

**Awareness and Perception of Social Media Sexual Violence Contents on Culture of Silence
among Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis**

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Certification

This is to certify that this study was conducted under my supervision by Abimifoluwa Glory ANJORIN with the matric no LCU/PG/002786 for the Award of Master of Science Degree (MSc) in Mass Communication and Media Technology, Faculty of Communication and Information Science, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria and that this work has not been previously submitted.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God, my Parents and all the young Nigerian female youths who have at one time in their lives been assaulted or exposed to assault.

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Abstract

The continued existence and growth of sexual violence which affects females has become a great menace as it does not discriminate against religion, race, age or gender. Its growth is backed up by a culture of silence which gives the perpetrators an edge over the victims and it is fueled by groups of people who by unspoken agreement decide not to talk about being assaulted or abused. It has caused a divide among individuals who have come across campaigns such as #MeToo, #SaySorry which have helped in creating awareness and others who feel they don't have a voice or have the power to do anything to mitigate assault among female youths. Therefore, this study examined female youth's level of awareness, social media contents impact on their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours towards breaking the culture of silence. The study was anchored on Technological Determinism theory, Spiral of Silence theory, and Media Dependency theory. The research study adopted the descriptive survey research design using a population of 553,678 female youths. The sample consisted 400 respondents from Ibadan Metropolis selected through purposive random sampling techniques. The data collected was coded and analysed using SPSS. Findings show that majority of the respondents (89.1%) consistently make use of social media. Response to visibility of campaigns of public awareness on some of the sexual violence campaigns fell under "Rarely" category, which implies a need for strategies to elevate public awareness in addressing sexual violence. Other findings showed that Female youths in Ibadan Metropolis recognise the importance of speaking up, despite the societal, familial, and legal barriers that exist. The study concluded that there was a significant negative relationship found between the awareness of social media sexual violence content and the culture of silence. From the findings, several recommendations were proposed.

Keywords: Sexual Violence, Culture of Silence, Female Youths, Ibadan Metropolis, Awareness and Perception

Word Count: 295

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Sexual violence is a prevalent problem that affects women, youths, and children all over the world, regardless of criteria such as age, social position, religious affiliation, level of education, and race¹. This is because sexual violence does not discriminate based on these characteristics. The growing prevalence of a culture of silence is one of the most prevalent contributors to the possibility of a woman becoming a victim².

Many other elements may also play a role, offenders commonly take advantage of this fact, which enables them to continue committing crimes while evading punishment.³ The term "violence against females" is an umbrella word for any violent crime perpetrated against women or female youths. This form of violence is directed towards a certain group because of their gender, much like a hate crime⁴.

Sexual violence is a type of physical or psychological harm that is inflicted on a person through sexual means without their consent or against their will. It can take many forms, including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other unwanted sexual behaviour. Sexual violence is a serious violation of a person's human rights and can have long-lasting physical, emotional, and psychological effects.

Violence against the female gender is defined by the United Nations General Assembly as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, bodily, sexual, or mental

injury or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary loss of liberty⁵." The United Nations' 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women recognised that male and female perpetrators, members of the same household, and even the "State" were all responsible for assaulting women⁵.

Women make up around half of the entire population of the globe⁶. The trend may also be seen in Nigeria, which has a female population that was estimated to be 49.34 percent in 2018 by the World Bank⁷. Many young women who were sexually assaulted as children chose not to tell their parents about the experience, and as a result, their parents were frequently unaware of the problem until the perpetrators were much older. Because they are afraid of being judged or having their lives threatened, the victims keep their suffering to themselves, they struggle with behavioural and psychological issues, including self-hatred, sadness, poor self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts, in addition to alcohol and drug misuse⁸. Sexual violence is a pervasive issue in the Ibadan metropolis, as it is in many other parts of Nigeria and around the world⁹.

The prevalence of sexual violence in the Ibadan metropolis is thought to be high, but the exact numbers are difficult to determine due to underreporting¹⁰. This can be due to several factors, including a lack of trust in the legal system, fear of reprisal, and a culture of silence surrounding sexual violence¹¹. Sexual violence in Ibadan metropolis takes many forms, including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and domestic violence¹¹. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence, and the risk of sexual violence is especially high for vulnerable groups such as young women, sex workers, and individuals living in poverty¹². The response to sexual violence in the Ibadan metropolis has been inadequate¹³.

There are a limited number of specialised services available to survivors of sexual violence, and the legal system is often slow and unresponsive¹³. Furthermore, there is a lack of education and

awareness about sexual violence, which contributes to a culture of silence and a lack of understanding of the issue. Some factors increase the risk of sexual violence in the Ibadan metropolis, such as poverty, unemployment, and poor living conditions, and also societal attitudes that tend to blame victims and place responsibility on them rather than perpetrators¹⁴.

The phrase "culture of silence" in this study is used to describe the phenomena of individuals and groups who do not speak out against or confront sexual assault¹⁵. This may occur in a multitude of contexts, including families, communities, organisations, and even society as a whole¹⁵. Sexual assault may be a taboo topic, and survivors may fear retaliation, revenge, or being blamed for the abuse they have experienced. The culture of silence can also shield criminals, allowing them to continue committing violent crimes without fear of retribution¹⁶. The absence of open dialogue about sexual assault can make it difficult for survivors to seek assistance, receive support, and bring their perpetrators to justice.

Several complicated and linked elements may contribute to the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. Stigma and humiliation are major contributing factor¹⁷. Many survivors of sexual violence have feelings of embarrassment, humiliation guilt, and sometimes pity for their perpetrators. Due to the fear of being judged or accused, this might make it difficult for individuals to speak up and seek treatment or retribution. This stigma can also be maintained by social beliefs that consider sexual assault as something to be embarrassed of or concealed, rather than as a severe crime that demands action. Fear of revenge also contributes to the culture of silence surrounding sexual abuse¹⁸. This might involve fear of physical revenge from the attacker as well as worry of social or professional repercussions if they report the incident.

In certain instances, survivors may fear that disclosing sexual abuse would result in severe repercussions for themselves, such as job loss or social isolation. This fear of revenge can be

heightened when the attacker is someone the victim knows or has authority over, such as a family member, employer, or teacher¹⁸. Furthermore, blame and victim-blaming contribute to the culture of silence around sexual assault¹⁹. When survivors of sexual violence come out, they may be told the abuse was their fault or that they deserved it.

This might deter individuals from getting treatment and speaking up because they worry, they will not be taken seriously or believed. This can also contribute to a culture of silence, as survivors may believe that disclosing sexual abuse would result in more victimisation¹⁹. Lack of support can also contribute to the silence surrounding sexual abuse²⁰. In certain areas, survivors may lack access to support services or lack confidence that they will receive the necessary assistance and support if they come forward.

This includes a lack of access to medical treatment, counselling, or legal aid²⁰. It can also entail a lack of understanding and compassion from people around them, who may not know how to respond to abuse survivors or refuse to accept their tales. Addressing these root issues and fostering a societal shift toward a more open and sympathetic attitude toward survivors is essential to ending the stigma around sexual abuse. This may involve attempting to refute myths and preconceptions regarding sexual assault as well as offering support services to victims²¹. Survivors need safe spaces to talk about their experiences and get assistance, and offenders need to be held accountable for their actions.

However, when it comes to sharing information, and experiences, and having a voice, a medium is crucial. This is because the medium itself is frequently used as a yardstick against which to evaluate the quality of the content it disseminates, "The medium is the message"²². In recent decades, there has been a proliferation of media outlets serving audiences all over the globe, thanks to the spread of advanced communication technology²³.

As a result of these advanced methods of communication, social media has rapidly expanded to become one of the most important venues for sharing information and ideas. Research has indicated that women are better able to protect themselves from becoming victims of sexual assault when they are more informed about the issue²⁴.

To fulfill its proper roles, Traditional media outlets have played a pivotal role in combating sexual offenses against women. However, the media has had little success in this fight, as the rate of occurrence is steadily increasing, and the primary reason for this is that victims do not speak up, which is primarily because of negative social attitudes.

Research conducted in the UK revealed that, from a group of 1600 women, 70% felt the media lacked empathy towards women reporting sexual assault, and over half perceived a similar attitude within the legal system and broader society in general²⁵. This indicates that the media bears some of the responsibility for this problem.

Social media usage is on the rise, with estimates from 2019 pointing to 3.2 billion active users, or around 42% of the global population^{26, 27}. The dominance of the old media has been broken in recent years by the emergence of social media platforms that also serve as news sources, such as *Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Instagram*. To upload one's profile and connect with others was the primary function of social media sites in the late 20th century²⁸.

Social media refers to a variety of online platforms that allow users to share and discuss ideas, build communities, and interact with others²⁹. Social media has three main parts: the infrastructure that lets people create and share information, the content itself, and the audience. Users, customers, and decoders are involved. Social media differs from traditional media like television in that users may both consume and produce content. "Social media" can apply to a

wide range of internet platforms, from instant messaging and messaging apps to social gaming platforms to *YouTube* and more³⁰.

Social media can have both positive and negative effects on the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence among young women or youths since young people are avid users of the platforms. On one hand, social media can provide a platform for survivors to share their stories and raise awareness about the issue³¹. This can help to break the silence and create a sense of community among survivors. On the other hand, social media can also be a breeding ground for sexual harassment, ridicule, and cyberbullying, which can further silence victims and discourage them from speaking out³². Additionally, the spread of misinformation, rumours, and harmful information or stereotypes can also contribute to a culture of silence surrounding sexual violence.

Feedback from social media and various news outlets indicated that sexual violence is a prevalent issue impacting women and has been a significant source of concern for women over many years; nonetheless, for several reasons, it has not abated. One of them is the likelihood that females who have been raped would keep silent due to shock and embarrassment which in most cases, is because the perpetrator through blackmail has threatened to punish them if they dare speak out about what occurred³³.

A video titled *Sex for Grades* produced by a female journalist for BBC News Africa sometime in October 2019 inspired many other women to speak up about their own experiences; some even named the professors who had harassed them by name on social media. Their origins may be traced to Nigerian and Ghanaian schools while others named in the report have had to re-evaluate their sexual harassment policies and practices in the wake of the report's publication.

These changes illustrate how effective the media can be in raising consciousness, offering support, and promoting behavioural shifts regarding sexual harassment. Not only do vulnerable females see these changes, but so do other members of society. Thus, social media may be viewed as catalysts for good in the world. It is in line with this that this study sought to determine the level of awareness and perception of social media sexual violence content on the culture of silence among female youths in the Ibadan metropolis.

This research study delved into social media content that is commonly associated with sexual violence, such as victim-blaming narratives, derogatory memes, and harmful stereotypes. It investigated how these contents were disseminated, shared, and consumed on various social media platforms.

The research also examined female youth's level of awareness, and the impact of social media content on their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours towards sexual violence including the normalisation and acceptance of sexual abuse, victim-shaming, and the silencing of survivors. While understanding the part social media contents play in making silence become a culture adopted by victims, the study aimed to identify effective strategies for countering those harmful narratives while promoting a culture of awareness, support, and empowerment.

Additionally, the research explored the potential of social media as a platform for positive change, such as promoting survivor-centric narratives, raising awareness about consent and healthy relationships, and providing avenues for reporting and seeking help.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The growing problem of sexual violence has led to a culture of silence, where people avoid discussing the issue due to fear, shame, or social pressure. This culture of silence is perpetuated by factors like victim-blaming, shame, and stigma, making it difficult for survivors to come forward or report the crime. Social media has added complexity to the issue, as it can spread harmful narratives and information. To overcome this culture of silence, we need to create a supportive environment for survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. Despite research on social media's role in perpetuating the culture of silence, there's still a need to understand how to address the stigma and issue of sexual violence. The problem disproportionately affects women and younger females, and the culture of silence prevents effective action. Social media's expanding role has made it harder to address the issue, and many incidents go unreported due to fear of not being believed or lack of support. The culture of silence is fueled by fear, stigma, and lack of support, leading to a cycle of silence and inaction. Therefore, this study aims to explore how female youths in Ibadan Metropolis perceive and are aware of social media content related to sexual violence and the culture of silence.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to examine the awareness and perception of female youths on social media sexual violence content on the culture of silence in the Ibadan metropolis. The specific objectives are to:

- i. find out the level of awareness on social media sexual violence contents among female youths in Ibadan Metropolis;

- ii. Find out the level of awareness of the culture of silence among female youths in Ibadan Metropolis;
- iii. ascertain the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence contents;
- iv. ascertain the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis' culture of silence;
- v. ascertain the relationship between awareness of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence contents and culture of silence; and
- vi. ascertain the relationship between the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence content and the culture of silence.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were posited concerning the research objectives:

- i. What is the level of awareness of social media sexual violence content among female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis'?
- ii. What is the level of awareness of the culture of silence among female youths in Ibadan Metropolis'?
- iii. What is the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence content?
- iv. What is the perception of female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis' culture of silence?

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses were postulated:

Ho¹ – there is no significant relationship between awareness of female youths on social media sexual violence content and a culture of silence.

Ho² – there is no significant relationship between the perception of female youths on social media sexual violence content and a culture of silence.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study examined awareness and perception of female youths on social media sexual violence contents on the culture of silence in the Ibadan metropolis while also aiding in limiting the sexual violence culture of silence by creating various means of sensitization for females, which could occur in schools, organisations and places of worship. The young females will need to have access to Help Lines that deal with assault cases and various punishments will have to be meted out to anyone caught in the act. Female youths can be taught self-defence mechanisms in cases of emergencies which could save their lives.

This study aimed to show how social media can help reduce sexual violence by exposing perpetrators while educating victims and other young females on preventive safety measures or steps to take when in trouble. The Ibadan metropolitan area is a highly populated city in Nigeria that has a high prevalence of sexual violence but a low rate of reporting incidents of sexual assault. By identifying existing gaps, this study will provide valuable solutions for governmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Governmental organizations can focus on empowering associations like the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Federal and State Councils. Non-Governmental organisations can create associations to empower women and female youths, by educating them on the dangers of not speaking up, protecting perpetrators, and maximising the use of social media to pass their messages. Due to the growing popularity of social media use in the city, it is essential to have an understanding of the role that this medium plays in shaping the debate around sexual assault, the prevalence of silence, and the effects of these issues on the community.

Furthermore, the significance of the study lies in the fact that it would be relevant with contributions from combinations of other academic scholars and researchers. The results of this study will offer a clear view of female youth's level of awareness and how they perceive social media sexual violence content which will also highlight the study's necessity in addressing critical issues relevant to the culture of silence.

Finally, this study would benefit the media, youths, women, individuals, communities, social workers, and the government while also being useful to future researchers and organisations as the results from this study would enhance their understanding of how females' perception of social media groups can play a crucial role in breaking the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence among female youths.

Moreover, the study would be useful to the study of mass communication and other fields of study by adding to the existing body of literature in the fields of development communication, media studies, and governance thereby providing a foundation for future researchers working in related fields while being beneficial to the media, youths, social workers and adults who might in one way or the other, come across the study.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study's participants are within the age range of 14-29 years with a total population of 553,678 in Ibadan Metropolis³⁴. The scope of this study encompasses female youths residing in the Ibadan Metropolis. Ibadan metropolis is characterised by its diverse population, comprising individuals from various ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The study focused on the said age range, as this age group is more likely to be active users of social media platforms. The research covered a wide range of social media platforms that are commonly used in the Ibadan metropolis,

including but not limited to *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp*. These platforms have gained significant popularity and have become influential channels for communication, information dissemination, and social interactions among individuals in the city.

Furthermore, the study examined the level of awareness and perception of social media sexual violence content on the culture of silence among female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis. It explored various aspects of social media content, including narratives/posts, campaigns, images, and messages related to sexual violence which could aid in mitigating the culture of silence. This research analysed the exposure levels of females in the Ibadan metropolis to such content and explored their impact on their perceptions, awareness levels, attitudes, and behaviours regarding sexual violence and reporting. The study was conducted through a survey (questionnaires) by gathering data from a sample of females in the Ibadan metropolis. The findings provided insights into the specific social media platforms that females in the city are exposed to, their awareness of the sexual violence culture of silence attributes, and the extent of their exposure to social media content related to this issue.

It is important to note that this study focused specifically on the level of awareness and perception of social media sexual violence content on the culture of silence among female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis. The findings and conclusions may not be generalised to other geographical areas or populations. However, they could contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics between social media sexual violence content on the culture of silence, and female youth in the Ibadan metropolis' levels of awareness and their perception of them.

1.8 Limitation of Study

The following are various limitations in this study:

- i. The study primarily focused on female youths within a specific age range in Ibadan Metropolis, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups, genders, and geographical locations.
- ii. The reliance on self-reported data through surveys and questionnaires can introduce biases, such as social desirability bias, where respondents may answer in a manner they perceive as more socially acceptable rather than their true feelings or experiences. This could potentially skew the understanding of their actual awareness, perceptions, and engagement with social media content on sexual violence.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Challenge and change: Refer to how social media can be used to combat the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence and to support survivors.

A culture of silence refers to unuttered decisions and agreements between a group of women to purposely keep silent and discourage or prevent the reporting and discussion about instances of sexual violence.

Content: Refers to any form of information or communication about sexual abuse or violence shared on social media, including but not limited to text, images, videos, and audio.

Ibadan metropolis: Refers to the city of Ibadan and its immediate surrounding areas, as defined by the Ibadan Municipal Government.

Perpetuate: Refers to how social media content maintains or reinforces the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence.

Perpetrator: this refers to an individual who carries out criminal acts of sexual assault on vulnerable and unsuspecting women.

Public figures: Refers to any individual or group with a significant following or influence on social media, including but not limited to celebrities, politicians, and influencers.

Sexual violence: Refers to any physical, sexual, or psychological harm or threat of harm that is inflicted on an individual without their consent. This includes but is not limited to rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and domestic violence.

Social media: in this research study refers to any online platform or application that facilitates communication and information among users, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

Sexual Assault Survivors: in the context of this work, sexual assault survivors refer to individuals who have experienced sexual violence at one point or the other and have been able to overcome their trauma, and fear and speak out about it.

Youths: this research study refers to females between the ages of 14 – 29 years.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

To provide empirical background and theoretical support to this study and also make this work comprehensive, the literature and theories will be reviewed under the following sub-headings:

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.3 Review of Empirical Literature

2.4 Conceptual Model

2.5 Summary of Reviewed Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Concept of Sexual Violence

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines sexual violence as any coerced sexual act, involving: any sexual attempt of sexual act, sexual comments, or act directed against a person's sexuality using force, by any person regardless of his relationship to the victim in any setting including home and work. This definition involves rape which is the "penetration, no matter how slight, the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim"¹.

Essentially, this definition includes any gender of victim and perpetrator and not just the women. It also recognises that rape with an object can be as traumatic as penile/vagina rape. The definition also includes instances in which the victim is unable to give consent because of temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity². Rape can be perpetrated by a single person or by two or more persons (gang rape). Often, rapists can rape a target victim trapped in

his or her house, in solitary places, and on a deserted road or path in a very degrading and frightening manner³. The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) confirmed from the Public Relations Officer of the Kano State Police Command that 33.3% of cases of rape were in uncompleted building⁴. Disturbingly, these growing incidences of rape are occurring in all the States across Nigeria, and this has ignited a series of serious public concerns and protests.

Daily reports of incidents of rape around the country exposed bizarre cases of sexual violence of the most monstrous types against young women, old women, and children⁵. Unfortunately, teenage girls and female children are the most targeted and sadly, there are irritating cases of fathers forcibly having sex with their daughters who are legally recognised as minors. The father's sexual intercourse with his daughter is incest which is another sexual crime defined for people having intercourse with bloodied family members. It is traditionally and legally prohibited⁶. For example, among Tiv people, there are clear incest taboos that set boundaries within sexual relationships which were allowed or sanctioned ranging from the ritual of burning to stigmatisation⁷. Moreover, in some communities, if two blood-tied family members (brother and sister) are found having sexual intercourse unless a rite of cleansing and severance of the two from their family tie is performed, they will be barren and never have good fortune in life⁸. Incest is recognised as a taboo in almost all ethnic groups, and it is by law prohibited in Nigeria. Unfortunately, this sexual act has become rampant and perpetuated by fathers, uncles, and child guardians. A review of available information in newspapers, police arrests, government ministries, agencies, and NGOs shows that men have dominated the perpetration of sexual violence⁹.

Violence against women (VAW) is one of the most systematic and prevalent human rights abuses globally. Such gender-based violence against women is a form of discrimination deeply rooted in power imbalances and structural inequality between women and men. Violence against women is

a global phenomenon, occurring in every continent, country, and culture. It harms families, impoverishes communities, and reinforces other forms of inequality and violence throughout societies¹⁰. The most prevalent violence that women experience in society is sexual violence, manifested in sexual assault. Sexual assault continues to be a pervasive problem in the United States. While prevalence estimates vary considerably based on research samples and definitions of sexual assault, a nationally representative survey estimates that 19.3 % of women and 1.7 % of men have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime¹¹. A significant body of research has been devoted to examining the typical characteristics of male perpetrators who sexually assault female victims. A deeper understanding of the characteristics most frequently associated with sexual assault perpetrators helps with understanding the etiology of sexual assault perpetration. In addition, it may help identify possible methods of intervention and prevention¹².

Furthermore, several non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations, and government interventions have used social media in the past few years to combat sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women to promote family planning, which is another essential sexual health issue, using development communication¹³. However, most of these campaigns, especially recent ones, lack published data measuring their impacts. Data on sexual violence typically comes from the police, clinical settings, non-governmental organisations, and survey research¹⁴. The relationship between these sources and the global magnitude of the problem of sexual violence may be viewed as corresponding to an iceberg floating in the water. Research on female sexual assault perpetrators is still emerging with fewer studies than on male perpetrators who assault female victims¹⁵. Most existing research has focused on the characteristics and behaviours of female offenders who commit assaults against children or youths. There is little consensus on the role of social media in combating sexual assaults, hence the

motivation for this study. The output of this study is a theoretical proposition aiming to identify ways in which online and social media could be used to combat sexual harassment on different levels, namely: the sexual harassment survivor; bystanders/witnesses of sexual harassment, or the immediate social circles of survivors and perpetrators; the Nigerian society at large; different organisations such as educational institutions, workplaces, malls, etc.; and the country's legislation and policies. Together, these propositions form a framework that other organisations and entities could utilise in Nigeria for the development of communication campaigns against sexual harassment. Ultimately, the use of this framework will play a role in creating sexual harassment-free spaces and decreasing sexual harassment prevalence rates in Nigeria¹⁶.

Sexual violence manifests as rape within marriage or dating relationships, by strangers, during armed conflict, homicide, unwanted sexual advances, or sexual harassment. Sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people or children; forced marriage or cohabitation; denial of the right to use contraception; or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases, as well as forced abortion also constitute sexual violence¹⁷. Coercion entails the use of physical force and may involve psychological intimidation, blackmail, or other threats¹⁸. It can also occur when a person is unable to give consent, e.g., while drunk, drugged, asleep, or mentally incapable of understanding the situation¹⁹. Online and social media platforms can be used to perpetrate sexual violence, such as threats and harassment revenge pornography, etc²⁰. Sexual violence is often grossly underreported to police²¹. Often, the victims do not perceive sexual violence to be severe enough to warrant reporting. Others do not know what constitutes sexual violence. Fear, shame, the embarrassment of being judged, blamed, and not believed, and fear of the perpetrator may keep some victims from reporting to police²². Among Aboriginal people, the proximity of First Nation people living on reserves makes the victims of sexual violence reluctant

to report sexual assault or child sexual assault to the police. Moreover, a lack of confidence in the police system makes Aboriginal women less likely to report incidences of violence against them compared to non-Aboriginal²³.

Sexual harassment is a global problem that women suffer from in developing and developed countries. For example, studies have shown that 79 % of women living in urban settings in India, 86% in Thailand, and 89% in Brazil have faced harassment or violence in public spaces. Furthermore, a survey conducted in Afghanistan – a country where women are required to cover completely, found that 93 % of the women were subjected to harassment in public spaces, 87 % in workplaces, and 89 % in educational institutions²⁴. The case in the United Kingdom is no better; 75% of women living in UK cities have been subjected to sexual violence or harassment in public areas, and 51 % of female Londoners feel at risk of facing harassment in public transportation²⁵.

Recently, as online, and social media have become more accessible, popular, and ubiquitous, they have become a communication medium. This includes health issues, such as changing beliefs and providing tips about the prevention of certain diseases, providing health tips, awareness about specific conditions and their risks, and understanding of health risks²⁶. It also includes means of empowering women, as well as combating violence against women in different forms, such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), sexual harassment, and domestic violence²⁷. Sexual violence is a pervasive issue that transcends geographical boundaries and impacts females irrespective of their age, social standing, religious beliefs, or educational background. The devastating consequences of such violence necessitate collective efforts to break the culture of silence surrounding it and promote awareness, support, and empowerment as Women and girls represent half of the world's population.

In Nigeria, the female population accounted for approximately 49.34% of the total population in 2018²⁸. This highlights the significant role that women play in shaping society and while there are various factors contributing to the victimization of females, one prominent reason is the increasing prevalence of the Culture of Silence. Offenders frequently take advantage of their victim's weaknesses, knowing they won't be reported while their actions persist as they get away with legal consequences²⁹. Many young females who experienced violations during their childhood rarely shared their traumatic experiences, leaving their parents unaware until the victims reached adulthood. Victims endure silent suffering due to the fear of judgment, threats to their lives, and the resulting behavioral and psychological challenges. These include self-hatred, depression, low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, and sometimes substance abuse³⁰. The problem persists as documented in the broader literature.

The Punch Newspaper exposed a distressing pattern of family-based violence, encompassing 564 domestic violence cases, 60 defilement cases, 11 attempted rape incidents, 123 child neglect or abuse cases, and 84 miscellaneous incidents and cases³¹. Before 2017, The Vanguard Newspaper published an editorial on January 17, 2014, revealing that the Lagos State Police recorded 678 cases of rape between March 2012 and March 2013³². These numbers highlight the alarming prevalence of unreported rape cases which goes undetected because victims hardly report perpetrators, family members, and onlookers or eyewitnesses do nothing to fix the prevalent issues. It was estimated that about 32.3 percent of multiracial women, 27.5 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native women, 21.2 percent of non-Hispanic black women, 20.5 percent of non-Hispanic white women, and 13.6 percent of Hispanic women were raped during their lifetimes³³. It was discovered that a range of about three out of four youths which make up about 74 percent had been abused sexually and were victimised by well-known

acquaintances; about 21.1 percent of offences, were planned, orchestrated, and carried out by a family member³⁴. Sexual violence is unfortunately prevalent not only within families but also in educational institutions. The occurrence of such incidents is a matter of great concern and is also disturbing.

Reports from a US-based resource center estimate that a minimum of one in five women (compared to one in sixteen men) experience sexual violation during their time in college³⁵. In a survey carried out by the Human Rights Commission and reported by ABC News in 2017, it was found that over half of the university students sampled from 39 universities in America experienced sexual harassment at least once. Eighty-nine percent of women reported encountering harassment, with the majority of incidents happening in class or involving other students³⁶.

Likewise, research conducted within Nigeria's higher education institutions reveals a significant occurrence of sexual violence among female students, with many cases going unreported. Over time, there has been no substantial change observed in terms of a decrease in the sexual assault trend. A study conducted in 2010 among 388 female youths in Ibadan revealed that 262 had encountered at least one instance of sexual abuse, with unwanted touching being the most prevalent form according to the study findings, the respondents demonstrated a strong understanding but exhibited negative attitudes toward sexual abuse, resulting in many cases going unreported³⁷. Several Nigerian institutions garnered attention following the release of a documentary by BBC News Africa titled "Sex for Grades," which highlighted the prevalent sexual molestation of female youths³⁸.

2.1.1.1 Effects of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence has devastating physical, mental, emotional, and psychological consequences for the victims. Victims of sexual violence are three times more likely to experience a disruption in life and seven times more likely to fear for their lives³⁹. Victims of sexual violence may have a diminished sense of self and self-esteem; may experience dissociation and powerlessness; show signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders, such as nightmares and flashbacks; and may relive the traumatic experience long after the event happened⁴⁰.

Some of the effects of sexual violence on women by RAINN in the year 2016 include:

- Depression: sexual violence victims go through a lot after being assaulted. They experience emotional, psychological, and social reactions to traumas. They become emotionally closed off, and socially awkward while some become unstable.
- Eating disorders: a lot of victims lose their appetite for food and have negative feelings about their bodies.
- Pregnancy: a lot of rape incidents lead to pregnancy and many of the victims get greatly concerned about becoming pregnant.
- Sleep disorders: flashbacks from the incidents occur and they get sleep deprived.
- Suicidal thoughts: people get suicidal thoughts and though not permanent, they must be taken care of, so they will not be carried out.
- Substance abuse: to get rid of the memories and thoughts of being raped, victims turn to using substances to get over it and end up abusing them.

2.1.1.2 Mental Health Issues

Sexual violence can seriously affect the victim's mental health, with dire consequences in the short, medium, or long term. In the hours and days following the event, the victim may present a

wide range of physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural symptoms⁴¹. Although they may be unsettling or appear strange, most of these symptoms are normal or at least expected responses to an extreme and terrifying event. They may nonetheless be difficult for the victim and her family or friends to cope with. In the month following the event, the stress level will remain high but should gradually decrease⁴². As the victim begins to adjust to what has happened, her symptoms should ease and eventually disappear altogether. In some cases, owing to the nature of the event (intensity, severity, duration) or individual variations in vulnerability (highly emotional personality, mental disorder, prior trauma) or environment (lack of family and social support, presence of stigmatisation or discrimination, etc.), the symptoms may persist and become chronic⁴³. Three months after the event, the persistence of symptoms, their growing intensity, or the appearance of new symptoms all point to deep-seated suffering and lasting psychological trauma. A number of these symptoms, it should be said, are not specific to sexual or other forms of violence but may appear in other circumstances as well⁴⁴. Those that are specific to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are the impression of reliving the event, dissociation, avoidance symptoms, and neuro-vegetative symptoms. Depression and suicidal ideation are common mental health consequences of sexual violence. Victims may attempt to regain control of life by abusing drugs and alcohol⁴⁵. The physical consequences of sexual violence include pain, fatigue, muscle problems, and gynecological problems⁴⁶.

2.1.1.3 Psychological Trauma

Findings from existent data validate that, victims of rape are always battling with psychological trauma, this is because the human mind is preconditioned to reflect on memories both good and bad, so there is a marginal propensity for any victim of rape to flashback, which might render the victim redundant/numb, depressed, and volatile, if not properly advised⁴⁷. If this goes unchecked,

the negativity in the Gender & Behaviour, victim's soul, mind, and heart will automatically degenerate from recurring post-traumatic stress disorder to self-harm due to the low self-esteem and pessimism they perceive themselves to be and consequently, this might lead the victim to self-inflict injury/in most cases, suicide⁴⁸.

Moreover, studies reveal that counselling, therapy, and support have been found helpful, following rape cases, especially where there may be complicating factors related to the violence itself or the process of recovery. There is substantial evidence that, a brief cognitive behavioural program administered shortly after rape, can hasten the rate of improvement of psychological damage arising from the trauma⁴⁹. After experiencing sexual violence, some women act rationally, whereas others display behaviour that is inadequate or inappropriate for example, uncontrolled agitation, individual panic flight, incessant and incoherent talking, etc. and predisposed individuals may show psychopathological behaviour (e.g., brief reactive psychosis)⁵⁰.

These initial responses do not predetermine the outcome. Within days or weeks of the event, some victims whose initial responses were inappropriate see their symptoms lessen and disappear spontaneously, while others whose responses were adequate begin to display psych-traumatic symptoms (for instance, impressions of reliving the event) and develop PTSD, which may be short-lived or become chronic⁵¹. Only time can tell which victims will adjust and which will experience long-lasting trauma. Those who show traumatic signs of dissociation are more likely to develop long-term psychological problems. However, many end up overcoming the psychological trauma spontaneously⁵².

2.1.1.4 Physical Effects

The physical effect of rape could be one or more of the following: Injuries from beating or choking, such as bruises, scratches, cuts, and broken bones swelling around the genital area and bruising around the vagina. Injury to the rectal-vaginal area (for example, tearing of the tissue that connects the anus to the vagina⁵³). Sexual violence can have a range of physical effects on survivors, which can vary depending on the nature and severity of the violence. Here are some common physical effects:

Injuries: Sexual violence can result in a variety of physical injuries, including bruises, cuts, scratches, broken bones, and internal injuries.

Sexual and reproductive health issues: Sexual violence can cause sexual and reproductive health problems such as unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and urinary tract infections (UTIs).

Pain and discomfort: Survivors may experience pain or discomfort during sexual activities, as well as chronic pain in other parts of the body.

Gastrointestinal problems: Survivors may experience gastrointestinal problems such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, which can be related to the trauma or to the physical violence itself.

Sleep disturbances: Survivors may experience insomnia, nightmares, or other sleep disturbances because of the trauma.

Substance abuse: Survivors may turn to drugs or alcohol as a way of coping with the trauma, which can have negative physical effects on the body.

It is important to note that these physical effects are not exhaustive, and survivors may experience a wide range of symptoms because of sexual violence. It is also important to seek medical

attention after experiencing sexual violence to address any physical health issues and receive appropriate treatment.

2.1.1.5 Personality Disorder

Personality disorders are not a direct cause of sexual violence, but they can contribute to it in certain circumstances. It is important to note that not all people with personality disorders engage in sexual violence, and not all people who engage in sexual violence have a personality disorder. Some personality disorders originate from sexual assault-induced trauma which ends up driving the victim over the edge. Personalities are created as a defence mechanism to protect themselves from harm. Studies have revealed that open-minded and cheerful people, once raped turned out to be volatile, aggressive, and belligerent. This is because they suddenly see everyone around them as being evil and taking advantage, as such they tend not to contribute to building social interpersonal relationship⁵⁴.

Sexual violence can have a significant impact on a person's mental health, including the development of a personality disorder. While any person can develop a personality disorder because of trauma, women who have experienced sexual violence may be particularly vulnerable due to societal attitudes towards gender and sexuality, as well as the power imbalances that often exist in sexual relationships. Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is one personality disorder that has been linked to experiences of sexual violence in women. BPD is characterised by intense emotions, unstable relationships, and a fear of abandonment. Women with BPD who have experienced sexual violence may struggle with self-worth, and trust, and may have difficulty regulating their emotions.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is another mental health condition that can develop in response to sexual violence. Women with PTSD may experience intrusive thoughts or memories of the traumatic event, have difficulty sleeping, and may feel on edge or hyper-vigilant. These symptoms can impact their daily functioning and relationships. It is important to note that developing a personality disorder or PTSD after experiencing sexual violence is not a sign of weakness, and seeking professional help is an important step in healing. Therapy, medication, and other forms of support can help women with these conditions learn coping skills and develop resilience in the face of trauma. It is also important to address the root causes of sexual violence and work towards creating a society where all individuals feel safe and respected.

2.1.1.6 Unwanted Pregnancy

Pregnancy may result from rape, though the rate has drastically reduced due to the availability of contraceptives like Yasmin, postinor, mircette, nordette, etc. Yet, some may be unaware, and these contraceptives may fail, especially if the duration between administering the contraceptive and the actual rape has lapsed. In many countries, women who have been raped are forced to bear the child or else put their lives at risk with back-street abortions⁵⁵.

Sexual violence-induced pregnancies can be a traumatic and difficult experience for survivors of sexual violence. It is never the victim's fault, and they should not be shamed or guilty for what happened to them, but society has become a constant reminder of the victim's pasts which makes it difficult for assaulted victims to report their perpetrators. If an individual is in such a situation, they need to seek medical attention and support as soon as possible. Survivors have the right to justice and support, and there are resources available to help them navigate the legal system.

2.1.1.7 Risk of STDs/STIs

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can be a result of sexual violence. When someone is sexually assaulted, they may be at an increased risk of contracting STDs/STIs due to various reasons, such as:

Lack of protection: In many cases of sexual violence, condoms or other forms of protection are not used, which increases the risk of contracting an STD/STI.

Trauma to the genital area: Physical trauma to the genital area during sexual violence can make it easier for STDs/STIs to be transmitted.

Coerced or forced sexual acts: In cases where sexual acts are coerced or forced, there may be tears or other injuries to the genital area that can make it easier for STDs/STIs to be transmitted.

Delay in seeking medical care: Many survivors of sexual violence may be hesitant to seek medical care, which can delay the diagnosis and treatment of STDs/STIs.

HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases are globally accepted as one of the grievous consequences of rape because such sex is given forcibly, and there is little or no precautionary measure, as such the victims are prone to sexually transmitted diseases like Gonorrhoea, syphilis, urinary infections as well as HIV/AIDS⁵⁶. Some of the most common sexual viral diseases that can be transmitted during sexual violence include chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, human papillomavirus (HPV), herpes, and HIV/AIDS.

Victims of sexual violence should seek medical attention as soon as possible after the incident to receive appropriate medical care, including testing for sexually transmitted diseases and infections. Treatment for STDs/STIs typically involves antibiotics or antiviral medications, and in some cases, ongoing medical monitoring and care may be necessary. It is important to seek emotional and psychological support as well, as sexual violence can have long-lasting effects on a person's

mental health and well-being. Victims of sexual violence can seek counselling and support from medical professionals, support groups, and advocacy organisations.

2.1.2 Concept of Culture of Silence

The term "Culture of Silence" refers to a social phenomenon where certain topics or issues are not discussed openly, often due to fear, shame, or a desire to maintain the status quo. It can occur in many different contexts, such as families, communities, workplaces, and even entire societies.

Silence is the act of not making any sound, or being quiet and it is a state in which an individual does not talk or answer questions about something asked. The culture of silence originates from a collective decision to remain quiet. It's defined as the shared behaviour within a group where, by tacit agreement, a specific subject is not mentioned, discussed, or acknowledged. The culture of silence in this study is adopted by the women who are victims of sexual assaults. They have implicit agreements to refrain from discussing what occurred to them. While not all of them adhere to this agreement, many do so due to feelings of sadness and discomfort regarding the issue, making it a sensitive topic if brought up or discussed around them. In previous years, meetings and conferences have been organised to address the silence surrounding sexual violence issues and to raise awareness about them.

The culture of silence surrounding sexual violence refers to a societal phenomenon in which survivors of sexual violence often feel compelled to remain silent about their experiences. This silence can be due to a variety of factors, including fear of retaliation or disbelief from others, feelings of shame or guilt, or a lack of support or resources to come forward. With a culture of

silence, individuals may feel pressure to conform to societal norms and expectations, even if they disagree with them or if they are harmful. This can lead to a lack of discussion or debate around important issues, which can in turn perpetuate inequality, discrimination, and injustice⁶.

A culture of Silence that is related to most sexual abuse cases occurs when the victims are still children and ends up leading to a culture of silence due to poor handling or management from the victim's family, community, or surrounding⁵⁷. The apparent lasting effects of these traumatic childhood exposures reflect cycles of abuse in the lives of the victims. Breaking the culture of silence often requires courage, vulnerability, and a willingness to challenge the status quo. It may involve speaking out against injustices, sharing personal experiences, and actively seeking out different perspectives and viewpoints. Creating a culture of openness and dialogue can help promote understanding, empathy, and social change.

The culture of silence surrounding sexual violence is particularly pervasive in some cultures and communities, where social norms and expectations may discourage survivors from speaking out or seeking help. This can lead to a perpetuation of the cycle of sexual violence, as perpetrators can continue their abusive behaviour with little or no consequences. It is important to recognise that sexual violence is never the fault of the survivor and that speaking out about experiences of sexual violence can be a powerful tool in breaking the cycle of abuse and promoting healing and recovery. To combat the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence, it is important to create safe and supportive spaces for survivors to come forward, like physical groups or social media groups with positive content or tips dedicated to providing resources and education about sexual violence and its impact, and work to change societal attitudes and beliefs about consent and healthy relationships. Silence is the act of not making any sound, or being quiet and it is a state in which an individual does not talk or answer questions about something asked. It has been

observed that encouraging victims or survivors of sexual assault to participate in available community-based services would be a way of breaking the silence and preventing the next person from becoming a victim⁵⁸.

2.1.2.1 Trace the Emergence of a Culture of Silence to a Traditional Perception of Sexual Violence

The Culture of Silence, also known as the "culture of shame" or "culture of stigma," has its roots in traditional perceptions of sexual violence that date back centuries²². The Culture of Silence has its roots in ancient times, where sexual violence was often viewed as a shame or dishonor to the victim and their family, rather than a crime against the individual²³. Here's a brief overview:

1. **Historical Stigma:** In ancient times, sexual violence was often viewed as a shame or dishonor to the victim and their family, rather than a crime against the individual.
2. **Patriarchal Societies:** In many traditional patriarchal societies, women's bodies were seen as property, and sexual violence was a means to assert power and control.
3. **Taboo and Silence:** Discussing sexual violence was often taboo, leading to a culture of silence and concealment.
4. **Victim-blaming:** Victims were frequently blamed for the assault, perpetuating the stigma and silence.
5. **Power Dynamics:** Imbalances of power, such as those between men and women, or adults and children, contributed to the culture of silence.

6. **Fear of Repercussions:** Fear of retaliation, ostracism, or further violence kept victims and witnesses silent.

7. **Institutional Complicity:** Institutions like the church, state, or family often perpetuated the culture of silence, prioritising reputation over justice.

8. **Modern Manifestations:** The Culture of Silence continues today, with survivors often facing skepticism, shame, and marginalisation.

The Culture of Silence has evolved, with modern manifestations including²⁴:

1. **Victim-shaming and Blaming:** Survivors are often questioned about their actions leading up to the assault, implying they are responsible for the violence. This blame can come from family, friends, authorities, or social media. Victim-shaming discourages survivors from speaking out and seeking help.

2. **Marginalisation of Survivors:** Survivors are often excluded from social circles, ostracized, or treated as "damaged goods." This marginalisation can be particularly harmful to already vulnerable populations, such as LGBTQ+ individuals or those from diverse cultural backgrounds.

3. **Lack of Support Systems:** Survivors often face inadequate access to resources like counseling, medical care, or legal aid. This lack of support can be due to funding shortages, stigma, or insufficient training for service providers.

4. **Inadequate Legal Protections:** Laws and policies may fail to:

- i. Define sexual violence broadly enough
- ii. Provide sufficient protections for vulnerable populations

- iii. Hold perpetrators accountable
- iv. Offer adequate support for survivors during the legal process

5. Perpetuation of Harmful Power Dynamics: The Culture of Silence maintains existing power imbalances, allowing perpetrators to continue abusing their power. This can be seen in:

- i. Institutions protecting perpetrators' reputations over survivors' well-being.
- ii. Systemic inequalities perpetuating violence against marginalised groups.
- iii. Social norms reinforce harmful gender stereotypes and expectations.

These modern manifestations of the Culture of Silence continue to prevent survivors from speaking out and seeking justice. Addressing these issues is crucial to creating a culture that supports survivors and holds perpetrators accountable.

Strategies for Breaking the Culture of Silence

- 1. Education and awareness:
 - i. Teach comprehensive sex education, including consent and healthy relationships
 - ii. Raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of sexual violence
 - iii. Provide accurate information to dispel myths and stereotypes
- 2. Empathy and support for survivors:
 - i. Listen to and believe survivors' stories
 - ii. Offer emotional support and connect them with resources

iii. Foster a supportive community that encourages disclosure

3. Challenging harmful power dynamics:

i. Address systemic inequalities and biases

ii. Promote diverse representation and inclusivity

iii. Hold those in power accountable for perpetuating or ignoring sexual violence

4. Promoting healthy attitudes toward sexuality and gender:

i. Encourage positive and inclusive views of sexuality and gender

ii. Challenge harmful gender stereotypes and expectations

iii. Foster a culture of respect, consent, and empathy

5. Encouraging open conversations:

i. Create safe spaces for discussing sexual violence and trauma

ii. Encourage honest dialogue about power dynamics and consent

iii. Support survivors in sharing their stories and experiences

6. Strengthening legal protections and support systems:

i. Implement and enforce comprehensive laws and policies

ii. Provide accessible support services, such as counseling and advocacy

iii. Ensure survivors have access to justice and perpetrators are held accountable

2.1.2.2 Emergence of Social Media and Culture of Silence

The emergence of social media has had a profound impact on the Culture of Silence surrounding sexual violence. On the one hand, social media has amplified survivors' voices, providing a platform for them to share their stories, connect with others, and raise awareness about the issue. This increased visibility has made it harder for society to ignore or silence survivors and has facilitated community building among those who have experienced similar trauma²³. Social media has also challenged traditional power dynamics, allowing survivors to speak truth to power and hold perpetrators accountable. Hashtag campaigns like #MeToo and #TimesUp have gone viral, sparking global conversations and inspiring survivors to come forward²⁷.

However, social media has also created new challenges. Online harassment and victim-blaming can be prevalent, with survivors facing backlash and criticism for sharing their stories. Misinformation can spread quickly, perpetuating harmful myths and stereotypes. Moreover, social media is not a replacement for in-person support and resources, systemic change and policy reform, or comprehensive education and awareness. While social media can provide a sense of connection and community, it can also create a false sense of security, leading individuals to overlook the need for tangible support systems²³.

Despite these limitations, social media has transformed the way we consume and share information, making it easier to access resources, information, and support services. It has also influenced public opinion and policy, helping shape public discourse and inform policy changes related to sexual violence²³. Social media has enabled organisations and individuals to share educational content and resources, reaching wider audiences and promoting cultural shifts. By leveraging social media responsibly and in conjunction with other efforts, we can harness its power to break the Culture of Silence and create a more just and supportive society for survivors.

Ultimately, social media is a tool, not a solution in itself. It must be used in tandem with grassroots activism, policy reform, and community engagement to create lasting change. By acknowledging both the benefits and limitations of social media, we can harness its potential to amplify survivors' voices and challenge the Culture of Silence²⁶.

2.1.2.3 Social Media Breaking the Culture of Silence

Social media has played a crucial role in curbing the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. With the emergence of social media platforms, survivors of sexual violence now have an outlet to speak up and share their stories. This has created a space for survivors to receive support, connect with others who have had similar experiences and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. One of the most significant effects of social media in constraining the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence has been the #MeToo movement. The movement began in 2017, when actress Alyssa Milano tweeted a call to action, asking women to share their experiences of sexual harassment and assault using the hashtag #MeToo⁵⁹.



Figure 2.1 An image showing how the #metoo trend started.

The hashtag quickly went viral with the use of social media messages, texts, and retweets, and within days, millions of women had shared their stories of sexual violence. Due to the trauma caused by the rape effect, people still refuse to speak up and are afraid of being stigmatised by society thus inciting the trend of the #whyIdidntReport hashtag.

Social media has also provided a platform for survivors to share their stories anonymously, allowing them to speak up without fear of retaliation or stigma. Social media platforms have created communities where survivors can connect with others who have had similar experiences and share their stories in a safe and supportive environment⁶⁰.

Another way that social media has helped break the culture of silence around sexual violence is by providing a platform for survivors to hold perpetrators accountable. Survivors can use social media to name and shame perpetrators and to raise awareness about the prevalence of sexual violence.

In addition to providing a platform for survivors to speak up, social media has also raised awareness about the issue of sexual violence⁶¹. The widespread sharing of stories and information about sexual violence on social media has helped to educate the public about the issue and to break down the stigma and shame that surrounds it. Overall, Social media has been instrumental in disrupting the prevailing silence surrounding sexual violence. By providing survivors with a platform to speak up, connect with others, and hold perpetrators accountable, social media has helped to create a more supportive and empowering environment for survivors of sexual violence⁶².

2.1.2.4 Barriers to Breaking the Culture of Silence

Breaking the culture of silence can be hard and excruciating for victims because it involves opening and exposure to the judgmental eyes of society⁶³. It got so bad that several messages started being passed around in the form of *Twitter* tweets, stating why victims do not open up about sexual violence can be challenging due to several reasons or barriers, which include:

- Fear of retaliation: Survivors may fear retaliation from their perpetrators or others who support the perpetrator. This can include physical harm, social isolation, or other forms of harassment or intimidation.
- Shame and guilt: Survivors may feel ashamed or guilty about the assault and believe that they are to blame. This can make it difficult for them to speak out and seek support⁶⁴.
- Lack of support: Survivors may not have a support network to turn to or may not be aware of the resources available to them. This can make it difficult for them to feel empowered to speak out about their experiences.
- Fear of not being believed: Survivors may fear that they will not be believed or that their experience will be dismissed or trivialised. This can make it difficult for them to come forward and share their experiences.
- Societal attitudes and beliefs: Cultural attitudes and beliefs about sexual violence can also be a barrier to breaking the culture of silence. Victim-blaming and the normalisation of sexual violence can make it difficult for survivors to feel empowered to speak out and for society to hold perpetrators accountable⁶⁵.
- Trauma: Survivors of sexual violence may experience trauma because of their experiences, which can make it difficult for them to speak out or seek support.
- Lack of legal justice: Survivors may not receive legal justice, making it harder for them to speak out about their experiences.

Addressing these barriers requires a collective effort from individuals, organisations, and institutions. Working together to create a culture where survivors are believed, supported, and empowered to speak out against sexual violence, and where perpetrators are held accountable for their actions is of immense importance⁶⁶.

The #whyIdidntReport hashtag is a social media campaign that was started in response to the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh in 2018. The hashtag was created to give survivors of sexual assault a platform to share their reasons for not reporting their assaults to the authorities. The campaign highlights the many reasons why survivors of sexual assault may choose not to report their assaults, including fear of not being believed, fear of retaliation, and shame or embarrassment⁶⁷. Many survivors also shared their stories of reporting their assaults and experiencing trauma during the reporting process.



Figure: 2.2 An image showing a tweet from a sexual violence victim

The #whyIdidntReport campaign has been successful in raising awareness about the barriers that survivors of sexual assault face when it comes to reporting their assaults. It has also sparked a larger conversation about the prevalence of sexual assault and the need for greater support and resources for survivors⁶⁸.

However, the campaign has also faced criticism from some who argue that it places too much emphasis on survivors to speak out about their experiences and that it can be triggering for survivors to read others' stories. Others argue that the campaign could be re-traumatizing for survivors who may not be ready to share their experiences publicly⁶⁹.

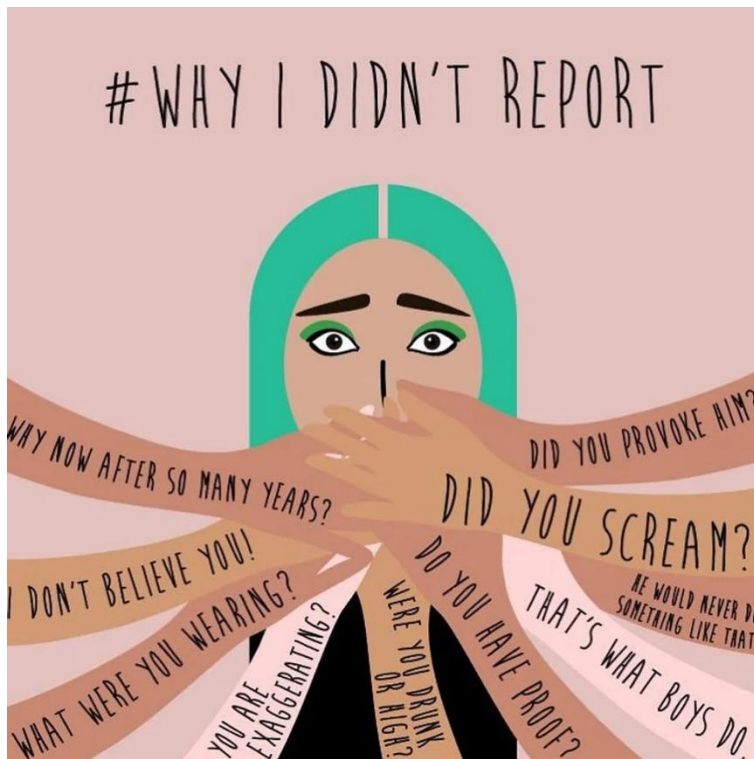


Figure 2.3 An image showing reasons individuals do not report sexual assault.

Overall, the #whyIdidntReport campaign has sparked an important conversation about sexual assault and the barriers that survivors face when it comes to reporting their assaults. It has also highlighted the need for greater support and resources for survivors and for a larger cultural shift towards believing and supporting survivors of sexual assault.

2.1.2.5 Reasons for the Culture of Silence among Sexual Violence Victims

The culture of silence entails a group behaviour where individuals refrain from mentioning, discussing, or acknowledging a particular subject by unspoken agreement. Within this framework, it involves adhering to an implicit agreement to not discuss what occurred to them. While not all women remain silent, the majority do so due to feelings of sadness and discomfort surrounding the topic, particularly when it is broached or discussed in their presence.

A study was conducted on the culture of silence on rape and the plights of the girl child in Nigerian society and at the end of the study, it is discovered that 80% of the girls have experienced rape cases and couldn't seek proper justice due to intimidation, social stigmatization, circumstances, reputation, threat & parental influence, hence remain silent⁷⁰. Victims have numerous logical reasons for choosing silence. For some, experiencing rape again further closes their minds. Some victims not only feel exploited, but they also fear disbelief, and retaliation, and experience immense shame. This problem continues to linger in obscurity due to a blend of sociocultural factors, resource constraints, and service-related issues. For example, insufficient services and support systems for survivors may hinder the deserved attention these issues should receive.

2.1.2.6 Sociocultural traditions

Similarly, some sociocultural traditions are obstructive tools to reducing the silence culture. Sometimes, the idea that people may scorn the victims, or that some religious bodies imply that

women incite assault obstructs the illumination of the issue. Young women and girls may hesitate to disclose a history of sexual violence, fearing it could negatively impact their prospects for marriage. Victims might view speaking up as futile if they feel their state of residence lacks proper judicial systems and measures to adequately punish offenders. Assaulted individuals face mistreatment due to mishandling and swift dismissal of rape cases, causing some to avoid being labelled as or referred to as 'victims'⁷². Encouraging victims or survivors to engage with existing community-based services is one method to break the silence and deter an increase in incidents.

Numerous meetings and conferences have been convened in recent years to break the silence and promote awareness regarding sexual violence issues. In 1979, the UN adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and in 1994, the UN established the position of a Special Rapporteur on eradicating Violence against Women.⁷³ The first Sexual Violence Research Initiative Conference took place in South Africa in 2009, bringing together health specialists, researchers, and policymakers to underscore the widespread impact of sexual violence worldwide.¹⁰⁹.

Since then, the issue of silence has remained a persistent concern, highlighting the ongoing nature of this issue. This issue could be mitigated through a collaborative effort involving various stakeholders, including public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives in schools, social gatherings, cultural events, religious forums, and the media. Additional social scientists have explored the various facets of sexual violence against women⁷³. Sexual violence is a widespread issue not only in the United States but also across the globe. It was discovered that rape could be perpetrated by anyone, whether a stranger or a family member, and it could be employed as a weapon of war⁷⁴. The menace of sociocultural traditions in influencing the culture of silence for sexual violence victims can be curbed.

2.1.2.7 Mistreatment of Victims

Expanding on this, Wise argues that societal perceptions of rape are influenced by rape myths, victim-blaming attitudes, and the treatment of victims. These factors contribute to the underreporting of rapes. She concludes that embracing media literacy can contribute to raising awareness. Regarding the issue of silence in Spanish universities, it was found that 62 percent of students are aware of or have experienced sexual assault within the school environment, while only 13 percent could identify violent situations⁷⁵. Research has unveiled that women were subjected to mistreatment and abuse by individuals in positions of power. It's prevalent for women to remain silent about assault cases, often fuelled by assumptions perpetrators hold regarding women's inability to speak up, further reinforcing their silence. It was emphasized that comprehending the issue and ensuring justice can serve as an effective means to achieving the objectives of breaking the silence⁷⁶. The mistreatment of victims can be curbed by enacting federal government laws that will prosecute those who mistreat sexual violence victims.

2.1.2.6.1 Threat

Most victims of rape fail to report their plight because of fear, intimidation, and threat. Quoting Racheal Ede of The Punch Newspapers, Miss Ibanga Goodness, a legal practitioner working with an NGO to aid women's rights, was brutalised in Feb 2019, to protect a rapist who raped a 21-year-old girl, among many other threats that have degenerated into a conspiracy of silence, against the women in the society⁷⁷. In another headline in the Punch Newspaper of 30th January 2012, Mr. Innocent Francis, father of 8-year-old Endurance, who was raped and murdered, alleged that his life was being threatened for reporting the plight of his daughter to the police.

2.1.2.6.2 Stigmatisation

Rape as a concept has a mode of perception that gives impetus to the way it is socially perceived. In most Nigerian cultures, rape is seen from the standpoint of a serious infraction against the established community norm/values⁷⁸.

Hence, defaulters are severely punished. Unfortunately, though, the punishment often prescribed is skewed in favour of the male offender. Often, the female victim is stigmatised in society with the possible consequences of being isolated, divorced, or neglected by the husband, if she is married already, sentenced to social ostracism that may deny her the opportunity of meeting potential suitors to marry if she is yet unmarried. This can be curbed by having ethics and written values to guide each organisation or community from stigmatising victims.

2.1.2.6.3 Parental Pressure

The attitude of some parents toward rape is discouraging, some parents blame their daughter for indecent dressing, seducing men, inexperience, and drug abuse, this blame goes to the women without punishing the men, and consequently, they boost the culture of silence by concentrating on restoring lost family honour, rather than taking up the case to seek justice at the arms of the

law, some would even go as far as chastising the victim to keep it to herself and buy her contraceptives to prevent any unwanted pregnancy⁷⁹.

Without a doubt, this kind of attitude towards the raped women in the society, provides the society, with a fertile ground/environment where rape can occur with impunity¹²⁹. This can be minimised by empowering NGOs that rise to the challenge of “saving” sexual violence victims from family pressure.

2.1.2.7 Rape Culture

Rape culture refers to the normalization, acceptance, or trivialization of sexual violence in a society. It encompasses attitudes, behaviours, and societal practices that contribute to an environment where sexual assault is often excused, dismissed, or even encouraged. The effects of rape culture on victims can be significant and far-reaching. Here are some of the impacts:

Victim-blaming: Rape culture perpetuates victim-blaming attitudes, where the responsibility for the assault is shifted onto the survivor. Victims may be subjected to questions about their behavior, clothing choices, or previous sexual history, implying that they are somehow at fault for the assault. This blame can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, and self-doubt for the survivor.

Stigma and shame: Victims often face societal stigma and shame associated with their assault. This can result in internalised feelings of worthlessness, self-blame, and a reluctance to seek help or report the crime. The fear of judgment and disbelief from others can further isolate survivors and prevent them from accessing support services.

Secondary victimisation: In a culture that fails to take sexual assault seriously, victims may experience secondary victimisation when they encounter disbelief, skepticism, or insensitive

responses from friends, family, or the criminal justice system. This lack of validation and support can compound the trauma and discourage survivors from coming forward.

Psychological and emotional impact: Sexual assault can have severe psychological and emotional consequences for survivors. These may include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, disordered eating, sleep disturbances, and substance abuse. The normalisation of sexual violence in rape culture can exacerbate these effects and hinder the healing process.

Fear and safety concerns: Rape culture perpetuates an environment where the fear of sexual violence is heightened, particularly for women and marginalized groups. The constant threat of assault can limit survivors' freedom, restrict their activities, and create a pervasive sense of insecurity. This fear can have a significant impact on survivors' daily lives, relationships, and overall well-being.

Addressing rape culture requires a multifaceted approach that challenges societal norms, promotes consent education, supports survivors, and holds perpetrators accountable. It is crucial to create a culture that believes and supports survivors, educates individuals about consent and healthy relationships, and works towards dismantling the structures that perpetuate rape culture.

2.1.3 The Culture of Silence on Social Media among Sexual Violence Victims

Negative social norms contribute to the prevalence of sexual violence and the development of a culture of silence among women. The media, in particular, can play an influential role in shaping these norms. Rape culture encompasses attitudes, behaviors, and societal practices that contribute to an environment where sexual assault is often excused, dismissed, or even encouraged. The effects of rape culture on victims can be significant and far-reaching.

The media has the potential to discourage social norms that condone sexual assault and gender inequality, thereby helping to prevent instances of sexual violence. Moreover, the media plays a pivotal role as champions in the effort to prevent sexual violence among victims⁸⁰. This effort is complemented by public awareness campaigns led by civil society groups advocating for a shift in attitudes. Their goal is to debunk myths surrounding sexual assault and redirect blame from the victims to the perpetrators of violence.

Several studies have found that individuals with access to different mediums (e.g., radio, television, print media, and the Internet) use other mediums to fulfill different needs. The Internet – is a medium for different types of communication; one-to-one communication (e.g. email, private messages), group communication (e.g., group chats, social media posts), and mass communication (online newspapers, IPTV) – makes identifying uses of the Internet as a medium for communication more problematic than traditional mediums which usually support one type of communication⁸¹. People use online media with standard communication tools to fulfill different needs in their daily lives. For example, web surfing is used in ways like newspapers and television for collecting information and entertainment. The Internet was found to be the medium used most for ordering information. Interpersonal platforms are used for social bonding, maintaining relationships, problem-solving, and persuasion⁸. This shows that as people get used to specific media types, the way they use them evolves, as the diffusion of innovations concept suggests. In the past decade, social media has become increasingly popular. Today, it is used to “pass the time, maintain relationships, meet new people, keep up with current trends, and gather social information”¹⁰³. Although, in addition, social media has been linked to collecting political information and civic engagement, it has also been found that college students who use Facebook for politics and civic engagement are more likely to practice them offline. In addition, it has been

found that social media users usually do not use one form of social media but rather utilise different forms of online and offline communication. Furthermore, new social media platforms are linked to social trends to maintain a specific “communication repertoire”⁸³. One increasingly widespread use of online media is help-seeking, especially in the case of health issues. Research has suggested that four in every ten adults have used the Internet at least once in the previous year to seek health information. In addition, using health websites has had a positive effect on attitude and behaviour change. Using such websites is linked to reducing anxiety and increasing self-efficacy. With the emergence of social media platforms, the Internet has become a more important source for seeking help and collecting health-related information. For example, Facebook, Twitter, and Google search engines were used for a pilot campaign about maternity health, and found that these platforms, especially Facebook and Google have a broad reach and are a cheap means of communicating public health information⁸⁴.

This was of particular importance since 45 % of the media time for Americans was spent on the Internet and mobile devices and 73 % of the adults use social media⁸⁵. However, it is essential to note that the Internet and social media are also abused to harass women. In fact, with the rise in the use of social media, sexual harassment has become more prevalent. There are different ways of doing so, including sending unwanted messages with sexual content, abusing someone’s data and photographs, online stalking, and even stalking in person⁸⁶. In addition to education, the media also fulfill surveillance roles, serving as modern-day sentinels and lookouts. They bring attention to important information that enables society members to make informed decisions and enhance their quality of life. Through creating awareness, enhancing knowledge, and shaping attitudes, the media actively work to discourage various anti-social behaviours, including sexual violence. One effective approach for the media to achieve this is by raising awareness and

empowering women to address knowledge gaps regarding sexual violence⁸⁷. Before the rise of social media, traditional media outlets were primarily responsible for addressing this issue. However, their effectiveness has been limited, as many affected women are hesitant to come forward and share their stories. With the advent of social media, individuals who are encouraged to speak out about sexual assault have the opportunity to contribute to society's understanding of the phenomenon⁸⁸. However, the anonymity that social media users can adopt seems to be encouraging more women to speak out about this social issue on various platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook. With the aid of social media, numerous victims, including notable figures, have urged others to join their cause. Alyssa Milano, a Hollywood actress who was sexually assaulted by Harvey Weinstein, is one such individual who has made a plea for solidarity within the industry⁸⁹.

Alyssa Milano initiated the #MeToo campaign, and by around 4 a.m. that day, approximately 200,000 #MeToo tweets had been published on Twitter. Additionally, stories began pouring forth on Facebook, with nearly 80,000 people engaging in discussions about the issue. The hashtag swiftly became the top trending topic on Twitter nationwide, serving as a rallying point for those who had endured various forms of assault. These ranged from past abuse during adolescence to unspoken workplace trauma, personal challenges, and verbal mistreatment or humiliation from family members due to their silence. It wasn't merely typing a hashtag; individuals started to genuinely open up about their experiences with abusers, expressing themselves openly⁸¹. A woman tweeted #MeToo when I was in the military. She mentioned that she remained silent for self-protection on several occasions, indicating that she had experienced abuse more than once.

Another victim stated they had been raped twice in their life, stalked four times, and threatened when they tried to speak out at age 14⁹⁰. Other victims reflected on past experiences, harkening

back to the year 2005 when a similar incident occurred, but with the hashtag #NotOkay, following a leaked video in which Donald Trump boasted about kissing and groping women. This trend underscores the reality that numerous women have experienced sexual assault and violation. Upon hearing the voices of others who confirm their experiences, many find the courage to speak up without fear of reprisal or condemnation.

2.1.4 Role of the Social Media

Social media as the eyes and arms of society play crucial roles in making sure that society is informed about pertinent issues happening in society. The prominent roles of mass include awareness creation, reporting, and empowering meaningful stories. Civil wars, rape, and Sexual violence committed in any form in different countries have attracted the concerns of social media to step in and play an important role in propagating against its viral effects. Social media can reduce or accelerate the magnitude of civil war, rape, and sexual violence if they act unprofessionally in reporting (writing or broadcasting) incidents, which have no clear investigation¹⁰⁵. Social media compels reporters and journalists to act professionally and inform the public about the significant impact of civil wars, rape, and sexual violence⁹¹.

Consequently, this means that social media play a significant role in creating awareness in the community about rape and sexual violence and its impacts so that the community takes immediate effect. Social media provide insights about the prevailing trends and analyse the recent major news about rape and sexual violence, providing resources to keenly report on civil wars, rape, and sexual violence observing principles of sensitivity and accuracy. Reporters possess sources of data and evidence as background for new stories. They can provide contacts for local government,

central government or state, politicians, NGOs, and other national experts on sexual violence. Social media, including print, television, radio, and online media coverage shapes the public agenda for policy-making processes and so, resorts to conduct a wider coverage and report the most pressing issues in the society⁹². Social media also frames the conditions that which policy discussions and decisions should be based. Regarding rape and sexual violence, social media coverage shapes people's perceptions and feelings on the issue and informs the community about how to go about⁹³. The valuable role of social media is in the formation of reality in a peace process, in conflict resolution (peace process). The peace process in conflict resolution is defined as the multidimensional methods, including economy, politics, and security, for the conflict can be resolved without any violence. Otherwise, the deconstructive role of social media can be indicated by the news content causing a probability of violent reaction among the different actors⁹⁴. In general, social media is a means to deliver information from a source of information (communicator) to the recipient information (communicant). Television print media, and social media take another rounded shape of social media which is used as the fastest way to convey information to many people within a very short time and efficiently.

Social media refers to a set of online tools that are designed for and centred on social interaction⁹⁴. Social media generally plays a significant role in bringing awareness to the community about anything bad or good happening in between⁹⁵. Social media with television, radio, the Internet, newspapers, magazines, and other printed publications have a significant role in reaching a wide range of people and effect change within society. The government has been using social media to create public awareness and challenge gender norms and attitudes of the woman and society about rape and sexual violence and to prevent it. Social media aim to increase knowledge, challenge attitudes and modify behaviour. Their intervention in reporting cases of rape and sexual violence

can also alter social norms and values (e.g., the belief that masculinity is associated with aggression) through public discussion and social interaction. Media campaigns have proven successful in increasing knowledge of intimate partner violence and influencing attitudes towards gender norms⁹⁶.

2.1.4.1 The Social Media Effects

The term “social media effects” continues to be used broadly, even though many media scholars struggle with the term ‘effect. We speak of the ‘effects’ of mass communication as a convenient expression. Effects are thus a shorthand and inadequate way of marking the point where audiences differentiate read and make sense of messages”⁹⁷. The word effect is something of a misnomer, used by many because of its economy and convenience as a label encompassing a complex and varied field of theory and research”. The media effects refer to the social or psychological changes that occur in consumers of the media message systems in their social milieu or cultural values because of being exposed to processing or acting on those mediated messages⁹⁸. Likewise, the social media effect as the consequences or outcomes of the working of or exposure to social media whether intended or not. The social media effect is a change in an outcome within a person, a social entity that is due to social media influence following exposure to a social media message with a series of messages. In this case, rape and sexual violence against women and girls is the most pressing issue in the DRC Congo, which ultimately requires the attention of social media⁹⁹.

Media research in recent decades has shown that media influence attitudes less directly than in a roundabout way, treating people as beings whose ideas their social environment shapes¹⁰⁰. People adjust their thinking and behaviour in this social environment, which was created by ideas precisely as by portrayed the phenomenon, that it is through this roundabout way that the media have an effect. Given this situation, it is hardly surprising that many think it will never be possible to study the effect of the media. The effects of media messages flow back to influence people or victims of rape and sexual violence need psychological and social characteristics¹⁰¹.

Moreover, in some cases, they relaxed to change the nature of the societal system itself. Behavioural alteration effects, for example, in some instances may take the form of massive protest, which not only gets people involved in producing a new series of events covered by the media, but may also increase the level of societal conflict, modify societal norms, or create new social groups. This series of events, in turn, can force changes in the relationships between the sociocultural system and the media system, such as the passing of new laws designed to change the media is operating policies¹⁰². "It is doubtless early, in a domain in so fast evolution, to assess available knowledge.

The author also, recognises that "the studies of reception offer a denial to the speeches which presented this spectator as passive, as immature and as eternally in search of protection. This study allowed, and according to him, to confirm the hypothesis of the limited effects and "the sovereignty of the use which the receivers reserve for the media¹⁰³. The studies on the media are distributed in three general domains, worth knowing (namely): the studies of the public, the studies of the contents, and the studies of the effects, "in every case, the attention and the interest refer finally to the effects, direct or indirect¹⁰⁴. In addition, in these effects, we know that " the idea of a receiver acting on the message and proceeding to filter of its contents establishes a rather

new sociological problem and certainly very rich today. Generally, the literature has demonstrated useful information regarding social media effect. The provided information indeed fits with the current study because social media is expected to play a significant role and bring desirable effects to the community regarding rape and sexual violence¹⁰⁵. Besides, the social media effect is valid since it makes information available to more people more quickly and enables individuals to spread their innovative ideas much further than they would have been if there were no social media.

In this regard, covering and reporting issues of rape and sexual violence is performed in professional manner personnel to avoid accelerating the incidents and causing more problems to the victims and the vulnerable societies.

2.1.4.2 Cognitive Effects

The cognitive effect is best described by the ambiguity of information arising from the occurrence of a particular incidence in society. In this respect, the conception and determination of ambiguity serve as the first example of a cognitive alteration effect, which is particularly likely to receive the attention of investigators working from a dependency theory. Accordingly, ambiguity can occur either due to society's lack of enough information to understand the meaning of an event or because there is inadequate information to govern numerous possible explanations of an event¹⁰⁶.

The situations where the initial information gathered and delivered by the media is incomplete, feelings of ambiguity are created, thus audience becomes aware that an event has occurred, but they fail to know what it means or how to interpret it. In such a situation more information is undoubtedly required in attempts to resolve such ambiguity. As such, the ambiguity happens because of inadequate or conflicting media reports resolved by complete information

subsequently delivered by the media to their audiences. It is in this position that the media's role in ambiguity creation and resolution is relatively easy to see. Cognitive effects include overcoming uncertainty; forming the attitude; defining priorities; opinion subject expansion; and clarifying the value system. Likewise, the cognitive effects of social media centre on attitude formation, expansion of peoples' systems of beliefs, and value clarification¹⁰⁶.

2.1.4.3 The Affective Effect

The affective effect is an emotional reaction to indirect information that can arouse strong feelings towards the representation of some social groups which can make people insensible to violence (cruelty) using excessive display of corresponding materials¹¹⁶. The impact of media messages on an audience's feelings and emotional responses is one of a kind of effects. Almost all media effects could be explored in terms of their affective dimensions, as it is very difficult to envision the cognitive effect of attitude formation without accompanying affective effects. Sometimes the affective element of attitude formation can have serious social consequences. In periods of intense social conflict, the police, for example, may form several attitudes from media characterisations about groups with which they have to deal. If media-derived attitudes contain affective elements, such as anger, hostility, and frustration, it may retard the ability of the police to keep their cool when the encounter comes. Affective effects are also associated with morale and alienation, which serve as the kinds of alterations in audience affect that can result from media messages¹⁰⁷. People who rely on social media systems as a primary source of information about their groups and categories can, thus, experience changes in morale and level of alienation when there are notable

changes in the quantity or quality of the information delivered by the media about those collectives.

2.1.4.4 Behavioural Effects

Behavioural effects are expressed by accepting the new course of action or by refusing the former one. All these effects influence only those people who rely on the data given by social media¹²⁸. Behavioural effects are described by overt action, which is the kind of effect that most people are most interested in. Where there are changes in attitude, belief, and affective states are interesting, but it is the degree, to which they influence overt action that makes them important. Under this study, the concepts of activation and de-activation are considered as pertinent effects of media messages on behaviour¹⁰⁸. Activation refers to instances in which audience members do something that they would not otherwise have done because of receiving media messages. In this respect, activation may be the product of elaborate cognitive or affective effects. For example, people may engage in issue formation or issue resolution because of the attitudes they have formed and the feelings they have developed. On the other hand, deactivation, or what people would have done, but which they do not do because of media messages can be as important as what they activated to do¹⁰⁹.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Technological Determinism Theory

Technological determinism is a theory that suggests technology is the primary driver of social, cultural, and historical change. It argues that technological advancements shape society and human behaviour and that social and cultural changes are a direct result of technological developments²⁶.

This theory can be seen in two forms:

Hard determinism: This perspective asserts that technology is the sole cause of social change and that human actions and decisions are irrelevant.

Soft determinism: This perspective suggests that technology is a significant factor in social change, but acknowledges that human actions and decisions also play a role.

Technological determinism is a theory that posits technology as the primary driver of social, cultural, and historical change. It asserts that technological advancements shape society and human behavior, and that social and cultural changes are a direct result of technological developments. This perspective can be seen in two forms: hard determinism, which claims technology is the sole cause of social change, and soft determinism, which acknowledges human actions and decisions also play a role²⁸. Proponents of technological determinism argue that technology drives social progress, shapes human behavior and culture and that social and cultural changes are inevitable consequences of technological developments. However, critics argue that this theory overlooks human agency and social context, fails to account for power dynamics and inequality, and ignores the role of other factors, such as economics and politics, in shaping social change²⁹.

2.2.1.1 Relevance to the Study (Technological Determinism Theory)

Technological determinism is partially relevant in the context of the Culture of Silence and social media, but it has limitations. On one hand, social media has empowered survivors to share their stories, breaking the silence and challenging the Culture of Silence. Social media platforms have also influenced how we discuss sexual violence, with hashtags and online campaigns raising

awareness and promoting change. Furthermore, social media has made it harder for institutions and individuals to ignore or silence survivors, forcing accountability and action.

However, technological determinism overlooks the importance of human agency in driving these changes. Survivors, activists, and advocates are the ones who leverage social media to share their stories, raise awareness, and push for change. Moreover, social media can perpetuate existing power imbalances, with marginalised voices still facing barriers to being heard. Additionally, technological determinism neglects the role of other contextual factors, such as policy, education, and cultural norms, which also shape the Culture of Silence. Therefore, while social media has been a game-changer in challenging the Culture of Silence, it is not the sole driver of change. A more nuanced understanding recognises the interplay between technology, human agency, and societal context.

Examples of technological determinism can be seen throughout history, from the printing press leading to the spread of knowledge and literacy to the internet revolutionizing communication and information access, and social media shaping modern social interactions and relationships. In the context of the Culture of Silence, technological determinism could suggest that social media and other digital technologies are driving changes in how we discuss and address sexual violence. However, this perspective overlooks the agency of survivors, activists, and advocates who leverage technology to create change and neglects the complex interplay between technology, human action, and societal context.

2.2.2 The Spiral of Silence Theory

The Spiral of Silence theory is a communication theory that explains how people's willingness to speak out on a particular topic can be influenced by their perception of the opinions of others.

According to this theory, people are more likely to speak out if they believe that their opinions are in the majority, while they are less likely to speak out if they believe that their opinions are in the minority¹¹⁴. The theory suggests that people have a fear of social isolation, and this fear motivates them to gauge the opinions of those around them before speaking out on a topic. If they perceive that their opinion is in the minority, they may choose to remain silent out of fear of being ostracised or criticised¹¹⁵.

The Spiral of Silence theory also suggests that media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. Media coverage can create the perception that a particular opinion is more prevalent than it is, which can further influence people's willingness to speak out on the topic. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, a German political scientist, created the model called the "Spiral of Silence". She believed that an "individual's willingness to express his or her opinion was a function of how he or she perceived public opinion." In 1947, Neumann and her husband founded the "Public Opinion Organisation" in Germany. She was also a President of the "World Association for Public Opinion Research" from 1978 to 1980¹¹⁶.

The theory has been applied to a wide range of topics, from political issues to social and cultural issues. However, it has been criticised for oversimplifying the complex ways in which people form and express their opinions. Some scholars argue that the theory does not consider the diversity of opinions within a particular group or the role of social norms and values in shaping attitudes and behaviours¹¹⁷.

Despite its limitations, the Spiral of Silence theory remains an influential framework for understanding how public opinion is formed and how individuals make decisions about whether to speak out or remain silent on a particular topic.

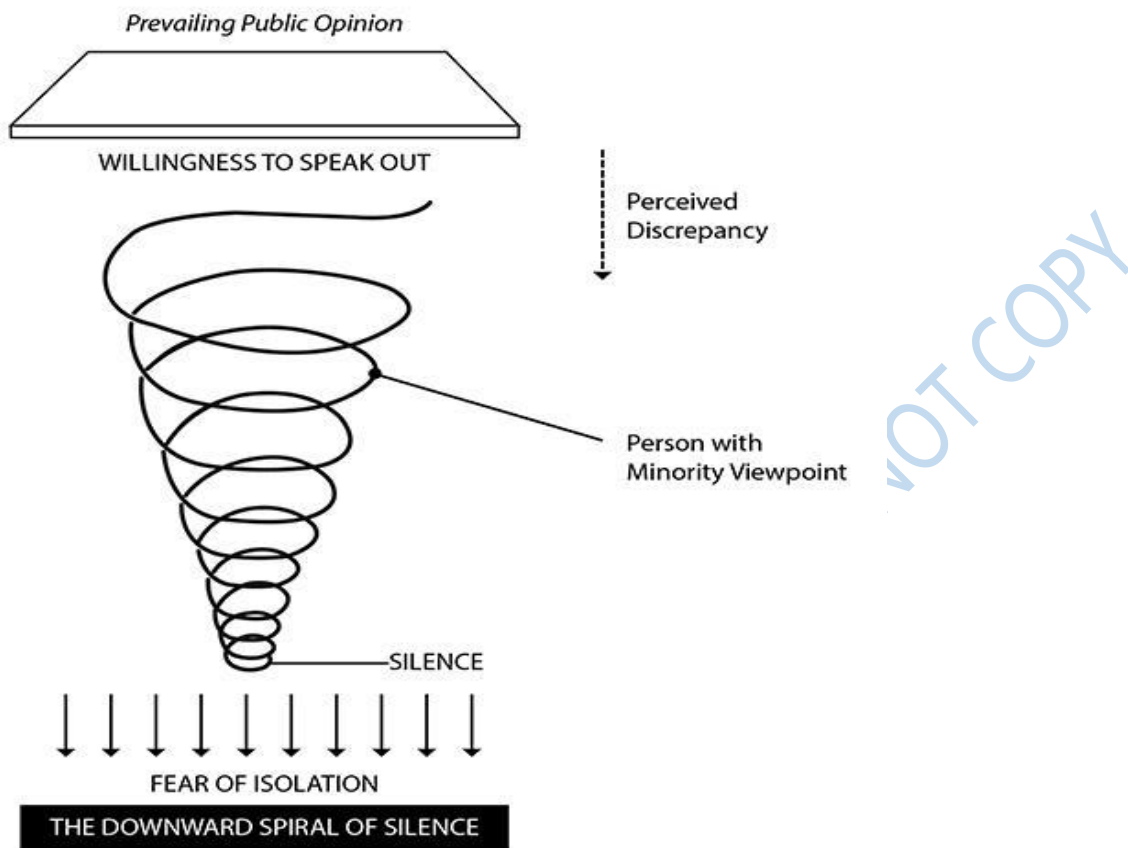


Fig 2.4 Image description of how the spiral of silence works

Noelle-Neumann evolved the spiral of silence theory from research on the 1965 West German elections. The research, according to Noelle-Neumann, "measured a lot more than we understood." The two major parties were locked in a dead heat from December until September, with a series of questions of public perception of the election winner was showing steady, independent movement. During the final days of the election, 3 to 4% of the voters shifted in the direction of the public's perception of the winner. A similar theme happened in the 1972 election, which began the development of the spiral of silence as a theory of public opinion¹¹⁷.

The spiral of silence theory suggests that "people who have believed that they hold a minority viewpoint on a public issue will remain in the background where their communication will be restrained; those who believe that they hold a majority viewpoint will be more encouraged to speak." The spiral of silence theory arose from a combination of high public uncertainty about a topic with an increase in the flow of communication⁹⁹.

The theory explains the formation of social norms at both the micro and macro levels. "As a micro-theory, the spiral of silence examines opinion expression, controlling for people's predispositions – such as fear of isolation, and demographic variables that have been shown to influence people's willingness to publicly express opinions on issues, such as agricultural biotechnology.

The spiral of silence occurs on a macro level if more and more members of the perceived minority fall silent. This is when public perceptions of the opinion climate begin to shift. "In other words, a person's reluctance to express his or her opinion, simply based on perceptions of what everyone else thinks, has important implications at the social level⁸⁰.

As one opinion gains interest, the amount of exposure it receives increases, leading the public to believe it to be the majority. The perceived minority then faces the threat and fear of isolation from society unless they conform. As the opinion gains momentum, the perceived minority falls deeper into their silence. This continues until the perceived minority no longer speaks out against it, either by presenting an image of agreement or conforming, and the opinion of the perceived majority ultimately becomes a social norm⁷¹.

The spiral model is used to visually describe the theory. An individual is more likely to go down the spiral if his or her opinion does not conform to the perceived majority opinion.

The model begins with individuals' inherent desire to blend with society. The fear of social isolation is necessary for the spiral to occur. Individuals who notice that their personal opinion is spreading will voice this opinion confidently in public⁸². On the other hand, individuals who notice that their opinions are losing ground will be inclined to adopt a more reserved attitude when expressing their opinions in public⁷³.

Representatives of the spreading opinion talk quite a lot while the representatives of the second opinion remain silent. An opinion that is being reinforced in this way appears stronger than it is, while an opinion suppressed will seem to be weaker than it is.

The result is a spiral process that prompts other individuals to perceive the changes in opinion and follow suit until one opinion has become established as the prevailing attitude while the other opinion will be pushed back and rejected by most. The end of the spiral refers to the number of people who are not publicly expressing their opinions, due to the fear of isolation⁷⁴.

This is a process of formation, change, and reinforcement of public opinion. The tendency of one to speak up and the other to be silent starts off a spiraling process that increasingly establishes one opinion as the dominant one. Over time, these changing perceptions establish one opinion as the predominant one and they change from a liquid state to a solid norm⁷⁵.

Further, Noelle-Neumann describes the spiral of silence as a dynamic process, in which predictions about public opinion become fact as mass media's coverage of the majority opinion becomes the status quo, and the minority becomes less likely to speak out.

2.2.1.2 Relevance to Study (Spiral of Silence)

The Spiral of Silence Theory, proposed by German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, suggests that individuals are more likely to remain silent on an issue if they perceive their opinion

to be in the minority, fearing social isolation or reprisals. While the Spiral of Silence Theory is primarily applied in the context of public opinion and political discourse, it can also be relevant to understanding the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. Since everyone wants to have an opinion, express an opinion, and be heard, the theory is essentially stated as the fear of not having one's opinion heard and the fear of becoming isolated. Sexual assault is horrific, and almost always silence follows. Those who have been sexually attacked tend to remain silent out of fear that their views would be disregarded, and they will be treated unfairly⁴⁵. By starting social media groups for victims to discuss issues together, it is possible to break their silence. Public opinion is the biggest issue for persons who have experienced sexual assault, according to the Spiral of Silence theory⁴⁶. People are afraid to speak up and express themselves "because they fear isolation," and the idea contends that if they believe their opinions are in the minority, they will opt to remain silent⁴⁷.

Expression can be facilitated via communication. The culture of silence surrounding sexual assault will be shattered through communication, and victims will also serve as a vehicle for raising awareness and disseminating knowledge about sexual assaults, the methods utilised, and what to do if they are about to be raped or harassed. Additionally, "Communication processes change the social and cultural environment, as well as the relationships that participants, both individual and institutional, have to that environment and each other, and at the same time it requires a consideration of the social, as in turn a mediator ⁴⁸." The lack of relief and societal support for sexual violence survivors is another prominent reason that has also led to the underreporting of these terrible crimes. As this subject is considered taboo in many societies, we can understand the reasons for the self-censoring of rape and sex-related assaults⁴⁹.

Hence, using the spiral of silence theory as a lens, this research study is trying to understand the individual willingness to express or remain silent against sexual violence on social media. The theory poses that when there is a dominant opinion present, the chances of expressing an opposing opinion are less likely. Existing scholarship has used the theory to exhibit the potential of social media activism in helping voice marginalised experiences⁵⁰.

With the use of hashtags and compelling visuals, social media platforms such as Instagram have the political potential to act as forums for free socio-cultural discourse. This study examines the relationship between the willingness to intervene and express an opinion against acts of sexual violence on social media. A research study pointed out that individuals who have revealed their sexual orientation were more likely to engage in group discussions on the same. The results revealed that while Twitter mediates online communication, the women felt equally confident to express their opinions face to face among women only. The study also confirmed that the spiral of silence phenomenon is reinforced among women in the presence of men and strangers⁵¹. The study demonstrated the potential for social media to mitigate the effects of the spiral of silence phenomenon, as women could feel confident in sharing their opinions on social media.

Additionally, it was important to examine the evolution of digital technology and its influence on the spiral of silence theory. A study conducted by Hakobyan argued that while the internet has offered new and communicative methods of discussion and expression online it has also led to fear of being judged or criticised, thus reinforcing the spiral of silence phenomenon. To better understand the effects of technology on SoS, another paper delved into avoidance strategies that can be adopted to remain silent and further reinforce the spiral of silence phenomenon in a hostile or uninviting situation⁷².

Glynn stated that the major components of the spiral of silence include.

- (1) An issue of public interest.
- (2) Divisiveness on the issues.
- (3) A quasi-statistical sense that helps an individual perceive the climate of opinion as well as estimate the majority and minority opinion.
- (4) 'Fear of isolation' from social interaction.
- (5) An individual's belief that a minority (or 'different') opinion isolates oneself from others; and
- (6) a 'hard-core' group of people whose opinions are unaffected by others' opinions⁵³."

Here's how the theory may apply:

Fear of isolation: According to the Spiral of Silence Theory, individuals may be hesitant to express their views if they believe their perspective on a particular issue is not widely shared. In the context of sexual violence culture of silence, survivors or those who wish to speak out may fear isolation or social exclusion if they perceive that others are not supportive or understanding of their experiences. This fear can prevent them from breaking the silence and seeking support.

Climate of silence: The theory suggests that a prevailing climate of silence on a particular issue can further discourage individuals from expressing their dissenting views. In the context of sexual violence, if there is a widespread perception that speaking out about such incidents is not welcomed, supported, or taken seriously, individuals may be less likely to share their experiences or advocate for change. The silence perpetuates the culture and reinforces the belief that it is better to remain quiet.

Reinforcement of dominant opinion: The Spiral of Silence Theory also posits that the dominant opinion on a given issue tends to be further reinforced while dissenting voices are

marginalized or suppressed. In the context of sexual violence, if the prevailing opinion or social norms downplay the seriousness of sexual assault, blame victims, or dismiss their experiences, it can silence survivors and discourage others from challenging the dominant narrative.

Social media and online discourse: The rise of social media and online platforms has influenced the dynamics of the Spiral of Silence. Individuals may be more likely to express their opinions anonymously or engage in discussions about sexual violence, but they may still fear backlash or cyberbullying. Online spaces can either foster a supportive environment for survivors to share their experiences or contribute to the silencing effect if dissenting voices are attacked or dismissed.

It's important to note that the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence is influenced by various factors, including power dynamics, gender inequality, institutional failures, and societal norms.

2.2.3 Media Dependency Theory

The dependency theory of social media has been widely explained by different authors in different contexts. This theory explains that the extensive use of media generates dependent relations with the audience. An investigation of various aspects of audience-media-society relationships with the existence of a dependence of audiences on social media information resources individuals or societies was found to be the focus of social media dependency theory²⁶. Media Dependency Theory is a communication theory that explores the relationship between media and individuals or groups. It suggests that individuals become dependent on media for information, entertainment, and social interaction and that this dependency can influence their attitudes, behaviours, and decision-making processes. Media dependency theory is a

communication theory that suggests that individuals and society are dependent on the mass media for information, entertainment, and socialization. Developed in the 1970s by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur, the theory seeks to explain the relationship between media and individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.

The implication for focus (audience-media-society relationships) is that the intention of audience dependence on media information is a key variable in understanding when and why media messages adjust audience beliefs, feelings, or behaviour. The dependency theory assumes that society depends on media especially when there is the existence of social changes, conflicts, violence, and or any other incidences happening in society. Likewise, when societies grow more complex, and as the quality of media technology improves, media continuously take on more and more unique information functions including information gathering, processing, and delivery²⁷.

Moreover, the dependency theory differentiates social media effects which could influence society as well as media by emphasising three types of effects: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. It is substantial that social media messages must achieve a broad range of cognitive, affective, and behavioural effects²⁸.

There are specific kinds of cognitive, affective, and behavioural changes in people that were brought about by social media because of individual and societal dependence on their information sources. Based on this information, the theory suggests, the audiences become dependent on the media because of their need to obtain information for making decisions. The need for information originates from some fundamental items such as television, radio, print, and online media²⁹.

The audiences need to understand the social environment, effective action, and the meaning of rape and sexual violence against women and girls for them to escape the consequences. Furthermore, the other cognitive effect of media happens when the attitudes of individuals are

under the influence of media, because of their dependency on information resources of media for facing the variant consequences they live with³⁰. The new idea of people about social and environmental problems (rape and sexual violence against victims), is an important issue, which shows that the media is an effective factor in creating or changing special conceptions or attitudes in public. Media dependency theory can be applied to understand the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. In the context of sexual violence, the theory suggests that media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and individuals' understanding of the issue. The theory argues that individuals and society rely on the media to provide information, frame discussions, and shape their attitudes and beliefs about sexual violence.

The hypotheses of this theory assume that the degree of public dependency on media has a direct positive correlation with the ability of the media to meet the individual's needs as much as possible. Therefore, the individual or the community will rely heavily on the medium to meet their needs and achieve its objectives³¹. In a similar investigation, media dependency theory put forward the public's dependency on media, as it distinguished the application of the influence of traditional media on recipients. The idea is based on the fact that the theory assumes that people in modern society rely on the media to understand the world around them. In addition, the media controls three types of information sources: collection, coordination, and revision³².

Social media's influential role is advanced through media dependency theory, which posits a structural dependency between social media, audiences, and social entities. The dependency theory normally increases when media structures serve many distinctive and fundamental information functions. In this regard, that potential will further be increased when there is a high degree of structural instability in society due to conflict and change.

Based on literature reviews, many scholars talked about the dependency theory of social media effect, but nothing existed about rape and sexual violence. To reduce this phenomenon of rape and sexual violence, there is a need for the dependency theory of social media effect to bring in valuable stances that were considered in the fight against sexual violence and rape³³. Media can capture the attention of the audience who has total dependence on media, to have knowledge of the role and the effects of social media. Indeed, the media brings an awakening of consciousness on certain social problems to prevent the consequences that, the society faces in their daily lives on rape and sexual violence against women and girls³⁴.

However, though previous studies have demonstrated the societal system, media system, and audience relationship, the nature of media influence under this study shall be determined by the interactions among the four avenues, societal system, political system, media system, and audience³⁵.

Generally, from the authors' arguments, dependency theory postulates that the impact of media messages is contingent upon the level of audience dependency on media information resources. In this endeavour, the higher the dependency, the greater the likelihood of media information influencing people's cognition, affective and behavioural change³⁶. Further, from the dependency side, the main idea of media dependency theory is a public dependency on media to get their desired information about rape and sexual violence. Media is trying to create public dependency on media by creating a need, interest, and public personal motivation towards the social phenomenon, the role, and effects of social media in the fight against rape and sexual violence against women and girls in DRC, has not, well discussed in the literature³⁷.

Moreover, the connection between the dependency theory of social media effect and our research is clear. The theory focuses on the audience and society who strongly rely on media which brings cognitive effect, affective and behavioural change. Rape and sexual violence are incidents that are at the root of the destruction of women and girls in the Democratic Republic of Congo precisely in South Kivu that need immediate attention of the media³⁸. The notion of audience dependency on the media emerges from an interpretation of the three relationships³⁹. When it comes to the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence, media dependency theory helps explain why certain issues related to sexual violence may be underreported or neglected in mainstream media. The theory suggests that media outlets and organizations may be dependent on various factors, such as advertisers, public opinion, or political pressures, which can influence their decision to cover or ignore certain topics. As a result, issues related to sexual violence, particularly those that challenge existing power structures or societal norms, may be marginalized, or silenced in the media. Moreover, media dependency theory also emphasizes the role of media audiences in shaping the media agenda.

If individuals rely solely on the media for information, their perceptions of sexual violence may be influenced by the messages and narratives presented by the media. If media outlets downplay or ignore discussions around sexual violence, it can contribute to a culture of silence and perpetuate societal attitudes that minimize or dismiss the seriousness of the issue. However, it is important to recognize that media dependency theory is just one framework for understanding the complex dynamics surrounding the culture of silence around sexual violence. Other factors, such as societal norms, power dynamics, and individual experiences, also play significant roles. Additionally, with the rise of social media and alternative media platforms, individuals now have greater opportunities to voice their experiences and challenge the dominant narratives perpetuated

by traditional media. Overall, media dependency theory provides insights into how media can influence the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. By understanding the dynamics between media, audiences, and societal attitudes, it becomes possible to critically examine the role of media in perpetuating or challenging the culture of silence and advocate for greater awareness and change.

2.2.3.1 Relevance to the Study (Media Dependency Theory)

The Media Dependency Theory is a socio-political theory that investigates the link between developed and underdeveloped countries by concentrating on the economic, political, and social dependencies that exist between the two groups of nations⁵⁴. The theory may also be used to explain the relevance of dependency theory to sexual abuse and the culture of silence. Both issues have been largely ignored by the academic community⁵⁵.

Media dependency theory is relevant to understanding the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence because it sheds light on how media influences public opinion and shapes societal attitudes. The theory suggests that individuals and society rely on the media for information, and it plays a significant role in framing discussions and shaping perceptions of various issues, including sexual violence. In the context of sexual violence, media dependency theory helps explain why the culture of silence persists. Media outlets have the power to determine which stories are covered and how they are presented, and they can either reinforce or challenge societal norms and attitudes surrounding sexual violence. If media organizations prioritize sensationalism,

and victim-blaming narratives, or fail to give adequate coverage to incidents of sexual violence, it can contribute to a culture of silence by downplaying the seriousness of the issue or perpetuating victim-blaming attitudes.

Dependency theory emphasises the power imbalances between developed and underdeveloped nations. Similarly, power imbalances exist within societies, where certain groups hold power over others. In the context of sexual violence, these power dynamics can contribute to a culture of silence⁵⁶. Perpetrators may exploit their positions of power or influence to commit acts of sexual violence, knowing that victims may be economically or socially dependent on them. This dependency can create fear, coercion, and a reluctance to report or speak out against the abuse¹⁵⁷. If individuals rely heavily on the media as their primary source of information, their understanding of sexual violence may be influenced by the way the issue is portrayed in the media. If the media perpetuates stereotypes, minimizes the prevalence of sexual violence, or fails to provide accurate and comprehensive coverage, it can contribute to a lack of awareness and perpetuate the culture of silence. However, it is important to note that media dependency theory is just one perspective, and the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence is a complex issue influenced by various societal, cultural, and individual factors. In recent years, the rise of social media and alternative media platforms has provided new avenues for survivors, activists, and marginalized voices to challenge the culture of silence and share their stories. These platforms have enabled greater visibility and awareness of sexual violence and have served as a tool for mobilising movements and demanding change.

Also, economic factors play a significant role in both dependency theory and sexual violence. In societies where economic opportunities are limited, individuals may be financially dependent on others for their livelihoods. This economic dependency can render victims more vulnerable to

sexual violence, as they fear losing financial support, employment, or social standing if they disclose their experiences⁵⁸. The fear of economic repercussions can contribute to a culture of silence, as victims may prioritise their economic well-being over seeking justice or speaking out. Dependency theory also acknowledges the influence of cultural norms and power structures in perpetuating inequality. Similarly, cultural norms surrounding gender, sexuality, and victim-blaming can reinforce the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence⁵⁹. Patriarchal power structures may discourage victims from coming forward due to societal expectations, victim-blaming attitudes, or fears of social stigma. These cultural factors reinforce the dependency of victims on their abusers and contribute to the perpetuation of sexual violence and silence⁶⁰.

Overall, media dependency theory provides insights into the role of media in shaping societal attitudes and perceptions of sexual violence. By understanding these dynamics, we can critically evaluate media representations, advocate for responsible reporting, and work towards breaking the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

Studies have revealed that women have been socialised and enlightened not to be aggressive or assertive and their comparative lack of physical strength may contribute to less of a willingness to fight back, to minimise the likelihood of severe injury or death. Thus, female passivity is a quite common response to male violence and the government's response has been, and continues to be, awfully inadequate⁶¹. This is why a study submits that "rape is severely under-reported in many parts of the world, rape is rarely reported, due to the extreme social stigma, cast on those who have been raped or the fear of being disowned by their families, or subjected to violence. From this submission, there is a raging culture of silence, due to fear and threat, intimidation, bad relationships, and social stigmatisation¹¹². This reveals that there seems to be a culture of silence

surrounding rape in Nigeria. The social stigma associated with rape across the globe forces female victims in Nigeria to conceal rape assaults to save themselves from shame and public embarrassment. Even parents of the raped often find it difficult to come out publicly to report such cases⁶³.

From the foregoing, rape is a heinous crime under Nigerian national law and is an internationally recognised human rights violation. Despite this, the government has failed in both its national and international obligations to check, prevent, investigate, and prosecute rape, whether committed by rich/poor, and to provide any reparations to the victims.

In The Punch editorial of October 11, 2019, it was disclosed that females subjected to sexual harassment on campus often endure shame, diminished self-esteem, unintended pregnancies, academic underperformance, and in severe cases, may contemplate or even consider committing suicide. Concerning a UNESCO report, the editorial underscored that among students who had endured sexual violence, 27 percent contemplated suicide or self-harm, 15 percent developed eating disorders, 15 percent abused alcohol or drugs, 50 percent had their academic performance negatively affected, and 11 percent experienced delayed academic progress⁶⁴. The responses on social media and other news platforms highlighted that this is a widespread issue that has afflicted educational institutions for many years, yet it persists for various reasons. One reason is that female students who have been violated are often inclined to remain silent due to the shock they experience. In many cases, the perpetrator of the violence, typically a lecturer, threatens repercussions if they dare to speak up⁶⁵.

One aspect that the perpetrator of violence tends to exploit is the victim's silence. In many instances, women are particularly vulnerable not only due to their perceived fragility but also

because of certain cultural beliefs and a lack of awareness about where to seek help. The persistent downgrading of women to the status of 'second-class citizens,' with little or no value attributed to their contributions to society, continues in many cultural contexts. Thapa's study revealed "high reproductive morbidity in many developing countries, where women choose not to discuss their problems or seek medical care. They endure their afflictions, living in fear of being ostracised."¹⁶⁶ which has led to a culture of silence provoked by fear of being ridiculed.

As Renzetti aptly noted, speaking up is just the beginning, a process that can last for years. Women are often afraid of not being believed, fear being persecuted, worry about the judgment of their family members, fear "ruining" the life of the perpetrator, and are hesitant to enter the tunnel of the justice system with no guarantee of justice at the end⁶⁷. Frequently, victims struggle to come to terms with the fact that they were violated, leading them to internalize their feelings without expressing them outwardly. As a result, their thoughts and emotions remain concealed, making it difficult for others to discern their inner turmoil.

While punishable by law, sexual violence is often driven by a desire for power and domination over the victim, coupled with the excitement derived from the victim's perceived helplessness and inability to resist. Sexual violence encompasses sexual exploitation and abuse, often manifesting as rape, where the perpetrator typically prevails if they can overpower their victims. While sexual violence affects both males and females, females are disproportionately subjected to abuse⁶⁸.

Some literature referenced by other researchers suggests that increased awareness of rape as one of the most prevalent forms of assault and violence reported leads to improved abilities among women or female youths to avoid becoming victims. In carrying out its normative functions, particularly traditional media, have been leading the charge against sexual crimes against women,

albeit with limited success. The rate of occurrence continues to rise regularly, mainly because victims often refrain from speaking out, largely due to negative social attitudes. The media bears some responsibility in this regard. A study conducted in Britain revealed that out of a sample of 1600 women, 70 percent perceive the media as unsympathetic towards women who report rape. Additionally, more than half expressed similar sentiments about the legal system and society in general.

The findings stemmed from a study commissioned by Mumsnet, a UK-based social network for parents, as part of its initiative to dispel myths surrounding sexual violence ahead of its campaign launch. The "We Believe You" campaign which lasted a week, was backed by charities such as Rape Crisis, Barnardo's, and the End Violence against Women coalition, aimed to empower victims to come forward, seek support, and pursue justice. The #justsaysorry campaign, initiated by two university students in the UK, serves as another testament to the existence of this issue⁷⁰. Various stakeholders have utilized both traditional and social media platforms to tackle this issue. It seems that traditional media are increasingly being favoured for the typically delicate task. Since the widespread availability of social media, various advocacy groups, including individuals, government bodies, NGOs, and other well-meaning organisations combating various forms of inhuman offenses, have incorporated these platforms into their campaigns to support victims and pursue social justice. The preceding examples demonstrate that social media can contribute to shifting observed cultures of silence, as an increasing number of women find the courage to speak up⁷¹.

These are the fruits of the efforts of various associations combating sexual violence. Numerous groups have been established on various social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, where victims can share their experiences while remaining anonymous.

These groups connect individuals with similar experiences, fostering discussions about their ordeals and providing encouragement to victims. From these platforms, ideas on prevention strategies and steps to take if one experiences sexual violence are shared. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) is one such example, utilising its Twitter platform to sponsor various campaigns addressing sexual violence issues. Additionally, there are platforms like Post and Trauma, the #MeToo Campaign, and the Survivor Alliance Blog, which serves as a blog for allies and survivors of sexual assault. The release of BBC News Africa's documentary by a female journalist emboldened many other females to share their experiences on social media. Some even went as far as publicly identifying the lecturers who had harassed them by name. These incidents occurred in Nigeria and Ghana. Since the expose, the identified institutions of learning and others have been compelled to re-evaluate their policies and approach to sexual harassment. These developments highlight the media's power to raise awareness, offer support, and facilitate changing attitudes toward sexual harassment⁷³.

These adjustments are noticeable not only among vulnerable female youths but also among other members of society in general. In this regard, social media can be viewed as a positive agents of change. However, some studies in Nigeria have also associated gender-based violence (GBV) with social media interactions. For instance, a study conducted in 2016 revealed that out of the five cases examined, all the victims had their initial encounter with the perpetrators on Facebook⁷⁴.

Undoubtedly, while social media offers advantages, it also presents several disadvantages, which can be mitigated through sufficient education. Quebec observed that media coverage of crimes, including sexual assault, influences the public's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour regarding these occurrences. It is widely acknowledged that beliefs and attitudes supportive of

sexual assault significantly contribute to the persistence of this phenomenon and society's response to it. Therefore, the media has a crucial role to play in preventing sexual assault⁷⁵.

Indeed, media campaigns have been initiated both in Nigeria and abroad to bring about necessary social change. However, since many of the popular social media campaigns originated outside Nigeria, certain questions may arise. It is worthwhile to explore how the vulnerable population, such as female youths, perceive the role of social media in addressing this issue⁷⁶. Against this backdrop, the study investigates the extent to which the engagement of social media has enhanced the knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of female youths regarding sexual violence, to dismantle the culture of silence.

2.4 Conceptual Model Of Sexual Violence

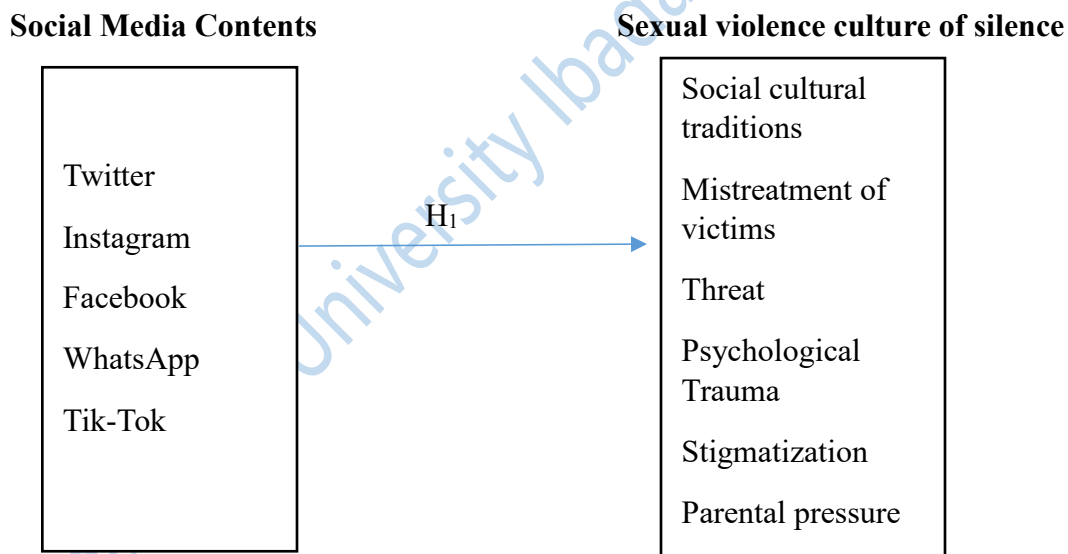


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model for the study

Multiple researchers have conducted research and concluded a strong linkage between robust utilization of social media platforms with an increase in risk of depression, self-harm, anxiety, loneliness, and high crime rate. The major social media platforms that we have including *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *WhatsApp*, and *TikTok* have all been great tools to pass information about

general public interests and create awareness about some banes in society that benefit the inhabitants. There the good and bad sides to accessing content on social media, as the former and latter can make or mar a person.

Sexual violence has devastating physical, mental, emotional, and psychological consequences for the victims. Victims of sexual violence are three times more likely to experience a disruption in life and seven times more likely to fear for their lives³⁹. Victims of sexual violence may have a diminished sense of self and self-esteem; may experience dissociation and powerlessness; show signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders, such as nightmares and flashbacks; and may relive the traumatic experience long after the event happened⁴⁰.

The effects of sexual violence can be heightened in a victim depending on what they consume from social media or people around them. Many lives have been ruined because an individual found a certain content funny and lives have also been saved because some people made it their business to get to the root of a certain issue. Instagram is a platform that majorly makes use of pictures, videos, and texts to convey information to the general public. Videos are posted on vlogs, stories, and *Instagram* reels and they go viral depending on how outrageous or hilarious such content is. If such posts are intended to do good but end up doing the opposite, it could lead to depression, stigmatization, or even maltreatment of the victim.

The majority of rape victims end up developing a culture of silence due to what they have experienced either in the hands of family members, colleagues, or family members which is triggered when the victims are still children due to poor handling or management from the victim's family, community or surrounding⁵⁷.

Social media can wield considerable influence either in dismantling or perpetuating the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. Breaking the culture of silence can be hard and excruciating for victims because it involves opening and exposure to the judgmental eyes of the society⁶³. It involves the victims letting their guards down and letting strangers into the darkest places of themselves which is most times their comfort zone. Some of the barriers to social media breaking the culture of silence are put up because the internet is so powerful it can do and undo. They experience things like, fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, lack of support from family or the general public, fear of not being believed, lack of legal justice, trauma, shame, and guilt which can make it difficult for them to speak out and seek support⁶⁴. The masses depend on the media for truth which propagated the dependency theory of social media. An investigation of various aspects of audience-media-society relationships with the existence of a dependence of audiences on social media information resources individuals or societies was found to be the focus of social media dependency theory²⁶. Media Dependency Theory is a communication theory that explores the relationship between media and individuals or groups. The cognitive effect of media happens when the attitudes of individuals are under the influence of media, because of their dependency on information resources of media for facing the variant consequences they live with³⁰. They react depending on what they are fed by social media, which can be a blessing in disguise or an absolute disaster. There have been rare cases where the masses chose the side of the perpetrator because of how information was disseminated leading to damage for the victim. The new idea of people about social and environmental problems (rape and sexual violence against victims), is an important issue, which shows that the media is an effective factor in creating or changing special conceptions or attitudes in public. Media

dependency theory can be applied to understand the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence.

Media can capture the attention of the audience who has total dependence on media, to have knowledge of the role and the effects of social media. Indeed, the media brings an awakening of consciousness on certain social problems to prevent the consequences that, the society faces in their daily lives on rape and sexual violence against women and girls⁴³. The role of social media in dismantling the culture of silence surrounding women's experiences of sexual violence is substantial and should not be underestimated, as disregarding its significance can lead to serious consequences.

2.5 Summary of Gaps in Literature Reviewed

The literature examined various issues related to sexual violence and the prevailing culture of silence among affected individuals, women, and female youths. The study covers areas like family, culture, and traditions, the use of the media, but it failed to identify governmental roles in eradicating the culture of silence for sexual violence victims. The media, family, and culture seem to control the narrative in the researched literature, whereas the government ought to have the authority to control the culture of silence, to create a safety haven for victims of sexual violence without being bullied into silence. The majority of available literature focuses on mostly women and children, there are only a handful that focus on female youths.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter discusses the procedure that was adopted by the researcher to gather information, to ensure the research was carried out successfully to achieve the expected result. It revealed several actions and plans that the researcher used to achieve the set research objectives and investigate the research problem. This chapter further discussed the following sub-headings: research design, the population of the study, sample and sampling techniques, description of the research instrument,

reliability, and validity of research instrument, the data collection instrument that will be employed in the investigation, as well as the method of data analysis. Finally, the chapter examined the different techniques used to test the hypotheses outlined in chapter one.

3.1 Research Design

The research study adopted the descriptive survey research design. It was considered the appropriate method to reach the goal of the research exercise as it enabled the researcher to have general views and findings about the population of the study. It was adequate for this study as the study looked at the relationship between two variables: one independent variable and one dependent variable. The design was used to gather information and data from the respondents in an accurate manner which also helped to appraise the interrelationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study while obtaining data that described the characteristics of the topic of interest in the research.

3.2 Population of the Study

For this study, the population consisted of Nigerian female youths between the ages of 14 to 29 resident in Ibadan Metropolis, who are also active internet and social media users, totaling a population of 553,678 which the National Population Commission (NPC) and World Health Organization regard as youths¹. The population consisted of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis which is the South-West geo-political zone in Nigeria.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

To answer the research questions, there was a need for the study to collect data from all cases. Thus, there was a need to select a sample since the researcher could not cover the entire population. The study applied a sampling technique to reduce the number of cases. This study

adopted the simple random sampling Techniques. Here, the selection of items completely depends on chance or probability, and therefore this sampling technique is also sometimes known as a method of chance.

For this study, the Taro Yamane formula was adopted to determine the sample size from the general population because the population of the study could not be determined.

The sample size for this study was obtained using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula with a 0.05 level of marginal error being assumed for the equation, which relates the population size to the level of significance as illustrated below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n= sample size desired

N= Total Population

e= Sampling error (0.05) based on 95% confidence level

For this study, the total population of female youths is collectively 553,678.

$$N = 553,678$$

Therefore, $n = \frac{553,678}{1 + 553,678 (0.05)^2}$

$$n = \frac{553,678}{1 + 553,678 (0.05)^2}$$

$$1 + 553,678 (0.05)^2$$

$$n = \frac{553,678}{1 + 553,678 (0.05)^2}$$

$$1 + 553,678 (0.0025)$$

$$n = \frac{553,678}{\quad}$$

$$553,679 (0.0025)$$

$$n = \frac{553,678}{\quad}$$

$$1384.2$$

$$= 399.999999$$

$$N = 400$$

The sample size for the study was 400.

3.4 Description of Research Instrument

The primary instrument used for the collection of data was a questionnaire which enabled the quantitative analysis of the variables considered for this study. The questionnaire was designed for this study in line with the research questions formulated. The questionnaire was categorised into five sections, the first section contained information on the respondents such as gender, age, educational qualification information, and social media platforms of female youths in the Ibadan metropolis were exposed. Section two answered the question on female youths in the Ibadan metropolis's level of awareness of social media sexual violence content. Section three answered the question on female youths in the Ibadan metropolis's level of awareness of sexual violence and culture of silence. Section four answered the perception of female youths in Ibadan

Metropolis on social media sexual violence content. The final section provided information on the female youths in Ibadan Metropolis' perception of sexual violence and culture of silence.

3.5 Validation of the Research Instrument

The validity of the research instrument (questionnaire) refers to the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. It is an important consideration in research, as valid instruments are essential for drawing accurate conclusions from the data collected.

The researcher's supervisor and other senior scholars in the department assisted in vetting the measuring instrument objectively, to critically examine and determine the appropriateness of the items and indices drawn in measuring the variables included in the study. Their suggestions, corrections, and ideas were incorporated into the final production of the research instrument.

3.6 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument's reliability was evaluated through a pilot study involving (70) young females in Ibadan. The questionnaire was subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha 0.70 coefficient. The instrument is said to be reliable if Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is greater or equal to 0.70 (Reliability \geq 0.70). The results showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.801 for the entire questionnaire (see Appendix 2), indicating high reliability for all constructs used to measure both independent and dependent variables in the study. Thirty (60) items were included in the reliability test, and all demonstrated joint reliability with a coefficient of 0.801.

The level of Awareness of Social Media Sexual Violence Contents was tested, and twenty (20) items were subjected to a reliability test, having a reliability of (0.805). The level of Awareness

of Sexual Violence Culture of Silence was also tested, twenty (20) items were subjected to a reliability of (0.765).

Perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence Contents were tested twenty (10) items were subjected to the reliability of (0.811). Finally, the Perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on sexual violence and culture of silence was tested on twenty (10) items and were subjected to a reliability of (0.801). From the foregoing, the results indicate that all the items that make up the indicators used to measure the variables in the study were highly reliable.

Table 1: Summary of Items Used in the Instrument and their Reliability Coefficient

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Level of Awareness on Social Media Sexual Violence Contents	20	0.805
Level of Awareness on Sexual Violence Culture of Silence	20	0.765
Perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence Contents	10	0.811
Perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on Sexual Violence Culture of Silence	10	0.809
Overall Reliability (Entire Questionnaire)	60	0.801

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The data was collected using questionnaire as the research instrument. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher to female respondents between the ages of 14 to 29 resident in Ibadan North – West and Ibadan South - West Local Government Areas. The questionnaire was

designed by the researcher with the assistance of the supervisor and administered to respondents who filled out the questionnaire and then had the questionnaires retrieved for accurate assessment.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis was done after the data gathered had been coded and managed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics will be used because it involves the data collection for the study which was analyse using the appropriate statistical tools such as frequency, mean, standard deviation, and percentage under SPSS.

3.8.1 Instrument Response Rate

Table 3.1: Instrument Response Rate

S/N	Research Instruments	Amount administered	Amount retrieved	Amount Validated	Rate of Response
1	Awareness and Perception of Social Media Sexual Violence Contents on Culture of Silence among Female Youths Questionnaire (APSMSVCCS)	400	350	350	87.5%

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

Table 3.1 presents the number of research instruments that were administered, collected (retrieved), and validated including the rate of responses. The study utilized a questionnaire named "Awareness and Perception of Social Media Sexual Violence Contents on Culture of Silence among Female Youths" (APSMSVCCS) to gather data. The questionnaire was administered to 400 participants. Out of the 400 administered questionnaires, 350 were retrieved. All 350 retrieved questionnaires were validated for analysis, indicating a high quality of responses. The response rate for the study was 87.5% which is quite high and suggests a good level of engagement from the participants. High response rates generally increase the reliability

of survey results as they reduce the potential for non-response bias. The fact that all retrieved questionnaires were validated for analysis suggests that the research instrument (APSMSVCCS) was well-designed and clearly understood by the participants, leading to a high quality of data collected.

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Endnotes

1. Population of Female Youths in Ibadan, 2023, available on ZhujiWorld.com

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Chapter Four

Results and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents the results and discussion of findings which were based on the data collection and analysis concerning the objectives (research questions and hypotheses) of the study. This chapter first shows the instruments' response rate followed by the presentation and interpretation of data (demographic characteristics of respondents, research questions, and hypotheses) and then the discussion of findings.

4.2 Demographic Data Analysis

Table 4.1 (a): Frequency Distribution of Students (N =350)

Demographic Variable		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	14-19 years	48	13.7
	20-25 years	176	50.3
	26-29 years	126	36
	Total	350	100
Highest Education Level	SSCE	32	9.1
	ND/NCE	24	6.9
	BSC/HND	222	63.4
	M.Sc. and Above	72	20.6
	Total	350	100

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4.1a shows the demographic distribution of Female Students. The majority of the female students, with 176 or 50.3%, are within the 20-25 years age bracket, indicating a strong representation of young adults in early adulthood. This suggests that the study significantly captures the perceptions and attitudes of female youths who are likely at a crucial stage of forming their views and experiences related to social media and sexual violence. The 26-29 years age group also has a notable representation with 126 female students or 36%, only a small fraction. The inclusion of 48 female students or 13.7% in the 14-19 years age group enriches the study with views from younger individuals.

A significant portion, 222 or 63.4% of the female students, possess a BSC/HND degree, suggesting that the study predominantly captures insights from well-educated individuals who

might have a critical understanding of the issues surrounding social media sexual violence. The presence of 72 female students or 20.6% with M.Sc. and above qualifications further emphasizes the study's engagement with a highly educated segment, likely to offer informed opinions and potentially more analytical responses to the research questions. Female students with SSCE and ND/NCE qualifications, constituting 9.1% (32) and 6.9% (24) respectively, ensure that the study also reflects perspectives from those with lower educational pathways, thereby enriching the data with a variety of viewpoints.

The demographic data suggests that the research primarily engages with a young, highly educated female student population, offering a rich ground for exploring nuanced understandings and attitudes towards social media sexual violence and its cultural implications. The study's focus on predominantly young and educated students may provide insights into current and evolving perceptions of sexual violence in the digital age.

Table 4.1 (b) Frequency Distribution of Students (N =350)

Item	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	
How frequently do you use social media?	Always	312	89.1
	Sometimes	36	10.3
	Rarely	2	0.6
	Total	350	100
For how long have you been a social media user?	2 years and below	8	2.3
	3-6 years	226	64.6
	7-10 years	116	33.1
	Total	350	100
Which of these social media platforms are you most active on?	Facebook	76	21.7
	Twitter	25	2.1
	Instagram	16	4.6
	WhatsApp	233	66.6
	Total	350	100
which of these social media platforms have you come	Facebook	205	58.6
	Twitter	25	7.1
	Instagram	100	28.6

across information on sexual violence?	WhatsApp	20	5.7
	Total	350	100
How do you react to sexual violence-related content on social media?	Like	11	3.1
	Share	87	24.9
	Comment	226	64.6
	Ignore	26	7.4
	Total	350	100

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

From the table, a significant majority of 312 (89.1%) of the respondents report always using social media, indicating a high engagement level with social media platforms. A smaller fraction 36 (10.3%) of respondents use social media occasionally (sometimes). Only a negligible portion 2 (0.6%) of respondents rarely use social media.

Further, the majority of the respondents 226 (64.6%) have been using social media for 3-6 years. A considerable number 116 (33.1%) have been using social media for 7-10 years, indicating a long-term engagement with social media platforms. Only a small percentage 8 (2.3%) have been social media users for 2 years or below.

In terms of most active social media platforms, WhatsApp is the platform where the highest number of respondents 233 (66.6%) are most active, highlighting its popularity among the users. Facebook follows with 21.7% of respondents being most active on it. Instagram and Twitter have lower activity levels at 4.6% and 2.1%, respectively.

Moreover, Facebook is the platform where most respondents 205 (58.6%) have come across information on sexual violence, suggesting it's a significant source of information on such issues. Instagram has a relatively high percentage of 100 (28.6%) of users encountering information on sexual violence. Twitter and WhatsApp have lower percentages, 25 (7.1%) and 20 (5.7%) respectively, indicating these platforms are less utilized for disseminating or encountering information on sexual violence.

In terms of reaction to sexual violence-related content on social media, a large majority of respondents 226 (64.6%) comment on sexual violence-related content, indicating a willingness to engage in discussions about the topic. Sharing 87 (24.9%) and ignoring 26 (7.4%) the content are other reactions, with a small percentage liking the content 11 (3.1%).

From the foregoing, social media is heavily used among the respondents, with WhatsApp being the most active platform. Facebook is a primary source of information on sexual violence, suggesting its role in awareness and discussion on such critical issues. Also, engagement with sexual violence content is high, with commenting being the most common reaction, indicating an active engagement and possibly a willingness to discuss and address issues of sexual violence on social media platforms.

4.2 Presentation of Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness of social media sexual violence content among female youths in Ibadan Metropolis’?

Table 4.2 (a): Level of Awareness on Social Media Sexual Violence Contents among Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis

S/N	Items	ALW (%)	OFT (%)	SO (%)	NOA (%)	M	SD	Remark
1	I receive pop-up notifications about information on sexual violence while making use of Facebook	7 (2)	19 (5.4)	114 (32.6)	210 (69)	1.49	0.69	Not At All
2	I have come across sexual violence content on social media	54 (15.4)	121 (34.6)	158 (45.1)	17 (4.9)	2.61	0.80	Often
3	I have heard about the culture of silence on social media	21 (6)	155 (44.3)	83 (23.7)	91 (26)	2.30	0.92	Sometimes
4	I know what Sexual Violence Culture of Silence is	0 (0)	62 (17.7)	69 (19.7)	219 (62.6)	1.45	0.78	Not At All

5	I have come across sexual violence campaigns on Twitter	50 (14.3)	94 (26.9)	86 (24.6)	120 (34.3)	2.21	1.07	Sometimes
6	I am exposed to information on sexual assault on social media regularly	69 (19.7)	101 (28.9)	144 (41.1)	36 (10.3)	2.58	0.92	Often
7	Social media has helped me know that violating someone sexually is a punishable crime	212 (60.6)	79 (22.6)	36 (10.3)	23 (6.6)	3.37	0.91	Often
8	I am knowledgeable about sexual assault-induced stigmatisation	208 (59.4)	75 (21.4)	49 (14)	18 (5.1)	3.35	0.90	Often
9	I am aware that sexual violence has negative effects on the physical, mental, and social state of a person	307 (87.7)	32 (9.1)	11 (3.1)	0 (0)	3.84	0.44	Always
10	I have no idea what sexual violence and its attributes entail	34 (9.7)	22 (6.3)	28 (7.4)	268 (76.6)	1.49	0.98	Not At All
Weighted Mean = 2.47; S.D = 0.84; Overall Decision = Sometimes								

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

KEY: Always (ALW)=4, Often (OFT)= 3, Sometimes (SO)= 2, Not at All (NA) = 1, SD = Standard Deviation, M= Mean

*****Threshold:** mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Not at All (NA); 1.500-2.499 = Sometimes (SO); 2.500-3.499 =Often (OFT); 3.500 to 4.500= Always (ALW)

Table 4.2 (a) shows students' level of awareness of social media sexual violence content among female youths in the Ibadan metropolis. The rating scale of Not at All (1)' to 'Always (4)' was used. Ten (10) items were used to level of awareness on social media sexual violence content. From the table, the data indicates a low level of direct engagement with pop-up notifications about sexual violence on Facebook, with the majority 210 (69%) not at all receiving such notifications. This suggests limited direct outreach or visibility of sexual violence information through pop-up mechanisms on this platform. A significant number of respondents have often encountered sexual violence content on social media, with nearly half 158 (45.1%) often coming

across such content. This highlights the prevalence of sexual violence discussions or mentions across social platforms.

Awareness of the culture of silence around sexual violence on social media is moderately acknowledged. A large fraction 155 (44.3%) sometimes hear about it, indicating a partial recognition of the issues surrounding open discussions of sexual violence. There is a substantial gap in understanding what the sexual violence culture of silence entails, with a majority of 219 (62.6%) not knowing about it. This gap signifies a need for more educational efforts to elucidate this concept. Awareness and exposure to sexual violence campaigns on Twitter are moderate, having a mean of 2.21 suggesting that while social media campaigns exist, they may not reach all users effectively or equally.

There is a relatively high frequency of exposure to information on sexual assault on social media, with a mean of 2.85, indicating that these platforms serve as significant sources of information on the subject.

Further, a high percentage of respondents 212 (60.6%) acknowledge that social media has educated them on the legal repercussions of sexual violence, having a high mean of 3.37 showing its potential as an effective tool for awareness and education. There is also strong 208 (59.4%) awareness about the stigmatization induced by sexual assault with a high mean of 3.35, indicating effective communication of its social implications through various media.

An overwhelming majority of 307 (87.7%) are “always” aware of the detrimental impacts of sexual violence on physical, mental, and social well-being, showcasing the highest level of awareness among the categories with a very high mean of 3.84. A significant portion of

respondents 286 (76.6%) claim no knowledge about sexual violence and its attributes, having a low mean of 1.49, highlighting areas where educational interventions are still needed.

The overall weighted mean score of 2.48 with a standard deviation of 0.84 indicates that, on average, the level of awareness and engagement with issues of sexual violence among female youths in Ibadan Metropolis is recognized as "Sometimes" ($x=2.47$; $S.D= 0.84$). This suggests a moderate level of awareness and points to the need for increased efforts in education, outreach, and engagement to enhance understanding and awareness of sexual violence, its implications, and the resources available for support and prevention.

Table 4.2 (b): Level of Agreement or Disagreement

S/N	Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	Remark
11.	Stalking is a sexual violence attribute	290 (82.9)	60 (17.1)	Yes
12.	Rape is a sexual violence attribute	350 (100)	0 (0)	Yes
13.	Groping is a sexual violence attribute	350 (100)	0 (0)	Yes
14.	Incest is a sexual violence attribute	305 (87.1)	45 (12.9)	Yes
15.	Fondling is a sexual violence attribute	309 (88.3)	41 (11.7)	Yes
16.	Sexual Harassment is a sexual violence attribute	335 (95.7)	15 (4.3)	Yes
17.	Unconsented intercourse by one's spouse is sexual abuse	341 (97.4)	9 (2.6)	Yes
18.	I disagree that rape is always forced	322 (92)	28 (8)	Yes
19.	Poor reporting culture of rape has resulted in its normalization	84 (24)	266 (76)	No
20.	Only penetrative forced intercourse is sexual assault	23 (6.6)	327 (93.4)	No

Over Decision: Yes

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4.2 (b) indicates nuanced perspectives on various aspects of sexual violence among female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis. The table shows students' level of agreement or disagreement. The

rating scale of 'Yes (1)' to 'No (2)' was used. Ten (10) items were used to level of level of agreement or disagreement of students concerning sexual violence. From the table, a significant majority 290 (82.9%) acknowledge stalking as an attribute of sexual violence, indicating a broad awareness of the various forms sexual violence can take beyond direct physical or sexual assault. There's a universal consensus of 350 (100% Yes) that rape is a form of sexual violence, reflecting a clear and strong understanding of rape as a severe violation. Similar to rape, the unanimous agreement (100%) on groping underscores a recognition of the importance of consent and the understanding that any non-consensual physical contact is a form of sexual violence.

Further, the majority 305 (87.1%) view incest as sexual violence, showcasing an understanding of the complex and harmful nature of sexual activities within family dynamics that lack consent and violate personal boundaries. Also, a high level of agreement 309 (88.3%) indicates that non-consensual fondling is widely recognized as sexual violence, emphasizing the critical role of consent in all forms of physical interaction.

Similarly, the overwhelming agreement 335 (95.7%) highlights a broad awareness of the various manifestations of sexual violence and the recognition that harassment, even if non-physical, constitutes sexual violence. Unconsented intercourse by one's spouse is reported as sexual abuse by the majority 341 (97.4%). This reflects a high level of awareness and rejection of marital rape, challenging traditional perceptions that marriage implies consent to all forms of sexual activity. The high agreement level (92%) suggests a nuanced understanding that rape encompasses a range of scenarios beyond physical force, including coercion or incapacity to consent.

The majority 266 (76%) of the respondents disagree that poor reporting has normalized rape, indicating awareness of reporting challenges but possibly reflecting optimism about social change or awareness efforts. Also, a high majority 327 (93.4%) disagreed that only penetrative forced

intercourse is sexual assault. This overwhelming disagreement affirms a comprehensive understanding of sexual assault, recognizing it includes a spectrum of non-consensual sexual activities beyond just penetrative acts.

The responses collectively indicate a high level of awareness and understanding among female youths in Ibadan Metropolis regarding the broad spectrum of behaviors that constitute sexual violence with an overall decision of “yes”.

Research Question Two: What is the level of awareness of the culture of silence among female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis’?

Table 4.3 (a): Level of Awareness on Sexual Violence Culture of Silence Among Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis’?

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M	St.D	Remark
1	I have read information about the culture of silence on social media	85 (24.3)	156 (44.6)	97 (27.7)	12 (3.4)	2.90	0.81	Agree
2	I know what sexual violence culture of silence means	68 (18)	171 (48.9)	108 (30.9)	8 (2.3)	2.83	0.74	Agree
3	I don't feel victims should speak up after being raped to protect their reputations	2 (0.6)	14 (4)	55 (15.7)	279 (79.7)	1.25	0.55	Strongly Disagree
4	I believe speaking up does more damage than keeping quiet	3 (0.9)	30 (8.6)	29 (8.3)	288 (82.8)	1.28	0.25	Strongly Disagree
5	I will report a relative who gropes or touches me sexually	160 (45.7)	164 (46.9)	22 (6.3)	4 (1.1)	3.37	0.65	Agree
6	I feel comfortable discussing sexual assault issues or cases with others	67 (19.1)	152 (43.4)	99 (28.3)	32 (9.1)	2.73	0.88	Agree
7	When I hear about a rape case, I blame the victim first	6 (1.7)	267 (76.3)	77 (22)	0 (0)	2.80	0.44	Agree
8	Indecent dressing is a major cause of rape	85 (24.3)	236 (67.4)	22 (6.3)	7 (2.0)	3.14	0.61	Agree

9	I believe perpetrators should be punished once exposed and not given a second chance	157 (44.9)	160 (45.7)	21 (6.0)	12 (3.4)	3.32	0.74	Agree
10	I believe Sexual Assault will lessen if rapists are castrated instead of being hidden or punished	138 (39.4)	175 (50)	37 (10.6)	0 (0)	3.29	0.65	Agree

Weighted Mean = 2.69; S.D = 0.63; Overall Decision = Agree

Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork, 2024

KEY: Strongly Agree (SD)=4, Agree (A)= 3, Disagree (D)= 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, St.D = Standard Deviation, M= Mean

*****Threshold:** mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 1.500-2.499 = Disagree (D); 2.500-3.499 =Agree (A); 3.500 to 4.500= Strongly Agree (SD)

Table 4.3 (a) shows the level of awareness of sexual violence culture of silence among female youths in the Ibadan metropolis. The rating scale of ‘Strongly Disagree (1)’ to ‘Strongly Agree (4)’ was used. Ten (10) items were used to measure the level of awareness of sexual violence culture of silence among female youths.

For the first item, a substantial portion of respondents engaged with information about the culture of silence on social media, with 24.3% strongly agreeing and 44.6% agreeing, indicating a significant level of exposure and awareness among the participants. This suggests an openness and readiness to engage in discussions on sexual violence online. Understanding what the sexual violence culture of silence means is acknowledged by 18% strongly and 48.9% agreeing, reflecting a good grasp among a majority on the complexities and implications of silence around sexual violence. This level of understanding is crucial for breaking the cycle of silence and encouraging open discussions.

The strong disagreement (79.7%) with the idea that victims should remain silent to protect their reputations highlights a progressive stance against the culture of shame and silence that often surrounds sexual violence victims. It indicates a supportive environment that encourages

speaking out. Similarly, the overwhelming disagreement (82.8%) with the belief that speaking up does more damage than silence underscores a collective rejection of the notion that silence can be protective or beneficial, emphasizing the importance of vocalizing experiences of sexual violence for healing and justice.

Further, the readiness to report sexual misconduct by a relative, with 45.7% strongly agreeing and 46.9% agreeing, signals a high level of personal accountability and the rejection of familial protection for perpetrators, indicating a strong stance against sexual violence irrespective of the perpetrator's relationship to the victim. Feeling comfortable discussing sexual assault issues, with 19.1% strongly agreeing and 43.4% agreeing, shows a considerable openness within the community to support conversations around sexual violence, which is essential for dismantling the culture of silence.

The agreement (76.3%) that respondents do not blame the victim first upon hearing a rape case challenges the victim-blaming narrative, indicating an empathetic approach towards survivors and recognizing the complexity of sexual violence beyond simplistic judgments. The belief that indecent dressing is a major cause of rape, with 24.3% strongly agreeing and 67.4% agreeing, reveals persistent myths linking victim behavior to sexual assault, indicating a need for continued education on consent and sexual violence. The strong consensus that perpetrators should face strict consequences, with 44.9% strongly agreeing and 45.7% agreeing, reflects a demand for accountability and justice in cases of sexual violence, highlighting the community's zero tolerance for such acts.

Lastly, the high agreement (39.4% strongly, 50% agreeing) with the notion that more severe punishments for rapists could reduce sexual assault incidents underscores a desire for deterrent penalties. These insights indicate that there is an increasing awareness and rejecting of the

culture of silence surrounding sexual violence, advocating for openness, education, and strict punitive measures against perpetrators. However, the persistence of certain myths and the need for further education on aspects of sexual violence are also evident, pointing towards areas where continued efforts are needed to foster a more informed and supportive environment.

The overall decision is agree, (weighted mean=2.69; standard deviation= 0.63), indicating a generally progressive stance towards combating the culture of silence around sexual violence. The respondents show strong support for victim empowerment, the importance of discussing sexual violence openly, and strict penalties for perpetrators. However, the agreement on indecent dressing as a cause of rape highlights persistent myths that need to be addressed through further education.

Table 4.3 (b): Level of Agreement or Disagreement

S/N	Sexual Campaigns	Violence ALY (%)	OFT (%)	RAR (%)	NAA (%)	M	SD	Remark
11.	I have heard of the #Metoo Campaign	56 (16)	36 (10.3)	0 (0)	258 (73.7)	1.69	1.18	Rarely
12.	I have heard of the #1in3Africa Campaign	23 (6.6)	22 (6.3)	38 (10.9)	267 (76.3)	1.43	0.88	Not At All
13.	I have heard of the #Breakthesilence Campaign	52 (14.9)	89 (25.4)	63 (18)	146 (41.7)	2.13	1.12	Rarely
14.	I have heard of the #Justsaysorry Campaign	25 (7.1)	32 (9.1)	44 (12.6)	249 (71.1)	1.52	0.93	Rarely
15.	I have heard of the #itsnotok Campaign	59 (16.9)	53 (15.1)	46 (13.3)	194 (54.9)	1.94	1.17	Rarely
16.	I have heard of the #believesurvivors Campaign	48 (13.7)	50 (14.3)	36 (10.3)	216 (61.7)	1.80	1.17	Rarely
17.	I have heard of the #SupportSurvivors Campaign	53 (15.1)	52 (14.9)	0 (0)	245 (70)	1.75	1.18	Rarely
18.	I have heard of the #SexualAssault Campaign	113 (32.3)	97 (27.2)	56 (16.9)	81 (23.1)	2.69	1.15	Often
19.	I have heard of the #endrapeculture Campaign	103 (29.4)	0 (0)	99 (28.3)	148 (42.3)	2.16	1.26	Rarely

20.	I have heard of the #sexualassault Campaign	105 (30)	73 (20.9)	79 (22.6)	93 (26.6)	2.54	1.18	Often
Weighted Mean = 1.96; S.D = 1.12; Overall Decision = Rarely								

Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork, 2024

KEY: Always (ALY)=4, Often (OFT)= 3, Rarely (RAR)= 2, Not at All (NA) = 1, SD = Standard Deviation, M= Mean

*****Threshold:** mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Not at All (NA); 1.500-2.499 = Rarely (RAR) = 2; 2.500-3.499 =Often (OFT); 3.500 to 4.500= Always (ALY)

Table 4.3 (b) shows the level of agreement or disagreement of students. The rating scale of ‘Not at All (1)’ to ‘Always (4)’ was used. Ten (10) items were used to measure the level of agreement or disagreement of female students. Notably, the #Metoo Campaign, despite its global prominence, appears to have a surprisingly low awareness among respondents, with a notable 258 (73.7%) indicating they have not heard of it at all, leading to a mean awareness score of 1.69, remarked “rarely”.

The #1in3Africa Campaign has the lowest awareness, with an overwhelming 267 (76.3%) of respondents unaware of it, reflected in a mean score of 1.43 remarked “not at all”, signaling a critical need for enhanced visibility and outreach. The #Breakthesilence Campaign, with a mean score of 2.13, shows some awareness but still lacks active engagement from the majority 146 (41.7%), indicating room for increased outreach. Similarly, the #Justsaysorry Campaign is not widely recognized, with 249 (71.1%) of respondents unaware of it, and a mean score of 1.52, suggesting the campaign has struggled to penetrate public consciousness effectively.

Further, the #itsnotok Campaign fares slightly better in terms of awareness, with a mean score of 1.94, yet 194 (54.9%) of respondents are not aware of it, highlighting a significant audience outreach gap. The #believesurvivors Campaign, with a mean score of 1.80, and the #SupportSurvivors Campaign, with a mean score of 1.75, both indicate moderate levels of public

awareness but show that a majority (216 (61.7%) & 245 (70%) respectively) remains either unengaged or unaware.

In contrast, the #SexualAssault Campaign stands out with a higher level of public engagement, indicated by a mean score of 2.69, with a substantial portion of respondents often hearing about it. The #endrapeculture Campaign, with a mean score of 2.16, shows moderate awareness but also underscores the need for improved outreach, as a significant number of respondents are not at all aware of it. The #sexualassault Campaign similarly shows a relatively high level of awareness, with a mean score of 2.54, suggesting better public engagement compared to most other campaigns listed.

The overall weighted mean of 1.96 and a standard deviation of 1.12 across the campaigns suggest that, on average, public awareness and engagement with these sexual violence campaigns tend to fall under the "Rarely" category (mean= 1.96; SD= 1.12). This analysis underscores a pervasive need for increased visibility and engagement strategies to elevate public awareness and participation in addressing sexual violence through these campaigns.

Research Question Three: What is the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence content?

Table 4.4: Perception of Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis on Social Media Sexual Violence Contents?

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M	St.D	Remark
1	I skip notifications or content about information on sexual violence while on social media	24 (6.9)	75 (21.4)	180 (51.4)	71 (20.3)	2.14	0.81	Disagree
2	Information on social media about sexual assault or violence triggers me	22 (6.3)	216 (61.7)	122 (32)	0 (0)	2.74	0.56	Agree
3	Rape and Assault cannot be eradicated through the use of social media	55 (15.7)	119 (34)	141 (40.3)	35 (10)	2.55	0.87	Agree
4	I encourage people to find forums or groups to talk about their pains as it relates to sexual violence	160 (45.7)	166 (47.4)	18 (5.1)	6 (1.7)	3.37	0.66	Agree
5	I willingly spread awareness of the prevention of sexual violence through social media	67 (19.1)	177 (50.6)	91 (26)	15 (4.3)	2.85	0.78	Agree
6	I will willingly participate in a sexual violence awareness campaign if I come across it on social media.	141 (40.3)	160 (45.7)	36 (10.3)	13 (3.7)	3.23	0.78	Agree
7	I will willingly make use of social media to expose a sexual offender	135 (38.6)	162 (46.3)	42 (12)	11 (3.1)	3.20	0.77	Agree
8	I never see the need to support victims on social media	14 (4)	30 (8.6)	144 (41.1)	162 (46.3)	1.70	0.79	Disagree
9	I feel most rape victims on social media use the medium to gain pity or chase clout	8 (2.3)	36 (10.3)	146 (41.7)	160 (45.7)	1.69	0.75	Disagree
10	I am opposed to speaking out if I or anyone close to me is victimized	30 (8.6)	55 (15.7)	123 (35.1)	142 (40.6)	1.92	0.95	Disagree

Weighted Mean = 2.54; S.D = 0.77; Overall Decision = Agree

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

KEY: Strongly Agree (SD)=4, Agree (A)= 3, Disagree (D)= 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, St.D = Standard Deviation, M= Mean

*****Threshold:** mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 1.500-2.499 = Disagree (D); 2.500-3.499 =Agree (A); 3.500 to 4.500= Strongly Agree (SD)

Table 4.4 presents data on the perceptions of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis regarding social media content on sexual violence. The rating scale of 'Strongly Disagree (1)' to 'Strongly Agree (4)' was used. Also, ten (10) items were used to measure the perceptions of female youths.

From the table, a significant portion of respondents 180 (51.4%) disagree with skipping notifications or content about sexual violence on social media, with a mean score of 2.14 and a standard deviation of 0.81. This suggests a willingness to engage with such content, despite a notable fraction that still skips it. There's a high level of agreement 217 (61.7%) that information on sexual assault or violence on social media can be triggering, with a mean of 2.74 and a low standard deviation of 0.56. This indicates a broad consensus on the emotional impact of such content.

On eradication of rape and assault via social media, opinions are mixed, but lean towards agreement 174 (49.7%) that social media cannot eradicate rape and assault, with a mean of 2.55 and a standard deviation of 0.87. This reflects skepticism about the effectiveness of social media campaigns in tackling these issues. A strong majority (93.1%) agree with encouraging people to find forums or groups to discuss sexual violence, indicated by a high mean of 3.37 and a standard deviation of 0.66. This shows strong support for using social media as a support network.

Further, there is agreement (69.7%) on willingly spreading awareness about the prevention of sexual violence through social media, with a mean of 2.85 and a standard deviation of 0.78. This suggests a proactive stance towards using social media for education and prevention. Also, a vast majority 301 (86%) would willingly participate in a sexual violence awareness campaign encountered on social media, reflected by a mean of 3.23 and a standard deviation of 0.78. This demonstrates a high level of readiness to engage in advocacy and awareness efforts. There's a consensus of 297 (84.9%) on the willingness to use social media to expose a sexual offender, with a mean score of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 0.77. This indicates a strong belief in the accountability and vigilance potential of social media.

A large majority 306 (87.4%) disagree with the statement that they never see the need to support victims on social media, showing a mean of 1.70 and a standard deviation of 0.79. This highlights a strong inclination towards showing support for victims online. The majority (87.4%) disagree with the notion that most rape victims on social media use the platform to gain pity or chase clout, with a mean of 1.69 and a standard deviation of 0.75. This indicates a sympathetic stance towards victims and recognition of their genuine plight. A significant majority 265 (75.7%) are opposed to remaining silent if they or someone close to them is victimized, as shown by a mean of 1.92 and a standard deviation of 0.95. This reflects a supportive attitude towards speaking out against sexual violence.

The weighted mean of 2.54 and a standard deviation of 0.77 suggest that, on balance, female youths in Ibadan Metropolis tend to agree with using social media as a platform for awareness, support, and advocacy against sexual violence (mean= 2.54; SD= 0.77). The overall decision of "Agree" indicates a positive perception of social media's role in addressing sexual violence, highlighting its potential as a tool for change, education, and support for victims.

Research Question Four: What is the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis' on sexual violence culture of silence?

Table 4.5: Perception of Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis on Social Media Sexual Violence Culture of Silence

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M	St.D	Remark
1	Ladies are always blamed when they speak up	131 (37.4)	162 (46.3)	40 (11.4)	17 (4.9)	3.16	0.81	Agree
2	Online groups empower women to speak up	164 (46.9)	160 (45.7)	24 (6.9)	2 (0.6)	3.39	0.64	Agree
3	Women are bullied for speaking up against sexual violence	164 (46.9)	139 (39.7)	24 (6.9)	23 (6.6)	3.26	0.85	Agree
4	Silence shapes victims negatively	194 (55.4)	135 (38.6)	12 (3.4)	8 (2.6)	3.47	0.69	Agree
5	I will report a relative who gropes or touches me sexually	198 (56.6)	127 (36.3)	12 (3.4)	13 (3.7)	3.46	0.74	Agree
6	Silence is suffocating	247 (70.6)	93 (26.6)	2 (0.6)	8 (2.3)	3.65	0.61	Strongly Agree
7	Society frowns upon anyone who summons the courage to report sexual offenders	107 (30.6)	144 (41.1)	77 (22)	22 (6.3)	2.96	0.88	Agree
8	The Law contributes to sexual assault	107 (30.6)	149 (42.6)	77 (22)	17 (4.9)	2.99	0.85	Agree
9	The cycle of sexual violence can't be broken unless victims start to speak up	107 (30.6)	149 (42.6)	77 (22)	17 (4.9)	2.99	0.85	Agree
10	Speaking up brings retribution	193 (54.9)	139 (39.7)	8 (2.3)	11 (3.1)	3.46	0.70	Agree

Weighted Mean = 3.28; S.D = 0.76; Overall Decision = Agree

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

KEY: Strongly Agree (SD)=4, Agree (A)= 3, Disagree (D)= 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, St.D = Standard Deviation, M= Mean

*****Threshold:** mean value of 0.000-1.499 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 1.500-2.499 = Disagree (D); 2.500-3.499 =Agree (A); 3.500 to 4.500= Strongly Agree (SD)

Table 4.5 shows the perceptions of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on the culture of silence surrounding social media and sexual violence. The rating scale of 'Strongly Disagree (1)' to 'Strongly Agree (4)' was used. Also, ten (10) items were used to measure the perceptions of

female youths on the culture of silence surrounding social media and sexual violence. The data shows a strong agreement 293 (83.7%) that women are often blamed when they speak up about sexual violence, with a mean score of 3.16 and a standard deviation of 0.81. This highlights a significant barrier to breaking the silence around sexual violence. There is also a high level of agreement 324 (92.6%) that online groups empower women to speak up, evidenced by a mean of 3.39 and a low standard deviation of 0.64. This suggests that digital communities serve as critical support networks for women.

The majority 303 (86.6%) agree that women face bullying for speaking up against sexual violence, with a mean of 3.26 and a standard deviation of 0.85. This underscores the social repercussions that victims can face. A significant majority 329 (93.9%) believe that silence negatively shapes victims, with a mean score of 3.47 and a standard deviation of 0.69. This indicates a strong consensus on the harmful effects of not speaking out. An overwhelming majority 325 (92.9%) would report a relative who engages in inappropriate sexual behavior, as shown by a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 0.74. This demonstrates a willingness to challenge sexual violence, even within familial bonds.

Further, the majority (97.2%) agree that silence is suffocating, with the highest mean score of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.61. This reflects a profound understanding of the oppressive nature of silence in the context of sexual violence. Also, there is agreement (71.7%) that society often frowns upon those who report sexual offenders, reflected by a mean of 2.96 and a standard deviation of 0.88. This highlights societal attitudes that can discourage victims from speaking out. The data shows agreement (73.2%) that the law contributes to the perpetuation of sexual assault, with a mean score of 2.99 and a standard deviation of 0.85. This points to perceived inadequacies in legal protections or enforcement. There's agreement (73.2%) on the necessity of victims

speaking up to break the cycle of sexual violence, with a mean score of 2.99 and the same standard deviation of 0.85. This underscores the importance of vocalizing experiences to disrupt patterns of abuse.

Finally, the data shows strong agreement (94.6%) that speaking up brings retribution, with a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 0.70. This may indicate a recognition of the risks involved in breaking the silence but also reflects a belief in the importance of doing so.

With a weighted mean of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.76, the overall consensus is one of agreement (mean=3.28; SD= 0.76) on the detrimental role of a culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. Female youths in Ibadan Metropolis recognize the importance of speaking up, despite the societal, familial, and legal barriers that exist.

4.4 Presentation of Hypothesis

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between awareness of female youths on social media sexual violence contents and a culture of silence

Table 4.6: Relationship between Awareness of Female Youths on Social Media Sexual Violence Contents and Culture of Silence

Correlations			Awareness of female youths on SM Violence Contents	Awareness of female youths on Sexual Violence Culture of Silence
Awareness of female youths on SM Violence Contents	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	-.288**	.000
	N	350	350	
Awareness of female youths on Sexual Violence Culture of Silence	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.288**	1	.000
	N	350	350	

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

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

To find the relationship between the awareness of female youths on social media sexual violence content and a culture of silence, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. The Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables is $-.288$, which indicates a weak to moderate negative correlation. This means that as awareness of sexual violence content on social media increases, there tends to be a slight decrease in awareness of the culture of silence around sexual violence among female youths. The significance level (p-value) is less than 0.01 ($p = .000$), suggesting that this correlation is statistically significant at the 1% level (2-tailed). This finding implies that Exposure to sexual violence content on social media might be playing a role in challenging or reducing the culture of silence around sexual violence among female youths. Increased awareness through social media leads to more discussions and openness about the topic, thereby reducing the culture of silence.

The negative correlation, although weak to moderate, indicates that there is a relationship between these variables, but it is not strong. This suggests that other factors not examined in this

analysis might also play significant roles in influencing awareness of the culture of silence around sexual violence.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the perception of female youths on social media sexual violence content and a culture of silence.

Table 4.7: Relationship between Perception of Female Youths on Social Media Sexual Violence Content and Culture of Silence.

Correlations		Perception of Social Sexual Contents	of Perception Media Sexual Violence Culture of Silence
Perception of Social Media Sexual Violence Contents	Pearson Correlation	1	.373**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	350	350
Perception of Sexual Violence Culture of Silence	Pearson Correlation	.373**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	350	350

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

Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork, 2024

Similarly, to find the relationship between the perception of female youths on social media sexual violence content and a culture of silence, Pearson’s correlation coefficient was also used. Table 4.9 shows a statistically significant positive correlation (Pearson Correlation = .373, $p < .01$) between the perception of female youth on social media sexual violence content and the perception of the sexual violence culture of silence. This positive correlation suggests that as individuals' perception of sexual violence content on social media becomes more pronounced, their perception of the culture of silence around sexual violence also intensifies. The correlation

coefficient of .373 indicates a moderate positive relationship, meaning that these perceptions tend to increase together.

The moderate correlation suggests that individuals who are more aware or concerned about sexual violence content on social media are also more likely to be aware of or concerned about the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. This could imply that engagement with or exposure to discussions around sexual violence on social media platforms might enhance individuals' understanding or awareness of the broader societal issues related to sexual violence, including the culture of silence.

The positive correlation underscores the role of social media as a significant factor in shaping perceptions around social issues. Social media might serve as a platform not only for raising awareness but also for reflecting or amplifying societal attitudes towards complex issues like sexual violence and the associated culture of silence. The findings could suggest that social media is a powerful tool for breaking the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. As people perceive more content related to sexual violence on social media, it might encourage conversations and reduce the stigma, leading to a greater acknowledgment of the culture of silence that often hampers discussions around these issues. While the correlation is statistically significant, the moderate strength indicates that other factors also play a crucial role in shaping perceptions about sexual violence and the culture of silence. Therefore, addressing these perceptions and the underlying issues would require multifaceted strategies that go beyond social media content to include education, community engagement, and policy changes.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

This research examined the awareness and perception of female youths on social media sexual violence content on the culture of silence in the Ibadan metropolis. In the discussion of the findings, the findings of the research are compared to the results of other studies to see if there are any corroborations or differences. In this study, the demographic information of the respondents was analysed, four research questions were answered and two hypotheses were tested.

Results from demographic analysis showed that the predominance of younger adults in the study is reflective of a demography that is both highly active on social media and at a formative stage in developing attitudes toward social and cultural issues. The majority of the study's participants are within the 20-25 years age bracket, which is a critical period for the formation of views and experiences related to social media and sexual violence. Young adults in this age group are often active on social media and may be particularly vulnerable to or aware of the dynamics of sexual violence within these platforms. The inclusion of younger (14-19 years) and slightly older (26-31 years) participants allows for a broader understanding of how age influences perceptions of social media sexual violence. The findings are consistent with a study that highlighted a significant engagement of younger demographics with social media and their acknowledgment of it as a key source of information on sexual violence¹. The inclusion of a predominantly female sample is particularly relevant given the gendered nature of sexual violence and the role of social media in both perpetuating and challenging these narratives. A study provided empirical evidence on how social media platforms can both empower and endanger women, particularly about psychological violence, underscoring the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to studying these issues³.

With a significant portion of the participants holding a BSc/HND degree or higher, the study is positioned to capture insights from individuals likely to have a critical understanding of social media sexual violence issues. This corroborates the findings that reported that higher education levels correlate with a more positive perception of social media's role in addressing the culture of silence around sexual violence. This suggests that education may enhance the capacity to critically assess and engage with content on social media related to sexual violence³.

Findings show that the majority of the respondents (89.1%) social media use is consistent with global trends indicating increased social media usage over the years. This high engagement level suggests that social media platforms are integral to daily communication and information dissemination. This is consistent with a study that reported a year-on-year increase in social media usage globally, emphasizing the platforms' role in shaping public opinion and awareness on various issues, including sexual violence⁴.

The result also revealed that the majority of the respondents have been using social media for 3-10 years, indicating long-term engagement. This finding is in line with research that found that long-term use of social media platforms is common among adults, with many using these platforms for several years to stay connected with others and access information⁵. The finding that WhatsApp and Facebook are the most active and significant platforms for information on sexual violence is consistent with studies that highlight the increasing use of WhatsApp for news consumption due to its privacy features. Similarly, Facebook's role in information dissemination has been well-documented, with many users relying on it for news and discussions on social issues^{6,7}.

Results also indicated that Facebook and Instagram are significant sources of information on sexual violence. This finding aligns with research that found that social media platforms,

especially Facebook and Instagram, play a crucial role in raising awareness about sexual violence and supporting survivors⁸. Further, the finding that a large majority of respondents engage with sexual violence-related content, primarily through commenting, suggests an active online discourse on this critical issue. This is supported by literature indicating that social media can provide a space for public discourse on social issues, allowing for increased visibility and awareness⁹.

Findings from research question one showed that the level of awareness and engagement with issues of sexual violence among female youths in Ibadan Metropolis is recognized as "Sometimes" ($x=2.47$; $S.D= 0.84$). This suggests a moderate level of awareness and points to the need for increased efforts in education, outreach, and engagement to enhance understanding and awareness of sexual violence, its implications, and the resources available for support and prevention. This suggests that existing initiatives may not be fully effective in reaching or resonating with this demographic, highlighting the need for more tailored and accessible educational programs. This finding is corroborated by a study that reported a moderate level of awareness and found that sexual minority female youth are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence exposure, which is associated with increased engagement in health-risk behaviors. The study also supports the need for heightened education and outreach efforts¹¹.

Also, the responses collectively indicate a high level of agreement among female youths in Ibadan Metropolis regarding the broad spectrum of behaviors that constitute sexual violence with an overall decision of "yes". It indicates a foundational understanding of sexual violence that can be built upon through further education and engagement efforts. This finding is supported by a study on intimate partner violence experiences among sexual and gender minority adolescents

and young adults assigned female at birth which reported high rates of agreement on what constitutes sexual violence.

Findings from research question two showed that the level of awareness of the culture of silence among female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis is good. Having an overall decision of agree, (weighted mean=2.69; standard deviation= 0.63) which indicates a generally progressive stance towards combating the culture of silence around sexual violence. These findings are in line with a study that found a good level of awareness of a culture of silence and reported a high severity of sexual assault, low reportage, and a strong influence of rape myth acceptance among female attendees of musical concerts, highlighting the fear of isolation, stigmatization, self-blame, and low confidence in the police as reasons for the refusal to report sexual victimization¹². Also, the level of agreement of the respondents across the campaigns suggests that, on average, public awareness and engagement with these sexual violence campaigns tend to fall under the "Rarely" category (mean= 1.96; SD= 1.12). This analysis underscores a pervasive need for increased visibility and engagement strategies to elevate public awareness and participation in addressing sexual violence through these campaigns. This finding opposes the result in a study that reported a mixed result of awareness levels but shows promising campaign effects for increasing knowledge, modification of some attitudes toward sexual violence, intentions to participate, and actual participation in prevention activities¹³.

Findings from research question three revealed that female youths in Ibadan Metropolis tend to “agree” with using social media as a platform for awareness, support, and advocacy against sexual violence (mean= 2.54; SD= 0.77). This indicates a positive perception of social media's role in addressing sexual violence, highlighting its potential as a tool for change, education, and support for victims. This finding is in line with a study that reported students' perception of

social media's role in breaking the culture of silence on sexual violence, indicating that increased awareness through social media content could indeed contribute to diminishing the culture of silence¹⁴.

Another study also reported how social media platforms, such as Facebook, have been effectively used for activism and advocacy worldwide. The study highlights the role of social media in raising consciousness, providing support to victims and survivors, building stronger movements, and highlighting the high prevalence of femicide and violence towards women which corroborates the study findings¹⁵.

Another study also reported the essential role of social media in domestic and sexual violence (DV/SA) organizations' work with youth, highlighting its use in advancing organizational functionality, including publicizing services, fundraising, and youth engagement¹⁶.

Results from research question four also showed that the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis' on sexual violence culture of silence is good. With a weighted mean of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.76, the overall decision is "agree" (mean=3.28; SD= 0.76) on the detrimental role of a culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. Female youths in Ibadan Metropolis recognize the importance of speaking up, despite the societal, familial, and legal barriers that exist. This finding opposes the result of a study that reported the significant impact of societal and cultural norms that create a discursive impossibility for young people to speak out against sexual assault¹⁷. This result is also in line with a study that reported the significant barriers victims face, yet also implies the critical need for breaking the silence and seeking help despite these obstacles¹⁸.

The result from hypothesis one showed that there exists a negative significant relationship between awareness of female youths on social media sexual violence content and a culture of silence. The significance level (p-value) is less than 0.01 (Pearson Correlation = -2.88, $p < .01$). This finding implies that exposure to sexual violence content on social media might be playing a role in challenging or reducing the culture of silence around sexual violence among female youths. Increased awareness through social media leads to more discussions and openness about the topic, thereby reducing the culture of silence. These findings corroborate a study that reported a significant relationship between social media awareness and breaking a culture of silence. The study found that the majority of the students had a positive perception of social media's role in breaking the culture of silence on sexual violence¹⁴.

Findings from hypothesis two show a positive statistically significant relationship between the perception of female youths on social media sexual violence content and culture of silence, (Pearson Correlation = .373, $p < .01$). This positive correlation suggests that as individuals' perception of sexual violence content on social media becomes more pronounced, their perception of the culture of silence around sexual violence also intensifies. These findings corroborate the result of work on the perception of female youths at Babcock University regarding the role of social media in breaking the culture of silence on sexual violence. They reported a significant relationship between the perception of female youths on social media sexual violence content and a culture of silence. The study found that students were moderately exposed to campaigns on sexual violence on social media, with the majority having a positive perception of social media's role in breaking the culture of silence on sexual violence. This indicates that increased awareness and exposure to sexual violence content on social media

positively correlate with a reduction in the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence among female youths¹⁴.

Endnotes

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Chapter Five

Conclusion

This chapter discusses a summary of the findings of the research, as well as the conclusion, recommendations, contributions to knowledge, and areas where additional research is needed.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The research investigated the awareness and perception of female youths on social media sexual violence content on the culture of silence in the Ibadan metropolis. The study analyzed demographic data of students, answered four research questions, and tested two hypotheses.

The majority of participants were aged 20-25, indicating a focus on a demographic highly active on social media and at a crucial stage for forming attitudes towards social and cultural issues.

The study also included younger (14-19 years) and older (26-31 years) participants to broaden the understanding of age-related perceptions. A significant portion of respondents hold a BSc/HND degree or higher, positioning the study to capture insights from individuals with a

potential for critical understanding of social media sexual violence issues. A notable 89.1% of respondents reported always using social media, reflecting global trends of increased usage. The duration of social media use among the majority was between 3-10 years, indicating long-term engagement.

The findings also reported that WhatsApp and Facebook were highlighted as the most significant platforms for information on sexual violence, emphasizing the role of these platforms in information dissemination and awareness raising.

Further, the level of awareness and engagement with sexual violence issues was quantified as "Sometimes" with a mean score of 2.47 (Standard Deviation, S.D= 0.84), suggesting a moderate level of awareness among the respondents. A high level of agreement was noted among participants regarding the behaviors that constitute sexual violence, indicating a foundational understanding that can be further enhanced through education. The awareness of the culture of silence around sexual violence was assessed as good, with participants generally agreeing on the importance of combating this issue, reflected by a mean score of 2.69 (S.D= 0.63).

The result also showed a positive perception of social media's role in addressing sexual violence, with an average agreement score of 2.54 (S.D= 0.77). This highlights the potential of social media as a tool for awareness, support, and advocacy. A significant negative relationship was found between the awareness of social media sexual violence content and the culture of silence (Pearson Correlation = -2.88, $p < .01$), suggesting that increased social media awareness could help reduce the culture of silence. There was also a positive significant relationship between the perception of social media sexual violence content and the culture of silence (Pearson Correlation = .373, $p < .01$), indicating that a more pronounced perception of such content correlates with a reduction in the culture of silence.

The study underscores the crucial role of social media in shaping the awareness and perception of sexual violence among female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis. It suggests that increased engagement and education through social media platforms can contribute to breaking the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions that leverage social media to raise awareness, support victims, and advocate for changes in societal attitudes toward sexual violence.

5.2 Conclusion

The research conducted on the awareness and perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis regarding social media content on sexual violence and its impact on the culture of silence yields several crucial insights. Through the analysis of demographic data, social media usage patterns, and perceptions of sexual violence, the study has uncovered the significant role social media plays in shaping young women's understanding and attitudes toward sexual violence and the associated culture of silence.

The demographic analysis revealed a participant group predominantly within the 20-25 age range, a critical period for the formation of social and cultural attitudes, emphasizing the relevance of targeting this demographic for interventions aimed at altering perceptions of sexual violence. The high level of social media engagement among the respondents, with a notable preference for platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, underscores the potential of these platforms as powerful tools for disseminating information and fostering discussions around sensitive issues like sexual violence.

The findings indicate a moderate level of awareness regarding sexual violence among the participants, pointing to a significant opportunity for increasing awareness and engagement

through targeted social media content. The positive perception of social media's role in breaking the culture of silence around sexual violence highlights the platform's potential as a catalyst for change, supporting advocacy, and providing support to victims.

Hypothesis testing further solidifies the relationship between social media and the culture of silence on sexual violence, revealing that increased awareness through social media correlates with a reduction in the culture of silence, while a more pronounced perception of sexual violence content on social media leads to an increased understanding and rejection of the silence surrounding sexual violence.

This study affirms the critical role of social media as a tool for awareness, advocacy, and support in the fight against sexual violence among female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis. It calls for strategic use of social media platforms to enhance education, outreach, and engagement efforts aimed at breaking the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. Future interventions should leverage the findings of this research to develop targeted, effective social media campaigns that address the nuanced needs and perceptions of young women regarding sexual violence, ultimately contributing to a more informed, aware, and vocal community ready to challenge and change the prevailing culture of silence.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations were made.

- i. Develop and deploy targeted educational campaigns on social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, which have been identified as significant sources of information. These campaigns should aim to raise awareness about the various forms of sexual violence, legal rights, and support services available.

- ii. Encourage active engagement, round table talks, and open dialogue on social media regarding sexual violence. This can be achieved by creating safe spaces for discussion, such as moderated forums or groups where individuals can share experiences, discuss issues, and support each other.
- iii. Given the gendered nature of sexual violence and the significant role of social media in both perpetuating and challenging these narratives, it is crucial to adopt gender-sensitive approaches in all social media campaigns. This involves recognizing and addressing the specific risks and challenges faced by women and ensuring that content is inclusive, respectful, and empowering. Campaigns should also aim to challenge gender stereotypes and norms that contribute to the culture of silence around sexual violence.
- iv. Forge partnerships with educational institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community groups to amplify the reach and impact of social media campaigns. These collaborations can facilitate access to a broader audience, provide credibility to the initiatives, and offer a comprehensive support network for individuals affected by sexual violence. Additionally, these partnerships can aid in the development of tailored educational programs and support services that address the specific needs and challenges identified through the study.
- v. Engagement can also be enhanced and inculcated in school curriculums through interactive activities like Q&A sessions with invited experts, organized webinars, and physical/online workshops that provide education on preventing sexual violence and breaking the culture of silence.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

The data gathered in this study has contributed to and expanded knowledge in the existing literature on the awareness and perception of social media sexual violence content on the culture of silence among female youths, most especially in Nigeria. It places special emphasis on the use of social media educating and creating awareness through the use of images, posts, hashtags, and videos to promote participation in curbing sexual, breaking the culture of silence, and making sure perpetrators are punished. While previous studies focused more on assault cases involving adults above 30 years of age, this study stands out by widening the scope, in the sense that it focused more on younger age brackets.

Hence, this study has enriched the literature by bridging this particular gap. It would also serve as a reference point for future researchers who might wish to investigate more sexual violence and the culture of silence around it. Furthermore, this study has validated and reinforced the relevance of various theories, namely the Uses and Gratification Theory, Spiral of Silence Theory, and Media Dependency Theory. The findings reinforced the assumptions of these theories. The findings showed that youths are exposed to media education and critical content on sexual violence, they are exposed to information on the culture of silence, and their decisions are heavily impacted by reactions or certain content on social media.

The research instrument, specifically the questionnaire designed and validated for this study, holds immense value for future researchers and students for future studies. From a practical standpoint, the findings of this study have given insight into the essence of social media creating awareness, revealing certain perceptions, and educating youths with the use of campaigns to shed more light on the thriving menace which is sexual violence. It has also shown the relationships between the variables. This would help political stakeholders and policymakers know how to use

the appropriate media forms to reach out to youths on sexual assault issues. Likewise, the media would ensure that its role is fundamental in creating awareness and breaking a culture of silence.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings the following are suggested for future research;

- i. Future research could benefit from comparing the awareness and perception of social media sexual violence content among female youths in various geographical and cultural contexts. Such comparative studies can help identify unique challenges and effective strategies tailored to different social, cultural, and legal environments, thereby enhancing the global understanding of how social media influences the culture of silence around sexual violence.
- ii. Conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in awareness, perception, and behavior over time can provide insights into the long-term effectiveness of social media campaigns against sexual violence. This approach would allow researchers to assess the sustainability of changes in attitudes and the culture of silence, identifying factors that contribute to lasting impact versus temporary shifts.
- iii. While this study focuses on female youths, understanding the perspectives of male youths on social media content related to sexual violence and their role in perpetuating or challenging the culture of silence is crucial. Future research should explore how male youths interact with and are influenced by social media discussions on sexual violence, aiming to engage them as allies in the fight against sexual violence.
- iv. The current study highlights WhatsApp and Facebook as significant platforms for information and discussion on sexual violence. Future research should expand to include a broader range of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and others, to

evaluate their unique roles and effectiveness in raising awareness and promoting dialogue on sexual violence.

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Appendix I

Questionnaire

Department of Mass Communication & Media Technology,
Faculty of Communication & Information Science,
Lead City University Ibadan, Oyo state.

Dear Respondent,

I am a Masters student of the Department of Mass Communication and Media Technology, Faculty of Communication, and Information Science, at Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria.

I am conducting a research study on the Awareness and Perception of Social Media Sexual Violence Content in Culture of Silence among Female Youths in the Ibadan Metropolis. The study aims to examine some influences of social media content on the perpetuation of the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. Respondents' participation in this study is voluntary and all information provided will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. Thank you for your cooperation and please note that there are no right or wrong answers.

Abimifoluwa Glory ANJORIN.

Please use the checkboxes below to tick the appropriate box that corresponds with your answer.

Section A: Demographic Data Contents

1. Age: a. 14- 19 [] b. 20-25 [] c. 26-29 []
2. Highest Educational Level: a. SSCE [] b. ND/NCE [] c. B.Sc./HND [] d. MSc and above []
3. How frequently do you use social media? Always [] sometimes [] rarely [] never []
4. For how long have you been a social media user? 2 years and below [] 3-6 years [] 7-10 years [] 11 and above []
5. Which of these social media platforms are you most active on? (PICK ONLY ONE OPTION)
 (a) Facebook [] (b) Twitter [] (c) Instagram [] (d) WhatsApp [] (e) Others -----
6. On which of these social media platforms have you come across information on sexual violence?
 (a) Facebook [] (b) Twitter [] (c) Instagram [] (d) WhatsApp [] (e) Others -----
7. How do you react to sexual violence-related content on social media?
 Like [] share [] comment [] ignore []

Section B: Level of Awareness on Social Media Sexual Violence Contents among Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis

Instruction: For each statement below, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by clicking the (√) button that most closely matches your response: ALW = Always; OFT = Often; SO= Sometimes; or NOA= Not at All.

S/N	STATEMENT	ALW	OFT	SO	NOA
1.	I receive pop-up notifications about information on sexual violence while making use of Facebook				

2.	I have come across sexual violence content on social media				
3.	I have heard about the culture of silence on social media				
4.	I know what Sexual Violence Culture of Silence is				
5.	I have come across sexual violence campaigns on Twitter				
6.	I am exposed to information on sexual assault on social media regularly				
7.	Social media has helped me know that violating someone sexually is a punishable crime				
8.	I am knowledgeable about sexual assault-induced stigmatisation				
9.	I am aware that sexual violence has negative effects on the physical, mental, and social state of a person				
10.	I have no idea what sexual violence and its attributes entail				

Instruction: For each statement below, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by clicking the (√) button that most closely matches your response: Yes or No

	STATEMENT	Yes	No
11.	Stalking is a sexual violence attribute		
12.	Rape is a sexual violence attribute		
13.	Groping is a sexual violence attribute		

14.	Incest is a sexual violence attribute		
15.	Fondling is a sexual violence attribute		
16.	Sexual Harassment is a sexual violence attribute		
17.	Unconsented intercourse by one's spouse is sexual abuse		
18.	I disagree that rape is always forced		
19.	Poor reporting culture of rape has resulted in its normalization		
20.	Only penetrative forced intercourse is sexual assault		

Section C: Level of Awareness on Sexual Violence Culture of Silence among Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis

Instruction: For each statement below, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by clicking the (√) button that most closely matches your response: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; or SD = Strongly Disagree.

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I have read information about the culture of silence on social media				
2.	I know what sexual violence culture of silence means				
3.	I don't feel victims should speak up after being raped to protect their reputations				
4.	I believe speaking up does more damage than keeping quiet				
5.	I will report a relative who gropes or touches me sexually				
6.	I feel comfortable discussing sexual assault issues or cases with others				

7.	When I hear about a rape case, I blame the victim first				
8.	Indecent dressing is a major cause of rape				
9.	I believe perpetrators should be punished once exposed and not given a second chance				
10.	I believe Sexual Assault will lessen if rapists are castrated instead of being hidden or punished				

Instruction: For each statement below, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by clicking the (√) button that most closely matches your response: ALY= Always; OFT = Often; RAR= Rarely; NA = Not at All.

S/N	Sexual Violence Campaigns	ALY	OFT	RAR	NA
11.	I have heard of the #MeToo Campaign				
12.	I have heard of the #1in3Africa Campaign				
13.	I have heard of the #Breakthesilence Campaign				
14.	I have heard of the #Justsaysorry Campaign				
15.	I have heard of the #itsnotok Campaign				
16.	I have heard of the #believesurvivors Campaign				
17.	I have heard of the #SupportSurvivors Campaign				
18.	I have heard of the #SexualAssault Campaign				
19.	I have heard of the #endrapeculture Campaign				
20.	I have heard of the #sexualassault Campaign				

SECTION D: Perception of Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis on Social Media Sexual Violence Contents

Instruction: For each statement below, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by clicking the (√) button that most closely matches your response: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; or SD = Strongly Disagree.

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I skip notifications or content about information on sexual violence while on social media				
2.	Information on social media about sexual assault or violence triggers me				
3.	Rape and Assault cannot be eradicated through the use of social media				
4.	I encourage people to find forums or groups to talk about their pains as it relates to sexual violence				
5.	I willingly spread awareness of the prevention of sexual violence through social media				
6.	I will willingly participate in a sexual violence awareness campaign if I come across it on social media.				
7.	I will willingly make use of social media to expose a sexual offender				
8.	I never see the need to support victims on social media				
9.	I feel most rape victims on social media use the medium to gain pity or chase clout				
10.	I am opposed to speaking out if I or anyone close to me is victimized				

SECTION E: Perception of Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis' on Sexual Violence Culture of Silence

Instruction: For each statement below, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by clicking the (√) button that most closely matches your response: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; or SD = Strongly Disagree.

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Ladies are always blamed when they speak up				
2.	Online groups empower women to speak up				
3.	Women are bullied for speaking up against sexual violence				
4.	Silence shapes victims negatively				
5.	I will report a relative who gropes or touches me sexually				
6.	Silence is suffocating				
7.	Society frowns upon anyone who summons the courage to report sexual offenders				
8.	The Law contributes to sexual assault				
9.	The cycle of sexual violence can't be broken unless victims start to speak up				
10.	Speaking up brings retribution				

Appendix I

(a) The Entire Questionnaire Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.801	60

(b) Level of Awareness on Social Media Sexual Violence Contents Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.805	20

(c) Level of Awareness on Sexual Violence Culture of Silence Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.765	20

(d) Perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence Contents Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.811	10

(e) Perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on Sexual Violence Culture of Silence

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.801	10

Bio-data

A. Personal Data

Name: **Abimifoluwa Glory ANJORIN**

Address: 35, Kings Drive, Providence, Olopomewa, Eleyele, Ibadan, Oyo State

E-mail: aanjorin247@gmail.com

Phone No: +2348106609674, +2347084814143

Date of Birth: 22nd December, 1997

Place of Birth: Ibadan, Oyo State

Nationality: Nigerian

Next of Kin: Miss Anjorin Wonder Oluwaseyi

35, Kings Drive, Providence, Olopomewa, Eleyele, Ibadan, Oyo State

Tel: 08063514067

B. Education Background

1. Educational Institutions Attended with Date

- (a) United Missionary Comprehensive College, Molete, Ibadan
West African Secondary School Certificate 2009-2014
- (c) Babcock University, Ilishan- Remo, Ogun State.
BSc. (Second Class Upper), Mass Communication 2014-2018
- (e) Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State.
M.Sc. Mass Communication & Media Technology 2021- 2024

C. Work Experiences with Dates

1. Human Resources Admin, Transmission Company of Nigeria, Akinyemi, Ibadan, Oyo State.
November 5th, 2021 – till date

D. Awards and Fellowships - NIL

E. Membership of Academic Professional Bodies - NIL

F. Publications

1. Thesis

- (i) Social Media Groups' Involvement in Breaking Women's Culture of Silence on Sexual Violence: Perception of Babcock Female Undergraduates (B.Sc. Project)

2. Journal Publications

- (i) Akoja M.I, Anjorin A.G., *Social media and women's culture of silence on sexual violence: perception of Babcock University's female undergraduates. Communication Cultures in Africa.* 2020 Jun 30; 2 (1):1-27. <https://doi.org/10.21039/cca.32>.

G. Major Conferences Attended with Dates

1. 1st International Conference at Lead City University, Ibadan, International Conference Centre between 12th and 15th February 2024.

2. The African Woman in the Media 2018, #AWIM18 at University of Ibadan Conference Centre, the University of Ibadan, Ibadan between 21st and 22nd June, 2018.

H. Referees

Dr. Mofoluke Akoja,

Mass Communication Department,

Babcock University, Ilishan Remo,

Ogun State.

08038313899.

.....
Signature

.....
Date

The University Compliance Certification

This is to certify that this thesis by Abimifoluwa Glory ANJORIN with Matric No: LCU/PG/002786 in the Department of Mass Communication and Media Technology, Faculty of Communication and Information Science, Lead City University, Ibadan is in full compliance with the approved University format and style.

Signature

Date

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