (43.5%) and Samburu (43.8%), pointing to lower engagement. Intermediate viewing levels (11–20 videos daily) were relatively consistent across most sub-counties, except Shimba Hills, where it was markedly lower (6.7%).

Table 19: The Use of TikTok Across Six Sub-Counties of Kwale County

		Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Duration of using TT	<1 year	34.5%	51.6%	45.9%	37.5%	53.1%	60.0%
	1-2 years	20.7%	14.5%	10.8%	25.0%	23.4%	20.0%
Hours spent on TT daily	3-5 Years	24.1%	22.6%	27.0%	23.2%	14.1%	0.0%
	>5 years	20.7%	11.3%	16.2%	14.3%	9.4%	20.0%
Videos viewed daily	<1 hour	37.9%	53.2%	40.5%	37.5%	51.6%	53.3%
	1-2 hours	31.0%	25.8%	24.3%	23.2%	26.6%	20.0%
	3-4 hours	13.8%	14.5%	27.0%	26.8%	12.5%	6.7%
Videos uploaded	> 4 hours	17.2%	6.5%	8.1%	12.5%	9.4%	20.0%
	< 5	24.1%	43.5%	32.4%	26.8%	43.8%	33.3%
	5-10	13.8%	12.9%	16.2%	12.5%	14.1%	13.3%
	11-20	24.1%	24.2%	21.6%	21.4%	20.3%	6.7%
Videos uploaded	> 20	37.9%	19.4%	29.7%	39.3%	21.9%	46.7%
	Never	72.4%	79.0%	62.2%	60.7%	79.7%	73.3%
	1-2 times	13.8%	14.5%	24.3%	7.1%	14.1%	13.3%
	3-5 times	13.8%	3.2%	8.1%	8.9%	1.6%	0.0%
	>5 times	0.0%	3.2%	5.4%	23.2%	4.7%	13.3%

For video uploading frequency, most respondents across all sub-counties never posted content, with the highest non-posting rates in Samburu (79.7%) and Lunga Lunga (79.0%), suggesting a predominantly passive user base. Occasional posting (1–2 times weekly) was most common in Matuga (24.3%), while frequent posting of more than five videos weekly was notably higher in Msambweni (23.2%) and, to a lesser extent, Shimba Hills (13.3%). This indicates that while content creation remains limited, certain areas, particularly Msambweni, have more active creators.

Overall, the data suggested that TikTok use among married women in Kwale County is largely passive, with most users engaging primarily as viewers rather than creators. However, pockets of intensive engagement exist, such as high viewing rates in Shimba

Hills and high posting rates in Msambweni, which reflected localised differences in digital culture, access to internet resources, and comfort with public content sharing.

4.8.2 Influence of TikTok on Behaviour and Misunderstanding/Conflict

The perceived influence of using TikTok on their behaviour and misunderstanding or conflicts with their spouses was important because it helped understand the contribution of using TikTok to behaviours that increase vulnerability spousal abuse. Insights into the influence of TikTok use on misunderstanding between married women and their husbands can help predict the impact of using the platform on spousal abuse. The findings on the perceived influence of TikTok use on behaviour and conflicts are presented in Table 20 below.

Table 20: Influence of TikTok on Behaviour and Misunderstandings

		Kwale County	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Influence on behaviour	No	58.6%	51.7%	64.5%	51.4%	50.0%	67.2%	60.0%
	Yes	41.4%	48.3%	35.5%	48.6%	50.0%	32.8%	40.0%
Cause conflict	Never	52.1%	44.8%	58.1%	43.2%	41.1%	64.1%	53.3%
	Rarely	12.9%	20.7%	11.3%	18.9%	8.9%	12.5%	6.7%
	Sometimes	24.0%	34.5%	22.6%	21.6%	32.1%	12.5%	33.3%
	Frequently	11.0%	0.0%	8.1%	16.2%	17.9%	10.9%	6.7%

Majority (58.4%) of the respondents denied that TikTok influenced their behaviour while 41.4% admitted the behavioural influence of TikTok. This observation was consistent across the six sub-counties of Kwale County. Such findings implied that using TikTok could have cause behavioural changes, some of which may trigger abuse by their husbands. While 52.1% of the respondents denied that TikTok use caused misunderstandings or conflicts with their husbands, 12.9% indicated that using the platform rarely caused spousal misunderstanding or conflicts. Respondents who indicated that TikTok use sometimes and frequently caused conflicts were 24% and 11% respectively. These findings were consistent across the six sub-counties of Kwale County.

The qualitative descriptive analysis by Langlais et al. (2024) also found that TikTok influences behaviours through self-presentation, attention-seeking, and parasocial. They also revealed that using TikTok shapes perceptions of intimacy. Langlais et al. (2024) found that TikTok's interactive and performative nature often encouraged the

pursuit of external validation through likes, comments, and followers, which can affect self-image and relationship dynamics. Online behaviours may inadvertently create tensions within marriages, particularly when husbands perceive these interactions as flirtatious or attention-seeking. The systematic review by Jain et al. (2025) also indicated that TikTok use increased marital conflicts by highlighting the platform's algorithmic design promoted addictive use through continuous content scrolling and emotionally stimulating videos. Such compulsive engagement can lead to perceptions of neglect or emotional unavailability within marriage. When a married woman spends excessive time creating or consuming TikTok content, their husbands may interpret this as a lack of interest or commitment, triggering jealousy and conflict. Interactive features of TikTok, such as liking, commenting, and following other users, can generate suspicions of infidelity or inappropriate online relationships, which can cause marital conflicts or misunderstandings.

4.8.3 Correlation of TikTok Use and Spousal Abuse

Correlations of physical injuries incurred from spousal abuse with duration of using TikTok, hours spent daily, number of videos viewed daily, and number of videos uploaded weekly were evaluated using the Pearson's correlation coefficient. The correlation analysis was repeated by replacing physical injuries from spousal abuse with spousal threats and controlling access to phone and social media separately. These correlation analyses were significant to the study because they provided insights into patterns that can help predict the impact of using TikTok on spousal abuse against married women. Table 21 below revealed the findings of the correlation analyses on TikTok use and spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County.

The results showed significant positive correlations between TikTok use and various forms of spousal abuse among married women, with some patterns stronger than others. In terms of duration of TikTok use, there was no significant relationship with physical injuries from spousal abuse ($r = 0.013$, $p = 0.831$), suggesting that simply having been on the platform longer does not directly relate to physical harm. However, duration was moderately and significantly correlated with spousal threats ($r = 0.277$, $p < 0.001$) and weakly but significantly correlated with controlled access to phones and social media ($r = 0.122$, $p = 0.048$). This suggested that over time, continued use of TikTok may

contribute to interpersonal tensions that manifest more as psychological control and intimidation than as physical violence.

Table 21: Pearson’s Correlation of TikTok Use and Spousal Abuse

		Physical Injuries From Spousal Abuse	Spousal Threats	Control Access to Phone & Social Media
Duration of using TT	Pearson Correlation	0.013	0.277**	0.122*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.831	0.000	0.048
	N	263	263	263
Hours spent on TT daily	Pearson Correlation	0.233**	0.361**	0.303**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	263	263	263
Videos viewed daily	Pearson Correlation	0.207**	0.506**	0.355**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000	0.000
	N	263	263	263
Videos upload weekly	Pearson Correlation	0.226**	0.267**	0.120
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.051
	N	263	263	263

For hours spent on TikTok daily, there were significant positive correlations with all forms of abuse: physical injuries ($r = 0.233$, $p < 0.001$), spousal threats ($r = 0.361$, $p < 0.001$), and control over phone and social media use ($r = 0.303$, $p < 0.001$). The strongest link was with spousal threats, indicating that higher daily engagement is especially likely to be associated with verbal or psychological intimidation, possibly due to jealousy or perceived neglect.

The number of videos viewed daily also correlated significantly with all abuse measures, with the weakest but still significant link to physical injuries ($r = 0.207$, $p = 0.001$) and stronger associations with spousal threats ($r = 0.506$, $p < 0.001$) and control over phone/social media use ($r = 0.355$, $p < 0.001$). The strong positive relationship with threats suggests that high consumption of TikTok content may trigger suspicion or conflict in the marital relationship, especially when spouses interpret such viewing as excessive or socially inappropriate. For videos uploaded weekly, there were significant but weaker correlations with physical injuries ($r = 0.226$, $p < 0.001$) and spousal threats ($r = 0.267$, $p < 0.001$), while the link with control over phone and social

media use was weak and statistically marginal ($r = 0.120$, $p = 0.051$). This suggests that content creation may attract negative partner responses, perhaps due to concerns about public exposure, perceived flirtation, or unwanted attention, but is less consistently linked to direct restrictions on device use.

Overall, the findings suggested that intensity of TikTok engagement, especially in terms of time spent and volume of content viewed, had stronger associations with spousal threats and control than with physical harm. This pattern pointed to psychological abuse as a more immediate reaction to high platform use, with physical violence less directly tied to TikTok behaviour. The findings on the correlation of TikTok use and spousal abuse were consistent with existing research evidence. The longitudinal study by Emond et al. (2023) provided a useful lens for explaining the observed correlation between TikTok use and spousal abuse among married women in Kwale County. These researchers found that social media-induced jealousy plays a significant role in spousal abuse, with a bidirectional relationship between jealousy and abuse. Applying these insights, TikTok's highly interactive and visually driven environment could easily become a source of jealousy within marriage, especially when one partner perceives the other's online activity as flirtatious, secretive, or overly time-consuming. Emond et al. (2023) suggested that such jealousy could escalate into verbal threats, controlling behaviours, and even physical harm, as observed in the findings from Kwale County where higher hours spent on TikTok, frequent viewing, and content posting were associated with increased spousal threats and control over phone use. Jain et al. (2025) associated excessive use of TikTok with increased anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation. These mental health problems negatively influence marital interactions by leading to irritability, withdrawal, or avoidance behaviours that undermine relationship harmony. In many cases, married women who use TikTok heavily spend less quality time with their spouses, which contributes to misunderstandings and emotional distance.

Based on the functionalist social change theory, the correlations between TikTok use and spousal abuse could be understood as a reflection of how new social behaviours and attitudes disrupt established marital norms. Such disruptions can create tension between married women and their husbands unless or until the relationship adapts to a new equilibrium. TikTok use, especially high daily engagement, frequent video

viewing, and content creation, may shift the balance of interaction and social roles between husband and wives marriage. In many traditional contexts, such as those in Kwale County, wives' increased public visibility and social networking through TikTok could be perceived by spouses as threatening to their authority or to cultural expectations of discretion. This disruption can manifest in spousal threats, control over phone use, or even physical harm as maladaptive attempts to status quo in the marital relationship. Over time, if TikTok becomes a normalized and integrated part of daily life, these tensions may decrease as couples adjust to the new patterns of communication and social engagement. This explains why married women who have use TikTok for many years had a lower likelihood of experiencing physical, verbal, or psychological abuse. The diffusion of technology theory complemented this by explaining that the process of adopting TikTok is not just a technical shift but a social one. Early and heavy adopters, particularly women who spend many hours on the platform or post content frequently, may face greater spousal resistance because their behaviour represents a departure from the familiar norms of marital interaction. Such resistance could take the form of control, intimidation, or physical abuse, especially when spouses perceive the technology as fostering inappropriate connections or undermining household harmony. The stronger correlations between intense TikTok use (hours spent, videos viewed) and non-physical forms of abuse align with the theory's view that initial adoption stages often provoke social conflict. Conversely, as TikTok use becomes more widespread and accepted, and as couples reach later adoption stages, these conflicts may subside, with partners developing shared understandings and boundaries around the technology's role in the marriage.

4.8.4 The Impact of Using TikTok on Spousal Abuse

Linear regression analyses were conducted to determine whether the time spent on TikTok, watching videos, and weekly video uploads predict physical injuries from spousal abuse, spousal threats, and access to phones and social media. These analyses were significant to the study because they help to evaluate the second objective and test the second hypothesis. The findings of the regression analyses are presented in Table 22 below.

Table 22: Linear Regression Analysis for the impact of TikTok Use on Spousal Abuse

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Physical Injuries From Spousal Abuse	(Constant)	1.471	0.153		9.628	0.000
	Duration of use	-0.280	0.081	-0.284	-3.473	0.001
	Hours spent daily	0.183	0.115	0.173	1.587	0.114
	Videos viewed daily	0.163	0.095	0.186	1.718	0.087
	Video uploaded weekly	0.171	0.086	0.146	1.985	0.048
Spousal threats	(Constant)	1.224	0.134		9.156	0.000
	Duration of use	-0.108	0.070	-0.113	-1.534	0.126
	Hours spent daily	-0.156	0.101	-0.152	-1.543	0.124
	Videos viewed daily	0.572	0.083	0.676	6.904	0.000
	Video uploaded weekly	0.068	0.075	0.061	0.911	0.363
Control access to phone and social media	(Constant)	1.355	0.151		8.995	0.000
	Duration of use	-0.234	0.079	-0.234	-2.946	0.004
	Hours spent daily	0.162	0.114	0.151	1.425	0.156
	Videos viewed daily	0.392	0.093	0.442	4.205	0.000
	Video uploaded weekly	-0.116	0.085	-0.098	-1.370	0.172

Among the aspects of TikTok use investigated by this study only the duration of use ($B = -0.284$, $p = 0.001$) and weekly video uploads ($B = 0.146$, $p = 0.048$) were significant predictors of physical injuries from spousal abuse. For physical injuries from spousal abuse, the duration of TikTok use in years showed a significant negative correlation ($B = -0.280$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting that women who have used TikTok for longer periods tend to report fewer physical injuries. This could reflect desensitisation, improved digital literacy, or the development of stronger social networks that act as protective factors. Conversely, the number of videos uploaded weekly was positively and significantly associated with physical injuries ($B = 0.171$, $p = 0.048$), indicating that active content creation may increase visibility and trigger conflict or jealousy from spouses, thus elevating the risk of physical harm. Hours spent daily and the number of videos viewed daily were positively correlated with physical injuries, but these were not statistically significant at the 5% level.

For spousal threats, the number of videos viewed daily stood out as the strongest predictor ($B = 0.572$, $p < 0.001$), implying that higher daily viewing frequency is strongly associated with increased threats from spouses. This may stem from partners

perceiving such viewing habits as a sign of infidelity, neglect, or inappropriate exposure to other men's content. Other TikTok usage variables, including duration of use, hours spent daily, and videos uploaded weekly, did not show significant relationships with spousal threats, although the coefficients for the first two were negative, possibly suggesting that longer-term or heavier daily use could normalise the activity in the relationship, thereby slightly reducing the risk of threats.

Regarding control over phone and social media access, both the duration of TikTok use ($B = -0.234$, $p = 0.004$) and the number of videos viewed daily ($B = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$) were significant predictors. Longer duration of use was associated with reduced spousal control, potentially indicating that over time women develop autonomy in their online interactions or that spouses become more accustomed to their social media use. On the other hand, higher daily viewing rates were linked to greater control by spouses, which might reflect increased monitoring and restrictions as a response to perceived excessive engagement. Hours spent daily and videos uploaded weekly were not significant predictors in this domain.

Overall, these findings suggested that passive consumption of large volumes of TikTok content, especially videos viewed daily, is a consistent risk factor for spousal threats and restrictions on phone use, whereas long-term use may offer some protective effects, possibly through familiarity or improved online resilience. However, active content creation carries its own risks, particularly for physical abuse. This pattern aligned with prior literature linking social media use, partner jealousy, and intimate partner violence, such as the longitudinal study by Emond et al. (2023), which found that perceived social media threats to the relationship can escalate conflict and violence. Jain et al. (2025) noted that the content shared on TikTok often portrays idealized or exaggerated depictions of relationships, wealth, and attractiveness, which can shape unrealistic expectations and comparisons within marriages. Such exposure to idealised lifestyles may increase dissatisfaction with one's partner or circumstances, fuelling arguments and emotional withdrawal. The constant exposure to contrasting values and opinions on TikTok can also exacerbate misunderstandings (Jain et al., 2025). Langlais et al. (2024) indicate that by amplifying engaging and provocative content, TikTok's algorithmic design can normalize behaviours that challenge traditional relationship

norms. Behavioural changes, such as increased secrecy, emotional withdrawal, and prioritization of online engagement over marital communication, can foster jealousy and conflict, which can escalate to spousal abuse.

From the lens of functionalist social change theory, the patterns observed in the study reflected the way new technologies, such as TikTok, disrupt and gradually reshape social systems, including marital relationships. Functionalism viewed society as a system striving for stability, where change occurs when new elements are integrated into existing structures to restore equilibrium. The finding that longer TikTok use correlated with fewer physical injuries and less control over phone access could be interpreted as an adaptive process. Over time, women's familiarity with the platform may enhance their social capital, self-efficacy, and access to supportive networks. TikTok use may shift the power balance and reduce certain forms of abuse after using the platform over a many years. With time, husbands were also forced to accept their wives' behavioural changes due to TikTok use. However, the significant positive link between frequent video viewing and increased threats or control suggests that when technological use introduces perceived instability, partners may react with coercive behaviours to reassert control. Such situations represented a temporary destabilization before a new equilibrium is reached.

According to diffusion of technology theory, the negative prediction of long-term use of TikTok aligned with how innovations spread through a population and the varied consequences during different adoption stages. Early adopters and long-term users may integrate the technology in ways that enhance personal agency and reduce vulnerability to abuse, reflecting the benefits of sustained and skilled use. However, for those in the more intensive but possibly less socially integrated usage phase, such as high daily video viewing, the technology may still be in a stage where its social implications are not fully negotiated within the relationship, leading to friction, jealousy, and controlling behaviours. The theory suggested that as TikTok becomes more widely diffused and its social norms are better established within relationships, these tensions may decline. Thus, the observed patterns represent a transitional stage in the social assimilation of TikTok use within intimate partnerships, where benefits and risks coexist depending on

the user's engagement style and the partner's adaptation to the new social dynamics it creates.

4.9 The Effect of Using WhatsApp on Spousal Abuse

The third objective of the study was to evaluate the effect of using WhatsApp on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The usage aspects under this objective include: the duration of using WhatsApp, hours spent using WhatsApp daily, number of messages sent daily, membership in WhatsApp groups, influence on misunderstandings or conflicts with spouse, and purposeful use. The data for analysis was obtained through questionnaires for married women.

4.9.1 Responses of Respondents in Relation to WhatsApp Use

The information on how respondents use WhatsApp was significant to the study since this platform was a popular social media platform. Furthermore, the platform was hypothesised to influence spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County. The respondents were required to rate their WhatsApp activity using a 4-point Likert scale, by ticking their response to the given statements. Data was analysed using frequencies and percentages.

About half of the respondents from Kwale County had used WhatsApp for more than 5 years. This group was followed by those who had used WhatsApp for less than a year (28.1%), 3-5 years (17.1%), and 1-2 years (4.6%). This trend was consistent across all the six sub-counties of Kwale County. The majority of respondents from Kwale County spent 1-2 hours daily on WhatsApp, followed by those who spent less than an hour (32.3%), 3-4 hours (18.6%), and more than 4 hours (12.5%).

In terms of duration of use, a majority of participants across the three settings had used WA for more than five years, with the proportion highest in urban areas (66.7%) and peri-urban areas (63.5%), compared to 41.0% in rural areas. Conversely, rural women had the highest percentage of relatively new users (<1 year) at 34.8%, while urban women recorded the lowest at 12.8%, suggesting more recent adoption in rural communities and earlier uptake in urban areas. Regarding daily time spent on WA, most women used the platform for 1–2 hours daily, with peri-urban users (42.9%) being the

most likely to fall into this category. Rural users had the highest proportion spending less than 1 hour daily (39.1%), whereas urban users were more likely to spend 3–4 hours (23.1%) or more than 4 hours daily (17.9%), indicating a heavier intensity of use in urban contexts. The results are presented in Table 23.

Table 23: WhatsApp Use among Respondents in Kwale County

		Kwale County	Rural	Peri-urban	Urban
Duration of Use	<1 year	28.1%	34.8%	20.6%	12.8%
	1-2 years	4.6%	5.0%	3.2%	5.1%
	3-5 years	17.1%	19.3%	12.7%	15.4%
	>5 years	50.2%	41.0%	63.5%	66.7%
Hours spent using WA daily	<1 hour	32.3%	39.1%	22.2%	20.5%
	1-2 hours	36.5%	33.5%	42.9%	38.5%
	3-4 hours	18.6%	17.4%	19.0%	23.1%
	>4 hours	12.5%	9.9%	15.9%	17.9%
WA messages daily	<10	30.8%	37.9%	20.6%	17.9%
	10-50	25.9%	23.0%	33.3%	25.6%
	51-100	28.5%	24.8%	28.6%	43.6%
	>100	14.8%	14.3%	17.5%	12.8%
WA Groups	None	33.8%	40.4%	25.4%	20.5%
	Inactive	8.4%	8.7%	6.3%	10.3%
	1–3 groups	20.2%	21.1%	22.2%	12.8%
	>3 groups	37.6%	29.8%	46.0%	56.4%
WA Use in purposeful activities	Never	39.9%	49.7%	25.4%	23.1%
	Rarely	4.6%	4.3%	6.3%	2.6%
	Sometimes	16.0%	14.3%	19.0%	17.9%
	Always	39.5%	31.7%	49.2%	56.4%

For message volume, rural women were most likely to send fewer than 10 messages daily (37.9%), while urban women showed a stronger representation in the higher message categories, particularly 51–100 messages daily (43.6%), suggesting more active messaging habits in urban areas. In terms of group participation, over three WhatsApp groups membership was most common in urban areas (56.4%), followed by peri-urban (46.0%), with rural areas lagging at 29.8%. A significant proportion of rural women (40.4%) reported belonging to no WA groups, compared to just 20.5% in urban settings. When considering purposeful use (work, business, family matters), urban women again led in consistent engagement, with 56.4% reporting "always" using WA for such activities, compared to 49.2% in peri-urban and 31.7% in rural areas. Notably,

rural women had the highest percentage of those who never used WA for purposeful activities (49.7%), highlighting a potential digital utility gap.

While WA is widely used across Kwale County, rural women tend to be newer, lighter users with less group participation and purposeful application, while urban women show patterns of longer use, higher intensity, greater group engagement, and more functional use of the platform. Peri-urban users often fall in between these two extremes but lean more towards urban usage patterns in certain aspects such as purposeful engagement and message volume.

Based on the diffusion of technology theory, the findings from Kwale County showed a clear progression of WhatsApp adoption stages across rural, peri-urban, and urban settings, reflecting how innovations spread at different rates depending on social and infrastructural factors. Urban women demonstrate the highest maturity of adoption, with a majority having used WhatsApp for over five years (66.7%), participating in more than three groups (56.4%), and consistently using the platform for purposeful activities (56.4%). This aligned with the theory's concept of "early adopters" and "early majority" being concentrated in areas with better connectivity, higher digital literacy, and more exposure to technology-based communication norms. Peri-urban areas displayed moderate adoption characteristics, with a high proportion engaged in multiple groups (46.0%) and purposeful use (49.2%), though the duration of use and intensity of engagement lag slightly behind urban figures, suggesting a transitional stage in the adoption curve. Rural areas, in contrast, reflected characteristics of the "late majority" or "laggards," with higher proportions of recent adopters (<1 year at 34.8%), lower group participation (29.8% with more than three groups), and limited purposeful use (31.7% always). These patterns suggested that technological diffusion is shaped by infrastructural availability, socioeconomic status, and cultural integration of digital tools, with adoption moving gradually from urban innovation hubs toward more remote communities.

The findings from the six sub-counties of Kwale County presented in Table 24 below revealed considerable variation in WhatsApp usage patterns among married women, reflecting both technological penetration and differing levels of integration into daily

life. Across all sub-counties, a significant proportion of women have been using WhatsApp for more than five years, with the highest prevalence in Shimba Hills (66.7%) and Msambweni (57.1%), indicating these areas have the most mature adoption. Conversely, newer adoption (<1 year) is most pronounced in Matuga (35.1%) and Lunga Lunga (33.9%), suggesting these areas may still be in earlier stages of digital engagement. Time spent on the platform also varies, with Shimba Hills showing the highest proportion of heavy users (>4 hours daily at 26.7%), while Kinango and Samburu have more moderate patterns, dominated by 1–2 hours of daily use. Message volume mirrors these patterns, with high-frequency messaging (>100 messages daily) most common in Lunga Lunga (21.0%) and Shimba Hills (20.0%), while Samburu remains the least active in this regard (7.8%).

Table 24: WhatsApp Use across the Sub-Counties of Kwale County

		Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Duration of Use	<1 year	24.1%	33.9%	35.1%	26.8%	23.4%	20.0%
	1-2 years	6.9%	1.6%	0.0%	3.6%	10.9%	0.0%
	3-5 years	17.2%	16.1%	16.2%	12.5%	23.4%	13.3%
	>5 years	51.7%	48.4%	48.6%	57.1%	42.2%	66.7%
Hours spent using WA daily	<1 hour	24.1%	37.1%	35.1%	28.6%	35.9%	20.0%
	1-2 hours	41.4%	30.6%	35.1%	37.5%	39.1%	40.0%
	3-4 hours	24.1%	17.7%	21.6%	19.6%	15.6%	13.3%
WA messages daily	>4 hours	10.3%	14.5%	8.1%	14.3%	9.4%	26.7%
	<10	31.0%	33.9%	32.4%	26.8%	32.8%	20.0%
	10-50	27.6%	17.7%	32.4%	23.2%	29.7%	33.3%
	51-100	31.0%	27.4%	18.9%	33.9%	29.7%	26.7%
WA Groups	>100	10.3%	21.0%	16.2%	16.1%	7.8%	20.0%
	None	31.0%	43.5%	35.1%	28.6%	32.8%	20.0%
	Inactive	13.8%	3.2%	2.7%	3.6%	20.3%	0.0%
	1–3 groups	20.7%	9.7%	27.0%	21.4%	20.3%	40.0%
WA Use in purposeful activities	>3 groups	34.5%	43.5%	35.1%	46.4%	26.6%	40.0%
	Never	34.5%	48.4%	27.0%	35.7%	46.9%	33.3%
	Rarely	3.4%	3.2%	5.4%	7.1%	4.7%	0.0%
	Sometimes	6.9%	22.6%	18.9%	12.5%	17.2%	6.7%
	Always	55.2%	25.8%	48.6%	44.6%	31.3%	60.0%

Group participation levels indicated stronger digital social networks in Msambweni (46.4% with more than three groups) and Lunga Lunga (43.5%), while Samburu showed weaker integration, with high proportions having no groups (32.8%) or inactive memberships (20.3%). Purposeful use of WhatsApp for work, business, or family matters is especially high in Shimba Hills (60.0%) and Kinango (55.2%), contrasting sharply with Lunga Lunga, where nearly half (48.4%) reported never using WhatsApp for such purposes. Overall, the data suggested that while WhatsApp has penetrated all

sub-counties, its role as a social and functional tool differs significantly, ranging from mature, purpose-driven use in areas like Shimba Hills and Kinango to more casual or socially limited engagement in Lunga Lunga and Samburu. These differences likely reflected disparities in digital literacy, economic activity, and social networking needs across the sub-counties

4.9.2 Influence of WhatsApp Use on Misunderstandings or Conflicts

The contribution of using WhatsApp to misunderstandings, quarrels, or conflicts with their spouses was evaluated. This information was considered important because it would help understand the contribution of using WhatsApp to the risk of married women being abused by their husbands. Insights into the influence of WhatsApp use on misunderstanding between married women and their husbands can help predict the impact of using the platform on spousal abuse. The findings on the perceived influence of WhatsApp use on behaviour and conflicts are presented in Table 25 below.

Table 25: Misunderstanding, Quarrels, or Conflicts Caused by WhatsApp Use

	Kwale County	Rural	Peri-Urban	Urban
Never	40.3%	44.1%	34.9%	33.3%
Rarely	16.3%	17.4%	19.0%	7.7%
Sometimes	28.1%	28.6%	22.2%	35.9%
Frequently	15.2%	9.9%	23.8%	23.1%

The study revealed that WhatsApp use among married women in Kwale County played a mixed role in marital relationships. The use was harmless sometimes, but in other cases acting as a source of misunderstanding and conflict. Countywide, 40.3% of respondents reported that WhatsApp never caused conflict with their spouses, suggesting that for a substantial proportion, the platform is integrated into daily life without disrupting marital harmony. However, 16.3% experienced conflict rarely, 28.1% sometimes, and 15.2% frequently. This means that for nearly 60% of the women surveyed, WhatsApp use had at least occasional negative impacts on spousal relations, potentially linked to jealousy, misinterpretation of messages, secrecy, or excessive time spent online.

When disaggregated by settlement type, the patterns suggested that the frequency of WhatsApp-related misunderstandings was shaped by both technological access and

sociocultural norms. In rural areas, the highest share of respondents (44.1%) said conflicts never occurred, and only 9.9% reported frequent conflicts. This reflected lower levels of smartphone penetration, less intensive WhatsApp use, and stronger adherence to traditional communication norms. In peri-urban areas, the proportion of women reporting frequent conflicts rose sharply to 23.8%, while the “never” category dropped to 34.9%. This shift suggested that as connectivity and exposure to diverse online networks increase, so too does the potential for misunderstandings. Urban areas showed a similar pattern: while 33.3% never experienced conflict, the share reporting frequent misunderstandings (23.1%) and those experiencing them sometimes (35.9%) is significantly higher, indicating that dense social networks, high smartphone penetration, and fast-paced digital communication may heighten marital tensions.

The perceived impact of WhatsApp on marital relationships in Kwale County is context-dependent. Rural women were less likely to experience WhatsApp-related conflict, while peri-urban and urban women face higher risks, likely due to greater digital engagement, changing gender norms, and more complex social interactions facilitated by the app. This underscored the importance of considering both technological access and cultural setting when examining the social effects of digital platforms on intimate relationships.

The findings presented in Table 26 below indicated notable variations in how WhatsApp (WA) use among married women is associated with misunderstandings and conflicts with their spouses across the six sub-counties of Kwale County. In Kinango, Lunga Lunga, and Matuga, the largest proportion of women reported never experiencing misunderstandings due to WhatsApp (44.8%, 45.2%, and 45.9%, respectively), suggesting relatively lower perceived conflict linked to WA use in these areas. However, in Lunga Lunga, a substantial proportion (32.3%) reported sometimes experiencing misunderstandings, indicating that when conflicts occur, they may be moderately frequent.

Table 26: WhatsApp’s Influence on Misunderstanding or Conflicts across the Sub-Counties

	Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Never	44.8%	45.2%	45.9%	30.4%	40.6%	33.3%
Rarely	27.6%	6.5%	16.2%	17.9%	20.3%	13.3%
Sometimes	17.2%	32.3%	16.2%	32.1%	28.1%	46.7%
Frequently	10.3%	16.1%	21.6%	19.6%	10.9%	6.7%

In Msambweni, the proportion of women who never experienced misunderstandings (30.4%) was lower than in other sub-counties, while sometimes (32.1%) and frequently (19.6%) reported conflicts were comparatively higher, implying more consistent tension linked to WA use in this area. Samburu presented a balanced pattern, with 40.6% never experiencing misunderstandings, but 28.1% sometimes and 20.3% rarely reporting them, indicating moderate but noticeable interpersonal strain.

Shimba Hills stood out for having the highest proportion of women who reported sometimes experiencing misunderstandings (46.7%), and a relatively low proportion reporting never (33.3%), suggesting a stronger association between WA use and periodic marital conflict in this sub-county. Interestingly, frequent misunderstandings were lowest in Shimba Hills (6.7%), implying that while disagreements occur often, they may not escalate to a persistent or chronic level. Overall, these results revealed that the frequency and intensity of WA-related misunderstandings vary significantly by locality, potentially reflecting differences in digital literacy, cultural attitudes toward social media, and relationship communication norms in each sub-county.

The findings mirror existing research evidence regarding the influence of WhatsApp use on conflicts and misunderstandings. Setiawan et al. (2025) considered communication central to reducing conflicts and misunderstanding in marriage because it facilitated ongoing communication and convenience for married couples. Their study found that while WhatsApp facilitates constant connectivity and convenience in daily interactions, it also introduced new challenges in relational communication. Setiawan et al. (2025) highlight that the immediacy and frequency of messages could lead to misinterpretations of tone, intent, or emotional state, especially when nonverbal cues are absent. Their findings also revealed that the visibility features of WhatsApp, such as “last seen,” “blue ticks,” and message timestamps, often trigger suspicion, jealousy,

and anxiety among married partners. When one spouse delays replying or interacts frequently with others online, the other may perceive neglect or secrecy, leading to unnecessary tension and misunderstandings. Setiawan et al. (2025) note that excessive use of WhatsApp can lead to conflicts by weakening in-person interactions and reducing opportunities for intimate and emotional connection. Harony et al. (2023) also found that WhatsApp influences conflicts and misunderstandings because it serves as both a bridge and a barrier in marital communication. Their findings revealed that married women's use of WhatsApp can lead to "digital fatigue" and communication overload, which are associated with emotional distance and increased misunderstanding.

Integrating the findings from married women in Kwale County with existing evidence suggested that although WhatsApp use could lead to conflicts and misunderstandings, it had the potential to promote harmony between wives and their husbands. Therefore, other factors mediated the influence of WhatsApp use on conflicts and misunderstanding in marital settings. According to the diffusion of innovations theory, conflicts and misunderstandings reduced with time after couples adapted and integrated WhatsApp into their marital relationships. Additionally, reducing the extension of patriarchal control to WhatsApp could minimise negative influences while strengthening the role of the platform to boost interactions between spouses.

4.9.3 Correlation of WhatsApp Use and Spousal Abuse

Correlations of physical injuries incurred from spousal abuse with duration of using WhatsApp, hours spent daily, number of messages sent daily, group membership, and use for purposeful activities were evaluated using the Pearson's correlation coefficient. The correlation analysis was repeated by replacing physical injuries from spousal abuse with spousal threats and controlling access to phone and social media separately. These correlation analyses were significant to the study because they provided insights into patterns that can help predict the impact of using WhatsApp on spousal abuse against married women. Table 27 below revealed the findings of the correlation analyses on WhatsApp use and spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County.

The findings indicated varying degrees of correlation between different patterns of WhatsApp use and indicators of spousal abuse among married women in Kwale County. For physical injuries from spousal abuse, only the use of WhatsApp in purposeful activities (work, business, family matters) showed a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.202$, $p = 0.001$). As such, women who used WhatsApp for such activities were more likely to report physical abuse. Other measures of WhatsApp use, included were duration of use, daily hours spent, daily messages, and group membership, did not show statistically significant correlations with physical injuries.

Table 27: Pearson's Correlation of WhatsApp Use and Spousal Abuse

		Physical Injuries From Spousal Abuse	Spousal Threats	Control Access to Phone and Social Media
Duration of use	Pearson Correlation	-0.009	0.353**	0.223**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.884	0.000	0.000
	N	263	263	263
Daily hours spent	Pearson Correlation	0.072	0.358**	0.229**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.245	0.000	0.000
	N	263	263	263
Daily messages	Pearson Correlation	-0.036	0.244**	0.076
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.556	0.000	0.217
	N	263	263	263
WhatsApp Groups	Pearson Correlation	0.091	0.383**	0.235**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.141	0.000	0.000
	N	263	263	263
Use in purposeful activities	Pearson Correlation	0.202**	0.529**	0.383**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000	0.000
	N	263	263	263

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

For spousal threats, all five WhatsApp use variables demonstrated significant positive correlations. The strongest association was with the use of WhatsApp in purposeful activities ($r = 0.529$, $p < 0.001$), followed by WhatsApp group membership ($r = 0.383$, $p < 0.001$), daily hours spent on the platform ($r = 0.358$, $p < 0.001$), and duration of use ($r = 0.353$, $p < 0.001$). Daily messages sent also had a significant, though weaker, correlation ($r = 0.244$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggested that increased engagement

with WhatsApp, especially for functional purposes and in group settings, is linked to a higher likelihood of experiencing spousal threats.

Regarding control of access to phones and social media, all variables except daily messages showed significant positive correlations. Again, the highest correlation was observed with purposeful WhatsApp use ($r = 0.383, p < 0.001$), followed by group membership ($r = 0.235, p < 0.001$), daily hours spent ($r = 0.229, p < 0.001$), and duration of use ($r = 0.223, p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that the more actively and purposefully married women use WhatsApp, the more likely they were to face controlling behaviours from their spouses concerning phone and social media use.

Generally, the results implied that while general time spent on WhatsApp or number of messages may not directly relate to physical abuse, increased and purposeful use in group contexts is more strongly linked to psychological forms of spousal abuse, such as threats and control over communication. This pattern suggested that conflicts and abuse could be driven less by casual chatting and more by perceptions of independence, exposure, and external networking facilitated through WhatsApp. These findings were consistent with Faye et al. (2020) who found that couples who used WhatsApp more intensively were more likely to report marital conflict and reduced expression of love, which are precursors of spousal abuse. Nnam and Dastile (2025) associated marital conflicts with from ambiguous WhatsApp messages, perceived emotional infidelity triggered by third-party contacts. Therefore, WhatsApp use had no correlation with spousal abuse by itself, unless the use involved a third party or suspicions of infidelity, or jealousy.

4.9.4 The Impact of WhatsApp Use on Spousal Abuse

Linear regression analyses were conducted to determine whether duration of use, hours spent daily, number of messages sent daily, group membership, and use for purposeful activities predict physical injuries from spousal abuse, spousal threats, and access to phones and social media. These analyses were significant to the study because they help to evaluate the third objective and test the third hypothesis. The findings of the regression analyses are presented in Table 28 below. For physical injuries from spousal abuse, two variables showed significant associations. Longer duration of WhatsApp use

was a negative predictor of physical injuries ($\beta = -0.203$, $p = 0.020$), suggesting that women who had been using the platform for more years reported fewer instances of physical harm. This implied that familiarity and established patterns of use reduced conflict triggers over time. Purposeful use of WhatsApp for work, business, or family matters was positively associated with physical injuries ($\beta = 0.197$, $p = 0.002$). As such, when WhatsApp is used for goal-oriented activities, it might intensify disputes possibly due to perceptions of neglect, jealousy, or suspicions about hidden communications. Other factors, including daily hours of use, number of messages sent, and group membership, were not significant predictors of physical spousal abuse.

Table 28: Linear Regression Analysis for the Impact of WhatsApp Us on Social Media

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Physical injuries from spousal abuse	(Constant)	1.754	0.179		9.790	0.000
	Duration of use	-0.203	0.086	-0.240	-2.344	0.020
	Daily hours of use	0.096	0.105	0.088	0.911	0.363
	No. of messages	-0.137	0.096	-0.133	-1.425	0.155
	WA Groups	0.136	0.095	0.161	1.436	0.152
	Purposeful use	0.197	0.062	0.246	3.202	0.002
Spousal threat	(Constant)	1.006	0.152		6.627	0.000
	Duration of use	-0.002	0.073	-0.002	-.025	0.980
	Daily hours of use	0.127	0.089	0.120	1.422	0.156
	No. of messages	-0.036	0.082	-0.036	-0.444	0.657
	WA Groups	0.050	0.080	0.062	.0627	0.531
	Purposeful use	0.348	0.052	0.448	6.664	0.000
Control access to phones and social media	(Constant)	1.224	0.173		7.057	0.000
	Duration of use	0.030	0.084	0.036	0.364	0.716
	Daily hours of use	0.157	0.102	0.142	1.538	0.125
	No. of messages	-0.201	0.093	-0.191	-2.147	0.033
	WA Groups	0.036	0.092	0.042	0.390	0.697
	Purposeful use	0.275	0.060	0.337	4.601	0.000

In the case of spousal threats, purposeful WhatsApp use was again the only significant predictor ($\beta = 0.448$, $p < 0.001$). This suggested that women who engaged in purposeful activities on WhatsApp are more likely to face verbal or psychological threats from their partners. Such threats could stem from partners perceiving these activities as a

challenge to traditional gender roles, economic dependency, or time allocation within the household. Duration of use, time spent daily, number of messages, and group membership did not have significant effects on spousal threats.

Regarding control over access to phones and social media, two factors were significant predictors. Purposeful use of WhatsApp was positively associated with control ($\beta = 0.275, p < 0.001$). This finding imply that using the platform for structured activities contributes to the response of husband of restricting access to digital tools, such as phones and social media. This aligned with patterns of coercive control, where the abuser limited communication channels to assert dominance. In contrast, the number of messages sent daily had a negative association ($\beta = -0.201, p = 0.033$), indicating that higher messaging activity was linked to less control over phone and social media access, suggesting that frequent communication builds broader support networks that make control harder to enforce. Duration of use, daily hours, and group membership did not show significant effects in this abuse dimension.

Overall, the findings suggested that the content and purpose of WhatsApp use, especially purposeful, goal-driven engagement, are more strongly linked to spousal abuse outcomes than simple frequency or duration of use. This pointed to deeper relational and cultural dynamics, where partners may react differently to perceived shifts in autonomy, economic participation, or social connectedness facilitated by WhatsApp. These findings were consistent with Faye et al. (2020) who found that WhatsApp use causes reduced quality time with spouses, impairment of household responsibilities, disturbed social activities, and feelings of doubt or mistrust due to excessive use. The Kwale County findings were consistent with the conclusions of a Nigerian study by Omokhabi et al. (2025) regarding the potential of social media to influence marital conflict. Their study also revealed that social media usage could strain relationships, when it is excessive or geared toward functional purposes. The key advancement in the Kwale study is that the nuance it added by breaking down specific WhatsApp behaviours and mapping them to distinct forms of abuse: emotional threats, physical injury, and coercive control. Thus, while the Nigerian study layed the foundation for the idea that social media impacted marriage conflict, the Kwale research operationalized that relationship with greater precision and applicability.

The finding that purposeful married women use of WhatsApp increased physical abuse, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviour of husbands' is contrary to expectations. Purposeful use of the platform in work, business, and family matters should be beneficial to marital relationships. Radical feminists could consider such findings as the extension of patriarchal control to limit the freedom of women in using WhatsApp. Based on this line of thought, husbands fear that their wives challenge their authority through the benefits attained from positive use of this social media platform. Therefore, the feminist perspective does not blame how women use the platform, but rather identify patriarchy as the reason why women's purposeful use of the platform increased their risk of abuse. In this regard, ending patriarchy is assumed to automatically result in no abuse when women purposefully use WhatsApp.

From the perspective of functionalist social change theory, the findings suggested that WhatsApp use among married women influenced spousal relationships in ways that both reinforced and challenged social norms. The fact that purposeful use of WhatsApp was a positive predictor of physical, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviour indicated that such uses disrupted traditional patterns of communication and gendered control within marriage. This disruption created tension as couples adapted to shifting roles, particularly in contexts where technology granted women more independence in networking, information access, and economic activity. However, in functionalist terms, such tensions were not purely destructive but part of the societal adjustment toward integrating new technologies into marital dynamics, although the short-term effects included in this study increased conflict in certain relationships.

When interpreted through diffusion of innovation theory, the results highlighted how different aspects of WhatsApp adoption and use were at various stages of integration into the social fabric of Kwale County. The fact that duration of use negatively correlated with physical abuse implied that over time, as women and their spouses became accustomed to WhatsApp, the technology became normalized and less likely to trigger conflict. As such, the use of WhatsApp may not trigger spousal abuse when the social media platform is routinized in marital relationships. Conversely, the significant positive associations between purposeful WhatsApp use and spousal abuse measures suggest that some uses of the platform are still in the early to middle diffusion

stages, where the technology’s perceived empowerment effects for women are met with resistance from some spouses. The resistance could result from fears of reduced control or perceived threats to traditional authority. These patterns underscored that the social consequences of technology adoption are not uniform; they depended on the type of use, the stage of adoption, and the extent to which the surrounding cultural context has adapted to the innovation.

4.10 Impact of Social Media Use on Spousal Abuse in Urban and Rural Areas

The researcher analysed the impact of social media use on spousal abuse of married women in rural and urban areas. This analysis was significant to the study since it helped to achieve the fourth objective and test the fourth hypothesis. Additionally, the analysis assessed how the impact of social media use on spousal abuse varies among married women in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. Such evaluation provides valuable insights that can inform targeted interventions for spousal abuse.

4.10.1 Spousal Abuse Based on Rural-Urban Residency

The comparison of physical injuries from spousal abuse, spousal threats, and control access to phones and social media was conducted among women in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. The comparison was significant to the study because it helped to discern any differences in spousal abuse due to rural-urban residency. The findings of the comparison are presented in Table 29 below.

Table 29: Differences in Spousal Abuse Based on Rural-Urban Residency

		Rural	Peri-urban	Urban
Physical Injuries From Spousal Abuse	Never	49.1%	47.6%	64.1%
	Rarely	18.6%	23.8%	12.8%
	Occasionally	17.4%	22.2%	10.3%
	Frequently	14.9%	6.3%	12.8%
Spousal Threats	Never	44.7%	27.0%	23.1%
	Rarely	17.4%	12.7%	7.7%
	Occasionally	29.8%	46.0%	59.0%
	Very Often	8.1%	14.3%	10.3%
Control Access To Phones & Social Media	Never	52.2%	49.2%	43.6%
	Rarely	13.0%	9.5%	17.9%
	Sometimes	24.2%	28.6%	28.2%
	Always	10.6%	12.7%	10.3%

The findings revealed notable differences in the prevalence and forms of spousal abuse among married women in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas of Kwale County. For physical injuries from spousal abuse, the highest proportion of women reporting they never experienced such injuries was in urban areas (64.1%), followed by rural (49.1%) and peri-urban (47.6%) areas. However, rural women had the highest proportion reporting frequent physical injuries (14.9%), compared to 12.8% in urban and only 6.3% in peri-urban areas. This suggests that while urban women are more protected from physical abuse, rural women remain more vulnerable to severe and recurring physical harm.

Regarding spousal threats, rural areas recorded the highest proportion of women who never experienced threats (44.7%), while the lowest was in urban areas (23.1%). However, occasional threats were most common in peri-urban (46.0%) and urban (59.0%) settings compared to rural areas (29.8%), indicating that non-physical but emotionally abusive forms of control may be more prevalent in areas with greater social interaction and communication technology use. Interestingly, frequent threats were higher in peri-urban areas (14.3%) compared to rural (8.1%) and urban (10.3%) areas, pointing to unique conflict dynamics in transitional communities. For control of access to phones and social media, rural women had the highest rate of unrestricted access (52.2% never experienced control), followed closely by peri-urban (49.2%) and urban (43.6%) women. However, sometimes and always controlling access was most frequent in peri-urban and urban areas, suggesting that in more connected environments, digital control may become a subtle but potent form of abuse. This pattern reflected how technology-mediated restrictions could replace or accompany physical control in modernised settings.

Generally, the findings indicated that physical abuse was more prevalent and severe in rural settings, whereas psychological control and technology-related restrictions were more common in peri-urban and urban environments. This shifted from physical to more covert forms of abuse across the rural-urban spectrum highlights evolving patterns of spousal abuse influenced by social, cultural, and technological contexts. The findings from Kwale County showed a pattern broadly consistent with the comparative Nigerian study by Adeoye et al. (2024), though some differences in magnitude are evident. In

the Kwale data, rural women reported higher rates of physical abuse than their urban counterparts, with 49.1% experiencing injuries occasionally or often compared to 35.9% in urban areas. This mirrored the Nigerian study, where rural women also faced a higher prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) across physical, emotional, and controlling behaviours, attributed to lower education levels, limited access to support services, and entrenched patriarchal norms. However, in Kwale, psychological abuse, such as threats and communication control, was also notable in peri-urban and urban settings, suggesting that while physical abuse rates decline with urbanisation, other coercive tactics persist or even increase.

Based on the radical feminist theory, the findings on differences in spousal abuse among married women in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas of Kwale County revealed patterns of patriarchal control manifesting through physical violence, intimidation, and restriction of communication. Radical feminism viewed these acts not as isolated incidents but as structural expressions of male dominance designed to maintain women's subordination. The data on physical injuries showed that while urban women reported the highest proportion of "never" experiencing such abuse (64.1%), significant proportions in rural (50.9%) and peri-urban (52.4%) areas reported some degree of physical harm, suggesting that patriarchal control is more openly enforced through physical violence where social and institutional protections for women may be weaker.

The high prevalence of spousal threats, particularly in peri-urban and urban areas, points to a shift from overt physical violence toward psychological control, which Radical Feminist Theory interpreted as a more covert but equally oppressive mechanism to sustain male power. Similarly, the control over women's access to phones and social media illustrates technological gatekeeping as a modern form of domination. This restriction limited women's ability to access information, maintain social networks, and exercise autonomy, thereby reinforcing dependency and reducing opportunities to resist male authority.

The varying frequency of physical, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviours reflects different stages of social transition and adaptation of society to modernization. Traditional gender norms and patriarchal family structures remain dominant in rural

areas. As such, conventional power hierarchies that legitimise male control through physical dominance are common in rural areas compared to urban areas. This could be seen as a dysfunction arising from slower adaptation to changing gender roles and social values. Husbands who reject new gender roles and social values guiding marital relationships are more likely to abuse their wives when they disagree on such realities. Functionalist theory suggested that such dysfunctions signal the need for social institutions to readjust their norms to align with evolving expectations of gender equality and mutual respect.

The differences in spousal abuse frequency across rural, peri-urban, and urban settings reflect varying stages of innovation diffusion. Urban areas are early adopters of new social and technological behaviours, while rural areas as late adopters or laggards. Peri-urban areas serve as transitional zones since they have the characteristics of both urban and rural areas. There is limited diffusion of modern social values and slower adoption of innovations, such as social media, in rural areas. Since traditional patriarchal beliefs remain deeply embedded in rural environments, the use of technologies that exposed women to alternative values and lifestyle could create tensions that potentially led to abuse. Since rural residents were laggards, they were more likely to misunderstand the activities and interactions of their partners on social media platforms. This perspective could explain the reason why physical abuse is more frequent among married women in rural areas compared to their counterparts in urban settings. As a transition zone, peri-urban areas had higher frequencies of spousal threats and controlling behaviours. Based on the diffusion of innovations theory, this high frequency resulted from the intersection of traditional values and values promoted by social media platforms. The higher rates of spousal threats and control over phone or social media access in urban areas suggest that as digital communication spreads, it becomes both a channel for empowerment and a tool for control. Therefore, while rural husbands exert their patriarchal control through conventional means, their urban counterparts have shifted such control to digital platforms. This theory underscored the need to customize interventions that promote safe use of social media and reduce social media-induced spousal abuse to match the context of rural, peri-urban, and urban areas.

4.10.2 Social Media Use Based on Rural-Urban Residency

The comparison of scores Facebook use, TikTok use, and WhatsApp use was conducted among women in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas using one-way ANOVA. The comparison was significant to the study because it helped to discern any differences in spousal abuse due to rural-urban residency. The findings of the comparison are presented in Table 30 below. One-way ANOVA revealed that the use of Facebook was significantly different among married women in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas ($p=0.025$). The same trend was evident for TikTok use ($p=0.021$) and WhatsApp use ($p<0.001$).

Table 30: One-Way ANOVA for Social Media Use in Rural, Urban, and Peri-Urban

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FB Use Score	Between Groups	41.072	2	20.536	3.722	0.025
	Within Groups	1434.593	260	5.518		
	Total	1475.665	262			
TT Use Score	Between Groups	101.553	2	50.776	3.900	0.021
	Within Groups	3385.025	260	13.019		
	Total	3486.578	262			
WA Use Score	Between Groups	396.758	2	198.379	8.367	0.000
	Within Groups	6164.299	260	23.709		
	Total	6561.057	262			

Tukey's post-hoc analysis was conducted to evaluate the differences in social media between rural and urban, rural and peri-urban, urban and peri-urban married women in Kwale County. The findings of the post-hoc analysis are presented in Table 31 below. The mean difference in Facebook use was significantly different between married women in rural and peri-urban areas ($p=0.019$). However, there was no difference in the use of Facebook between rural and urban married women and between urban and peri-urban women. These findings imply that peri-urban married women used Facebook more than their rural and urban counterparts. Furthermore, the level of use of Facebook by urban and rural married women in Kwale County was similar.

Tukey's post-hoc analysis also revealed that TikTok use was significantly different only between rural and peri-urban married women ($p=0.019$). The mean difference indicated that peri-urban women in Kwale County used TikTok more than their rural counterparts. However, there was no difference in the use of TikTok between rural and

urban married women and between urban and peri-urban women. The use of WhatsApp was significantly different between married women in rural and peri-urban areas ($p=0.006$) and between those in rural and urban areas ($p=0.003$). The mean differences revealed that urban and peri-urban married women used WhatsApp more than their rural counterparts. There was no difference in the use of WhatsApp among married women in peri-urban and urban areas ($p=0.778$). As such, the level of WhatsApp use was similar between peri-urban and urban married women in Kwale County.

Table 31: Tukey's Post-Hoc Analysis of Social Media Use based on Rural-Urban Residency

Dependent Variable	(I) Residency	(J) Residency	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
FB Use Score	Rural	Peri-urban	-0.95238*	0.34907	0.019	-1.7752	-0.1295
		Urban	-0.26374	0.41923	0.804	-1.2519	0.7245
	Peri-urban	Rural	0.95238*	0.34907	0.019	0.1295	1.7752
		Urban	0.68864	0.47860	0.323	-0.4395	1.8168
TT Use Score	Rural	Peri-urban	-0.68864	0.47860	0.323	-1.8168	0.4395
		Urban	-1.45687*	0.53621	0.019	-2.7208	-0.1929
	Peri-urban	Rural	-0.81462	0.64397	0.416	-2.3326	0.7034
		Urban	1.45687*	0.53621	0.019	0.1929	2.7208
WA Use Score	Rural	Peri-urban	0.64225	0.73518	0.657	-1.0907	2.3752
		Urban	0.81462	0.64397	0.416	-0.7034	2.3326
	Peri-urban	Rural	-0.64225	0.73518	0.657	-2.3752	1.0907
		Urban	-2.22981*	0.72360	0.006	-3.9355	-0.5241
WA Use Score	Rural	Urban	-2.90014*	0.86901	0.003	-4.9486	-0.8517
		Peri-urban	2.22981*	0.72360	0.006	0.5241	3.9355
	Peri-urban	Urban	-0.67033	0.99209	0.778	-3.0089	1.6682
		Urban	2.90014*	0.86901	0.003	0.8517	4.9486
WA Use Score	Urban	Peri-urban	0.67033	0.99209	0.778	-1.6682	3.0089

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The differences in the use of different social media platforms across rural, peri-urban, and urban married women can be explained by the diffusion of innovations theory. Lidder et al. (2025) reveal that urban areas lead rural areas in adopting innovations. As such, social media platforms are first adopted by urban residents before diffusing to peri-urban and rural areas. First adopters often use innovations more responsibly and are more careful to reduce the negative consequence compared to late adopters. In this regard, they are less likely to use social media platforms more frequently than their peri-rural counterparts. Peri-rural married women may exhibit excessive use of social media because they have not had adequate exposure to distinguish between safe and harmful

use. Rural women are still hesitant to using social media platforms or have lower access to internet-enabled devices, such as smartphones and laptops. As such, they have significantly lower frequency of using Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp.

4.10.3 Impact of Rural-Urban Residency on Spousal Abuse

The researcher evaluated whether living in a rural, peri-urban, or urban area affected the impact of social media use on spousal abuse. Regression analysis was used to determine the moderating role of rural-urban residency on the impact of social media use on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County. This analysis was significant to the study because it helped to achieve the fourth objective and test the fourth hypothesis. Table 32 presents the findings of the regression analysis. The findings reveal that area of residence significantly moderated the impact of TikTok use on physical injuries married women in Kwale County sustain from spousal abuse ($p=0.004$). However, rural-urban residency did not moderate the impact of Facebook use ($p=0.096$) or WhatsApp ($p=0.134$) on physical injuries from spousal abuse. From Table 32, it is evident that rural-urban residency significantly moderated the impact of using TikTok ($p=0.023$) and WhatsApp ($p=0.023$) on spousal threats against married women in Kwale County. However, the area of residence did not moderate the impact of using Facebook on the risk of married women being threatened by their husbands ($p=0.563$). Rural-urban residency also moderated the impact of using TikTok on the risk of experiencing controlled access to phones and social media ($p=0.014$). The moderating role of area of residence was not significant for the impact of Facebook use and WhatsApp use on controlled access to phones and social media. These findings suggest that interventions for addressing spousal abuse against married women should be tailored to consider the differences between rural, peri-urban, and urban areas.

From a functionalist social change theory perspective, the findings reflected how specifically social media use integrates into community structures differently across rural, peri-urban, and urban settings, leading to varied impacts on spousal abuse dynamics. In Kwale County, the higher Facebook use among peri-urban women may signal an intermediate stage of change: these areas combine rural social cohesion with increasing exposure to urban lifestyles and technologies. The moderation of TikTok and WhatsApp's impact on threats and control in different residential areas suggests

that the role of social media in spousal abuse is not uniform. Instead, it is shaped by the social norms, values, and support systems embedded within each type of community. Functionalists would argue that as social media becomes more integrated into rural and urban systems, its disruptive potential on traditional marital power structures will gradually stabilise, but the rate and nature of change will differ by residency type.

Table 32: Rural-Urban Residency vs. the Impact of Social Media Use on Spousal Abuse

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
Physical Injuries From Spousal Abuse	(Constant)	1.944	0.124		15.704	0.000
	FB Use	-0.031	0.018	-0.168	-1.671	0.096
	TT Use	0.040	0.014	0.329	2.942	0.004
	WA Use	-0.013	0.008	-0.166	-1.504	0.134
Spousal Threats	(Constant)	1.590	0.111		14.274	0.000
	FB Use	-0.010	0.016	-0.054	-0.579	0.563
	TT Use	0.028	0.012	0.238	2.287	0.023
	WA Use	0.018	0.008	0.235	2.295	0.023
Control Access to Phones and Social Media	(Constant)	1.664	0.123		13.507	0.000
	FB Use	-0.026	0.018	-0.138	-1.399	0.163
	TT Use	0.034	0.014	0.273	2.476	0.014
	WA Use	0.006	0.008	0.078	0.719	0.473

Through the diffusion of innovation theory, the results can be understood as a reflection of varying stages of adoption and adaptation to social media technologies. Peri-urban women’s higher Facebook use compared to both rural and urban women indicates they may be in the “early majority” phase, where adoption accelerates due to both peer influence and increased access to digital tools. Rural women, though increasingly connected, could be in an earlier adoption stage, with limited exposure to platform functionalities beyond basic communication, while urban women may have moved into a saturation phase where novelty has waned, reducing usage intensity. The significant moderating effects of rural-urban residency on TikTok and WhatsApp suggested that these platforms are at different diffusion stages in each setting, influencing their potential to spark conflict or provoke controlling behaviour from spouses. Diffusion theory explained that as these technologies spread, the associated social risks, such as spousal threats and control, are not just a product of the technology itself, but of how, when, and in what context it is adopted.

Under radical feminist theory, the findings illustrated how digital technologies interact with patriarchal structures to reinforce or challenge male dominance differently across

residential settings. Radical feminists argued that spousal abuse is rooted in systemic gender power imbalances, and new technologies can become either tools of liberation or instruments of control depending on the surrounding power dynamics. In peri-urban areas, where Facebook use is highest, women's increased online visibility and networking opportunities may be perceived as a threat to male authority, potentially triggering controlling behaviours. The fact that TikTok and WhatsApp use showed moderated effects on threats and phone/social media control across residency types suggests that these platforms, perhaps due to their more interactive and socially visible nature, provoke stronger patriarchal backlash in some contexts. In rural areas, where traditional gender roles are more rigid, men may use control over phones and social media as a means to maintain dominance, while in urban areas, overt control may be replaced by subtler forms of monitoring. Radical feminists would view these patterns as evidence that the digital sphere is an extension of the gendered struggle for autonomy, with residency shaping the tactics of male control.

4.11 The Role of Digital Literacy

The researcher also evaluated the role of digital literacy of married women in Kwale County. The analysis was significant to the study because they enabled the researcher to determine whether digital literacy moderated the impact of social media use on spousal abuse on married women in Kwale County.

4.11.1 The Level of Digital Literacy

The participants were asked to rate their level of digital literacy. Collecting this information was significant to the study because it helped to assess the digital literacy of married women. The data were also used later to analyse the moderating role of digital literacy on the impact of using various social media platforms on spousal abuse. The findings on the level of digital literacy are presented in Table 33 below. There were more respondents with average or below average in digital literacy in Kwale County since 6.5%, 17.9%, and 36.9% of respondents reported that they had very low, low, and average levels of digital literacy, respectively. Respondents with high and very high levels of digital literacy were 27.8% and 11%, respectively.

Table 33: Digital Literacy Levels Based on Rural-Urban Residency

		Kwale County	Rural	Peri-urban	Urban
Perceived	Very Low	6.5%	8.7%	3.2%	2.6%
Digital Literacy	Low	17.9%	21.1%	14.3%	10.3%
	Average	36.9%	38.5%	31.7%	38.5%
	High	27.8%	22.4%	33.3%	41.0%
	Very High	11.0%	9.3%	17.5%	7.7%
Digital Literacy	No	58.9%	66.5%	46.0%	48.7%
Training	Yes	41.1%	33.5%	54.0%	51.3%

Overall findings are consistent across the rural, peri-urban, and urban areas of Kwale County. Respondents from rural areas with very low, low, average, high, and very high levels of digital literacy were 8.7%, 21.1%, 38.5%, 22.4%, and 9.3%, respectively. On the other hand, those from urban areas of Kwale County with very low, low, average, high, and very high digital literacy levels were, 2.6%, 10.3%, 38.5%, 41%, and 7.7%, respectively. Interestingly, peri-urban areas of Kwale County had the highest percentage of respondents (17.5%) with very high levels of digital literacy. These findings implied that there are more married women with low levels of digital literacy in rural areas compared to urban and peri-urban areas. Furthermore, they suggested higher penetration of social media in urban and peri-urban areas than rural areas. These findings revealed a worrying trend of many married women who are less digitally literate at a time when the use of social media and other digital tools is increasing. Furthermore, since the study had established that social media use increased the risk of spousal abuse, low digital literacy increases their vulnerability.

In rural areas, a majority of 66.5% of women had not attended digital literacy training, with only 33.5% reporting participation. This indicated a notable gap in access or uptake of digital literacy programs in rural communities. These areas faced challenges such as limited infrastructure, fewer training opportunities, and lower digital exposure, which could contribute to the low training rates. In contrast, the situation was more favourable in peri-urban and urban areas. In peri-urban areas, 54.0% of women have attended digital literacy training, which is the highest proportion across the three zones. Similarly, in urban areas, 51.3% have participated in such training, slightly above those who had not (48.7%). These findings suggested that women in more developed or better-connected areas were more likely to benefit from digital literacy initiatives, possibly due to better access to technology, information, and education services.

Overall, the data highlighted a clear urban-rural disparity in digital literacy training access among married women in Kwale County. This underscored the need for targeted efforts to bridge the digital divide, especially by expanding outreach and training programs in rural communities to promote equitable digital empowerment for all women, regardless of their location.

The level of digital literacy of married women across Kinango, Lunga Lunga, Matuga, Msambweni, Samburu, and Shimba Hills were also analysed and presented in Table 34. The findings on digital literacy levels across the six sub-counties of Kwale County revealed notable differences in perceived digital literacy levels among married women. Overall, a majority of respondents in all regions assessed their digital literacy as either average or high. Msambweni reported the highest percentage of women perceiving their skills as average (46.4%), followed by Matuga (37.8%) and Lunga Lunga (35.5%). Similarly, Kinango and Lunga Lunga had the highest proportion of women who viewed their digital literacy as high (both 31.0%), suggesting stronger confidence or exposure to digital tools in those areas. In contrast, Matuga had the lowest number of women perceiving their literacy as high (18.9%) despite a relatively high average rating, indicating a lack of individuals who felt advanced in their digital capabilities.

Very low and low digital literacy levels were more prominent in regions such as Shimba Hills and Matuga. Shimba Hills recorded the highest percentage of women with very low digital literacy (13.3%), followed by Kinango (10.3%) and Lunga Lunga (9.7%). Matuga had the highest percentage of women reporting low digital literacy (27.0%), suggesting that although a significant number perceive themselves as average, many still struggle with digital competency. These findings indicated a divide within regions where some women are confident in their skills, while others remain on the lower end of the digital literacy spectrum.

Table 34: Digital Literacy Levels across the Sub-Counties of Kwale County

			Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Perceived Digital Literacy	Very Low	Low	10.3%	9.7%	2.7%	1.8%	6.3%	13.3%
		Average	13.8%	12.9%	27.0%	14.3%	21.9%	20.0%
		High	31.0%	35.5%	37.8%	46.4%	32.8%	33.3%
		Very High	31.0%	30.6%	18.9%	26.8%	29.7%	26.7%
			13.8%	11.3%	13.5%	10.7%	9.4%	6.7%
Digital Literacy Training	No	51.7%	64.5%	70.3%	53.6%	54.7%	60.0%	
	Yes	48.3%	35.5%	29.7%	46.4%	45.3%	40.0%	

In terms of digital literacy training, the majority of married women across all regions had not attended any formal training. The highest proportion of women without training was found in Matuga (70.3%) and Lunga Lunga (64.5%), while Kinango and Msambweni had the lowest (51.7% and 53.6%, respectively). This implies that in regions like Matuga and Lunga Lunga, limited access to or participation in training may be contributing to the higher percentages of women with low digital literacy perceptions. Conversely, in Kinango and Msambweni, where training attendance is relatively higher (48.3% and 46.4%), more women rate their digital skills as average or high, suggesting a positive correlation between training exposure and perceived competence.

The findings above are consistent with existing evidence, which demonstrate significant disparities in digital literacy between rural and urban residents. For example, Akbar and Wijaya (2024) found that rural communities in Indonesia face persistent challenges in developing digital literacy due to inadequate internet infrastructure, limited access to digital devices, and lower levels of formal education. He et al. (2025) also observed that rural residents generally possess lower digital skills compared to their urban counterparts, largely because of unequal access to digital education and technological infrastructure. A Kenyan study by Chisika and Yeom (2025) revealed similar findings by indicating that rural areas continue to lag behind urban centres in both internet connectivity and digital competence. Rural residents in Kenya have lower digital literacy levels because of infrastructural limitations, high data costs, and insufficient training opportunities. From the lens of the diffusion of innovations theory, rural residents were late adopters of digital technologies. Therefore, married women in rural areas of Kwale County had lower levels of digital literacy compared to their urban counterparts, primarily because of their liminal exposure to digital technologies.

4.11.2 Online Safety Practices

Participants were asked to indicate the online safety practices they employed while using social media platforms. The safety practices investigated by this study included using strong password, two-factor authentication, avoiding suspicious links, and controlling the time spent online. Overall, the use of strong passwords was the most widely practiced safety measure among women in Kwale County, with 73.4% reporting that they use strong passwords. The adoption is particularly high in peri-urban (82.5%) and urban (82.1%) areas, compared to 67.7% in rural areas. This suggested that women in more developed areas may have better digital literacy or exposure to online security education.

In contrast, the use of two-factor authentication (2FA) is less common. In Kwale County, only 41.4% of women use 2FA, with rural areas lagging slightly at 37.9%, compared to 47.6% in peri-urban and 46.2% in urban settings. Despite its importance in enhancing account security, two-factor authentication appears underutilized, likely due to limited awareness or the technical challenges involved in enabling it. The practice of avoiding suspicious links is also relatively low across the board. Only 29.3% of respondents in the county reported engaging in this practice, with rural areas again showing the lowest adherence at 26.7%, compared to 33.3% in both peri-urban and urban areas. Clicking on suspicious links was a common cause of phishing and malware attacks, so this finding underscored a significant vulnerability. More education was needed to raise awareness of online threats and how to recognize and avoid them.

Table 35: Online Safety Practices in Kwale County

Safety Practices		Kwale County	Rural	Peri-urban	Urban
Strong Password	No	26.6%	32.3%	17.5%	17.9%
	Yes	73.4%	67.7%	82.5%	82.1%
Two-Factor Authentication	No	58.6%	62.1%	52.4%	53.8%
	Yes	41.4%	37.9%	47.6%	46.2%
Avoiding Suspicious Links	No	70.7%	73.3%	66.7%	66.7%
	Yes	29.3%	26.7%	33.3%	33.3%
Controlling Online Time	No	76.0%	75.2%	76.2%	79.5%
	Yes	24.0%	24.8%	23.8%	20.5%

Controlling the time spent online appeared the least observed safety practice with only 24.0% of respondents across the county who attempted to manage their screen time.

Urban women reported the lowest engagement in this practice (20.5%), while rural women showed slightly higher awareness (24.8%). The lack of attention to screen time control reflected a general underestimation of the potential negative effects of excessive social media use, such as reduced productivity, emotional exhaustion, or digital addiction.

The analysis of online safety practices was also done across the six sub-counties of Kwale County, including Kinango, Lunga Lunga, Matuga, Msambweni, Samburu, and Shimba Hills. The findings are presented in Table 36 below. Across all regions, the use of strong passwords was the most commonly practiced safety measure. Shimba Hills recorded the highest adherence, with 93.3% of respondents reporting that they use strong passwords, followed by Kinango (79.3%), and Matuga (81.1%). In contrast, Lunga Lunga and Msambweni had the lowest percentages (both at 66.1%), suggesting a need for strengthened awareness around basic password security in these areas. On the safety measure based on the two-factor authentication (2FA), the levels of adoption are relatively lower and more varied. The highest use was reported in Kinango (48.3%) and Lunga Lunga (45.2%), while Matuga showed the lowest usage (24.3%). This pattern indicated that although many women may have understood the importance of strong passwords, fewer are implementing more advanced security features like 2FA. The low uptake in Matuga, in particular, raised concern, as it was suggested that many accounts could remain vulnerable to unauthorized access despite the use of secure passwords.

Table 36: Table Online Safety Practices across the Sub-Counties of Kwale County

		Kinango	Lunga Lunga	Matuga	Msambweni	Samburu	Shimba Hills
Strong Password	No	20.7%	33.9%	18.9%	33.9%	25.0%	6.7%
	Yes	79.3%	66.1%	81.1%	66.1%	75.0%	93.3%
Two-Factor Authentication	No	51.7%	54.8%	75.7%	57.1%	56.3%	60.0%
	Yes	48.3%	45.2%	24.3%	42.9%	43.8%	40.0%
Avoiding Suspicious Links	No	65.5%	67.7%	70.3%	69.6%	73.4%	86.7%
	Yes	34.5%	32.3%	29.7%	30.4%	26.6%	13.3%
Controlling Online Time	No	75.9%	72.6%	75.7%	80.4%	75.0%	80.0%
	Yes	24.1%	27.4%	24.3%	19.6%	25.0%	20.0%

The practice of avoiding suspicious links is generally low across all regions, with Shimba Hills showing the lowest adherence (13.3%). Only 34.5% of respondents in

Kinango and 32.3% in Lunga Lunga indicated that they avoid suspicious links, the highest percentages among the six regions, but still low overall. These findings highlighted a critical gap in cybersecurity awareness that could expose users to online threats such as fraud, identity theft, or malware. The least practiced online safety behavior was controlling the time spent online. This behavioral safety measure had the lowest rates of engagement, with only 19.6% of women in Msambweni and 20.0% in Shimba Hills reporting efforts to manage their time online. Even the regions with the highest engagement (Lunga Lunga 27.4% and Samburu 25.0%) had fewer than one-third of users practicing time management. This could reflect a lack of awareness regarding the negative effects of excessive screen time, such as digital fatigue, addiction, or interference with offline responsibilities.

The findings revealed poor online safety practices among married women are consistent with existing evidence. Coopamootoo and Ng (2023) contend that online safety practices among women are shaped by gendered experiences, social expectations, and unequal access to digital security knowledge. Their study found that women tend to adopt more cautious and protective digital practices than men, primarily due to heightened exposure to online risks such as harassment, stalking, and privacy violations. Their study revealed that women are more likely to engage in proactive strategies such as frequently changing passwords, restricting personal information shared online, and adjusting privacy settings on social media platforms. However, these practices are often motivated by fear and the need for self-protection rather than empowerment. Coopamootoo and Ng (2023) note that most online safety advice and digital security tools are developed from male-oriented perspectives, often overlooking the specific threats and emotional labour women experience online. For example, while cybersecurity guidelines tend to focus on technical threats, women are more concerned about social and psychological harms, such as cyberstalking and abusive online interactions. Zwilling et al. (2022) link poor online safety practices to unequal access to digital education and exposure to technical environments. They also link it to the observation that women are less likely to receive formal training or professional experience in information technology. As such, women have relatively lower confidence in identifying and responding to sophisticated cyber threats. However, the findings from Kwale County also concurred with Zwilling et al. (2022) in their finding

that women generally exhibit greater compliance with basic cybersecurity guidelines than men, such as regularly having strong passwords and 2FA. The fact that the majority of Kwale women were in rural areas could contribute to poor adherence to online safety practices.

4.11.3 Moderation of the Impact of Social Media Use on Spousal Abuse

Regression analysis was used to determine the moderating role of digital literacy on the impact of social media use on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County. This analysis was significant to the study because it helped to evaluate the effectiveness of digital literacy interventions that seek to address spousal abuse against women in the digital era where social media use is inevitable. The findings of the regression analysis are presented in Table 37.

Table 37: The Moderating Role of Digital Literacy

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
Physical Injuries From Spousal Abuse	(Constant)	2.045	0.133		15.385	0.000
	FB use	-0.007	0.004	-0.195	-1.994	0.047
	TT use	0.007	0.003	0.273	2.634	0.009
Spousal Threats	WA use	-0.002	0.002	-0.135	-1.261	0.209
	(Constant)	1.694	0.123		13.793	0.000
	FB Use	-0.007	0.003	-0.193	-2.068	0.040
	TT Use	0.007	0.002	0.273	2.764	0.006
Control Access to Phones and Social Media	WA Use	0.004	0.002	0.234	2.291	0.023
	(Constant)	1.792	0.135		13.308	0.000
	FB Use	-0.005	0.004	-0.149	-1.517	0.130
	TT Use	0.005	0.003	0.181	1.740	0.083
	WA Use	0.001	0.002	0.081	0.757	0.450

The regression analysis explored whether digital literacy moderates the relationship between social media use (Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp) and different dimensions of spousal abuse (physical injuries, threats, and control over phone/social media use) among married women in Kwale County. For physical injuries, Facebook use interaction with digital literacy had a small but significant negative effect ($B = -0.007$, $p = 0.047$), suggesting that higher digital literacy reduced the link between Facebook use and the frequency of physical injuries. Conversely, TikTok use interacted with digital literacy showed a positive and significant effect ($B = 0.007$, $p = 0.009$), indicating that higher digital literacy amplified the association between TikTok use and physical abuse risk. WhatsApp use interaction was not significant ($p = 0.209$).

For spousal threats, a similar pattern emerged for Facebook use, where higher digital literacy weakened the relationship ($B = -0.007$, $p = 0.040$). In contrast, TikTok use again showed a significant positive moderating effect ($B = 0.007$, $p = 0.006$), and WhatsApp use also demonstrated a significant positive moderation ($B = 0.004$, $p = 0.023$), suggesting that digital literacy in these cases heightened the link between these platforms and spousal threats. For control over phone and social media access, none of the interaction terms reached statistical significance ($p > 0.05$), although TikTok use approached significance ($p = 0.083$), indicating a potential trend toward a positive moderating effect.

Overall, the findings suggested that digital literacy mitigates Facebook-related risks of physical injury and threats. Digital literacy enabled married women to discern online behaviours and patterns that exposed them to spousal abuse risks. Such skill helped them to locate resources that could help them deter husbands from abusive tendencies. However, it could heighten the association between TikTok use and certain forms of abuse. This could reflect differences in platform content, interaction patterns, and the ways digital literacy equips women either to resist or inadvertently expose themselves to risks in different online environments.

The findings from Kwale County were consistent with previous studies that acknowledge the crucial moderating role of digital literacy in shaping how using social media platforms influence the risk of spousal abuse. Greyson et al. (2023) found that individuals with higher digital literacy are more capable of adopting online safety practices that reduce vulnerability to surveillance, spousal control, and emotional manipulation by intimate partners. They also noted that people with high levels of digital literacy were able recognize potential online threats more effectively than those with limited literacy. In the case of married woman, low digital literacy can increase their susceptibility to online exploitation, enabling controlling partners to misuse technology to monitor communications or restrict digital autonomy. The findings of Van Schaik et al. (2018) supported this view by demonstrating that users' security awareness and risk perception strongly influenced precautionary behaviours on social networking sites. In this regard, women with higher digital literacy tend to perceive online risks more accurately and engage in protective actions. Behaviours, such as using

complex passwords, limiting geolocation data, and customizing audience visibility can significantly reduce the likelihood that social media interactions become triggers for jealousy, suspicion, or psychological abuse of married women by their husbands. Together with these previous findings, the study in Kwale County suggests the adoption of tailored digital literacy interventions that increase the capacity of married women use social media platforms without increasing the risk of being abuse by their husbands. Furthermore, such interventions can help married women navigate social media sites, which are inevitable realities of the contemporary world.

However, some studies cautioned the reliance on digital literacy programs in reducing social media use-induced spousal abuse due to unsupportive findings. Suyanto et al. (2023) argue that digital literacy often focuses on technical competencies, neglecting the social and psychological implications of technology use. They found that even moderate to high digital literacy does not fully protect technology users from the adverse effects of digital engagement. This evidence suggested that literacy alone does not address the broader structural and cultural factors shaping online interactions. Technical knowledge of social media features does not necessarily translate into protection against digital control or surveillance by abusive partners. Therefore, women may know how to use social media platforms but still remain vulnerable to spousal abuse. The findings of Fiolet et al. (2021) provide more insights by demonstrating that TFA extends beyond a user's level of digital skill. Their study revealed that even when women possess adequate digital literacy, abusers may use more advanced or covert methods that bypass typical safety measures. Furthermore, since social media platforms favour openness, connectivity, and data sharing, Leitão (2018) found that their design creates structural vulnerabilities that even digitally literate women cannot overcome completely. Therefore, these studies suggested that digital literacy programs should be customised to consider the social and psychological implications of social media use. Involving husbands in digital literacy training of their wives can further reduce the risk of spousal abuse by enriching the understanding of the nature of online interactions and behaviours.

From the perspective of functionalist social change theory, the findings suggested that digital literacy plays a nuanced role in influencing how social media use impacts

spousal abuse, with different patterns across platforms and abuse indicators. According to functionalism new technologies and skills, such as digital literacy, can either mitigate or exacerbate social tensions depending on how they are integrated into existing social systems. The negative moderating effect of Facebook use on both physical injuries and spousal threats indicates that, in the functionalist view, higher digital literacy could promote stability by reducing harmful interactions when using this platform, perhaps by enabling users to identify, avoid, or report abusive behaviours. Conversely, the positive moderation seen with TikTok use across physical injuries and spousal threats suggests a destabilising influence, where increased digital literacy might inadvertently enhance exposure to or engagement with conflict-inducing content. This divergence highlighted that not all technological adoptions contribute equally to social harmony. WhatsApp use presented a mixed pattern, with digital literacy reducing physical abuse risk but increasing threats, pointing to a complex adjustment process in which society is still balancing the integration of instant messaging into marital dynamics.

Through the lens of diffusion of innovation theory, the results could be interpreted as showing that the adoption and consequences of social media use are shaped not just by access but by how innovations are learned and applied in specific contexts. Digital literacy functions as a key attribute affecting the "implementation" and "confirmation" stages of adoption, influencing whether an innovation is used in ways that reduce or increase social harms. The finding that greater digital literacy reduced abuse risks for Facebook but increases them for TikTok suggested that the perceived characteristics of each platform, such as compatibility with existing norms, complexity of use, and potential visibility of private actions, affect how users integrate them into marital relationships. For Facebook, literacy may lead to selective, controlled use aligned with positive social norms, whereas for TikTok, literacy might expand the scope for content sharing, public exposure, and interactions that heighten marital conflict. The mixed findings for WhatsApp suggest that even for widely diffused innovations, the impact depends on how digital skills influence patterns of communication and surveillance in intimate relationships.

4.12 Qualitative Findings

Semi-structured interview schedules were also used to collect data from key informants, including local chiefs, professional counsellors, OCPDs, DCIOs, and community health assistants/GBV to supplement the quantitative data. The analysis qualitative data from the responses of key informants revealed important insights in spousal abuse against women and the role of social media. Qualitative responses were collected from 12 local area chiefs, 6 OCPD, 6 DCIO, 12 professional counsellors, and 6 community health assistants. The themes and narratives that emerged reveal how social media platforms, particularly Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok, have reshaped patterns of communication, trust, and control within marriage, often intensifying conflict and abuse.

4.12.1 Social Media as a Catalyst for Suspicion and Jealousy

Key informants consistently reported that the use of social media by married women triggers suspicion, jealousy, and insecurity among partners. Many respondents linked marital conflicts to private online conversations, messaging, or online friendships. WhatsApp emerged as the most cited platform associated with misunderstandings. For example, participants noted that “...a wife was caught chatting with a lover outside marriage on WhatsApp” and that “WhatsApp communication from wife’s male friends and ex-boyfriends led to the husband’s suspicion causing conflicts, physical and emotional abuse.” Professional respondents shared accounts in which husbands discovered private messages, photos, or videos on their wives’ phones and interpreted these as signs of infidelity or moral misconduct. One informant noted that “a wife was caught chatting with a lover outside marriage on WhatsApp.” Some husbands may use few cases of infidelity enabled by social media to justify controlling their wives’ access to digital tools.

These findings align with Nnam and Dastile’s (2025) argument that social media interactions blur the line between fidelity and friendship, fuelling jealousy and emotional violence. Husbands may become jealous when they find their women interacting with male social media users, confusing such interactions with infidelity. Additionally, the undefined boundary between infidelity and online friendship may encourage women to share more than they should. Similarly, Setiawan et al. (2023)

observed that messaging platforms create virtual spaces where secrecy and misinterpretation heighten suspicion. In patriarchal marital contexts, such as in Kenya, women's digital communication is easily construed as disloyalty, reinforcing male possessiveness and control. Although married women may not be doing anything that may threaten their marriage, the secretive nature of online interactions may cultivate jealousy.

4.12.2 Online Visibility and Cultural Expectations

Key informants frequently described incidents where women's public visibility on Facebook and TikTok, through photos, videos, or status updates, provoked conflict. One professional counsellor recalled that "*...a woman was assaulted over continued posts of videos on Facebook,*" while another noted that "*...a husband accused his wife of exposing herself to other men through TikTok videos.*" These responses imply that married women's online visibility is interpreted as a sign of seeking attention or validation. Husbands with such perceptions are likely to suspect their wives of infidelity and develop insecurities, which may lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and even spousal abuse. The abusive reaction of husbands may act as a deterrent to influence married women's online presence. Cases of married women who have been caught to using social media platforms have also fuelled insecurity among husbands.

These responses on online visibility highlight how digital self-expression challenges traditional gender norms. In many African societies, married women are expected to uphold modesty and discretion (Awino et al., 2022). The visibility afforded by social media disrupts these norms, provoking accusations of moral transgression. This argument explain by women who are active on social media are labelled unruly. According to Harony et al. (2023), online self-presentation introduces new power dynamics, where women's digital autonomy may be perceived as defiance or disrespect, leading to abusive reactions from partners. Thus, social media becomes a stage for contested performances of gender and respectability.

4.12.3 Digital Surveillance and Control

A striking finding is that married women's use of social media may result in behavioural changes in their husbands. Using social media triggered husbands'

coercive control over their wives' online activities. Respondents reported cases of men demanding passwords, confiscating phones, or deleting social media apps such as WhatsApp or Facebook to limit their wives' communication. Others mentioned the use of spyware and tracking applications. A local area administrative officer noted that "*...many women report their spouses become jealous or control them when they spend much time on social media.*" As such, husbands may develop controlling behaviours when they perceive that their wives use social media excessively. Although controlling behaviours violate the autonomy of married women, some husbands consider it appropriate to restore order. A community health assistant stated, "*Some people take a lot of their time stuck on their gadgets and some find their spouses intruding into their personal accounts.*" Although some husbands monitor online interactions to exert their patriarchal control, others stalk their wives to confirm their suspicion of unfaithfulness.

These practices revealed by the responses align with global research identifying digital surveillance as a growing form of intimate partner control (Rogers et al., 2023). As women gain access to digital platforms, some men extend traditional forms of monitoring into the online realm. In this study, such behaviours reflected attempts to reassert dominance and preserve patriarchal authority within the household. The findings support the radical feminist view that technology can reproduce and amplify gendered power imbalances (Nikulina & Brumbaugh, 2024). Such a view is founded on the assumption that husbands who seek to control their women's use of social media were already controlling or abusive in offline contexts. However, Chattopadhyay et al. (2020) indicate that addiction to social media may influence behaviour negatively, which may draw reactions from the other partner. The functionalist perspective would view the behaviour of husbands monitoring their wives' online activities as an adjustment to the changes in the marital relationship caused by social media use. However, this perspective may be abused to justify patriarchal control of men over their wives.

4.12.4 Neglect, Distraction, and Communication Breakdown

Participants associated social media use with negative outcomes in marital relationships. Most of the key informants described excessive social media use as leading to marital neglect, emotional disconnection, and reduced intimacy. Examples

included statements such as “*no proper communication between spouses, one partner is busy on TikTok late hours and conjugal rights delayed*” and “*excessive time on social media reduces quality time between spouses.*” Married women’s communication using these social media platforms raised several concerns, including jealousy, mistrust, infidelity, neglect, reduced intimacy, and marital dissatisfaction. Key informants also acknowledged that social media also aid infidelity, which leads to marital conflicts and even divorce when discovered. One of the informants said, “*A married lady whose husband is out of the country was caught in Facebook chatting with another man and forgot to delete the messages. After exchanging the phones with the husband, the accounts were active and texts found.*” There are cases where communications and other interactions via social media lead to separation and divorce.

Key informants viewed the excessive use of social media platforms as destructive to marriages by fuelling neglect of household duties, reduced intimacy, and emotional distance between spouses. Many respondents noted that spending much time using any of the three platforms reduces face-to-face interactions with spouses and less time dedicated to marriage life. Reduced intimacy and emotional distance resulting from excessive use of social media were found to “*...create suspicion and increased conflicts.*” Spending less time with each other was found to create communication gaps, which were associated with misunderstanding and conflicts.

These narratives echo research by Suyanto et al. (2023), who found that unregulated digital engagement can reduce interpersonal communication and increase relational strain. Social media may replace husbands, creating emotional distance with their wives. Such changes are detrimental to marital relationships because they can lead to maladjustments, including controlling behaviours, psychological, and physical abuse. In many cases, social media becomes both a distraction and a substitute for affection, deepening emotional distance. This supports findings by Harony et al. (2023) that digital engagement redefines marital intimacy and prioritises virtual interactions over face-to-face connection.

4.12.5 Peer and Media Influence on Behaviour

Several respondents identified peer pressure and online content as influencing women's attitudes, dressing, and lifestyle, which in turn caused domestic conflicts. For instance, one respondent reported that "*...fellow women in a WhatsApp group pushed her to get another man for marital affairs,*" while another mentioned that "*...motivational groups encouraging financial independence led to emotional and physical abuse.*" It was noted that some ladies copy lifestyles they see in social media which lead to physical and emotional abuse in their relationships, especially when their husbands do not approve of the changes. Key informants noted that some women "*...take social media advices and experiences to their normal life situations.*" One of the behavioural changes was where the woman changes mode of dressing, which could lead to conflict and abuse if the husband disagrees. Such cases reveal the oppression of women, who need approval from their husbands before embracing certain practices.

This reflects how social media introduces alternative value systems that challenge traditional family hierarchies. According to Suyanto et al. (2023), online communities often promote individualism and self-expression, which can be perceived as threatening to patriarchal norms. In contexts where masculinity is tied to authority, such changes may provoke violent responses from spouses. Although digital peer influence can be a source of empowerment, it can increase the vulnerability of married women to spousal abuse. He et al. (2024) reveal that women use social media to relax and release stress from their busy lives and meet new people, who may expose them to new approaches to self-fulfilment. Such interactions may be frowned upon in the contemporary world. However, Adams et al. (2023) caution against blindly consuming social media content or believing people met online due to the widespread misinformation on online platforms.

4.12.6 Underreporting and Normalisation of Abuse

A major concern raised by the key informants was the low reporting of social media-related spousal abuse. Most professionals stated that such cases are "*rarely reported for fear of shame, blame, or cultural pressure.*" Many women only report when they are overwhelmed by severe or repeated incidents of physical assault or after their separation. Some women do not report abuses because of the fear of their husband's

retaliation. For example, one key informant indicate, *“Most social media related abuse cases go unreported for fear of husband’s beatings.”* Therefore, many married women do not see the significance of reporting since they believe that their husbands may not stop their abusive behaviour due to external pressure. Additionally, married women do not consider social media-related, such as controlling behaviour, as a serious case to be reported to the police unless it leads to physical assault. Most women do not report immediately for fear of stigma or believe that it is a minor case. Some married women remain silent amidst their frequent abuse to the extent where their friends, families, and neighbours intervene to report cases of abuse. In some cases, married women defend their husbands to prevent outsiders from escalating the matter to relevant authorities.

These responses align with broader evidence in Sub-Saharan Africa showing that sociocultural stigma and victim-blaming discourage women from seeking help (Williams et al., 2025). Some women may even internalise social stigma and justify abuse by their husbands. Social media-linked conflicts are often trivialised, seen as private marital matters rather than legitimate abuse. Consequently, digital forms of spousal abuse remain hidden, reinforcing cycles of silence and impunity. Underreporting promotes the normalization of spousal abuse since it reinforces the belief among perpetrators that they actions will not be punished.

4.12.7 Community Attitudes and Social Stigma

The findings also revealed negative attitudes and perceptions society has towards women who are active on social media platforms. Such women are viewed as *“lazy, immoral, or disrespectful,” “seen as flirting or cheating,”* and *“considered modernised and uncultured.”* Society considers the frequent use of social media to promote laziness among married women since it leads to a pattern of time wastage. Women who are active on social media are associated with characters that do not favour marriage by making them *“incompetent,” “spoiled,” “flirterous,” “unfaithful,” “uncultured, irresponsible and unruly.”* Such labels can justify abusive behaviours of husbands and blame women for their abuse. Since society considers that social media expose married women to unacceptable behaviours, husbands may be justified to abuse or control them to tame such behaviours. Additionally, the negative labels may reduce the urgency

towards helping abused women to find justice because they reinforce the notion that such women are untrustworthy.

These findings highlight the persistence of social stigma surrounding women's digital participation, consistent with Plieger et al. (2021), who found that community norms often associate female online visibility with promiscuity. This stigma not only increases women's exposure to abuse but also constrains their freedom of expression. Stigma extends social control from the household to the wider community, maintaining gendered hierarchies in both offline and online spaces. In this regard, stigma enables society to reinforce patriarchal control over women in digital spaces. Social stigma associated with women who are active on social media may make them hesitant to seek help or report abuse.

4.12.8 Digital Literacy as a Protective Factor

Several key informants acknowledged the role of digital literacy in enhancing women's ability to navigate online risks. Respondents stated that digital literacy *"helps women use privacy settings, block harassers, and avoid sharing sensitive information."* Women who understand online spaces can filter good information from bad ones, reducing negative behavioural changes that may be used as an excuse for spousal abuse. Digital literacy can improve the *"...understanding on how to use social media and its challenges."* Such awareness helps to develop practices that enable women to leverage the opportunities brought by social media with increasing their risk of spousal abuse. High levels of understanding can enable women to locate speak out or seek help online against abusive husbands. Apart from women, many key informants expressed that husbands' digital literacy also determine who they respond to their wives' online activities. One informant indicated that digital literacy *"helps married women and their spouses on how best to handle social media use amidst maintain good marriage relationships."* Therefore, digital literacy can reduce the impact of social media in elevating the risk of abuse by promoting safety use among married women and improving their husbands' tolerance of their online activities.

These responses are consistent with Meherali et al. (2021), who argued that digital competence promotes safer social media engagement and reduces vulnerability to

exploitation. Women should understand the risks that online platform pose to avoid being exploited or misled by negative peer influence. Since Adams et al (2023) reveal rampant misinformation on social media, digital literacy plays a significant role because it can help married women to distinguish truth from falsehood. Digital literacy enables women to know how social media use affects their lives, identify harmful interactions, set boundaries, and foster transparency in marital communication. However, unequal access to technology education, especially among rural women, limits this protective potential.

4.12.9 Effective Interventions

Key informants emphasised the need for civic education, marital counselling, and community sensitisation to address social media-related abuse. One of the informants recommended “*civic education to couples and community at large on matters social media usage.*” Civic education and community sensitization campaigns can help dispel misconceptions and stigma against social media use. Educating the public can create intolerance towards spousal abuse by increasing reporting rates. Suggested interventions included faith-based programmes, public awareness campaigns, and policies regulating online behaviour. These interventions can reduce the vulnerability of women to spousal abuse in offline contexts or when they use social media. These recommendations support Bellini’s (2024) findings that community-based and culturally informed approaches are most effective in addressing technology-facilitated abuse.

Civic education serves as a community-based strategy for promoting awareness, shaping attitudes, and fostering behavioural change regarding the responsible use of digital platforms and respect for gender equality within marriage. In the context of Kenya and similar patriarchal societies, civic education functions as a bridge between technological advancement and social values, ensuring that the growth of social media use does not exacerbate spousal abuse. As such, it can advocate for adopting values that accommodate social media use without causing conflicts in marriages. Schmitt et al. (2024) indicate that civic education can be used to promote digital literacy and safe online practices. Additionally, engaging men in digital literacy and behaviour change programmes can mitigate insecurities driving online surveillance and aggression

(Flood, 2023). A Kenya study by Ngunjiri and Muiro (2021) found that marital counselling strengthens marital communication and conflict resolution skills. Therefore, it can help married couples find better ways of preventing the escalation of disagreements over social media use.

4.12.10 Rural-Urban Divide

Many key informants acknowledged that urban married women used social media more than their rural counterparts. They even noted high cases of excessive use of social media among urban women. This observation can be explained by the fact that “...*women in urban are more exposed*” to digital technologies than those in rural areas. One key informant indicated, “*Women in rural areas are calm with less usage of social media while urban women are busy on social media spending more time online.*” This response suggests that the impact of social media on spousal abuse against married women is more in urban areas compared to rural areas.

Responses indicated that urban women are more exposed to social media and consequently more vulnerable to abuse compared to their rural counterparts. Since rural women have limited access and time for online engagement, they have a low risk of social media-induced spousal abuse. They indicate that “...*urban married women are busy on the social media due to available amenities while the rural women use social media less often and moderately.*” Rural married women mostly use their phones for basic communication since they are busy always busy in the farm. Given that most rural women use feature phones, their access to social media is limited. One informant express that the limited social media use among rural women makes them “...*vulnerable due to lack of exposure..,*” while high level of exposure to digital platforms among urban women cause “*self-indulgence leading to misuse of social media platforms.*” Urban women face peer pressure, greater connectivity, and liberalised attitudes, leading to higher conflict risks.

These findings mirror broader digital inequalities identified in Kenya, where urban women’s greater connectivity brings both empowerment and exposure (Kimote, & Mutunga, 2025). The findings highlight the importance of tailoring interventions to geographical and socio-economic contexts. Digital interventions that promote the use

of digital technologies to empower women should also consider educating them about the risks and appropriate measures to take. Such interventions can enable women to leverage digital tools to empower themselves financially and contribute to the development of their families without causing tensions with their husbands.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

The findings of the PhD thesis revealed critical insights into spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The study assessed physical abuse, spousal threats, control over phone/social media access, reporting behaviours, and the role of social media in marital conflicts across six sub-counties. Regarding physical abuse, about one-third of the married women had sustained injuries from their spouses, with 17.5% experiencing it occasionally and 12.5% frequently. The highest prevalence was observed in Matuga, while Shimba Hills had the lowest, with 66.7% reporting no such experience. In terms of spousal threats, a form of psychological abuse, 38% experienced them occasionally and 9.9% very often, suggesting that verbal threats are more common than physical violence. Shimba Hills and Msambweni had the highest incidences of spousal threats. On the matter on control over communication, a notable 25.9% said they experienced such control occasionally and 11% reported frequent restrictions, indicating that psychological abuse through digital control is a significant issue, second only to verbal abuse. In terms of reporting abuse, the majority (55.2%) of women had never reported any incidents. Matuga and Kinango had the highest rates of reporting, while Lunga Lunga and Shimba Hills had the lowest, highlighting a troubling trend of underreporting in certain areas. The study also explored the perceived impact of social media on marital conflict. While 41.4% of women perceived that social media use never caused misunderstandings with their husbands, 31.9% reported that it sometimes did, and 16.3% said it frequently led to conflicts. Facebook and WhatsApp emerged as the most common platforms used by married women causing misunderstandings, conflicts, and issues with their spouses.

The first objective of the study was to evaluate the effect of using Facebook on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The findings of the study highlighted a significant relationship between Facebook use and spousal abuse among married women in Kwale County, Kenya. Most married women reported low engagement on Facebook in terms of activity levels, posting or reacting to content, and friends and followers. More than a third of married admitted that Facebook content affected their behaviour, such as fashion choices or social interests. A significant

number experienced negative emotions, which could potentially contribute to marital tension. Correlation analysis showed a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between physical spousal abuse and both the time spent on Facebook and frequency of activity. Interestingly, women with more Facebook friends and followers were less likely to be abused physically by their spouses. Spousal threats had moderately strong positive correlations with both time spent and activity frequency, suggesting greater exposure to verbal abuse with increased Facebook use. However, the number of friends and followers had no significant correlation with threats.

Similarly, controlling access to phones and social media was positively associated with time and activity on Facebook, indicating that more engaged women are more likely to have their access restricted by their spouses. Regression analysis confirmed these trends: time spent on Facebook significantly predicted physical injuries, spousal threats, and control over phone/social media access. Frequency of activity was a strong predictor for spousal threats and control but not for physical injury. Notably, a higher number of Facebook friends and followers consistently predicted a decrease in all three forms of abuse.

The second objective was to determine the effect of using TikTok on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The findings of the study indicated that TikTok use among married women in Kwale County had a measurable impact on spousal abuse, with variations depending on how the platform is used. The majority of married women had used TikTok for less than one year, and most of them spent less than one hour per day on the app. A large proportion had never uploaded videos, and those who did mostly posted 1–2 times per week. Although many women were passive consumers, some were highly active in viewing TikTok content. About two in five married women admitted that using TikTok affected their behaviour, changes that may potentially increase conflicts with spouses. Nearly half of married women acknowledged that TikTok sometimes or frequently caused misunderstandings or quarrels with their husbands, suggesting a link between platform use and marital tension. Correlation analysis showed statistically significant positive relationships between TikTok use and all three forms of spousal abuse measured, including physical injuries, verbal threats, and control over access to phones and social media.

These results implied that as engagement with TikTok increased, so was the risk of spousal abuse. Linear regression analysis revealed that how married women use TikTok predicted physical injuries from spousal abuse. The duration of TikTok use reduces physical abuse while uploading videos on TikTok increased this abuse. As such, long-term users were slightly less likely to report physical injuries, potentially due to adaptation or changing usage patterns. The findings revealed that the high consumption of TikTok content increases vulnerability to verbal abuse. While longer-term users may experience less control, higher video consumption increases the risk.

The third objective was to assess the effect of using WhatsApp on spousal abuse against married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The analysis focused on various dimensions of WhatsApp usage, including the duration of use, daily hours spent on the platform, number of messages sent daily, group memberships, conflicts arising from use, and purposeful use. The majority of respondents had used WhatsApp for over five years, typically spending 1–2 hours on the app daily. Most sent fewer than 10 messages per day and belonged to more than three WhatsApp groups. A considerable number reported using WhatsApp for purposeful activities either always or never. Regarding conflict, most respondents said that WhatsApp never caused quarrels with their spouses, though a smaller portion indicated it sometimes or frequently did. Therefore, WhatsApp could have a role in spousal abuse by causing misunderstanding and conflicts between married women and their husbands. Correlation analysis significantly associated longer WhatsApp use with increased spousal threats and restricted access to phones and social media, though not with physical injuries. Similarly, daily hours of use, number of messages, and group memberships were positively associated with spousal threats and control, though the associations were weak. Importantly, using WhatsApp for purposeful activities was significantly and positively associated with physical injuries, spousal threats, and control over phone and social media access. Regression analysis indicated that while longer use of WhatsApp predicted fewer physical injuries, using WhatsApp for purposeful activities increased the risk of such injuries. Additionally, purposeful use was the strongest predictor of spousal threats and restrictions on phone/social media access. Notably, a high number of daily messages predicted lower risk of control over phone use.

The fourth objective was to explore the impact of social media use on spousal abuse among married women in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas in Kwale County, Kenya. The analysis revealed notable differences in the nature and extent of spousal abuse across the three residential contexts. Physical abuse was found to be more prevalent in rural areas, whereas spousal threats and control over phone and social media access were more common among urban women. Peri-urban women exhibited intermediate patterns between the two. A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in social media usage across these areas. Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp usage varied notably, with peri-urban women using Facebook and TikTok more than rural women, while WhatsApp use was significantly higher among urban and peri-urban women compared to those in rural areas. Tukey's post-hoc analysis confirmed these findings, showing significant pairwise differences, particularly highlighting lower usage of all platforms among rural women. Regression analysis was used to test whether rural-urban residency moderated the relationship between social media use and spousal abuse. The results showed that TikTok use significantly predicted physical injuries from spousal abuse, and its impact varied by area of residence. Moreover, TikTok and WhatsApp use significantly predicted spousal threats, with rural-urban residency moderating these effects. TikTok use was also significantly linked to controlling behaviours over phone and social media access, and this relationship was moderated by residency. In contrast, Facebook use did not significantly predict any form of abuse nor was it significantly moderated by residency.

Apart from rural-urban residency, the study also assessed the moderating role of digital literacy in the impact of social media use on spousal abuse. The findings revealed that married women using Facebook or TikTok with higher levels of digital literacy have lower risk of physical abuse compared to their counterparts with lower digital literacy. The moderating role of digital literacy on the impact of social media on physical abuse was not evident among married women using WhatsApp. Digital literacy significantly moderated the impact of using Facebook and WhatsApp on the risk of married women in Kwale County being verbally abused by their spouses. Therefore, having a high level of digital literacy reduces the chances of married women experiencing threats from their spouses due to their use of Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp. Digital literacy does not

moderate the impact of using Facebook on the risk of married women having their husbands control their access to phones and social media.

5.2 Conclusion

The study findings revealed that social media use plays a significant role in spousal abuse among married women in Kwale County, Kenya. The social media platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp, demonstrated unique relationships with the three forms of abuse examined: physical injuries, spousal threats, and controlled access to phones and social media. Although physical abuse was reported by about a third of the married women, spousal threats were the most prevalent. Psychological abuse through restricted access to digital communication tools emerged as a significant concern. While the majority of women did not report their experiences, the data suggests that social media use, particularly when frequent or emotionally impactful, can trigger or exacerbate abusive behaviour from spouses.

Facebook use showed a statistically significant relationship with spousal abuse, especially in terms of threats and control over communication. While most women had low activity on the platform, those who spent more time and were more active were more likely to experience verbal threats and psychological control. A larger network of friends and followers appeared to serve as a protective factor, correlating with lower levels of abuse.

TikTok use, on the other hand, presented a more direct and consistent relationship with all forms of spousal abuse. High content creation and consumption were linked to increased risks of physical and verbal abuse, as well as controlled access to phones and social media. However, longer-term use of TikTok may cause behavioural adaptation over time, leading to a slight decrease in physical abuse.

WhatsApp, though primarily used for communication, also contributed to spousal abuse in specific contexts. While conflicts resulting from WhatsApp use were not as widely reported, the platform's purposeful use, especially for information sharing or group engagement, increased the risk of all three forms of abuse. However, women who sent

a high number of messages daily were less likely to have their access to phones controlled, suggesting that frequency of use may at times reduce suspicion or conflict.

Rural, peri-urban, and urban contexts significantly influenced how social media use relates to spousal abuse. Physical abuse was more common in rural areas, while verbal and psychological abuse were more prevalent in urban settings. Usage patterns across platforms differed by location, with peri-urban and urban women engaging more with all three platforms than their rural counterparts. These differences suggest that geographical context moderates how social media use impacts abuse dynamics, with TikTok and WhatsApp being particularly sensitive to this factor. Digital literacy emerged as a crucial moderator in the relationship between social media use and spousal abuse. Women with higher levels of digital literacy were less likely to experience physical and verbal abuse linked to their use of Facebook and TikTok. However, this protective effect was not observed for WhatsApp-related physical abuse. Digital literacy also helped reduce verbal abuse across platforms.

Overall, the study demonstrates that social media use significantly contributes to spousal abuse among married women, with the nature and extent of abuse being influenced by platform type, user behaviour, geographical context, and digital literacy. While social media can empower and connect users, its use within the context of marital relationships may also create tensions that escalate into abuse. The findings of this study underscore the need for targeted interventions, including digital literacy training, community sensitization, and policy frameworks that address the intersection of technology use and domestic abuse in Kenya and similar settings.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

From the research findings, it is evident that social media use by married women play a significant role in their abuse by their husbands. How married women use Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp can either increase or reduce their risk for spousal abuse. Several recommendations were made based on established information. First, there is an urgent need for community-based awareness campaigns to educate couples about the potential risks and consequences of unchecked social media use within marriages. These campaigns should particularly highlight how excessive engagement on

platforms, such as Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp, can lead to conflict, misunderstandings, and various forms of abuse, including physical, verbal, and psychological.

Secondly, digital literacy programs targeting both women and men should be rolled out across rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. The study showed that digital literacy can moderate and reduce the likelihood of abuse, especially among Facebook and TikTok users. Therefore, equipping married women with digital skills can empower them to use social media more safely and responsibly. For men, such training can help them better understand online behaviours and reduce overreactions or abusive responses stemming from insecurity, jealousy, or misinformation.

Thirdly, counselling and support services should be strengthened and made more accessible in all sub-counties of Kwale, with a special focus on areas with high underreporting, such as Lunga Lunga and Shimba Hills. Integrating trained counsellors into community health programs or local administration offices can encourage early reporting and intervention in cases of abuse triggered by social media disputes. These services should also include couples' therapy and conflict resolution workshops that address communication in the digital age. Moreover, policy-makers and local authorities should develop guidelines that encourage responsible social media use in marital relationships. These may include recommendations on setting boundaries, managing privacy, and promoting mutual respect in digital interactions. Community leaders, including governors, members of county assembly, chiefs, and religious figures, should be engaged to champion these efforts and to help shift cultural norms that tolerate or ignore spousal abuse.

Lastly, platform-specific interventions are essential. Since TikTok and WhatsApp use were strongly associated with verbal abuse and phone/social media control, tech companies, in partnership with civil society, should explore ways to integrate safety tips, usage insights, or reporting tools into their platforms that are tailored to high-risk users in rural and low-literacy areas. Special attention should also be given to educating users about online content creation, as uploading videos was linked to higher physical abuse risk.

5.4 Recommendation for Future Research

Based on the study findings, several suggestions for future research emerge to deepen understanding of the relationship between social media use and spousal abuse.

- i. There is a need to explore the perspectives of husbands or male partners to gain a more balanced view of how social media dynamics affect marital relationships. The current study focused solely on married women, which provides only one side of the narrative. Therefore, including men in future research would provide valuable insights into the motivations behind abusive behaviours linked to digital platforms.
- ii. Longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the long-term impact of social media use on spousal abuse. The current study employed a cross-sectional design, capturing perceptions and behaviours at a single point in time. Longitudinal research could help track changes in behaviour, abuse patterns, and digital engagement over time. Such studies can provide a clearer picture of causality and evolving trends in tech-related domestic conflict.
- iii. Another area for further investigation is the role of emerging platforms and evolving social media features, such as live streaming, anonymous messaging apps, or monetized content. While the current study focused on Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp, newer or less studied platforms may also contribute to spousal conflict in unique ways. Future studies should assess whether these newer platforms exacerbate or mitigate abusive behaviour and whether different content types, such as political, religious, and sexual content, play a role. There is also a need to explore intersectional factors, such as age, education level, economic status, and cultural background, that shape how social media influences spousal abuse. Such variables may moderate the relationship between digital activity and abuse, and understanding them could help in designing more targeted interventions for different groups of women.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Elenin, M. M., Elshora, A. A., Sadaka, M. S., & Abdeldaim, D. E. (2022). Domestic violence against married women during the COVID-19 pandemic in Egypt. *BMC women's health*, 22(1), 94.
- Adams, Z., Osman, M., Bechlivanidis, C., & Meder, B. (2023). (Why) is misinformation a problem?. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 18(6), 1436-1463.
- Adebayo, A., & Evbuoma, I. (2021). The effects of WhatsApp religious abuse messages on married individuals in Lagos, Nigeria. *Covenant Journal of Communication*. Retrieved from <https://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cjoc/article/view/2646>
- Adeleke, R., Iyanda, A. E., & Chris-Emenyonu, C. (2024). Analyzing the relationship between the experience of intimate partner violence and female internet use in Nigeria. *Telecommunications Policy*, 48(4), 102753.
- Adeoye, B. D., Adebayo, O. A., & Owoeye, T. P. (2024). Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence: A Comparative Analysis of a Rural and Urban Area in Ekiti State. *Indonesian Journal of Community Services*, 3(2), 84-93.
- Adeyeye, G. M. (2023). Social Media and Its Influence on Psychological Distress of Married Women: The Aftermath of Marital Trauma. *International journal of Multicultural Education*, 25(02), 473-483.
- Ahmed, S. K. (2024). How to choose a sampling technique and determine sample size for research: A simplified guide for researchers. *Oral Oncology Reports*, 12, 100662.
- Ahmed, S., & Khan, M. (2021). The role of Facebook support groups in empowering victims of spousal abuse. *Journal of Social Media Studies*, 5(2), 134-150.
- Aje, T. E., Moka, O., Azabagun, A. H., & Gbadeyan, O. J. (2025). Digital Technology and Gender-based Conflicts in Families: Challenges and Implications. *African Journal of Gender, Society and Development (formerly Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa)*, 14(2), 283-302.
- Akbar, M., & Wijaya, G. (2024, June). Digital literacy of rural areas in Indonesia: Challenges and opportunities. In *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Rural Socio-Economic Transformation, RUSSET 2023, 1 November 2023, Bogor, Indonesia*.
- Ali, F. (2017). Women's agency and violence against women: the case of the Coalition on Violence against Women in Kenya. *African Conflict and Peace-building Review*, 7(1), 51-65.
- Ali, P. A., McGarry, J., & Maqsood, A. (2022). Spousal role expectations and marital conflict: perspectives of men and women. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 37(9-10), NP7082-NP7108.

- Alsharif, H., Alharthi, M., & Alzahrani, S. (2021). Facebook surveillance behaviours and their impact on marital relationships. *Cyberpsychology Journal*, 14(3), 45-59.
- Amare, M., Arndt, C., Guo, Z., & Seymour, G. (2024). Variation in women's attitudes toward intimate partner violence across the rural-urban continuum in Ethiopia. *World Development*, 174, 106451.
- Annet, K. A. (2024). The Impact of Social Media on Modern Relationships. *Partnership*, 13, 14.
- Arikewuyo, A. O., Lasisi, T. T., Abdulbaqi, S. S., Omoloso, A. I., & Arikewuyo, H. O. (2022). Evaluating the use of social media in escalating conflicts in romantic relationships. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 22(1), e2331.
- Aslan, Ö., Aktuğ, S. S., Ozkan-Okay, M., Yilmaz, A. A., & Akin, E. (2023). A comprehensive review of cyber security vulnerabilities, threats, attacks, and solutions. *Electronics*, 12(6), 1333.
- Asuquo, R. U. (2025). Contributions of Facebook, WhatsApp and X Posts on Creating Awareness on Domestic Violence against Women in Abuja, Nigeria. *Abuja Journal of Humanities*, 6(1), 57-65.
- Atherton, O. E., Willroth, E. C., Graham, E. K., Luo, J., Mroczek, D. K., & Lewis-Thames, M. W. (2024). Rural-urban differences in personality traits and well-being in adulthood. *Journal of personality*, 92(1), 73-87.
- Awino, I., Fofie, I. M., & Steeves, H. L. (2022). Gender and Digital Communication in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Feminist Political Economy of Enduring Inequities. In *Women in Mass Communication* (pp. 125-140). Routledge.
- Bailey, L., Hulley, J., Gomersall, T., Kirkman, G., Gibbs, G. & Jones, A. (2024). The Networking of Abuse: Intimate Partner Violence and the Use of Social Technologies. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 51(2), 266-285.
- Barchi, F., Winter, S., Mbogo, D., Thomas, B. & Ammerman, B. (2022). Exploring the relationship between participation in an adult-women's soccer league and intimate partner violence in rural Kenya. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(9-10), NP7907-NP7931.
- Bas, O., Ogan, C. L., & Varol, O. (2022). The role of legacy media and social media in increasing public engagement about violence against women in Turkey. *Social Media+ Society*, 8(4), 20563051221138939.
- Bazan, L. P. (2024). Social media and its perceived effect against domestic violence: Evidence from a tertiary educational institution in southern Philippines. *International Journal of Novel Research and Development*, 9(2), 192-201.

- Bellini, R. F. (2024). Abusive partner perspectives on technology abuse: Implications for community-based violence prevention. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 8(CSCW1), 1-25.
- Boethius, S., Åkerström, M., & Hydén, M. (2023). The double-edged sword—abused women’s experiences of digital technology. *European Journal of Social Work*, 26(3), 506-518.
- Bosch, T., Admire, M. & Ncube, M. (2020). Facebook and politics in Africa: Zimbabwe and Kenya. *Media, Culture & Society*, 42(3), 349-364.
- Bouffard, S., Giglio, D., & Zheng, Z. (2022). Social media and romantic relationship: Excessive social media use leads to relationship conflicts, negative outcomes, and addiction via mediated pathways. *Social Science Computer Review*, 40(6), 1523-1541.
- Brasil, K. M., Mims, C. E., Pritchard, M. E., & McDermott, R. C. (2024). Social media and body image: Relationships between social media appearance preoccupation, self-objectification, and body image. *Body Image*, 51, 101767.
- Brookfield, K., Fyson, R. & Goulden, M. (2024). Technology-Facilitated Domestic Abuse: An under-Recognized Safeguarding Issue? *The British Journal of Social Work*, 54(1), 419-436.
- Brown, S. L., Manning, W. D., & Wu, H. (2022). Relationship quality in midlife: A comparison of dating, living apart together, cohabitation, and marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 84(3), 860-878.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Chakraborty, E., & Dey, A. (2024). The impact of Facebook usage on marital bonds in the digital age: A comprehensive analysis. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, 10(2), 20-24.
- Chattopadhyay, S., Kumar, M., Singh, O. & Talukdar, P. (2020). Effect of Internet addiction on marital life. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, 29(2), 268-271.
- Chen, M. & Grossklags, J. (2022). Social control in the digital transformation of society: A case study of the Chinese Social Credit System. *Social Sciences*, 11(6), 229.
- Chen, S., Ma, N., Kong, Y., Chen, Z., Niyi, J. L., Karoli, P., ... & Li, Z. (2025). Prevalence, disparities, and trends in intimate partner violence against women living in urban slums in 34 low-income and middle-income countries: a multi-country cross-sectional study. *EClinicalMedicine*, 81.
- Chen, Y., & Grossklags, J. (2022). *Digital technologies and social control: The impact of online social media on societal norms and deviance*. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 129, 107137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.107137>

- Chisika, S. N., & Yeom, C. (2025). Bridging the Digital Divide: Advancing Equitable Internet Access in Rural Kenya for Sustainable Development. *Asia-Pacific Journal Of Convergent Research Interchange: Future Convergence Technology Research Society*, 11(2), 187-202.
- Communications Authority of Kenya (2025). *Increased Smartphone Adoption and Mobile Money Drive Growth in Telecoms Sector, Report Shows*. <https://www.ca.go.ke/increased-smartphone-adoption-and-mobile-money-drive-growth-telecoms-sector-report-shows>
- County Government of Kwale (2023). History of Kwale County. <https://kwale.go.ke/history-of-kwale/>
- County Government of Kwale (2025). *History of Kwale County*. <https://kwale.go.ke/history-of-kwale/>
- County Government of Kwale. (2023). Kwale County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2023-2027.
- Cui, J., Zhang, T., Jaidka, K., Pang, D., Sherman, G., Jakhetiya, V., ... & Guntuku, S. C. (2022, May). Social media reveals urban-rural differences in stress across China. In *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media* (Vol. 16, pp. 114-124).
- Daspe, M. È., Vaillancourt-Morel, M. P., Lussier, Y., & Sabourin, S. (2018). Facebook use, Facebook jealousy, and intimate partner violence perpetration. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 21(9), 549-555.
- Data Reportal. (2024). *Global Digital Overview 2024*. Retrieved from <https://datareportal.com>
- David, M. E., & Roberts, J. A. (2021). Phubbing, social exclusion, and marital dissatisfaction: The role of smartphone addiction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 38(4), 1310–1334.
- Davidson, C. A., Jackson, K. T., Tryphonopoulos, P., Stoyanovich, E., & Mantler, T. (2024). Maternal Decision-making about Social Media after Leaving an Abusive Relationship: an Exploratory Descriptive Case Study of Women in Ontario. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 33(12), 3753-3766.
- Dayton, J. (2020). Facebook usage and perceived relationship satisfaction among married individuals. *Northwest University, College of Social and Behavioural Sciences*.
- De Haan, M. (2017). The effects of WhatsApp usage with professional contacts on work-life conflict and stress. *Annals of Digital Communication Studies*.
- Díaz, J. J., & Saldarriaga, V. (2023). A drop of love? Rainfall shocks and spousal abuse: Evidence from rural Peru. *Journal of health economics*, 89, 102739.

- Decker, M. R., Wood, S. N., Thomas, H. L., Thiongo, M., Guiella, G., Fiacre, B., & Gichangi, P. (2022). Violence against women from partners and other household members during COVID-19 in Burkina Faso and Kenya. *BMC public health*, 22(1), 1857.
- Deppuh, C. O., & Ng'ang'a, P. (2022). Effect of commercial motorcycle transport on socioeconomic empowerment among the youths in Kwale County, Kenya. *International Academic Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 1(2), 482-505.
- Dobash, R. E., & Dobash, R. P. (1979). *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy*. New York: The Free Press.
- Duriesmith, D., & Meger, S. (2020). Returning to the root: Radical feminist thought and feminist theories of International Relations. *Review of International Studies*, 46(3), 357-375.
- Dziewa, A. & Glowacz, F. (2021). Getting out from intimate partner violence: Dynamics and processes. A qualitative analysis of female and male victims' narratives. *Journal of Family Violence*, 1-14.
- Eaton, A. A., Noori, S., Bonomi, A. E., Stephens, D. P., & Gillum, T. L. (2022). The impact of social media on intimate partner violence: A systematic review. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(3-4), NP1906–NP1931.
- Ehoro, O., & Badey, D. (2021). New media and marital instability: Exploring the implications of social media on new marriages. *International Journal of Innovative Development and Policy Studies*, 9(3), 116-126.
- Ella, B. A., Smadar, B. A., & Shirley, D. S. (2023). Social punishment by the distribution of aggressive TikTok videos against women in a traditional society. *Journal of information, communication and ethics in society*, 21(1), 129-142.
- Emezue, C. (2020). Digital or digitally delivered responses to domestic and intimate partner violence during COVID-19. *JMIR public Health and Surveillance*, 6(3), e19831.
- Emond, M., Vaillancourt-Morel, M., Métellus, S., Brassard, A. & Daspe, M. (2023). Social media jealousy and intimate partner violence in young adults' romantic relationships: A longitudinal study. *Telematics and Informatics*, 79, 101956.
- Faye, A. D., Bhave, S. H., Gawande, S., Tadke, R., Kirpekar, V. C., Pakhare, A., & Singh, D. (2020). WhatsApp Use and its Impact on Relationships among Doctors: A Cross-Sectional Pilot Study. *Annals of Indian Psychiatry*, 4(1), 48-55.
- Femi-Ajao, O., Kendal, S., & Lovell, K. (2020). A qualitative systematic review of published work on disclosure and help-seeking for domestic violence and abuse among women from ethnic minority populations in the UK. *Ethnicity & Health*, 25(5), 732-746.

- Fiolet, R., Brown, C., Wellington, M., Bentley, K. & Hegarty, K. (2021). Exploring the impact of technology-facilitated abuse and its relationship with domestic violence: A qualitative study on experts' perceptions. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 8.
- Flood, M. (2023). Engaging men online: Using online media for violence prevention with men and boys. *The Routledge companion to gender, media and violence*, 491-500.
- Frei-Landau, R., Muchnik-Rozanov, Y., & Avidov-Ungar, O. (2022). Using Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory to conceptualize the mobile-learning adoption process in teacher education in the COVID-19 era. *Education and information technologies*, 27(9), 12811-12838.
- Gavin, S. M., & Kruis, N. E. (2022). The influence of media violence on intimate partner violence perpetration: An examination of inmates' domestic violence convictions and self-reported perpetration. *Gender issues*, 39(2), 177-197.
- Gebremariam, H. T., Dea, P., & Gonta, M. (2024). Digital socialization: Insights into interpersonal communication motives for socialization in social networks among undergraduate students. *Heliyon*, 10(20).
- Gichuhi, L. (2022). Gender-Based Violence Among Learners in the Coastal Region of Kenya: Voices from the Local Administration. *Journal of the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO*.
- Gill, S. (2021). *How Many People Own Smartphones in the World? (2024-2029)*. Priori Data. <https://prioridata.com/data/smartphone-stats/>
- Gillanders, R., & McNamara, G. (2024). Smartphones and attitudes to intimate partner violence: Evidence from Africa. *Kyklos*, 77(2), 411-427.
- Gracia, E., Marco, M., López-Quílez, A., & Lila, M. (2021). Chronic high risk of intimate partner violence against women in disadvantaged neighborhoods: An eight-year space-time analysis. *Preventive Medicine*, 148, 106550.
- Greyson, D., Chabot, C., Mniszak, C., & Shoveller, J. A. (2023). Social media and online safety practices of young parents. *Journal of Information Science*, 49(5), 1344-1357.
- Grogger, J., Ivandić, R., & Kirchmaier, T. (2024). Can Social Media Reach Isolated Domestic Abuse Victims? Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial During the Covid-19 Lockdown. *Cambridge Journal of Evidence-Based Policing*, 8(1), 5.
- Haleem, A., Javaid, M., Qadri, M. A., & Suman, R. (2022). Understanding the role of digital technologies in education: A review. *Sustainable operations and computers*, 3, 275-285.
- Hantrais, L. (2009). *International Comparative Research: Theory, Methods and Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Hardesty, J. & Ogolsky, B. (2020). A socioecological perspective on intimate partner violence research: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 454-477.
- Harony, T., Einav, G., & Galily, Y. (2023). Let's WhatsApp! Generation X couples' online and offline relationship patterns in the digital age. *New Media & Society*, 25(12), 3370-3391.
- Harvey, S., Garcia-Moreno, C., & Butchart, A. (2019). Primary prevention of intimate-partner violence and sexual violence: Background paper for WHO expert meeting. World Health Organization.
- Hasanah, U., Deiniatur, M. & Training, T. (2020). Character education in early childhood based on family. *Early Childhood Research Journal (ECRJ)*, 2(1), 29-42.
- Hasanudin, H., Mukhlas, O. S., Noradin, M. F. B. M., Solehudin, E., & Jubaedah, D. (2023). Phenomena of domestic violence against women and divorce in 2020-2022 in Indonesia: An islamic perspective. *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam*, 137-152.
- He, C., Shi, R., Wen, H., & Chu, J. (2025). Impact of digital literacy on rural residents' subjective well-being: An empirical study in China. *Agriculture*, 15(6), 586.
- He, L., Firdaus, A., Gong, J., Dharejo, N., & Aksar, I. A. (2024). How the social media impact women's psychological well-being in the patriarchal structure? The moderating effect of social capital. *BMC Public Health*, 24(1), 581.
- Hidayah, N. A., & Sessiani, L. A. (2025). The Impact of the "Marriage is Scary" TikTok Trend on Gen Z's Anxiety Toward Marriage. *Psikologi Prima*, 8(1), 185-198.
- Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of Delinquency*. University of California Press.
- Homan, P., Manikonda, L., & De Choudhury, M. (2020). Understanding social media discourse on intimate partner violence through machine learning. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 22(11), e15347.
- Ikwara, E. A., Humphrey, A., Meble, K., Hannington, W. G., Jacob, E. C., & Isiko, I. (2025). Prevalence and factors influencing intimate partner sexual violence against women aged 15–49 in Kenya: findings from the 2022 Kenya demographic and health survey. *BMC Women's Health*, 25(1), 74.
- Imudia, B. (2021). *Contributing Factors of Marriage Dissolution in Oredo Local Government Area*. <https://nigerdeltajournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/6.-Contributing-Factors-of-Marriage-Dissolution-in-Oredo-Local-Government-Area.pdf>
- Imudia, F. (2021). *Spousal Abuse and Marriage Dissolution in Nigeria*. *Journal of African Studies*, 17(1), 89-101.

- Iqbal, R. (2021). Gendering of smartphone ownership and autonomy among youth: narratives from rural India. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2108.09788*.
- Irene, B. N., Irene, J., Lockyer, J., & Dewitt, S. (2025). Degenerative 'Affordance' of Social Media in Family Business. *Systems, 13*(8), 629.
- Islam, L. (2024). Patriarchal masculinities and cyberbullying on Facebook: unraveling interconnections and implications in the context of Bangladesh. *Gender issues, 41*(1), 1.
- Iwana, M. D. C., Hidayat, A. R. T., Dinanti, D., & Onitsuka, K. (2022). The effects of internet on rural-to-urban migrating intentions of young villagers: Evidence from rural Indonesia. *AGRARIS: Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development Research, 8*(2), 139-159.
- Jabali, O., Hamamra, B., & Mahamid, F. (2024). Modern relationships and social media: exploring the digital dynamics of husband–wife interactions. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 11*(1), 1-9.
- Jain, A. K., Sahoo, S. R., & Kaubiyal, J. (2021). Online social networks security and privacy: comprehensive review and analysis. *Complex & Intelligent Systems, 7*(5), 2157-2177.
- Jain, L., Velez, L., Karlapati, S., Forand, M., Kannali, R., Yousaf, R. A., & Ahmed, S. (2025). Exploring Problematic TikTok Use and Mental Health Issues: A Systematic Review of Empirical Studies. *Journal of primary care & community health, 16*, 21501319251327303.
- Jaradat, D. (2018). Women's Quality of Life after Leaving an Abusive Relationship: The Effects of Past and Ongoing Intimate Partner Violence, Mastery and Social Support (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Western Ontario (Canada)). <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7995&context=etd>
- Jomy, A., Sharma, V. & Fatima, J. (2019). Impact of mobile phone use on marital relationship and family life in a selected residential area of Faridabad, Haryana. *International Journal of Nursing & Midwifery Research (E-ISSN: 2455-9318), 6*(2&3), 52-57.
- Kagwiria, M. C. (2022). Influence of Mobile Devices Use on the Level of Marital Satisfaction among Couples in Mck Nkubu Synod, Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Embu and Kirinyaga Counties, Kenya (Doctoral dissertation, KeMU).
- Kamal, N. M., & Afandi, W. N. H. W. (2023). A Systematic Literature Review on Consequences of Social Media on Intimate Relationships. *PaperASIA, 39*(5b), 5-15.
- Kamimura, A., Bhattacharya, H., Steadman, M., Panahi, S., Griffiths, A., Meng, H. W., & Franchek-Roa, K. (2022). Dating/intimate partner violence and social media use among college students. *Violence and gender, 9*(4), 187-192.

- Karimi, P., Ngare, G. W., & Bonareri, G. O. (2023). Factors Affecting Utilization of Healthcare and Legal Services by Domestic Violence Survivors in Kibra Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 6(1), 1-18.
- Karlsson, N., Lila, M., Gracia, E., & Wemrell, M. (2021). Representation of intimate partner violence against women in Swedish news media: A discourse analysis. *Violence against women*, 27(10), 1499-1524.
- Kemp, S. (2023). *Digital 2023: Global Overview Report*. We Are Social & Hootsuite. Retrieved from <https://wearesocial.com>
- Kharuddin, F., Azid, N., Mustafa, Z., Kamari, N., Ibrahim, K. & Kharuddin, D. (2020). Determination of sample size in early childcare Centre (TASKA) service project in Malaysia: Classification and Analytical Approach. *Albukhary Social Business Journal*, 1(2), 104-112.
- Khodabakhsh, S. & Le Ong, Y. (2021). The impact of partner phubbing on marital quality among married couples in Malaysia: Moderating effect of gender and age. *Aloma: revista de psicologia, ciències de l'educació i de l'esport Blanquerna*, 39(1), 9-16.
- Kimeto, J. (2016). The Effect of social media on Marital Success: A case of Lang'ata Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. Master's Thesis, PAC University, Kenya.
- Kimote, Z., & Mutunga, D. (2025). Digital Technology and Community Empowerment: Bridging the Rural-Knowledge Center Gap. *Frican Journal Of Science, Technology And Engineering (AJSTE)*, 5(1), 57-75.
- KNBS (2022). *2022 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey Fact Sheet: Kwale County*. <https://www.knbs.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Kenya-Demographic-and-Health-Survey-2022-Factsheet-Kwale.pdf>
- KNBS (2023). *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2022*. <https://www.knbs.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Kenya-Demographic-and-Health-Survey-2022-Presentation.pdf>
- Konyar, M., & Ersanli, E. (2022). The effect on happiness of social media usage in married couples. *International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies*, 36(1), 608-619.
- Kozhimannil, K. B., Sheffield, E. C., Fritz, A. H., Henning-Smith, C., Interrante, J. D., & Lewis, V. A. (2024). Rural/urban differences in rates and predictors of intimate partner violence and abuse screening among pregnant and postpartum United States residents. *Health services research*, 59(2), e14212.
- Kozhimannil, K. B., Sheffield, E. C., Fritz, A. H., Henning-Smith, C., Interrante, J. D., & Lewis, V. A. (2024). Rural/urban differences in rates and predictors of intimate partner violence and abuse screening among pregnant and postpartum United States residents. *Health services research*, 59(2), e14212.

- Kusunoki, Y., Bevilacqua, K. & Barber, J. (2023). The dynamics of intimate relationships and violent victimization among young women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 38(3-4), 3344-3372.
- Langlais, M. R., Boudreau, C., & Asad, L. (2024). TikTok and romantic relationships: A qualitative analysis of social media conflict and intimacy. *Journal of Social Media Studies*, 12(1), 95–112.
- Lapierre, M. & Custer, B. (2021). Testing relationships between smartphone engagement, romantic partner communication, and relationship satisfaction. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 9(2), 155-176.
- Latifian, M., Arshi, M., Alipour, F., Harouni, G. G., & Islam, M. S. S. (2024). Investigating the relationship between internet addiction, domestic violence, and emotional divorce among married women in Tehran. *BMC psychiatry*, 24(1), 707.
- Leitão, R. (2018). Digital technologies and their role in intimate partner violence. In *Extended abstracts of the 2018 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems* (pp. 1-6).
- Leitão, R. (2021). Technology-facilitated intimate partner abuse: A qualitative analysis of data from online domestic abuse forums. *Human-Computer Interaction*, 36(3), 203-242.
- Le-Phuong, L., Lams, L., & De Cock, R. (2022). Social media use and migrants' intersectional positioning: A case study of Vietnamese female migrants. *Media and Communication*, 10(2), 192-203.
- Lidder, P., Cattaneo, A., & Chaya, M. (2025). Innovation and technology for achieving resilient and inclusive rural transformation. *Global Food Security*, 44, 100827.
- Liu, Q., & Li, J. (2024). A one-year longitudinal study on the mediating role of problematic TikTok use and its impact on relationship conflict. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1132), 1-14.
- Louie, Y. (2021). Technology-facilitated domestic abuse and culturally and linguistically diverse women in Victoria, Australia. In *The Emerald International Handbook of Technology-Facilitated Violence and Abuse* (pp. 447-467). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Majid, U. (2018). Research Fundamentals: Study Design, Population, and Sample Size. *Undergraduate Research Journal*, 9(2), 1-7.
- Mandel, S. (2021). *Technology as the Third Spouse - the Impact of Smartphones on Newlywed Couples*. PhD Thesis, the University of Pennsylvania. <https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/b14b96ff-90fd-43d6-b697-ff7d6a6a91a4/content>

- Marganski, A. (2013). Virtual relationship violence and perspectives on punishment: Do gender or nationality matter? *Future Internet*, 5(3), 301-316.
- Mattu, R., & Saha, D. (2024). Harnessing mobile innovation diffusion to deter intimate partner violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2024(1), 12162.
- Meherali, S., Rahim, K. A., Campbell, S., & Lassi, Z. S. (2021). Does digital literacy empower adolescent girls in low-and middle-income countries: a systematic review. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 761394.
- Mehmood, G., Alam, N., & Afzal, S. (2025). Social Media Usage Interpersonal Relationship and Mental Health Issues among Married Individuals. *Journal of Political Stability Archive*, 3(1), 274-294.
- Mehri, A., Saber, M., Nakhaeizade, M. & Safinejad, H. (2021). Investigating the causes and type of violence against spouses in married men in Kerman. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 10(1).
- Mehri, Z., et al. (2021). *The Role of Women's Empowerment in Reducing Spousal Abuse*. Iranian Journal of Public Health, **50(1)**, 115-123.
- Melkam, M., Fentahun, S., Rtbey, G., Andualem, F., Nakie, G., Tinsae, T., & Fente, B. M. (2024). Multilevel analysis of intimate partner violence and associated factors among reproductive-age women: Kenya demographic and health survey 2022 data. *BMC public health*, 24(1), 1476.
- Mendelson, E. A., & Smith, J. K. (2024). Mediated sexual and romantic learning on TikTok: The Dating Wrapped trend. *Social Media + Society*, 10(3), 1–11.
- Molina, S., Wagner, L., & Kreyenfeld, M. (2025). Women's economic independence and physical intimate partner violence (IPV) during separation. *PLoS One*, 20(6), e0326529.
- Momineen, F. & Batool, S. (2020). Understanding the Effects of Smart Phones on Marital Relations of Working Couples. *International Review of Social Sciences*, 8(12), 352-359.
- Mshana, G., Malibwa, D., Aloyce, D., Peter, E., Mchome, Z., Kapiga, S. & Stöckl, H. (2022). Same habitus in new field? How mobile phone communication reproduces masculinities and gender inequality in intimate relationships in Mwanza, Tanzania. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 39(11), 3351-3372.
- Mukherjee, M., Ratho, A., & Jain, S. (2021). Unsocial media: Inclusion, representation, and safety for women on social networking platforms. *ORF Occasional Paper*, 312.
- Mumbi, L. (2024). *Kenyan's outpace the rest of the world in social media use – report*. The Eastleigh Voice. <https://eastleighvoice.co.ke/technology/87318/kenyan's-outpace-the-rest-of-the-world-in-social-media-use-report>

- Mureithi, R. W. (2018). Challenges in Litigating under Kenya's Protection from Domestic Violence Act 2015. *Kabarak Journal of Law and Ethics*, 3(1), 87-105.
- Mutsvairo, B., & Ragnedda, M. (2019). *Mapping the Digital Divide in Africa: A Mediated Analysis*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Mutua, C. (2022). The influence of mobile device use on marital satisfaction among couples in Kenya. *African Journal of Social Psychology*.
- Mwangi, J. T. (2021). Influence of social media on the marital relationships of young middle-class couples in Kilimani Division, Nairobi County, Kenya. *Master's Thesis, University of Nairobi*.
- Mwangi, P., & Otieno, G. (2023). Social media interactions and spousal abuse: A study among married women in Kenya. *African Journal of Gender Studies*, 12(1), 78-92.
- Mwatsahu, M. (2022). Socioeconomic Factors Influencing Gender-Based Violence in Kwale County, Kenya. Unpublished thesis, University of Nairobi.
- Nabaggala, M. S., Reddy, T., & Manda, S. (2021). Effects of rural–urban residence and education on intimate partner violence among women in Sub-Saharan Africa: a meta-analysis of health survey data. *BMC women's health*, 21(1), 149.
- National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ). (2022). Status Report on Gender-Based Violence in Kenya: Towards Access to Justice for Survivors.
- Negriff, S. (2019). A pilot study examining risk behavior in facebook posts for maltreated versus comparison youth using content analysis. *Child abuse & neglect*, 96, 104091.
- Nguefack-Tsague, G., Amani, A., Dadjie, V., Koyalta, D., Carole, D., Dissak-Delon, F. N. & Chichom-Mefire, A. (2024). Gender-based violence and its health risks on women in Yaoundé, Cameroon. *Archives of Public Health*, 82(1), 90.
- Ngunjiri, J. W., & Muiru, A. W. (2021). Effect of Communication Skills acquired during Premarital Counseling on Marital Stability among Newly Married Couples in Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*, 9(9).
- Nguyen, T., Tran, L., & Pham, H. (2022). Online conflicts and offline consequences: Facebook disputes as predictors of intimate partner violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, 37, 123-135.
- Nikulina, V. & Brumbaugh, C. (2024). Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Domestic Violence. In *Encyclopedia of Domestic Violence* (pp. 1-11). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

- Nivetha, R., & Radha, B. (2024). Digital Divide: A Comparison of Undergraduate Female Student's Use of Social Media Platforms in Urban and Rural. *Indian Journal of Educational Technology*, 6(1), 43-53.
- Njuki, M., Muriungi, S. K., & Tuikong, S. (2023). Prevalence of different forms of intimate partner violence among women in informal settlements in Nairobi County, Kenya. *PAC University Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 5(1), 1-15.
- Nnam, M. U., & Dastile, N. P. (2025). Social media insecurity and intimate partner violence: Drug use as an escape route. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Research and Practice*, 25(3), 648-666.
- Nwafor, G. U., Guanah, J. S., & Okowa-Nwaebi, L. (2022). Facebook users' perception of the social menace of domestic violence against men in Imo state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Gender Studies and Research*, 7(1), 182-196.
- Odenigbo, C. I., Odezulu, L. C., Anyakoha, B. U., Cookey, I. T., & Anorue, L. I. (2024). Influence of Social Media Messages on Adult Internet Users and Issues Relating to Domestic Violence against Cohabiting and Married Women in Southeast Nigeria. *Journal of Home Economics Research*, 31(2).
- Oginyi, A., et al. (2020). Predictors of domestic violence among married couples: Psychological distress and personality profiling. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*.
- Okyere, J., Budu, E., Ahinkorah, B. O., Aboagye, R. G., Seidu, A. A., & Yaya, S. (2023). Rural-urban differentials in the association between sex preference for children and marital dissolution in sub-Saharan Africa. *PLoS one*, 18(10), e0291435.
- Okyere, J., Dosoo, A. K., Ayebeng, C., & Dickson, K. S. (2024). Dynamics of violence disclosure among women in Kenya: trends, changes and associated factors. *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition*, 43(1), 197.
- Oluchukwu, O. (2021). The use of social media in resolving marital conflict. *International Journal of Research Publications*, 69(1), 544-555.
- Oluwagbemiga, A., Johnson, A., & Olaniyi, M. (2023). Education and intimate partner violence among married women in Nigeria: a multilevel analysis of individual and community-level factors. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 38(3-4), 3831-3863.
- Omokhabi, A. A., Omokhabi, U. S., & Oloyede, T. O. (2025). Social media impact on marital conflict among married couples in three Southwestern Nigerian states. *Simulacra*, 8(1), 1-16.
- Omondi, S. & Muia, D. (2021). An Analysis of the Legal Framework for the Protection of Victims of Spousal Abuse in Kenya. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 26(10), 5-12.

- Ongare, R. M. (2023). Exploring the economic empowerment of rural women entrepreneurs through digital platforms: An investigation into the utilization of social media platforms. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering*, 12(7), 308–316.
- Osakwe, C. N., & Odungiweru, B. (2020). The Patterns and Impact of Spousal Abuse in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(4), 332-342.
- Pandey, P., & Pandey, M. M. (2021). *Research Methodology: Tools and Techniques*. Bridge Center.
- Patel, R., & Singh, S. (2020). Facebook usage and its correlation with spousal abuse in urban India. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 66(4), 398-405.
- Plano Clark, V. L., & Ivankova, N. V. (2016). *Mixed Methods Research: A Guide to the Field*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Plieger, T., Groote, O., Hensky, R., Hurtenbach, L., Sahler, S., Thönes, L., & Reuter, M. (2021). The association between sexism, self-sexualization, and the evaluation of sexy photos on Instagram. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 716417.
- Prayogi, A. (2023). Social Change in Conflict Theory: A Descriptive Study. *ARRUS Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(1), 37-42.
- Ramirez, S. (2025). The Impact of TikTok Usage: A Quantitative Examination of Relationship Satisfaction and Relationship Outcomes in Adult Romantic Relationships. Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University.
- Redmiles, E. M., Bodford, J., & Blackwell, L. (2019). “I just want to feel safe”: A Diary Study of Safety Perceptions on Social Media. In *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media* (Vol. 13, pp. 405-416).
- Richmond, R. L., Lee, W. H., Lin, S., Obol, J. H., Akera, P., Menezes, G., & Worth, H. (2023). Comparing factors associated with intimate partner violence among rural and urban women in northern Uganda. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 38(5-6), 5139-5163.
- Rizzo, A., Princiotta, E., & Iuele, G. (2023). Exploring the link between smartphone use, recorded violence, and social sharing in 80 case studies in Italy. *Psych*, 5(4), 1241-1255.
- Rodriguez, L., Garcia, M., & Perez, A. (2022). Shared Facebook activities and their influence on intimate partner violence. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 48(2), 345-360.
- Rogers, M., Fisher, C., Ali, P., Allmark, P. & Fontes, L. (2023). Technology-facilitated abuse in intimate relationships: A scoping review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 24(4), 2210-2226.

- Rosales, A., & Fernández-Ardèvol, M. (2016). WhatsApp usage among older individuals in Spain: A generational perspective. *Journal of Communication Technology and Society*.
- Rosli, F. S., Zahari, N. N., Faizolakhman, N. I., & Rosidi, M. H (2025). The Influence of Social Media on Marital Conflict: An Analytical Study Through the Lens of Maqasid Al-Shariah in Preserving Family Stability and Dignity.
- Sapienza, A., Lítlá, M., Lehmann, S., & Alessandretti, L. (2023). Exposure to urban and rural contexts shapes smartphone usage behavior. *PNAS nexus*, 2(11), pgad357.
- Sardinha, L., Maheu-Giroux, M., Stöckl, H., Meyer, S. R., & García-Moreno, C. (2022). Global, regional, and national prevalence estimates of physical or sexual, or both, intimate partner violence against women in 2018. *The Lancet*, 399(10327), 803-813.
- Sari, D. A., & Musyafaah, N. L. (2025). “Marriage is Scary” on TikTok: Maqāsid al-Sharīah's Analysis of the Fear of Marriage in the Digital Era. *Ma'mal: Jurnal Laboratorium Syariah dan Hukum*, 7(2), 132-164.
- Satici, B., Kayis, A. & Griffiths, M. (2023). Exploring the association between social media addiction and relationship satisfaction: psychological distress as a mediator. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 21(4), 2037-2051.
- Schmitt, J. B., Baake, J., & Kero, S. (2024). What means civic education in a digitalized world?. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1257247.
- Setiawan, G. A., Rumondor, P. C., Sanjaya, M., & Wijaya, S. N. (2025, January). The Potential of Digital Communication via Whatsapp Application in Interpersonal Communication Management for Married Couples. In *2025 19th International Conference on Ubiquitous Information Management and Communication (IMCOM)* (pp. 1-5). IEEE.
- Shaaban, R. E. S. (2023). The Effects of the social media Platforms on the couple relationships in the Egyptian society (A Survey study). *Journal of Media and Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(3), 44-96.
- Shakeri, S., Shabani, J., Sharbaf, H. & Aghili, S. (2019). Mediating role of attitude towards betrayal and marital conflict in relation between using virtual social networks and emotional divorce. *Journal of Community Health Research*, 8(4): 220-227.
- Sihombing, W., & Tambunan, S. M. G. (2023). Representation of married young women in “a day in my life”: Affirmation and negotiation of the construction of femininity in TikTok. *Makna: Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi, Bahasa, Dan Budaya*, 12(1), 53-81.
- Silva, T., & Martins, F. (2020). The duality of Facebook interactions in marital relationships: Risks and rewards. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 104, 106185

- Siregar, I. (2022). The relationship between conflict and social change in the perspective of expert theory: A literature review. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities Studies*, 2(1), 09-16.
- Skafida, V., Morrison, F., & Devaney, J. (2022). Prevalence and social inequality in experiences of domestic abuse among mothers of young children: A study using national survey data from Scotland. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 37(11-12), NP9811-NP9838.
- Stangl, F. J., Riedl, R., Kiemeswenger, R., & Montag, C. (2023). Negative psychological and physiological effects of social networking site use: The example of Facebook. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1141663.
- Stark, E. (2007). *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*. Oxford University Press.
- Statista (2025). Global social network penetration rate as of January 2025, by region. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/269615/social-network-penetration-by-region/>
- Statista. (2024). *Number of Monthly Active Facebook Users Worldwide as of January 2024*. Retrieved from <https://statista.com>
- Stats Kenya (2024). *Population using the Internet in Kenya by Constituency*. <https://statskenya.co.ke/at-stats-kenya/about/population-using-the-internet-in-kenya-by-constituency-stats-kenya/83/>
- Sutcliffe, A., Dunbar, R., & El-Jarn, H. (2023). Investigating the use of social media in intimate social relationships. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 42(4), 379-391.
- Sutherland, K., Casey, S., & Crimmins, G. (2025). Social media behaviors and barriers impacting women e-commerce entrepreneurs in rural Australia: A pilot study. *Community Development*, 56(1), 39-58.
- Suyanto, B., Sugihartati, R., Egalita, N., Mas' udah, S., Singgih, D. S., & Sudarso. (2023). Digital literacy and survival mechanism of micro-small enterprises in practicing sharing economy. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(2), 2245691.
- Taquette, S. & Monteiro, D. (2019). Causes and consequences of adolescent dating violence: A systematic review. *Journal of Injury and Violence Research*, 11(2), 137.
- Tasew, A. & Getahun, K. (2021). Marital conflict among couples: The case of Durbete town, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. *Cogent Psychology*, 8(1), 1903127.
- Tasnima, T., & Md Syed, M. A. (2024). Smart phone usage for women's empowerment to respond against domestic violence in Bangladesh. *Information Technology for Development*, 30(1), 114-131.

- Terrazas, J., & Blitchtein, D. (2022). Rural–urban migration as a factor associated with physical and sexual intimate partner violence Peru 2015–2017: a secondary analysis of a national study. *BMC women's health*, 22(1), 67.
- Tessema, Z, Gebrie, W., Tesema, G., Alemneh, T., Teshale, A., Yeshaw, Y. & Liyew, A. (2023). Intimate partner violence and its associated factors among reproductive-age women in East Africa:-A generalized mixed effect robust poisson regression model. *PLoS one*, 18(8), e0288917.
- Thakkar, S., Muhammad, T., & Maurya, C. (2023). An investigation of the longitudinal association of ownership of mobile phones and having internet access with intimate partner violence among young married women in India. *Journal of Public Health*, 1-12.
- Treuthart, M. (2019). Connectivity: The global gender digital divide and its implications for women's human rights and equality. *Gonz. J. Int'l L.*, 23, 1.
- Tsuma, D. M. (2023). Exploring the influence of social media on political engagement among Kenyan youth: a comparative study across urban and rural areas. *African Journal of Emerging Issues*, 5(17), 244-260.
- Tulibaleka, P. O., & Katunze, M. (2024, September). Rural-Urban Youth Migration: The Role of Social Networks and Social Media in Youth Migrants' Transition into Urban Areas as Self-employed Workers in Uganda. In *Urban Forum* (Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 329-348). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Tur-Prats, A. (2019). Family types and intimate partner violence: A historical perspective. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 101(5), 878-891.
- Van Schaik, P., Jansen, J., Onibokun, J., Camp, J., & Kusev, P. (2018). Security and privacy in online social networking: Risk perceptions and precautionary behaviour. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 78, 283-297.
- Wang, X., & Wang, Y. (2024). Association between digital engagement and urban-rural disparities in Chinese women's depressive symptoms: A national-level cross-sectional study. *Digital health*, 10, 20552076241239246.
- Wanjala, P. N., Mutisya, M., & Mutia, T. (2017). *Effectiveness of the Legal and Policy Frameworks in Controlling Gender Based Violence in Teso North Constituency, Kenya*. Master's Thesis, Egerton. <https://fol.egerton.ac.ke/blogs/26-overview-of-the-legal-and-policy-framework-for-gender-based-violence-in-kenya>
- Watson, S. (2022). The role of social media abuses in gender-based violence: the challenge of vituperative communication in the age of new technology (Doctoral dissertation, University of York).
- West, M., Kraut, R. & Ei Chew, H. (2019). I'd blush if I could: closing gender divides in digital skills through education.

- Williams, A., Wood, S. N., Thiongo, M., Gichangi, P., Devoto, B., Bevilacqua, K. G., ... & Decker, M. R. (2025). Intimate partner violence help-seeking norms: scale reliability and cross-sectional multilevel associations with intimate partner violence among youth in Nairobi, Kenya. *BMJ open*, *15*(1), e080699.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2021). Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018: Global, Regional, and National Prevalence Estimates for Intimate Partner Violence Against Women and Global and Regional Prevalence Estimates for Non-Partner Sexual Violence Against Women. Geneva: WHO.
- Wu, G., Liu, J., Boateng, F., Cui, S. & Shuai, H. (2021). Do social bonds matter? Social control theory and its relationship to desistance from substance abuse in China. *Journal of Drug Issues*, *51*(1), 50-67.
- Wu, L., Zhang, J., He, W., & He, J. (2021). *The Relationship Between Social Control and Intimate Partner Violence: A Meta-Analysis*. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, *58*, 101593. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2021.101593>
- Yu, X., Ang, S., & Zhang, Y. (2024). Exploring rural–urban differences in the association between internet use and cognitive functioning among older adults in China. *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, *79*(4), gbad195.
- Zegeye, B., Shibire, G., Ahinkorah, B. O., Keetile, M., & Yaya, S. (2021). Urban-rural disparities in wife-beating attitude among married women: a decomposition analysis from the 2017 Senegal Continuous Demographic and Health Survey. *Archives of public health*, *79*(1), 102.
- Zeng, S. (2023). Chinese female representation on short video applications and their perception: Douyin (TikTok) as a Case Study (Master's thesis, Universidade Catolica Portuguesa (Portugal)).
- Zhou, D., Xu, Y., & He, Q. (2023). New media use and mental health of married women: Mediating effects of marital quality. In *Healthcare* (Vol. 11, No. 21, p. 2909). MDPI.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introductory Letter

Dear Respondent,

My name is Bernadine Mbula, a postgraduate student at Chuka University pursuing a Doctor in Philosophy in Criminology and Security Studies. I am carrying out a field study is on: *The Role of Social Media Use on Spousal Abuse against Married Women in Kwale County: A Criminology Perspective*. The collected data will be handled with utmost anonymity, confidentiality and only for the current study.

Kindly respond by filling the questionnaire, answering the interview questions or participating in the Focus Group Discussions with objectivity. Your name will not be required for the study. All data collected with your consent will only be used for the purposes of the study. Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Bernadine Mbula
(Researcher)

Appendix II: Questionnaire for Married Women

Section A: Demographic Information

1. What is your age group?
 - Below 20 years
 - 21 – 30 years
 - 31 – 40 years
 - 41 – 50 years
 - Above 50 years
2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
3. What is your highest level of education?
 - No formal education
 - Primary level
 - Secondary level
 - College/Technical training
 - University degree
 - Postgraduate degree
4. What is your current occupation?
 - Unemployed
 - Self-employed
 - Formal employment (government/private sector)
 - Casual laborer
 - Farmer
 - Student
 - Other (Specify): _____
5. How would you describe where you live?
 - Urban
 - Peri-urban
 - Rural
6. What is your average total income?
 - Below Ksh. 5,000 per month
 - Ksh. 5,001 – 10,000 per month
 - Ksh. 10,001 – 20,000 per month
 - Ksh. 20,001 – 30,000 per month
 - Above Ksh. 30,000 per month
7. How many years have you been married (if applicable)?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1 – 5 years
 - 6 – 10 years
 - 11 – 15 years
 - More than 15 years
 - Not married

Section B: Spousal Abuse against Married Women

1. Have you ever suffered physical injuries (bruises, cuts, fractures) from your spouse due to physical violence?
 - Yes, frequently
 - Yes, occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never
2. How often does your spouse threaten, intimidate, or humiliate you using social media?
 - Very often
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never
3. Does your spouse control or restrict your access to family resources such as money, phone, or social media?
 - Yes, always
 - Yes, sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
4. Have you ever contacted a crisis hotline, relative, or community member to report spousal abuse?
 - Yes, frequently
 - Yes, occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never
5. Has social media usage ever contributed to misunderstandings or conflicts with your spouse?
 - Yes, frequently
 - Yes, sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
6. Which social media has most frequently contributed to misunderstandings or conflicts with your spouse?
 - None
 - Facebook
 - TikTok
 - WhatsApp
 - All

Section C: Facebook Usage by Married Women

1. How many hours do you spend on Facebook per day?
 - Less than 1 hour
 - 1–2 hours
 - 3–4 hours
 - More than 4 hours

2. How often do you post, comment, or react to content on Facebook per week?
 - Rarely or never
 - 1–5 times a week
 - 6–10 times a week
 - More than 10 times a week
3. Approximately how many Facebook friends or followers do you have?
 - Less than 100
 - 100–300
 - 301–500
 - More than 500
4. Has your behaviour (e.g., dressing style, hobbies, relationships) ever been influenced by content you saw on Facebook?
 - Yes
 - No
5. Have you ever experienced negative emotions (e.g., jealousy, stress, sadness) due to Facebook usage?
 - Yes, frequently
 - Yes, sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never

Section D: TikTok Usage

1. How long have you used TikTok?
 - less than 1 year
 - 1 year
 - 5 years
 - Over 5 years
2. How many hours do you spend on TikTok per day?
 - Less than 1 hour
 - 1–2 hours
 - 3–4 hours
 - More than 4 hours
3. How many TikTok videos do you watch per day?
 - Less than 5 videos
 - 5–10 videos
 - 11–20 videos
 - More than 20 videos
4. How often do you create or upload videos on TikTok per week?
 - Never
 - 1–2 times per week
 - 3–5 times per week
 - More than 5 times per week
5. Has content on TikTok ever influenced your behaviour (e.g., dressing, speech, or lifestyle changes)?
 - Yes

- No
- 6. Has your use of TikTok ever led to misunderstandings or conflicts with your spouse?
 - Yes, frequently
 - Yes, sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never

Section E: WhatsApp Usage and Spousal Abuse

1. How long have you used WhatsApp?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1 year
 - 5 year
 - More than 5 years
2. How many hours do you spend on WhatsApp per day?
 - Less than 1 hour
 - 1–2 hours
 - 3–4 hours
 - More than 4 hours
3. Approximately how many WhatsApp messages do you send or receive per day?
 - Less than 10 messages
 - 10–50 messages
 - 51–100 messages
 - More than 100 messages
4. Are you an active member of any WhatsApp groups?
 - Yes, in more than 3 groups
 - Yes, in 1–3 groups
 - No, I am not in any WhatsApp group
 - I am in groups but not active
4. Has your WhatsApp usage ever caused misunderstandings, quarrels, or abuse from your spouse?
 - Yes, frequently
 - Yes, sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
5. Do you use WhatsApp strictly for purposeful activities (work, business, family matters)?
 - Yes, always
 - Yes, sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never

Section F: Digital Literacy

1. How would you rate your overall digital literacy (ability to use computers, smartphones, social media platforms and internet)?

- Very High
 - High
 - Average
 - Low
 - Very Low
2. Have you ever participated in any digital literacy training programs such as classes, workshops or online courses?
 - Yes
 - No
 3. How often do you control the time you spend on social media, internet, and smartphone?
 - All the time
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
 4. Which of the following online safety measures do you practice?
 - Using strong passwords
 - Enabling two-factor authentication
 - Avoiding suspicious links and downloads
 - Control amount of time spent online

Section G: General Questions

1. Who often handles your spousal abuse cases and how are they handled?

2. What impact do you think excessive time spent on these social media platforms has on marital relationships and spousal abuse?

3. Have you encountered situations where social media groups or online content influenced your behaviour or lifestyle, leading to conflict or spousal abuse? Please explain _____

4. Which social media is most influential on your spousal relationship? Explain.

5. For how long have you experienced spousal abuse?

6. In what ways does your environment (urban or rural) influence your use of social media?

7. Can you describe how confident you feel when using different social media platforms?

8. What are the common attitudes in your community regarding women who are active on social media?

Appendix III: Interview Guide for Key Informants

Section A: Demographic Information

1. What is your age group?
 - Below 20 years
 - 21 – 30 years
 - 31 – 40 years
 - 41 – 50 years
 - Above 50 years
2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
3. What is your highest level of education?
 - No formal education
 - Primary level
 - Secondary level
 - College/Technical training
 - University degree
 - Postgraduate degree
4. What is your current occupation?
 - Community Health Assistant
 - Security Officer
 - Administrator (Chief)
 - Professional Counsellor
5. Are you Married?
 - Yes
 - No
6. How many years have you worked in Kwale County?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1 – 5 years
 - 6 – 10 years
 - 11 – 15 years
 - More than 15 years
7. In your professional experience, have you handled cases where Facebook, TikTok, or WhatsApp usage by married women contributed to spousal misunderstandings or abuse? Kindly explain. _____

8. What common concerns or complaints do you hear from married women (or their relatives) regarding how their social media usage (Facebook, TikTok, or WhatsApp) triggers conflict or abuse in their marriages? _____

9. Have you been consulted, observed or received reports where a spouse uses control over social media access (Facebook, TikTok, or WhatsApp) as a form of abuse or manipulation? If yes, please share your observations.

10. Based on your role, what impact do you think excessive time spent on these social media platforms has on marital relationships and potential abuse?

11. Have you encountered situations where social media groups or online content influenced a married woman's behaviour or lifestyle, leading to conflict or spousal abuse? Please explain the cases you handled or witnessed.

12. How do you think participation in WhatsApp groups or creating TikTok videos affects married women's safety or exposes them to spousal violence or emotional abuse?

13. In your opinion, how often do women seek help or report spousal abuse related to social media use (either emotional, physical, or psychological abuse)? Kindly give examples if possible. _____
14. What advice would you give to married women on balancing social media use (Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp) and maintaining healthy relationships to prevent abuse?

15. What interventions or community support mechanisms do you think are effective in addressing spousal abuse cases where social media is a contributing factor?

16. Does the rural-urban residency of married women influence their use of social media? Explain.

17. What are the common attitudes in the community regarding married women who are active on social media?

18. How does digital literacy affect the impact of social media use on the risk and incidences of spousal abuse against women?

19. What online safety measures can protect married women from any excesses of social media and reduce the risk of abuse?

Appendix IV: Chuka University Ethics Review Committee Approval

CHUKA



UNIVERSITY

Knowledge is Wealth (*Sapientia divitia est*) Akili ni Mali

CHUKA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Telephones: 020-2310512/18
Direct Line: 0772894438

Email: info@chuka.ac.ke

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka
Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

28th May, 2025

REF: CUIERC/ NACOSTI/744
TO: Bernadine Mbula

RE: The role of Social Media Use on Spousal Abuse Against Married Women in Kwale -
County: A Criminology Perspective

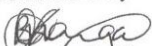
This is to inform you that *Chuka University IERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812*. The approval period is 28th May, 2025 – 28th May, 2026.

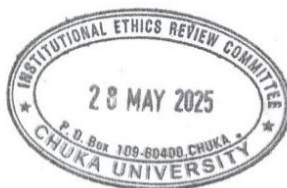
This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Chuka University IERC*.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Chuka University IERC*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely


Dr. Benjamin Kanga
SECRETARY



Appendix V: National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) Research Authorisation


REPUBLIC OF KENYA
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 299018
Date of Issue: 20/June/2025
RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Ms. BERNADINE MBULA MUTUNGA of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kwale on the topic: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON SPOUSAL ABUSE, AGAINST MARRIED WOMEN IN KWALE COUNTY: A CRIMINOLOGY PERSPECTIVE for the period ending : 20/June/2026.
License No: NACOSTI/P/25/4175225
Applicant Identification Number: 299018
Deputy Director
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Verification QR Code



NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.
See overleaf for conditions

Appendix VI: CEC Health - Kwale County



COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KWALE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

P.O. Box 4 - 80403
Kwale, KENYA

Email: info@kwale.go.ke
Website: www.kwale.go.ke

RE: CG/KWL/6/CEC/25/VOL.1/121

DATE: 25th June, 2025

Bernadine Mbula
P.O.Box 172-80405
KINANGO-KWALE

RE: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KWALE COUNTY

Following your application for authorization to carry out research "*the role of social media use on spousal abuse against married women in kwale county: criminology perspective*", for the period ending 20th June 2026.

Approval is hereby granted. The investigator shall actively engage, and keep informed the County Department of Health throughout the study and any changes to the protocol communicated prior to execution.

The investigator shall conduct in-person feedback sessions and provide pragmatic recommendations to the County Health Management Team (CHMT).

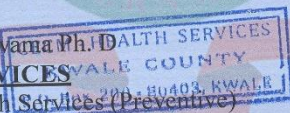
Hon. Dr. Mwatsaha wa Gwama Ph.D

CECM - HEALTH SERVICES

CC: Chief Officer – Health Services (Preventive)

: Chief Officer – Health Services (Curative)

: County Director - Health Services



Appendix VII: County Commissioner Kwale Approval to DCCs



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Email: cckwale@yahoo.com
Telephone: **Kwale 4105**
When replying please quote

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
P.O. BOX 1
KWALE

Ref. No. ADM.15/7/4CC VOL.IV/92

24th June, 2025

All Deputy County Commissioners
KWALE COUNTY

RE: REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION **BERNADINE MBULA -**

Reference is made to a letter dated 24th June, 2025 from Ms. Bernadine Mbula concerning the above subject matter.

This is to authorize the officer to carry out data collection on the role of Social Media use on Spousal Abuse Against Married Women: A Criminology Perspective.

Kindly accord her necessary support.

S. KEDIENYE
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KWALE COUNTY



Copy to:
Bernadine Mbula

**Appendix VIII: County Commissioner Kwale Approval to Kwale County Police
Commander**



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

Email: cckwale@yahoo.com
Telephone: **Kwale 4105**
When replying please quote

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
P.O. BOX 1
KWALE

Ref. No. ADM.15/7/4CC VOL.IV/91

24th June, 2025

County Police Commander
KWALE COUNTY

RE: REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION
BERNADINE MBULA

The above named Officer is pursuing a PhD in Criminology and Security studies at Chuka University. She has completed her course work, thesis proposal defenses and now proceeding to her final defense that requires data collection, analysis and recommendation.

As part of her data collection exercise, she is supposed to interview some of your officers.

Kindly accord her necessary support.

S. KEDIENYE
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KWALE COUNTY

Copy to:

✓ Bernadine Mbula

Appendix IX: County Commissioner Kwale Approval to County Criminal Investigation Officer



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

Email: cckwale@yahoo.com
Telephone: **Kwale 4105**
When replying please quote

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
P.O. BOX 1
KWALE

Ref. No. ADM.15/7/4CC VOL.IV/92

24th June, 2025


County Criminal Investigation Officer
KWALE COUNTY

RE: REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION
BERNADINE MBULA

The above named Officer is pursuing a PhD in Criminology and Security studies at Chuka University. She has completed her course work, thesis proposal defenses and now proceeding to her final defense that requires data collection, analysis and recommendation.

As part of her data collection exercise, she is supposed to interview some of your officers.

Kindly accord her necessary support.


S. KEDIENYE
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KWALE COUNTY

Copy to:

✓ Bernadine Mbula

Appendix X: Map of Kwale County

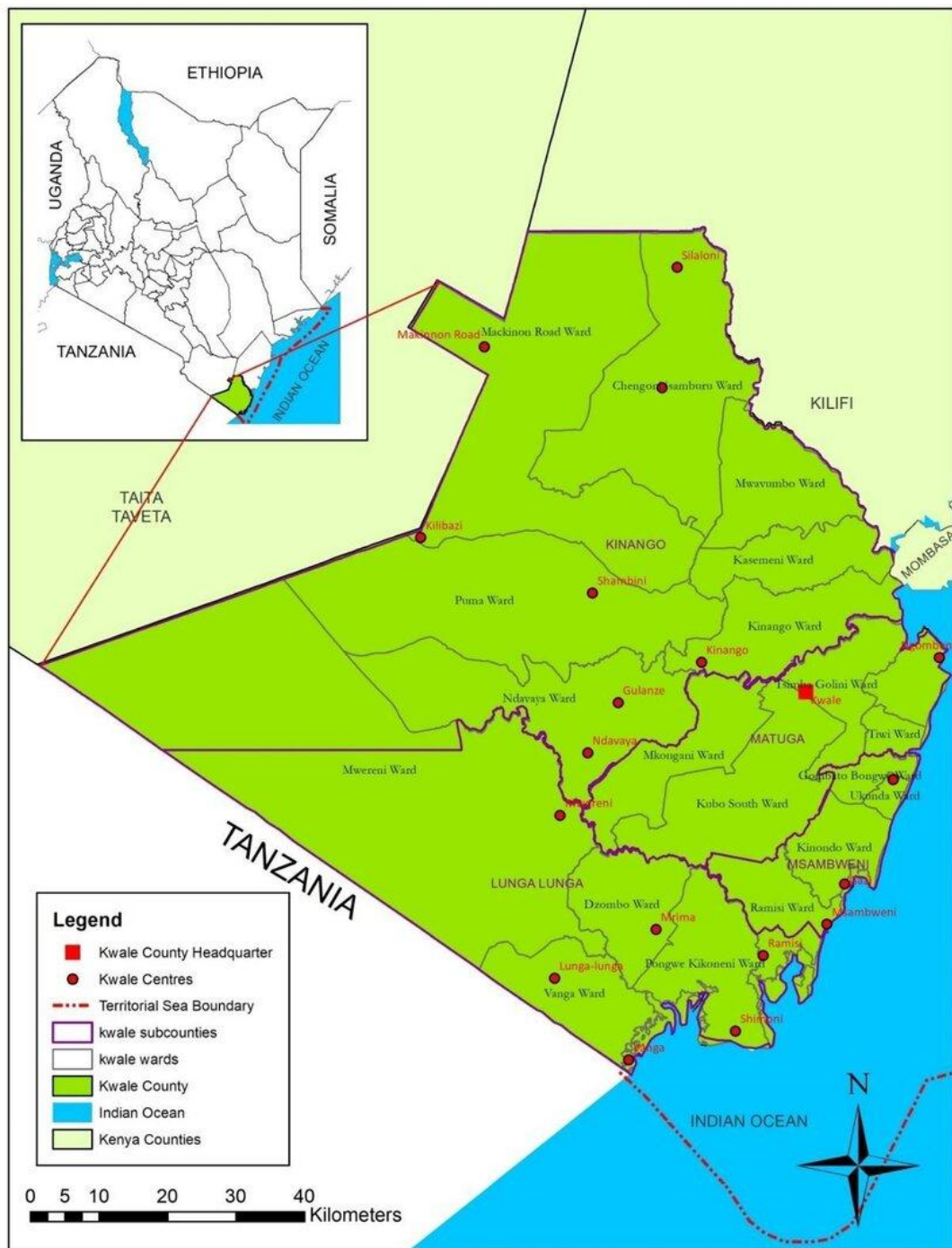


Figure 2: Map of Kwale County

Source: Kwale County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022