

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

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Abstract

The continued existence and growth of sexual violence which affects females has become a great menace as it doesn't 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, and #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 and social media content's impact on their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours toward breaking the culture of silence. The study was anchored on Spiral of Silence theory. The study adopted the simple random sampling method and employed a questionnaire for data gathering. The sample consisted of 400 respondents from Ibadan Metropolis selected through purposive random sampling techniques. Findings show that the majority of the respondents (89.1%) consistently make use of social media. 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

Introduction

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 race (Cole, 2022). 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 victim (Shinbrot, Wilkins, Gretzel, & Bowser, 2019).

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 (Christopher, 2021). 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 crime (World Health Organisation, 2021).

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 liberty (Qureshi, 2020)." 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 women.

The prevalence of sexual violence in the Ibadan metropolis is thought to be high, but the exact numbers are difficult to determine due to underreporting (Meghna, Wamoyi, Pearson & Stöckl, 2021). 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 violence (B. Emma & F. Edu-Afful, 2019). Sexual violence in Ibadan metropolis takes many forms, including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. 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 poverty (Nicola, Flynn & Powell, 2019). The response to sexual violence in the Ibadan metropolis has been inadequate.

There are a limited number of specialised services available to survivors of sexual violence, and the legal system is often slow and unresponsive (Akanji, 2022). 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 perpetrators (Bode-Okunade & Olaigbe, 2020).

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 assault. This may occur in a multitude of contexts,

including families, communities, organisations, and even society as a whole (Vasundhara, 2018). 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 retribution (Nishimura, 2019). 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 factor (Fred, 2019). 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 abuse (H. M. Sandy; I. Vranjes, J. L; Berdahl & L. M. Cortina, 2021). This might involve fear of physical revenge from the attacker as well as worry of social or professional repercussions if they report the incident.

However, when it comes to sharing information, 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". In recent decades, there has been a proliferation of media outlets serving audiences all over the globe, thanks to the spread of advanced communication technology (Ramón, 2021).

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 issue (Sivagurunathan, Orchard, MacDermid & Evans, 2019).

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.

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 (Bode-Okunade & Olaigbe, 2020). 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 century.

Social media refers to a variety of online platforms that allow users to share and discuss ideas, build communities, and interact with others (Vasundhara, 2018). 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 more.

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 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 minority (McLuhan, 2019). 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 criticised (Fred, 2019).

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 1980 (Sandy, Vranjes, Berdahl & Cortina, 2021).

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 behaviours (Ramón, 2021).

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 experiences.

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 strangers (M. Sivagurunathan; T. Orchard; J. C. MacDermid & M. Evans, 2019). 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 situation.

Statement of the Problem

The growing culture of sexual violence has created the birth of a sexual violence culture of silence which refers to an unspoken societal tendency to avoid talking about certain topics, often due to fear, shame, or social pressure. A culture of Silence can be perpetuated by a range of factors, including victim-blaming, shame, and stigma surrounding sexual violence, and a lack of support for survivors. As a result, survivors of sexual violence may feel discouraged from reporting the crime or may be met with scepticism, disbelief, or hostility if they do come forward. The influence of social media content on the culture of silence adds another layer of complexity to the problem. Social media platforms have become influential spaces where information, opinions, and narratives are disseminated. Overcoming the culture of silence around sexual violence requires a collective effort to create a safe and supportive environment for survivors, as well as a willingness to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Despite the growing body of literature examining the use of social media in sexual violence culture of silence among women, little insight has been provided into how the stigma or issue of sexual violence can be washed away or dealt with. The issue of sexual violence has become a controversial issue that affects both genders, which has disproportionately affected women and even younger females. However, there is still a huge obstacle in the form of a culture of silence concerning sexual abuse, which prevents effective action from being taken. The expanding role of social media has made it difficult to address the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. Many

incidents of sexual abuse go unreported, partly due to fear of not being believed or of the justice system failing to vindicate the victim's honour.

Furthermore, the pervasive problem of sexual violence with an added culture of silence surrounding it is deeply troubling and requires urgent attention. The prevalence of sexual violence incidents coupled with the reluctance to discuss and address the issues only serves to perpetuate a cycle of silence and inaction. The culture of silence is fuelled by various factors, including fear of victim-blaming, social stigma, and the lack of effective support systems for survivors. As a result, many incidents of sexual violence go unreported, leaving victims without justice and perpetrators free to repeat their abusive behaviours. However, the impact of social media content on the sexual violence culture of silence, particularly among female youths in the Ibadan Metropolis, remains poorly understood. Therefore, this study examined Female Youths in Ibadan Metropolis' level of awareness and perception of social media sexual violence content in the culture of silence.

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. ascertain the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence contents;
- ii. ascertain the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis' culture of silence;
- iii. ascertain the relationship between the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis on social media sexual violence content and the culture of silence.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posited concerning the research objectives:

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

Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses were postulated:

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

Methodology

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. 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 sample size for the study is 400 female youths. The primary instrument used for the collection of data was a questionnaire which enabled the quantitative analysis of the variables considered for this study. Data analysis was done after the data gathered had been coded and managed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and Discussion of Findings

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

Table 1: 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)	2.1 4	0.8 1	Disagree
2	Information on social media about sexual assault or violence triggers me	22 (6.3)	216 (61.7)	122 (32)	0 (0)	2.7 4	0.5 6	Agree
3	Rape and Assault cannot be eradicated through the use of social media	55 (15.7)	119 (34)	141 (40.3)	35 (10)	2.5 5	0.8 7	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)	3.3 7	0.6 6	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)	2.8 5	0.7 8	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)	3.2 3	0.7 8	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)	3.2 0	0.7 7	Agree
8	I never see the need to support victims on social media	14 (4)	30 (8.6)	144 (41.1)	162 (46.3)	1.7 0	0.7 9	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)	1.6 9	0.7 5	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)	1.9 2	0.9 5	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 1 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 Two: What is the perception of female youths in Ibadan Metropolis' on sexual violence culture of silence?

Table 2: 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)	3.1 6	0.8 1	Agree
2	Online groups empower women to speak up	164 (46.9)	160 (45.7)	24 (6.9)	2 (0.6)	3.3 9	0.6 4	Agree
3	Women are bullied for speaking up against sexual violence	164 (46.9)	139 (39.7)	24 (6.9)	23 (6.6)	3.2 6	0.8 5	Agree
4	Silence shapes victims negatively	194	135	12 (3.4)	8 (2.6)	3.4 7	0.6 9	Agree

		(55.4)	(38.6)					
5	I will report a relative who gropes or touches me sexually	198	127	12	13	3.4	0.7	Agree
		(56.6)	(36.3)	(3.4)	(3.7)	6	4	
6	Silence is suffocating	247	93	2	8	3.6	0.6	Strongly
		(70.6)	(26.6)	(0.6)	(2.3)	5	1	Agree
7	Society frowns upon anyone who summons the courage to report sexual offenders	107	144	77	22	2.9	0.8	Agree
		(30.6)	(41.1)	(22)	(6.3)	6	8	
8	The Law contributes to sexual assault	107	149	77	17	2.9	0.8	Agree
		(30.6)	(42.6)	(22)	(4.9)	9	5	
9	The cycle of sexual violence can't be broken unless victims start to speak up	107	149	77	17	2.9	0.8	Agree
		(30.6)	(42.6)	(22)	(4.9)	9	5	
10	Speaking up brings retribution	193	139	8	11	3.4	0.7	Agree
		(54.9)	(39.7)	(2.3)	(3.1)	6	0	
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 2 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 vocalising 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.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the perception of female youths on social media sexual violence content and a culture of silence.

Table 3: Relationship between Perception of Female Youths on Social Media Sexual Violence Content and Culture of Silence.

Correlations		Perception of Social Media Sexual Violence Contents	Perception of 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	Pearson	.373**	1
Violence Culture of	Correlation		
Silence	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.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from research question one 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 silence (Smith, Chen, Lowe & Basile, 2022).

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 findings.

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 organisational functionality, including publicizing services, fundraising, and youth engagement.

Results from research question two 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 assault. 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 obstacles.

Findings from hypothesis one shows 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 youths.

Conclusion

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. 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.

Recommendations

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

- i. Forge partnerships with educational institutions, non-governmental organisations (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.
- ii. Engagement can also be enhanced and inculcated in school curriculums through interactive activities like Q&A sessions with invited experts, organised webinars, and physical/online workshops that provide education on preventing sexual violence and breaking the culture of silence.

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