

Influence of Online Social Movements on Knowledge and Attitude towards Domestic Violence among Facebook Users in Kwara State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a menace that is ingrained in every society, however, its perpetuation has left a lasting bruise in the psychology and physical make up of victims. Movement against this act has overtimes been championed both online and offline and its consequences are worth examining. It is against this backdrop that this study is inspired to assess the influence of movement against domestic violence on the thought and attitude of Facebook users. The study is premised on social learning theory and it undertook a questionnaire survey. Facebook communities were used in identifying Facebook users that are acquitted with domestic violence movement activities on Facebook. Facebook communities like *Offaly domestic violence support service* and *Nigerians against domestic violence* were platforms in which respondents for the study were selected. Using the purposive sampling technique, a total of 220 respondents were purposely selected for this study. The questionnaire was designed with Google-form and 220 links were distributed across to the selected members of Facebook domestic violence community on Facebook via direct message (DM) of the selected respondents, a total of 173 responses were recorded from the exercise. Data were analyzed with statistical package for social science (SPSS), analytical results were through frequency and simple percentages. The findings of this study suggest that Facebook offers support for victims of domestic violence and orchestrate petitions to punish domestic violence perpetrators. Findings also indicate that Facebook provides enlightenment that reshapes approaches of reacting to experiences of domestic violence. It is recommended that Facebook community should provide a rehabilitation section for perpetrators of domestic violence to remold their mental frame and make diminutive the record of domestic violence in the society.

Key words: Attitude, Domestic violence, Facebook, Facebook Movement, Thought

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is defined as abuse that can affect anyone, regardless of their race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It encompasses various forms of mistreatment, including physical, sexual, emotional, economic, and psychological abuse (Office of Violence Against Women, 2007). It is also referred to as spousal abuse, battering, family violence, or intimate partner violence. This pattern of abusive behaviors typically occurs in intimate relationships, such as marriage, dating, family, or cohabitation. The forms of domestic violence include physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, slapping, throwing objects), sexual abuse, emotional abuse, intimidation, and economic deprivation, among others (Seimeniuk et al., 2010).

Series of domestic violence cases has overtimes been making waves in the digital space. The cycle surges with times and drags in affluence as culprits in numbers of scenarios, posing a question on the role model and pedestals person's exemplary foundation to the society. When mention is made of the concept of domestic violence, what easily comes to mind are the beating, molestation and brutalization of women by their husbands; this is age-long and widespread (Uwafoor & Guanah, 2022; Aligwe, et al., 2016). This implies that women are the prime subject, and remain the target of abusers. Domestic violence is often linked to women and in other occasions to children as victims, laying little or no emphasis on the tribulation and agony men face in their domestic domain. However, both genders and minors are susceptible to domestic violence depending on certain circumstances. Odumakin (2006) highlighted the alarming prevalence of domestic violence, particularly against women. She pointed out that, out of 2,400 domestic violence cases her office handled, only a tiny fraction, just two cases were against men. This emphasizes the common perception that women are the primary victims of domestic violence. McKeown & Kidd (2003) also noted that male victims of domestic violence face a society that believes wives are the only victims, and husbands are predominantly the abusers. This stereotype is often reinforced through widespread media campaigns focusing on female victims, which provide sympathy and support for women while male victims are met with skepticism (Cleary, 2003). Domestic violence is universally considered a criminal act and a violation of human rights, with severe penalties for perpetrators (Aligwe, & Nwafor, 2016).

The issue of domestic violence against women remains a pressing concern both in Nigeria and globally. It reflects societal misconceptions about gender roles and power dynamics, often resulting in women enduring severe mistreatment within intimate relationships

In Nigeria, Facebook has become a critical platform for addressing domestic violence. Various groups and initiatives have emerged to raise awareness, offer support, and advocate for change (Nwafor, & Nwabuzor, 2021). Prominent Facebook groups, such as *FIN* (which began as a space for Nigerian women to share their stories and seek help) and *Nigerians Against Domestic Violence*, which aim to educate the public on recognizing the signs and consequences of domestic violence, as well as to challenge societal norms that perpetuate such violence. These groups also serve as platforms where survivors can share their experiences, seek advice, and build a sense of community. Through these efforts, they advocate for policy changes and enhanced support systems for victims, striving to create a safer environment for all (Nwafor, & Odoemelum, 2016).

The brutality towards a weaker family member or intimate partner is a phenomenon that has continue to unfold in every society and it has drastically numb victim esteem and damage their wellbeing in ramifications. The emergence of internet has formidably revoke and diminish injustice in the society, to this end, domestic violence campaign has been gaining ground in the internet and yielding favorable outcome to the victims, the echo chamber created online has pave way for storytelling and experience sharing which connects to the empathy of online users and serve as an impetus for activists action. With references to *Female in Nigerians Against Domestic Violence forum* and bloggers-cum activists activities on domestic violence, possibility of reshaping the phenomenon and people's position on the phenomenon is high. Studies have examined the influence of Facebook and social media on the perception of people on domestic

violence and Facebook knowledge creation of domestic violence against minor, however, a study is yet to be conducted on influence of Facebook movement against domestic violence on thought and attitude of Facebook users in Kwara State, Nigeria. It is on this note that this study inquire into the influence of Facebook movement against domestic violence on the thought and attitude of Facebook users against domestic violence. Consequently, the research questions are; (i) What are the activities of Facebook movement against domestic violence? (ii) How has Facebook movement against domestic violence influenced approach to reacting to experience of domestic violence? (iii) What are the influence of Facebook storytelling of domestic violence on mental mapping and attitude towards the phenomenon?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Domestic violence

Domestic violence is a global issue (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002), affecting families across all social, racial, economic, educational, and religious groups. According to Krug et al., (2002), domestic violence against children has been documented in various cultures, arts, and sciences for centuries. Historical records include cases of infanticide, mutilation, abandonment, and other forms of abuse, dating back to ancient civilizations. While charitable organizations and others advocating for children's welfare have existed for a long time, the issue of child abuse did not gain widespread attention until the 1962 publication of *The Battered Child Syndrome* by Alexander, Macdonald, and Paton (2005). This work coined the term "battered child syndrome" to describe the clinical effects of severe physical abuse in young children. Today, it is widely recognized that child abuse is a global issue, occurring in many forms and deeply intertwined with cultural, economic, and social practices. Addressing this problem requires a better understanding of its prevalence, causes, and consequences across different settings.

In Nigeria, domestic violence manifests in many forms, including slapping, kicking, hitting with objects, verbal abuse, sexual coercion, and threats of abandonment. Economic abuse, such as denial of funds or access to education and healthcare, is also common (NwaMmuo, 2013). A report from *This Day* newspaper (2011) reveals alarming statistics: 5% of women have experienced battering, with higher rates among educated women (65%) compared to those with lower incomes (55%). Many women endure abuse because they feel they have nowhere to go and believe the law will not protect them. Shockingly, 97.2% of victims are unwilling to report the abuse to the police (Ukwueze & Ifeobu, 2017).

Mass media intervention against domestic violence

Fayoyin (2011) emphasises the significant role of media in advancing human rights, particularly children's rights. International development organisations also highlight the vital role of mass media in fostering public support for human rights issues. In 1978, UNESCO issued a declaration recognizing the crucial contribution of media to promoting human rights and international peace. According to Article IV of the declaration, media institutions are essential in educating young people about the values of peace, justice, freedom, and mutual respect, while also facilitating the realization of human rights globally (Fayoyin, 2011).

Social media has proven to be an effective tool in exposing domestic violence (Oxfam Infamy International, 2019; Nweze, et al. 2020). For example, in Benue State, Nigeria, some polytechnic students used online platforms to share their experiences after one of their lecturers was arrested for allegedly assaulting his niece. Similarly, following a BBC report on the "cold room experience" at the University of Lagos, numerous other cases were revealed on social media involving lecturers engaged in similar misconduct with students. Social media has also been used to shed light on other injustices. For instance, in Lagos, Nigeria, a woman who locked her stepson in a doghouse without food as punishment was exposed via Twitter, leading to her arrest after public outcry (Busari & Amedu, 2020). This illustrates how social media can be harnessed to challenge harmful social norms.

Traditional campaigns aimed at changing domestic violence can be more effective when supported by social media, which provides a platform for debate and discussion (Busari & Amedu, 2020; Ezike, 2016). Furthermore, social media fosters cross-border solidarity, enabling campaigners to collaborate globally in the fight against violence. By uniting both online and offline efforts, these movements can work toward ending violence against children through coordinated action across social platforms.

Social learning theory

Social learning theory is centered on the idea that individuals acquire behaviors and attitudes through observation and interactions with others in a social setting. By observing the actions of others, people tend to replicate similar behaviours, especially if these behaviours are associated with positive outcomes or rewards (Bandura, 1977, cited in Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). According to this theory, moral reasoning and behaviour are influenced by observation and modelling, suggesting that moral judgments about what is right or wrong can develop through the process of modelling. Learning occurs in two primary ways: observational learning, where individuals learn by watching others, and intrinsic reinforcement, where mental states play a role in motivating learning. The theory posits that learning can occur through three major ways: Observational learning, Reinforcement, and through Modelling.

Applying Social Learning Theory (SLT) to this study provides a useful framework for understanding how online behavior shapes users' perceptions and actions. SLT suggests that individuals learn by observing movement against domestic violence on Facebook, particularly when those behaviours are reinforced by positive outcomes in the social environment.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

In the study by Busari and Amedu (2020), entitled; 'Utilization of Social Media Platforms as Awareness Tools on Domestic Violence Against Children in Ibadan', the researchers employed a survey research method, utilizing a questionnaire for data collection. The study focused on the Oluyole Local Government Area of Oyo State, specifically targeting SSS 3 students from Methodist High School in the Toll Gate area. A simple random sampling method was used to select 100 students from the SSS 3 cohort as the sample size. The findings revealed that senior secondary school students in the area frequently use social media platforms such as Facebook,

Twitter, and Instagram. Many of the students reported being victims of domestic violence, particularly physical abuse. Additionally, the study found that students are regularly exposed to campaigns against domestic violence on social media. Social media was identified as a platform that amplifies the voices of domestic violence victims and facilitates behavioral changes in parents and guardians through continuous awareness campaigns.

Nwafor, Guanah, and Okowa-Nwaebi (2022) conducted a study titled; 'Facebook Users' Perception of the Social Menace of Domestic Violence Against Men in Imo State, Nigeria', the authors adopted a survey research design. The study was carried out in Owerri metropolis, the capital of Imo State, Nigeria. The population for the research consisted of 522,033 individuals from three local government areas in Owerri: Owerri Municipal, Owerri North, and Owerri West. The Projected Population Index (PPI) formula was employed to determine the actual population of the three areas. The study found that while domestic violence against women is widely acknowledged in Nigeria, men also suffer from domestic violence. This finding challenges the common perception that domestic violence against men is rare, showing that it is indeed a reality. The study found that battered husbands come from various age groups, educational backgrounds, and socioeconomic classes. Although social media has played a role in raising awareness about domestic violence against men, it has not been as successful in giving the issue the same attention as domestic violence against women

Abdulmalik (2021) conducted a study titled; 'Social Media Activism and Offline Campaigns in the Fight Against Domestic Violence in Ghana: A Study of Selected Activists on Facebook'. The research used a qualitative approach with a cyber-ethnography design, focusing on social media activists, especially those active on Facebook. The study utilized purposive sampling, selecting individuals based on their involvement in online activism. The study found that domestic violence is a pervasive issue in Ghana, although many victims fail to recognize their experiences as domestic violence. The research revealed that, in addition to physical abuse, many other forms of domestic violence such as emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse were not initially recognized by victims. However, social media activists have succeeded in raising awareness among social media users, helping them identify these forms of abuse as domestic violence. As a result, more victims have started seeking help when necessary.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative approach. A descriptive survey research design was employed and questionnaire was adopted in eliciting responses from Facebook users, online questionnaire was used in achieving this. Validity test was conducted by subjecting the questionnaire to an expert review, reliability was ensured by disbursing 15 online links of the questionnaire to Facebook users who are exposed to domestic violence activism online, which proved to be reliable after the retrieval of data from respondents and subjecting it to analysis. Facebook communities were used in identifying Facebook users that are acquitted with domestic violence movement activities on Facebook. Facebook communities like Offaly domestic violence support service and Nigerians against domestic violence were platforms in which respondents for the study were selected. Using the purposive sampling technique, a total of 220 respondents were purposely selected for this study. The questionnaire was designed with Google-form and 220

questionnaires link were distributed across to the selected members of Facebook domestic violence community on Facebook via direct message (DM) of the selected respondents, a total of 173 responses was recorded. The 173 questionnaires retrieved were correctly filled, and this connotes that there was no questionnaire submitted with erroneous out of all the 173 questionnaires. Statistical package for social science was used to analyze data, table depicting frequency and percentages were presented to show outcome of analysis.

RESULT

Table 1 Demographic distribution of respondents

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	68	39%
	Female	105	61%
	Total	173	100%
Age	18-27	34	20%
	28-37	63	36%
	38-47	44	25%
	48 and above	32	19%
	Total	173	100%
Educational Qualification	SSCE	28	16%
	Diploma	36	21%
	B.Sc./HND	81	47%
	M.Sc.	23	13%
	PhD	5	3%
	Total	173	100%
Marital Status	Single	26	15%
	Married	101	58%
	Divorced	35	20%
	Widowed	11	6%
	Total	173	100%
Employment Status	Employed	83	48%
	Self-Employed	72	42%
	Unemployed	18	10%
	Total	173	100%

The table above depicts the demographics of respondents. The female respondents appear to be more than the male respondents. The age grade of respondent from 28-37 is the highest among other age grade. The respondents with B.Sc./HND academic qualification appears as to be more, the lowest qualification in the distribution is SSSCE which signifies that all respondents are literate. Majority of the respondents are married while few are widowed. A significant multitude of the respondents as either employed by an organization or self-employed, indicating that majority of them are engaged in a source of livelihood.

Table 2 Activities of Facebook movements against domestic violence

Variables	Level of Agreement					Total
	SA	A	N	D	SD	
I am aware of various activities organized by Facebook movements against domestic violence	42 (24%)	95 (55%)	11 (6%)	12 (7%)	13 (8%)	173 (100%)
I believe Facebook movements against domestic violence provide support for survivors through online communities	48 (28%)	101 (58%)	6 (4%)	7 (4%)	12 (7%)	173 (100%)
Facebook movements against domestic violence frequently organize online petitions and campaigns	54 (31%)	97 (56%)	7 (4%)	10 (6%)	5 (3%)	173 (100%)
Facebook movements against domestic violence encourage users to report domestic violence incidents	52 (30%)	94 (54%)	9 (5%)	7 (4%)	11 (6%)	173 (100%)

A majority of respondents (79%) either strongly agree **or** agree that they are aware of various activities organized by Facebook movements against domestic violence. A combined 86 % of respondents (28% strongly agree, 58% agree) believe that Facebook movements against domestic violence provide support for survivors through online communities. 87% of respondents agree that Facebook movements against domestic violence frequently organize online petitions and campaigns. 84% agree that Facebook movements against domestic violence encourage people to report domestic violence incidents.

Table 3 How Facebook movement against domestic violence influence approaches to reacting to experiences of domestic violence

Variables	Level of Agreement					Total
	SA	A	N	D	SD	
I am more likely to support or intervene in cases of domestic violence because of the information I have seen in Facebook movements	57 (33%)	92 (53%)	6 (4%)	8 (5%)	10 (6%)	173 (100%)
Facebook movements have changed my approach to helping those experiencing domestic violence	52 (30%)	94 (54%)	7 (4%)	9 (5%)	12 (7%)	173 (100%)
Facebook movements have influenced my perception of how domestic violence should be addressed	55 (32%)	93 (54%)	6 (4%)	9 (5%)	10 (6%)	173 (100%)

85% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to support or intervene in cases of domestic violence because of the information they have seen in Facebook movements against domestic violence. 84% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Facebook movements have changed their approach to helping those experiencing domestic violence. Again, 86% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Facebook movements have influenced their perception of how domestic violence should be addressed.

Table 4 Influence of Facebook storytelling of domestic violence on the mental mapping and attitude towards the phenomenon

Variables	Level of Agreement					Total
	SA	A	N	D	SD	
I believe Facebook storytelling has influenced my opinion on the need for stronger laws to prevent domestic violence	43 (25%)	109 (63%)	5 (3%)	7 (4%)	9 (5%)	173 (100%)
I feel more empathetic towards survivors of domestic violence after reading their stories on Facebook	45 (26%)	102 (59%)	5 (3%)	9 (5%)	12 (7%)	173 (100%)
Facebook made me believe that domestic violence affects the mental wellbeing and leads to trauma in it victims	41 (24%)	107 (62%)	7 (4%)	12 (7%)	6 (4%)	173 (100%)
menace to human in the	39 (23%)	106 (61%)	11 (6%)	8 (5%)	9 (5%)	173 (100%)
Facebook domestic violence storytelling has made me to believe that communication solves conflict rather than violence						
Facebook has made me believe that inflicting pain on fellow house mate/partner is inhumane and breeds grudges	48 (28%)	104 (60%)	7 (4%)	5 (3%)	9 (5%)	173 (100%)

88% of respondents agree or strongly agree Facebook storytelling has influenced their opinion on the need for stronger laws to prevent domestic violence. 85% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Facebook make them feel more empathetic towards survivors of domestic violence

after reading their stories on Facebook. Again, 86% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Facebook made them believe that domestic violence affect the mental wellbeing and leads to trauma in it victims. 84% of the respondents agree that Facebook domestic violence storytelling has made them to believe that communication solves disagreement rather than violence. 88% of the respondents agree that Facebook has made them believe that inflicting pain on fellow house mate/partner is inhumane and breeds grudges.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was found that Facebook address domestic violence by engaging in numbers of activities like providing support for victims of domestic violence, this is an avenue for victims to heal and overcome tribulation. Facebook community also organize online petition to trial perpetrators and ensure justice prevail. It also encourage Facebook users and victims of domestic violence to report distress of such phenomenon to the appropriate authority, this boost the courage and determination of victims from suffering in silence to expressing their plight. This is akin to Nwammuo and Salawu (2018) assertion that Facebook group serves as a platform where women report domestic violence cases and seek justice, with the founder offering free legal services. The study found that victims frequently reported issues such as rape, physical abuse, and abandonment, and that members were generally satisfied with the assistance provided. This highlights Facebook's role in empowering victims to speak out and seek legal redress. Similarly, Ajayi-Ayodele and Oguntomisin (2024) posit that Facebook groups effectively raise awareness and encourage proactive responses among users. Exposure to messages from social media activists was linked to increased likelihood of taking necessary actions when experiencing domestic violence. This suggests the panacea set by Facebook communities in canvassing cases of domestic violence. Evincing the constructive effort by the platform in reforming domestic violence as a menace to the society could help reduce the phenomenon in the society.

This study finding also suggests that Facebook movement against domestic violence influenced approaches to reacting to experiences of domestic violence by reshaping how people respond to domestic violence occurrence and intervening in domestic violence related issue. Facebook movement against domestic violence has mold the orientation of Facebook users on devising a constructive means of handling domestic violence. In relation to this, Nwammo & Salawu, (2018) demonstrated that Facebook movements against domestic violence significantly influence users' responses and interventions. Nigerian women's exposure to social media activists' Facebook groups revealed that these platforms effectively raise awareness about the dangers of abusive relationships. A substantial majority of respondents indicated that such exposure encouraged them to take proactive steps when facing domestic violence, including reporting incidents and seeking support

This study also depicts that Facebook storytelling of domestic violence influence the mental mapping and attitude of people towards the phenomenon. It draws attention on the need for human empathy, clamour for law that restrain perpetrators, instilling the knowledge of the damage and trauma prone to be encountered by victims. Also, according to the study, domestic violence affects future ties and could lead to perpetual loathe from the part of the victim. More so, communication are better means of correcting disappointment and settling disputing instead

of violence which further escalate disagreement, indicating that storytelling on Facebook has better orientate people on reason they should desist from violence and adopt communication in solving conflict. In relation to this, Awa (2020) noted that, ineffective communication and intolerance fuel domestic violence and suggest that fostering open and respectful communication can play a pivotal role in addressing and preventing such violence. Encouraging individuals to express their feelings and needs constructively can reduce frustration and misunderstandings that may lead to violent behaviors. Similarly, Hemmett, Castaneda & Ulloa (2015) highlighted that effective communication is crucial in preventing intimate partner violence (IPV). Couples with poor communication skills, characterized by high hostility and low warmth, were more prone to IPV. In contrast, couples with better communication tended to have healthier relationships, emphasizing the role of dialogue in conflict resolution.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is realized that Facebook is a platform that has overtimes fervently revolt against domestic violence and other social upheavals. The study summation imply that Facebook is responsible for domestic violence tackling owing to it involvement in numbers of activities that aim to curb domestic violence and ensure it victims get justice. This is likely to heal the bruise and metal drainage of affected victims.

It also reveal the part Facebook plays in educating people on approaches in tackling domestic violence whether being directly affected or indirectly. Facebook storytelling of domestic violence also shapes the thought and attitude towards domestic violence. This signifies that it possess prospect in beckoning remedy against indulging in domestic violence like strategizing for communication during conflict instead of violence, the need to be empathic and compassionate towards fellow human and the adversities of domestic violence which simply charge people to be wary of being caught in such act.

Facebook community should provide a rehabilitation section for perpetrators of domestic violence to remold their mental frame and make diminutive the record of domestic violence in the society. Additionally, domestic violence is a delicate issue and requires robust investigation, Facebook should explore the possibilities of intense investigation and interrogation to experience efficient tackle of domestic violence. Reiteration of domestic violence is limited to women and children with little or no acknowledgement of men predicament in the issue, Facebook should offer a common ground for male victims of domestic violence to express their grievances and not buttress the ordeal of only women and children in their domestic environment.

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