



Perception of Pranks on Social Media: Clout-Lighting

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ABSTRACT

The development of the internet and social media has created new opportunities for using pranks as disguised means of generating clicks and social media engagement by social media users. As a means of humor, a prank has formed one of the major contents of social media landscape purposively designed to draw public attention to perpetrators' walls and to generate comments in a social media driven economy of pay-per-click/view. This study aims to examine the reasons people carry out pranks against their intimate partners and to also find out if there is a relationship between self-esteem and the tendency to carry out pranks against ones intimate partner and to share such videos online. The study revealed that social media use, age, gender and the partners' self-esteem predict the tendency for pranks among romantic partners in a relationship and that that pranks decrease the level of satisfaction in relationship among partners.

Keywords: social media, pranks, self-esteem, clout-lighting

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become one of the most important means of reaching out to people and has over-taken traditional media in terms of immediacy and its interactive nature (Nwabueze & Ikegbunam, 2015). Year in year out, new innovations move into the social media space and in so doing, influence the lives of the people who are being exposed to it. Undoubtedly, every means of livelihood is gradually moving into social media space because there is an increasingly reliance on social media to get their messages across to their target audiences (Nwabueze & Ikegbunam, 2015; Walrave, Ponnet, Van Ouytsel, Van Gool, Heirman, & Verbeek, 2014).

The ubiquity of the internet and the relative affordability as a means of communication and interaction has naturally made it possible for romantic relationships to exist on and because of the internet/social media (Parks, 2007; Sinclair & Wright, 2009). Drawing from empirical studies, the use of internet enabled media in sustaining romantic relationships encourages a good number of reactionary effects between intimate partners (Sprecher, 2010). In this study, social media reactions are accessed from the perspective of the use of pranks in networking sites between intimate partners. Partners in intimate relationships may react

unexpectedly to messages from their partner when they feel the jokes are taken far beyond acceptable moral standards (Renfrow & Rollo, 2014).

According to Krakowiak and Modliński (2014), a prank is a ludicrous event or act done to entertain, amuse or ridicule a victim who does not expect to be a subject of any mockery or comic situation. Drawing on socio-cultural perspectives, pranks have been recognized as a category of play that attempts to smear the bond between fantasy and reality and are unserious, make-believe, and involve a high magnitude of surprise (Karpińska-Krakowiak, 2014). Typical examples of pranks range from childish joke experiments (like placing sugar in a salt bowl; hanging a bucket of water above a doorway, removing chairs from their previous positions to make a friend fall off while attempting to seat on it, using some snake-like ropes to create an impression or image of a snake to hypnotize a friend), to “adolescent” office pranks (like wrapping the office desks with stretch foil, so colleagues returning from their holidays think they are fired). The major goals of these actions are to amuse, tease, mock the victim, and then entertain the audience who watches the scene.

The development of the internet and social media has created new opportunities for using pranks as disguised means of generating clicks and social media engagement by social media users. As a means of humor, a prank has formed one of the major contents of social media landscape purposively designed to draw public attention to perpetrators’ walls and to generate comments in a social media driven economy of pay-per-click/view. These kinds of jokes sometimes extend beyond their boundaries dealing some negative blows on the personality of the victim(s) whose motion or still photographs are being used in trending Facebook, Instagram or YouTube videos that are uploaded by their intimate partners. Majority of these kinds of actions are taken basically out of trust usually on the side of the prank-maker. The contents of the videos or photographs of the actions may promote the image of the victim or bring them to ridicule in a social media space full of physically known and unknown friends.

Why those who engage in this kind of act do such things with their partners, how do victims of these acts feel after being used for such pranks especially, those image ruining ones are what formed the basis of the current study. It was against this background that the researchers decided to find out the reasons people carry out pranks against their intimate partners and to also find out if there is indeed a relationship between self-esteem and the tendency to carry out pranks against ones intimate partner and to share such videos online.

Cloutlighting: A Brief Overview

Cloutlighting is a mixture of clout and gaslighting specifically designed to gain social media engagement by baiting clearly unwilling and uncomfortable people with ‘pranks’ or ‘jokes’ (Negesh, 2018). It is a form of play that usually involves a romantic partner indulging in an action that can put the other half in a ridiculing situation usually unknown to him or her. While perpetrating this act, the unassuming partner reacts as if the situation is real without knowing that s/he is being pranked. Video clips of the prank or joke is then posted online for likes and comments.

Sometimes, the actions are more serious than expected and result in deeply embarrassing or harmful results for the victim. Pranks can be very dangerous and end up ruining the victim’s life as captured in the word of Redmond (2018) who lamented that YouTube inspired pranks ruined her daughter’s life. This shows that sometimes what might seem like good-natured fun to one person is very clearly bullying and harassment to another. Unfortunately, observation has shown that several people have become a victim of pranks in different ways.

Cindy suffers from acoustic trauma which was caused as a result of an extremely loud air horn blowing directly into her ear as a prank to make her panic or create a jump scare. This prank led to Cindy losing her sense of hearing, thereby putting her in serious physical, psychological and emotional distress. In another incident, a video went viral, showing a couple abusively scolding their very young kids until they cried. The incident resulted in a lot of backlash for the parents who were then forced to reveal that it was all a prank and even the kids confirmed that it was indeed a prank. However, the actions of the parents were not well received by the public and they still faced heavy backlash (Britto, 2017).

Generally, Psychologists have studied pranks for years, often in the context of harassment, bullying and all manner of malicious exclusion and prejudice. Recent research suggests that the experience of being duped

can stir self-reflection in a way very few other experiences can (Hoffman, 1960 cited in Carey, 2008). Actually, pranks are humor but some humor can be harmful to the victims depending on the nature of the prank and the victim. Mouton, (2006) revealed that one's sense of humor is not only subjective, but can vary widely based on gender, ethnicity, economic status and nationality. What passes on as joke in Europe may lead to war in Africa (Arnold, 2011).

Social Media Pranks, Self-esteem & Self-efficacy of Victims: A Triple-threat Relationship Review

According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, everyone at some point of their life will develop a real and an urgent need to be accepted, respected and to belong to a group or be part of one. At the very least, people expect the respect of and acceptance by their intimate partners. Disrespect in any form by one's partner can lead to dejection, social rejection and low self-esteem or self-worth. Pranks when done in a way that the 'victim' feels insulted or abused can lead to aggressive behavior from the victim, low feeling of self-worth and withdrawal (Chan & Chui, 2017; Connolly, Al-Ghamdi, Kobeisy, Alqurashi, Schwartz, & Beaver, 2017; Forster, Grigsby, Unger, & Sussman, 2015). Previous literature, (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Lo, Cheng, Wong, Rochelle, & Kwok, 2011) has revealed a positive correlation between high self-esteem, high self-efficacy, and assertive behaviors in youths- self-discipline and good work performance. It can therefore be assumed that self-esteem and efficacy boost peoples' public image and encourage them to strive to get things. This is because those who have positive self-esteem and self-efficacy tend to accept themselves, integrate themselves, and achieve what goal that is set all to remain respected in the midst of others who matter to them (Tabassam & Grainger, 2002).

It is not a new fact that careless pranks can demean the personality of any victim and cause some psychological dissociation leading to loneliness, regret and self-rejection sometimes culminating in suicide. The situation above is rampant in social media use of pranks which most times ends in cyberbullying and self-disclosure (Nwabueze, 2014).

Although it has been reported that there is a gender-based difference in delinquent online behavior, people with low levels of self-esteem have been associated with a reported bullying behavior (Rigby & Cox, 1996 cited in Lo & and Cheng, 2018). On the other hand, pranks can cause emotional and psychological breakdowns leading to reduced emotional self-efficacy significantly associated with being threatened or injured with a weapon (prank) in an online environment (Valois, Zullig, & Revels, 2017); this is where the damage done may impact the victim's perception of life and relationships. Based on the above, one can perfectly assume that engaging in pranks with anybody on social media has connections with the personality trait of the person carrying out the prank and may be injurious to the self-esteem and self-efficacy of the affected victim.

Social Media Pranks and Romantic Relationships: Implication to Commitment between Partners

Owing to the fact that social media use has become an integral part of daily life, one can hardly avoid its use in romantic relationships. There has been a phenomenal increase in computer-mediated interpersonal interactions in the 21st century societal development. Unfortunately, this development does not leave romantic activities without any negative impact given that social media addiction can spur relationships, make or mar people's mood in such a way that may control their reactions to certain issues most of the times (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, & Pallesen, 2012; Griffiths, 2005; Ryan, Chester, Reece, & Xenos, 2014; Van den Eijnden, Lemmens, & Valkenburg, 2016). It therefore follows that one way or the other, social media pranks can influence romantic relationships either negatively or positively. According to Abbasi and Alghamdi (2017a, 2017b), the use of social media pranks in romantic relationships has a significant negative implication to the sustenance of the relationship. Studies have also shown that addiction to social media use in a relationship is directly connected to lower satisfaction in such relationships (Marshall, Bejanyan, Castro, & Lee, 2012; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016).

Drawing from the above scholarly views on the impact of addictive social media use, it has been observed that pranks are a very active feature of the social media and can be seen as a factor that poses a high impact challenge to romantic relationships.

It is also not uncommon to use pranks as means of getting attention of a potential partner through what media scholars called trial balloon (Agbanu, 2018). This is common among social media users who- in the form of teasing- toss a potential partner and pretend to prank him/her if the person reacts otherwise. Drouin, Miller, and Dibble (2015) demonstrated that purely thinking about online potential romantic alternatives decreases relationship commitment and relationship satisfaction with the current partner while alternative romantic relationships make primary relationships weak and less satisfying leading to extradyadic relationships (Rusbult et al., 2011). In all, individuals who experience low commitment are prone to developing more interest in alternatives romantic relationships (Cravens & Whiting, 2014). This is supported by empirical evidence that suggests that relationship commitment has a robust inverse connection with social media solicitation behaviors (accepting and sending friend requests to and from romantic alternatives, and engaging in pranks of different kinds for different personal reasons) (Drouin et al., 2014).

Hall (2015) affirmed that the mere fact that people think a person is funny or that the person can make a joke out of anything is not strongly related to how satisfied that person or his/her partner is in a relationship. For Hall, what is strongly related to a relationship satisfaction is the humor couples create together. Playfulness between partners is crucial to building a lasting relationship, because it creates bonds and establishes security but some kinds of pranks can deal a deadly blow on the personality of any or both partners if absolute care is not taken in their level of exposure. Mascotto (2008) examined the impact of anonymity on Cyberbullying in adolescents using integrative literature review. The study which was premised on the perceptions of adolescents aged 10-19 regarding anonymity in their online behaviors in order to understand its impact on cyberbullying found its theoretical background on the social learning theory of human behavior. The study found that anonymity does not only alter adolescent coping strategies and behaviors through minimizing its consequences and creation of power imbalance which in turn encourages bystanders participation in cyberbullying, but also, impacts the environment by blurring intention and reception, creates dissociation, and reduces empathy in adolescents. The study therefore recommended that adolescent should be provided with educational campaign on online risks and management. Standardized legislation and nation-wide anti-bullying policies and programs designed aimed at reducing the incidence and impact of cyberbullying in adolescents was also recommended. This study is closely related to the current study in the sense that they are both concerned with online risk management which results in an act carried out online through social media platforms. It is no news that some pranks can easily translate to cyberbullying.

Similarly, Branley, and Covey (2017) set out to understand what factors make some users of social media engage in risk-related activities. The study applied the dual-process Prototype Willingness Model to demonstrate the potential role of reasoned and social reactive pathways in explaining risk behaviors in adolescents and adults in the online environment. The research was carried out using the quantitative single time point study with online survey data from an international sample of social media users. Through the Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior, the study found that the reactive pathway variables increase explained variance in willingness to engage in online risk behaviors (compared to reasoned pathway variables alone) by a mean improvement of 6.2% across in both adolescent and adult age groups. Prototype favorability (how positively or negatively an individual judges their perception of the 'typical person' to engage in a risk behavior) emerged as a particularly strong predictor of willingness to engage in online risky behavior. The predictive ability of prototype similarity (an individuals perceived similarity to the 'typical person' to engage in risk behavior) differed according to the type of risk behavior involved, with similarity on conscientiousness and extraversion appearing to have the most influence upon willingness. Reactive pathways significantly predict willingness to engage in risky behavior online across both age groups. The reactive pathway variables explained more additional variance in willingness for adolescents compared to adults suggesting that reactive processes may play a bigger part in adolescents' online risk taking; with decision making potentially shifting towards a more reasoned, analytical pathway in adulthood. As this study looks at the risk from willingness model, the current one looks at the people perception of pranks from the relational theory approach.

Molluzzo and Lawler (2011) examined undergraduate students' perception of Cyberbullying. They conducted the study using the survey research method with Qualtrics and SPSS (McClave & Sincich, 2006) as instrument of data collection and analysis. The study found that cyberbullying is a serious issue and recommended that serious value re-orientation should be adopted as a means of curbing the menace of

cyberbullying in society especially among undergraduates. It is the view of the researchers in this study that as cyberbullying exerts significant influence on the lives of the victims; pranks cannot fail to deal some deadly and harmful blows on the emotional and psychological development of the victim irrespective of victim's age.

Closely related to the current study is Circello's (2013) study that investigates reasons for cyber-bullying others by perpetrators. The study investigated the reason why some people turn to social media sites to bully their peers. The researcher conducted a phenomenological qualitative study on middle school adolescents using interviews to test the dis-inhibition, dissociative anonymity, and social dominance theories revealing characteristics in adolescent bullies of de-individuation and desensitization in the evolution of cyberbullies. Data analysis and findings suggested that participants felt empowered or "in control" using social media sites to bully as very apparent in the primary themes that emerged from each participant's responses. The study findings revealed that the victims' self-esteem is damaged by cyberbullying once it occurs. This study is very closely related to the current one in the sense that it provides a template for the evaluation of the reasons why some people turn to social media platforms to prank their loved ones.

Social media use has been adjudged by several media scholars to be a two-edged sword which cuts either positively or negatively depending on the situation, at the time of use, and the direction its use was channeled by the user (Al-Harrasi & Al-Badi, 2014). Today, business, education, technology, administration, politics, leadership and even religion are all being managed and sustained through the internet (Nwabueze & Ikegbunam, 2015). Having penetrated all facets of life, social media use cannot be avoided in people's romantic relationship so it has crept in and is exerting influence which can positive or negative owing to over/misuse of the communication channel. Available literature reveals that media scholars' attentions are yet to shift to the use of social media pranks in romantic relationships making such works lacking in media studies. The influence of these pranks in social media had not been examined in media studies, so in this regard, this study set to expose the unknown influence of pranks in romantic relationship. Among studies on sexual related abuses, efforts have been placed on sexting, cyber-bullying, cyber-crimes and cyber or internet victims with little or nothing done in the area of pranks and its influence on romantic relationships, self-esteem of the victim and the perpetrator and the reasons why perpetrators prank their intimate partners. Against this background, this study set to provide an empirical knowledge on the reason for and influence of pranks on romantic relationships and its overall impact on romantic relationship satisfaction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher posed the following questions to serve as a guide to achieve the above research objectives.

- RO1. Do social media usage, age, gender and self-esteem significantly predict the tendency to engage in cloutlighting pranks?
- RO2. Is there a significant association between cloutlighting- prank engagement (no, yes) and romantic relationship satisfaction?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on two media theories- the relational dialectic and theory of reasoned action. It is important to state that studies on the influence of social media use on sexual and romantic relationships have severally found favors in the use of the above selected theories as reliable in providing proper interpretation to variables.

The Relational Dialectic Theory

The theory was propounded by Baxter (2004) and postulates that changes in relationships gradually sets in to draw a fast developing line between autonomy and connections viewed as unified oppositions. This gradual change is unpredictable and can lead to end a relationship especially when one partner feels highly unsecured in the relationship (Baxter, 2004, p. 190). The theory was designed to help provide a template for understanding how breakups occur in a romantic relationship while taking into consideration the need for autonomy and connection in relationships. Relating this theory to the current study, the use of pranking

partners on social media can lead to the thought of insecurity in a relationship especially when the prank is self-demeaning and image killing.

Theory of Reasoned Action

This theory states that people tend to behave in ways that allow them to obtain favorable outcomes considered strong enough to meet the expectations of others who are important to them. Glynn (2004), in Agbanu (2014), opines that the theory is based on the belief, that humans are rational beings and as a result, calculate the cost and benefits of their actions and inactions. They take into account how other beings would perceive their actions before engaging in such actions.

Reasoned actions require people to think critically about the actions that they are about to take before jumping into conclusions of engaging in acst based on their emotional responses. It depends upon what the actor is willing to accept as quality at that point in time. The theory was transformed into Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in 1991 by Ajzen to account for circumstances when people may have incomplete control over their own behaviors (Anol, 2012). In the case of divorce for example, some partners do not have control over the circumstances that they found themselves in. The theory is a generalized theory of human behavior in the social psychology that can be used to study a wide range of individual behaviors. It presumes that individual behavior represents conscious reasoned choice, and is shaped by cognitive thinking and social pressures (Anol, 2012).

The theory postulates that behaviors are based on one's intention regarding the action to be taken, which in turn is a function of the person's attitude toward the intended action. Drawing from the position above, any kind of action a partner in a romantic relationship wants to take in the social media space, is reasoned, thought of and as well considered to be good and capable of providing the desired behavior expected by those who matter to him or her. It is not out of place that attitude is defined as the individual's overall positive or negative feelings about performing the behavior in question, which may be assessed as a summation of one's beliefs subject to a reasoned choice of action, which in this study is to pranking each other. What matters this time, is whether those who are considered to have mattered in the intended pranks expected the behavior yet to be exhibited. Drawing from this logic, if a partner in a romantic relationship sees those around him as being in support of his/her intention to prank the other, he/she may be forced to put in his/her best to ensure acceptable behavior. Relating this theory to our current study, this study assumes that pranks are well thought of actions by the performers which they engage in as a result of the 'reward' or benefits they think they will get whether that reward is "likes, profit or both".

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study was to present the impact of social media usage, gender, age and self-esteem on tendency to engage in cloutlighting pranks. The study also aimed to find whether a significant relationship exists between cloutlighting-prank engagement and romantic relationship satisfaction among couples. The research design for this study is descriptive and utilized survey methods to collect data. The dependent variable of this study is "cloutlighting- prank engagement" which has two binary outcomes; if a participants has not engaged in, it is coded as 0 and if he/she has engaged in, it is coded as 1. The predictor variables are: age of participants, gender, time spent on social media and self-esteem. The study also adopted a correlational design used to find a relationship between cloutlighting- prank engagement and romantic relationship satisfaction.

Sample Size and Sampling Method

The study population included youths who live in North Cyprus and have access to and make use of social media on a regular basis. Based on these specific criteria, the researchers opted to focus on university students in North Cyprus. The reason for selecting this category of North Cyprus residents was because, they are the most active users of the internet according to Smith and Anderson (2018) who found out that 94% of people aged 18-24 make use of social media on a regular basis. These age brackets make up the majority of university students and they are also either seeking to be in a serious relationship or are in a serious

relationship (Schmidt & Lockwood, 2015). Bearing this in mind, the researchers made use of convenience sampling and asked students of Girne American University to fill online questionnaires. Links to the online questionnaire were sent to their school mail account. At the end 250 respondents filled and submitted the questionnaires. While Girne American University was convenient due to its proximity to the researchers, the university is also a melting pot of different cultural, religious, racial and economic backgrounds and as such a more holistic view of the subject matter can be obtained.

Questionnaires

The generated demographic survey questions included the participants age, gender, average time spent on social media daily, and whether they have engaged in cloutlighting pranks (with response of yes-no). The questionnaires were administered online through form application. Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) Hendrick, (1988) and Rosenberg’s (1965) were also used to collect data from the participants.

Rosenberg’s (1965) Self-esteem Scale was used to examine participants’ self-esteem. This scale is comprised of 10 items (e.g., “At times I think I am no good at all”) with end points of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The reverse coded questions are 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9. Mean scores was calculated and taken as the overall scores. Items were scored such that higher scores indicated higher level self-esteem. Rosenberg’s (1965) Self-esteem Scale has been applied to several ethnicities and found to have above average coefficient alphas between .79 to .85 (Heyman, 2000).

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) which has Cronbach alpha of .733 assessed the overall relationship satisfaction with the other partner (Hendrick, 1988). The scale comprise of 7-item Likert questions about satisfaction of self and the partner. It includes questions such as “How good is your relationship comparing to most?” the responses range from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Satisfaction scores are achieved by dividing the total points by 7. Higher scores indicate higher relationship satisfaction.

RESULTS

RO1. Do Social Media Usage, Age, Gender and Self-esteem Significantly Predicted the Tendency to Engage in Clout Lighting Prank?

Table 1. Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	104.326 ^a	.266	.388

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001

Table 2. The Observed and the Predicted Frequencies for clout lighting prank by Logistic Regression With the Cutoff of 0.50

Observed	Predicted			Percentage Correct
	clout lighting prank			
	No	yes		
clout lighting prank	No	80	51	61.1
	Yes	45	75	62.5
Overall Percentage				61.8

Table 3. Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
social_media_use	.129	.057	5.199	1	.023	1.138	1.018	1.272
Age	.007	.019	.051	1	.871	1.002	.981	1.018
Step 1 ^a gender(1)	.805	.268	9.039	1	.003	4.236	1.323	3.778
self_esteem	-.085	.047	6.828	1	.033	.915	.852	.958
Constant	1.282	2.587	.768	1	.429	.178		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: social_media_use, age, gender, self_esteem.

A four-predictor logistic model was fitted to the data to test the research question regarding the relationship between the likelihood of doing cloutlighting pranks on a partner predicted by age, gender, frequency of social media use and self-esteem. The logistic regression model was statistically significant,

$\chi^2(4) = 17.401, p < .0005$. The model explained 38.8% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in doing cloutlighting pranks and correctly classified 62.0% of cases. The result showed that:

$$\text{Predicted logit of (CLOUT LIGHTING PRANK)} = 1.282 + (0.129)*\text{SOCIAL MEDIA USE} + (0.07)*\text{AGE} + (0.805)*\text{GENDER} + (-0.085)*\text{SELF ESTEEM}$$

According to the model, the log of the odds of participants engaging in cloutlighting pranks was positively related to social media use ($p < .05$), positively related to gender ($p < .01$;) and negatively related to self-esteem ($p < .05$). Age was not a significant predictor of tendency to engage in cloutlighting pranks ($p = .871$).

In other words, the higher the social media use, the more likely that people will engage in cloutlighting pranks while people with higher level of self-esteem are less likely to engage in clout lighting pranks. Males were 4.23 times more likely to engage in clout lighting pranks than females.

RO2. Is there a Significant Association between Cloutlighting Prank Engagement (no, yes) and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction?

Table 4. Correlations between clout lighting and romantic relationship satisfaction

	clout lighting prank	romantic relationship satisfaction
clout lighting prank	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.157*
	N	251
romantic relationship satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.157*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013
	N	251

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

Table 4 showed a point-biserial correlation between cloutlighting- prank engagement and romantic relationship satisfaction. A negative significant relationship between cloutlighting- prank engagement (no = 0 and yes =1) and romantic relationship satisfaction was found ($r_{pb} = -.157, n = 251, p = .013$).

The result showed that couples that engaged in cloutlighting pranks were more likely to have low satisfaction in their relationship.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Having examined the public perception of pranks on social media by the people, this study evaluated two research questions using the age, social media use, gender and the partners' self-esteem and satisfaction as the variables and determinants of the effect of pranks.

On the first research questions that investigated the predicting factors for engaging in pranks among romantic partners, the study revealed that social media use, age, gender and the partners' self-esteem predict the tendency for pranks among romantic partners in a relationship. Definitely, among these factors, social media use was found to be the most predicting factor for pranks among romantic partners. The implication of this finding is that partners with high self-esteem are less likely to indulge in pranks on social media since they consider that somehow very injurious to their personality traits. The this study was in collaboration with the findings made by Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, and Caspi (2005); Lo, Cheng, Wong, Rochelle and Kwok (2011), where it was established that there was a positive correlation between high self-esteem, high self-efficacy, and assertive behaviors in youths which include self-discipline and good work performance rather than pranks as found in less committed relationship where pranks exert significant negative influence on romantic relationship (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2017a, 2017b). This study therefore, supports previous studies (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, & Pallesen, 2012; Griffiths, 2005; Ryan, Chester, Reece, & Xenos, 2014; Van den Eijnden, Lemmens, & Valkenburg, 2016) which have demonstrated that pranks exert significant influence mostly negative ones on romantic relationships. Meanwhile, this finding disagrees with the views of some scholars such as Branley and Covey, (2017) who confirm the power of pranks in sustaining romantic relationship where partners struggle to satisfy their mates through exclusive self-exposure.

On the second research question which was set to investigate the influence of pranks on romantic relationships among partners, this study found that pranks in romantic relationships decrease the level of satisfaction in relationship among partners (see **Table 4**). The table demonstrated that those who engage in

social media pranks have less satisfaction with their romantic partners which may lead to a break up. Drawing from the data obtained and discussed from the study, it is clear that the self-esteem of partners significantly influences their rate of engagement in social media pranks. The higher the self-esteem of the partners is, the lesser their desire to engage in social media pranks.

CONCLUSION

This study looks at the influence of pranks as well as the reason for its perpetration by those who do it in the social media. It is an eye opener to both media scholars and all social media users who in one way or the other use it on their intimate related persons. The study also adds to existing literature on the use of social media pranks and creates opportunities for future studies in the area. It is an attention catcher to media scholars to also look into the use of such jokes by social media users to get the perception of victims of such social media use and reasons for such use of the social media by the perpetrators. The study can help victims understand the reason they were pranked and help them to manage the impending danger of expensive jokes by their romantic friends. On the other hand, the study may help the victims observe the intentions of the perpetrators of such social media jokes on them and try to take an informed decision either to remain in the relationship or call it a quit.

This study is not an all comers affair because it takes only the victims of a prank or their perpetrators to understand what it takes to be pranked or prank another. Against this background, the study covers only the respondents who had pranked their loved ones or those who have been pranked by their loved ones. Anyone not in the above category described is excluded from the study. In terms of limitation, the researchers encountered challenges in fishing out victims and perpetrators of pranks in social media. This challenge was surmounted by doggedness and the burning desire to carry out this study. Again, given the nature of the study, it is not too easy for some of the respondents to disclose exactly their feelings of the situation they found themselves especially after being the victim of the joke. Through proper study method selection and promise of sincere confidential use of information, researchers were able to surmount the challenge to get the respondents to accept to participate in the study.

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