

## **DYNAMICS OF MOBILE DEVICE ADDICTION AND COMMUNICATION GAP AMONG COUPLES IN OGUN STATE: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE**

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### **Abstract**

The widespread incorporation of mobile devices into everyday life has created new challenges in interpersonal interactions, especially among couples. This study investigated the dynamics of mobile device addiction and its effects on communication gaps, emphasising the mediating function of language in Ogun State, Nigeria. The research utilised a descriptive survey design with 110 intentionally chosen couples ( $N = 220$  persons). Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and analysed utilising Pearson's correlation and Chi-square tests. The findings indicated a substantial positive correlation between mobile device addiction and communication deficits among couples ( $r = .411, p < .05$ ), implying that excessive mobile usage diminishes emotional intimacy and mutual comprehension. The language employed in mobile-mediated contacts significantly affected relationship comprehension ( $\chi^2 = .000, p < .05$ ), suggesting that casual, unclear, or emotionally neutral digital language leads to communication failures. The research concludes that language serves as a vital intermediary in the relationship between mobile device addiction and communication quality. These findings underscore the necessity for interventions in communication literacy, the establishment of digital boundaries, and the incorporation of mobile communication dynamics into relationship counseling frameworks. The study recommends that couples should establish consensual guidelines for mobile phone usage during shared activities (e.g., meals, and bedtime) to minimise distractions and improve the quality of face-to-face communication.

**Keywords:** Mobile Device Addiction, Communication, Language, Couples.

### **Introduction**

In the digital era, smartphones have become essential to everyday existence, providing unparalleled connectivity and ease. This prevalence has raised worries regarding excessive use, commonly referred to as "smartphone addiction," which is defined by compulsive interaction with mobile devices that disrupts daily functioning and interpersonal interactions (Lee & Lee, 2023). Studies demonstrate that this addiction can adversely affect communication abilities, resulting in less in-person contact and emotional disconnection between individuals, especially couples (Yam & Kumari, 2022). A problem intimately linked to smartphone addiction is "phubbing" the act of disregarding someone in a social context by focusing on one's phone rather than interacting with them. This conduct has been associated with diminished relationship satisfaction, heightened conflict, and sentiments of neglect

among partners (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). The presence of mobile devices in human relationships might generate communication voids, causing partners to feel disregarded or unappreciated, which may result in emotional detachment (Roberts & David, 2016).

Language has a crucial function in this context. Effective communication depends on verbal exchanges, non-verbal clues, tone, and active listening, all of which can be undermined by incessant smartphone usage. The presence of a mobile device during talks can disturb the natural flow of discourse, resulting in misunderstandings and a deterioration of emotional connection. Moreover, the inclination towards digital communication instead of in-person contact can modify linguistic patterns, diminishing the profundity and quality of dialogues (Adams, Williford, Vaccaro & Kisler, 2022). Comprehending the relationship between smartphone addiction, communication deficiencies, and language utilisation is essential for tackling the difficulties encountered by couples in sustaining good relationships in the digital age. This study seeks to elucidate the mechanisms by which excessive mobile device usage impacts interpersonal communication and to identify techniques for cultivating more meaningful connections between couples.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In an age characterised by digital immediacy, mobile devices serve as both facilitators of connection and agents of detachment in intimate relationships. Although previous research has investigated the psychosocial effects of mobile phone usage, an emerging and insufficiently studied phenomenon is the complex relationship between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples, especially regarding language as both a conduit and obstacle to emotional intimacy. Mobile device addiction, defined by excessive smartphone usage and digital dependency, impairs the flow of interpersonal communication, frequently substituting spontaneous verbal exchanges with fragmented digital encounters (Elhai, Yang, & Montag, 2023). This behavioural change promotes both physical disengagement and linguistic fragmentation, wherein expressive language is either condensed or supplanted by emoticons, memes, and silence. Couples are increasingly encountering a "phantom presence"—being physically present while psychologically absent, a phenomenon that undermines mutual comprehension and a common emotional lexicon (Turkle, 2022).

The significance of language in this dynamic is substantial although frequently disregarded. Language serves not only as a medium for information but also as a vehicle for relational significance, empathy, and conflict resolution. Mobile device addiction truncates discussions or converts them to digital formats, so diminishing the depth of face-to-face discourse. This behaviour may lead to linguistic dissonance a widening disparity between the language of digital communication and the intricate, collaboratively developed language of intimacy.

Furthermore, sociolinguistic research indicates that excessive reliance on digital shorthand and asynchronous communication may diminish a couple's common linguistic repertoire, hindering emotional connection and heightening the likelihood of misinterpretation (Tagg & Seargeant, 2024). In this setting, language serves as both the victim and the medium of communication failure. Although couples may continue to communicate, their mutual understanding may no longer possess the same profundity. Notwithstanding these increasing tendencies, the current literature has predominantly neglected to examine the convergence of gadget dependency, language degradation, and relational detachment within a cohesive framework. The interaction among these variables is inadequately theorised and empirically underexamined, especially in varied cultural and language settings.

This study aims to critically analyse how mobile device addiction influences the communication gap between couples through the mediating effect of language. It examines if excessive digital interaction alters not just how couples communicate but also the substance and extent of their expressions. The objective is to provide a linguistically sophisticated and psychosocially informed comprehension of modern relational dynamics in the digital era.

### **Research Objectives**

The study investigates the dynamics of mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples: the role of language. Specifically, the study is set to:

- i. examine the relationship between mobile device addiction and communication gaps among couples.
- ii. investigate how the language used in digital communication contributes to or mitigates relational misunderstandings among couples.
- iii. assess the mediating role of language in the impact of mobile device addiction on couple communication quality.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- i. What is the relationship between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples?
- ii. How does the nature of language used in mobile communication influence emotional and relational understanding between couples?
- iii. To what extent does language mediate the effect of mobile device addiction on the communication dynamics of couples?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant influence of the nature of language used in mobile communication on relational understanding between couples.

## **Literature Review**

### **Language as a Means of Communication**

Language serves as a medium of communication among humans. Language is a dynamic construct that facilitates communication between individuals and their creator, as well as among humans. Through language, individuals can express any sentiment, whether positive or negative. Language facilitates interpersonal interaction. Omowon (2016) posits that the absence of proficient language use will hinder any community's ability to attain significant progress or development. Isa, Adekanye, & Abdulkareem (2020) believe that language serves as a medium for communication. Language serves as a medium of communication, predominantly in spoken form, thereby indicating the primacy of oracy over literacy. Furthermore, Smith (2004) asserts that language is intrinsic to our humanity and fundamental to our existence.

Language is fundamental to human existence and survival as it allows us to effectively traverse our environment. Language is fundamental to human existence. It is crucial to recognize that language plays a vital function in human existence.

In a similar development, Ajose (2020) asserts that language serves to facilitate communication and comprehension among others, enabling a person to articulate emotions, solicit assistance, and convey apologies. The capacity for language, more than any other characteristic, differentiates humans from other animals. Language is fundamentally human as it facilitates the transmission of information, ideas, thoughts, and emotions between individuals. Obadare & Fasae (2024) assert that the potential for linguistic communication is a distinctive and potent human faculty that enables individuals to convey views, concerns, perceptions, expectations, knowledge, fears, aspirations, and affection. Oluwole (2011) submits that language is a fundamental medium of human communication, essential for all types of interactions, whether agreeable or disagreeable.

### **Communication**

Communication is a method of interaction between individuals or among groups. Communication and humanity are inextricably linked; thus, Olasehinde (2017) opines that communication is essential to human existence. The primary distinguishing characteristic between humans and animals is the capacity for meaningful communication in humans. The hopes, aspirations, anxieties, love, experiences, joys, and sorrows of humanity. Communication is fundamental to human existence, involving the transmission and reception of information among two or more individuals. Seweje (2014) posits that communication is the activity of exchanging information, thoughts, ideas, and emotions among individuals via verbal, written, or nonverbal means. Omowon (2016) asserts that communication via language is an essential instrument in the lives of individuals, families, communities, and entire

nations. Richard and Lynn (2009) assert that communication is fundamental to relationships and their maintenance. Partners must engage in communication; nevertheless, neglecting emotions hinders effective communication competence.

### **Types of Communication.**

There are different types of communication and these are:

Oral communication: this is sending a message through a spoken medium example is face-to-face talking. Oral communication has many advantages because the speaker enjoys talking to his listeners face to face and as a result, he gets feedback from his listeners which can either send a message that he should continue in his delivery or discontinue. In oral communication, there is spontaneity while the speaker's intuition and competence come into play. It is germane to know that in oral communication, gestures, voices, pitch, stress, and facial expressions all have roles to play in the communication process.

Written communication: This is sending a message by the use of symbols that are understood by the sender and the receiver of the message. In written communication, the listeners are absent and so the speakers cannot get immediate feedback nor read the true feelings through facial expressions.

Body language: This is a form of non-verbal communication that can also be used to send a message. Seweje (2014) states that you can often tell if someone is pleased or upset simply by looking at his/her facial expression, postures, positions of the hands and arms, eye contact, and gestures.

### **Communication in Marriage**

Communication in marriage mostly occurs through verbal expression, serving as the mechanism for conveying information; nevertheless, Oyedepo (1997) asserts that marital communication encompasses more than merely transmitting feelings, thoughts, messages, or wishes. It also encompasses the manner and timing of expression. Oyedepo (1997) posits that communication in marriage entails the exchange of thoughts and emotions, fostering dialogue like that of intimate friends. Increased communication among couples fosters greater intimacy. Effective communication is essential in every facet of life. Effective communication is essential in marriage. The foundation of a harmonious, productive, and significant marriage is communication. Oyedepo (1997) affirms that effective communication is the foundation of any successful and enduring relationship

### **Benefits of Communication**

It conveys meaning and understanding.

It builds trust and rapport.

It resolves conflicts and misunderstandings.

It facilitates collaboration and teamwork.

It enhances personal and professional relationships.

### **Communication Gap**

Couples are expected to bond to communicate their experience, and to use communication to resolve conflicts but when this is not done, there will be misunderstandings, conflicts, and emotional distance there culminating into bottled-up emotions, lack of listening, assumptions which is the lowest form of knowledge and addictive behavior which all affect the union negatively.

### **Social Media**

Njemanze (2012) posits that the proclivity for brief texting, akin to any other habit, becomes challenging to discontinue once established. Similarly, Ogunyemi & Tunde-Awe (2014) observe that numerous pupils have developed an addiction to social media engagement through mobile devices. Also, Dekera, Adelabu, Onekutu, & Olakunle (2019) believe that social media has established a novel social dimension wherein students can enhance their social awareness by maintaining connections with old friends and forming new friendships. The existence of both positive and negative aspects of social media does not alter the reality that these platforms are swiftly gaining popularity and securing a significant role in our lives. It is undeniable that social media has become an integral aspect of our lives. The addiction is so pervasive that even places of worship are not spared.

Similarly, Ogunyemi (2020) asserts that numerous individuals have developed such an attachment to it that it appears to have become an integral aspect of their lives. Ogunyemi & Tunde (2020) believe that in the era of globalisation, social media use has become integral to daily human activities. In addition, Ogunyemi (2020) emphasizes that social media has significantly influenced our communication and socialisation practices while Obadare & Fasae (2024) observe that the typical anticipations of connection, affection, and care have devolved into disagreements and isolation, as individuals prioritise social media over active engagement in familial ties. Ajose (2020) asserts that parents who communicate effectively demonstrate authentic involvement in every aspect of their child's life. Lack of communication jeopardises our capacity to engage with and influence children's lives significantly. It is fragmented and divisive; we ought to engage on a personal, human level.

### **Family Institution**

Marriage is the official joining of a man and a woman as husband and wife. Marriage is sought for love, protection, companionship, security, economic factors, or societal conformity. The family is regarded as the fundamental agent of socialisation, a microcosm that instills appropriate virtues and values in individuals. The family is the cornerstone of any society that produces citizens who will lead and govern the nation's affairs. Ajose (2020) notes that the family, as a microcosm of society, functions as a conduit between the individual and the broader community. The family has a key influence on the development of an individual's

personality. The family's role in a child's upbringing and the transmission of cultural norms and values is paramount.

The family is the initial social unit to which the child is initiated into. Larayetan (2010) affirms that a spouse requires attention, which entails contemplating the other individual, focusing on them through attentive listening and observation, as well as demonstrating interest, concern, and support. Couples are inherently in close relationships, characterised by interdependent partners who fulfill each other's needs for connection and social inclusion. They experience an emotional attachment that is indispensable and engages in distinctive communication patterns, as noted by Richard & Lynn (2009). It is frequently observed that couples reside in proximity without engaging in contact or engagement. It is a situation of proximity yet emotional distance; as numerous couples exist in superficial relationships. They refrain from direct communication, opting instead to converse with both familiar and unfamiliar acquaintances from a distance. Couples are anticipated to engage in intimacy; nevertheless, mobile devices are supplanting this connection.

Communication among spouses fosters unity. Children have optimal development in homes where spouses interact with peace, love, and harmony, which is attainable only via effective communication and positive relationships between them. Omartian (2002) observes that in marriage, we must align our dreams, desires, hopes, talents, mindsets, assumptions, needs, and habits with those of our spouse, which necessitates three elements: communication, communication, and communication—verbal, emotional, and physical. Communication is the cornerstone of a robust and enduring partnership; in its absence, intimacy falters, rendering a marriage devoid of connection virtually lifeless. Aroge (2019) asserts that language encompasses the acquisition of both spoken and written familial communication by youngsters.

Children arise from marriage, and language is crucial for their development; yet, the use of language at home significantly influences their linguistic growth, socialisation, and academic achievement. When spouses are preoccupied with their phones and neglect effective verbal communication, children will have language malnutrition. Omowon (2016) attests that the woman is the primary care giver who remains with the children for an extended duration. She addresses their diverse needs while the father seeks sustenance. They both use language to connect with the child, providing information, instruction, correction, and encouragement. Obadare & Fasae (2024) assert that the family is the most ancient institution on the planet and plays a crucial function in society. Also, Arogundade (2011) posits that successful marriages require spouses to adopt effective and friendly communication patterns.

### **Mobile Device**

Recently, the utilisation of social media and internet-based applications has significantly escalated. Social media networking platforms encompass Facebook, Twitter, 2go, WhatsApp,

Eskimi, Myspace, blogs, Netlog, Skype, LinkedIn, and several others. Taiwo (2018) affirms that the essence of the digital era is that nearly all human activities are mediated by technology, including relationships, education, careers, health, financial management, information dissemination, and government. Taiwo (2012) asserts that in the 21st century, communication technology has evolved swiftly due to the extensive utilization of computers and communication satellites. The internet, satellites, mobile phones, and fax machines are significant determinants of living in modern civilization. Regarding the utilization of mobile devices Ogunyemi & Tunde-Awe (2014) state that numerous pupils have developed an addiction to social media participation. Opara & Adetunyi (2020) assert that the utilization of mobile devices has swiftly become commonplace, not just in wealthy nations but also in developing countries such as Nigeria. Adeosun (2020) opines that the utilization of ICT has engendered many transformations in multiple facets of human existence.

### **Addiction**

Omartian (2002) submits that marriage is solely for two individuals, and the inclusion of any third party, excluding God, undermines the relational bond and constitutes an intrusion. Omartian (2002) notes that proximity to a spouse addicted to alcohol, drugs, or other detrimental behaviours might compromise one's mental stability, leading to a sensation of losing one's sanity. Effective communication is essential for sustaining a healthy marriage. Omartian (2002) postulates that addictive behaviour constitutes an illness and should be addressed accordingly. It is detrimental and requires attention since it is impacting the relationship. Meyer (2002) asserts that addiction extends beyond nicotine, alcohol, narcotics, or other detrimental substances; individuals can develop addictions to many entities. Meyer (2002) defines addiction as an essential need that an individual perceives as intolerable to live without, prompting them to use extreme measures to obtain it. Addiction is compulsive. Akeredolu-Ale (2012) enumerates that the absence of personal face-to-face interaction may impede the younger generation's cultivation of natural socialization skills and overall development. Spargo & Larkins (2012) claim that SMS has rapidly emerged as one of Australia's most favoured communication methods, particularly among the youth.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative, correlational research design to investigate the relationships among mobile device addiction, language use, and communication gaps among couples. The design was selected to enable statistical examination of patterns and associations among variables within naturally occurring relationships. The target population consisted of heterosexual couples in committed relationships (married or cohabiting) for a minimum of one year. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 110 couples (N = 220 individuals) from the three Senatorial districts in Ogun State. Couples were selected to

ensure variability in age, socio-economic background, and duration of relationship, enhancing generalizability.

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed both in person and via secure online forms, following informed consent. Couples were instructed to complete the questionnaires individually to reduce bias and encourage honest responses. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic and baseline variables. Pearson correlation and Chi-square of the independent sample were employed to test relationships between mobile device addiction and communication gaps at 0.05 level of significance using SPSS (Version 26).

## Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples?

Table 1: Responses on the relationship between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples

S/N	Item	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
1	I often find myself using my mobile device even during important conversations with my partner.	29 (13.2)	71 (32.3)	69 (31.4)	51 (23.2)	2.65	.980
2	My partner and I talk less face-to-face because one or both of us are frequently occupied with our phones.	37 (16.8)	53 (24.1)	69 (31.4)	61 (27.7)	2.70	1.052
3	Using mobile devices during our time together has led to misunderstandings in our relationship.	36 (16.4)	52 (23.6)	85 (38.6)	47 (21.4)	2.65	.993
4	I feel emotionally distant from my partner when either of us is focused on our phone.	27 (12.3)	52 (23.6)	93 (42.3)	48 (21.8)	2.74	.938
5	My partner often pays more attention to their mobile device than to me during our conversations.	50 (22.7)	50 (22.7)	56 (25.5)	64 (29.1)	2.61	1.131

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of respondents' perceptions of the impact of mobile device addiction on communication deficiencies in their romantic relationships. For Item 1, "I frequently utilise my mobile device even during significant discussions with my partner," the responses were fairly spread, with 31.4% in agreement and 23.2% in strong agreement, resulting in a mean of 2.65 (SD = .980). In Item 2, which examined the decline in face-to-face

communication attributable to frequent phone usage, the mean score was somewhat elevated at 2.70 ( $SD = 1.052$ ), with 59.1% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. Item 3 addressed the issue of miscommunications stemming from cell phone usage during communal time. In this instance, 60.0% of participants concurred or strongly concurred, substantiating the assertion that digital distractions may engender relationship misinterpretations. The average score of 2.65 ( $SD = .993$ ) further substantiates this modest unanimity.

Item 4 addressed emotional separation, revealing that 64.1% of respondents concurred or strongly concurred that concentrated phone usage fosters emotional distance. This item achieved the highest mean score of 2.74 ( $SD = .938$ ), indicating that emotional disengagement resulting from mobile device usage may be more pronounced for several couples. Finally, Item 5 indicated a relatively uniform distribution, with 54.6% of respondents recognizing that their partner frequently prioritizes phone usage over dialogue. Although the standard deviation was the largest ( $SD = 1.131$ ), the mean score was generally stable at 2.61, reflecting diverse perceptions with increased variability among respondents.

**Research Question 2:** How does the nature of language used in mobile communication influence emotional and relational understanding between couples?

Table 2: Responses to how the nature of language used in mobile communication influences emotional and relational understanding between couples

S/N	Item	SD	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
			(%)				
1	I feel emotionally closer to my partner when we use expressive language (e.g., affectionate words, and emojis) in mobile conversations.	17 (7.7)	51 (23.2)	75 (34.1)	77 (35.0)	2.96	.945
2	Misunderstandings often occur between my partner and me due to the ambiguity or brevity of our text messages.	4 (1.8)	29 (13.2)	95 (43.2)	92 (41.8)	3.25	.750
3	The way we communicate via text or messaging apps reflects the emotional tone of our relationship.	32 (14.5)	43 (19.5)	74 (33.6)	71 (32.3)	2.84	1.038
4	I find it easier to express sensitive or emotional topics through mobile messaging than in face-to-face conversations.	5 (2.3)	17 (7.7)	117 (53.2)	81 (36.8)	3.25	.692

5	The use of abbreviations, acronyms, or informal language in our digital chats sometimes hinders clear understanding between us.	13	27	80	(45.5) (5.9) (12.3) (36.4)	100	3.21	.878
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Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of respondents' perceptions of the impact of language employed in mobile communication on emotional and relational comprehension between couples. Item 1 examined the extent to which expressive language (e.g., affectionate terminology, emojis) fosters emotional intimacy. A significant percentage of respondents concurred (34.1%) or strongly concurred (35.0%), resulting in a comparatively elevated mean of 2.96 ( $SD = .945$ ). This suggests a widespread notion that emotionally expressive digital communication promotes intimacy, while 30.9% of respondents disagreed, indicating considerable diversity in this experience.

Item 2 discussed the prevalence of misunderstandings resulting from vague or succinct communications. The average response was 3.25 ( $SD = 0.750$ ), with 85% of individuals either agreeing or strongly agreeing, indicating a prevalent acknowledgment that ambiguous digital language can obstruct relational clarity.

Item 3 assessed whether text-based communication mirrors the emotional tone of the relationship. While 65.9% of respondents concurred or strongly concurred, a significant 34% either disagreed or maintained neutrality. The mean of 2.84 ( $SD = 1.038$ ) indicates moderate agreement; however, the considerable standard deviation reveals varied opinions, potentially shaped by personal communication styles or contextual influences.

Item 4 indicated that more than 90% of respondents concurred or strongly concurred that they found it simpler to articulate delicate or emotional subjects through mobile messaging rather than in face-to-face interactions. This item achieved the highest mean score of 3.25 ( $SD = .692$ ), indicating that digital platforms may enhance emotional disclosure in intimate relationships, especially in situations where verbal confrontation is challenging. Item 5 emphasised that informal digital language, including abbreviations and acronyms, can obstruct mutual comprehension. The item, with a mean of 3.21 ( $SD = .878$ ) and over 80% of participants expressing agreement or strong agreement, highlights how linguistic selections in digital environments can obfuscate interpersonal clarity, despite regular communication.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does language mediate the effect of mobile device addiction on the communication dynamics of couples?

Table 3: Responses to the extent that the language mediates the effect of mobile device addiction on the communication dynamics of couples

S/N	Item	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
1	When my partner and I primarily use short texts or abbreviations (e.g.,	6 (2.7)	14 (6.4)	69 (31.4)	131 (59.5)	3.48	.737

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	"k", "lol"), our conversations often lack emotional depth.							
2	I find that excessive use of emojis or GIFs in our chats reduces the clarity of serious discussions.	4 (1.8)	8 (3.6)	71 (32.3)	137 (62.3)	3.55	.657	
3	Misunderstandings in our relationship often stem from how messages are phrased or interpreted over text.	5 (2.3)	12 (5.5)	102 (46.4)	101 (45.9)	3.36	.691	
4	The language we use while communicating through mobile devices affects how emotionally connected we feel.	2 (0.9)	7 (3.2)	107 (48.6)	104 (47.3)	3.42	.603	
5	Even when we text frequently, poor language use (e.g., vague or unclear wording) can lead to a communication gap between us.	0 (0.0)	24 (10.9)	99 (45.0)	97 (44.1)	3.33	.665	

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Table 3 displays participants' replies concerning the degree to which language influences the effects of mobile device addiction on communication dynamics between couples. Item 2 exhibited the highest mean score ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 0.657$ ), asserting: "I find that excessive use of emojis or GIFs in our chats reduces the clarity of serious discussions." A significant majority of respondents concurred (32.3%) or strongly concurred (62.3%), indicating that non-verbal digital cues despite their prevalence may hinder intelligibility in emotionally sensitive discussions. Likewise, Item 1, which assessed the influence of brief sentences and abbreviations on emotional profundity, attained a high mean score ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.737$ ). Significantly, 59.5% of participants strongly concurred that linguistic shortcuts undermine genuine connection, while an additional 31.4% agreed—suggesting that shorter language may reduce emotional expressiveness in digital communications.

Item 4 concentrated on emotional connectedness, resulting in a mean of 3.42 ( $SD = 0.603$ ). Approximately 96% of participants either concurred (48.6%) or strongly concurred (47.3%) that the language employed in mobile communication influences their emotional connectivity, hence substantiating the primary hypothesis that language serves not merely as a neutral channel but as a potent relational medium. In Item 3, which examined the interpretive ambiguity of digital communications, 92.3% of respondents concurred or strongly concurred that misconceptions frequently stem from the phrasing of messages. The average score of 3.36 ( $SD = 0.691$ ) substantiates the claim that language misalignment in mobile communication may result in relational tension. Lastly, Item 5, which examined the effects of ambiguous or imprecise language in frequent texting, yielded a mean of 3.33 ( $SD = 0.665$ ).

Notwithstanding its status as the item with the lowest mean, an agreement was substantial: 45% concurred and 44.1% strongly concurred, suggesting that a high frequency of digital communication does not offset linguistic quality or clarity.

### Hypotheses Testing

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples.

Table 4 shows a correlation between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples.

		Mobile device addiction	Communication gap among couples
Mobile device addiction	Pearson Correlation	1	.411**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross- products	114.681	72.710
	Covariance	.872	.364
Communication gap among couples	N	220	220
	Pearson Correlation	.411**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross- products	72.710	104.876
	Covariance	.364	.823
	N	220	220

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the correlation between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples in Ogun State. The table revealed that the calculated Pearson Correlation Sig. Value (.411) less than the table value 3.84 (at the 95% level of confidence) obtained for responses on the mobile device addiction and communication gap among couples in Ogun State. The covariance, however, was (.872) and (.823) respectively. This indicated that mobile device addiction has a positive correlation with the communication gap among couples in Ogun State. Hence, the null hypothesis was not upheld. This implies that there was a significant relationship between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples in Ogun State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant influence of the nature of language used in mobile communication on relational understanding between couples.

Tables 5: Chi-Square Test analysis of the influence of the nature of language used in mobile communication on relational understanding between couples

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	143.523 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	142.848	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	83.703	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	143.496	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	220				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 82.78.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The result of the analysis in Table 5 shows the influence of the nature of language used in mobile communication on relational understanding between couples. The Chi-square test revealed that calculated  $\chi^2(.000)$  was less than the significant level at the 0.05. This implies that there is a significant influence of the nature of language used in mobile communication on relational understanding between couples. Hence, the null hypothesis was not upheld.

## Discussion of Findings

The descriptive analysis of the data indicates a moderate yet significant correlation between mobile device addiction and the development of communication gaps among couples. The disparity in replies indicates that while certain persons encounter large interruptions in relational contact, others may not view phone usage as notably harmful highlighting the complex and subjective essence of this phenomenon in the digital era. The findings of the descriptive analysis indicate that language significantly influences how couples perceive emotional and relational understanding via mobile communication. Expressiveness and clarity seem to improve relational quality, whereas brevity and informality frequently lead to confusion or emotional detachment. These findings confirm the mediation function of language in the digital aspects of intimate relationships.

Moreover, the study indicates a robust agreement among participants: language functions as a mediating factor in the correlation between mobile device usage and communication quality in romantic relationships. These findings substantiate the notion that both the existence of mobile interaction and how language is utilised within it profoundly influence relational dynamics.

The inferential analysis results from Table 4 demonstrated a strong positive association between mobile device addiction and the communication gap among couples ( $r = .411$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The moderate link indicates that increased smartphone addiction correlates with a heightened perceived deficit in relationship communication. This corresponds with current scholarship highlighting the detrimental impact of excessive mobile phone usage on interpersonal intimacy (Oyedepo, 1997). Excessive usage of mobile devices frequently results

in "technoference," the persistent disruption of face-to-face conversation by digital gadgets, which has been empirically associated with diminished relationship satisfaction and heightened conflict (Richard & Lynn, 2009). The findings of the present study corroborate these tendencies, indicating that addiction to mobile devices diminishes couples' ability to participate in continuous, emotionally significant, and uninterrupted communication.

Adeosun's (2020) research underscores that poor smartphone usage induces not only physical distraction but also psychological disengagement, rendering individuals emotionally unavailable even during face-to-face conversations. The discovery in Ogun State, Nigeria, substantiates that this phenomenon is neither culturally nor geographically confined, but may signify a worldwide communication trend in digitally saturated contexts.

Table 5, Chi-square analysis demonstrated a statistically significant effect of the language utilised in mobile communication on relational comprehension ( $\chi^2 = .000$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests that the language characteristics of digital communication such as conciseness, informality, and symbolic replacement significantly influence how partners perceive and emotionally react to each other. This discovery substantiates the theoretical assertion that language in digital environments is not a neutral conduit but a medium with relational implications. Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2018) assert that digital language is frequently flattened, asynchronous, and semiotic, potentially diminishing nuance and mutual understanding in emotionally intense exchanges. When emotive signals like tone, body language, and timing are substituted with emoticons or acronyms, the likelihood of misinterpretation increases—especially in contexts necessitating empathy, clarification, or dispute resolution. The result corroborates Adams et al. (2022) conclusion that, while mobile communication enhances interaction frequency, it paradoxically reduces depth. Couples may "communicate more yet comprehend less," as language shifts from collaborative meaning-making to a focus on efficiency and conciseness. This study establishes a substantial correlation indicating that the quality and structure of language usage influence the relationship effects of mobile device utilisation, particularly in how partners interpret emotional intent and relational signals.

## Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between mobile device addiction, the quality of language in digital communication, and the consequent communication gaps among couples in Ogun State, Nigeria. The results revealed a substantial positive correlation between mobile device addiction and communication deficits, suggesting that excessive and frequent mobile usage undermines emotional intimacy and interpersonal comprehension between partners. The study indicated that the language employed in mobile-mediated communication substantially affects relational comprehension, with informal, shortened, or ambiguous digital language leading to emotional disconnection and recurrent misunderstandings. The research

demonstrates that language serves as a vital intermediary in the influence of mobile device addiction on the communication dynamics between couples. These findings underscore the necessity of not only tracking device usage but also rigorously analysing the linguistic dynamics employed by couples in digital communications. The prevalence of mobile devices in modern communication necessitates an examination of their impact on relational well-being from both technological and linguistic perspectives.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Couples should be trained on how to use emotionally expressive and context-sensitive language in digital interactions.
- ii. Marriage counselors and therapists should incorporate assessments of mobile device use and digital communication patterns in their sessions.
- iii. Couples are encouraged to set mutual guidelines for mobile phone usage during shared time (e.g., meals, bedtime) to reduce distraction and enhance quality face-to-face communication.
- iv. Educational institutions and community health programs should include modules on digital communication in premarital and relationship education curricula, particularly in digitally active regions.

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